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The University of Sydney

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
2013
THESIS**

A METAPHORICAL NATURE: THE IMMANENT JOURNEY

**by
Yi-An Liu**

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Abstract

Description of Creative Work

Humans are part of nature and the universe, like myriads of object in the world. We can only feel our true existence in nature. Chuang Tzu said, '*Heaven and earth and I came into existence together, and all things with me are one.*' The true existence in nature is presented through the material and in the process of making. The repetition in art practice is a meditation to find a kind of pure and peaceful emptiness of spirit. The process of creating an artwork is like a practice of spirit. Through the repetition and complete concentration, each moment becomes the unique and pure perception of the present. The present consists of memory and spirit and composes the future and eternity. This is the true mind; through the body connected to the original consciousness and presented through the world of objects. Clay, as a material with the same age as Earth, has contained and recorded the human history, behaviour, existence and body since we were born. It is a catalyst to connect the human mind, body and history and nature. There are three series of works: *Infiniteness*, *Endless Boundary* and *Without Moment*. *Infinity* consists of five objects which represent the concept of vessel and emptiness. *Endless Boundary* includes two works. *Endless Boundary 1* has 6 objects and *Endless Boundary 2* has 36 objects to represent the non-boundary with visible boundary. *Without Moment* present the concept of "art practice as a meditation" through a thousand pieces of shuttle-shaped small pieces in *Without Moment 1* and five hills which consist of countless dots in *Without moment 2*. The three projects will be exhibited at Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney from 5th to 12th December of 2012.

Abstract of Thesis

This thesis presents a theoretical background for the art practice. It explores the ideal relationship between human and nature through the *Tao* of Chuang Tzu and how art can be the catalyst to reveal and bring the true being and freedom. Chuang Tzu takes the relationship of all objects and the world as comprehensive, without distinction and egocentrism. Humans, as parts of nature, coexist with all other objects. The relationship of human and nature

should be harmonious and the essential being of life should be free and beautiful. The art works of Lo, Sen Hao, Wolfgang Laib, Andy Goldsworthy and Gao, Xing Jian are discussed. They shows how material and art practice are the catalyst to reveal the essential being and the ideal relationship between human, nature, and the universe.

Keywords: Tao; Chuang Tzu; Nature; Ceramic

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Introduction

My thesis, titled *A Metaphorical Nature: The Immanent Journey*, includes five bodies of works, *Infinity, Endless Boundary 1 and 2 and Without Moment 1 and 2*, developed from April 2010 to November 2012. This study follows on from my Master's project, *The Truth of Metaphor*. It is my concept of material and the lifecycle and my personal overseas experience with an immanent change and transcendence of my thinking about life and art practice during this period. Inspired by my new experiences and lifestyle in Australia and an introspection on life in Taiwan, the study aims to explore the relationship of human, nature and the universe and how art practice and art works can be the catalyst to reveal the truth of being¹ through the *Tao* of Chuang Tzu.

The research focuses on the truth of being and the non-dual thinking for three reasons. The first is the introspection about the relationship of human and nature. The introspection is generated from the different lifestyle that I have experienced in Australia. On the tiny island, Taiwan, the conflict between human and nature is obvious and life is stressful and limited. However, in Australia, I feel nature is very close to daily life; the clear sky, the clean air and wind, the broad green field and the flying seagull. Here life is simple and vivid. This natural life let me start to think about the meaning of life and the question about who I am. I started to ponder about the truth of being and what is the role that I and my art has in the world.

The second reason is to see the world with a broader understanding and empathy. In this section, Chuang Tzu provides a viewpoint to contemplate the world without dogma and distinction to treat the myriad of objects² comprehensibly and see the world without egocentrism. The concept helps one to see the world more open-mindedly and transcends singular values and distinctions- to see the world unclouded.

¹ The term truth of Being here mentions the "being of I am". To compare with ego, the meaning of "the being of I am" mentions "who you really are" or "find your true self" instead of the recognition of ego or a name.

² The phrase, myriad of objects, is translated from the Chinese vocabulary Wan Wu(萬物). Wan(萬) in Chinese means ten thousands or all and Wu means things, objects, or matters. The words, the myriads of objects, indicates all the phenomena in the universe. Tao Te Chi mentions the origin of the myriad objects that ' *The Tao produces one; one produces two; two produces three; three produce the myriad of objects.*' The phrase has a comprehensive meaning to mention all things in the universe without distinction to show the proposition of identification with Taoism.

The third one is for the calmness, tranquillity and freedom in life, the experience of presence. Daily life can be the meditation to regain the truth of being. In art practice or art contemplation, the experience of presence and freedom are existent in a type of concentration on one thing. Simply speaking, the experience of true calmness, tranquility and freedom exists in the myriad of objects and every movement in daily life and art work.

This research discusses the relationship of human, nature and universe and how art practice and artwork can be the connection to reveal the truth of being –to experience real calmness, tranquility and freedom. The spirituality of material discussed in the research is clay, as a catalyst to connect human nature, and universe. The process of art practice and art contemplation is taken as a way of meditation to experience an unlimited and still condition. The metaphorical form and immanent transcendence combine the visible form and invisible content of the project and make an obscure and unlimited space to allow the possibility of inspired thinking.

This introduction presents the general information on my research. Section One outlines the research question. Section Two presents the research background of my previous studio practice from 2005-2008 and my introspection on modern life in Taiwan. Section Three addresses my research methodology. And Section Four summarises the organisation of the thesis.

(1)Research Questions

The central questions for the study are:

What is the Chuang Tzu's thinking towards the relationship between human, nature and universe and truth of being? What are artists' responses to the ideal relationship between human, nature and universe? How can art become the catalyst to reveal the truth of Being? Where does the idea of A Metaphorical Nature: the Immanent Journey come from and how is it presented in my art practice?

(2)Research Background

i. Previous Studio Practice (2005-2008)

My previous studio works were completed in the National Taipei University of Education. The project was inspired by the natural environment of home and foreign countries. In my previous practice, the representation of natural objects was the main form in the collection, besides the visible impression of objects like plants, growth rings, ripples and animals. The natural objects such as grass, sand, soil and fallen leaves were used as the stage of the installation.

In the project, the representation of nature was taken as a process to regain life and experience the truth of being as part of nature. The series of works did not touch the essence of being, they were in an embryonic stage and showed an intention to discover the essential question about being. But, they opened the question to the more profound study about the truth of being and the relationship between human, nature and universe. They also became the basis of the metaphorical ceramic installation of the current studio works and set up the early primary structure of my system of creation and the way I view the world and myself.

There are three collections in the project *The Truth of Metaphor. The Circle of Life; The Subtleness and Tenacity of Life, and A Walk Through Nature.*

The Circle of Life

The continuous reproduction of life is an endless succession, like a spiral. From the moment we are born till the time we die, life, as we know it, goes on and on.

I made this series in the second year of my master's study. The first year of my study was occupied by heavy duties for four projects: two public art installations and proposal, one government project and one group exhibition proposal. Except the group exhibition proposal, another three projects were not mine, but belonged to the professors in my department and others. The three projects came in quick succession without a break and my daily life was filled by the full schedule and chased by the progress and the professors' endless phone calls and orders from morning to late night. The only meaningful thing to me in this

period was crossing these completed things off on my schedule. The narrow office and noisy phone calls made me tired and almost crazy. I felt I was a machine finishing all the orders of my bosses, instead of an artist, a human, chasing my dream and ideal for life. I knew supporting my supervisors' projects was one of the postgraduate student's duty in the Eastern graduate school education, but this was not the main purpose I studied for a higher degree.

When the first year finished, I was exhausted. I knew I learnt something new, but I felt depressed by my empty studio table and shelves and I knew this depression and worry cannot be released by any form of relaxation. It was about my inner state. A group show in Korea was still in process, but I needed to take a break. In the summer vacation, before the second year started, I escaped from Taiwan and went to Canada for a holiday. Now, I did not worry about anything. In fact, I could not worry about anything.

Canada was one of the most beautiful nations that I had ever visited. The great mountains with white snow in summer, the crystal clear blue and icy cold lake, the green roof of the maple tree, the wild animal, rabbit, squirrel, racoon in the front yard of my uncle's house and the wild raspberry and blackberry in my aunt's backyard. For me, this was a place surrounded by vivid nature. In the two months in Canada, my depression and frustration were released. I finally realized a master's advice for me: Walk through nature. It will heal you. Now I was healed and prepared to face my life.

This work series *Circles* (figs.1 & 2) has taught me something new about life. I have learnt about the meaning of life from a new perspective and I have sought to find solutions to problems. Nature is a great healer. As I approach nature, I see the joy and the essence of life all over again. No matter how desperate or anxious I feel, as long as I return myself to nature, I am able to return to the essence of life and become my contented and tranquil self. Perhaps, we cannot be at peace with ourselves and experience true happiness unless we realize we are just a part of the never-ending universe.



Figure 1 Liu, Yi An, *Circles I*, ceramics, 2006



Figure 2 Liu, Yi An, *Circles II*, ceramics, 2006

The Subtleness and Tenacity of Life

This series of work *New Birth* (figs.3-5) was intended as self-therapy. It is the best treatment there is for the vulnerability and emotional negativity in me. This series of works shares a common language. The subtle yet abundant sprouts symbolize the coming of the spring. It represents the rebirth of all things and life forms.

This series is a symbol of new hope for myself and my family. My father was depressed in this period. His eyes were unexpectedly injured by my five-year-old cousin. She did not mean to do it, but my father had a slight retinal detachment after this. I know it was not very serious and doctor also said although it could not be entirely healed it would be almost healed. But, my father was so depressed because of the unexpected accident. The atmosphere surrounding my family was quite sad and full of negative energy during the vacation. I tried to do something to support my father, but I was disappointed in my weakness and the only thing I could do for him was nothing but endless worry. I called a teacher to express my helplessness and find support. He did not give me any dogma; he just told me not to use the negative mood and show my concern and love. If I hoped for the happiness of those people I love, the first thing I should do was keep a joyful heart and be positive then I could bring love to them.

In this series of work *New Birth* (figs.3-5), green sprouts emerged repeatedly in large numbers. I built them up one by one on a small area with green mud. The work required tremendous concentration - my mind was in a state of blankness. In this blankness, I felt the sprouts grow slowly. Throughout the process, my sorrow gradually diluted and faded. My body and eyes were tired, but as I watched the sprouts grew from nothing into individuals, and from individuals into clusters, my heart was filled with joy and comfort. The green sprouts seemed to have absorbed all my negativity and transformed them into positive energy. I was reborn. As I looked at each sprout I had grown and its resilience in growth, I sensed new life and hope. To me, it is a practice of *Tao* in daily life. By repeatedly moving my body and feeling the fatigue, I practised the *Tao*. I was exhausted and hollow, but it was a rewarding act. My negative thoughts were transformed into positive ones. The tremendous effort and level of concentration took away the despair I felt emotionally. I was contented and at

peace with myself. There was no time for negativity. I gained freedom and a new life in the moment.



Figure 3 Liu, Yi An, *New Birth I*, ceramics, 2007



Figure 4 Liu, Yi An, *New Birth II*, ceramics, 2007



Figure 5 Liu, Yi An, *New Birth III*, ceramics, 2007

A Walk Through Nature

I had lived in Taipei City for seven years before my new journey to Sydney. Taipei is a very crowded and busy city, full of people, motorcycles, cars, buses and noise. The noise made me sleepless, the dusty air made me allergic and the hectic life made me stressed and anxious. My feeling for the city is complicated and contradictory. I hated its narrow sky and eternal noise, but I was still enchanted by its quickness, convenience and continuous new information. Sometimes, I wished to regain some calmness in nature, but in the narrow city it seems difficult, so I tried to find something from nature. In my daily life I observed the shining sunset (although part of it was always covered by a building), the cool wind in the playground (although I can hear the noise from He Ping East Road), and the Cherry Blossom beside the side gate of my

university (although there were many scooters under the small tree). These natural phenomena and vivid lives brought me a tiny feeling of happiness in my daily life.

Nature accommodates and tolerates all life forms. This also applies to humanity. People are no different to plants and animals. Civilization and urbanization do not intervene with our being a part of nature and returning to nature. We can be moved by nature in every corner of life. We will walk through nature and experience every subtle gift given us and be entranced by it. Human Beings are part of nature like grass, trees, insects and animals. Our spirits are in nature, as well.



Figure 6 Liu, Yi An, *The Planet*, ceramics, 2007



Figure 7 Liu, Yi An, *Freedom*, ceramics, 2007

ii. An Introspection on Modern Life in Taiwan

I left Taiwan for Australia to study in 2010. The small island changes quickly for me, especially for a person far from home. Every time I walk outside the lobby of the airport and breathe the humid air deeply and walk on the street with friends of my home country, everything is familiar, but unfamiliar. The difference and changes in the environment and people are much more obvious through the separation of different time and space.

Checking Taiwanese news is one of my daily habits. Taiwan is my home country so I hope it can be improved, but it often makes me sigh with resignation. The natural disasters, the endless and selfish arguments between KMT(Kuomintang) and DDP(Democratic Progressive Party), the conflicts and disputes of employers and employees, the increasing jobless and misery index, the higher prices and the lower incomes, the unaffordable house prices, the broadening poverty gap and the loss of any sense of a secure life occupies most sections of the news web pages. Taiwanese sense of happiness is lower, but the sense of loss and confusion for the future is higher.

I always have gatherings with my ceramic mates from the National Taipei University of Education when I return to Taiwan. Some of them are struggling with their ideal of art and life. It is not simple to earn a living in Taiwan by making fine art. The struggle between ideal and reality is a dilemma and most of them do not persist. The loss is not only related to the confusion of the future, but also the isolation and separation facing the world. Earning a living is important and a dream for life is important as well, but if you cannot feed yourself right now, how can you face and move on to the future, positively? Most of them choose the most urgent solution, feeding themselves, and hope the income could be the foundation for completing their future ideal. The distance between a tired and exhausted working life and the ideal of life becomes greater. We never share the feeling with each other, but as part of the studio, you can feel it. One of my senior colleagues described this concretely but abstractly to me. He said it was like you were flowing with the flood with no return, you know you need to struggle to chase and complete your ideal, you wanted to shout against it, but you found your voice was submerged by the muddy water. The flood is not only reality itself, reality sometimes could be an opportunity to push you to grow up and face society, but also it can be the loss of meaning in life. What we are living for? What we are chasing for? And what is my value in society? They shout these questions in a silent protest to get some recognition from the society. My studio mates, now graduated, were caged, weak and angry because of the unfair and unhealthy circumstances of the system and they were forced to lose their mental and physical health.

There is a very sad and cruel case of mental and physical breakdown. This was news in Taiwan in 2010. In order to save on the cost of labour, many Taiwanese companies made changes to the system of job responsibility. It means the employer does not need to pay an after-hours or over-time salary to the workforce. A 29-year-old engineer, Xu, Shao Bin, who worked in the Nan-ya Plastic Corporation was found with a heart attack in front of the computer desk full of documents. He was unable to be resuscitated by cardiogenic shock. His parents queried whether their son may have been killed by the over-time work. According to the investigation, Xu, Shao Bin worked at least 13-19 hours per day and six months before he died, his over-time hours were up to 120 hours per month.³

³ Merit Time Website in Taiwan
<http://www.merit-times.com.tw/NewsPage.aspx?Unid=203930> (27/09/2010)

According to recent research by “Cheer magazine” and “Udnjob.com”, more than 30% of labourers in Taiwan work over 62 hours per week. A quarter of labourers need to work on weekends or public holidays. The research in 2009 by IMD indicated that the Taiwanese average working hours are 2282 hours per year and this is the highest in the world.⁴

Xu’s case is not unique. Actually, it is a normality in Taiwan in most industries, including medical, high-tech, design, finance, even education. We violate our humanity and exhaust our physical and mental health. In modern society, we expect to get the satisfaction of being recognized in society, by working. We think we are working for our beloved or our future so we can endure the tiredness and debatable system and feel our existence in society is worthwhile. However, we suddenly notice that we cannot stand the pressure anymore, but we are forced to accept it because we have no choice. What do I exist and live for? Are we working for living or living for working?

Xu’s case does not only highlight the unreasonable working system of Taiwan, it also reveals an unreasonable attitude of treating a free and independent person as worthless. What is the value of existence? Why are we living? What are we living for? Who am I? When I read the news of Taiwan recently, the loss of a true self in the complex society of Taiwan seems more unsolvable and unaffordable under the dire financial circumstances. The underprivileged classes are disappointed and depressed about the future and the strong people’s pride and power. Under this situation, a positive recognition of the nation is breaking down - the separation and conflicts of different supporters of different parties, the conflict of protecting the natural environment and developing industries - the island is splintered into several different issues by the anxiety of survival and recognition of the land, of the nation, or of ourselves.

Fang Marvin Minto used a metaphorical, but sophisticated way, to reveal his opinion of the abnormality and unreal confusion and anxiety of the life in this Taiwanese society. In Mandarin, the pronunciation of money and gold are the same. In Fang Marvin Minto’s installation, *Gold, Clay* (fig. 8), he made nine objects from clay with a golden glazed surface and installed them on Italian shelves made of clear glass and stainless steel. He attempted to show that we strive for wealth, but what we chase is only the brilliant and unreal surface. It

⁴ Cheers Official Website in Taiwan
<http://www.cheers.com.tw/catalog/editor.jsp?id=402881e8134e403a01134e4093bf0025>
(01/10/2010)

was shiny and brought fantastic money and happiness to us. We were satisfied even if it was only a facade. In another of his installation artworks, *Idea Everywhere* (fig.9), he used the image of green grass and printed it on transparencies. He pressurized and sealed nature in an artificial product and locked them in a greenhouse. He said of another work, *Gold, Clay*,

What I am concerned with is nothing but Taiwan. For example, Taiwanese become material under the financial development. In order to earn more money, they violate the normal rules to work over 14 hours a day. If what you chase is nothing but money and gold, I just give you gold. ⁵

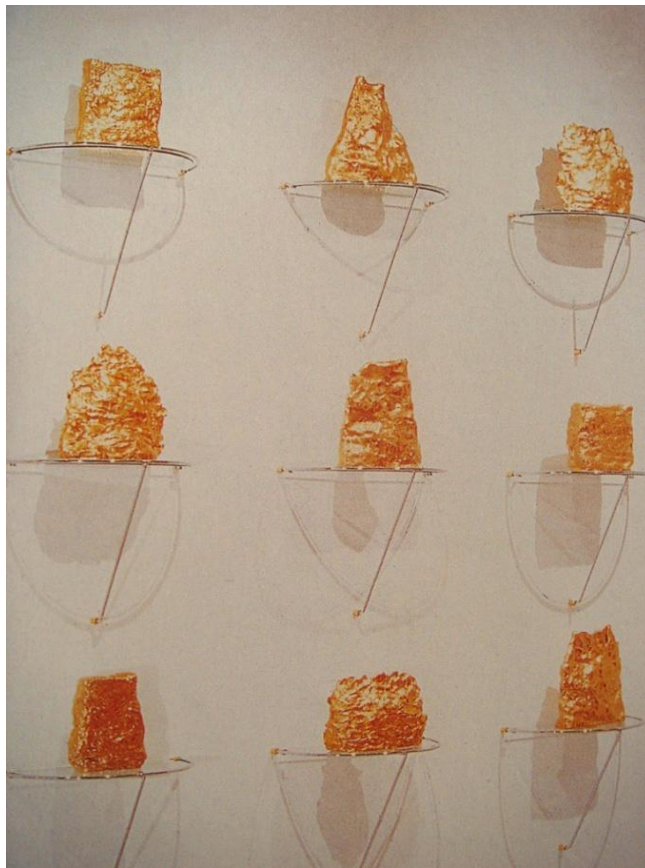


Figure 8 Fang Marvin Minto, *Gold • Clay*, 1992

⁵ Department of Culture Affairs, Taipei City Government, *The gravity of the immaterial : the inaugural exhibition of ICA, Taipei*, p.106

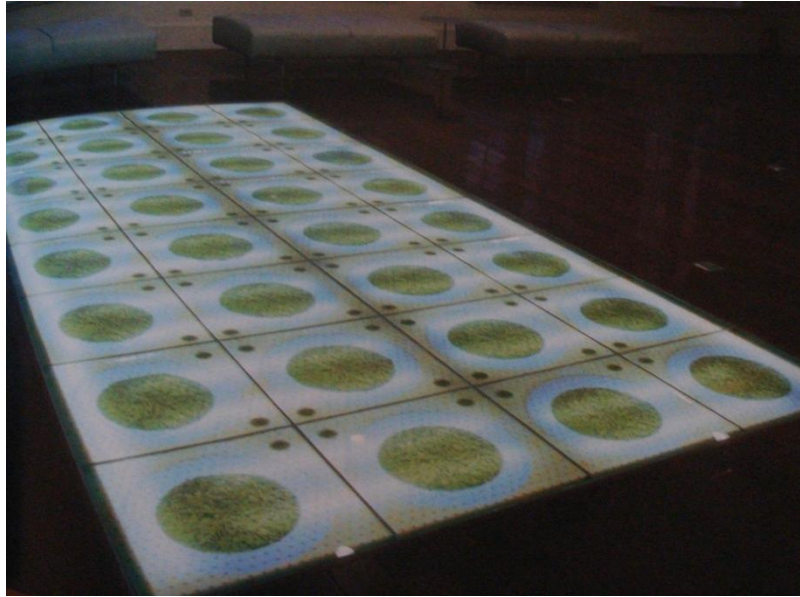


Figure 9 Fang Marvin Minto, *Idea Everywhere*, Taipei: Taipei MOCA,

Another Taiwanese artist, Lee, Ming Shung, used a direct way to dig at the Taiwanese crazy desire for money. In 1992, he used 8000 100 dollar bills to create a big carpet on the gallery floor. He also used 1000 dollar bills to create five Chinese characters, *我們的信仰* (*Our Faith*)(fig.10). Before entering the gallery, every viewer had to take off their shoes and tread on the carpet made by the bills. He hoped viewers could tread on the money and he used this to satirize the society.



Figure 10 Lee, Ming Shung, *Our Faith*, Taipei: Ni Ya Gallery, 1992

Fang Marvin Minto and Lee, Ming Shung used different ways to show our blind desire for materialism. They also revealed a part of human sorrow for the cruel paradise of money and material. Under control by material, the floating, helpless and unreal feeling becomes a metaphor of modern life. We feel unhappy under such a society, but we find we are too weak to defeat it. We just live day by day, we have a lot of questions of the society and our lives, but we have no choice and just live in this real, but unreal world.

In *City Disqualified: Ximen District* (figs.11 & 12), Yuan, Goang Ming altered hundreds of photos to recombine them into a whole work. He used a surreal approach to show a seriously lost reality. The district is Taipei city centre full of pedestrians, transport, shops and noise. We have a strong impression of the image that we have experienced before, but, in the work the city that we know becomes empty and untrue. It is like a ghost city without people. It looks real but also unreal. The real city became a shadow and the only thing that is left is a world without the possibility of ideals. Every visible thing is a shadow.



Figure 11 ,12 Yuan, Goang Ming; *City Disqualified: Ximen District*; Digitally Altered Photography ; 300x240cm ; 2002

Kuo, Hung- Fa (Mr. Red) exhibited an installation, *May How Taiwan* (fig.13), including print media, red sofa, and some dolls with ridiculous shapes. All the hand-made dolls, maybe we should call them freaks, are fragmentary and weird. Some of them have six breasts or are without a head or upper part of the

body. In the background are images of floating animals and human bodies. They look cute and brilliant, but full of emptiness and sorrow. He said,

*We are all confused to the inexplicable world with an inexplicable dream and hope. Finally we are dashed and disappointed, but it is not really serious. And then we just keep living our lives, happily and painfully, soberly but lost.*⁶

Every visible thing in the world becomes unreal. Except money. It seems nothing can fill the void of the mind and the process of chasing for material is like filling a bottomless pit. It is an endless process.



Figure 13 Kuo,hung-fa Mr. Red; *May How Taiwan*; 2000

The empty and unstable feeling of the unreal but real world is like a sickness in our life. We are living, but we do not understand what we live for. This kind of unnatural life repeats again and again. Is the nature of life a painful paradise or joyful hell?

⁶ Mr. Red, *Hong Jiao Nang De Bei Shang Yi Hao*, (Taipei: Titan,1998),p.157.

These Taiwanese artists demonstrate their worries and cynicism towards the way of survival in modern society. There are expectations, disappointments, anger, mocking and slight sadness towards Taiwan in their works. They create an unreal and real paradise with unreal and floating existence to reveal the question about the purpose of living and bring about an introspection of real life and the value of being for the viewer.

Taiwan is a very small island with 23 million people. According to the research by DGBAS (Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting, and Statistics) of Taiwan in 2011, Taiwan's dense population was up to 642 persons per square kilometer⁷. By the way, the Australia square is almost 214 times broader than Taiwan but the population is only 22,503,706 (On 27 October 2010 at 22:32:21 (Canberra time)⁸). According to simple comparison, Taiwan is like a small narrow and crowded boat. In order to keep the financial development in the small island without abundant natural resources, the natural environment in Taiwan becomes the victim. Pollution and all kinds of natural disasters caused by man-made damage happens in Taiwan. The more serious disasters also show our selfish waste and damage to the natural environment.

In Lo, Sen Hao's work, *Land Survey* (fig.14), he displayed a group of junk glass bottles in glass exhibition cabinets and some bottles were fired into uncanny shapes in the kiln. The artist lives near the area of Yang-Ming Mountain National Park, which is famous for its volcanic landform and various Taiwanese protophytes, and a daily walk in the morning is part of his routine. All the bottles in the work were collected along the way and they all came from the tourists. He used a simple and direct way to reveal how we treat our land. The fired bottles looked writhing and sad. Once they were only silica in the planet, they were a part of Earth, but in the glass cabinets they were evidence of the deserted artificial products littered on the mother land.

Another of Lo, Sen Hao's works, *Today's Fancy; Yesterday's Love* (fig.15), used a metaphorical, but critical way to expose human selfishness in exploiting nature. He built a bamboo bridge on the polluted ditch in Lu-Kung.⁹ A few decades ago it was the most important and efficient approach to ship the

⁷ Directorate- General of Budget, Accounting, and Statistics
<http://eng.dgbas.gov.tw/public/Data/23308454071.pdf> (24/11/2012)

⁸ Australia Government Official Website
<http://www.abs.gov.au/> (27/10/2010)

⁹ Lu Kung is a small but historic town in Chang Hua county in the middle of Taiwan.

agricultural products and material from Lu-kung. However, with the improvement of transportation established, the ditch was forgotten. No longer was it a symbol of bringing wealth to the historic town, but garbage. At the exhibition, the artist invited every viewer to walk on the bridge and everybody covered their noses because of the stench. The work was destroyed by the local residents before the closing date because the residents thought the artist displayed the worst aspect of their town.



Figure 14 Lo, Sen Hao, *Land Survey*, Trash and Garbage collected from Da-tun Mt., junked glass bottles, unopened glass bottles drinks, glass exhibition cabinets, 300*50*300 cm

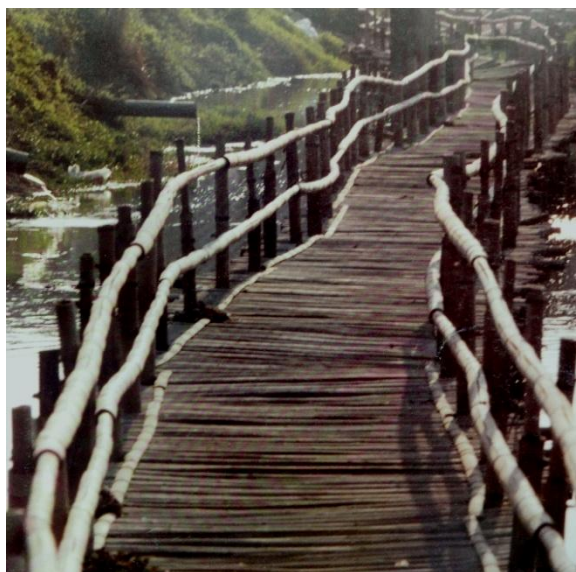


Figure 15 Lo, Sen Hao, *Today's Fancy, Yesterday's Love*, Bamboo, 1998

Lo, Sen-hao's works focus on the relationship between human activity and concern for the land. He wants to reveal attitudes to the land.

Another artist, Wang, Wen Chin, chooses a peaceful and quiet form to exhibit the tranquillity of nature. In his work, *Path* (fig.16), in 2000, he used bamboo to weave a large tunnel-shaped cage. The giant object with two small entrances and big inner space was very similar to the equipment that the Taiwanese aboriginal used for fishing. He avoids using manufactured products to form the soft and tough material, but, instead, chose the traditional way to assemble bamboo with ropes. Another work is *Beyond the Side* (fig.17) which was made in 2001. He collected wood to build a round space and invited viewers to enter the space to feel the tranquillity and tolerance of nature.



Figure 16 Wang, Wen Chin, *Path*, 2000x 300x 300 cm, 2000



Figure 17 Wang, Wen Chin, *Beyond the Side*, 320x 320x 42 cm, 2001

Lin, Hong Wen used the deserted and junk bamboo to make an artwork, *Reborn Pupa - The Sound of the Tide of History* (fig.18). The giant pupa-shaped object was accompanied by the sound of the tide. He revealed his expectation for the rebirth of nature. He said,

Human has never overtaken nature, but we still have the ability to destroy nature. The destruction has never ended. The beefwood near the river mouth was destroyed; the breakwater at the bay was continually built and cut off our vision..... So I picked up the deserted bamboo shelves of raising oysters and built a pupa to connect the incomplete coast, the moving sound of tide, the destruction by civilization and the solemnness of time to the reborn pupa¹⁰.



Figure 18 Lin, Hong Wen, *Reborn Pupa- The sound of the Tide of History*, 2900× 600× 600cm,1998

The island needs a peaceful strength for rebirth, no matter what happens in politics, culture or nature. It is my home country. I really hope it can be harmonious, tranquil, and beautiful. I hope every Taiwanese on the island can be happier and hopeful, can feel free for life, can feel pride in living on the land and protect the environment that we inhabit. The introspection inspires my thinking about the relationship between human and nature and human and the

¹⁰ *Yi Shu Zai Su Wen Hua Chu Hang* (Department of Culture Affair Taiwan Province Government, 1998) , p.88.

external world. I am living in a modern society and I need a mobile phone, computer and internet for communication and obtaining new information. I cannot let them go. Living is not easy. However, how can we find a balance between the inner and the outer world? How can we treat the world, nature and ourselves without limitations and egocentrism? My introspection on modern life lets me rethink the meaning of living and how we can keep an unclouded spirit in a complex world.

(3)Research Methodology

Relevant to the concept of *A Metaphorical Nature*, when I made the series *Infiniteness* (figs.55-59) and *Endless Boundary* (figs.66-69), I started to do the research to discover the essential being of life and the calmness and emptiness that I experienced in my process of art practice. Making these works, I experienced a sort of peace and harmony with the external world. I wanted to understand the primary question about the ideal relationship between human and the external world. In order to approach the centre of this research, I have read relevant articles, journals, and publications concerning the area of Chinese etymology, Eastern and Western philosophy, cosmology and aesthetics. I have had to analyse the contents and have integrated them into a broad and profound understanding. In this stage of investigating the relationship between human and the external world, Taoism is explored and discussed. Content analysis was the main method that I used to have a comprehensive and deep understanding of the thesis.

However, when I was creating the work *Without Moment* (fig.71-74), my background knowledge of Tao of Chuang Tzu inspired my thinking about how I could present the harmonic and comprehensive relationship between human, nature and universe in my art practice and life. I wanted to present the process and the condition of a spirit of art practice as a meditation and present the artworks as a catalyst to reveal the truth of being. The two works investigate a concept of art practice as an experience about the relationship between a human and the world. During this time of making *Without Moment*, I focused more on my studio process to consider my own condition in art practice and thought how art could be the catalyst to reveal the ideal of my aim. I have also read about Western and Eastern artists who focused on the issue of finding an

answer to the possibility of the coexistence and connection between human, nature and universe. Between the areas of contemporary art, religion, and psychology I gathered the background knowledge to analyse the condition that I experienced and developed my own opinion about the relationship to artwork and the world. In this stage, art practice, content analysis and critical thinking were all used to support and inspire my thinking and theory.

(4) Research Limitation

In this research, I discuss the ideal relationship between human and nature through the field of Taoism, specifically its philosophical and aesthetics explanation. The religious Tao is not discussed in this research. In order to highlight the aesthetics explanation of life, the Tao of Chuang Tzu is chosen to be the main background knowledge, instead of the other Tao master, Lao Tzu.

In this thesis, I attempt to explore the possibility of finding a balance between human and nature. I discover a harmonious and peaceful power from natural material, art practice, and metaphorical form to present a spirit that embodies a comprehensive relationship to human, nature, and universe. In this section, I focus on the artists in the 20th century who use the metaphorical form and take the process of art practice or natural materials as the catalyst to connect human and universe or reveal the truth of being in the myriad of objects.

(5) Definitions

Nature: The term 'nature' in this thesis indicates a type of spontaneous condition. It represents two parts. First, it indicates all the visible and invisible spontaneous phenomena, including the myriad of objects and their moving. Second, it means the original and pure condition of soul and consciousness to mean the pure essence of life. It is the phenomena that Tao reveals in objects and the pure essence of being which connects to Tao.

Universe/ Cosmos: Universe/cosmos indicates two meanings of universe/cosmos in this thesis. In the concrete, it means a scientific and cosmological universe that contains various substances and elements. In the abstract, it means infinite space and time. In this thesis, it is not only a scientific

term, but also a philosophical term to indicate the past, present and future. The being of universe/cosmos is emptiness and *Tao*.

World: World means the space or place that the myriad of objects inhabit. It is a stage on which every object/entity performs its/their life.

(6)Thesis Structure and Chapter Summaries

The thesis proceeds as follows.

Introduction provides the basic discussion to the thesis, including the purpose of studying, the research background, the research questions and the research methodology.

Chapter One addresses the meaning of the *Tao* of Chuang Tzu. The chapter explicates the concept of *Tao* and the *Tao* aesthetics by Chinese etymology analysis, original literature analysis and other scholars' opinions. The concept of *Tao*, simply speaking, is a way to explain the movement of thousands of objects in the universe. It is unspeakable and invisible, but exists everywhere and in everything in the universe. In Chuang Tzu's explanation of *Tao* and *Tao* aesthetics, real beauty and existence are not questions about visible and subjective proposition, but the truth of being. To follow the *Tao* and escape from egocentrism it combines with the myriad of objects to attain the harmonious and comprehensive condition that is the real freedom of life. This chapter presents the ideal condition of real life and truth of being in *Tao* as a foundation to the research, based on the literature review.

Chapter Two discusses the meaning of the nature of *Tao*. The concept of nature in Taoism does not mention the natural environment, but a type of spontaneity and essential being. Chuang Tzu proposes the concept of non-doing to return to innocence and objects to the artificial strategies and dogma. He takes the world as comprehensive and proposes the concept of identification to understand that all distinctions are produced from subjective values and egocentrism that restricts the truth of being. The meaning of nature is an ideal condition without distinction and artificiality but, rather, combines with the all the objects to get real freedom like the happily flying butterfly. He

admires the beauty and grace of life and takes human existence as free as any other object.

Chapter Three presents how artists' art practice becomes the catalyst to reveal the relationship between humans and nature's proposition. The first response is the introspection to the conflict between human and nature in Taiwan. Taiwanese artists show their concern for the environment and expectations for a better future for this land. The second point is about material. Clay, as the main material of ceramics, is not only a material, but has its own story and spirit that is the metaphor for the process of life. From the Big Bang till now, it records the history and memory of all objects on the Earth. In Lo, Sen Hao's works, the material is taken as a catalyst to connect the relation of human and universe, and past, present and future. The artist Wolfgang Laib presents the concept of nature by doing non-doing and using natural objects to address the spirit of combining with nature and non-egocentric innocence and purity. The French painter Gao, Xing Jian creates a sort of ideal condition for aesthetics that is between concrete and abstract and Eastern and Western. His works present the combination of body, material and universe to attempt to attain a true freedom in a non-dual and intuitive aesthetics.

Chapter Four is the analysis of my own works, including the origin, content and form. I mention the experience of my ceramic study process, overseas study and life experience and how Australia's natural environment has influenced my thinking and viewpoint on my work and ideal. I name the process as an *Immanent Journey* that presents the *Metaphorical Nature*. The process of art practice is, for me, taken as a form of meditation through repetition to attain experience of peace and tranquillity. I choose the simple shape and element and white colour to represent purity to highlight the essence of being. Artworks could be a catalyst to reveal the truth of being and lead artist and viewer to experience the freedom of existence. I use the metaphorical form to provide the impermanent and open possibility to answer or respond for the viewer. The chapter shows my proposition and thinking towards art and my own works.

Chapter One: The Aesthetics of Chuang Tzu's Tao

Introduction

This chapter will discuss Chuang Tzu's *Tao* and aesthetics. As a Taiwanese artist, Taoism is a very important aspect of my cultural background and it also deeply influences my art practice. *Tao* is an important part of Eastern philosophy and has influenced the religion, politics, science, philosophy, medicine and fine art of Eastern culture for thousands of years. Chuang Tzu, as one of the masters of Taoism, has addressed a system of approach that contemplates the world and beauty and the nature of Being in the world from a non-dualistic viewpoint. This chapter will examine Chuang Tzu's point of view of life and beauty in order to understand the relationship between human and the external world.

