

**Formless form: a Study of the status of
Contemporary 'Landscape-like' Painting in Taiwan**

**PhD Thesis Report and Appendix
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' I, *Mery Tuohi*, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.'

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ABSTRACT

The thesis is composed of series of paintings, starting from portraits of an island in Taiwan, that represent a search for the relationship between site and *Shan-Shui*, between resemblance and the abstract. These paintings depict everyday scenes that combine events, viewpoints and memories. Other series set in London look at 'alternative nature' and 'staged authenticity', in which people are seen as insiders or outsiders.

This accompanying report is divided into four sections, weaving together three methodologies—theoretical, historical, and practical—to study the aesthetics of contemporary 'landscape-like' painting in Taiwan, in particular the concepts of the sublime and *Shan-Shui*. This practice-led research uses my own painting to address these issues and to question my position within the Taiwanese art world.

First, I outline key points in the history of Taiwanese painting starting from the period of Japanese rule. Through specific examples I aim to clarify how identity and cultural transformation in Taiwan has taken place through the influences of Modernism and *Shan-Shui*. I also look at the differences and overlaps between the concepts of 'the painterly sublime' and '*Qi-Yun Sheng-Dong*', raising questions about the political implications.

Secondly, I look at artists from Asia and the West with particular attention to the physical material qualities of painting and elaborate on the aesthetic notion of *Bi-Mo* (which relates to brush marks) and how this relates to my concept 'landscape-like'.

In the third part I discuss my own paintings, referring to the sublime, *Shan-Shui* and the concept of 'landscape-like'.

The fourth section is based on my response to the current political condition of Taiwanese Art and focuses on a project that culminated in the London Start Art Fair entitled *Future Island*, 2016. In conclusion, I suggest that the contemporary appearance of *Shan-Shui* and the sublime as crucial to 'landscape-like painting' in Taiwan as a political form.

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METHOD

The main method of research will be practice-led. That is, it will use my painting to raise issues and questions associated with contemporary landscape painting in Taiwan and to question my own position within the Taiwanese art world.

I am undertaking an overview of landscape painting in Taiwan and its associated aesthetics, contrasting *Shan-Shui* with the sublime in Western painting. This involves accessing archives in Taiwan and the use of library archives in London including the Centre of Taiwan Studies at SOAS.¹

The method of reading that I employ is one of receiving and resisting; and the method of writing is a process of digesting and raising questions in relation to my painting. The overall research method brings together painting, reading and writing as one interrogative act.

This report weaves together three methodologies—theoretical, historical and practical—to study the aesthetics of contemporary landscape-like painting in Taiwan.

I break down the research into the following themes:

1. the influence of political history on the subject matter of Taiwanese painting
2. my position, viewpoint and subject matter in relation to my Taiwanese background and also my experience of living in London

-
- 1 The events hold by SOAS Centre of Taiwan Studies I've attended which were highly related to my research in relation to my distance with history and politic of Taiwan are –
 - Film Screening (28 July 2014): Super Citizen Ko (超級大國民, 1995) and Q&A with director Wan Jen (萬仁). The background of this film is the White Terror period of Taiwan in the 1950s, the story was told through the memories of an old man. See report p.28 footnote 11 and p.66.
 - Film Screening (18 November 2014): Sunflower Occupation (太陽不遠, 2014) and Q&A with producer, Tsai, Tsung-Lung(蔡崇隆). This is a documentary of The Sunflower Student Movement (March 18 - April 10, 2014), it was a protest driven by students and civic groups protesting the approval of the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement (CSSTA) by the ruling party Kuomintang at the legislature without clause-by-clause review. See report p.69.
 - Film Screening (11 February 2015): Hand in Hand (牽阮的手, 2011) and Q&A with directors Yen, Lan-chuan (顏蘭權) and Juang, Yi-tseng (莊益增). This documentary deals with the history in the post-war 60s through portraying the life of a human rights doctor and his wife and how they fought for democratization of Taiwan.
 - Second World Congress of Taiwan Studies (18-20 June 2015): Key themes include assessments of the state of the field in Taiwan Studies and Revisiting Classic Works in the field. Available from: <https://www.soas.ac.uk/taiwanstudies/events/18jun2015-second-world-congress-of-taiwan-studies.html> [Accessed 25 June 2015].

