



Zen in the Martial Arts

Author: Joe Hyams
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Rarely does a book on the martial arts cover as many different fighting styles as this one, which also includes first-hand accounts of training under the great Bruce Lee.

Zen in the Martial Arts is unusual for several reasons. Unlike many martial arts books, this one does not even attempt per se to explain the physical techniques themselves. Instead, through anecdotes about his training under some of the greatest martial artist over the last century, Joe Hyams offers an account of what one individual practitioner rarely experiences first-hand: instruction from several masters in one 'career'.

Chief among these is the legendary Bruce Lee, who, apart from being the film star of legend, was also inventor of *Jeet-Kune-Do*, or the *Way of the Intercepting Fist*. The fact that Lee only taught a handful of students, normally in a one-on-one situation, would suggest that Hyman's account of their time together is reason alone to read the book. Ultimately, though, the author's time with Bruce is however only part of the story. The book also covers similar exchanges with, and training under, some of the other leading instructors of the day, including chapters on the practice and philosophy of Aikido, Kung-Fu and Karate, and whilst specific events in the practice hall are cited, it is always to emphasise a wider and more general way of thinking: Zen can be found in all martial arts. It is worth mentioning though that whilst there can be no doubt that the meetings and sessions described in the book actually happened, one should consider the long exchanges of dialogue recalled by Hyman as paraphrasing at best. After all, it is virtually impossible to recall entire conversations word-for-word the very next day, let alone years after the events.

In my opinion this book has two selling points that set it apart from most others of this type. Firstly, it was written at a time when the greatest teachers of the last century were still alive and the author's multidisciplinary approach ensures that students of most arts should feel included. Secondly of course, one of those teachers happened to be Bruce Lee.

9 sausages out of 10

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