There are three sections in this chapter. The first section is a general introduction to the origin of Chuang Tzu's philosophy. Chuang Tzu showed the real and cruel social problems in Meng Tzu's *Chinese Warring States Period* (about 475-222 B.C.) and it could be considered a reflection of modern society, as well. The second section concerns the meaning of *Tao*. I will introduce the original meaning of the character "Tao" by the etymologic analysis first and then discuss the definition of Tao in Chuang Tzu. In the third section, I will discuss Chuang Tzu's aesthetics through an analysis of the original article by Chuang Tzu, including the explanation of Chuang Tzu's ontology, body and behaviour analysis, the truth and the central aesthetics purpose of his work.

1. The background of Tao

(1) The background of Chuang Tzu

Chuang Tzu, named Chou, was born in Meng County (the north-east of Shang Chiu County in China, today). Actually, his date of birth and death and most of the relevant biography has been lost. According to *Shi-Ji*(史記), we can only know that he lived in the same period as Meng Tzu¹¹, the *Chinese Warring States Period* (about 475-222 B.C.). Chuang Tzu described the

¹¹ Zhang, Mo Sheng, *Zhuang Zi Xin Yi*, (Beijing: New World Press, 2007), p.21.

period: *'King thinks lightly of his people's death, and consequently the dead are lying all over the country like so much undergrowth in the marsh. The people know not where to turn.'*¹² The endless wars caused anxiety in people's minds, but the rulers still desired political power. The world was like a real tragedy, nobody could escape from it. He said,

In the world today, the victims of the death penalty lie heaped together, the bearers of cangues¹³ tread on each other's heel, the sufferers of punishment are never out of each other's sight.¹⁴

The period was a hell, full of sorrow, fear, despair and the loss of conviction.

The social and historical background of Chuang Tzu is a tragic world. He was powerless to change it; he had his ideal, but it was not accepted by the selfish and utilitarian rulers of the day. He used a humorous way to laugh and saw the world and kept his own ideals in a poor life until he died.

Chuang Chou's family was very poor and so he went to borrow some grains of rice from the marquise of Chien-ho. The marquise said, "Why, of course. I'll soon be getting the tribute money from my fief, and when I do, I'll be glad to lend you three hundred pieces of gold. Will that be alright?" Chuang Chou flushed with anger and said, "As I was coming yesterday I heard something calling me on the road. I turned around and saw that there was a perch in the carriage rut. I said to him, 'Come, perch - what are you doing here?' He replied, 'I am a wave official of the eastern sea. Could you give me a dipperful of water so I can stay alive?' I said to him, 'Why, of course. I am just about to start south to visit the king of Wu and Yueh. I'll change the course of the West River and send it in your direction. Will that be alright?' The perch flashed with anger and said, 'I've lost my element! I have nowhere to go! If you can give me a dipper of water, I'll be

¹² Chuang Tzu, *Chuang Tzu*, translated by Fung, Yu Lan, (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1989), p.65.

輕用民死，死者以國量，乎澤若蕉，民其無如矣

¹³ The word cangue is the same as cang.

¹⁴ Chuang Tzu, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, translated by Burton Watson, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), p.118.

今世殊死者相枕也，桁楊者相推也，形戮者相望也

*able to stay alive. But if you give me an answer like that, then you'd best look for me in the dried fish store.'*¹⁵

This story reveals the social reality behind the poverty of Chuang Tzu. First, what Chuang Tzu wanted to borrow was only some grains of rice to fill his stomach, but the marquise said he only can lend the gold to him. It shows a huge poverty gap. Although the gold is precious, it still cannot solve Chuang Tzu's hunger, immediately. The marquise's ignorance is a metaphor for the rulers that have never understood people's sufferings and still feel smug in their ignorant kindness. Second, it is a satire to the pretense of sensibility. The relationship between *Tao* and the human is like grains and human life, and water and fish. The lack of water and grains are the metaphors of the loss of *Tao*. Fish live in water, people live by grains, no matter water or grains, they are necessary, such as the thousands of objects that follow *Tao* to exist in the world. *Tao* is natural and necessary, but it is like the lack of water and grains, that Chuang Tzu has tried to ask somebody for it. Third, it shows that people always aim too high and chase the impracticable thing. Gold is precious, but cannot be eaten; water in the West River is adequate, but cannot save the perch, immediately. Sometimes we focus on the external thing we lack - it could be money, could be a better position or recognition from others. But it would be a good motive to push us to move on, however, is it really more important than anything?

Once when Chuang Tzu was fishing in the Pu River, the king of Chu sent two officials to go and announce to him: "I would like to trouble you with the administration of my realm." Chuang Tzu held on the fishing pole, and without turning his head, said, "I have heard that there is a sacred tortoise in Chu that has been dead for three thousand years. The king kept it wrapped in cloth and a box, and stored it in the ancestral temple. Now would the tortoise rather be dead and have its bones honoured? Or would it rather be alive and dragging its tail in the mud?" "It would rather be alive and dragging

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 295.

莊周家貧，故往貸粟於監河侯。監河侯曰：「諾，我將得邑金，將貸子三百金，可乎？」莊周忿然作色曰：「周昨來，有中道而呼者。周顧視車轍中，有鮒魚焉。周問之曰：『鮒魚來！子何為者耶？』」對曰：『我，東海之波臣也。君豈有斗升之水而活我哉？』」周曰：『諾，我且南游吳越之王，激西江之水而迎子，可乎？』」鮒魚忿然作色曰：『吾失我常與，我無所處。我得斗升之水然活耳。君乃言此，曾不如早索我於枯魚之肆！』」

its tail in the mud,” said the two officials. Chuang Tzu said, “Go away! I’ll drag my tail in the mud.”¹⁶

The story indicates human ignorance of external wealth and status. The nature of the tortoise is to stay in the mud. It might be dirty and humble, but the tortoise can be happily alive because this is its nature. However, it was stored in the ancestral temple, wrapped and boxed. It is merely a dead body and people still think it shows their respect to the tortoise and consider the tortoise might be satisfied with the box, cloth and ancestral temple. We chase for the unnatural thing, even if it is dead and unreal, and still think it is wonderful; we are satisfied with what we have done to others, but we never think about others’ real nature.

According to the stories, Chuang Tzu revealed some problems about the world he lived in: the unfair society, the utilitarian rulers, chasing for impracticable desires, the loss of nature and truth. Although this viewpoint was held thousands of years ago, it still reveals some central problems in contemporary society.

2. The meaning of Chuang Tzu’s Tao

(1) The meaning of Tao in etymology

What is *Tao*? Where does the term originate? To most people, like any philosophic concept, it is not only abstract, but also recondite and difficult.

Before we discuss the difficult and intricate topic, I would like to examine the concept from Chinese etymology. Chinese characters belong to a system of pictography and each character always consists of a few original pictograph components. Sometimes the meanings of some characters are “visible” by the character’s form. We call them pictographs and they are self-explanatory characters.

¹⁶ Ibid, p.187-188.

莊子釣於濮水。楚王使大夫二人往先焉，曰：「願以竟內累矣！」莊子持竿不顧，曰：「吾聞楚有神龜，死已三千歲矣。王巾笥而藏之廟堂之上。此龜者，寧其死為留骨而貴乎？寧其生而曳尾於塗中乎？」二大夫曰：「寧生而曳尾塗中。」莊子曰：「往矣！吾將曳尾於塗中。」

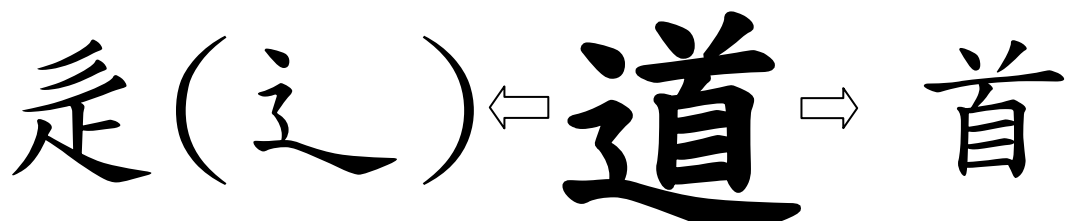


Figure 19 the Chinese character of Tao

The structure of the character “ Tao(道)” can be divided into two parts. The left part is “ Chuo (走)”. In Chinese etymology, this part represents the meaning of “walk” or “run”, but it extends to be understood as “a condition in motion or process”. It is not only for concrete matters, but also includes abstract concepts such as connotations of time and space, processes of development and approaches. Particularly for the connotation of time, it includes past, present, and future and how these exist and function in the space of history, including the known and unknown. *Tao* is a concept about process and development.

The right part is “Shou (首)”, the component, like “Chuo” , is a pictograph. In the Chinese etymology, it has a concrete meaning “heads” and also generally represents “person.” The head is a significant part of the human body, we distinguish the difference between each person by their unique face. It is visible, concrete and important. To compare with “Chuo,” the concept of “Shou” seems a more concrete matter than “Chuo.” It is visible, observed and can be analysed. In other words, it can be taken as a kind of noumenon or actuality. However, it cannot be forgotten that apart from the visible organ, the head, the invisible knowledge and thinking, also reveals the being of objects. The knowledge, memory and thinking, these invisible aspects dwell in the visible and perceivable body and construct a part of consciousness. The component mentions not only the visible noumenon, but the invisible mentality. The component of Tao also includes the existence of objects and spirit. ¹⁷

If we combine the two parts and define it in the simplest way, the meaning that we get should be “a walking man.” But what would we need if we want to walk well? We need legs and so learn how to walk; we need a space, concentration and, most important, we need a suitable direction. Tools, skill, space, motion

¹⁷Tao Liu, *Dao De Gu Wen Zi Shi Yi Ji Qi Ding Yi*, 2004
<http://www.confucius2000.com/poetry/ddgwzsyjqdy.htm> (07/21/2012)

and direction, these are all included in the process of walking. Even if *Tao*'s meaning is still a little obscure, we can approximately understand it is a comprehensive concept including skill, space, time, motion and approach. It contains the specific meaning of the motion of all objects and ontological meaning of a description of time, space and mind. These two different characters are defined clearly and are derived from many words about skill, religious training, road, principle and morality in the system of the character, *Tao*.

According to this analysis of *Tao*, the character includes an interpretation of the process and real existence of the objects, including concrete and abstract existence. When the concrete and abstract meanings unite together, a meaning appears: *Tao* is a way of analysing and observing any visible and invisible object and concept of space and time. In other words, it is an abstract concept to explain various phenomena in the cosmos.

(2) The spontaneous Tao

Etymology is the most direct way to understand the basic meaning of *Tao*. However, *Tao* is a kind of philosophy and as we know philosophical terms not only give external meanings, but also express a whole system of a philosopher's thinking. A term might be the core of a world of thinking. *Tao* is the core of Chuang Tzu's philosophy. In *Chuang Tzu*, *Tao* is the central axis of Chuang Tzu's philosophical cosmos. Like many other philosophical terms, *Tao*'s definition is also complex. However, it is not like the research and analysis of knowledge, memory and experience in general philosophy. Knowledge, memory and experience are all based on the human mind and behaviour. Although the topic is still abstract, memory, knowledge, consciousness, experience, religion, psychoanalysis, aesthetics and politics are from human behaviour and consciousness.

The object of *Tao* is the whole cosmos. Of course it includes human beings, but the recognition of the cosmos, to Chuang Tzu, is not to discover the visible planet or explore how the cosmos originated. In Jonathan Star's opinion, *It can present the substance of the entire universe and the process by which the universe functions.*¹⁸ The term "cosmos" in Chinese is "Yu Zhou (宇宙)"

¹⁸ Jonathan Star, *Tao Te Ching: Lao Tzu*, (USA: Penguin Group, 2003), p.272.

Yu(宇), which means the whole space, including up and down, east, west, south, and north. Zhou(宙) means infinite time from past, now and future. Cosmos is not only a literal term, but also a concept to indicate the whole space and endless time, including various phenomena that we have known from the past and everything we do not know in the future.

We already have a basic idea of the topic and object of *Tao*, but what is *Tao*? *John Blofeld* described *Tao*, as

*The Tao is unknowable, vast, eternal. As undifferentiated void, pure spirit, it is the mother of the cosmos; as non-void, it is the vessel, the sustainer and, in a sense, the being of the myriad objects, permeating all. As the goal of existence it is the way of Heaven, of Earth, of Man. No being. It is the source of Being. It is not conscious of activity, has no purpose, seeks no rewards or praise, yet performs all things to perfection. Like water, it wins its way by softness. Like a deep ravine, it is shadowy rather than brilliant.*¹⁹

And *Jeaneane Fowler* explains *Tao* as,

*Tao is the undifferentiated Void and potentiality underpins all creation, immutable, unchanging, without form and beyond all deities and even the idea of them. It is indescribable Reality, eternally nameless, but the experience of it, and of its profound emptiness, is the goal of the Taoist.*²⁰

Tao is a concept that is difficult to explain. It is an invisible and abstract way to create all the objects, including heaven, earth, mountain, ocean, human and all creatures. It is also the principle of being in the myriad of objects. In *Chuang Tzu 6*, *Chung Tzu* explains the meaning of *Tao*:

Tao has a reality and a corroboration, but no action and form. It may be transmitted, but cannot be received. It may be attained, but cannot be seen. It exists by and through itself. It exists prior to heaven and earth and, indeed, for all eternity. It causes the gods to be divine and the world to be produced. It is above the zenith, but it

¹⁹ John Blofeld, *Taoism: The Road to Immortality*, (Shambala Publications, 1979). p. 2-3.

²⁰ Jeaneane Fowler, *An Introduction to the Philosophy and Religion of Taoism: pathways to immortality*, (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2005), p.107-108.

is not high. It is beneath the nadir, but it is not low. It is prior to heaven and earth, but it is not ancient. It is older than the most ancient, but it is not old. ²¹

Tao does not belong to any time, space, or religion. In other words, *Tao* could be identified as the way of all abstract and concrete concepts and matters in the world. It is the source of being. It cannot be said, written, taught like any kind of religion, philosophy, knowledge or history. In “Chuang Tzu 22,” he said, “*The Way cannot be heard; heard, it is not the Way*”²². Lao Tzu also said, “*The Tao that can be spoken of is not the eternal Tao*”²³.

However, we might ask, if *Tao* cannot be spoken, what are we discussing? If *Tao* cannot be heard, spoken and seen, what is the object in this discussion? Is it meaningless? When we see Chuang Tzu and Lao Tzu’s original article explaining *Tao*, they are like a meaningless language. It cannot be demonstrated and seems without logic. Before we debate this, we should know the word, *Tao*. What we speak or call is the name of *Tao*, not *Tao* itself. *Tao* is a sort of thinking, a language without voice, but a text is the symbol of language. Text is a catalyst to carry the truth, but the truth does not exist in the literature. There is a Zen story. One day, a nun named Wu Jin Zang asked Hui Neng, the sixth Zen patriarch, about her confusion about the Nirvana Sutra and hoped Hui Neng could explain it to her. Hui Neng said he could not read and asked her to read the content out for him. Wu Jin Zang asked him if he could not even read a word, how could he understand the truth in the text? Hui Neng replied that the truth was not related to the text. The truth was like the moon in the sky and the text was like our finger. A finger could point out the moon, but a finger is not the moon and we did not need the finger to see the moon.²⁴ No matter text or language, they both are catalysts to help us to attain enlightenment, they are not the truth, itself.

²¹ Chuang Tzu, *Chuang Tzu*, translated by Fung Yu Lan, (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1989), p.95-96.

夫道，有情有信，無為無形，可傳而不可受，可得而不可見，自本自根，未有天地，自古以固存，神鬼神地，生天生地，在太極之先不為高，在六極之下而不為深，先天地生而不為久，常於上古而不為老

²² Chuang Tzu, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, Translated by Burton Watson, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), p.243.

²³ Wing Tsit Chan, *A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy*, (Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 97.

²⁴ Cai, Zhi Zhong, *Zen Buddhism in Comics*, (Taipei: Lucas Publishing), p.35.

In the Chuang Tzu's description of *Tao*, the core of the article is not to prove something, but to show an explanation to the origin of the cosmos. For Chuang Tzu, *Tao* is different from the idea of deities. It is without any implication about myth or religion. Gods, Heaven and Earth are all born from *Tao*. In Chuang Tzu's opinion, the being and development of all objects are spontaneous. The birth and development of all the myriad of objects is a natural phenomenon. It sounds quite irrational, unscientific and violates most people's perception of the birth of human and world in religion and it seems to challenge the existence of Gods. However, what we have to understand is *Tao* never stands in a radical place to challenge the existence of God or Buddha, because the existence of gods is also part of the world, in *Tao*. Maybe we can say *Tao* is like an invisible vessel without edge and boundary. It contains everything, including the cosmos, gods, creatures, heaven, earth, ocean and every phenomenon in the space that is known or unknown. It is without comparison and difference, correctness or incorrectness, lightness or darkness. It seems nothing, but is not equal to zero. It transcends everything that we know in the world and stands in a place that cannot be caught and compared. To *Tao*, all the visible or invisible things are parts of it. So where is *Tao*? It is nothing but everywhere, and exists everywhere and in everything no matter good or bad because, for Chuang Tzu, everything is equivalent in *Tao*. In Chuang Tzu's book, there is a small story to explain the existence of *Tao*:

Tung Kuo Tzu asked Chuang Tzu: "Where is the so-called Tao?" Chuang Tzu said: "Everywhere." The former said: "Specify an instance of it." "It is in the ant" "How can Tao be anything so low?" "It is in the grass." "How can it still be lower" "It is in the earthenware tile." "How can it be lower?" "It is in excrement." To this Tung Kuo Tzu made no reply. Chuang Tzu said: "Your question does not touch the fundamentals of Tao. You should not specify any particular thing. There is not a single thing without Tao... There are three names that are different, but denote the same reality; all refer to the one thing." ²⁵

²⁵ Chuang Tzu, *Chuang Tzu*, translated by Fung, Yu Lan, (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1989), p.7.

東郭子問於莊子曰：「所謂道，惡乎在？」莊子曰：「無所不在。」東郭子曰：「期而後可。」莊子曰：「在螻蟻。」曰：「何其下邪？」曰：「在稊稗。」曰：「何其愈下邪？」曰：「在瓦礫。」曰：「何其愈甚邪？」曰：「在屎溺。」東郭子不應。

The way that Chuang Tzu interpreted the world is only by the world's principle. Existence or change of phenomena develops on its own. In *Chuang Tzu 22*, he said, *Heaven cannot but be high; Earth cannot but be wide; Sun and moon cannot but be in motion; Myriad of objects cannot but be vivid; that is Tao.*²⁶ According to this paragraph, Tao seems to do nothing because all objects exist and develop spontaneously, but a question appears: where is the spontaneity from? The answer is Tao. It does everything by doing nothing and does nothing by doing everything. There is a story about the music of heaven in Chuang Tzu story. Tzu Yu asked Tzu Chi what is the music of heaven and how it is produced. Tzu Chi replied, *The wind, as they blow, differ in thousands of ways, yet all are self-produced. Why should there be any other agency to excite them?*²⁷ Every phenomenon in the universe is spontaneous. All of the thousands of objects are self-produced and their existence is a natural phenomenon.

3. Chuang Tzu's Aesthetics

(1) Ontological Aesthetics

The primary concept of Tao has already been discussed. If we want to simply define Chuang Tzu's aesthetics, we will find an answer about *Tao*. The object that Chuang Tzu contemplates is the cosmos. But before we begin to discuss Chuang Tzu's aesthetics, there is an important concept to consider. The object that Chuang Tzu is concerned with the whole of space and infinite time therefore every object is included in *Tao*. We cannot ignore even those things that we think are dirty, humble and wicked, they are all parts of the cosmos. If they are a part of the cosmos, they absolutely have their own *Tao* and exist in *Tao*. If we contrast with the former discussion, everything and every value are parts of the cosmos without distinction and with *Tao*. They are able to be objects of aesthetics observation and analysis. If we attempt to understand Chuang Tzu's aesthetics, the invisible true spirit and being should be discussed.

²⁶ Chuang Tzu, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, translated by Burton Watson, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), p.239.

天不得不高，地不得不廣，日月不得不行，萬物不得不昌，此其道與

²⁷ Chuang Tzu, *Chuang Tzu*, translated by Fung, Yu Lan, (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1989), p.40.

夫吹萬不同，而使其自己也。咸其自取，怒者其誰邪？

According to Chuang Tzu's literature of Tung Kuo Tzu's question of Tao, it is an abstract and invisible power that exists everywhere.

In the conversation quoted in the last section of Chuang Tzu's and Tung Kuo Tzu's discussion of *Tao*, it seems ridiculous. *Tao* is considered a sacred and supreme existence, but it unexpectedly exists in excrement. If we try to explain the meaning of *Tao*, it is a principle of all objects' working, it is really difficult to accept that this intangible, but great power exists in such a low matter. We might doubt Chuang Tzu's motive because it is truly a confusing allegory. We are quite used to using our sense organs: eyes, ears, tongue, nose and skin to experience the world, to judge the divergence of beauty and ugliness. Everybody's standard might be different because of our different experiences, likes, knowledge and cultural background. It also means that there is no unitary standard to evaluate beauty. This perceivable experience is very subjective because the evaluation is from humans and we use our subjective experience to perceive the visible form. Chuang Tzu said,

*Mao Chiang and Li Chi were considered by men as the most beautiful of women; but at the sight of them fish dived deep in the water, birds soared up in the air, and deer hurried away. Among these four, who knows the right standard of beauty.*²⁸

There is no absolute standard in the world. The standard changes with different point of views. Chuang Tzu strongly questions the way that we generally agree to judge or distinguish an object. To Chuang Tzu, the real beauty is not only identified by the perceivable form or body, but also the truth of being behind the visible form. However, humans depend on their sense organ to experience the visible entity and the truth of being hidden behind the perceivable surface is ignored. Chuang Tzu opposes an over reliance on the sense organs to contemplate the myriad of objects. He said,

There are five conditions under which the inborn nature is lost. One: when the five colours confuse the eye and cause the eyesight to be unclear. Two: when the five notes confuse the ear and cause the hearing to be unclear. Three: when the odors stimulate the nose and produce weariness and congestion in the forehead. Four: when the

²⁸ Ibid, p.51

毛嬙麗姬，人之所美也。魚見之深入，鳥見之高飛。麋鹿見之決驟，四者孰知天下之正色哉

*five flavours dull the mouth, causing the sense of taste to be impaired and lifeless. Five: when likes and dislikes unsettle the mind and cause the inborn nature to become volatile and flighty. These five are all a danger to life.*²⁹

The aesthetics of Chiang Tzu are not established on perceivable beauty, but the being and Tao hidden behind the visible objects. In other words, he tries to deconstruct beauty, itself. However, it never means there's nothing after deconstructing. To Chuang Tzu, there is a system of ontology of beauty behind it, the nature, *Tao*.

Martin Heidegger takes Vincent Van Gogh's painting, *Pair of Shoes* (fig.20), as an example to explain the nature of art. He analyses the experience of being the shoes and indicates the truth that the painting reveals is the strife of the world and earth and what the peasant has experienced.³⁰ What he focused on is not admiration of Van Gogh's perfect skill and strong emotion, but invisible existence, the peasant's life and the relation to human, world and earth through the painting. Although one thinks Chuang Tzu's philosophy also belongs to the area of ontology and what Chuang Tzu emphasise is also the truth behind the visible experience, the truth is still different from Heidegger's.



Figure 20 Vincent Van Gogh, *Pair of Shoes*; oil on canvas; 37.5 X 45 cm; 1886

²⁹ Chuang Tzu, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, translated by Burton Watson, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968) , p.140-141.

且夫失性有五。一曰五色亂目，使目不明。二曰五聲亂耳，使耳不聰。三曰五臭熏鼻，困憊中顙。四曰五味濁口，使口厲爽。五曰趨舍滑心，使性飛揚。此五者，皆生之害也²⁹」。

³⁰ Thomas. E.Wartenberg, , *The Nature of Art: An Anthology*, (Peking: Peking University Press, 2002), p 158-159.

Chuang Tzu enhances the aesthetic experience towards the freedom of revealing spirit and *Tao*. To Chuang Tzu, the experience and being are interrelated. And Chuang Tzu also thinks we want to understand the truth and nature of the world, the contemplation and evaluation of beauty is a way to experience or attain a sort of liberty in life. However, the general evaluation is often the subjective evaluation of the object. In opposition, in a conversation between Chuang Tzu and Tong Kuo Tzu (footnote 16), Chuang Tzu's "evaluation" attempts to transcend the visible form and subjective judgment and directly cuts to the chase of being and the domain of *Tao*. In "*Chuang Tzu 22*", he said,

*Heaven and earth have their great beauties but do not speak of them; the four seasons have their clear-marked regularity but do not discuss it; The ten thousands things have their principles of growth but do not expound them. The sage seeks out the beauties of Heaven and earth and masters the principles of the ten thousands things.*³¹

According to the above, we can understand that "beauty" is one of the central concepts in Chuang Tzu's philosophy. The term that a sage needs to attend to is to understand the real beauty of heaven and earth and to grasp the principle of all objects' operations. But it is very strange that Chuang Tzu attempts to deconstruct beauty. It seems ridiculous and conflicting. Chuang Tzu says, *Heaven and earth have their great beauties but do not speak of them*. The invisible beauty of heaven and earth³² cannot be only described through language. The invisible beauty of heaven and earth might be real, but it cannot be told. The real and sincere grasp to this inner beauty is the approach through which we understand the truth. The truth is revealed in the *Tao* of the myriad objects and the real and inner beauty exists here. Such as Martin Heidegger's explanation of *Pair of Shoes*, its beauty does not only depend on the visible colours and image, but also the truth of being, the human's story and life behind the picture, the relationship of human, earth and the world.

³¹ Ibid, p. 236.

天地有大美而不言；四時有明法而不議；萬物有成理而不說。聖人者，原天地之美，而達萬物之理」。

³² The meaning of the term "heaven and earth", does not only mention the visible sky and land, but the meaning of the natural environment indicates the relationship of the Earth and cosmos.

(2) Tao of Skill and Body

In last section, we discussed Chuang Tzu's debate of concerning perceivable beauty from our sense organs. To Chuang Tzu, they hide the truth of *Tao* - the real beauty of all the objects. We might feel confused because art is a subject concerned with perception and mind. If we attempt to make an explanation, it is about a visible presentation and it is always presented by our physical sense, body movement and imagination. No matter literature, visual art, music or performance, they are sensed and perceivable. We would have some personal opinion of an artwork based on our preferences or experience and the work is the object. In other words, if there is no object to be sensed, there is no opinion, judgment or reaction. They are sensed by our sense organs and connect to our experience that then informs the value. Chuang Tzu doubts the truth of the perceivable phenomenon sensed by our sense organs. Another part of art practice is technique, one of the elements that form a complete artwork. What Chuang Tzu attempts to deconstruct is not only the perceivable phenomenon and subject or visible beauty, but also the recognition of skills.

Chuang Tzu doubts the perceivable beauty and thinks they are not absolutely true because they are subjective because of different viewpoints. He critiques the perceivable sense, but it does not mean that he opposes the aesthetic feeling. The aesthetic feeling of Chuang Tzu is the perception of the beauty of truth of being. He queries the desire to strive for and focus on technique alone. There is a butcher's story in "Chuang Tzu 3",

Prince Wen Hui's cook was cutting up a bullock. Every blow of his hand, every heave of his shoulder, every tread of his foot, every thrust of his knee, every sound of the rending flesh and every note of the movement of the chopper were in perfect harmony – rhythmical like the dance of "The Mulberry Grove," simultaneous like the chords of "Ching Shou."

"Ah, admirable," said the prince, "that your art should become so perfect!"

The cook laid down his chopper and replied: "What your servant loves is Tao, which is more advanced than art. When I first began to cut up bullocks, what I saw was simply whole bullocks. After

three years' practice, I saw no more bullocks as wholes. At present, I work with my mind, but not with my eyes. The function of my senses stop; my spirit dominates. Following the natural veins, my chopper slips through the great cavities, slides through the great openings, taking advantage of what is already there. I did not attempt the central veins and their branches, and the connectives between flesh and bone, not to mention the great bones. A good cook changes his chopper once a month because he hacks. Now my chopper has been in use for 19 years; it has cut up several thousand bullocks; yet its edge is as sharp as if it just came from the whetstone. At the joints there are always interstices, and the edge of the chopper is without thickness. If we insert that which is without thickness into an interstice, there is certainly plenty of room for it to move along. Nevertheless, when I come to a complicated joint, and see that there will be some difficulty, I proceed anxiously and with caution. I fix my eyes on it. I move slowly. Then by a very gentle movement of my chopper, the part is quickly separated, and yields like earth crumbling to the ground. Then standing with the chopper in my hand, I look all round, with an air of triumph and satisfaction. Then I wipe my chopper and put it in its sheath."

"Excellent," said the prince, "from the words of this cook, I learned the way of cultivating life." ³³

However, one might doubt, if one does not control the tool well, how one can complete an art work. Painters need brushes, photographers need cameras to catch the moment and potters need tools to form the object. If one does not have the intention and proven technique to control and use tools precisely, it is

³³ Chuang Tzu, *Chuang Tzu*, translated by Fung, Yu Lan, (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1989), p.59-60.

庖丁為文惠君解牛，手之所觸，肩之所倚，足之所履，膝之所踣，砉然響然，奏刀騞然，莫不中音，合於桑林之舞，乃中經首之會。

文惠君曰：「嘻，善哉！技蓋至此乎？」

庖丁釋刀對曰：「臣之所好者道也，進乎技矣。始臣之解牛之時，所見無非全牛者；三年之后，未嘗見全牛也；方今之時，臣以神遇而不以目視，官知止而神欲行。依乎天理，批大卻，導大窾，因其固然。技經肯綮之未嘗微礙，而況大軀乎！良庖歲更刀，割也；族庖月更刀，折也；今臣之刀十九年矣，所解數千牛矣，而刀刃若新發於硎。彼節者有間，而刀刃者無厚，以無厚入有間，恢恢乎其於游刃必有餘地矣。是以十九年而刀刃若新發於硎。雖然，每至於族，吾見其難為，怵然為戒，視為止，行為遲，動刀甚微，謦然已解，牛不知其死也，如土委地。提刀而立，為之而四顧，為之躊躇滿志，善刀而藏之。」

文惠君曰：「善哉！吾聞庖丁之言，得養生焉。」

difficult to complete or even form a satisfying art work for an artist. Chuang Tzu's proposition of forgetting the technique seems not to make sense in the general progress of art practice. In the story, did the butcher really forget the skill of separating the bullock? Absolutely not. For him, the skill and tools had become part of his body. In the process of separating the bullock, he did not need any intention to control the chopper, because the process, for him was totally natural and smooth and the chopper and he had already become one. He was very proficient with the process. His body, the chopper, even the bullock is comprehensive in the process of separating.

There is the another question about controlling the skill and tool. Why do we need to control them? First, if we really handle them well, why do we require our mind to remind ourselves to control them well. Second, the relationship between tool, skill and body movement in the process is comprehensive and equal. There is no distinction between them. If they are comprehensive, there is no difference between subject and object. In this condition, the concept of control collapses. In my art practice process, I do a lot of repetition. At the beginning, I tried to control my hand and material well to attain the ideal shape and texture. However, when I became familiar with the material and my body, each action in the process of making was spontaneous. I no longer concentrated on controlling the material and body. The subject and object of myself, my body and tool disappear as distinct entities. In the story, what Chuang Tzu really opposes is not the skill and the tool themselves, but the intention of controlling all objects following the *Tao* and respecting the truth of Being of the myriad of objects. The other point that Chuang Tzu attempts to highlight in the story is the condition of forgetting egocentrism in concentration and trying to enter the invisible truth of Being instead of the visible phenomenon.

In the beginning of the story, the only thing that the butcher saw, in his eyes, was a whole bullock. The bullock, the matter really existed and it was visible. He holds the chopper and attempts to control it well. In my practice, when I started to learn throwing, I always chose the most suitable clay and quietest potter's wheel in the studio to start doing my work. I did my best to put the clay on the centre of the wheel and threw it hard and tightly to make it stably rotate. In the process, it collapsed because I threw it too hard, put too much water with the clay, and it was not on the centre of the wheel. I tried to use more power to control the shaking and collapsing clay and recover them. Finally, I felt

muscular pain in my arms, wrist and waist. I was too tired to complete throwing my work. I used my mind and tried to control the clay and the potter's wheel, but I forgot they had their own way. In the process, I forced them to follow my rhythm and rules instead of cooperating with them and "listening to their voice." Such as the butcher's story, even a bullock also is with *Tao*. We use eyes, tools and purpose to control it instead of respecting and understanding the truth of being of each object. Finally, it might be done but I hurt the tool, the clay and my body because I only believe what I see and what I think and do not follow the wheel's and the clay's "*Tao*." When the butcher said he's never used his eyes to cut the bullock, his senses stopped and then he cut the bullock perfectly and his chopper was still sharp. He still used skill and experience, but the real point that attains the eminent perception is through being and the following of *Tao*. According to that, the standard of beauty is not only skill, but shows the *Tao* and mind. He said,

*The fish trap exists because of the fish; once you have got the fish, you can forget the trap. The rabbit snare exists because of the rabbit; once you have got the rabbit, you can forget the snare. Words exist because of meaning; once you have got the meaning, you can forget the words. Where can I find a man who has forgotten words so I can have a word with him?*³⁴

This story can be taken as a kind of deconstruction, to deconstruct the visible object to grasp the nature of the entity. The world becomes narrow when the truth of being and *Tao* are limited by our own egocentrism and prejudice. We sometimes are restricted by the perceivable experience. In order to avoid the disguised truth, deconstruction is necessary and can bring transcendence of seeing the world as unclouded and broad. At the beginning, what the butcher sees is a whole bullock, but finally what he sees is only the structure of the body. The activity of cutting can be considered as a kind of deconstruction. The visible surface is only temporarily perceivable and part of truth. However, the truth of Being is invisible, such as an artwork, the form and shape provide the perceivable information and become a catalyst to reveal the content. We need a visible form to be the catalyst to analyse or explore an artist's viewpoint of the

³⁴ Chuang Tzu, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, translated by Burton Watson, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), p.302.

荃者所以在魚，得魚而忘荃；蹄者所以在兔，得兔而忘蹄；言者所以在意，得意而忘言。吾安得夫忘言之人而與之言哉！

world, however, the real intention, ideal, experience or statement is shown metaphorically and needs to be discovered or contemplated. The reason that the butcher can cut the bullock so perfectly, like a miracle, is he catches the bullock's nature. In his eyes, there is not an object but the primary structure, the nature. Like the Van Gogh painting, *Pair of Shoes*, what Martin Heidegger sees is not the image or colours on the canvas, but the truth of the conflict of the world and earth hidden behind the visible form. The bullock is like the painting and Chuang Tzu describes the process and method of revealing the truth, to deconstruct and eliminate the interference of perceivable presentation and totally concentrate on the behaviour and motion. There is a story,

Woodworker Ch'ing carved a piece of wood and made a bell shelf, when it was finished, everyone who saw it marveled, for it seems to be the work of gods or spirits. When the marquis of Lu saw it, he asked, "What is it you have?"

Ch'ing replied, "I am only a craftsman - how would I have any art? There is one thing, however. When I am going to make a bell shelf, I never let it wear out my energy. I always fast in order to calm my mind. When I have fasted for three days, I no longer have any thought of congratulations or rewards, of titles or stipends. When I have fasted for five days, I no longer have any thought of praise or blame, or skill or clumsiness. And when I have fasted for seven days, I am so calm that I forget I have four limbs and a form and body. By that time, the ruler and his court no longer exists for me. My skill is concentrated and all outside distractions fade away. After that, I go into the mountain forest and examine the heavenly nature of the trees. If I find one of the superlative forms, and I can see a bell shelf there, I put my hand to the job of carving; if not, I let it go. This way I am simply matching up 'Heaven' with 'Heaven.' That's probably the reason that people wonder if the results were not made by spirits.³⁵"

³⁵ Chuang Tzu, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, translated by Burton Watson, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), p.205-206.

梓慶削木為鑿。鑿成，見者驚猶鬼神。魯侯見而問焉。曰：「子何術以為焉？」對曰：「臣工人，何術之有。雖然有一焉。臣將為鑿，未嘗敢以耗氣也。必齊以靜心。齊三日，不敢懷慶賞爵祿。齊五日，不敢懷非譽巧拙。齊七日，輒忘然吾有四肢形體也。當是時也，無公朝。其巧專而外骨消。然後入山林，觀天性。形軀至矣。然後成見鑿。然後加手焉。不然則已。則以天合天。器之所以疑神者。其是與。」

In *Prajna Paramita Heart Sutra*, it said "... he perceived that all five Skandhas are empty."³⁶ These five Skandhas are five factors: *form*(色), *feeling*(受), *perception*(想), *volitions*(行), and *consciousness*(識)³⁷ to compose the myriad of objects and things in the world in Buddhism. *Form* means perceivable objects³⁸, including the human body, things or anything with a shape. *Feeling, perception, volitions* and *consciousness* belong to the category of thinking. All of the five factors are empty. The interpretation is very similar to Chuang Tzu's critique of skill and perceivable beauty. Every visible material form or the ideology are with emptiness, so what we perceive or experience is only the impermanent and changeable appearance.