3. a comparison of the notion of *Shan-Shui* and the sublime in painting, both historical and contemporary
4. an exploration of 'landscape-like' painting
5. an elaboration and test of these concepts through my own painting

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What kind of 'landscape' was developed in Taiwanese painting?
 - What were its purposes and relation to Eastern and Western aesthetics
 - What were the responses of Taiwanese painters to dramatic political change in the past?
 - How does this continue or change in the present?
 - How does Taiwan's social situation affect young artists' ideology and aesthetical taste?
2. What constitutes 'good' and 'bad' landscape painting?
 - How important are the notions of *Shan-Shui* and the sublime in relation to the aesthetic judgement of landscape-like painting?
 - If our 'way of seeing' is the result of education, and the 'habit' of seeing painting is culturally dependent, how can painting produce resonance and meaning in cross-cultural discussion?
 - How has the representation of natural elements and symbols in classical landscape and *Shan-Shui* painting changed in contemporary painting?
3. How can I use news images to modify and adapt my argument that landscape-like painting is an act of passive resistance to, and comment on, the political condition of Taiwan?

INTRODUCTION

In *Landscape into Art* (Clark, 1949), the formation of classical Western landscape painting is discussed through chapters on the landscape of symbols, fact, fantasy, ideal, natural vision, the northern light and the return to order. Clark maps out the process of expressing events through landscape in traditional painting, referencing how painters' observations and their imagination turned the colours of nature into 'landscape' as ideas for painting. The frescoes of Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *Good and*

Bad Government (1338–40) in the Palazzo Pubblico, Siena, are considered to be the first surviving landscapes in the modern sense. In these paintings, visual metaphors for the human relationship to the land emerged. When we look at a painting of a landscape, we assume there is something to be proclaimed through it, just as the term 'landscape' is conditioned by a combination of social, political, cultural and economic effects. In *Editorial: Law, Polity and the Changing Meaning of Landscape*, Kenneth R Olwig explains that:

' " Landscape" means an area, as perceived by people (Council of Europe, 2000, Article 1: a). An early manifestation of this sea change was in the pioneering work of J. B. Jackson, who during a long career persisted in comprehending landscape "not as a scenic or ecological entity but as a political or cultural entity, changing in the course of history" (Jackson, 1979, p.153). Landscape is increasingly being seen as being "both 'site' and 'sight'", as the legal geographer Nicholas Blomley puts it. It is the site which is the object of sight, or other forms of perception (Blomley, 1998, p.574). Landscape is hereby understood as the site or sites where political or cultural entities manifest themselves, creating the amalgam of places that can be perceived as landscape (Mitchell, 2002; Olwig, 2002).'²

On the other hand, the Chinese words corresponding to landscape, *Feng-Jing*, mean a scene that possesses an atmosphere: *Feng* literally means wind and *Jing* refers to ambivalent meanings such as light, shadow, circumstance, and '-scape'/scenery. In this case, I prefer to explain it as a "view" in the wind, which brings out the physical experiences one would expect to sense such as humidity, the sense of touch or the sound of the wind. The term given to Chinese landscape painting, *Shan-Shui*, literally means mountain and water. This term leads to a more abstract understanding of landscape because no word represents land or territory as in the Western term, but is instead composed of symbols that are symbolic of the geographical elements that construct the scene. These two kinds of perception also affect the developments of perspective and the representation of pictorial space in the two realms. I propose that this is the fundamental difference between western traditional landscape and *Shan-Shui*. Through these different orders of languages, we can see the different approaches they stand for: in the West, landscape is about