In the butcher story, it seems to have four elements, the mind, the body, the tool and the bullock. Maybe the description of dividing it into four parts is not appropriate because they are actually a comprehensive system from Chuang Tzu's point of view. The butcher uses his mind to control the body to operate the chopper and cut the bullock. Each of them owns their clear duty to complete the cutting and the process seems methodical. However, the point is not the extraordinary skill of cutting the bullock, the body movement, cutting approach and practice are not the core aim in the story. The point is how to see and treat the many objects, including our body.

Actually, to Chuang Tzu, the concept of body is mental. He thinks we have to "take care" of our bodies. But the understanding of "take care" is not relevant to medical care, medicine or exercise. The way that we take care of the body is more related to a type of meditation: the *emptiness*(虛), the *one*(壹), the *tranquillity*(靜), *fasting of mind*(心齋) and *sitting in forgetfulness*(坐忘).³⁹ Emptiness means maintaining a non-egocentric attitude and humble mind; one is to concentrate on the being and combine it with the world, comprehensively; tranquillity is a situation of peaceful and harmonious existence of all the objects; fasting of mind means if there is not any desire in your mind, the light will appear; and sitting in forgetfulness means erasing the limit of the body and egocentrism.

³⁶ Shu Tan, *The Prajna Paramita Heart sutra*, translated from Sanskrit into Chinese by Tripitaka Master Hsuan Tsang, commentary / by Grand Master T'an Hsu ; translated into English by Venerable Dharma Master Lok To ; edited by K'un Li, Shih, (New York : Sutra Translation Committee of the U.S. & Canada, 1995)

觀自在菩薩行深般若波羅蜜多時，照見五蘊皆空

³⁷ Dong Fang Wen Rui, *Xin Jing Huo Xue Hou Yong*, (Taipei: Xu Sheng Tu Shu , 2005), p.39.

³⁸ Ibid. p.80.

³⁹ Lin, Wu Tso, *Body Concepts in Merleau-Ponty and Chuang Tzu*, p.12.

One notices there is no description about taking care of the body to be healthy. He even hopes we can decrease clinging to the form of the body because the human body is limited, fragile and impermanent. For example, no matter how one gets power, wealth or how we take care of the body we still cannot escape from the circle of birth, life, age, disease and death. Therefore, the meaning of taking care of the body is trying to transcend the material existence of the body and return to the unlimited being in the cosmos. One might doubt the combination of body and consciousness which cannot be physically divided. The real meaning of body in the situation - the purpose of keeping healthy or strong or completing a physical action is not the significant part - the point is to be the catalyst to connect the being and the external world and to feel the truth of being midst the myriad of objects. Although the butcher easily cuts bullock every time, he is still thoughtful and totally concentrates on the cutting process; although he feels triumph and satisfaction, he still wipes his chopper and puts it in the sheath, carefully. What the butcher shows is not only the perfect cooperation of the body, tool and skill, but the wisdoms of moderating behaviour, following the natural reality to complete the whole process, and respecting the many objects.

(3) Real beauty

Chuang Tzu's recognition of beauty is very different from the general concept. To Chuang Tzu, the standard of appreciation of beauty is not based on the visible form. The general standard like colour, balance, skill and even the artists' statement are all not the point to become the standard of appreciation of beauty. In Chuang Tzu's perception, real beauty is a process revealing the essence of truth. The standard of beauty is based on the truth of being, not only the perceivable beauty. The principle of visible beauty is formulated by humans and each person has subjective consciousness and values. If the standard changes with the subjective consciousness, there is no absolute standard because it might change with different situations and viewpoints.

Before we start the topic, the first thing we need to do is to see all the objects equal in existence, including humans. There is not any different existence between people, fish, birds and deer. The essences of being, in *Tao*, are all the same. All standards are created by distinction. For example, the definition and concept of beauty or ugly are produced by the different characters that people

give to particular objects. They might be distinguishable and particular, but not the general standard of the objects. The different results of aesthetic appreciation are just from the different point of views so, to Chuang Tzu, it is not really necessary to define or distinguish what is beautiful or ugly.

The knowledge of the ancients was perfect. How perfect? At first, they did not yet know that there were things. This is the most perfect knowledge; nothing can be added. Next, they knew that there were things, but did not yet pass judgments upon them. When judgments were passed, Tao was destroyed.⁴⁰ With the destruction of Tao, individual preference came into being.⁴¹

This quote indicates the process of how distinction is produced. In the beginning there was emptiness in the cosmos. And then something appeared, from the emptiness came being and the thousands of objects were born, but it was still a situation without any distinction and boundary. Everything is one. However, people think there is a distinction, but still cannot tell what is wrong and what is right. When the standard of right and wrong appear, we start having the viewpoint or preference. There is no standard in the beginning of the cosmos, all standards are the product of subjective judgment and viewpoint. It is changeable because it is established on subjective values and changes with time, space and point of view, just like our opinion of something might change with age or position. However, we might debate why we cannot have preference. We are human, and we have absolutely preference to choose or defend what we like or recognize and why is it related to the destruction of *Tao*. The destruction of *Tao* is the distinction and destruction by individual conflict of defending the subjective preference and value.

Thus, it is that there are roof-slates and pillars, ugliness and beauty, the peculiar and extraordinary. All these by means of the Tao are united and become one. To make a distinction is to make some

⁴⁰ If Tao is an unspeakable and invisible power, how can it be destroyed? The sentence "Tao was destroyed" does not mean the destruction of the essential being of Tao itself, but the concept of harmonious and comprehensive condition of Tao. If distinction and judgments appear, it is far from the harmonious meaning of Tao.

⁴¹ Chuang Tzu, *Chuang Tzu*, translated by Fung, Yu Lan, (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1989), p.47.

古之人，其知有所至矣。惡乎至？有以為未始有物者，至矣，盡矣，不可以加矣。其次以為有物矣，而未始有封也。其次以為封焉，而未始有是非也。是非之彰也，道之所以虧也。道之所以虧，愛之所以成。

*construction. But construction is the same as destruction. For things as a whole there is neither construction nor destruction, but they turn to unity and become one.*⁴²

The meaning of beauty is not only established on the perceivable experience or axiological concept, but returned to the revealing of Being. When the truth of being can be revealed in a spontaneous way, it is real beauty. In other words, the meaning of beauty is truth and the meaning of truth is revealing *Tao*.⁴³ *Tao* is the principle of the myriad of objects and heaven and earth, including their beauties, so truth and beauty are one. The meaning of truth is revealed in *Tao*.

However, one already understands that real beauty exists in *Tao* and it is essential and ontological, not visible and axiological. However, how can one understand the real nature of objects? And what is the nature of objects? Chuang Tzu thinks that the real nature of each object is *Te*(德). The character is always translated to “virtue” or “morality” in English. The meaning is close to the Confucious definition of *Te*, to describe a person with noble character and integrity and great virtue. However, in Chuang Tzu, *Te* is not only used to describe a moral man, but also the nature of all objects.

The Chinese character *Te*(德) consists of three symbols, *Zhi*(直) (its old shape is *Zhi*(值), which means “to meet” or “to be worth”), a heart(心), and a foot(彳). According to these three parts, one can get a general idea: one meets or values a mind and behaviour. In the dictionary, we can find there are meanings of morality, virtue, decency, favour, kindness, behaviour, conduct and gratitude.⁴⁴ One can get a general understanding of the relation between *Tao* and *Te* by their original meaning. *Tao* means a road or a way and *Te* presents a phenomenon of mind and behaviour. No matter if there is a man walking along the way or not, the way still exists, but if a man wants to walk stably and safely, walking along the way might be the best choice. However, it is still not enough to walk on the way, he has to have a clear direction, be stable and correct steps and then he can walk smoothly. The relation of *Tao* and *Te* is such as this. *Tao*

⁴² Ibid, p.46.

故為是舉莛與楹，厲與西施，恢橐橐怪，道通為一。其分也，成也；其成也，毀也。凡物無成與毀，復通為一。

⁴³ Ching Song Shen, *Chuang Tzu Yu Heidegger De Mei Xue*,
<http://www.2100cn.net/thread-22394-1-1.html> (08/10/2012)

⁴⁴ Richard Sears, *Chinese Etymology*
<http://www.chineseetymology.org/CharacterEtymology.aspx?characterInput=%E5%BE%B7>
(05/10/2012)

is spontaneous and always exists and *Te* is born from *Tao* and it is the nature of an object, the principle, that an object exists in *Tao*. *Tao* cannot be spoken or taught and it is difficult to perceive, but *Te* can be experienced and noticed.

Lao Tzu said *Tao* produces a thing; *Te* maintains it.⁴⁵ Chuang Tzu also said that which things get in order to live, is called *Te*.⁴⁶ *Te* is the concrete existence of *Tao* in all objects. *Te* is individual existence in everything. It is a concept about thing-character, the pure and individual existence of things. Even if *Tao* is the most important concept and stands infinitely high in Chuang Tzu's philosophy, the relation between *Tao* and *Te* is still not linear or subordinate. If *Tao* was water, *Te* would be like a river or lake.⁴⁷ Both of them are spontaneous, but *Te* is the natural character of each thing and exists in *Tao*. *Te* spontaneously represents *Tao* in various forms. According to the spontaneity of *Tao* and *Te*, the purity and real beauty are natural and spontaneous as well. There is a story:

Confucius looked shamefaced and said, "Please, may I ask what you mean by the 'truth'?" The stranger said, "By the 'truth' I mean purity and sincerity in their highest degree. He who lacks purity and sincerity cannot move others. Therefore he who forces himself to lament, though he may sound sad, will awaken no grief. He who forces himself to be angry, though he may sound fierce, will arouse no awe. And he who forces himself to be affectionate, though he may smile, will create no air of harmony. True sadness needs no sound to awaken grief; true anger need not show itself to arouse awe; true affection need not smile to create harmony. When a man has the Truth within himself, his spirit may move among external things. That is why the Truth is to be prized."⁴⁸

The spirit and nature of beauty is truth and truth is purity and sincerity so they are also the expression of beauty.

⁴⁵ Chuang Tzu, *Chuang Tzu*, translated by Fung, Yu Lan, (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1989), p.8.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p.8.

⁴⁷ Ibid, p.9.

⁴⁸ Chuang Tzu, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, translated by Burton Watson, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), p.349.

真者，精誠之至也。不精不誠，不能動人。故強哭者雖悲不哀，強怒者雖嚴不威，強親者雖笑不和。真悲者無聲而哀，真怒者未發而威，真親者未笑而和。真在其內，神動於外，是所以貴真也。”

(4) True freedom

The word “freedom” in Chinese is *Zi You*(自由). *Zi*(自) means “self” or “natural”. To reflect the meaning of *Tao*, it is a spontaneous condition and represents the individual being of all the objects. And the other character, *You*(由), means “source” or “derivation”, to represent a sort of origin. According to this brief explanation of the two characters, the inner meaning of freedom in Chinese is a spontaneous source of each object. However, the character *Zi* in the vocabulary does not mean the personal ego but the transcendent being.⁴⁹ The meaning of freedom in Chuang Tzu’s perception is not related to the common freedom that we know in the modern society or the personal mind or intention to complete something without control or limitation, but the freedom of releasing egocentrism and combining with nature as one. It is a philosophical concept.

From the last three sections, one has a general idea of Chuang Tzu’s aesthetics. No matter how *Tao* is revealed, following the nature or by attaining purity and sincerity, the central and only purpose of Chuang Tzu’s aesthetics is the absolute freedom of existence. The meaning of freedom, for Chuang Tzu is a kind of detached condition of mind. Although it cannot be denied there is some mundane meaning of escaping, it has never presented a kind of passive epicureanism or pessimism. The meaning of freedom does not mean we can do anything we want, like and desire unscrupulously, or irresponsibly abandon our duty to enjoy life, but an ideal condition of existence combining with nature and seeing the world and one’s own mind, unclouded.

Although the function of “distance” is to escape from the old viewpoint and get a type of transcendence and liberty, it is not for purifying or evading, but for a condition of enhancement of mind. In order to grasp the real beauty of earth and heaven, people cultivate the freedom of mind, and then one can observe and understand the broadness and beauty of the world.

In the Northern Ocean there is a fish, by the name of Kun, which is many of thousands of miles in size. This fish metamorphosed into a bird by the name Peng, whose back is many thousands of miles in breathe. When the bird rouses itself and flies, its wings obscure the

⁴⁹ Ke Chian Xu, *Zhuang Zi Zhe Xue Xin Tan: Dao Yan Zi You Yu Mei*, (Beijing: Zhong Hua Shu Ju, 2005), p.159.

*sky like clouds. When the bird moves itself in the sea, it is preparing to start for the Southern Ocean, the Celestial Lake. A man named Chi Hsieh, who recorded novel occurrences, said, "When the Peng is moving to the Southern Ocean, it flaps along the water for three thousand miles. Then, it ascends on a whirlwind up to a height of ninety thousand miles, for a flight of six months' duration." There is the wandering air; there are the motes; there are living things that blow one against another with their breath.*⁵⁰

This is a famous story by Chuang Tzu. There are some important points in the story. First, the place "Northern Ocean", "Southern Ocean" and "Celestial Lake" are all places that people cannot arrive at. They are so far away that people cannot see them. If we want to understand them, the only approach is using the eyes of our being. The being can transcend space, sense and anything material and attain pure freedom. Second, Kun can change its shape and no matter Kun or Peng, both of them are gigantic. In our experience, there are standard sizes of fish and bird, but in the story, they are so large that we have difficulty imagining them. Chuang Tzu uses a literary skill to reveal a broad, infinite and unknown space. Kun and Peng do not belong to the real world and experience, anymore. They transcend the limit of the material world and our former experiences. In the infinite world, there is no limit, only freedom of imagination and mind. Third, Peng rouses itself and flew. It means enhancing the viewpoint. Fourth, no matter the freedom of Kun or Peng, it is only a conditional freedom. Kun only lives in the ocean and Peng only flies in the sky. So he said, "Without sufficient depth, the water would not be able to float a large boat... without sufficient density, the wind would not be able to support the large wings."⁵¹ The comprehensive freedom also needs to accumulate sufficient conditions. One has to transcend those external limitations and conditions in order to attain the inner freedom and peace.

⁵⁰ Chuang Tzu, *Chuang Tzu*, translated by Fung, Yu Lan, (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1989), p.25-26

北冥有魚，其名為鯤。鯤之大，不知其幾千里也。化而為鳥，其名為鵬。鵬之背，不知其幾千里也；怒而飛，其翼若垂天之雲。是鳥也，海運則將徙於南冥。南冥者，天池也。齊諧者，志怪者也。諧之言曰：「鵬之徙於南冥也，水擊三千里，搏扶搖而上者九萬里，去以六月息者也。」野馬也，塵埃也，生物之以息相吹也。天之蒼蒼，其正色邪？其遠而無所至極邪？其視下也，亦若是則已矣。

⁵¹ *Ibid.* p.2

且夫水之積也不厚，則其負大舟也無力。覆杯水於坳堂之上，則芥為之舟；置杯焉則膠，水淺而舟大也。風之積也不厚，則其負大翼也無力。

One might have a question about what the limitation is. Before exploring the proposition, we should start from Chuang Tzu's ideal. In *Chuang Tzu* 6, there is a long description of the ideal figure,

*The true man only has true knowledge. What is a true man? The true man of old did not oppose even the minority. He did not seek for heroic accomplishment. He laid no plans. Therefore, he had neither regret in failure, nor self-complacency in success. Thus he could scale height without fear, enter water without being wet, and fire without feeling hot. Such is he, who's knowledge has ascended to Tao.... The true man of old knew neither to love life, nor to hate death. Living, he felt no elation; dying, he offered no resistance. Unconsciously he went; unconsciously he came. That was all.... Being such, his mind was free from all thought.... His joy and anger occurred as naturally as the four seasons. He was in harmony with all things without knowledge of any fixed standard....*⁵²

Chuang Tzu describes an outline of an ideal figure. It is entirely perfect, like a sage and hard to attain for a normal person. Before judging the amazing and unrealistic description of a perfect man, one should understand a few points. First, it is a sort of literal description to highlight the spirit and character of a perfect man. What he emphasizes is not the amazing body which can suffer the water and fire without getting hurt, but calm when facing the change and a person who is not influenced by external variations. Second, the spirit of affirming life and transcending egocentrism, is the concept. However, it does not indicate any pride or self satisfaction, but an attitude without influence by loss or gain. He keeps a broad mind because a perfect man knows the external phenomena are impermanent and changeable. All the variation is normal and caused by *Tao*, including birth and death. The perfect man identified himself as a follower of the thousands of objects. For instance, if one feels happiness for gaining something, one might feel disgraced for losing it. A perfect person is

⁵² *Ibid*, p. 91-92.

古之真人，不逆寡，不雄成，不謀士。若然者，過而弗悔，當而不自得也。若然者，登高不慄，入水不濡，入火不熱，是知之能登假於道者也若此。古之真人，其寢不夢，其覺無憂，其食不甘，其息深深。真人之息以踵，眾人之息以喉。屈服者，其嗑言若哇。其耆欲深者，其天機淺。古之真人，不知說生，不知惡死。其出不訢，其入不距。翛然而往，翛然而來而矣。不忘其所始，不求其所終。受而喜之，忘而復之。是之謂不以心損道，不以人助天，是之謂真人。若然者，其心忘，其容寂，其顙顙。淒然似秋，煖然似春，喜怒通四時，與物有宜而莫知其極

calm and free because he knows those distinctions, life and death and loss and gain are impermanent and nothing can affect him.

The true freedom of Chuang Tzu is the transcendence of distinction and an empathic and broad mind to contemplate all the objects without distinction and prejudice. In Chuang Tzu's viewpoint of freedom, life is truly the free existence without the limitation of ego and external entity. It is flexible and changes form because being is without a concrete and singular shape; we can rise with force and spirit to the infinite space and experience many conditions and then integrate with *Tao* to attain true freedom and inner peace. The real freedom to Chuang Tzu is a kind of way of identifying one's own existence and integrating and respecting others' *Tao* to let everything do its own work.

Conclusion

Chuang Tzu's philosophy supplies a different and non-dual way to contemplate the world. From an ontological viewpoint to the deconstruction of perceivable objects and beauty, his philosophy transcends forms and sensibility and stands in a free and detached space. Chuang Tzu's thinking might be considered pessimistic and escapist because of his argument against the social environment and the lofty literature. However, the argument originates from his ideal to the world. Although one can feel his anger and dissatisfaction with many unreasonable and ridiculous facts in his literature, we also can find a whole new beautiful world without limit, without falsehood, without being unfair and unnatural.

However, we cannot deny there is still contradiction in Chuang Tzu's system. He doubts the subjective judgment, but his philosophy is also subjective thinking; he attempts to eliminate the conflicts of different values, but he still argues and challenges others' thinking. There is no perfect thinking, because there is no perfect man. Before we argue the contradiction in his thinking, we should understand his motive behind the visible literature. His description and discussion should be a bit radical, it might also contain his dissatisfaction, disappointment and worry about the society, but also show his strong concern for the world and an ideal of creating a better and beautiful world.

His aesthetics integrated the beauty, true freedom and *Tao's* principle in the world. The aesthetic experience is no longer an isolated feeling, but is connected to the world and human spirit. There is no subjective judgment and everything is equal in the comprehensive world. This non-duality brings a different viewpoint to the world. There is no absolute "this" or "that" in the world. All perceivable things are the products behind the subjective experience. The most significant part is to understand the real nature and develop the mind into freedom.

And the concept of *Tao* is the important part of Taoism. Maybe it is not able to be proved and is unscientific, but it is a way to explain the world with a philosophic viewpoint to show an ideal condition without attitude and subjective limit. However, the ideal is difficult to attain because the way that we perceive the world is based on personal experience. Chuang Tzu debates the perceivable truth because every perceivable and visual entity is impermanent and changeable. The point might not be the proposition of the visible, but the distinction caused by egocentrism and the trust of the visual. In his opinion, the myriad of objects are comprehensive and equal. His debate about the visual entity or sense is a way to emphasize the core of *Tao*, the identification and non doing, to integrate the world as comprehensive and respect others' freedom and existence.

Chapter Two: Chuang Tzu' s Philosophy of Nature

Introduction

In the last chapter, I discussed the meaning of *Tao* and the aesthetics spirit of Taoism. *Tao* is an invisible power of the universe and the thousands of objects connected to it. Under *Tao*, every object in the universe has the same nature of being as a human. *Tao*, as a philosophical and aesthetics thinking, emphasises the viewpoint of life, art and cosmology. However, with the development of civilization and technology, human life is more efficient and quick, but it also drops into a sort of deep depression and frustration because of the isolation from society and the loss of Being in modern life.

In this chapter, I will discuss the relationship of the human and nature in Tao through philosophical analysis and relevant literature. In the first section, I will discuss the meaning of the nature in Taoism from life experience and etymological analysis in Tao. In the second section, I will explore the roles of human and the myriad of objects by Chuang Tzu's theory of identification of the human role in nature and the question of the nature of Being. In the third section, I will start with a story of "Chuang Chou and the Butterfly" to discuss the concept of "life itself as a great dream" and the natural process of life. Then I will discuss the process that regains the nature of Being, the concept of non-doing in the fourth section. I will mention how non-doing can be a solution and perspective to answer the question of being human and the freedom of humanity.

1. The meaning of Nature in Tao

What are we going to do on the weekend? Shopping? Watch movies with a partner or alone? Staying at home sleeping, play games, reading books, watching television or doing nothing? Besides this, what can we choose to do? This is one of reasons that I love life in Australia, so many approaches to try and feel the splendid vista of nature - fishing beside the twinkling lake under the crystal blue sky, listening to the crisp and clear song of birds and insects under the Jacaranda tree, lying on the new green grass under the warm spring sunshine, enjoy romance fiction and the aroma of Cappuccino, or surfing at the

golden beach with the endless rhythmic sound from the snow white waves and fresh wind.

Figures, colours, and sensations, we perceive the existence and beauty and interact with nature through the senses. The moment we are born, we explore the environment via our sense organs. We observe, hear, see, taste and touch all things. Because of the different characteristics of all objects, we distinguish and recognise the world by our senses, knowledge and environment. However, what we feel in the experience of nature seems more abstract than the sense organs. It seems there is a deep power that is difficult to speak about, it moves or influences us silently when we are close to nature. Sometimes you would feel calm and free, your mind and emotions have returned to the purest and the most primitive state, everything is tranquil and clear. Sometimes, you feel extraordinarily clear in your mind and something negative seems to be released. As Eckhart Tolle said,

*Being aware to many subtle sounds of nature - the rustling of leaves in the wind, raindrops falling, the humming of an insect, the first birdsong at dawn. Give yourself completely to the act of listening. Beyond the sounds, there is something greater; a sacredness that cannot be understood through thought.*⁵³

The experience of interacting with nature makes us perceive the identity of spirit. Although the feelings and emotions have interacted with nature, it is hard to describe concretely. It is still perceived and awakens and reveals the essence of the existence of the human mind or spirit. In the last chapter, the character of *Tao* was discussed. It is a principle of the universe. It is not able to be seen and spoken. It is spontaneous and is 'itself'. It is an invisible power of the reality of being between the myriad of objects. Not only the visible figures, but also the invisible spirit and mind connected to *Tao* and interacting with the outer visible objects in nature. The original meaning of "nature", in Chinese etymology also correlates with the essence of *Tao*.

In Chinese, the word for "nature" is composed by two characters, "zi(自)", which means "self" or "from", and "ran(然)", which represents a kind of condition in Chinese etymology. As above, the original meaning of "nature" in Chinese

⁵³ Eckhart Tolle, *Calmness Speak: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment*, (Taipei: Acorn Publishing, 2009), p. 128.

philosophy is not only the scientific or environmental definition. Nature is also a spontaneous condition, it is a vocabulary that reflects the perception of the cosmos. The word “nature”, that we have known, is based on the experience of observation and understanding of the perceivable environment. The human, as part of nature, have the intelligence and ambition to discover the unknown world. One is not only an observer, but also an explorer of nature. The relationship and emotions between human and nature is tangled. Humans admire and respect the greatness and vastness, but fear its unpredictable and incredible power; humans attempt to protect its rarity and beauty, but destroy its original appearance for development and survival. As a part of nature, the human role is in conflict. Our survival is tightly connected with nature, no matter what is the decision or the dilemma of one’s own survival and coexistence with nature. The tangled conflict between human and nature and human and human is still contradictory. British philosopher, Bertrand Russell even mentioned one of the three kinds of conflict in human nature and man in nature.⁵⁴

In the conflict, victor is the indispensable criterion of living so the victor also plays the role of conqueror and takes nature as a kind of bondage and an opponent to be defeated, In order to conquer, he has to dominate and overcome everything he has not understood. The human desire of overcoming the unknown environment contributes to human exploration and cognition of nature.

The conflict between human and nature inspires the development of science in order to understand nature and so survive. However, does the knowledge that humans have established for thousand years really approach or touch the core or answer the question about being human and in the world? In Jean- Francois Lyotard’s article, “Can Thought Go on Without a Body?”, he questions the insoluble philosophical question. With the sun getting older, 45 billion years later, when the sun explodes, all the philosophical questions will die with the sun’s death. He said,

That, in my view, is the sole serious question to face humanity today. In comparison everything else seems insignificant. Wars, conflicts, political tension, shifts in opinion, philosophical debates, even passions- everything’s dead already if the infinite reserve

⁵⁴ Bertrand Russell, *New Hope For A Changing World*, (London: Allen & Unwin,1951), p. 12.

*from which you now draw energy to defer answers, if in short thought as quest, dies out with the sun.*⁵⁵

All thought in the human world is illusion. The human, as the most living of living things in the world, ‘*thought borrows a horizon and orientation, the limitless limit and the end without end it assumes, from the corporeal, sensory, emotional, and cognitive experience of a quite sophisticated but definitely earthly existence - to which it is indebted as well.*’⁵⁶ Human destiny is inseparable from the death of the sun. The conflict is no longer a meaningful proposition after the death of the sun and thought. A corporeal human body finally will face the only confirmed result of human destiny, death. The conflict of human and nature does not answer the final destiny, the fate of humans depends on the living sun. *It (nature) made us the way it made all bodies - by chance and according to its law.*⁵⁷ Humans are made by nature, like all the objects, and now we coexistent with it and one day we will die with it as well. The relationship of human and nature is comprehensive and the conflict between human and nature, like those insoluble philosophical questions will end and become emptiness.

Lyotard does not provide any answer to Being, but takes the conflicts of human and human, and human and the world as the insoluble illusion. The relationship between human and nature is related to the sun’s life. The destiny of human and nature depend on the visible fireball, and its silent death after 45 billion years. In Russell’s opinion, the perception of the relationship of man and nature is established on conflict. Nature is a threatening and frightening opponent. In order to live, man must fight and defeat it. The conflict, finally, like all objects on the Earth, will vanish, only endless emptiness and silence, left.

The fear of nature cannot change the final end. The fear of nature is also part of human thought and feelings toward the unknown world. We fear because of the unknown. However, in Eastern culture, the attitude to the unknown nature is presented from a different perspective, it is respected. The concept of Shintoism emerges from the respect for nature and our coexistence with nature.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Jean-Francois Lyotard, *Can Thought Go on Without a Body?* in *Materialities of Communication*, edited by Han Ulrich Gumbrecht and K. Ludwig Pfeiffer, translated by William Whobrey, (Stanford, Calif. : Stanford University Press, 1994), p. 287.

⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 287.

⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 289.

⁵⁸ La Vie, Li, Pai Lin, and Huang, Ya Ji, *Touch of Design*, (Taipei: Mai Hao Si, 2008), p. 12-13

Japan is located in north-east Asia. The big island needs to face frequent earthquakes, typhoons, rain storms, snow and the threat of volcanic eruption. Various natural disasters make Japanese realize nature is beyond defeat and they perceive the fragile life and destiny in terms of a strong nature. If one wants to exist, one should coexist with nature and show one's respect to pray for his existence. The core concept of Shintoism is Animism, which originates from a respect for nature makes meaning of the world. It is a kind of polytheism and praises the deities which dwell in mountains, trees, rivers, rocks, vegetables even animals.

This spirit is revealed in the Japanese artist, Hayao Miyazaki's animation works, *Princess of Mononoke*. All animals in the forest are Gods. And humans attempt to obtain their survival and govern the natural environment through the radical conflict with the Gods. However, the result of offending the Gods is the destruction of civilization and Gods still dominate human survival in birth and death.⁵⁹

The relation between man and nature and the conflict of Russell's claim are based on the fear of nature, but they are still different. Russell takes nature as an opponent who humans are required to defeat, so humans must understand the opponent to win the conflict. However, Shintoism never proposes to be the victor, one humbly prays to nature for a space to exist in and will find a solution or way to coexist with nature. Shintoism considers nature as a place filled with and conducted by spirit. This concept is similar to Taoism, but they are different in the way of they structure and conduct nature. First, Shintoism is based on religion and the deities in the objects in the physically natural environment. But, Taoism takes the power and phenomenon of nature as a spontaneous and natural existence so every unknown or unpredictable power of nature is caused by *Tao*. They are general phenomena in *Tao*. Second, although Chuang Tzu presents his admiration and respect to nature, he does not consider nature frightening because he knows there is nothing to fear. Human fear of nature originates from the unknown and uncontrolled power of nature, but to Chuang Tzu, he knows clearly the origin of the power of nature so there is nothing to fear. Third, the world is comprehensive and the myriad of objects are equal in existence, so if there is no distinction between object and subject, there is no object to fear. Although Shintoism and Taoism both hold the similar proposition

⁵⁹ Hayao Miyazaki, *Princess Mononoke*, (Tokyo: Ghibli Studio, 1997)

of respecting and following nature, the relationship between nature and human is still distinct.

However, in the viewpoint of Taoism, the real beauty of nature does not exist in the perceivable and visible feelings, but in *Tao* and its principle. There is no conflict or opposition between man and nature because the relation between all objects is relative. Humans are a part of nature and equally positioned to all other objects. The essence of Being is totally the same so there is not opponent or enemy. And the meaning of nature is not the deities in nature, there is not deity in the philosophy of Taoism, the only being is *Tao*, and all objects are equal and free. There is no any mysterious power to conduct or control the destiny of the objects, every phenomenon happens spontaneously. The meaning of nature in Taoism is not the visible space but the formless spiritual domain and cannot be spoken.

Nan Kuo Tzu Chi(南郭子綦) sat leaning on a table. He looked to heaven and breathed gently, seeming to be in a trance, and unconscious of his body.

Yen Cheng Tzu Yu(顏成子游), who was in attendance on him, said: "What is this? Can the body become thus like dry wood, and the mind like dead ashes? The man leaning on the table is not he who was here before."

"Yen," said Tzu Chi, "your question is very good. Just now, I lost myself, do you understand? You may have heard the music of man, but not the music of earth; you may have heard the music of earth, but not the music of heaven."

"I venture," said Tzu Chi, "it is called the wind. At times, it is inactive. When it is active, angry sounds come from every aperture. Have you not heard the growing roar? The imposing appearance of the mountain forest, the apertures and cavities in huge trees many a span in girth: these are like nostrils, like mouths, like ears, like eye sockets, like goblets, like circles, like pools, like puddles. The wind goes rushing into them, making the sounds of rushing water, of whizzing arrows, of moaning agony. Some sounds are shrill, some deep. Gentle winds produce minor harmonies; violent winds, major

ones. When the fierce gusts pass away, all the apertures are empty and still. Have you not seen the bending and quivering of the branches and leaves?"

"The music of earth," Tzu Yu said, "consists of sounds produced on the various apertures; the music of man, of sounds produced on pipes and flutes. I venture to ask of what consists the music of heaven."

"The wind as they blow," said Tzu Chi, "differ in thousands of ways, yet all are self-produced. Why should there be any other agency to excite them?"⁶⁰

This passage is from " *Chi Wu Luen*(齊物論)." There are three different kinds of music: music of man, music of earth, and music of heaven are mentioned to describe the relationship between mankind, the myriad of objects, and the cosmos. Music of man is relative to the music of earth and the music of earth is also relative to the music of heaven. Music of man is produced by man's behaviour and imitating and respecting natural phenomena, such as the music of earth, blowing wind through the apertures, also it represents the perceivable natural phenomena. No matter what it is, the music of mankind or earth, they all produce their own music under *Tao*. This is not a complicated principle. But silent music of heaven is *Tao* and nature. Because it is silent, it is the origin of every kind of music, such as the origin of the myriad of objects, *Tao*. Human, earth and heaven, each of them presents the Being of human, the perceivable natural phenomenon, and *Tao*. One perceives the reality of being in nature and understands the place that one is dwelling by experiencing and coexisting with nature. In the music of man, earth and heaven, the music of earth is vivid and

⁶⁰ Chuang Tzu, *Chuang Tzu*, translated by Fung, Yu Lan, (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1989), p.39-40.

南郭子綦隱機而坐，仰天而噓，焉似喪其。

成子遊立侍乎前，曰：「何居乎？形固可使如槁木，而心固可使如死灰乎？今之隱機者，非昔之隱機者也。」

子綦曰：「偃，不亦善乎，而問之也！今者吾喪我，汝知之乎？汝聞人而未聞地，汝聞地而未聞天夫！」

子游曰：「敢問其方。」

子綦曰：「夫大塊噫氣，其名為風。是唯無作，作則萬竅怒。而獨不聞之寥寥乎？山林之畏，大木百圍之竅穴，似口，似耳，似枅，似圈，似臼，似洼者，似污者；激者，謫者，叱者，吸者，叫者，譟者，突者，咬者。前者唱于而隨唱者唱喁。冷風則小和，飄風則大和，厲風濟則竅為虛。而獨不見之調調，之刁刁乎？」

子游曰：「地籟則竅是已，人籟則比竹是已。敢問天籟。」

子綦曰：「夫吹萬不同，而使其自已也，咸其自取，怒者其誰邪！」

various and detailed in description. Even if one cannot hear the music of heaven, one is still able to feel the real beauty of nature through our body. Although all the objects look very different from each other, such as the variety of music of earth, the essence of being has never changed; they are all part of the music of heaven.

However, although one can be aware of a little part of the music of heaven by one's observation, the way to hear the music of heaven seems hard to attain. It is silent therefore it is impossible for it to be heard. In the first paragraph of the passage, Tzu Yu described Tzu Chi's body as dry wood and his heart as the dead ashes when he is in meditation at the table. Tzu Chi said he had already forgotten himself. What did he forget? The answer is the attitude to any distinction from the objects. He totally forgot the consciousness of ego and released himself from emotion and desire. There is not time, space, and objects, all of them are one, including himself. There is nothing, the thousands of objects return to a pure existence in the cosmos. Everything is equal and free in *Tao*. If everything is equal, there is nothing we need to fear even if forms are different, the truth of being has never changed or disappeared. It might be hidden but never lost.

In Martin Heidegger's opinion, it can be revealed through artworks⁶¹ and the experience of nature also presents a sort of calmness to reveal and regain the truth of being in Zen and Taoism meditation. There is no distinction between the myriad objects and human in existence.

When walking and resting in nature, honour that realm by being there fully. Be still. Look. Listen. See how every animal and every plant is completely itself. Unlike humans, they have not split themselves in two. They do not live through mental images of themselves, so they do not need to be concerned with trying to protect or enhance those images. The deer is itself. The daffodil is itself.

All things in nature are not only one with themselves but also one with the totality. They haven't removed themselves from the fabric

⁶¹ Thomas. E. Wartenberg, *The Nature of Art: An Anthology*, (Peking: Peking University Press, 2002), p. 149-171.

*of the whole by claiming a separate existence: “me” and the rest of the universe.*⁶²

Eckhart Tolle’s quote describes the relationship of individual existence and the whole universe. It is a process to regain the calmness of existence, to reveal the truth of Being. There is no distinction or separation from the myriad of objects. No fear, no conflict about living, no myth, no split, it is pure contemplation of the true being and beauty of nature because all objects are unique and part of nature. *Tao* and one’s contemplation and intimacy with nature are helpful to let one perceive and transcend one’s role in nature and feel the true freedom of existence in nature. The real *Tao* is the peaceful and tranquil heart. One feels one is part of nature. How can confusion and distracting thoughts feel the peaceful? The music of heaven is silent

2. Treatment and identification

One gains an awareness of the world from the day one is born. In the beginning, one perceives the world by the sense organs then is taught to distinguish the various objects, colours, shapes, sizes and one perceives one is different from others. One is oneself and nobody can replace one’s feeling, experience and memory. Then, one is educated to distinguish the right and wrong, good and bad, kind and evil. The development and establishment of perception assist us to understand and experience the world that one dwells in and obtain advantages for survival. The world consists of various forms and concepts. One distinguishes these concepts and analyses their advantage and disadvantage to gain knowledge of existence and develop one’s values. These values and differences between subject and object, nobleness and meanness, function and the preferable structure of each subjective world is in each person’s consciousness. These differences make each one unique, with different viewpoints to form or create one’s world and mission in life. Everyone has a unique inner cosmos in one’s mind to present one’s point of view and worldview to the world.

The perception that the world is built by the subjective cognition obviously reveals the different views of life and death in different religions. Taking

⁶² Eckhart Tolle, *Calmness Speak: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment*, (Taipei: Acorn Publishing, 2009), p. 126.

Christianity as an example, Adam and Eve, virtues and vices, God and Satan, initial creation and The Last Judgment, the dogma of Christianity is based on the essence of binary oppositions to reveal the importance and value of virtues. The point of view of Taoism (religion) and Buddhism are based on the concept of emptiness and the cycle of life and death. Everything is from the emptiness and there is not a deity to conduct or dominate the world. The only master of the cosmos is the cosmos, itself. No matter what creature or object you are, everything is equal and life and death are elements of the normal process of being. No matter if Christ or Taoism and Buddhism, the object that one contemplates is the human and the world. There is no absolutely wrong or right, only different ways of interpreting the world.