2 Olwig, K. R. (2005) Published online: 23 Jan 2007, *Editorial: Law, Polity and the Changing Meaning of Landscape*, *Landscape Research*, 30:3, 293-298, DOI: 10.1080/01426390500165369. Available from: <http://www.tandfonline.com.libproxy.ucl.ac.uk/doi/abs/10.1080/01426390500165369> [Accessed 28th January 2017].

territory and ownership, whereas *Shan-Shui* refers to the particular elements of nature. In addition, Land Art or Earth Art in the Chinese translation differs from landscape painting: Land Art is translated word for word as *Di-Jing*. *Di* means earth or ground. The 'scapes' that can be found in traditional Western landscape painting, *Shan-Shui* and Land Art are all different. In the traditional Western landscape, the 'scape' serves to point out the ownership of geographical territories, or the stage for a religious story; characterized by the beauty of pastoral, or the pursuit of the sublimity of nature by painting. Land Art, on the other hand, is the artist's direct action in the place. *Shan-Shui's* scape is a symbolic field for *Tien, Di, Ren*, which can be respectively translated as heaven, earth and being.

My research is an investigation of the development of painting in Taiwan and its art history through my proposed concept 'landscape-like'. I give definitions for this concept and test it through my own paintings: this is my primary methodology. The first aspect of 'landscape-like' is political, referring to the sudden change of art in Taiwan under Japanese rule (1895–1945), when Impressionism was introduced as its starting point. Another aspect of 'landscape-like' depends on the brush marks. I will discuss brush marks in relation to the sublime, sensation and *Qi-Yun Sheng-Dong*. The similarities between the sense of the sublime in painting and *Qi-Yun Sheng-Dong* in ink painting lies in the pursuit of 'the form beyond the figurative shape of the subject'.³ The third aspect of landscape-like is 'alternative nature'. Apart from going to the wilderness, the 'real wild', what we mostly experience is an 'alternative nature'. I will discuss different thoughts provoking environments that I explore in my paintings, such as artificial indoor rock-climbing centres; gardens; political protests that temporarily form the landscape of a faceless crowd; advertisements in the tube stations that become our window views; and religious festivals that blur the line between ritual and tourist attraction.

I propose that the scape in 'landscape-like' painting is an open ground for brush marks that combine the symbolic field and the representational field of depiction. Particularly in the historical and contemporary context in Taiwan, the two 'scapes' combine into a 'landscape-like' fusion based on painting methods. Unlike the Western traditions of art history, which is essentially linear, the history of art in Taiwan is fragmented: these paintings present the fragmentation of time, space, images, religions, territories, identities and memories drawn from the past as well as the present. If the concept of the sublime is embedded in Western landscape painting in the same way that *Qi-Yun Sheng-Dong*⁴ is embedded in *Shan-Shui*, then

3 See 'Sublime and Qi-Yun Sheng-Dong' in page 47.

4 See 'Sublime and Shan-Shui' in page 39.

painters and critics need to engage with such concepts and a discussion of their symbolic values. It might also lead us to question whether the current dramatic labelling of the sublime as being 'in crisis' is perhaps mistaken⁵.

I am interested in exploring the concepts of the sublime and *Qi-Yun Sheng-Dong*, both from a historical and contemporary perspective. I will use selected essays and artworks from the Tate online research publications for the project 'The Art of the Sublime' (2008), which attempted to explore the history and current relevance of the sublime, to compare the differences and similarities between viewpoints of the sublime and *Shan-Shui*. I will also look into the specific characteristics in the development of Taiwanese painting, which are deeply affected by Taiwan's political development, relations with Japanese culture in the past and present, and have been receiving both Eastern and Western aesthetic concepts specific to time and place.

I. DEVELOPMENT OF TAIWAN PAINTING-1800s TO 21st CENTURY

History is made visible through many narratives and accounts, the conditions of visibility are established through them. Becoming modern and being modernized are not the same thing and do not have the same intention. The parallels of development of the modern art and Taiwanese art history seem to come together all of a sudden when Japan ruled Taiwan.

' Whereas modernization as a narrative placed national units on a temporal continuum from "backward" to "advanced," globalization does not presume the historical time of Western progress. Global space entails simultaneity, overlap, coherencies incoherently superimposed. Like a photograph in multiple exposure, it makes sense only precariously, only by blocking out part of the visible field. We are capable of seeing further than is comprehended by our separate, sense-making practices, and what we see limits the legitimacy of what we do.' (Buck-Morss, 2003: p.5) (Bal and Hernández-Navarro, ed. 2011: p.143)

5 See Alison Smith, 'The Sublime in Crisis: Landscape Painting after Turner', in Nigel Llewellyn and Christine Riding (eds.), *The Art of the Sublime*, January 2013. Available from: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/the-sublime/alison-smith-the-sublime-in-crisis-landscape-painting-after-turner-r1109220> [Accessed 26 August 2014]. See also 'Sublime and *Qi-Yun Sheng-Dong*' in page 48-51.

When I attended 'Paradigm in the Billow: the International Conference on Cheng-Po Chen and Modern East Asian Art History' at the National Palace Museum of Taiwan in January, 2015,⁶ I became aware that Taiwanese art history is being continually updated. The people in the field of Taiwanese art history are making efforts to clarify 'misleading' narration and also to deepen certain subjects that was neglected. This situation is the result of successive generations in Taiwan having been through several periods of chaotic identity transformations, struggling between "becoming someone" or "being someone". This shifts narrations of their own time and viewpoints in relation to history. Take this topic about painter Cheng-Po Chen (1895-1947), for example, it opens a space for scholars from different countries to develop ideas from different angles, in some way to occupy and control the tone of explaining the period of time reflected by this painter.

In researching the position of Taiwanese painting in the development of art in Taiwan, I am reading *Visual Culture in Taiwan, 1975-1995* (Kuo, 1995), *Ethnic Consciousness and Remarkable Form* (Li, 2001), *A Critique on Taiwan Art* (Ni, 2007), *Tension in Art: Art and Cultural Politics in Taiwan* (Liao, 2010), *2000s Taiwanese Painters* (Chang, 2013), *Extending Knowledge through Investigating Art* (Liao, 2013), *The Urban Aesthetic of Taiwan* (Chen, 2013). Through reading critics from different generations and at different historical periods, we can really see how the tones and keywords have changed but nevertheless still correlated with each other. I will then trace how the atmosphere of painting in Taiwan was described first of all before the Japanese invasion; in Imperial Japanese-related European art influence; the Chinese-post-war American art influence; and the contemporary shift to Taiwanese-based art under the influence of globalization and then the interdependent contemporary art markets. These critical writings taken from different points in history pinpoint the change in values and the distance between the people, the artists, and the field of vision as articulated by the critics.

Japan and its Effects

A Japanese congressman, Takekoshi Yosaburo (1865-1950), writes in his book *Japanese Rule in Formosa* that 'In colonies like Formosa, where everything is still in its infancy, the government should be largely patriarchal' (Braithwaite trans., 1907: p.22). This idea summarizes the development of western landscape painting in Taiwan: 'policy driven'. Between 1895 and 1945, Taiwan was a dependency of the

6 In memory of the 120th Birthday anniversary of Taiwanese painter, Cheng-Po Chen (1895-1947). The National Palace Museum of Taiwan hold a special exhibition of Chen during 05/12/2014-20/03/2015 as well as international conference highlighting Chen's contribution and impacts on modern East Asian history.

Empire of Japan. As Taiwan was Japan's first overseas colony, Japanese intentions were to turn the island into a show piece "model colony". Therefore, every effort was made to improve the island's economy, industry, public works and to change its culture.

As a matter of fact, Taiwan was lacking an art environment before the Japanese rule as it was an agrarian based feudal society. Artists usually worked for the temple making art such as portraits of door gods, which was not considered valuable at that time and had been devalued for a long time. This was the case until, in recent years, there were some efforts made to revive folk art (see Figure 1, p.23). Chinese ink painting (or *Shan-Shui*) was undeveloped in Taiwan and, as in China, only highly educated scholars or literati practices this, and this was not characteristic of Taiwan's economic development.