In the last section, Russell's thought about humanity's three conflicts is mentioned and Martin Heidegger addresses that an artwork may reveal the truth of Being⁶³. The most classic Western philosophy is based on dualism to compare, demonstrate, and analyse things, including human and nature, human and thing, even human and human self. The discussion focuses on the relationship of object and subject no matter if it is conflictive, relative, opposite or paradoxical. And there are many dual descriptions in philosophic literature, such as true and false, good and bad, virtue and evil, the definition of these vocabularies are diametrically opposed and with obvious and distinct values. And one unhesitatingly gives one side the positive definition and the other the negative one. Ontology appreciates truth and abandons falsehood; in ethics, it teaches humans to do good not evil; religion expects humans to do the right thing not the wrong. In order to reveal the absolute positive and good, the conflict of the positive and negative sides are made prominent by negating the other side, completely. *'For you to be right, of course, you need someone else to be wrong and so the ego loves to make wrong in order to be right. In other words: You need to make the other wrong in order to get a stronger sense of who you are.'*⁶⁴

In this logic, the positive side is completely revealed by comparing the negative side. In other words, when the negative does not exist or is not emphasized, the meaning of the contrast also becomes indefinable. This entirely opposite duality is only meaningful when the opposite side also exists. The positive is

⁶³ Thomas. E. Wartenberg, *The Nature of Art: An Anthology*, (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2002), p.150.

⁶⁴ Eckhart Tolle, *A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life's Purpose*, (London: Michael Joseph, 2005), p.67.

meaningful and revealed by the negative. The contrast is the basic premise even if they are totally opposite and inconsequentially, they still only exist when the opposite side is meaningful. So, the standard is produced by comparing the sides, it does not reveal the spontaneous and entire truth. And if the concept of “being right, making wrong” strengthens one’s ego and continues the conflict and separation, does it mean there is no absolutely right and wrong in the world?

In the last section, I quoted the story of the music of Heaven, Earth and Man to elaborate the relationship between heaven, earth and humanity. It also mentions an important part of Chuang Tzu’s philosophy about treatment and equality, *Chi Wu*(齊物). From Chuang Tzu’s perspective, no matter life or death, giant or dwarf, right or wrong, good or bad or other opposite or relative descriptions, they are all produced by one’s subjective judgment or values. One depends on one’s preference, experience and purpose to estimate and distinguish things, so it also means the standard is changeable with one’s mind, time, and space and it is without constancy. All meanings and judgments have relative values and are casual and changeable.

*Everything is “that” (another things other’s other); everything is “this” (its own self). Things do not know that they are another’s “that”; they only know that they are “this.” The “that’ and the “this” produce each other. Nevertheless, when there is life, there is death, and when there is death, there is life. When there is possibility, there is impossibility, and when there is impossibility, there is possibility. Because there is right, there is wrong. Because there is wrong, there is right.*⁶⁵

In the conversation between Lord of River and Jo of the North Sea, Chuang Tzu develops the idea of *Chi Wu*(齊物).

From the point of view of the Way (Tao), things have no nobility or meanness. From the point of view of things themselves, each regards itself as noble and other things as mean. From the point of

⁶⁵ Chuang Tzu, *Chuang Tzu*, translated by Fung, Yu Lan,(Beijing: Foreign Language Press,1989), p.44.

物無非彼，物無非是。自彼則不見，自知則知之。故曰：彼出于是，是亦因彼。彼是方生之說也。雖然，方生方死，方死方生；方可方不可，方不可方可；因是因非，因非因是

view of common opinion, nobility and meanness are not determined by the individual itself.

From the point of view of differences, if we regard a thing as big because there is a certain bigness to it, then among all the ten thousand things (myriad of objects) there are none that are not big. If we regard a thing as small because there is a certain smallness to it, then among the ten thousand things (myriad of objects) there are none that are not small. If we know that heaven and earth are tiny grains and the tip of a hair is a range of mountains, then we have perceived the law of difference.

From the point of view of function, if we regard a thing as useful because there is a certain usefulness to it, then among all the ten thousand thing (myriad of objects) there are none that are not useful. If we regard a thing as useless because there is a certain uselessness to it, then among the ten thousand things (myriad of objects) there are none that are not useless. If we know that east and west are mutually opposed, but that one cannot do without the others, then we can estimate the degree of function.

From the point of view of the preference, if we regard a thing as right because there is a certain right to it, then among the ten thousand things (myriad of objects) there are none that are not right. If we regard a thing as wrong because there is a certain wrong to it, then among the ten thousand things (myriad of objects) there are none that are not wrong. If we know that Yao and Chieh each thought himself right and condemned the other as wrong, then we may understand how there are preferences in behaviour.⁶⁶

In Chuang Tzu's thought, definition is the consequence of collation. All values are changeable and occasional with different viewpoints and values. All values are the consequence of one's subjective definition and judgment. The standard

⁶⁶ Chuang Tzu, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, translated by Burton Watson, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968) , p.179-180.

以道觀之，物無貴賤。以物觀之，自貴而相賤。以俗觀之，貴賤不在已。以差觀之，因其所大而大之，則萬物莫不大；因其所小而小之，則萬物莫不小；知天地之為稊米也，知豪末之為丘山也，則差數睹矣。以功觀之，因其所有而有之，則萬物莫不有；因其所無而無之，則萬物莫不無；知東西之相反而不可以相無，則功分定矣。以趣觀之，因其所然而然之，則萬物莫不然；因其所非而非之，則萬物莫不非；知堯、桀之自然而相非，則趣操睹矣

changes with each viewpoint and it is not only for humans, but also for all the objects in the world. Under the thought of all the objects are the one that reveals the truth and our comprehension. If it does, the distinction between contrasted values and the differences between subject and object are also eliminated. If all objects are the one and different roles to each other disappear, there are no constant meanings of object and subject. With developing thought, it is not necessary to distinguish everything in the world. The thinking of heaven and earth exist, in me, together and all the myriad of objects are one with me.

However, if a human attempts to realize thinking of identity, the first step is to desert discrimination and egocentrism. In the description of the music of heaven, earth and man, Tzu Chi's meditation describes the body like dry wood and the mind like dead ash and he even forgets who he is. The concept of "forgetting who he is" does not imply losing himself, but abandoning the egocentrism, the ego in his thinking, the word "I" in language. This "I" is built by thinking, with its own life and fed by our mood and emotions especially the negative emotion, fear. The ego, writes Buddhist philosopher Han de Wit, "*is also an affective reaction to our field of experience, a mental withdrawal based on fear.*"⁶⁷ The human judgment of the external world is subjective so it also means everybody might hold a different opinion of the same issue or thing. One always attempts to prove one is correct to obtain the advantage of competition or existence in society, so one has to defend one's perspective and prove others' wrong. The world is separated by subjective values and judgments. In order to transcend this separation, it is helpful to realize the separation or distinction are the essence of egocentrism and the obsession of emotions. When the attitude can be more flexible and contemplate and accept the difference through empathy then the true mind can be revealed. In Zen, it is called *Ming Xin Jian Xing*(明心見性), which means the recognition of the mind's nature. When a person's true mind is unclouded and not limited by prejudice, he owns the ability to see and realize the nature of being and the concept of *Dao Tong Wei Yi*(道通為一), the entire comprehensive harmony.

If a man sleeps in a damp place, he will have a pain in his loins, and half his body will be as if it were dead. But is it so with an eel? If a man lives up in a tree, he will be frightened and all in a tremble. But is it so with a monkey? Among these three, who knows that right

⁶⁷ Han de Wit, *De Lotus en de roos: Boeddhism in dialoog met psychologie, godsdienst en ethiek* (Kampen: Kok Agora, 1988), p. 82.

way for habitation? Men eat flesh; deer feed on grass. Centipedes enjoy snakes; owl and crow delight in mice. Among these four, who knows the right taste?⁶⁸

The quote seems ridiculous. How can we compare the different animal with the same point of view? And how can we compare humans with animals? Chuang Tzu does not focus on the difference, but the reality of truth of Being and broadens the field of vision of the cosmos. All objects are in *Tao* and there is no difference between the truth of Being between human and all other objects. We are equal to all others.

Chuang Tzu's perspective about identity focuses on the reality of truth of being not the differences of forms of species. The concept exceeds the boundary of human society. The space that humans dwell in does not have limitation anymore and it is broadened to the infinite spirit and nature. He treats the myriad of objects in comprehensive harmony and empathy and breaks the prejudice to release the spirit of the infinite *Tao* to obtain true freedom.

3. Identification of Object and Self

There is a famous fable about the true freedom concerning the butterfly in "Chuang Tzu 2",

Once upon a time, Chuang Chou⁶⁹ dreamed that he was a butterfly, a butterfly flying about, enjoying itself. It did not know that it was Chuang Chou. Suddenly he awoke, and veritably was Chuang Chou again. We do not know whether it was Chuang Chou dreaming that he was a butterfly, or whether it was a butterfly dreaming that it was Chuang Chou. Between Chuang Chou and the butterfly there must be some distinction. This is a case of what is called the transformation of things.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Chuang Tzu, *Chuang Tzu*, translated by Fung, Yu Lan, (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1989), p.51.

民濕寢則腰疾偏死，然乎哉？木處則惴慄恟懼，猿猴然乎哉？三者孰知正處？民食芻豢，麋鹿食薦，螂蛆甘帶，鷓鴣耆鼠，四者孰知正味？

⁶⁹ Chou is the name of Chuang Tzu.

⁷⁰ Ibid. p. 54.

昔者莊周夢為蝴蝶，栩栩然蝴蝶也，不知周也。俄然覺，則蘧蘧然周也，不知周之夢為蝴蝶與，蝴蝶之夢為周與，此之謂物化

This dreamlike story has been remembered for thousands of years. It presents Chuang Tzu's opinion of the relationship of human and nature, but also shows the perspective of living life and the process of living to die.

The human mind and dream dwell in the body, a different place from others. One knows something called "I" or "myself" and there are various ideas, memories, knowledge, emotions, feelings and thoughts. Unless one shares them by persistent literature or language, they are still secret and kept hidden. But we all understand it is difficult to achieve, even if we keep secrets to protecting ourselves or not, even if we think we are already totally open and pour out our true mind, maybe we have not understood ourselves as much as we think and we cannot confirm the "I", or whatever everything that I perceive are truly real or not. What we express is the truth from "I think" and the "I think" is a subjective recognition of the external things and it is also a strategy to conceal the true spirit. It is controlled by egocentrism.

Humans recount the information from the external environment and also reselect or transform the information. It means we sometimes lie or conceal a partial fact, but the body never tells a lie, the shiver in fear, the flickering eyes in a lie, and the cold sweat in anxiety, even if the operation of the mind is incredibly strong, it is difficult to hide the lie. There is a dimension called ego between human inner spirit and external environment. It sometimes covers the truth of our inner being and external things and destroys the harmony and identification between human and other things when one is facing the negative emotion.⁷¹

However, is it possible to achieve the harmony and identification of the boundary of '*heaven and earth and I came into existence together, and all things with me are one*', like Chuang Chou and the butterfly? If we hold the point of view of cognition, it is absolutely impossible. You are yourself and it is itself, too. It is acceptable to feel and understand each other, but it is impossible to become "one". For example, raising a pet with time there must be some tacit understanding and affection between owner and pet, but you are still different individuals. You can not totally understand each other unless your mind becomes its and its mind becomes yours and we all know this is impossible. If we hold the viewpoint of cognition, the estrangement of human and external

⁷¹ Eckhart Tolle, *A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life's Purpose*, (London: Michael Joseph, 2005)

things is difficult to break because the distinction of form, class and exterior is clear. You cannot say 'human' is rock because they are entirely different; you cannot say you are me because we are entirely different, too. We can see the individual distinction under this concept that is built on the perceivable difference and becomes an explicit and a distinct knowledge system..

In fact, it is difficult and unfair to compare the two viewpoints because they are different trajectories that are used to discuss to the relationship of human and external environment. According to Chuang Tzu's thinking of identification and treatment, he never discovers the question from the point of view of cognition, but from the aesthetic and empathic attitudes that contemplate the thousands of objects.⁷² In the story, Chuang Chou and the butterfly are fused. Chuang Chou deserts the stubborn thinking of his existence and eliminates the boundary of the butterfly and himself. The butterfly is Chuang Chou and Chuang Chou is the butterfly. They become one without distinction. This is a sort of freedom, liberation and harmony which cannot be easily analysed in a cognitive and scientific way. If we use a biographic view to analyse the story, there is no doubt that human is not a butterfly and butterfly is not human. But if we see it from Chuang Tzu's viewpoint of identification, they are different in body, but the nature is the same and under this premise, things and I or I and things have no difference in subject and object. So this concept of "thing and I are one" is not a conclusion of philosophical demonstration, but natural truth and premise. This feeling and understanding are hard to analyse in a rational way, we cannot precisely describe some spontaneous and inexplicable pleasure, fear or other complicated feelings. However, this harmony always exists inside our being. The purity and calm that we feel in a natural environment is the real response in our being.

The pressure and pursuit of time, space, reality and the continuous strategy and thinking for survival bring strong isolation and emptiness from our own being. In *Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka, he described how Gregor Samsa awoke one morning from uneasy dreams and found himself transformed in his bed into a gigantic insect. Gregor was a traveling salesman. He had to wake up at 4 am in the morning and caught the train at 5 am to get to the office. His boss's face and the dull work made him hate this job, but he had no choice but endure it in order to pay his father's debt. This day, he awoke from a nightmare and found he no longer had a human body, but had become an enormous

⁷² Chen, Gu Ying, *Zhuang Zi Zhe Xue*, (Taipei: Tai Wan Shang Wu Yin Shu Guan, 1966), p. 26.

insect. He tried to crawl outside his bedroom for the morning shift, but he felt exhausted and whispered.⁷³

This is a portrait of human modern life, the frustration of existence, the lost being, and the limited life. Kafka takes the big beetle as the metaphor of deep and heavy unhappiness and isolation. The isolation is from the loss of being and the weakness of facing it, negatively. What modern people lost is the freedom of being human, not like a wriggling big insect boxed up in a heavy body and crawling, frustrated. They are still despised and stepped on by society. Weakness, sinking, and emptiness, he loses the ability to resist and cannot struggle anymore and finally disappears, silently, from the world.

The spirit of Chuang Chou and the butterfly attempt to redefine and restore the real being from the sinking life and find the pure being of humans and the real being of all objects. A human being is like the free and happy butterfly, with a short life but unlimited existence in one's own life. The truth of being presents the initial freedom without the limitation of dogmas, mind, time and space of being a purely free being.

In fact, the content of the story is a dream. In *Chi Wu Luen*(齊物論), Chuang Tzu has an opinion, "life is like a great dream"

*Those who dream of wailing and weeping may in the morning go out to hunt. When they dream, they do not know that they are dreaming. In their dream, they may even interpret dreams. Only when they are awake, they begin to know that they dreamed. By and by, comes the great awakening, and then we shall find out that life itself is a great dream. All the while, the fools think that they are awake; that they know. With nice discriminations, they make distinctions between princes and grooms. How stupid! Confucius and you are both in a dream. When I say that you are in a dream, I am also in a dream.*⁷⁴

⁷³ Franz Kafka, *Metamorphosis And Other Stories*, translated by Willa and Edwin Muir, (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1961), p. 11-52

⁷⁴ Chuang Tzu, *Chuang Tzu*, translated by Fung, Yu Lan, (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1989), p.53.

夢飲酒者，旦而哭泣；夢哭泣者，旦而田獵。方其夢也，不知其夢也，夢之中又占其夢焉；覺而後知夢也，也有大覺而後知此大夢也，而愚者自以為覺，竊竊然知之。君乎！牧乎！丘也，與汝皆夢也；于謂汝夢，亦夢也

Chuang Tzu treats the meaning of the dream by the form and process of life. In the passage about the butterfly, Chuang Tzu creates a famous saying, *life is a great dream*. It means life is like a dream, short and unreal. We think we experience a long time in the dream, but actually it is short and we have no idea why we are in the scene of the dream, we do not know where we are from in the dream, but everything is so real with feelings and senses. We are sad, lost or happy in the dream, but we notice it is only a dream after waking. Even if it is so vivid, we cannot distinguish what is reality and what is a dream, and sometimes we even forget we dream. Life is like a dream. We are living in our dream or others' dreams. In the creation myth of Hindu, they believe *the universe is the dream of the god who, after a hundred Brahma years, dissolves himself into a dreamless sleep. The universe dissolves with him - until, after another Brahma century, he stirs, recomposes and begins again to dream the great cosmic dream.*⁷⁵All the thousands of objects are living in Brahma's dream and the world that we live is a dream.

Chuang Tzu's opinion of life is not negative. Life is short and what we perceive is not totally real, but in the story of Chuang Chou and the butterfly, life is definitely a free and happy dream. Life itself is a dream but, no doubt, it is a beautiful dream. We might ask if there is so much suffering in life, birth, aging, sickness and death, so how can life be a beautiful dream? For Chuang Tzu, birth, aging, sickness and death are the natural process of life so we do not need to think we are suffering. But take it as suffering because of our infatuation with life and fear of death. And other visible or invisible things are all from the artificial desire and never connect to our being. Birth, aging, sickness and death are a natural processes. The butterfly is ephemeral. Its life is so brief, but it still has its life at each living moment. Is it worried about dying? It only lives its life in nature and the presence of being. Life is an illusion. The visible body is like anything visible, it will die one day. People fear death because they do not know where they are going after dying.

From "life itself is a great dream" to "all things with me are one" and liberation from death, the true meaning of Chuang Chou and the butterfly is to explain the natural relationship of human and nature. Everything in the world is spontaneous, impermanent and short, but we always insist they are permanent and long-living.

⁷⁵ Carl Sagan, *Cosmos*,(New York: Random House, c1980. 1st ed), p.258.

When Chuang Tzu was about to die, his disciples expressed a desire to give him a sumptuous burial. Chuang Tzu said, "I will have heaven and earth for my coffin and coffin shell, the sun and moon for my pair of jade annulus, the stars and constellation for my pearls and beads, and the ten thousands things for my parting gifts. The furnishings for my funeral are already prepared - what is there to add?"

"But we are afraid the crows and kites will eat you, master!" said his disciples.

Chuang Tzu said, "Above ground, I'll be eaten by crows and kites, below ground, I'll be eaten by mole crickets and ants. Wouldn't it be rather bigoted to deprive one group in order to supply the other?"⁷⁶

The sufferings of birth, aging, sickness and death are the natural process of all objects. The human is part of the myriad of objects, living with them, dying with them, they cannot be separated. If we can abandon the egocentrism and the persistence of body and occasion, we can regain the truth and beauty in our being.

4. The process of harmony - Wu Wei

In the last section, I discussed Chuang Tzu's attitude to facing all the impermanent and various objects. He expects the ideal of combining the myriad of objects and makes the process of life natural and beautiful. Humans coexist in the world with all other objects. To Chuang Tzu, the harmonious approach to coexisting between the thousands of objects is *Wu Wei*(無為).

In Chinese, the definition of the two characters, *Wu*(無) means non, without or emptiness and *Wei*(為) means behaviour, making or doing something. Non-doing, how can we move on in our life without doing anything? And how can we develop and establish human civilization by doing nothing? To compare Chuang Tzu's attitude to the aesthetics of positive life, seems ridiculous and

⁷⁶ Chuang Tzu, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, translated by Burton Watson, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968) , p. 361.

unreasonable. Before I discuss the true meaning of *Wu Wei*, I would like to examine the metaphorical meaning behind the two characters.

If one attempts to explain the word by a Western philosophical dictionary, the word “truth” would be approximal, it could be a process of truth and the purpose of truth is to reveal the truth. In the concept of *Wu Wei*, *Wu Wei* is not a kind of intention, but a motiveless and purposeless unintentional mind. The contemplated object is no longer the touched or visible thing, but the thing itself, its nature of being. Martin Heidegger takes a thing as a sort of matter standing together with a form⁷⁷ to eliminate the artificial definitions of function, preference and emotions and so see the nature of the thing. The meaning of *Wu*(無) is relative and opposite to *You*(有). The Chinese verb, *You*(有), means to have, own, to exist, to be present or to be around. *Wu* has the contracted meaning of “not to be present,” “non-existence,” “not to be around.” In Chinese, *Wu* is not only the void, but a sort of empty existence. Emptiness also means the object is not existent, even existence itself is not existent in pure emptiness. The existence of emptiness is type of “existent emptiness” and also a kind of “nonexistent existence,” there is no distinction between subject and object in the concept of emptiness and there is no existent object to contemplate. The essence of existence is emptiness and emptiness exists in existence. According to Lao Tzu, emptiness is the essence of *Tao* and existence is the effect of *Tao*.⁷⁸ Perception is not able to see emptiness because emptiness is insubstantial, but the existence of the myriad of objects includes the essence of emptiness. The *Wu* in *Wu Wei* is not the entire emptiness and negation of existence, but an attitude and boundary of truth to contemplate the nature of thing or human.

The other meaning of *Wu Wei* is *Wei*(為), which can be pronounced in the second tone or the fourth tone in Chinese. The meaning in pronouncing in the second tone is doing, making or behaviour. They are produced by one’s intention. In other words, it is related to the humans’ “knowledge” and “purpose”. In the last section, we know man’s recognition is subjective and it changes with intention, position and time and space. If it is so, what is the true knowledge? There are two of Chuang Tzu’s famous sayings,

⁷⁷ Thomas. E. Wartenberg, *The Nature of Art: An Anthology*, (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2002), p. 155.

⁷⁸ Cai, Zhi Zhong, *Taoism in Comics*, (Taipei: Lucas Publishing, 2012), p. 286.

*There is a limit to our life, but to knowledge there is no limit. With what is limited to pursue what is unlimited is a perilous thing.*⁷⁹

*Calculate what man knows and it cannot compare to what he does not know. Calculate the time he is alive and it cannot compare to the time before he was born. Yet man takes something so small and tries to exhaust the dimensions of something so large! Hence he is muddled and confused and can never get anywhere.*⁸⁰

Human life and recognition is limited so man must understand the boundary of one's ability when the exploration of knowledge is out of range, even if one is able to be satisfied with no knowledge.⁸¹ In Chuang Tzu's articles, the argument for anti-knowledge is, indeed, existent. However, the knowledge that Chuang Tzu argues is the mundane knowledge, sort of temporary knowledge for adapting the values of contemporary and perceivable knowledge.⁸² The knowledge cannot be named the real knowledge. It is merely named the little knowledge, the knowledge under egocentrism. This temporary knowledge often exists in debating and parading others' purpose. It is bounded by human egocentrism or lopsided view due to his subjective prejudice. However, if it is pronounced in the fourth tone, the meaning of *Wei`* (偽) is a little different. The character *Wei`* (偽) can be separated into two components, *man* (人) at the left side and *do* (為) at the right side. Setting the meaning of words, literally, from the context, it means artificial or affected? If something is artificial and there is one's intention and desire behind it, how can we define its reality? The true knowledge, the harmonious relationship of all objects and nature, only exists in spontaneous *Tao*. In *Tao*, nothing is contrived. Paul Carus suggests that *Wu Wei* means "to do without doing", "to act without acting", "acting without non-assertion"⁸³ If we define *Wu Wei* literally, it seems negative and vacant, but its true meaning is to break egocentrism and contemplate the world from a broader standpoint without prejudice and self-satisfaction.

⁷⁹ Chuang Tzu, *Chuang Tzu*, translated by Fung, Yu Lan, (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1989), p.59.

吾生也有涯，而知也無涯。以有涯隨無涯，殆已

⁸⁰ Chuang Tzu, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, translated by Burton Watson, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), p. 177-178.

計人之所知，不若其所不知；其生之時，不若未生之時；以其至小，求窮其至大之域，是故迷亂而不能自德也

⁸¹ Chen, Gu Ying, *Zhuang Zi Zhe Xue*, (Taipei: Tai Wan Shang Wu Yin Shu Guan, 1966), p. 88.

⁸² Ibid, p. 89.

⁸³ Carus, translator, *The Teaching of Lao Tzu*, p. 22.

Actually, the origin of *Wu Wei* comes from Chuang Tzu's perspective on contemporary politics of his time. Chuang Tzu lived in an age of conflict. In order to consolidate power, feudal princes launched wars to scramble for power and profit. Strategies, penalties, fame and wealth, virtue and morality, and tact and debate, they all became the tools for expanding power and land. The country and people became the prey of hostile powers, *"the world weary and vexed; man found bitterness in their nature and there was no contentment anywhere."*⁸⁴ Frequent wars could not bring recovery. In order to survive, people struggled for power even ruined people's lives. The virtuous humanity disappeared. It totally ran counter to Chuang Tzu's ideal, where life was beautiful and the nature of life was free. When people struggle for survival and desire, how can beauty and freedom of life be revealed? In the conflicting society, Chuang Tzu proposed the thinking of *Wu Wei* to be a correction. Law could violate humanity, virtue and morality might limit the development of personality and they are totally a human's subjective judgment. Sometimes they even originate from private desire or are embezzled or abused in the troubled times to increase hurt and pain. Such as his saying,

*But until the sage is dead, great thieves will never cease to appear, and if you pile on more sages in hope of bringing the world to order, you will only be piling up more profit for Robber Chi. Containers of pecks and bushels for people to measure and they will steal by peck and bushel. Scales and balances for people to weigh by and they will steal by scale and balance. Tallies and seals to insure trustworthiness and people will steal with tallies and seals. Benevolence and righteousness to reform people and they will steal with benevolence and righteousness. How do I know this is so? He who steals a belt buckle pays with his life; he who steals a state gets to be a feudal lord - and we all know the benevolence and righteousness are to be found at the gate of the feudal lord.*⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Chuang Tzu, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, translated by Burton Watson, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), p. 114.

桀之治天下也，使天下瘁瘁焉人苦其性，是不愉也。

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, p. 109-110.

聖人不死，大盜不止。雖重聖人而治天下，則 是重利盜跖也。為之斗斛以量之，則并與斗斛而竊之；為之權衡以稱之，則并與權衡而竊之；為之符璽以信之，則并與符璽而竊之；為之仁義以矯之，則并與仁義而竊之。何以知其然邪？彼竊鉤者誅，竊國者為諸侯，諸侯之門而仁義存焉，則是非竊仁義聖知邪？

The function of law and dogma are established on the basis of evil in human nature. However, in Chuang Tzu's opinion, all kinds of relative or opposite principles are subjective thinking and so the dogma of law, system, morality and religion limit the development of personality and cannot bring a stable society. Dogmas offer principles and standard of behaviour and make people who obey them believe they are correct and feel secure. But the secure feeling is not from the truth of life, but from recognition of a subjective value so the political, moral and religious dogma cannot bring true inner peace. Chuang Tzu's purpose is not to negate the positive values and influence of morality, but the biased values and artificial untruth behind the dogma and rule. There is a saying in chapter *Ma Ti*,

Horses' hooves are made for treading frost and snow, their coat for keeping out wind and cold. To munch grass, drink from the stream, lift up their feet and gallop - this is the true nature of horses. Though they might possess great terraces and fine halls, they would have no use for them. Then along comes Po Lo. "I am good at handling horses!" he announces, and proceeds to brand them, shave them, pare them, bind them with martingale and crupper, tie them up in stable and stall. By this time two or three out of ten horses have died. He goes on starving them. Make them thirsty, race them, prance, pull them into line, force them to run side by side, in front of them the worry of bit and rein, behind them the terror of whip and crop. By this time, over half the horses have died.⁸⁶

Eckhart Tolle holds a similar opinion concerning dogma, he said,

Dogmas - religious, political, scientific - arise out of the erroneous belief that thought can encapsulate the reality of truth. Dogmas are collective conceptual prisons. And the strange thing is that people love their prison cells because they give them a sense of security and a false sense of "I know."

⁸⁶ Ibid, p.104.

馬，蹄可以踐霜雪，毛可以御風寒。齧草飲水，翹足而陸，此馬之真性也。雖有義臺路寢，無所用之。及至伯樂，曰：「我善治馬。」燒之，剔之，刻之，錐之。連之以羈罽，編之以阜棧，馬之死者十二三矣；飢之，渴之，馳之，驟之，整之，齊之，前有檝飾之患，而後有鞭策之威，而馬之死者已過半矣

Nothing has inflicted more suffering on humanity than its dogmas. It is true that every dogma crumbles sooner or later, because reality will eventually disclose its falseness; however, unless the basic delusion of it is seen for what it is, it will be replaced by others.

*What is the basic delusion? Identification with thought.*⁸⁷

Wu Wei never means doing nothing, but to follow the free development of human nature and release man from the pressure and limit of artificial systems and dogma. However, the unlimited development of humanity might cause anxiety or threaten others' freedom when it is over-excited or twisted and cause lawlessness and disorder. So the significance and function of *Wu Wei* does not only apply to the limits of social systems, but also to the various limitations, judgment and viewpoint and remains in harmonious relationship between human and human in the unlimited condition. This thinking is matched to *Chi Wu*(齊物). The relationship between one and other is equally respected, not surrendered, under the basic premise one could follow one's nature to create and feel true freedom, but also respect each other.

Chuang Tzu redefines the process of harmony of one and other, and one and nature by thinking of *Wu Wei*. Humans destroy the earth and tell ourselves we do this for survival. Nature becomes human's opponent, threatening our survival. However, the true enemy is not nature but our twisted fear and desire. We think nature belongs to us. Because of fear, we think we must fight for life, but we forget that we belong to nature. When Europeans landed in North America, they cheated and forced American Indians to sign contracts to transfer the land. For the Indian, it was incomprehensible. They thought they belonged to the earth, but the earth never belonged to them. In *Chief Seattle's Letter To All The People*, the chief said,

*The President in Washington sends word that he wishes to buy our land. But how can you buy or sell the sky? the land? The idea is strange to us. If we do not own the freshness of the air and the sparkle of the water, how can you buy them?*⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Eckhart Tolle, *Calmness Speak: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment*, (Taipei: Acorn Publishing, 2009), p. 32.

⁸⁸ Chief Seattle, *Chief Seattle's Letter To All The People*, 1845
<http://www.wrm.org.uy/actors/WTO/chief.html> (12/08/2012)

The human's obsession with the ownership of nature allows us not only to fight for our own survival, but also destroy the natural environment. In Liu, Xiao Gang's opinion, humans make two kinds of mistakes about the environment. The first one is they don't make enough effort, and the second one is caused by overdoing.⁸⁹ The point of the proposition of the relationship of human and nature is not only the effort to protect the natural environment or stop the pollution, but also an attitude to re-examine the human role between the thousands of objects. It is related to the contemplation of the truth of Being and regains the connection and integration of all objects with empathy and respect, instead of conflict or utilitarianism. Humans are not the master of nature. The separation or distinction of all objects brings isolation of human existence and the illusion of governing or controlling the world. We have no right to control it. The master of nature is nature itself and it cultivates self, including humans.

Conclusion

Tao, as a philosophical and aesthetics thinking, applies a more comprehensive and empathic point of view to treating the being of myriad of objects and humans. There is no distinction, no absolute judgment of values, no limitation to life and no negation of the suffering in life. It seems void and irrational without traditional and precise logic, but it still presents a different viewpoint to solve the abstract philosophical question about being and creation.

Today, the world is changing quickly, the newest things or information, today, might become old tomorrow. Nothing is unchangeable. One owns a lot and perceives a lot in the colourful and vivid world and is excited by every new thing and information or something one has never experienced. One keeps chasing for the material and feels liberation in consumption. One owns more and feels happy when one gets it. But why the feeling of weakness, emptiness, frustration and loss still appears again and again? One does not only expect the abundant material life, but also the being, the being to prove one's existence is identified, appreciated and confirmed. However, there is a Tibetan saying, "*Seeking happiness outside ourselves is like waiting for sunshine in a cave facing north.*"⁹⁰ If one expects true happiness, we should start to connect

⁸⁹ Liu, Xiao Gang, *Non- Action and the Environment Today: A conceptual and Applied Study of Laozi's Philosophy*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001), p.335.

⁹⁰ Matthieu Ricard, *A Guide to Developing Life's Most Important Skill*, translated by Jesse Browner, (London : Atlantic Books, 2007, c2006), p. 33.

to one's being and regain the connection to the nature of Being. Such as Chuang Tzu's perspective about identification and non-doing, before one regains the truth of the world, one should rebuild ourselves first treat the world fairly and respect ourselves and others. Rabindranath Tagore said, "*We read the world wrong and say that it deceives us.*"⁹¹ One sees the world from one's own view and says the world deserts me and it is unfair. One feels limited and blames the unfair and cruel world, but one forgets the world is constructed by humans. When one blames the world, one blames oneself.

The truth of the world is always there and it has never been far from us. Chuang Tzu admires the beauty and freedom of life and takes life as a beautiful dream to remind one to cherish each moment of life and be empathic to others. It is an ideal which is hard to achieve, but it indicates a road to regain true happiness and the nature of being.

⁹¹ Rabindranath Tagore, *Stray Birds*, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916)
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/tagore/strybrds.htm> (12/08/2012)

Chapter Three: Art Practice as the Catalyst between Human, Nature and Universe

Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss artists' responses to the proposition between the relationship between humans, nature and cosmos and how art can be the connection between them to reveal the truth of Being. In the first section, I discuss the conflict of human civilization's development and natural environmental protection through the examples of Taiwan and use some Taiwanese artists' responses to discuss the proposition. In the second section, I talk about the spirit of material through the birth of the universe and the Earth and how humans connect to the earth and universe. Taiwanese artist, Lo, Sen Hao's works and statement will be discussed to explain how material connects the universe, world and human. In the third section, the activity of art practice and the spirit of natural place will be discussed and the works of Wolfgang Laib and Andy Goldsworthy are used as examples to explain how artists interact with the world and the universe in the process of art practice. The final section discusses the nature of being of each object in the thousands of objects and examines each of them as an independent and individual spirit and energy related to the power of the universe. The ink and wash painting of Gao, Xing Jian will be taken as an example that describes an invisible and flowing energy.

1. Conflict and Introspection

In February 2010, I left my home country and started the longest journey that I had ever experienced in a foreign country.

This is a vast and open land and I am in the flourishing city, Sydney. Even if it is the Australian economic centre with most of the population, at beginning, I have to say, I was not used to the Australian life. There is no night market, open shopping mall and bookstore after 7 o'clock on weekdays', and the only places I can visit are supermarkets, bars, cinemas and boring convenience stores. The trains do not come as frequently as Taipei MRT; the Wi-fi is not available in most public places and cafés. At the beginning, it is a famous international city,

but seemed too slow and inconvenient for me. Three months later, I started to get used to living here and enjoyed my new life. Although it has inconvenient and expensive public transportation, messy and dirty streets in the City at weekend nights and very slow life-style, it is really a beautiful city. The humanized working system, parks everywhere for enjoying the warm sunshine, clear blue sky and ocean, the light purple Jacaranda trees, the clear sunset painted in rose-pink. Sydney is a city that in daily life I can feel a beautiful nature. Then, I found the Taiwanese convenience store in the hard working Taiwanese people who might sacrifice their health and quality of living.

I am from Taiwan, a small island, which measure a square is only one out of 213.6 of Australia's. There are 23 nations that admit it is an independent nation⁹² in the world and others only consider Taiwan as a province of China, even though the People's Republic of China has never governed Taiwan. The population is 23,268,372 (till July, 2012),⁹³ even more than Australia. ⁹⁴ The GDP is around 20,862 US dollars per person.⁹⁵ The famous industries are D-ram, LCD and parts of electronic consumer products. This is a small and crowded nation, without abundant natural resources. 23 million live in the tiny place with narrow living spaces. They work very hard, sacrificing their social life and family life. It is never easy to live in this island on the limited land.

It is my sweet home land. However, to see and feel nature in Taiwanese cities, especially in Taipei City, is not simple to attain. For normal, everyday people when you open the window for flowing air, the only thing you can see is your neighbour's window in front of your eyes and you even know what they are doing and where his bed is located when the curtain is open; and the only things you can smell and hear is the car gas and noise from all kinds of vehicles. The parks are small and often without one in your residential community; the blue sky is often covered by smoke and mist dust. Working overtime and the noisy and dusty living environment makes it unhealthy. In

⁹² Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of China(Taiwan)
<http://www.mofa.gov.tw/Official/Regions/AlliesIndex/?opno=777f1778-f578-4148-b22a-b62f81be5f57> (16/08/2012)

⁹³ Ministry of Interior, Republic of China (Taiwan)
http://www.moi.gov.tw/chi/chi_news/news_detail.aspx?sn=6577&type_code=01
(16/08/2012)

⁹⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistic
22895470 people, on 4 May 2012 at p.m.03:22:42 (Canberra time)
<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs%40.nsf/94713ad445ff1425ca25682000192af2/1647509ef7e25faaca2568a900154b63?OpenDocument>

⁹⁵ Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting, and Statistic, Excusive Yuan, R.O.C. (Taiwan)
<http://www.dgbas.gov.tw/ct.asp?xItem=31664&ctNode=497&mp=1> (16/08/2012)

order to survive, on this tiny island, the environment and life become the victims. The conflict between nature and human is extraordinarily obvious in Taiwan. It was beautiful in my parents' description of the past. The magnificent mountains and strange reef rock on the North Coast glistened in the sun light; there were colourful and unusual corals and tropical fish in Ken Ting's clear seawater; the surge of waves in Hualian Bay brought the clear and fresh sea breeze from the Pacific Ocean. But now, something is different. The strange reef rock on the North Coast becomes the Chinese visitors' stepping stones for taking photos; the coral in Ken Ting is bleached because of the warmer seawater and dug out by human desire; the wooded hills and forest are replaced by fruits and areca, which root lightly and cannot protect and catch the soil and cause mudflows and bury whole villages and families after heavy rain. This island, without abundant resources, has struggled between nature and survival under the shadow of war. In 2008, the project of Su Hua highway was suspended. People living in eastern Taiwan had expected the highway since 2000.⁹⁶ The original road was built along the east coast cliff in 1932. Rock falls and collapses happened after every heavy rain and earthquake. This is the only road to connect with Northern Taiwan. This is the last clean land in Taiwan, if it is developed, it will be gone. But who can endure the danger and inconvenience? It is a dilemma between environment and development. In 2008, the Taiwan government started to open the country for Chinese tourists to develop the local tourism industry. They earn a lot from the tourists, but it is exchanged for the destroyed reef rock with the tourists' signatures on it. This is the sadness of the Taiwanese environment. However, the dilemma of environmentalism and development never disappear. It becomes the true and false question with only one choice. No matter what is your final choice, humans still lose and the only difference is losing this moment or in the future.

In order to survive, maybe it is only an excuse, we can endure an unnatural environment and lifestyle and take the natural environment as an expendable object. The earth collapses in heavy rain; the poison gas pollutes the breeze; the beach is gone; the coral is bleaching. We pay for this loss but in some people's thinking, it means nothing. A Taiwanese movie director, Dai, Li Ren, expressed his strong concern and worry about the destroyed coast and environment in Eastern Taiwan. He said,

⁹⁶ National Policy Think Tank Online
http://thinktank.nat.gov.tw/Forum/Forum_CP.aspx?icuidem=22674&Issue=Article&Reply=List&RType=All&CtNode=152&CtUnit=58&BaseDSD=11&mp=1&xq_cat=C07&Vote=VList
(16/08/2012)

The beautiful coast in Eastern Taiwan is Taiwanese pride. It might be far from the capital, the centre of media, so it is hardly concerned and supervised by the mainstream public opinion... the greedy desire for money is devouring the coast that Taiwanese are proud of. And those destroyed cannot be retrieved anymore and it is much more serious than we imagine.⁹⁷

For those who earn their living from it, they complain about losing benefits, but they totally forget they cause the situation. Nature becomes the tool for earning a living. It loses its utilitarian value after being exhausted by humans. One destroys the natural environment because one takes nature as one's own object and thinks one can do anything to it. One forgets, one is part of it. Without land and ocean, how can humans live on the Earth? International news in September, 2012, China, Taiwan, and Japan each asserts it owns the sovereignty of *Diao Yu Tai* in the East China Sea.⁹⁸ The islands become the new target because it might contain huge natural gas or petroleum deposits and abundant fishery resources. We are like the aggressor scrambling for the zone and separating the Earth. In front of the enormous benefit, we fight and calculate for a reason about survival. However, the Earth never only belongs to humans. Human is only part of it. Humans will pay for the aggression one day and finally get the punishment from ourselves.

Hung, Tian Yu, presents the process of civilization changing the landscape through the blank space in his realistic landscape paintings. In his works, *Kee Lung River 1, 2, 3*, he chooses three periods - three hundred years ago, 1860s, and today, to show the environmental changing of Kee Lung River through the research of ecological and environmental documents.⁹⁹ Three hundred years ago, the population around the river was under three hundred. The two sides of the river were full of green. The forest was green; the river was clear blue reflecting the blue sky. The brilliant colours in *Kee Lung River 1* (fig. 21) display a vivid and pure natural environment. Until 1860s, when something changed. Part of the forest was rooted out and replaced by the blank spaces on *Kee Lung River 2* (fig.22). They look like villages, roads and houses and the river

⁹⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/leon.dai> (01/11/2012)

⁹⁸ Dia Yu Tai is a tiny island located in East China Sea. Taiwan Government name it Diao Yu Tai, but in China it is named Diao Yu Island and Japan call it Senkaku Island .
http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012Diaoyu/node_1089381.htm (01/11/2012)

⁹⁹ Qiu, Zi Rong, *Taiwan Contemporary Art Series: environment and ecology*, (Taipei: Yi Shu Jia Chu Ban She, 2003), p. 74.

was no longer clear. With the increasing population, the natural environment started to vanish, the dusk, the beautiful natural environment in the past is blank and no longer exists. The time moves on today. The green almost vanished; the river becomes black under the grey sky; the viaducts are built along the black river. The picture is almost completely occupied. In the blank space, we can see some vague grey pencil lines. They are the contour lines of the buildings and factories. With the moving on of time, what is it going to leave in the picture? A blank paper with only grey pencil lines? Or the entire emptiness.



Figure 21, 22, 23 Hung, Tian Yu, *Kee Lung River I, II, III*, oil on canvas, 180*60 cm, 2002

Hung wrote a passage for the works. He said,

I cannot tell the detail. It was long ago before my birth. Look, it has endless green. It is this land with lots of legends to be mentioned. The Formosan Sika Deer, the giant vines in the rainforest, the sweet

fish in the clear rivers, the facial tattooing of aboriginals and noisy monkeys. This island is called Formosa.

At that time, I had not reincarnated and my soul was playing in the clouds, but I remembered what I saw. Until I look down in the aircraft today, I finally know what misfortune is. The wind whispered to me, “ the world has been different.” The smell of the river water is sickening and the lingering smoke under the sunshine dyed all things to grey. The landscape should be extremely miserable, but it turns to a landscape painting which has rhythmic black and white colours. All birds flew away and all animals have gone, but the saddest thing is the memory that often appears in my heart of the Garden of Eden.

I clearly know everything is broken, but I still keep painting and going ahead. Have I ever held a heavier painting brush than this? Even so, I still hold the naïve expectation.

After a thousand years, two thousand years... God might heal the wound of the earth.¹⁰⁰

Hung brings the timeline into the series of works to record the change of the natural environment and its relationship to human activity. The change has been happening for three hundred years and will go on in the future without stop. However, what is the thing that he attempts to save and protect? He uses this way to erase the damage that humans have done to nature. To Hung, it is like a fact that he is not willing to face. Under the blank space, there is his concern and powerlessness to change the damaging nature. What he really attempts to record is not the blank space, but the vivid nature. The picture of the Kee Lung River with green forest and clear blue river water becomes the eternal beauty in his memory of the changing world.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, p.70-74.



Figure 24 Ni, Zai Chin, *Shi Le Yuan: Shi Le Yuan I*, ink and rice paper, 83*55 cm, 1993-1994

Ni, Zai Chin shows his strong concern for the environment before the consciousness about environmental issues has become prominent in Taiwan. He was a famous person of the environmental movement in Kaohsiung City. In the series of artworks, *Shi Le Yuan*(失樂園)¹⁰¹ in 1993 to 1994, he used rice paper and ink to present a world with only grey, black, and white. In the *Shi Lo Yuan 1*(失樂園 1) (fig.24), he puts symbols of environmental issues in Taiwan, such as working labourers, old house, Formosan sika deer and black earth. These symbols are metaphors of Taiwan. It should be a beautiful land, a paradise of wild animals, but it is named a lost paradise to bemoan the sadness of the earth. In the other work of the same series, *Shi Luo De He Shan*(失落的河山) (fig.25)¹⁰², he shows the significant issue of excessive use and exploitation of hillside land in Taiwan. The consequence of excessive use of hillside land increases the occurrence of mudslides in the typhoon season. The cracked earth and the river filled with gravel are a silent protest against human's ill-use of nature. The land, animals and historical sites have already become the victim of satisfying human social and economic requirement.

¹⁰¹ It means the lost Paradise.

¹⁰² It means the lost mountain and river.

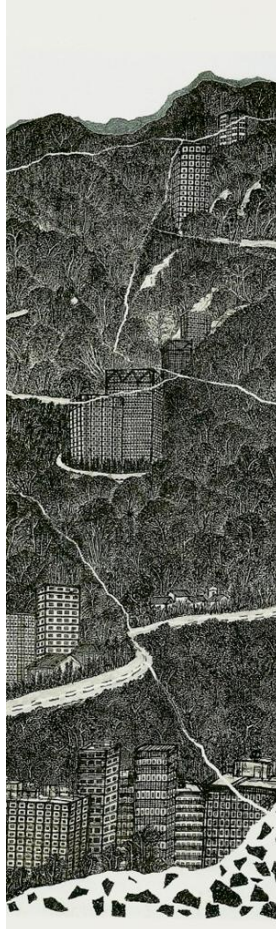


Figure 25 Ni, Zai Chin, *Shi Le Yuan: Shi Lou De He Shan*, ink and rice paper, 53*162 cm, 1998-1999

This series, *Shi Lo Yuan*, Ni places himself in the role of a third person to contemplate the environmental issue and accuses humans of destroying the natural environment. Humans take nature as belongings to control, to fight and to satisfy what they need from land. However, what humans gain, might make them lose more because of this excessive use. Humans seem to be the victor in the conflict between human and nature, but the consequences are obvious. Humans only get a temporary victory, they might lose the future.

In another series, *Hui Su Zhe*(回塑者) (figs.26 & 27), changes his role into first person practitioner and fuses with the environment through activity. The red bricks are always used for sidewalks in Kaohsiung City. You can see the red bricks everywhere in the city. He replaced the damaged bricks with grass. In the same series, he also destroyed the concrete columns located along the

Love River in Kaohsiung City. Ni thought the columns were ugly and vulgar. He damaged the top of a column and replaced it with agave. This behaviour is silent. In such a big city, his works might not be known by most. He said,

*I put down my painting brushes and find another way in nature. However, when I have deep observation of the environment, I see a dying nature and the industrial civilization and human's greedy desires are the biggest natural enemy. In order to backtrack the past, the past of vivid nature, I am forced to rise up. However, it is an extremely silent activity. I do it silently and leave silently.*¹⁰³



Figure 26 Ni, Zai Chin, Po Huai, Huan Yuan, 1994

¹⁰³ Blog of Ni, Tsai-chin
<http://tw.myblog.yahoo.com/nitsaichin/article?mid=379&prev=393&next=255> (11/14/2012)



Figure 27 Ni, Zai Chin, Po Huai, Huan Yuan, 1994

This is a silent protest, from damage to rebuilding. The artist, here, is like a silent practitioner and idealist who focuses on a renewed environment. He rebuilds them silently and expects a better future for the natural environment. Humans destroy nature then the artist tries to do something to rebuild it, even if it seems insignificant. Different to the series of *Shi Le Yuan* (figs.24 & 25), Ni changes the space of art practice into the environment and takes himself as a practitioner for rebuilding the natural environment. He said,

There are two periods in my art practice. The first period is Shi Le Yuan, and belongs to accusations. The second period is fusion. I fuse with the environment. My art practice in the first period is separated, but it merges in the second period. The material of my art works is originally a part of the environment and the works are made in the environment as well. The material, form, place and spirit of my works, their playing and ending, originates from the environment. They are one with the environment. I do not paint and the environment is not my object because I am in the environment. ¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ Qiu, Zi Rong, *Taiwan Contemporary Art Series: Environment and Ecology*, (Taipei: Yi Shu

As an artist, his behaviour completes the art works, and his art works and activity reflect the environmental issues and act as a catalyst to present his concern and ideal to the world. However, he does not take the environment as an object. He merges with the environment and creates the works with and in nature. The relationship in the series of *Hui Su Zhe* shows an ideal merging with nature and takes the role of artworks and art practice as part of the environment. From *Shi Le Yuan* (figs.24 & 25) to *Hui Su Zhe* (figs.26 & 27), from separation to merging, the introspection of the conflict of human and nature also reflects the expectation of a better world for human and environment.

Besides the concern of the environmental issues, Huang, Wen Hao presents the phenomenon of a living process through the withering and growing of wheatgrass in his work. He uses the wheatgrass - 1959B.C. ~ 1959 A.D. (fig 28) - as a metaphor for the return of nature. He seeded the wheatgrass in the gallery and welcomed the participation of viewers. He asked the viewers to cut the wheatgrass with sickles and he took out the clotted earth from PVC boxes then stacked this earth on a bronze table. The earthed blocks were transformed to become a chemical battery. Finally, he juiced the wheatgrass to provide refreshment for the viewers.



Figure 28 Huang, Wen Hao, 1959B.C. ~ 1959 A.D., 1993

The natural process of object and human activities completed the works. Human's every activity in the works represents the relationship of human and human works, human works and natural environment and human activity and the living progress of nature. Humans work with nature and nature feeds humans and finally we will return to nature and feed our future generations and myriads of other objects. The artist said,

Life is infinite burning, the irreducible combustion. Art could be the catalyst or the possible addiction. Although it is still not life itself, it brings the infinite possibility of life. I expect a world combining with the myriad of objects as one; the organics and inorganics are coexistent; heart and matters combine as one; the Paramattha and Ethereal communicate to each other without dialectic; human do not need the system for living together; and human can communicate with heaven without ceremony. All duality become reconciled. I expect to understand, close and return to nature and the human group. I do not believe the truth of transcending individual beings or that we can fabricate the unlimited truth. I do not believe artists can provide the meaning of life to people. What they have done is to establish a paradigm of chasing the value and truth of an individual.¹⁰⁵

He shows a strong expectation for the ideal of a harmonious and comprehensive world, a world without conflicts. In this work and passage, Huang combines nature, human and art as one to discuss the function of an artwork, the role of an artist in the world, and the ideal relationship between human and nature. To him, art is not the essence of being or being itself, but it could be a catalyst to reveal being. And the role of artist, here, becomes a practitioner and idealist to establish a paradigm to inspire the world, and maybe, at the same time, artists are inspired by nature, as well. His ideal of the world is similar to Chuang Tzu's concept of combining the myriad of objects as one.

From the accusation and protest of human's destruction of nature to presenting the ideal relationship between human and nature, no matter the way that the artists' choose, they all show the strong concern for the land. The worry and concern originate from the love of the earth and their expectations for a more

¹⁰⁵ 1997-1998 Nian Du Shen Qing Zhan Zhuan Ji, (Taipei: Taipei Fine Arts Museum, 1999), p. 126.

harmonious world. Artworks are not the answer to the essence of being itself in the world, however, they could be the connection that inspires the thinking or imagining of a better world. Through its form, process, material or content each of them has the connection or metaphor of nature. I never think art is sacred. To me, it is a spontaneous process to understand and present my thinking to the world. My role in the process of art practice is being a practitioner that completes the spontaneous idea in my spirit. The spontaneous idea, to me, is given from the universe and nature and the materials that artists use are from nature, as well. How can we cherish the earth where we dwell? Japanese designer Shinichi Nakazawa said,

Nature has given its bounty freely. Nature, the source of all life, has willingly bestowed wisdom and enabled humankind to develop the technologies needed to utilize all manner of energy and other resources. Yet humanity has not repaid or even dutifully acknowledged this vast debt, and now nature is beginning to lose patience. Technology was not given so mankind could ride roughshod over nature and wreak irreparable changes. Rather, technology is to draw out the hidden essence of all nature so that it can sparkle with new purpose. Technology is not to enslave and command life, but to draw forth the infinite possibilities locked within all life and to open new realms of significance. Thus it is that we need to heed the message of life and nature and to create new interfaces infused with nature's wisdom. Thus it is that we need to breathe the forgotten wisdom into our technology-dominated civilization, to allow modesty and humility and nature among people, themselves.¹⁰⁶

2. Materials and Life

This is the planet where we dwell. From the winter of the Northern Hemisphere to the summer of the Southern Hemisphere, I found how broad the world is. When I walk alone on the strange land and breath the dry wind of Australia, I realize the unknown world and myself are waiting for my discovery. I always look for the Southern Cross at night to know my direction, sometimes the

¹⁰⁶ Kenya Hara, *Designing Design*, translated by Maggie Kinser Hohle & Yukiko Naito (Baden, Switzerland: Lar Muller Publisher, 2007), p. 331-332.

loneliness is also a sort of tranquilly. I appreciate the peace and grace of living. In this atmosphere, I feel the grace within my existence. I spend a great deal of time asking questions of myself. Why am I here? Where am I going? Where was I from? The earth bears my body. After I die, my soul and body will become part of the cosmos, such as Chuang Tzu's saying: *Heaven and Earth and I came into existence together, and all things with me are one.*¹⁰⁷ The world is vast but also tiny. So many places that I haven't known, but it seems tiny when one looks at on starlight from a billion years ago. It is vast enough for humans, but to the cosmos, it is only the blue dust. And human existence is only the dust on it.

The relationship between human and earth is mentioned in Chinese creation myths. In China, they believe the world is created by a male god named Pan Gu and humans are created by a female god named Nu Wa. In the beginning of the universe, there is nothing but chaos. However, this chaos coalesced into a cosmic egg for about 18,000 years. After 18,000 years, Pan Gu was born from the cosmic egg. He separated the heaven and the earth. The light and clear elements, *Yang*, ascended to form heaven, and those heavy and murky elements, *Yin*, sank to become earth. Pan Gu grew up one Zhang (about 242 cm) per day and the Heaven grew one Zhang as well. After another 18000 years, he was 90000 miles tall. After he died, his body became the scenery in the world. His breathe became wind and cloud; his voice changed into thunder; his left eye transformed into the sun and right eye transformed into the moon; his arms and legs turned into mountains; his blood vessels became rivers; his muscles changed to clay; his hair and beard transformed into stars; the fine hair on his skin turned into plants; his teeth and bones became metals and rocks; and his sweat became rain.¹⁰⁸

This legend describes the birth of the universe, but how are humans created and who created humans? In the Chinese legend, there was a god named Ne Wa. She was a female god with human upper body and face and the snake's lower body. She used the yellow mud to form the shape of humans one by one by her hands. These humans were smart since they were individually crafted. However, she started to feel bored and tired of individually making each human so she began to put a rope in the mud and made the drops of mud fall from it to

¹⁰⁷ Chuang Tzu, *Chuang Tzu*, translated by Fung, Yu Lan, (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1989), p.49.

¹⁰⁸ Xu Zheng, (徐整 220-265 AD), *Three Five Historic Records* (三五歷紀; pinyin: *Sānwǔ Lìjì*), is the first to mention Pangu in the story "Pan Gu Separates the Sky from the Earth".

form new humans. These small drops became new humans, but they are not as smart as the first ones.¹⁰⁹

Humans connect to the cosmos and earth. Human is the artwork of Nu Wa, unique and individual. Just as in an artwork, Nu Wa's playfulness, originality, love and memory can be found in each. It is impossible that humans are made of earth and the myriad of objects are made of a giant's body. What the creation myth attempts to explain is the simple, but complex question of human existence. Taoism describes emptiness and chaos in the origin of the cosmos and One appeared one day. One created Two, Two created Three, Three created all objects. It is a sort of philosophical and aesthetics thinking which cannot be proven a scientific truth and becomes the model. It does not explain the process from emptiness to existence because in Taoism, the principle is *Tao* and it is always here and spontaneous.

This kind of romantic thinking is sort of an imaginary and poetic understanding of the cosmos, but it cannot become a theory. In the modern age, scientists have discovered and proven the gradual creation of the cosmos and humans. In the 1920's, most scientists believed that the cosmos was static.¹¹⁰ Then American astronomer, Edwin Hubble (1889-1953), found almost all galaxies were moving away from each other and the greater the distance between any two galaxies, then their relative speed of separation is enormous.¹¹¹ In 1929, he formulated the finding, nowadays is called simply, Hubble's Law.¹¹² This finding changed the scientific view of the universe and proved the universe is expanding. If we use the far past to push back to, all materials should gather in a tiny area with infinitely high temperature and density.¹¹³ If we keep pushing back to the origin of the universe, there might be a point, a point at the beginning of time and space. This is the original thinking of the Big Bang Theory. The Big Bang was named by Sir Fred Hoyle (1915-2001), an astronomer from University of Cambridge. Actually, the name, Big Bang is a derogatory term because Hoyle believed in a immovable universe like other

¹⁰⁹ Li Fang, (李昉 925-996 AD), *The Imperial Readings of the Taiping Era* (太平御覽; pinyin: *Tàipíng Yùlǎn*, 983AD)

¹¹⁰ Stephen Hawking & Leonard Mlodinow, *The Grand Design*, (New York : Bantam Books, 2010), p.124.

¹¹¹ Stephen Hawking, *The Universe in a Nutshell*, translated by Li Hua Ye, (Taipei: Locus Publishing Company, 2001), p. 75.

¹¹² *Ibid.* p. 76.

¹¹³ Stephen Hawking & Leonard Mlodinow, *The Grand Design*, (New York : Bantam Books, 2010), p.124.

astronomers at that time.¹¹⁴ However, the most direct and powerful evidence to prove the Big Bang Theory is the Microwave Background Radiation, the material that had existed in the universe since the Big Bang, which was found in 1965.¹¹⁵ At the same time, the catalyst for the Big Bang is still a mystery. The infinitely high temperature and density makes all known scientific rules become invalid apart from General Relativity. This point is named a Singularity. The origin of a singularity and the universe is still an unknown mystery, but we still know the origin and creation of the cosmos and life started from a big bang.

At beginning of the Big Bang, the universe was a hot, dense and non-transparent fire ball which included various gases. Ten billion years later, materials started to gather to form quasars, fixed stars, and protogalaxies and began to compound the heavier nuclear atoms. Fifty billion years later after the Big Bang, those galaxies with heavier nuclear atoms started to form, including our Galaxy. 103 billion years later, after the Big Bang, the Solar System and its planets had formed and started to move around the sun. Earth appeared.¹¹⁶ In the beginning Earth was like a fireball covered with magma. Then the flowing magma let the metal materials sink to the bottom and the magma surface became uniform. The cooling magma formed the Earth's hard crust and igneous rock. Two hundred thousand years ago, the Earth's atmosphere reacted with the cooling igneous rock. Rain appeared and formed the ocean. The constant and slow weathering and erosion pulverised the igneous rock into tiny particles. This is the birth of clay.¹¹⁷ It reflects the memory of the universe and Earth, today.

Clay is not only a material, but a medium that connects human, earth and universe. Water, earth, wind and fire are the most important and primary natural elements in the world are also important and meaningful to ceramic creation. They are the medium that connects the universe and an artist's personal history, life experience and memory and in the process of firing, the transformation and eutectic melting of form and property are like the birth of the universe and Earth. Earth is a ceramic work. Clay, as a carrier of human global memory, represents and memorializes the process and cycle of human life and behaviour. Material is not merely material to form the visible shape, but the spirit participates in the

¹¹⁴ Ibid. p. 127.

¹¹⁵ Stephen Hawking, *The Universe in a Nutshell*, translated by Li Hua Ye, (Taipei: Locust Publishing Company, 2001), p. 78.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, p. 168-169.

¹¹⁷ Cheng, Dao Yu translated, *Zhi Tao Yong De Nian Tu Yu You*, (Taipei: Xushi Culture and Education Foundation, 1995), p. 3-6.

spirit of artworks. And the spirit of material does not form through an artwork, but has its own system and story which is deeply related to the truth of Being of human and the world. The world is in the process of completing an artwork. The world includes myriad of objects, including humans, and their past, present, and future.

The earth carries the memory of the universe, also the memory of the Earth. Every creature performs the life process of survival and extinction, birth and death and becomes a part of the earth's memory over 46 billion years. The conflicts between human and nature are recorded by the earth of the Earth. Wars, destruction, protection and development earth records life but also records human egocentrism, struggle and suffering. The artist Lo, Sen Hao, has been focussed on the issue of the relationship of human and earth. To Lo, the meaning of the earth is not only an organic material, but records and carries human history and activity and reveals the future after humans die out. He describes his work *Unending Road* (fig.29) as,

*Land is an example of soil, stone and green grass until the footsteps and pathways people make leave bald spots over its perfection. ... This strip of road was, after all, formed from the trudging footsteps of humanity! It held the sweat, spittle, the decaying corpse of our ancestors, and the ashes of the dead of the future. It is the carrier of humanity's life rolling progressively from past to future.*¹¹⁸



Figure 29 Lo, Sen Hao, *Unending Road*, ceramic, 1993

¹¹⁸ Lo, Sen Hao, *The View in Affinity: Lo, Sen Hao Installation Art 1993-1999*, (Taipei: Wu Xin Tu Shu, 2000), p. 38.

The infinite cosmos above the head and the earth under the feet, we know we dwell on the Earth, we remember this knowledge, but forget the earth under our feet. We are part of the universe, part of the Earth, as a passenger, who will return to the earth like all other objects. We are embraced by the sun, the moon and the stars and are part of them. The earth nourishes plants, plants feed the herbivores, and herbivores feed the carnivores. When life ends, the body integrates with earth and nourishes the plants and feeds the animals. The performance of life is revealed. Lo, Sen Hao had an explanation for his artwork *Cocoon* (fig.30) to explain the relationship of universe, earth and the thousands of objects.

A grain of sand or is it a planet?

What was once a burning ball of fire began to cool; its boiling hot surface turned to embers and gradually peeled off, transforming into fields of grains and substance, little round pieces shaped like the shadow of the earth in people's heart. These little shadows gave out little green sprouts that grew and turned the land to gold.¹¹⁹



Figure 30 Lo, Sen Hao, *Cocoon*, 1993

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p. 42.

The planet and earth are the global memory of the myriad of objects. There are our buried ancestors, maybe our and our lover's last life are beside them, as well. All objects exist with us and become one with us. The form of life is coexistent and changeable in nature like the transformation of ceramic works during firing. However, the nature of Being has never changed, but transforms with the myriad of objects and universe. Lo, Sen Hao's art project, *Project Revivification* (fig.31) in 2002, discussed the concept of transmigration of life and death through the concept of the material spirit. On his way to the office and back home, he saw many animal corpses which had been killed on the road by the wheels of vehicles. He took photos of them and took these corpses to the kiln to burn them into bone ashes, then mixed them with clay that he picked up from the suburbs, following his intuition to make different vessel for each of the animals. These animals lost their life, unpredictably. They owned body, story, memory and soul and they all disappeared after death. Lo used clay and fire to recreate their bodies and souls. He said,

*All materials and objects on earth are mostly a kind of vessel. Some can carry water, some can carry food, some can carry blood, heart beats and souls. When the vessel changes its original shape, whether organic, or inorganic, sublimation or decay, after several transformations, the elements and energies of the original vessel are still present, this is the spirit of revivification.*¹²⁰

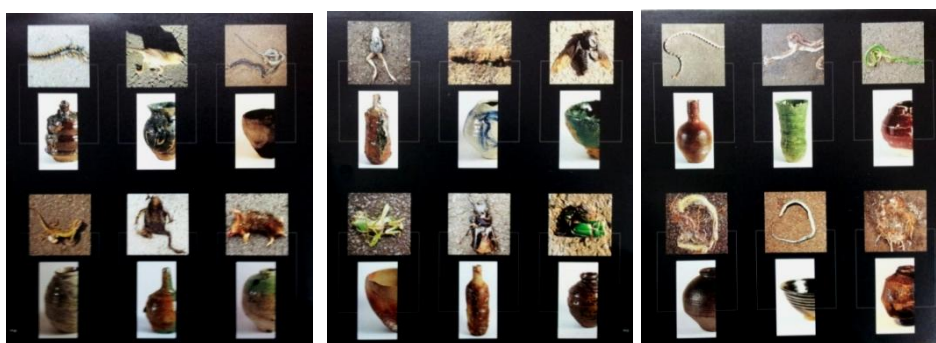


Figure 31 Lo, Sen Hao, *Project Revivification*, acting art, 2002

¹²⁰ Lo, Sen Hao, *Happy Land: Lo, Sen Hao Installation Art 2002-2005*, (Taipei: Wu Xin Tu Shu, 2006), p. 112.

We always think the disappearance of body is the end of life, however, whether life or death, they are only normal phenomenon, every perceivable thing will be extinct one day, such as Chuang Tzu's thinking. If life is impermanent, what do we live for? And what is the meaning of life? What do we contain in the vessel of body? From body to vessel, from soul to the content in the vessel, all lives will return to dust. The body transforms into ashes in the kiln's fire and returns to the earth, then is new born in the kiln's fire. The form of life changes, but the nature of Being is permanent. Clay as a sort of catalyst, it combines the past, the present, and the future and the process of the cycle of life never ends.

The concept of vessel and universe, earth and human also reflect Chuang Tzu's idea of the universe and humans. The harmony of becoming the one with universe and earth, the moment of a dream-like life, the connection of human and universe exists in the human Being, from earth to Earth, the elements of the human body are relative to the earth's elements and reveal the fact that the human is part of the universe. Mountains, rock and soil are all dust from the universe, from the dust of the Big Bang to the corpses of animals and plants. Aqua, calcium, iron, magnesium and zinc, these necessary minerals to maintain human life are the same as the earth's elements. All objects are from dust and transform to dust, finally. The human is a grain of dust in the universe and life is only an immediate process from dust to dust.

From dust to dust, in Lo's art project, *Liquor Dust* (figs.32 & 33) in 2010, he chose a traditional ceramic form to use Temmoku¹²¹ glaze to present the breathe and connection between human and universe. Lo lives on the boundary of Yang Ming Mt. National Park, Taiwan, famous for a volcanic terrain. The cherry blossom in spring, the green shade in summer, the red maple in autumn and the mist and cloud in winter, the beautiful scene and vital creatures are like a treasure from nature. He gathered the rock, soil and plants from around his house, the purple-brown clay, andesite, basalt, quartz sand and dried straw, Acacia confusa, camphorwood, areca, longan tree. These natural materials were washed, bundled, calcined and ground to be the ceramic

¹²¹ Temmoku glaze generally means the dark glaze which contains a high percentage of iron oxide. This kind of dark glaze originates from China. In the Kamakura Period (1192-1333 A.D.), Japanese monks studied at Tian Mu Mountain in Zhe Jian province in China. When they finished study, they also brought the black tea bowl from Tian Mu Mountain to Japan, so the black tea bowl was called Temmoku.
Huang, Chun Chen (2007), *Black-Secret Region: The Research and Application of Yuteki Temmoku Glaze: Take the Slip of Linkou County as An Example*, (Taipei: Master of Art thesis of National Taipei University of Education,2007), p.16.

material for making Temmoku tea bowls. The myriad of objects' breathing, the artist's breathing and the Being of all objects and the Being of the artist, contemplates and sees each other equally by gathering and forming the materials. The dust in hand is ourselves in the last life and future, there is ancient time and memory, without pride or humility, only the contemplation of the vessel's body in our past and future, to feel and react to the breathing and flowing of the myriad of objects and being in the universe. Lo said,

*One Temmoku bowl presents an immeasurable amount of dust with untraceable origins, which is possibly the beginning of another universe. The process of formation of stars and planets is almost similar to the theory of pottery-making. I feel that every Temmoku bowl is connected to every sentient being, relating to the limitless sky and universe.*¹²²

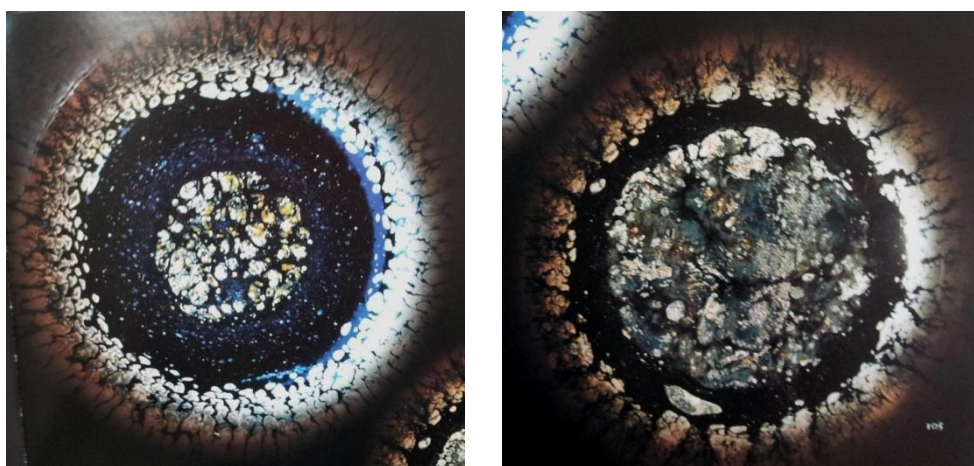


Figure 32, 33 Lo, Sen Hao, *Liquor Dust*(details of two works), 2010

There is the essence of life and Being inside the bowls. It belongs to the memory of the universe and every sentient being. Human Being and body reconnect to the universe to recall our mission in this life and the essential question about Being - where are we from and where are we going.

¹²² Lo, Sen Hao, *Liquid Dust*, (Taipei: Wu Xin Tu Shu, 2010), p.52.

Ceramics is from the dust of the universe, it is the fragments of stars and planets, the cooling magma, the weathered rock and the corpses of animals and plants. It is connected to the universe's history, including human past, present, and future, with its own story, spirit and soul. Everything is from the dust of the Big Bang and, as Lyotard reminds us, will return to the dust in the universe, eventually, including artists, materials and artworks. And material itself is not only a material to structure the artwork, it is also part of the universe, part of all objects with its own story and memory, which is also related and connected to the human story and memory. The human story and the material story combine in the artwork to bring a new image that is connected to the world and the thousands of objects more comprehensively. Art is also the movement and the framing and rearrangement of the universe.

3. Behaviour and Natural Place

2002, this was the second semester of my ceramics education, the first class in this semester, after the teacher's demonstration of the skill of handbuilding, we received the first project for homework: a vessel that is as tall as our own height after glaze firing. It was a big challenge for beginners. Depending on different clays and the firing temperature, the clay body would shrink up to ten to twenty percent. Taking myself as an example, I was 160 cm tall, if I wanted to build a vessel taller than me, the height of my vessel should be up to 180 cm at least. In the process the repeated collapse, failure and restart were like an endless nightmare. We were worried, disappointed, almost lost patience, confidence and passion. Before firing these vessels, the teacher planned an exhibition for them, named *Self-immolation* (figs.34 & 35). In that moment we suddenly knew what we had made - not only vessels but ourselves and the purpose of the project was not only the skill training, but the attitude to face ourselves and the world and respect nature. A few years later, I realized that this was the way to face the internal and external world, and the existence of ourselves and myriad of objects, like meditation. Actively keeping going, accepting the impermanence, holding empathy for all objects and respecting nature, these were what I learned in the process. However, other things that I feel are helpful in my life are unspeakable.



Figure 34, 35 *Self-immolation* in progress, photo by Chen, Xiang Jun, 2002

One day, the sunlight flew from the window into the back of the area to the potters' wheels and shone on the twinkling dust fluttering in the air. The forest-like vessels were standing in the studio and shone peacefully in the tender morning light. The leaves of the camphorwood in the ceramic front yard were clearly shining under the sunlight. Nobody was in the studio except me, only a small whisper from the old kiln. I sat and started my work that day. The clay was cold and the sunlight was warm. The wind blew and made the clear, green camphorwood leaf flutter and fly, like the golden snow. In the recycled yellow clay, there was Miro's (the college dog) white hair and a little white porcelain inside the clay. It was moist but not sticky and was rough and full of grog. I rolled coils under my fingers and built them into the unfinished clay body and connected them carefully by using my fingertips. The actions were repeated again and again during the whole morning, quietly and peacefully, like a silent performance. It was a kind of emptiness and calmness. I totally concentrated on each action, listening to my breathing, feeling the temperature and texture of the clay and my fingers. With the sunlight and shadow passing, the time stopped, the thinking disappeared, the world became clear and my heart became silent. Three months later, my vessel was finished. It was not fired or even loaded in the kiln. It was broken in the process of moving it to the

kiln. With time passing in front of the studio, it gradually melted to dust under the root of the camphorwood and returned to the earth.

Anger, worry, disappointment, pleasure and satisfaction, for me these emotions never stop flowing in the process of making art. They coexist with the present. The process of making an artwork is similar to meditation. According to Zen's proposition, the "correct way" never means the social rules or dogmas, but a situation "before our parents were born", it means our "original character."

*Originally, Bodhi is not a tree,
Nor is the mind-mirror standing.
Originally, not one thing exists,
So where is the dust to cling?*¹²³

This is Hui Neng's poem, which means everything in the world is unfounded, empty and illusory. Everything is born from the emptiness, and nature is emptiness and will finally return to the emptiness. In Zen meditation, the process of meditation, from the chaos and mess to the recognition of true Being and nature, might have stages. The first stage is Distracted Heart, which means the heart is influenced by external things and becomes distracted. The next one is Drowsy Heart, it cannot concentrate and becomes sleepy. The third one is Unstill Heart, which is a distraction more than a calmness. The fourth stage is One Heart, entire concentration. And the last one is to own a Calm Heart to regain the tranquility of the inner heart.¹²⁴ The purpose of meditation is to reveal the true soul, the truth of Being, where human and the myriad of objects are connected to each other. In *The Tao of Art*, Ben Willis mentions that no matter if Taoist, Buddhist or other religious way of meditating, the purpose is almost the same: self-cultivation, inner quietude and the achievement of higher spirituality.¹²⁵ In Taoism, 'meditation was to bring about this union, the integration, to re-establish the soul in its proper relationship to the Tao, to nature and the reality of itself. In other words, to make objective form of the physical being, the personality, the ego-self, one with its true nature, within.