However, calligraphy was an exception and it was practiced during the late Ching period (about 1885-1895) and continued during Japanese Rule in the educational system because the Japanese also valued calligraphy. It could be seen as an influence on the gestures and brush marks in ink painting in a broader sense and a shared common value among East Asian cultures. Western oil painting (Impressionism at that time) and *Tōyōga* painting (or *Nihonga*, which is glue colour painting in the Japanese style, see Figure 7, p.28) were introduced under the directive of the Japanese and became mainstream in the building up of a new art structure in Taiwan. More than 20 years later than Europe, Japan learned about Impressionism in 1893, and this was introduced into Taiwan in 1925 (Ni, 2007: p.13-15) (see Figure 2, p.23). When Japan was being constructed through an occidentalist viewpoint, the Impressionists were in their turn fascinated by Japanese *Ukiyo-e* (The Pictures of the Floating World) for their depiction of the vivid pleasures of life in the urbanised *Edo* period (1603-1867) realised through amazing decorative techniques. It is important to point out that although the state of Taiwan under Japanese rule during the 1920s was a period of economic progress, and progress in education and literature, there were no general ideas of the 'bourgeoisie' and no acceptance of nudity in art (Ni, 2007: p.77).

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 1: Door Gods in Puji Palace, Taoyuan, Taiwan (built in 1807), repainted by Jian-Guang Zhang in 1967.

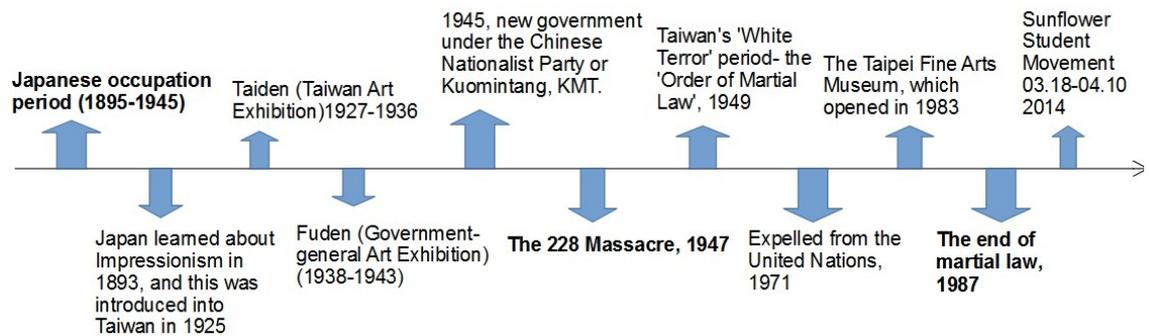


Figure2: Time line of key events of Taiwan history (1895-2014) in this report.

Under these distinctive historical conditions, the foundation for Taiwanese oil painting was built by Japanese teachers; Kinichiro Ishikawa (1871-1945) is recognized as one of the torchbearers of modern Taiwanese art history (see Figure 3, p.24). Certain periods of the European history of landscape painting, which provided amazing scenes for religious stories, and Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, were encountered in Taiwan only through the reproduction of images and the education provided by Japanese art teachers. The pictorial forms were taught by the Japanese as the academic painting form of Taiwan, a form of new knowledge alienated from the original concepts of European Impressionism and also ignoring the influences that Japanese art had on European art contexts, Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890) in particular, in the 1860s (see Figure 4, p.25). Japan's aim for this art education was to serve the Japanese authority's intention to cut the navel string Taiwan had with its former ruler, The Ching Empire, by occidentalization,

which at that time was defined as advanced and aimed to structure new cultural values for the people of its first overseas colony.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 3: Kinichiro Ishikawa (1871–1945), *Alleyway*. Watercolour on Paper, 43.5 × 28.5 cm, before 1945, Taipei Fine Arts Museum Special Collection.