¹²³ Steven W. Laycock, *Hui-Neng and the Transcendental Standpoint*, Journal of Chinese Philosophy V.12, pp. 179- 196, (Copyright 1985 by Dialogue Publishing Company), p. 179.

¹²⁴ Du, Yi Xin, *Chan Zong Tu Wen Bai Ke Yi Chian Wen*, (Xi An: Shannxi Normal University Press, 2008), p. 366.

¹²⁵ Ben Willis, *The Tao of Art: The Inner meaning of Chinese Art and Philosophy*, (Melbourne: Century Hutchinson Australia (Pty) Ltd, 1987), p.100.

*Understood in this sense, it is not difficult to see why it was called a "returning."*¹²⁶

However, this inner meditation of the heart is always doubted, it only pays attention to personal, moral claims without thought of others and society. However, to escape from suffering and reality never becomes the purpose of meditation. In the process of meditation, only active and positive attitudes can face the appearance of egocentrism and thoughts. And, the appearance of them reflects the confusion about the soul and Being and only a brave and positive attitude can release the confusion. A significant part of the process of meditation is to face and contemplate the essence of confusion or other phenomena in the world in an objective and detached way to transcend the perceived reality. In this age, the pressure of competitive life and stress of losing time occupies our daily life. Thinking of gain and loss, competition, comparison and the worry of time makes life and one's viewpoint become narrow and weak, then everybody is like Kafka's weak, big beetle. The world is structured by individual people. The concept of Chuang Tzu's *Wu Wei* and meditation never means escapism, but to embrace the world and return to the nature of Being.

And the process of making artworks is similar to meditation, the change appears in the body and spirit. The process of art practice is an extremely personalized behaviour; it is a conversation between artist and world, and artist and him/herself. Sometimes toil, tiredness or hunger can be ignored or forgotten because a broader ideal, passion or mission exists; sometimes a problem arises, it might be from an outer pressure or the negative thoughts in the mind. These might happen in the process of making and one needs to be brave and positive to face this and overcome it. In the conversation between artist and world, the true existence of the artist is to respond to the world and finally to create new objects to reflect the truth of Being. The truth of Being does not exist in the visible artwork only. The artwork is an object and will be destroyed or wither with time, no matter how we fix it, the artwork is still different to its true feature. It might be broken by fire, flood, earthquake or children playing in a museum. It also needs to face the impermanence and its existence like other objects' impermanent existence just as every visible thing will disappear one day. But the meditation in the process of art practice is connected to the human and the world and brings influence. This invisible

¹²⁶ Ibid, p.101.

power leads the human spirit to keep heading towards nature and reveals the impermanence and truth of Being.

The artist completes the process of connecting to self-existence, spirit, ideal and the communication with the world. The purpose of meditation is spirit, the pure connection between the myriad of objects and spirit, to feel the pure relationship of true being and the universe. And the process of meditation or creation is like a ceremony that integrates humans and the universe, internal and external, spirit and body. *Meditation was precisely such a harmony, because it integrated the inner and outer world. It was the spiritual union the Taoists sought, uniting the physical and spiritual selves to making them one.*¹²⁷ The behaviour of artmaking, itself, is a practice of the artist, herself, and her life through art and the fundamental purpose of practice is to prove existence - I am here. In the process, the extremely personal and direct experience and aloneness can make an artist enter a space/time of presence where there is no past or future. In this presence, the artist is connected to the universe to achieve a situation of integrated inner and outer world, body and spirit. This phenomenon is similar to meditation in the spirit. However, to the artist, the feeling of existing in the moment is not the final result in art practice, whether the point that the artist emphasizes is the result or the process. The completion of the artwork is still necessary even if some artworks represent and focus on the process of making, they are still recorded by image or object. The feeling of existing in the moment is a personal experience and condition in the process of art practice. Similarly to *Tao*, it is unspeakable and abstract, but it can be part of the content of artworks.

The Germany artist Wolfgang Laib (1950-) uses natural material and the activity of gathering material and making artwork to present a pure and deep relationship between human, art and the universe without conflict and judgment. He purely contemplates the world in a peaceful, tranquil and non-judgmental way. In his work *Milk Stone* (fig.36), he used white marble and white milk to present the clean and pure relation of these two elements to reflect the concept that the *Dao*¹²⁸ *in its regular course does nothing, and so there is nothing which it does not do.*¹²⁹ Like a ceremony, he poured the milk slowly on the

¹²⁷ Ibid, p.106.

¹²⁸ The word Dao is the same as Tao

¹²⁹ Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*, Trans. James Legge, Chapter 37
<http://ctext.org/dao-de-jing/zh?en=on> (20/08/2012)

white marble day by day. White milk on white marble, white on white. The artist repeated the same simple action everyday to make a totally white artwork which looks almost the same after the artist's action. Marble belongs to the earth. It is a crystal of the earth and solid; milk is the product of objects, it is organic and fluid, the nourishment of young animals. The milk flows on the marble, life is the fluid on the earth. Organic and inorganic, solid and fluid, these different characteristics look contradictory, but they have the same nature of Being under the concept of identification. The artist's behaviour is also part of the work, part of all objects. He was doing something that looks like doing nothing.



Figure 36 Wolfgang Laib , *Milk Stone*, marble and milk, 2 x122x130 cm, 1987

Another work by Wolfgang Laib is *Pollen from Pine* (figs.37 & 38). He gathered the hazelnut pollen himself from the natural environment (fig.39) and mashed them to become a golden yellow square. The golden yellow square has a feathered edge that makes the artworks look like a golden light on the floor. Pollen is the element of a plant's development. It is a symbol of vivid and endless life. It is fine and flows with the wind and insects between heaven and earth. Laib was in the golden flower field between heaven and earth, in the flowing pollen and wind. A human is part of the universe, no matter if it is body or spirit. Laib's behaviour looks simple and monotonous, but the repeated

simple action is like a tranquil ceremony to include the natural within his peaceful action. His participation with all objects is through his intuition and spirit without any attitude or viewpoint, it is contemplation and silently participating. He is part of them, part of the marble and milk, part of the artwork, part of the universe.

The pollen is still used in his recent work *Without Place- Without Time- Without Body* (fig.40). He used pollen and rice to build many small mountains. Golden pollen and white rice, pollen is the dust for developing new life and rice is the food for maintaining humanity and is given from the earth. They are both symbols of divine life. The pollen and rice mountains represent a pure existence of objects. From the limited object to the unlimited myriad of objects, it shows a harmonious spirit of contemplating the worlds. Between emptiness and abundance, still gazing and self-revelation, Laib participates in the universe through the tranquil ceremony to integrate human and world, self and the universe. It presents the truth of Being in art through metaphorical behaviour and form to perform the act of becoming one with all objects.



Figure 37 Wolfgang Laib , *Pollen from Pine*, pollen, 1989



Figure 38 Wolfgang Laib , *Pollen from Pine*, pollen, 1989

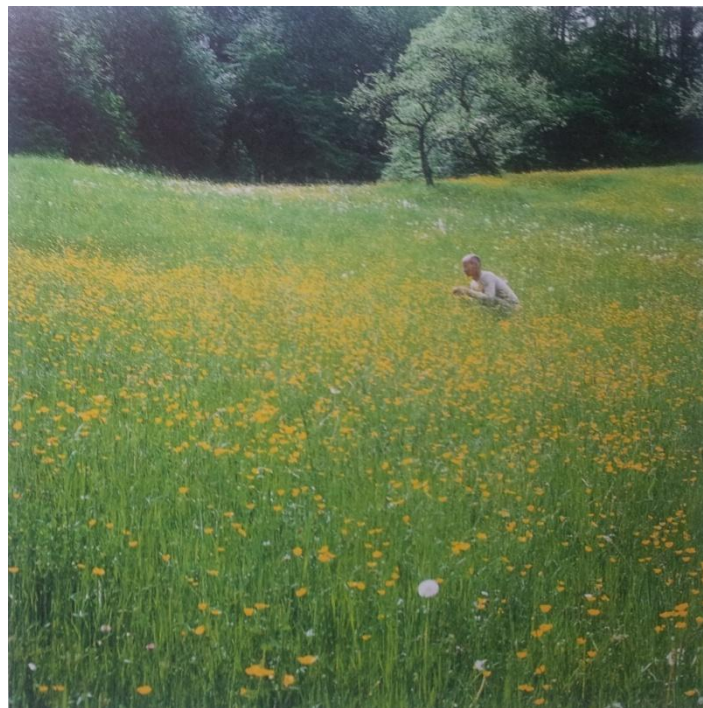


Figure 39 Laib gathering the pollen in the buttercup meadow

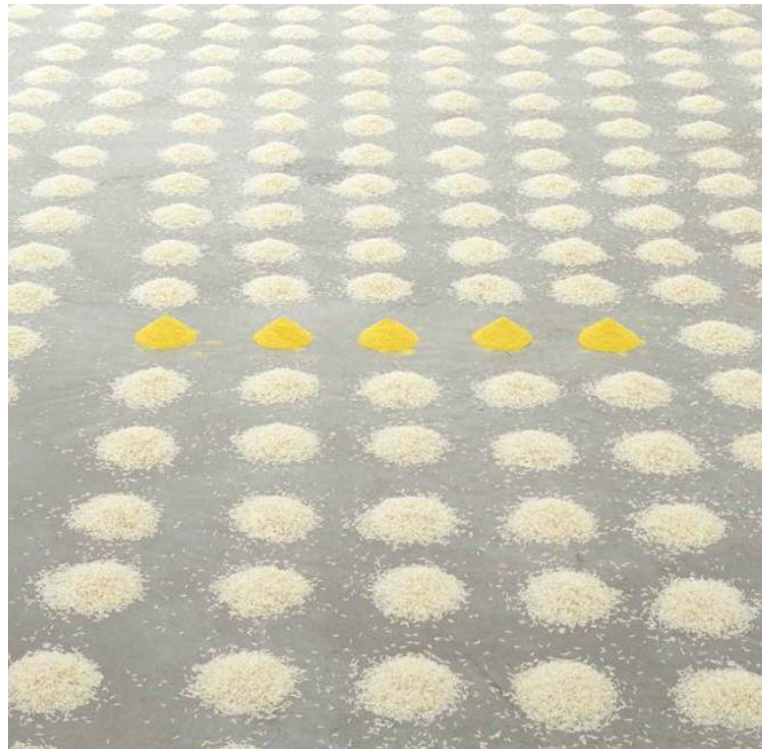


Figure 40 Wolfgang Laib, *Without Place - Without Time - Without Body*, rice, hazelnut pollen, 2007

Humanity is the fluid between heaven and earth. Blood, thoughts, location and duration flow in the universe, but the truth of Being and impermanence never change. Through the natural environment, we feel our existence and participation in the world.

Andy Goldsworthy (1956-), an English artist, presents the flowing and unspeakable natural principle in his works. He moved the exhibition space to the natural environment and brought the natural power into his works. He noted and described the perceivable natural phenomena and change of work and environment, temperature, weather, scene, shape and colour in his process of making work. In his work, *Stick Hole* (fig.41) at Scaur Glen, Dumfriesshire, from April to August 1999, he used sticks to build a stick hole. From spring to autumn, the plants grew exuberantly and the stick-made hole was gradually covered and hidden by greenery. These two works have similar elements, hole and spiral. These two artificial works made of natural materials look as if the site is disappearing with the flow of time and shadow. In Goldsworthy's works,

natural material is used to create an artificial work, but it still disappears with the moving time and space and returns to the earth. He said,

*I was always interested in seeing work change and decay, but usually as a spectator. Lately the challenge has been not simply to wait for things to decay, but make change as an integral part of a work's purpose so that, if anything, it becomes stronger and more complete as it falls apart and disappears. I need to make works that anticipate, but do not attempt to predict or control, the future.*¹³⁰

Goldsworthy takes the changing of his works and nature as a natural progression. No matter his works or exhibition site, his works change with nature and flow with the natural energy. The impermanence and the progress from existence to disappearance are like the process of life, every phenomenon is spontaneous and follows the principle of *Tao*, including the artwork, itself. His works are completed by the cooperation of nature and human activities. The artwork is built by the artist, however, it also belongs to the changes of nature and even itself changes every day. His works, in the beginning of the place, the material and the spirit, connect and coexist with nature. The change is part of the works, like the myriad of objects in the world, ever changing and impermanent and, finally, return to the earth.

In 1999, Goldsworthy made a new series at Connell (figs.42-44). He used leaves as the brush and took the rock beside the river as canvas. Like a ceremony to represent the beauty of nature, red, yellow, orange, and green leaves were collaged onto the rock. The red maple was built to be a red hill, located on the rock. The yellow leaves were set in the bottom of rock with the golden reflection on the mirror-like water surface. In his diary of the series of works, he wrote down the details of the weather, the scene, the process that he did in artworks, the mood and condition of working with them and his feeling of experiencing the change of his works every day.¹³¹ He also felt the changing of the environment, the materials and his works through his body. The process was not like installing an object in a museum or gallery. The wind blew away part of the work, the sun's disappearance made him miss the best light and the leaves dried quickly and split from the rock. The unpredictable environment made him rework or recover the damaged works several times. He would be

¹³⁰ Andy Goldsworthy, *Time*, (London: Thomas & Hudson Ltd., 2000), p.7.

¹³¹ *Ibid*, p.163-177.

tired and frustrated. The repetition and reworking the artworks is like a process of facing the unpredictable and changing world, working with heaven, working with earth, working with himself to contemplate the myriad of objects and himself. In the relationship between artworks and nature, there is intuitive and immediate communication. The artist's behaviour is to contemplate and feel the rhythms of human, earth and heaven directly.



Figure 41 Andy Goldsworthy, *Stick Hole*, 1999



Figure 42 Andy Goldsworthy, *Overleaf*, 1999

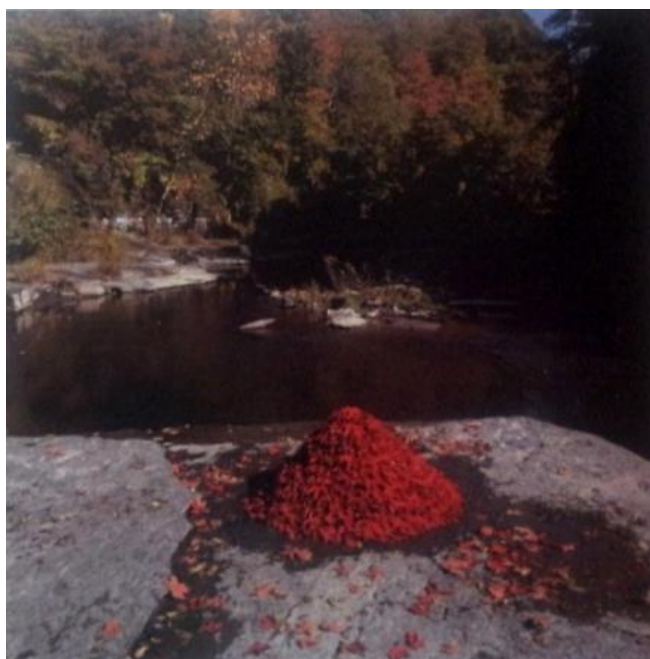


Figure 43 Andy Goldsworthy, *Cairn of leaves supported by cairn of stones*, 1999



Figure 44 Andy Goldsworthy, *Leaves laid on a river boulder held with water green to yellow dark to light*, 1999

Ceremony, behaviour, heaven and earth, in the process of making artworks, it is an artist's inner meditation and outer ceremony or performance in the world. It is in the world as a metaphor and reveals the truth of Being and the world. This completion of ceremony is connected to the outer world through the artist's extremely personal experience and there is a sort of pure contemplation and communication of human and universe inside the process of art practice. It is visible power. No matter if the final form is traditional or contemporary, avant-garde or conservative, in the process of making artwork, this personal connection and intuition exist, like the spirit of material and memory. They flow through the artwork and become an invisible power to change the space, person and the world.

4. Spirit and Infinity

When I was twenty, I visited the solo exhibition of Gu, He Zhong, an oil painter. He had painted many photographic still lives - vegetable, fruit, food, glass, tin with content inside, viscera and empty plates which were all in a blue-grey tone. The cool and shimmering light and shadow made all the still lives on the canvases look like frozen, isolated and congealed preparation and sacrifice. I asked a question about a painting which was only an empty plate (fig.45). My question was related to my ceramic background, I asked about the concept of a

vessel and, at that time, I thought what made a vessel be a vessel was its function of containing something visible. I asked, if the mission and function of a plate was to contain something, but in this painting, it did not contain anything. So, what was its mission and function, and what was its meaning of Being in this painting. His answer has impressed me to this day. He answered, “can’t it contain the air?” This answer brought me a new point of view about visible objects and existence. The vessel contained nothing in the picture, however, it was still a vessel, but it was the not real object. It existed on a canvas but it could not really contain anything, even the air. This was the beginning for me - to think about the proposition of the truth of Being and the way that I read the world.



Figure 45 Gu, He Zhong, *Contemplation* (Chinese:靜觀), oil on canvas, 20x40 cm, 1994



Figure 46 Gu, He Zhong, *Atmosphere in Breakdown* (Chinese:破曉氣息), oil on canvas, 40x50 cm, 1997-1998



Figure 47 Gu, He Zhong, *Value of Dignity*
(Chinese: 尊嚴的價值), oil on canvas, 60x65 cm,
2001

Maybe one is too easily convinced about the visible and persistent concept and immerse one's thinking into the established pattern and miss other possibilities. There is no absolute rule in the world and the meaning and name of a vessel are also named by humans. It is an object named 'vessel', but it is itself, like those isolated still lives that attempt to reveal their own existence and independent spirit. They are watched, but their existence is equal to the observer. They are the virtual images which look like the real image on the canvas and how can we know these images in front of us are real or fake. There is no permanent values and definition in the world, they are spontaneously formed from the emptiness and will return to it, as well. The emptiness that the plate holds contains everything visible and invisible, virtual and real and the cycle of life and death, just as the universe looks empty but contains the changing and flowing of time and space of all objects. All of them inclusive in the universe but each of them is still independent but related to each other. This empty plate (fig.45) contains nothing, but reveals its independent spirit and becomes a metaphor of the spirit and energy for changing and flowing around all objects.

In Eastern art, particularly in ink and wash painting, there is a significant part which is even more important than realistic painting, *Chi Yun*(氣韻). *Chi*(氣) means air and breath, a sort of perceivable but invisible energy to represent the living presence and a kind of energy of form. Not only animals, but all objects contain this breath. If we attempt to explain it in a scientific vocabulary, it could be the energy field of each object, like universal gravity, it is unperceivable but

related and interact with each other. However, it does not mean the physical breath, but spirit and energy of Being. It is about the individual spirit of each object, a pure and independent existence. But the individual independent spirit never means isolation or separation, but develops in its own nature in *Tao* and finally merges with others in *Tao*.

*Chi could also be described as the perceptible presence or manifestation of Tao in the natural world, which was later to be characterized by historical Chinese art critics and aesthetician as “life movement” and “spirit resonance”, as Chi Yun.*¹³²

If we describe energy as *Chi*, it also means it can ‘flow’. If it can flow, it also means it will have motion and cause rhythm or tempo of motion. *Yun*(韻) is the rhythm of the interaction between the energy of all objects. It is able to describe the rhythm of life, virtual and real, living and dead, motion and stillness, the myriad of objects change their form of existence in *Tao* and interact with others to merge in *Tao* and become one. *Chi* and the flowing energy in Eastern art reveal the individual spirit of existence of the all objects and merge into the comprehensive energy of the objects in *Tao* and presents a seamless mood to show the ideal of combining with nature without distinction. And what the mood present is the pure relationship of all objects and the universe, which is integrated by the realisation of the comprehensive spirit and energy of nature and the universe through the structure and merging of the nature of all objects. In Taoism, the subject is not the visible thing in the understanding of the spirit of universe, but the invisible energy which cause the phenomenon, *Tao*. The natural phenomenon does not only consist of visible natural objects such as tree, mountain, river, but the atmosphere of place which is formed by the natural object’s invisible energy and change.

According Immanuel Kant’s analysis of *Beautiful* and *Sublime*, the *Beautiful* in nature is connected to the visible objects, which has boundaries, but the *Sublime* is found in formless objects.¹³³ The *Sublime* is boundless and the object that the *Sublime* connected to is abstract, without a form. How can we describe an object concretely if it is formless? However, it is possible to use

¹³² Ben Willis, *The Tao of Art: The Inner Meaning of Chinese Art and Philosophy*, (Melbourne: Century Hutchinson Australia (Pty) Ltd, 1987), p.49.

¹³³ Immanuel Kant, *Kant’s Critique of Judgement*, translated with Introduction and Notes by J.H. Bernard (2nd ed. revised) (London: Macmillan, 1914)
http://oll.libertyfund.org/?option=com_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=1217&chapter=97496&layout=html&Itemid=27 (06/12/2012)

one's intuition which originates from one's independent feeling of nature.¹³⁴ The experience of natural place is familiar to humans, but we still find it difficult to describe where the tranquil and liberating feeling comes from. There seems an unspeakable power and atmosphere that brings a harmonious feeling when we experience the *Sublime* and *Beauty* of nature. However, the way that Eastern art describes the invisible power of nature is still abstract. Lao Tzu also thinks *Tao* is unspeakable.¹³⁵ In Christian Norberg-Schulz's opinion, one of the ways of understanding nature is to start from the natural power and integrate the abstract power and concrete natural objects to explain how the existent objects exist. Sky, land, mountain, rock and tree are given sacred meaning and connected to a creation myth of the birth of the universe.¹³⁶ The creation myth of the birth of the universe structures the sanctity of nature, like the Animism of Shintoism and other polytheisms. The second approach is cosmic order. People choose and induct a systematic cosmos from the changing events of nature, such as the movement of the sun across the sky and the phases of the moon to form the model of universe and Earth.¹³⁷ The third is character, which means to match the character of natural place and human physical and emotional character, like the Greek Gods with human bodies and emotions.¹³⁸ People use this approach to connect human and nature and become part of nature. The fourth and fifth ways of understanding nature are light and time. Light is a significant factor in perceiving the existent object and with the movement of time, the changing of the light of the sky and the rhythm of the myriad of objects, existence appears.

Humans experience the greatness of nature and the insignificance of self through the perceivable natural objects and mood and define nature as a sacred existence to fear and respect because you can perceive nature directly, but it is difficult to understand comprehensively. However, in Taoism, nature is a great master, we can learn from it, but we are also part of it and with the same nature of being as all other objects. The contemplation of nature is the spirit caused by the interaction of each object's energy. This spirit is similar to Christian Norberg-Schulz's opinion about the spirit of natural places. Chuang Tzu and Norberg-Schulz both think the structure and spirit of natural places

¹³⁴ Ibid

¹³⁵ Wing Tsit Chan, *Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy*, (Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 97.

¹³⁶ Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*, (London : Academy Editions, 1980), p. 27.

¹³⁷ Ibid. p.36.

¹³⁸ Ibid, p.36.

arise from the independent character and energy of each object. The difference is *Taoism* explains the universe under *Tao* and the concept of nature and impermanence. And the flowing *Chi Yun* also reflects the change and breath of the myriad of objects under the flow of time and the light of the sky. Although part of natural objects look calm, there is the condensation of time inside, which includes the slow and smooth change and flow of the independent spirit of each object. The spirit of place in Eastern art forms is the flowing breath and change of all objects in the universe and interacts and integrates with the artist's spirit and body. It presents a condition that coexists and becomes one with the universe through the art practice.

In Pu, Zhen Yuan's *The Chinese Art Theory of the Ideal Condition of Aesthetics* (中國藝術意境論), he describe the three characteristics of an artistic conception. The first is from the aesthetics appreciation of the universal mode of living to the aesthetics appreciation of the function of life.¹³⁹ It means to return to the independent spirit of a natural object's own being instead of representing the visible forms of all objects. In Eastern art, mountain, rock, tree and river are all impressions constructed from different abstract symbols. The dry brush skill is used to represent the rough texture of rock; the leaf is painted by a moist brush and the medium of dark ink; the fluttering cloud and mist is represented by gradation and whitespace. What ink and wash paintings attempt to contemplate and represent is not the precise and realistic light, shadow and image. They focus on the texture and character of an object to form an image that returns to the nature of each object.

The second characteristic is to form the void and the quiet aesthetic appreciation with the centre of *Chi Yun* in the integration of movement and calmness.¹⁴⁰ In Hsia Kuei's *Remote View of Streams and Hills* (fig.48), we can see the flowing waterfall and the standing mountain; the tender and soft water and hard rock; the void and the fluttering cloud and mist and the real plants. The contrast of movement and calmness, hard and soft, void and material are like the proposition of identification, every different point of view is the result of naming and contrasting the objects. They are revealed by each other and coexist with each other, but yet have their own nature of Being. It also means the inclusiveness of every phenomenon and value in the world because there

¹³⁹ Pu, Zhen Yuan, *Zhong Guo Yi Shu Yi Jing Lun*(中國藝術意境論), (Beijing: Peking University Press, 1999), p. 126-162.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.* p. 126-162.

is no absolutely right and wrong, only the different mental states and standpoints.

The third characteristic is to create nature naturally to achieve the inclusive state.¹⁴¹ The single and stationary viewpoint and the horizon are rare in Eastern ink and wash painting, they include every phenomenon and contain every viewpoint. Hsia Kuei used different angles to view the scene.¹⁴² Because of the various points of view, the layers of mountains and cliff and the meandering rivers form a kind of particular space containing the whole scenery. The artist attempts to represent the covered and invisible parts in the picture. The point is to contain and present the natural being and mood and reveal the independent being of natural objects. And in the picture, we can see the bridge, houses, boats, and few fishermen and tourists. The artist puts the human image and the constructions into the remote and spacious scenery with the other objects to show a sort of expectation and combination with nature and create an appreciable, enjoyable and livable natural environment. Humans connect through the process of making artwork to attain a harmonious and quiet relationship between natural objects, human body and mind.

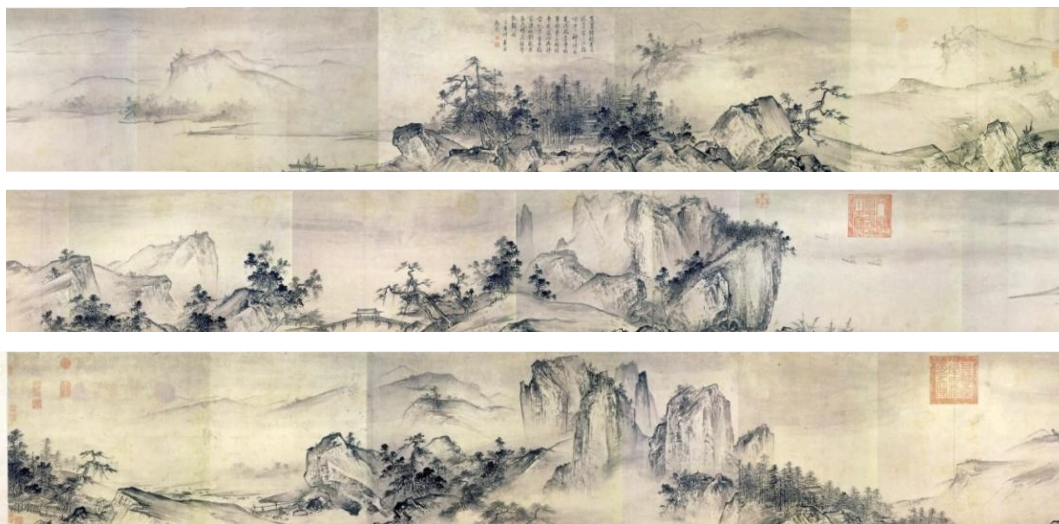


Figure 48 Hsia Kuei (fl. 1180-1230), *Remote View of Streams and Hills*, Sung Dynasty (960-1279), Hand scroll, ink on paper, 46.5 x 889.1 cm, National Palace Museum

¹⁴¹ Ibid. p. 126-162.

¹⁴² National Palace Museum

http://www.npm.gov.tw/zh-tw/collection/selections_02.htm?docno=17&catno=15&pageno=2
(26/11/2012)

This painting, a still object, contains a universe. There is the artist's body and spirit, the material's body and spirit and the artwork's body and spirit inside the artwork. This is the intersection of the spirit of universe, earth and human, including the inner scene after the artist's contemplation of the inner and outer worlds. So they all connect to the universe and are practised by the human body and then traverse time and space to reveal the truth through the artwork. In Eastern aesthetics, the meaning of mood in a painting is to return to the emptiness and comprehensive universe. It means to experience the emptiness and infiniteness and return to comprehensive Being and the spirit of the universe. Returning to the emptiness means it eliminates the distinction and opposites of object and subject, and treat positive and negative objects, equally. But this equality is not based on the perceivable figure but the emptiness and impermanence of being, to return to the nature of being. And to return to the comprehensive universe is to realize nature and being and coexist with all objects in *Tao*. The scene in the picture comes from the result of contemplation of the artist's inner scene and his/her intuition towards the outer world. It represents their spirit through his/her body movement, position and skill then it forms a universe completed by artist, earth and heaven and then interacts with the audience's universe. It is a process of searching self and structuring a new universe.

The French-Chinese artist Gau, Xing Jian constructs a contemplative, tranquil and spiritual aesthetics. He holds a strong position regarding the end of revolution and the modern illness of the rapidly changing world and the excessive pursuit of new forms and issues.¹⁴³ In his opinion, the excessive attention to the public issues and overthrowing the past of contemporary art causes the disappearance of the artist's personalization which is dispelled in the critique of the times, social issue, consumer market and loss of the pure aesthetic sense.¹⁴⁴ Gau, Xing Jian attempts to return art to the personal, perceptual, spiritual and pure aesthetic experience through his statement and contemplative art form.

He 'paints the silence, deep heart, and the quickly changing images in the flowing time.'¹⁴⁵ In Gao, Xing Jian's works, you can see the unlimitedly brimming ink rhythm flows in the picture. It is difficult to define the style. It is

¹⁴³ Gao, Xing Jian, *Ling Yi Zhong Mei Xue* (另一種美學), (Taipei: Linking Publishing, 2001), p. 2-9.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p.10-13.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p. 48.

between Eastern and Western, abstract and concrete, calmness and movement, and lightness and darkness. In *Humour Noir* (fig.50), it looks like two people in meditation or two black stones; it seems to be a scene, maybe a snow scene, or a face without a smile. There is many possible imaginings of this works. It looks like everything, but also nothing. It is between the concrete and abstract. It has no single answer. In *Sonate* (fig.51), there is no clear boundary in the picture. Every colour merges together without clear distinction. The ink and water flow on the rice paper. He paints the work through his body, but he also gives freedom to these colours. The work is completed through the spontaneity of his flowing sense and ink and water. *Serenite* (fig.52) is like a scene or illusion. You can see the flowing water and ink in the picture. The image looks like an unreal illusion, maybe in a dream or memory, but it seems to be a scene without clear contour. You cannot define the image. The flowing image looks like a real but unreal place. It is nothing. It seems to flow and change continuously in the calm picture.

He uses Eastern ink and wash, but there is no symbol of traditional ink and wash. However, the flowing *Chi Yun* and mood seem an Eastern style; the dark and light ink circles look abstract, but seem a metaphor of a place; it looks faint and dark but without chaos and there seems something clear and bright in between the darkness: The picture is calm, but with a kind of flowing time and light and shadow that brings the rhythm and breath of the sense; the realistic and brimming picture has also an emptiness and spirit. There seems to be a contradictory duality, but each element naturally integrates the other. You can feel that each element is shimmering, changing silently and flowing slowly in the universe.

Lai, Xian Zong thinks there are three aesthetics themes in Gao's paintings. The three main characters in Gao's works is the subject of his aesthetic contemplation: the body, the object is a universe and the aesthetics Being is freedom (fig. 49).¹⁴⁶ Gao paints through the body and perception of body and the image of body also appear in his work, *Humour Noir* (fig.50). He describes his process and situation of painting as the Zen state.¹⁴⁷ Spirit and body become the media to connect to the universe and become the witness of a free life.

¹⁴⁶ Xian Zong Lai, *Dao Jia Chan Zong Hai De Ge Yu Dang Dai Yi Shu*(道家禪宗、海德格與當代藝術), (Taipei: Hungyeh Publishing Co., Ltd., 2007), p.302.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, p.303.

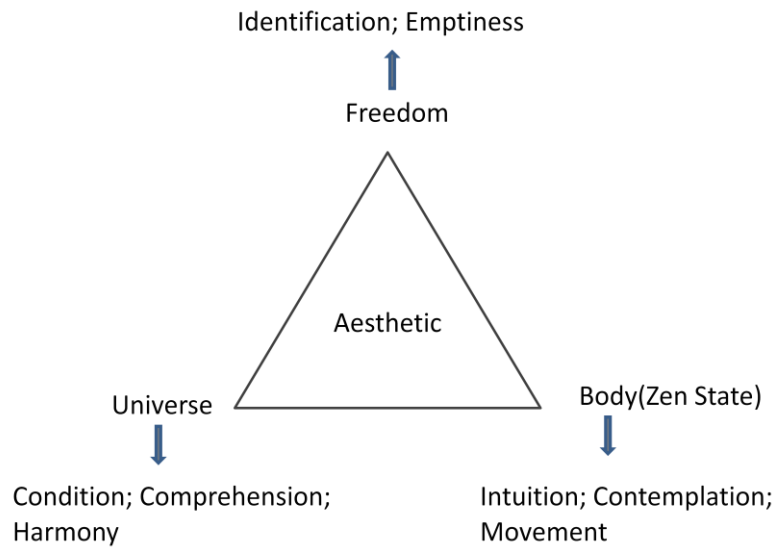


Figure 49 The structure of Gao Xing Jian's Aesthetics

These elusive metaphorical scenes in his works are the metaphors of the comprehension and changing spirit and universe, instead of the visible images. Art creation, itself, is the practice of body. The Zen state during creation is the transcendence of consciousness, to connect closely to the inner body through the brush. And the structure of point, line and plane get rid of the perspective to present the profundity of mind and the free movement of visual line. What it penetrates into is not only the body of Zen, but also the body of the artwork, itself. It is a coming together of bodies. Gao, Xing Jian's ideal aesthetics condition expresses a self awareness of the integration of human and universe. In his paintings, the metaphor of human image or spirit frequently appears - meditating, understanding, and sublimating. The human-like and non-human-like image inspires the speculation that it is the image of a human or tree or rock. The metaphorical images reveal the Tao's content of identification and form and return to the emptiness and comprehensive universe and present the truth and contain the emptiness of all objects.



Figure 50 Gao, Xing Jian, *Humour noir*, ink on paper, 88x84 cm , 1993



Figure 51 Gao, Xing Jian, *Sonate*, ink on paper, 81cx81 cm, 1995

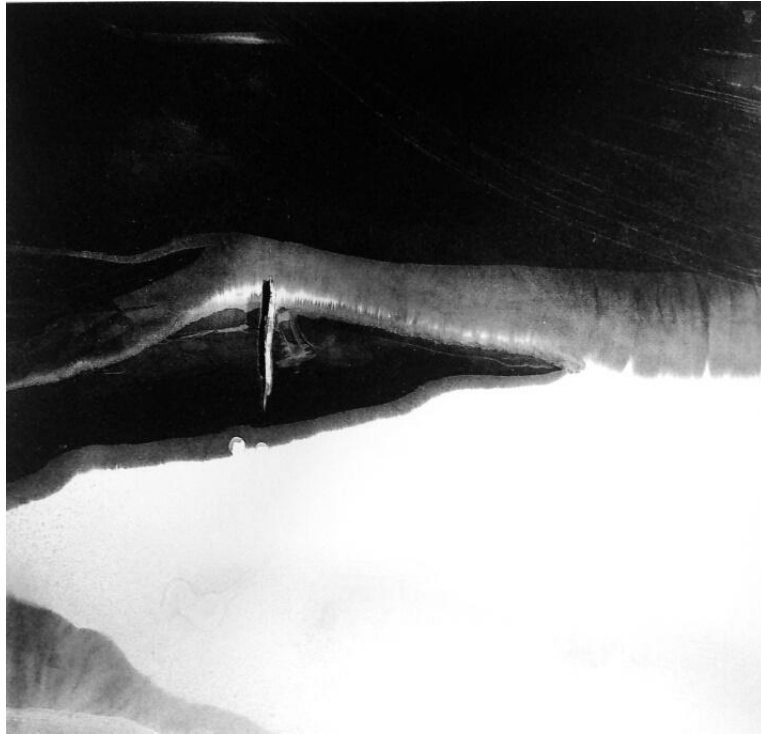


Figure 52 Gao, Xing Jian, *Serenite*, ink on paper, 71x74 cm , 1996

The ideal aesthetic condition presents the metaphor of impermanent values and its emptiness; it achieves the harmony and freedom of connecting to Being and universe with presence of body and intuition. It is debatable if this kind of personal art may be seen. An artist stays in his/her room and does what he/she experiences, his/her art does not connect and function with the society. However, each person is part of the world and the world is comprehensive. How can we connect to the world if we originally combine with the world? The world consists of each person. If an artist is not faithful to her spirit and aesthetic appreciation, how can he/she persuade others his/her art and concept are valuable? One should be a human being before being an artist who experiences one's own being, where one is from, why one exists and why one has life and remember the preciousness of body, being, and life. One is fortunate to own the ability to create something and own a free spirit and feeling to contemplate, perceive and assert our own and others' being. Human is but part of the universe, and so is art.

Conclusion

The relationship of human, nature and universe is an abstract proposition. However, it really exists and is revealed in artwork and art practice. In this chapter, I began each section from my own experience to each issue. No matter whether living overseas, my introspection of my home country, my ceramics education and my feelings and changes in my process are personal, but significant. They inspire my thinking about the proposition, my artwork and my viewpoint from which I contemplate the world and myself. The relationship between human, nature and universe is like an invisible energy that connects human past and future in the environment. And artwork makes the invisible connection that reveals the truth of Being in a metaphorical way through material, behaviour and the world that hide inside the flowing energy of the artwork.

Artworks function between human, nature, and cosmos to take a significant role in the truth of Being. They are catalysts that integrate the relationship of human, nature and cosmos by introspection of the human ego and fear, the interaction with natural material and environment, and the thinking surrounding the union of body, artwork and freedom. Artworks, as the catalyst to reveal the truth of Being, integrate the inner and outer world of humans and the world, consciousness and universe and body and materials. The meaning of integration and union is the revelation of Chuang Tzu's thinking about combining all the myriad of objects as one without distinction and show the harmonious and comprehensive condition in art practice and its inner spirit. The meaning of art practice and spirit are not only a process of producing an object, but the behaviour of self-cultivation and participating in the world's movement. It is a meditation that connects human and world.

Chapter Four: A Metaphorical Nature - the Immanent Journey

Introduction

This chapter presents the thinking and physical experience surrounding my project “A Metaphorical Nature - the Immanent Journey”. I use a metaphorical way to present my journey from Taiwan to Australia - the experience of a strange language, a strange culture, a strange people and a strange loneliness. I have a lot of time to review my life and art. The beautiful, natural Australian environment inspires my mood, attitude to life and art and healthy body. Some influences are unspeakable but sincere, however, the journey, for me, is not only crossing geographic boundaries, but also traversing the ego.

In the first section, I will discuss my thinking and explanation of the concept of vessel from my learning experience and a tea bowl to express my concept of the connection of life and ceramics. It reveals my response to Chuang Tzu’s ideal of combining with nature through my experiences, and takes my own works as examples to explain this concept. The second section discusses the meaning of the immanent journey. I describe my process and change in my journey and how the journey influences my creation and my attitude to Nature and the external world due to the crossing of geographic boundaries. In the third section, I will discuss the concept of art practice as a way of meditation through my works. The metaphorical form becomes a significant catalyst and object of meditation to show the concept of Taoism of non-doing, identification and transcendence in my project and experience.

1. The free vessel

I started learning pottery by making vessels. Ten vessels, ten different vessels, ten uniform-size vessels, the vessel’s for Chinese New Year’s Eve dinner, the vessel as tall as me. In the first year, the vessel is the first form for me to understand ceramics. The vessel was the first challenge and concept of ceramics in my education.

This concept is primary, not only for a ceramic artist, but also for any person without a ceramic background. For those people who debate the traditional form and definition of ceramics or vessel, the concept might be judged as not amazing or new. Ceramic art has more possibility of diversified forms and concepts and is not just concerned with the characteristics and function of a vessel. In my process, making vessels became a giant stone named tradition and craft that hampered my ambition and determination to enter the realm of Contemporary Art. I was hampered by the excessive skills. I even tried to abandon it. I cannot deny that the primary skill, especially the skill of wheel throwing, made me involved with the dilemma of entering into a new art concept and style. This was the biggest problem that I had experienced.

The ceramic studio in National Taipei Teacher's College (the National Taipei University of Education, today) was my first place of learning ceramic art. This studio has a very different environment from other studios like glass, wood, metal or painting. Except the Chinese New Year break, it is open 24 hours and all equipment and materials are open and used by all students in the studio. It is only an elective course so, except in lectures or meetings, the teacher does not appear in the studio. And there was no technician or tutor so all teaching and practice after lectures were lead by the volunteer senior or postgraduate students. This studio is established by the teacher's trust in the students, the students' passion for ceramic art, and the cooperation and healthy competition between students. The seniors' great skill and the healthy competition between students were always the driving force. Especially at the early stage of practising the throwing technique. Thickness, shape and quantity - throwing was a way to judge and compare the learning results and improvement. However, at the later stage, it became a sort of condition for me and my studio friends. I went to the studio and worked long hours every day, but I really did not have any clear idea or direction. The lecturer taught my group to make slip, casting and hand-building as well, but throwing was still the most familiar skill for me. It was rapid and direct without systematic and logical thinking and demonstration. Although the lecturer spent lots of time discussing the concept of material, philosophy and art history, for me, at that moment, they were still difficult to understand and apply faithfully in art practice. The throwing became the safest and the most comfortable existence for me.

However, when the third year came, something seemed different. I started to feel bored and frustrated by the unchanging art practice. I made a lot of vessels,

but I had no idea about the purpose and origin of making them. I even felt confused by my passion and motive to do ceramics. I could not take these vessels that I produced as artworks, for me they were only an exercise. I began to face the pressure of the graduate project. I felt more confused and attempted to escape from this empty model of ceramics. However, the worst was, I did not know how. Those hundreds of vessels that I had produced stood lonely on my shelves and were covered by a thin dust, they had the body of a vessel, but I did not make them with the “heart” of a vessel. They could be used, but now they were only filled by emptiness. The lecturer said a human is like a vessel. Facing my ceramics and my artworks in the studio, was like this forgotten vessel with an empty existence, and each day that I worked in the studio was only exercising my body. I was willing to study and learn, but behind the hard work, I was still facing my deep emptiness and frustration. In the summer vacation, before my fourth year, I could not stand the pressure anymore. The endless paper work and meetings with the exhibition team, I felt so exhausted. After finishing the proposal of my group, I got on a coach to return home.

When I saw my parents’ faces, lots of my heavy work and stress were gone. I saw some old friends, visited my high school teacher, returned to the mountain and bay beside my former house, the familiar waves, hollow squares, sunset, and the Acacia that I picked the beans under in my childhood, brought back memories of my family, my friends and myself. I opened my portfolio of high school graduation works, all works inside were so juvenile but happy, no purpose, no worry, I painted what I really wanted to paint in my mind no matter what it was. These were inside me, lots of memories, encounters and scenes, and always there in my mind, deeply. They became the present to me. Maybe, I only saw the difficulty in front of me and forgot the original intention and love of art.

One month later, I was back at the studio and again sat in front of the potter’s wheel but it was different, I understood more about myself. Maybe, I was still not professional and experienced enough to interpret and create my works precisely and systematically, but I really wanted to interact with was the place where I felt real and warm. Then, I completed my first artwork, *The Body of Memory* (fig.53). I threw 100 thin cups and attached them on a hollow hemisphere to complete a hydrangea shaped object. In each cup I put a shell and coral shaped small ball, a symbol of my memory of the beach. I was inside the work, my memory, my process, my frustration, my love of my family, my

beginning point. It was my symbol of the regeneration of transcending the problem and expecting the future. This passion and heartbeat of expecting a new work was the experience that I had forgotten. Now, I really understood, instead of knowing through the lecturer's speech, what I contained and what my work contained.

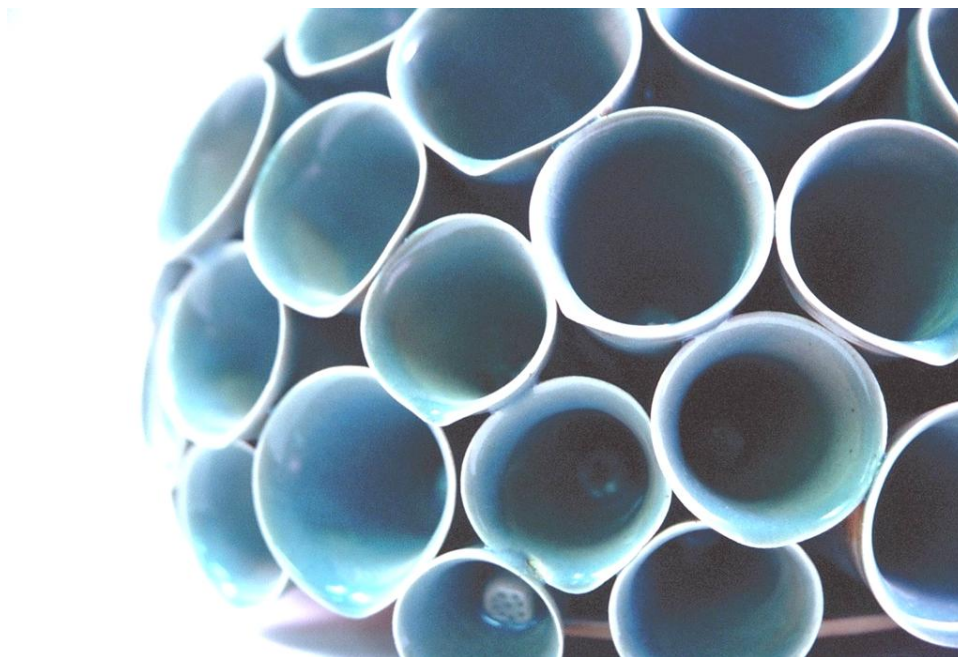


Figure 53 Liu, Yi An, *The Body of Memory*, Ceramic, 2005

Vessels, wares with the function of containing, spread all over our daily life. We used it to contain the visible solid or liquid. However, do vessels only contain the real, visible thing? There is a Yohen Temmoku tea bowl of Song Dynasty in Seikado Bunko Art Museum in Tokyo. The word Temmoku was from China. Its pronunciation is Tian Mu(天目). Tain(天) means sky or heaven and Mu(目) means eyes. Temmoku is “the eyes of heaven”. Inside the bowl, there are blue, iridescence crystals such as the starry night and the deep black on the bottom is like a black hole that attracts all the crystals. This tea bowl contains the tea and the tasteful owner's fingerprints and is the pride of the Song Dynasty. It contains its own journey from land, to human hand and to Japan. It contains the potter's breath and handprints. It contains the clay, the wood, and the fire, and a twinkling universe. Maybe, what the vessel contains is like Gu, He Zhong's painting, it not only contains the visible and touchable objects, but also the

invisible air and energy. A human is like a vessel as well, it contains the warm organs, the flowing thoughts, knowledge and memory, it contains the invisible and real being and emotion; the artwork is a vessel with its own story and energy of the world, artist and even inside the flowing and impermanent myriad of objects. It exists in the universe, individually and independently. Such as the Yohen Tenmoku tea bowl, the material records the birth of the planet and its home country's earth, the records of the craftman's body movement, the empty space contains the tea leaves of several centuries. From China to Japan, in hundreds of years, it records every owner's story and its impermanent and flowing destiny.



Figure 54 Tea Bowl, Yohen Tenmoku, Southern Song Dynasty, 12-13th century, Jian ware

My present works were inspired by my emptiness and loneliness when I arrived in Australia. Leaving my family and friends for a strange land, and after the exciting discovery of a new place, I felt the time passed so slowly - a week became a month. This is the first time that I noticed the sense of now time changes with the mental condition and I needed something to contain my unease. I entered into my studio and sat down feeling the strange place. It was quiet, wide, light, and empty, It was very different from my former studio. It would become a part of my new journey and would contain my works, my tools,

my emotions and my thought in the next three years. I knew I wanted to do something to memorialize the new journey. I opened a bag of clay, rolled it under my fingers into short slices then pressed them into thin and small pieces. The shape, after pressure, was like a shuttle, the symbol of rapidly flowing time in Chinese literature.¹⁴⁸ I made hundreds of them and each of them contained my thinking and emotions which consisted of each moment in my life journey from the past to the present. There was my body, my presence and my future, inside. I obtained a sort of peace and light in my emotional centre at the moment I made the shuttle. My consciousness seemed to leave my body and float in an unknown space. I combined each piece tightly or loosely with a hole like a big circle. It embraced the air to form a clear black hole that brings me to another universe (fig.55).



Figure 55 Liu, Yi An, *Infinity*, ceramics, 2010

¹⁴⁸ There is a Chinese set phrase, Sui Yue Ru Suo(歲月如梭). Sui Yue(歲月) means years or time; Ru means like; and Suo is a shuttle of loom. The set phrase means the time is like a shuttle of loom. It flies too rapidly to catch our eyes.



Figure 56 Liu, Yi An, *Infinity*, ceramics, 2011



Figure 57 Liu, Yi An, *Infinity*, ceramics, 2010



Figure 58 Liu, Yi An, *Infinity*, ceramics, 2011



Figure 59 Liu, Yi An, *Infinity*, ceramics, 2011

These shuttle shaped white pieces appear repeatedly and become the significant element in my works. They are made of clay from the earth and earth is the carrier of the corpses of the myriad of objects and records the story of the planet. It is related to the circle of life and death and the experience from the past to the present and future. The earth has recorded humans' and the Earth's timeline, but also transcends the timeline and becomes the connection between human and the universe. It is a vessel of memory, from the cooled lava to the withered dust, it contains itself and the Earth's memory in the universe; it contains the corpses and growth of all the objects and their past and present life and also reveals where they are going.

Infinity (figs. 55-59) is my first series in Australia. In the first three months in Sydney, a week, for me was, like a month. The strange language, the strange people, the strange environment, everything to me was like an unreal dream and everything, to me, made me homesick. The time, in that period, was flowing so slowly. It made the time of missing home longer for me. I sat in front of my table and felt lost, empty and depressed. Everything was so strange and I lost the direction of getting my sense of belonging. I knew it was unhelpful to stare at the empty, grey room. I took some clay and started to do something to distract my emptiness. Rubbing and pressing, I only repeated the two actions again and again. In the beginning, there were so many thoughts in my mind - my worry in a new life, my fear of the strange place, my loneliness, my poor English ability. My mind was messy and I could not concentrate on my work. I tried to force myself to be patient, to keep working. Gradually, I felt much better - better texture of the pieces, better patience and better mood. The room was so quiet and light that I could hear the sound of my breath and the wind outside the window and saw dust shining in the sunlight. Something peaceful appeared. Those messy thoughts disappeared. My body seemed to become part of the floating dust, sunlight and the clay on my hands and all worries vanished. I made hundred of shuttle shape pieces in this calmness and silence. After working, I saw the sunset on my way home. I felt calm. This was the moment that I felt I belonged to the world of the new land.

This series contains a sort of unpredictable impermanence. Ceramics is sort of art form that you never know its exact result before opening the kiln. Experience and professional knowledge are important but the clay, the fire, the kiln and weather have their own characters and whispers. The interaction between these materials and artist create the work together. As a ceramist, the

only thing I can do is do communicate with the materials. The Artist is not a controller in the process of art practice, but a co-operator who works with the world. The result is formed by the cooperation and interaction between the artist and the world. It could be a disaster but sometimes, it could bring you a beautiful accident. Particularly in the last work of the series *Infinity 5* (fig.59), at the beginning, I expected it could be a perfect and clean arc. It was in early November in 2010 and I was going to Taiwan to prepare my solo exhibition in a few days. I was busy in moving and cleaning in this period. I quickly set it in the kiln and went home. I totally forgot I needed to settle some bricks or kiln props to avoid the fragile clay body falling down in high temperature. However, it had been too late. After two days, I went to studio to face the result caused by my and impatience. I knew it could be a disaster. It might fall in the kiln and what I would see might be a pile of cracked white pieces. However, when I opened the kiln door, I saw a white wave. My work did not fall apart, it bent softly like a wing. This is what I learnt from the material, to respect the world, to be humble to the world and face the impermanence with a tranquil attitude because such is the journey of life, I've never known what is waiting for me. The only thing I can do is accept the present and try to face any unpredictability calmly.

I am a ceramist, a human being, my body and heart contain my flowing energy, my egocentrism and being, and my memory, knowledge and experience, no matter it was the past or future, is contained by the earth. When it is in my hands, I am touching my body which has combined with the land and feel its texture, hardness and the temperature that it is interacting with to awaken my existence. Then I know it will be me in the future, to become the dust and maybe in my next life, I will become the tea bowl in my family's, my friends' or my lover's hands. A tea bowl, like the Yohen Temmoku (fig.54) one, is a universe which contains those encounters, spirit and my body in my pre-existence. Or like a traveller in the universe, to arrive in another universe and contain another form of life. The countless shuttles, which represent each unique moment, combine in an endless circle the changeable life form. Being a live human and in the death of being, the earth nourishes the plants and feeds animals, in the circle of life. It contains the air, the land and the human world and history. From human, the earth, to the universe, from the universe, the earth, to human, their own memory in the past, in the present, or in the future never disappears and they also contain each other to form the invisible, comprehensive world that cannot be separated.

The concept of vessel was my beginning point for learning ceramics. Its form was heavy baggage for me, but its meaning also inspired me to obtain a new thinking for my ceramic art. Somebody asked me why I used the vessel form, that such an extremely crafted term to interpret the meaning or spirit of ceramics, might limit the possibility of ceramic art. However, for me, the concept of vessel is not only the functional use, but also the emptiness of the myriads of phenomena and reveals the impermanent being of all the objects. Emptiness is nothing; without form, without boundary, invisible and untouchable. According to Chuang Tzu's thinking about the impermanent visible and perceivable phenomenon, the flow and change, the appearance and disappearance of the thousands of objects is a spontaneous phenomenon, which follows *Tao*. The emptiness is the existent inexistence, but also the in-existent existence. It contains nothing and also everything.

A vessel contains something because of its empty space. The empty space is without a permanent or stable form. It is nothing, but contains every possibility and brings an unlimited concept to the vessel (fig. 65) which allows the memory and experience of artists, audience, material, world, universe to dwell inside and connect to each other. A designer from MUJI, Kenya Hara's work, *Horizon* (fig. 60-63), presents an unadulterated relationship between human and Earth through the concept of "nothing but everything". The concept of emptiness in the images contains the emotions and connection when mankind deals with the earth; in the end, such seeming nothingness tolerates all thoughts as if some thought floated in the emptiness. In his design, he uses the concept of "*Empty Vessel*" to make the commercial advertisement of MUJI to create a space to contain various imaginings. It is the impression of an unlimited brand and it establishes an open communication between consumers and brand (fig.65). He said, '*communication becomes effective only when an advertisement offers an empty vessel and viewers freely deposit into it their idea and wish.*'¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ Kenya Hara, *Designing Design*, Trans. Maggie Kinser Hohle & Yukiko Naito (Baden, Switzerland: Lar Muller Publisher, 2007), p.242.



Figure 60 MUJI advertisement, *Horizon* poster Uyuni Salt Lake, 2003



Figure 61 MUJI advertisement, *Horizon* poster Uyuni Salt Lake, 2003



Figure 62 MUJI advertisement, *Horizon* poster Mongolia, 2003



Figure 63 MUJI advertisement, *Horizon* poster Mongolia, 2003

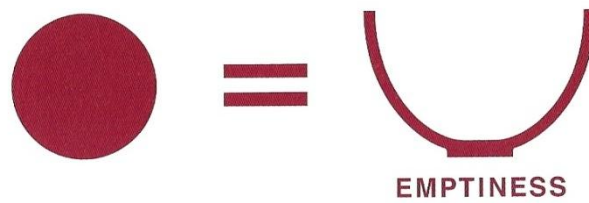


Figure 64 Kenya Hara : The concept of emptiness of Nothing yet everything

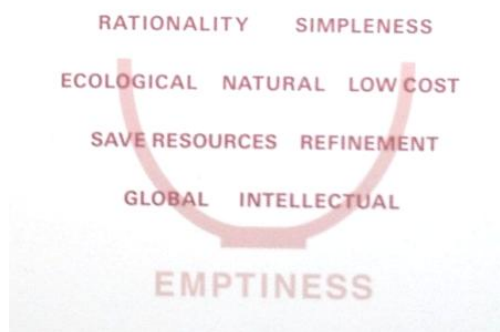


Figure 65 Kenya Hara : The concept of empty vessel and the possibility of everything

The empty space is the main character of a vessel. The ceramist creates emptiness to form a vessel. The function of containing takes and keeps the things in the vessel. *When we fill the jug, the pouring that fills it flows into the empty jug. The emptiness, the void, is what does the vessel's holding. The empty space, this nothing of the jug, is what the jug is as a holding vessel.*¹⁵⁰ What makes the vessel be a vessel does not lie in the materials, but in the emptiness that holds it. Humans pour a thing in the vessel, no matter water, wine, food or anything, the vessel is gathering the existence of human, world and heaven and earth, including the being of all the objects and the invisible flowing energy in the universe in Tao. The relationship between human, nature and universe is revealed through the empty space of the vessel and the being of the vessel comes into its own.

My work, the concept of vessel, is a vessel, a body to take and keep my thinking and ideal about the relationship of human, nature and universe. It does not only reveal the visible or speakable form or statement, but also the connection between myself, the external world and the universe. This connection and relationship between human, earth and universe is the truth of Being that the artwork reveals and the truth is the most real evidence and initial truth of human existence. The concept of vessel is not a limited frame, but the real freedom and purity to contain my immanent journey and the spirit and scenes in it; for my art, it belongs to freedom and supplies freedom, as well it tells its story without judgment, critique and interference. It contains its body, the world and universe, and the imagination from the world.

2. The immanent journey

The only thing that humans can confirm for the future is death. However, we exist in the world, the vision on the way to the only future also enriches the life journey.

Life is a journey. My journey in the world, in this life, started from my birthplace, Xin Zhu, my parents' residence, Kaohsiung, to my study location, Taipei, and now, in the expansive continent in the Southern Hemisphere, Australia. A journey is a sort of transboundary, no matter the geographic border or the spiritual status. The body moves from this place to the other, and so does the

¹⁵⁰ Martin Heidegger, *The Thing*, translated by Albert Hofstadter in *Poetry Language Thought* (New York: Harper and Row, 1917), included in *The Craft Reader* (New York: Berg Publishers, 2010), edited by Glenn Adamson, p. 404-408

spirit. The different people, different things, different scenes, different cultures and different mood, the distance between the concrete mileage and abstract mood sometimes are not proportionately relative. The change of people, environment and mood make the homeland become the contradictory sad land, but also makes the strange land become the new homeland. The separation and encounter in the journey do not mean sadness, happiness and a linear sense of time. The life journey, no matter the separation or encounter, is only a process. Even the most unselfish family love cannot accompany us for our whole life because of death, let alone the loss of friendship and romance. And the high and low mood, the gain and loss in the journey, are not only the perceivable and present gain and loss. When we really ponder the absolute gain and loss, we truly experience the bizarre and unpredictable circumstance and encounter in the life and then learn to cherish the present moment.

I wasted the precious time, felt confused in life, felt limited and sad and wanted to escape, but was too weak to break through before I came to Australia. Humans are really the species that never feels satisfied. Miro, the dog in my studio in Taiwan, feels satisfied with eating, sleeping and being stroked; my sister's cat, San Mao, only expects two meals everyday of a few brown, dried and monotonous diet food. And, I have never worried about my life, with my parents' support and my family's love, all is well. But with close friends, I was still wasting time and feeling confused. Employment, creation, studying abroad, there are so many choices in life. Every choice has a different loss and gain. No matter which choice, nothing is more scary and weak than staying in the same place. In weakness, complaining about the world or myself, only finds me in a deeper hole, to forget my past and my hopes and dreams for the future, even the precious present. The brief break in the journey should be for better scenes. When a person feels confused about the values of choice and existence in front of the crossroads in the journey, the present and future become indefinable and you do not even know where you are.

I think I am really lucky to meet a Buddhist master, who really helped me to see myself and the world, clearly. The first stage is enjoying sunshine and exercise. I have to say that Taipei is not a suitable place to do these things. The sky is narrow because of the crowded high buildings, the noise and exhaust gas of vehicles make people anxious and allergic, the only view out of your windows are your neighbours' wall or clothes, no light in the unit and windows are often closed in day time. I walked to the sports ground in the National Taipei

University of Education, the closest open spaces to my apartment. I was seeing the sunset in the pleasantly cool wind and faintly heard the sound of vehicles on He Ping East Road. I started to run and the scene was disappearing quickly at my side. Suddenly, I had a feeling of escaping. I felt breathless, and then I stared at the campus that I had stayed at for seven years. The scene was familiar, with lots of memories, original intentions and beginnings. This was the start of my life and a dream about fine art and this was also the place that gave me the ability and skill to chase my dream.

I had been here for seven years and seen many people and friends come and leave, some gave up their dream about ceramics, some were still insisting, some left for another dream, and some kept going without intention, as well. The original intention sometimes was not only the original thinking, but also included the mood of making the original intention, which was related to an ideal life and existence. Sometimes, it seems events come from another life and I have been here, already. If we can face our spirit faithfully, we will be in the suitable and true way of Being. The confusion and hesitation of facing the crossroads of life made my process of searching for the answer become an escapism. When you choose escapism, it also means you are far from the truth of Being and forget where you are in your life journey. I had already stopped in front of the crossroads of my life for a long time and started to feel confused and unconfident about who I am and my mission in this life.

Then I stepped on the new land in the Southern Hemisphere, unexpectedly, to experience the strange clear sunlight, the humidity of the air and wind, the smell of the soil and the position of the flowers. The crossing of boundaries is like escaping and regression. Passively escaping also means to be far from the confusion and considerations of the present, to see the relationship and situation between self and the world, objectively and rationally. In this situation, the world seems clearer and simple. After all the confusion, hesitation and dilemma passes away, we finally realize those things come from our own thoughts. We even maltreat ourselves, making a fuss about an imaginary illness or create an imaginary cage and then we understand how foolish we were in the past. Finally, one sees oneself calmly and can know real happiness. I am still learning, still a beginner attaining the condition of finding my true self and seeing the world, unclouded. Now I am living in the vast and natural land and my mind seems broader, as well. Fewer people, less noise and less dust, the sunlight, wind and earth seem closer. These purities and power of

existence become my objects about contemplating the world. It is not a great redemption, maybe, but it is about a positive power of surviving and it is powerful enough to eliminate the negative ego and loss. However, maybe I should thank the negative ego in my mind, I am aware of it, and it brings me a key to enlightenment.

I experienced the magnificent ocean scene at Watson's Bay; the fine, white sand at Surfer's Paradise; the countless twinkling stars in the Royal National Park; the jumping and swimming dolphins and gold sand at Port Stephen; I saw how the naughty birds fly into my studio and destroy my works. I even had a walk at Iron Cove and picked a Golden Ginkgo leaf and took a photo to send to my lover. It is a trip. Because it is an unfamiliar place, the scenes seem more beautiful and touching or maybe these myriad of objects have the sort of power that essentially can bring a peace for me and let me experience the calmness.

*Our flesh-and-bone tabernacle seems transparent as glass to the beauty about us, as if truly an inseparable part of it, thrilling with the air and trees, streams and rocks, in the waves of the sun, ...a part of all nature, neither old nor young, sick nor well, but immortal.*¹⁵¹

*Another glorious Sierra day in which one seems to be dissolved and absorbed and sent pulsing onward we know not where. Life seems neither long nor short, and we take no more heed to save time or make haste than do the trees and stars. This is true freedom, a good practical sort of immortality*¹⁵²

Returning to nature and freedom are two significant concepts in my works. Infinitely repeated elements are applied in each work. No matter the thin, white shuttle, the rolled, thin long slap or the porcelain made of tiny particles, they are infinite and countless existences and belong to, and echo the infinite presence that I was interacting with in the world for a momentary tranquility and peace. In Zen, this is a sort of sudden enlightenment to return to the same truth of being as the myriad of objects and dwell inside our own calmness. These infinitely repeated elements are represented by the infinite forms of circles, the incomplete but comprehensive rings, the individual but infinite documentation of each moment and the relationship of the world and an endless gatherings

¹⁵¹ John Muir. (1998). *My First Summer in the Sierra*. p.16.

¹⁵² *Ibid.* p.41.

present. These independent and individual elements and their structures are all uncomplicated. Most of them are circles or rings.

I made the series, *Endless Boundary* (figs.66-69) in 2011 and 2012. The first work of the series (figs.66 & 67) consist of hundreds of shuttle shape pieces and the second works (figs.68 & 69) were formed by long slaps. Each object in this series has a hole. For me, this hole is like a Black Hole,¹⁵³ that leads us to another space, to an unknown place. Each element is a catalyst to lead us to the emptiness, the emptiness without boundary and the emptiness to another universe. I form the non-boundary with the boundary to shows the relationship of emptiness and visible object, the material and immaterial. The visible boundary of the works forms the emptiness of the emptiness. Just as the calmness that I experienced in the repetition of its construction leads me to experience the endless emptiness and freedom.

In this series, I use the form of the circle. It is inspired by the mould that explains Kepler's Law¹⁵⁴ that I saw in National Museum of Natural Science in Taiwan when I was 10 years old. I was too young to understand its principle at the time, however, when I saw the steel ball moving on the black funnel then drop into the hole in the centre, I was very curious to know where it was going. The image and memory have existed in my brain for 20 years. Using the form of the circle originates from my early curiosity of the universe and then combines with my understanding of material and Eastern philosophy. The forms do not only present my concept of the material of the inner meaning of the circle of life, but also are influenced by Paul Cezanne's (1893-1906) opinion

¹⁵³ *A Black Hole is a great amount of matter packed into a very small area. The result is a gravitational field so strong that nothing, not even light, can escape. Most black holes form from the remnants of a large star that dies in a supernova explosion. If the total mass of the star is large enough, it can be proven theoretically that no force can keep the star from collapsing under the influence of gravity. However, as the star collapses, a strange thing occurs. As the surface of the star nears an imaginary surface called the "event horizon," time on the star slows relative to the time kept by observers far away. When the surface reaches the event horizon, time stands still, and the star can collapse no more - it is a frozen collapsing object.*

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

<http://science.nasa.gov/astrophysics/focus-areas/black-holes/> (09/12/2012)

¹⁵⁴ *In the early 1600s, Johannes Kepler proposed three laws of planetary motion. Kepler was able to summarize the carefully collected data of his mentor - Tycho Brahe - with three statements that described the motion of planets in a sun-centered solar system. Kepler's efforts to explain the underlying reasons for such motions are no longer accepted; nonetheless, the actual laws themselves are still considered an accurate description of the motion of any planet and any satellite.*

The Physics Classroom

<http://www.physicsclassroom.com/class/circles/u6l4a.cfm> (20/09/2013)

of deconstructing the form of all objects into primary geometric graphics, which was my first encounter with modern art as a young adult. He mentioned the concept in a letter to his friend, Emile Bernard, explaining that to understand nature with the three primary graphics - cylinder, cone and sphere.¹⁵⁵ Paul Cezanne returns the myriad of objects to the basic geometric graphics and widens the boundary of geometry to the art which establishes a new approach to structure. He contemplates the artworks and the world and their relationship.



Figure 66 Liu, Yi An, *Endless Boundary 1*, ceramics, 2011

¹⁵⁵ Paul Cezanne, *Paul Letters*, edited by John Rewald, (London: Bruno Cassirer, 1941), p.234



Figure 67 Liu, Yi An, *Endless Boundary 1*, ceramics, 2011



Figure 68 Liu, Yi An, *Endless Boundary 2*, ceramics, 2012



Figure 69 Liu, Yi An, *Endless Boundary 2*, ceramics, 2012

The law of all objects is explained in a scientific way from a different point of view. Paul Cezanne provides an approach to contemplate the world. It is not the only resolution or answer to explain the world, however, it is an approach to explain the world. The truth of Being, itself, is difficult to explain, so the approach or process is enough. The answer is in the viewer's feeling, to feel the truth of Being that he/she has experienced. My works, personally, are a process of sudden enlightenment and transcendence in my life journey. However, what I really expect is not to take my artworks as the representation of the answer or result, but a tranquil catalyst to inspire an imagining or calmness in the viewer. The spontaneous mood and feeling are related to the viewer's life journey and unknowable essential thinking. The sincere mood of the spirit is the most important and precious event in the artwork, not the judgment or admiration.

White is the main colour in the series of works. White is the colour with the highest brightness and it is also the colour which is most easily stained. In the works of Japanese designer, Kenya Hara, the possibility of white is used to present a group of concepts about the texture of the handmade, emptiness and

returning to innocence.¹⁵⁶ The cool, soft, pure, clean and warm white, the different and individual white gives the industrial product warmth and evokes feelings of humanity and Nature. In optics, white light is formed by mixing various coloured lights. It is the origin, but also the emptiness after the complexity to form a non-dual colour, which is filled with spirit and emptiness and the dialectic of truth. Its brightness also reveals the texture of my artworks and the trace of my finger's movement during making. Rolling, pressing, attaching and floating, every trace, breath and process that my body leaves on the surface forms the shadow under the light and presents a contrast, but coexistent, impermanent illusion. This illusion on the white surface recalls a stain, but in truth is nothing. The metaphor of white is the empty and spiritual calmness. It is light, the innocence behind the complexity; it is the origin, the pure possibility, the emptiness of origin and returning.

If you mix together all the colours of light, they become white. If you discard all the colours in paint or ink, they also become white. White is a synthesis of all colours and, at the same time, the lack of colour, achromatic. As a colour that escapes colour, it is a special one. Put another way, colour is no more than a single aspect of white. Insofar as it avoids colour, and thus more strongly awakens physicality, it is a materiality; like empty space or a margin, it is pregnant with time and space. It even entails abstract concepts like absence and absolutely zero.¹⁵⁷

The white colour, for me, is the representation of my concept of unlimited life and emptiness. It is the space in the colourful world, to regain innocence, to calm my thoughts, to face a new start and calmness in every moment. It is the existent colour without colour, such as the phenomena in the world, visible but invisible, perceivable but empty. It belongs to being and non being.

From spirit, form, and colour, I try to describe a concept of returning to innocence and the truth of Being in this collection. This is a process of immanent transformation, a series of chain reactions after crossing boundaries. From confusion to loneliness, from loneliness to freedom, then transforming to the art practice and introspection, my works and art statement are metaphorical, immanent and difficult to describe verbally and literally. A comprehensive

¹⁵⁶ Kenya Hara, *Designing Design*, Trans. Maggie Kinser Hohle & Yukiko Naito (Baden, Switzerland: Lar Muller Publisher, 2007), p. 212-221.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 216.

journey is not only recorded by the visible objects or images, but also unspeakable transformations along the way. My artworks record and carry not only the colour and form, but also my body and the flow of thoughts at each moment.

3. Art Practice as Meditation

In the Zen viewpoint, walking and sitting are also parts of Zen or *Tao* meditation.¹⁵⁸ In the beginning stage of my creative life, I had never taken art practice as a way of meditating and art works, for me, had never been given the meaning or spirit of meditation to reveal the truth of Being.

In the last chapter, I mentioned my experience of making a tall vessel in my second year of undergraduate study. This experience opened my view and brief understanding of the behaviour of art practice. Material, body, and presence, I did not have enough background knowledge and experience to integrate each part of the process of art practice. I did not even have any profound cognition about the relationship and analysis of each part. The only thing I perceived was something unusual. In this unusual situation, I felt unlimited, clear, and without the pressure of time. For me, an anxious person, it was a way to calmness. I knew I needed it and I had experienced it, but I had no idea what it was. At that moment, it was an immanent transformation, but it was still immanent and I did not have the ability and intention to connect it to my art practice. They were still independent and unrelated, one belonged to mental concepts, and one belonged to art. Later, I gained more knowledge and also understood more about myself and this integration made me start to perceive the invisible influence of the art practice process on my artworks. I kept the texture and trace of the handmade, I used handbuilding instead of casting, I took much time to repeat the same action and finish the countless, tiny objects. I was tired, even hurting. These things began to be the significant characteristics of my works. They seemed meaningful, about process, about recording the process and reflecting my movement honestly and truly. Even truer than my explanation of the completed works.

¹⁵⁸ Du, Yi Xin, *Chan Zong Tu Wen Bai Ke Yi Chian Wen*, (Xi An: Shannxi Normal University Press, 2008), p. 472.

In 2009, I saw the works of Hsu, Yung Hsu for the first time. The giant and hollow circles were without any glaze, only with the original colour of clay (fig.69). The surface was uneven, looked messy but with a sort of rhythm inside. From realistic sculpture to metaphorical installation, it seemed there was no limitation and burden in his mind, but following the feeling of body and spirit in his art practice. In the workshop, he repeated the motion of pressing and pushing a piece of clay with his fingers. The edge was broken with an irregular shape of withered rock by the sea. With the difference of humidity, size and the pressing power on the clay, each of the objects were given a different shape. Although they looked different, they still returned a balanced and harmonious rhythm. Each object was imprecise but spontaneously graceful like rock, a kind of creature, the damaged coral, the miniature of a ruin or the broken mountain. It could be like anything or nothing. What his works carried were not the distinction of style, but the present record of the body's movement and the viewer's unlimited possibility to contemplate the works. I think behind those unconscious and free-style like movements there could be a sort of slow and still flowing release. The flowing and releasing are not an over-limited control and arbitrary releasing but a calm, stable, and spontaneous spiritual and bodily condition at each moment in the progress of art practice. The trace of his finger, each pressing and kneading in his every breath was recorded on the clay. I was watching the works with damaged edge, they were very different to my favourite style, the smooth and fine line and texture. But I could understand they were true and strong, only with the presence of the artist, himself, and the artworks, themselves, when they were being created.



Figure 70 Hsu, Yung Hsu , *Transcending Boundaries*, ceramics, 2008

Artworks record the body, including the perceivable and visible body and the immanent body. When I was looking at my portfolio and the works stored in my sunroom, the texture and trace of my hands were still there on the surface. The trace of my hands, the trace of shaving the clay body, the condition that I felt at that moment and every change I made to them remained, from the past to the future. What the artworks record are the present body, the presence in art practice and the body. The freedom and innocence that I feel in my art practice are nothing but my present being. This unlimited and clear condition is called presence in Eckhart Tolle's literature, *The Power of Now*, and it mentions a condition that a person totally exists in, in the present.¹⁵⁹ In this condition, every subjective value disappears and humans can experience the truth of being and real freedom of existence. The concept is very similar to Chuang Tzu's philosophy about identification to return to the innocence and see the world and human existence without distinction as if for the first time. Erich Fromm also thinks that active, creative art has the power to bring the union between the world and human existence. He said,

¹⁵⁹ Eckhart Tolle, *The Power of Now: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment* , (Sydney : Hachette Australia, 2009, c2004.)

*A third way of attaining union lies in creative activity, be it that of artist, or of the artisan. In any kind of creative work the creating person unites himself with his material, which represents the world outside of himself. Whether a carpenter makes a table, or a goldsmith pieces of jewelry, whether the peasant grows his corn, or the painter paints a picture, in all types of creative work the worker and his object become one, man unites himself with the world in the process of creation.*¹⁶⁰

From my viewpoint of being an artist, the repetition in my art practice is in order to attain an unconscious and tranquil condition by repeating the interaction between body movement and material. In the series, *Without Moment* (figs.71-75), I made a thousand shuttle shaped pieces and countless dots. In, each of the small pieces has a different amount and arrangement of small dots which presents each unique moment in my art practice. The pieces in the works are the body of memory that records my presence in the moment. I nail hundreds of nails and holes to hang them on the wall. For me, the repetition of installing the two works is like a ritual for me as well. And in *Without Moment 2* (figs.74 & 75), I made countless dots which represent each moment. The series is the story of the artwork and myself in art practice. In the process of making and installing them, I did a lot of repetition. I added the slip dots on the clay or plaster board thousands of times. It is very delicate work whereby I must totally concentrate on the movement of my fingers and the flow of the clay slip. In the repetition, I experienced a sort of calm, unconscious condition. There is no sound in my mind. It is a kind of calmness and silence and I seemed to combine with the environment and the clay. For me, the repetition, is an approach or even a ceremony. The way that I present them also come from the ceremony of worship in my grandparents' home. In every Chinese New Year, they prepared the sweet, nuts and rice cake for the ancestors and heaven. They formed them like a small mountain and settled them on the table respectfully and humbly. They hold the incense, prayed and appreciated the blessing from ancestors and heaven. My grandmother told me, they were talking with the ancestor and heaven silently. Ceremony is the way that they talked to themselves and the invisible power of universe. For me, the art process is the meditation and ceremony that leads me to experience the

¹⁶⁰ Erich Fromm, *The Art of Loving*, (New York, London: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc, 2008), p.16

connection between my inner and outer worlds, the calmness and unconsciousness.

This unconsciousness never means the meaningless daydream or absence and it is not a total void, either, but a harmonic condition of body and spirit. It is not a deathly calmness, but a balanced emptiness that returns to what I am and the concept of identification and non-doing in Taoism. The voice from my mind is silent. The process of art practice, to me, is to reveal this calmness through my body. And the presentation of this calmness is like Zen thinking about the meditation of each thing in daily life. In the daily life, we can probably experience this calmness by completely concentrating on something, maybe walking, brushing teeth, even breathing. A master even defined the meaning of Zen in a simple sentence: Doing one thing at a time.¹⁶¹ The repetition in my art practice, besides recording the moment and revealing the truth of Being of the myriad of objects combining with one another, it also is an attempt to remain in the present. I am not an expert practitioner of Zen or Taoism, for an expert, normal breathing can lead to presence and it is existent in every moment. I do not have any religious faith, but my process of experiencing the present let me have the opportunity to feel the freedom and the release of values and judgments. Since one was born, one has never stopped receiving the various values, judgments and comparisons. One has lived in the world independently but not entirely free. Each of us is a unique person, but we still must experience various judgments. Each of us is an individual, but we cannot be ourselves completely because we need to adapt and integrate with society. We start to feel pressure, emptiness, and confusion when we desire answers and have many options, after that, we move on and notice the precious moment in which we experience the true freedom. The outer phenomenon cannot bring true freedom and calmness because it is impermanent, changeable and cannot be controlled. The true freedom and calmness exist in each of us and is without value or answer.

¹⁶¹ Eckhart Tolle, *Calmness Speaks*, (Taipei: Acorn Publishing, 2009), p.108.

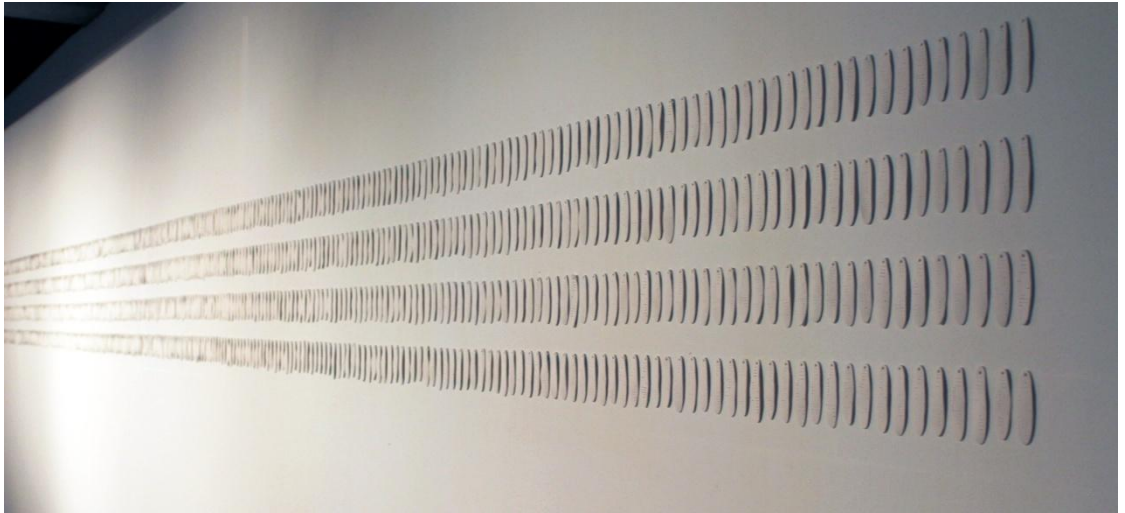


Figure 71 Liu, Yi An, *Without Moment 1*, ceramics, 2010

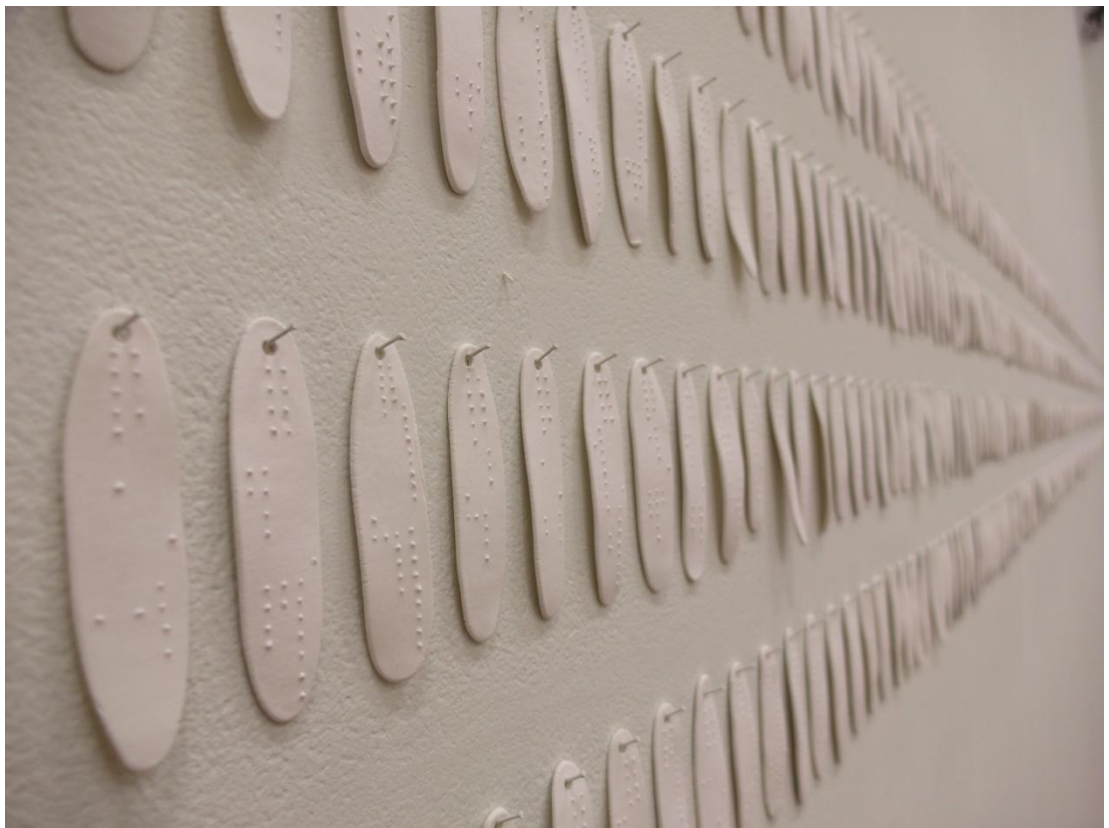


Figure 72 Liu, Yi An, *Without Moment 1*, ceramics, 2010

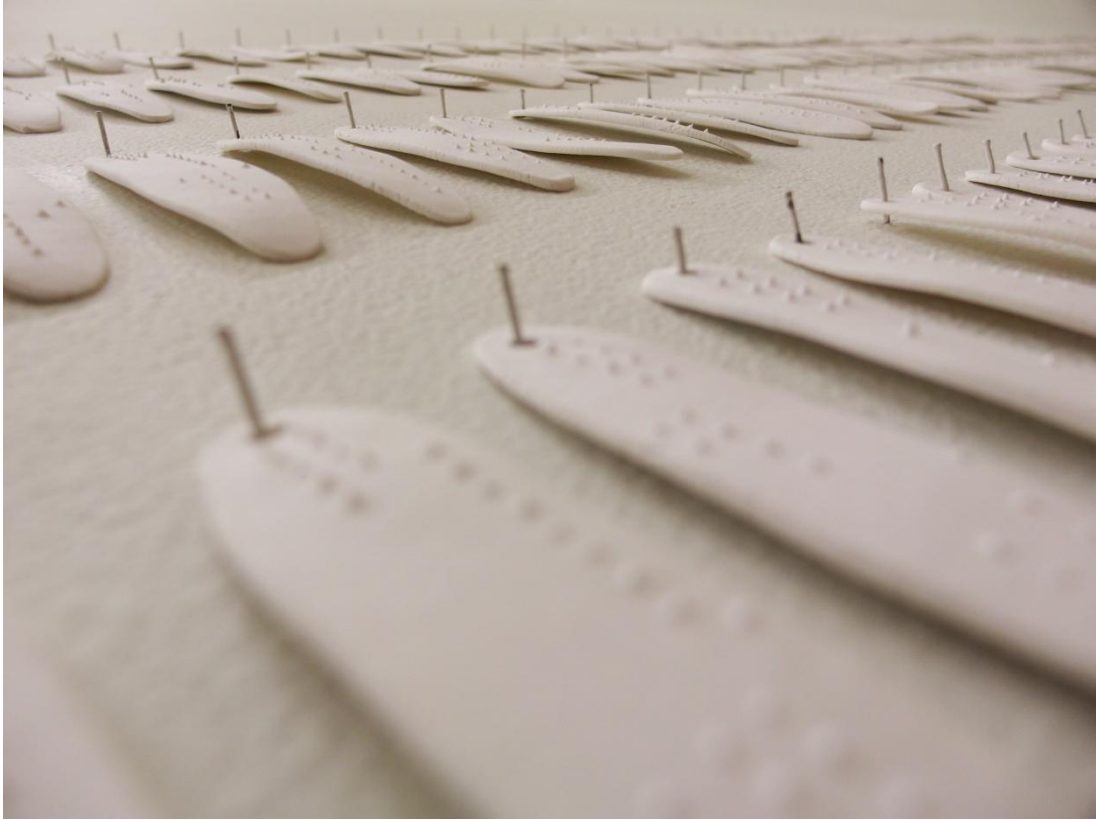


Figure 73 Liu, Yi An, *Without Moment 1*, ceramics, 2010



Figure 74 Liu, Yi An, *Without Moment 2*, ceramics, 2011



Figure 75 Liu, Yi An, *Without Moment 2*, ceramics, 2011

One of the unique characteristics of art is to provide the space, freedom and possibility of thinking and contemplating the world. The viewer's explanation or understanding of the artworks is sometimes not the same as an artist's statement. This is acceptable. The world, itself, is open and artworks are completed by viewers, artists and art works as part of the world. The meaning and function of artworks do not only present artists' statements, but also includes the artworks' own free and independent Being, and the viewers' freedom of explanation. There is no one answer even if the art statement is written or spoken, it never means that the viewer is obliged to accept it. The artwork, itself, has the possibility of openness even if it is a still life painting; the emotion and concern behind each person's feeling from the painting is different. In my works, I never provide an answer. What I attempt to provide does not only give an explanation of the works, but the freedom of contemplating the world, therefore, I choose the metaphorical form to emphasise the space between dualities. In the space between duality, there is not a total void, but the metaphorical catalyst that inspires the viewer's thinking or attitude.

The definition of metaphor in literature is a way of describing something by referring to it as something different but it has similar qualities.¹⁶² It is not the

¹⁶² Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English

direct figurative expression but depends on the vehicle to transform the descriptive way. It is indirect and obscure but because of these characteristics, the space of thinking is open. In Yao, Jui Chung's book, *Installation Arts in Taiwan*, he believes the metaphorical scene. He said,

*Some artworks do not present the real intention, but attain it by the transformation of meaning among objects and the arrangement of space. These works often do not place emphasis on the visible strength or shock. They hesitate between the ambiguous zone of speculation and demonstration. It does not only present the explicit things but also provide the multi-layered imaginary space.*¹⁶³The Taiwanese artist Chen, Shang Ping also thinks *artists understand the world through symbols and metaphor. What they do is from the imaginative play and the reflection and projection of a type of spiritual experience. Therefore, broadly speaking, the interaction and dialogue between the viewer and the artwork should be listened to.*¹⁶⁴

An artwork itself can convey lots of information. Besides the atmosphere that the artwork produces and the symbols that the artist projects upon it, there is the artist's thinking and the content that the artist attempts to present. However, the metaphorical form replaces the limited language through a lateral way of thinking and opens up the possibility of a viewer's explanation of the work. The artwork becomes a meditation of the object to reveals the truth of Being in the process of contemplating the artwork. It reveals its own world and inspires viewers to form an understanding that makes the connection between the viewer's, the artist's and the artwork's worlds. However, the interaction is with a precondition that the sincerity of the artist and the openness that the viewer brings to the experience is embedded in the process of contemplating the artwork. The experience can be a kind of feeling, intuition or inspired thinking, but the thought is an open and spontaneous non doing and identification without dogmas and rules.

No matter the artist or viewer, the personal experience and the relationship to the outer world are parts of the world. The process of art practice is not a single

<http://www.idoceonline.com/dictionary/metaphor> (10/11/2012)

¹⁶³ Yao, Jui Chung, *Installation Art in Taiwan since 1991-2001*, (Taipei County, Shin Dian City: Mu Ma Wen Hua Shi Ye You Xian Gong Si, 2002), p.289.

¹⁶⁴ Chen, Shang Ping, *"Anti" Sculpture: External Contemplation*, (Kaohsiung: Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Art, 2000), p.10.

point of resolution, but is contained in the process of life. I take my art practice as a sort of meditative experience and through it perceive my relationship to the universe and nature, to explore my truth of Being, and to experience the brief presence of transcendence and freedom. It influences my point of view profoundly in contemplating and realizing the world. I do not attain the condition of seeing my true mind, but I gradually understand the world that I experience, the role that humans play in the universe and the true freedom that we own. Body is part of the world. My body allows me to experience the truth of living on the planet and in the world. My memory, experience, encounters, things, the earth, the universe, and my intuition complete the present I. I consist of the world, and so does my work.

Conclusion

In this chapter, most of the experiences and feelings are very personal. This is my viewpoint of the ceramic process, the journey and my inner art practice. As I said in this chapter, there is no single answer in my project. I discuss the process, the experience and the point to life and art as my own viewpoint. Yes, it is my own viewpoint. Although I hope to see the world objectively, I still know it is impossible. Because I am a human being, with feelings, memories, egocentrism, desire and emotions, the only thing I can do is to be honest with myself and present it sincerely. It can only be subjective.

The chapter also shows a gap between the ideal, non-doing and identification and my personal feelings and writing. I always feel there is something lost between my own experience and the ideal of Taoism and my statement and my writing. We live in the human world so it is difficult to avoid fighting for survival and moving on, so we cannot truly return to an innocence. It only exists, sometimes. I really try to fill the gap between my experience and my art practice and writing, but there remains a space that I cannot fill. The limitation of language is real. Language is always a reflection or projection, but the gap does not exist in a space. It is an eternal now, it is *Tao*. At the beginning, I thought it is because of my English ability. I tried to describe it in Chinese but the gap is still there. I try my best to mention the personal and unspeakable experience however, no matter how I explain it, no matter how I say it is true and honest, it still sounds like sophistry. The only thing I can explain it, it should be the unspeakable *Tao*.

These personal experiences to me are related to the world. It really forms the world that I have experienced, including people, things, environment and all phenomena that I have seen and met. So, I clearly know, myself is a world and my art is a world and they consist of the world, the universe.

It is subjective and open to the world.

Conclusion

This thesis examines my world view and aesthetics by exploring the role of human and the function of artworks in the world. There are four main findings in the thesis. First, the relationship between human, nature and universe is harmonious and comprehensive. The *Tao* of Chuang Tzu provides an all encompassing viewpoint that sees the world and life return to the innocence and experience of a real beauty of life. Second, humans are part of nature and the universe, with the same truth of Being as the myriad of objects with the true freedom to experience the calmness and peace and equality of other myriad of objects. Third, the artwork is the catalyst to reveal the truth of being and lead the artist and viewer to experience the freedom of truth of Being. In the process of art practice and art contemplation, the artist and the viewer both experience the freedom to contemplate their own being and the world. Fourth, the completion of artworks requires the participation of the world, including the material, time, space, artist, viewer and every external condition. My intention has been to reveal the truth of Being and present the tranquility and freedom of life, to regain the grace of life through the process of art practice and art contemplation.

The implication of my research underwrites the relationship between human, nature and the universe. With more understanding of the relationship to *Tao* and more awareness of my own condition in my journey and art practice, I produced the works *Infinity* and *Endless Boundary* to present my ideal life and the desire to understand the truth of life. Then, the process of making *Without Moment*, inspired my thinking towards a concern for the meanings of art practice and the artwork in the world. In the process of making the projects, *Tao* inspired a way of contemplating the world and an attitude to carry myself and my art practice. The aim of the studio works is to reveal the practice of the truth of Being in the life process and my own story.

This conclusion provides an overview to the research. There are two parts. In the first part, I review the outcome of each chapter. The second part presents the implications, findings and responses to my core research questions and addresses the suggestion for the future research. In the next stage, it moves in

the direction of the truth of Being and a ceramic installation records the grace of a moment

(1) Chapter Review

Chapter One explains the meaning of the Tao of Chuang Tzu and his life as the background knowledge and foundation of the thesis. The unspeakable and invisible *Tao* reveals the invisible, but existent truth of being in the world and emphasises the real freedom of life and the importance of an encompassing and empathic attitude to understand and respect the myriad of objects. This chapter establishes the core viewpoint of my research and explores the truth of being and develops my thinking on the way to treat all objects.

Chapter Two reveals Chuang Tzu's thinking surrounding the relationship of human, nature and the universe. The content of the real meaning of nature in Taoism, the spontaneity and the concept of non-doing and identification reveals an empathy toward the myriad of objects and the harmonious and comprehensive relationship between human, nature, and universe without distinction and egocentrism. It admires the free and graceful life being of the myriad of objects. In the chapter, I have approached the main proposition to discover the truth of Being by exploring the relationship of all objects.

Chapter Three maps out artists' responses to the relationship of human, nature and universe. The artists' responses to the proposition are based on the introspection or concern for the environment or take the natural environment or artworks as the connection and object of meditation or process that interprets the world that they experience. The truth of Being is revealed in the artworks, art practice and material. The chapter inspired my thinking on how artwork and art practice can be the catalyst to reveal the truth of being and the real freedom and grace of life.

Chapter Four interprets the content and form of my studio works and their background or origin. It reveals the connection of my personal life experience and the thesis. The artworks are taken as the meditative object to reveal the truth of Being. The main topic, *A Metaphorical Nature*, is the ideal atmosphere that I hope to reveal in the works and the subheading, *The Immanent Journey*,

is the process and experience that I wish to reveal in my art practice, the process of contemplating artworks and my attitude to the artworks. The chapter shows my point of view on my art practice and the wish and ideal to return to an simplicity and regain a real freedom, calmness and beauty in life.

(2) Research Findings

First question: What is Chuang Tzu's thinking towards the relationship between human, nature and universe and truth of being? This research investigates the relationship between human, nature and universe in Chuang Tzu's thinking.

The research finding is that Chuang Tzu does not discuss them as separate points, but takes them as comprehensive without distinction and conflict. In Chuang Tzu's thinking, human and nature and universe combine together through *Tao*, the truth of being of the myriad of objects, to form a sort of harmonious and comprehensive relationship. *Tao* is like an invisible and broad power that contains every object in the universe. However, it never means *Tao* is a supreme, controlling power. It is spontaneous and the myriad of objects follow this power, spontaneously. What he discusses is not the visible interaction between human, nature, and universe, but the invisible true connection between them. If human, nature and universe are taken as one and all the objects have equivalent existences, then distinction and separation disappear.

Chuang Tzu discusses the topic of the truth of Being of all objects, the *Tao*. *Tao* as the principle of development and movement of the myriad of objects forms every invisible and visible phenomenon in the world. Because of *Tao*, every one of the objects has an equal truth of existence without distinction and egocentrism. The conflict of human and human and human and nature is from the separation of all the objects and *Tao*. Human nature should be unlimited, tranquil and graceful like other objects in the universe. The true relationship between human, nature and universe is a comprehensive and harmonious one when we can follow and accept the truth of Being, *Tao*. Only when we touch the truth of being, can this proposition reveal the invisible truth.

Tao as the truth of being, integrates the myriad of objects, human, nature, and universe as one and forms a harmonious and comprehensive world.

Second Question: What are artists' responses to the relationship of human, nature and universe? This thesis examines the artists' responses to the proposition of the relationship of human, nature and universe. Artists present the topic from different viewpoints. However, while they may use different language and movement, they show a spirit of presenting that is a kind of combination and coexistence with nature to reveal the truth of Being.

The combination of human, nature and universe is presented by the interaction of body and natural materials or environment to show the experience of combining with the myriad of objects to become one. The material and body is a catalyst to experience the truth of being and the artwork is the other catalyst to reveal the truth of being and forms a sort of introspection or ideal about the topic. No matter the material, art practice, or place, the connection of human, nature, and universe revealed by artworks is not only the completed artworks, but also the process of art practice that presents the interaction of human and material and the spirit of the material. The process of interacting with material is also the interaction with nature and universe.

In summary, the artists (Hung Tian-Yu, Ni Zai-Chin, Huang Wen-Hao, Lo Sen-Hao, Hsu Yung-Hsu, Wolfgang Laib, Andy Goldsworthy, Gu He-Zhong and Gau Xing-Jian) considered their ideal and opinion that takes the relationship between human, nature and the universe in interaction with the world. Their artworks have the intention to reveal the truth of Being, to inspire a sort of introspection or ideal of the relationship of human, nature and the universe to the world.

Third Question: How can art become the catalyst to reveal the truth of Being? This research presents my thinking on artworks and how they function in the world.

Artworks have the characteristic of revealing the truth of Being. However, the truth of being is not only presented in the completed artwork, but also in the process of art practice and art contemplation. An artwork is not only completed by the artist. Material, artist, viewer, nature and universe structure the process of completing an artwork and each of them has their own story to use the different ways to experience or reveal the truth of Being. The truth of Being is the same however, the process is different. To an artist, he/she experiences the

truth of being by interacting with the material and the world in the process; to a viewer, the artwork provides an object that inspires their thinking of the artwork or the world, and the process of thinking is totally free and unlimited. An artwork is completed by the world and art is also a catalyst that reveals the truth of Being and provide a free process to the artist and view to experience the true freedom of thinking and feeling without restriction. And this is the characteristic of truth of Being, freedom

Artworks are not only the completed still objects, but also include an invisible process and the process is formed by the cooperation of the artist, viewer and the world. In the completed object and process, art is the catalyst that connects the experience of regaining the truth of Being of artist and viewer and the materials.

Fourth Question: Where does the idea of “A Metaphorical Nature: the immanent journey” come from and how is it presented in my art practice?

The idea of *A Metaphorical Nature: the Immanent Journey* comes from my previous research and my overseas study and life experiences to date. In the previous research, I focussed on the metaphorical representation of the natural objects to attempt to reveal the combination of human, nature and art. With the development of life experience and professional background knowledge, I started to think what the truth of Being is, behind the visible natural objects and what the connection is between human, nature and universe. The main topic, *A Metaphorical Nature*, mentions the proposition that I would like to present. The truth of Being or the *Tao* is invisible and unspeakable, it exists in the world without a concrete shape, but it is truly here to guide the myriad of objects. The main topic also demonstrates the form and atmosphere that I apply in my artworks to use a metaphorical path to provide the possibility and freedom for the viewer to move their thinking towards the nature of being. All artworks in the project used simple forms and colours to show a tranquil condition of life and spirit. And each of them, with their own original element, structure the visible forms which represent the simple nature of each object.

The Immanent Journey presents the process of art practice and the experience of the artist’s life and the process of contemplating artworks for the viewer. As personal experience, it mentions the changing of my location and mood in my

journey and the process of art practice. Besides my personal experience, it also shows a process of experiencing calmness and tranquility in daily life, to perceive the nature of being. Simply speaking, the meaning of the immanent journey is like a meditation. The introspection and thinking that inspired me by my own crossing of boundaries, the presence that I am aware of in my art practice, the freedom of thinking in the process of contemplating art to a viewer, these are like a journey that allows an experience of something different in the world and also becomes part of each one's journey. In the project, all artworks are made with a large quantity of elements to show the spirit of process, behaviour and the interaction with material. What they attempt to present is not only the completed result, but also the way they are to be experienced.

This research, "A Metaphorical Nature: The Immanent Journey", highlights a few points. The first, it reveals that the truth of Being is to regain the freedom and calmness of life. The second, it connects and integrates the relationship of human, nature and universe through art practice. The third, it shows a viewpoint that treats the myriad of objects equally with empathy and non dual thinking. In other words, the thesis is the practice of my attitude to life, art and world.

(3) Future Direction for Research

If I really need a point to define the start of this research, officially, it would be 2010, however, to me, it is a process of meditation and has been with me since I was born. The overseas study has influenced me greatly. It may be the most exciting and significant journey for me. There has been many changes of peoples, things, locations and attitudes in the past three years. I lost some things, but also gained something. A life's journey could be a process of continuous loss and gain. Between loss and gain, there is something precious and unforgettable and then we grow up, face the world bravely, and have more strength.

Since 2005, when I commenced my master's degree in Taiwan, I started the research regarding a metaphorical nature and started to think about my own attitude to ceramics and art, I admit I have many personal feelings to ceramics and this is one of the reasons that I think it is the representation of human existence and take it as a living material. What is ceramics? Craft? Sculpture?

Skill? Glaze? Object? In the beginning, I thought it is an object made of clay, glaze and fire. Then it became a catalyst to present my thinking and introspection of my own experience and show my world view. It is the record and carrier of my memory, thinking and emotion. Now, to me, ceramic art is an attitude to treat the world with empathy and respect. Who or what did make this change? I might answer: the world.

It does not sound like a confident and positive attitude. I am changed by the world and where are my ideals, my insistence and my expectation for the future? I am changed and moved by the world's truth. The impermanence and flux of things, the invisible truth and the only future that we can be sure of, death, makes me see the world with a broader and tranquil attitude. There are too many things that we cannot control or predict in the world, in fact, nothing really belongs to us. Ceramics teaches me the attitude to face the impermanence of the world and see the invisible but precious process in the world. You never know what you will see when the kiln door is open. It could be a perfect work, a broken work, a beautiful accident or a disaster. It has taught me the truth of the world is to face everything with an accepting and tranquil attitude. The world changes me, to treat life as a gift, to cherish it in the present.

In this research, I mention my personal experience to explain the relationship and connection that I experience in my life and art practice. I attempt to describe a condition to perceive a sort of calmness and the brief tranquil moment to explain the spirit and truth of Being. However, there are two difficulties. First, it is difficult to describe in language. I always tried to describe in Chinese, but it is still not accurate. The limitation of language is a wall which is hard to break. No matter what language or vocabulary that I use, it remains far from my own feelings. Maybe, it is the unspeakable *Tao* and does not belong to any vocabulary. Second, it is a personal experience and how does it relate to the world and others? My research sometimes is judged as only personal experience and is not really related to the world. It is personal, I agree. But I also agree that the world is composed of individual person and each individual person is a small world which connects to each other and the comprehensive world and forms it. And every individual people has the power to change the world by themselves because he/she is connected to the world and is a part of the structure of comprehensive and harmonious time and space.

In the next stage of my research and art practice, I will concentrate on two parts. The first one will be landscape art, to present my works and the behaviour of art practice in natural or public environment to discuss the relationship between artwork, art practice and the environment. The second, I would like to investigate the relationship of art practice, ceremony and documentation to take the behaviour of art practice as the ceremony to form the record of the track of life and moment.

What is life? What do we live for? Where are we? Where are we from? The questions have been asked for thousands of years and exist in every individual person's spirit. The answer is open, dependent on the different life experience; however, the grace and freedom of the nature of life never changes. Australia is a beautiful land, an isolated island with a complex culture and amazingly beautiful natural environment. The life here is more natural than my home country, Taiwan. My home country is not perfect. It has a lot of problems surrounding international relationship, politics, environmental policy, and employment system. The conflicts make Taiwan become a complicated society regarding cultural identification, national identity and self identity. However, the complication makes Taiwan a chaotic, but interesting society. The differences between Taiwan and Australia inspired the research and became the origin of the project. The other reason, still personal, I really hope I can bring something graceful and tranquil to the world, especially to my home country.

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Source: Qiu, Zi Rong, *Taiwan Contemporary Art Series: Environment and Ecology*, (Taipei: Yi Shu Jia Chu Ban She, 2003), p71, 72, 73

Huang, Wen Hao, *1959 B.C. ~ 1959 A.D.*, 1993

Source: Yao, Jui Chung, *Installation Art in Taiwan since 1991-2001*, (Taipei County, Shin Dian City: Mu Ma Wen Hua Shi Ye You Xian Gong Si, 2002), p.176

Hsia Kuei (fl. 1180-1230), *Remote View of Streams and Hills*, Sung Dynasty (960-1279), Hand scroll, ink on paper, 46.5 x 889.1 cm, National Palace Museum

Source:

http://www.npm.gov.tw/en/collection/selections_02.htm?docno=25&catno=15&pageno=2 (accessed October 29 2012)

Kenya Hara : The concept of emptiness of Nothing yet everything

Source: Kenya Hara, *Designing Design*, translated by Maggie Kinser Hohle & Yukiko Naito(Baden, Switzerland: Lar Muller Publisher, 2007), p. 242

Kenya Hara : The concept of empty vessel of the possibility of everything

Source: Kenya Hara, *Designing Design*, translated by Maggie Kinser Hohle & Yukiko Naito(Baden, Switzerland: Lar Muller Publisher, 2007), p. 243

Kuo, Hung Fa Mr. Red; *May How Taiwan*; 2000

Source: Yao, Jui Chung, *Installation Art in Taiwan since 1991-2001*, (Taipei County, Shin Dian City: Mu Ma Wen Hua Shi Ye You Xian Gong Si, 2002), p.129

Lee, Ming Shung; *Our Faith*; Taipei: Ni Ya Gallery; 1992

Source: Yao, Jui Chung, *Installation Art in Taiwan since 1991-2001*, (Taipei County, Shin Dian City: Mu Ma Wen Hua Shi Ye You Xian Gong Si, 2002), p. 22

Lin, Hong Wen; *Reborn Pupa- The sound of the Tide of History*;2900x 600x 600cm; 1998

Source: Yao, Jui Chung, *Installation Art in Taiwan since 1991-2001*, (Taipei County, Shin Dian City: Mu Ma Wen Hua Shi Ye You Xian Gong Si, 2002), p.151

Lo, Sen Hao, *Cocoon*, 1993

Source: Lo, Sen Hao, *The View in Affinity: Lo, Sen Hao Installation Art 1993-1999*, (Taipei: Wu Xin Tu Shu, 2000), p. 43

Lo, Sen Hao; *Land Survey*; Trash and Garbage collected from Da-tun Mt., junked glass bottles, unopened glass bottles drinks, glass exhibition cabinets; 300*50*300 cm, 2003

Source: Qiu, Zi Rong, Taiwan Contemporary Art Series: Environment and Ecology, (Taipei: Yi Shu Jia Chu Ban She, 2003), p. 90

Lo, Sen Hao, *Liquor Dust*(details of two works), 2010

Source: Lo, Sen Hao, *Liquid Dust*, (Taipei: Wu Xin Tu Shu, 2010), p

Lo, Sen Hao, *Project Revivification*, acting art, 2002

Source: Lo, Sen Hao, *Happy Land: Lo, Sen Hao Installation Art 2002-2005*, (Taipei: Wu Xin Tu Shu, 2006), p.113-114

Lo, Sen Hao; *Today's Fancy, Yesterday's Love; Bamboo*; 1998

Source: Qiu, Zi Rong, Taiwan Contemporary Art Series: Environment and Ecology, (Taipei: Yi Shu Jia Chu Ban She, 2003), p.88

Lo, Sen Hao, *Unending Road*, ceramic, 1993

Source: Lo, Sen Hao, *The View in Affinity: Lo, Sen Hao Installation Art 1993-1999*, (Taipei: Wu Xin Tu Shu, 2000), p.39

MUJI advertisement, *Horizon* poster Mongolia, 2003

Source: <http://www.ndc.co.jp/hara/works/en/2011/11/2003ad.html>
(accessed November 20 2012)

MUJI advertisement, *Horizon* poster Uyuni Salt Lake, 2003

Source: <http://www.ndc.co.jp/hara/works/en/2011/11/2003ad.html>
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Ni, Zai Chin, *Po Huai, Huan Yuan*, 1994

Source:<http://tw.myblog.yahoo.com/nitsaichin/article?mid=379&prev=393&next=255> (accessed November 14 2012)

Ni, Zai Chin, *Shi Le Yuan: Shi Le Yuan I*, ink and rice paper, 83*55 cm, 1993-1994

Source: Qiu, Zi Rong, Taiwan Contemporary Art Series: Environment and Ecology, (Taipei: Yi Shu Jia Chu Ban She, 2003), p. 60

Ni, Zai Chin, *Shi Le Yuan: Shi Lou De He Shan*, ink and rice paper, 53*162 cm, 1998-1999

Source: Qiu, Zi Rong, Taiwan Contemporary Art Series: Environment and Ecology, (Taipei: Yi Shu Jia Chu Ban She, 2003), p. 61

Vincent Van Gogh, *Pair of Shoes*; oil on canvas; 37.5 X 45 cm; 1886

Source: <http://www.vangoghmuseum.nl/vgm/index.jsp?page=1576&lang=en> (accessed 20 October 2012)

Wang, Wen Chin; *Beyond the Side*; 320x 320x 42 cm; 2001

Source: Yao, Jui Chung, *Installation Art in Taiwan since 1991-2001*, (Taipei County, Shin Dian City: Mu Ma Wen Hua Shi Ye You Xian Gong Si, 2002), p.150

Wang, Wen Chin; *Path*; 2000x 300x 300 cm; 2000

Source: Yao, Jui Chung, *Installation Art in Taiwan since 1991-2001*, (Taipei County, Shin Dian City: Mu Ma Wen Hua Shi Ye You Xian Gong Si, 2002), p.149

Wolfgang Laib , *Milk Stone*, marble and milk, 2 x122x130 cm, 1987/1989

Source: Rubin Museum of Art

<http://rmanyc.org/events/load/846>(accessed November 25 2012)

Wolfgang Laib , *Pollen from Pine*, pollen, 1989

Source: *Wolfgang Laib: Durchgang- Ubergang*, edited by The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo Tohru Matsumoto, Katsuo Suzuki, Kenji Miwa, 2003, p. 42, 43

Wolfgang Laib, *Without Place - Without Time - Without Body*, rice, hazelnut pollen, 2007

Source: <http://arttattler.com/archivewolfganglaib.html> (accessed November 25 2012)

Tea Bowl, Yohen Tenmoku, Southern Song Dynasty, 12-13th century, Jian ware

Source: <http://www.seikado.or.jp/040201.html> (accessed September 29 2010)

Yuan, Goang Ming; *City Disqualified: Ximen District*; Digitally Altered Photography ; 300x240cm ; 2002

Source: <http://mfa.techart.tnua.edu.tw/~gmyuan/data/chinese.htm> (accessed 6 September 2012)

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1. Infinity 1, ceramics, 30*31*28 cm, 2010
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1. Without Boundary 1, ceramics, 6*600*90 cm, 2011, 12 elements
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