There were selected themes because the Japanese authority wanted to modernize Taiwan through numerous cultural forms, including art, but without letting it become a tool for the freedom of the mind. Therefore, the Japanese politically driven art guided the aesthetics and form of the official Fine Art Exhibition, encouraging people to paint scenes of the peaceful daily lives of the local residents, or the beautiful local street views and romantic landscapes with tropical plants (see Figure 5, p.25). This was the opposite of landscape painting embedded in massive historical events, depicting Christian stories (see Figure 6, p.26) or scenes of the human conquering nature.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 4: Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890), *Bridge in the Rain* (after Hiroshige). Oil on canvas, 73.3 cm × 53.8 cm, 1887, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation).

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 5: Chi-Chun Liao (1902–1976), *Courtyard with Banana Trees* (芭蕉の庭). Oil on Canvas, 129.2 × 95.8 cm, 1928, Taipei Fine Arts Museum Special Collection.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 6: Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890), *Pietà* (after Delacroix). Oil on canvas, 73 cm × 60.5 cm, 1889, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation).

There was no art school or university art department before and during the Japanese occupation period (1895–1945). If people were interested in art at classes in high school or normal school, and wanted to learn more, then they went to Japan for further study. Artists who returned from studying abroad—including Cheng-Po Chen (1895–1947), Shui-Long Yen (1903–1977), San-Lang Yang (1919–1989) and Xue-Hu Guo (1908–2012) for example—founded what is viewed as the beginnings of a new tradition of art in Taiwan. Under the nurture of educational institutions and these new emerging artists, the *Taiden* (Taiwan Art Exhibition) was established by official and civilian groups in 1927 and was held annually until 1936. From 1938 to 1943 it was reformed and renamed *Fuden* (Government-general Art Exhibition), pointing to the deep involvement of political forces in shaping culture at that time. However, calligraphy was not included in either of these art exhibitions, since the focal point of cultural policy was based on Western trends. By introducing Western art forms as key to modernization and by shaping the aesthetic taste of art works for this official exhibition, a new seed of art in Taiwan was planted and grew successfully.

Tōyōga painting (included in the *Taiden* and *Fuden*, 1927–1936; 1938–1943) on the other hand, has its origin in the techniques of Chinese ink painting, which depicts figural or narrative subjects very precisely with highly detailed brushstrokes (see Figure 7 and 8, p.28). It combines the elements of Eastern painting skills (the use of lines and colours for example) with the tendency of ‘to paint or draw from life or nature’ from Western art, allowing painters to explore this remixed art form under the themes suggested by the authorities: still life, portraiture and regional scenes.

The original intentions of Impressionism, understood as a controversial art movement challenging the rules of academic painting and opening up new possibilities of ways for painting in Europe in the 19th-century did not affect Taiwan in the same way, since access to art in Taiwan took place in a different time line and space.

Taiwanese painters internalised the new knowledge of image making and developed their 'own' style. This was how the Japanese owner of the Taiwan Daily Newspaper, Kawamura, expressed his opinion of the educational meaning of the *Taiden* (Taiwan Art Exhibition): '... the islander's life have been dreary and vapid because the lack of civilization in its history and neglect of edification in the taste of art ... Fortunately in this art palace, aesthetic standards of inlander (which means Japanese) and Taiwanese are no difference...' (Kuo ed. *Visual Culture in Taiwan, 1975-1995*, 1995: p.49). The term 'inlander' signified how the Japanese viewed Taiwan as its offshore island and confirmed Taiwan as part of Japan. Through viewing the collection of works in the official exhibitions we can sense both the powerful control of aesthetic values by the ruling class and the artistic development of the paintings, under this limitation.

If we view learning Western painting as similar to learning a foreign language (English for example), then we could say that its grammar, pronunciation and methods of usage, were imparted by the Japanese as a cultural influence but also blending in with the Taiwanese's own speech and sentence structures. The resulting 'wording', in my view, was seeking a standardised format but resulted in an exotic aroma, in comparison to the 'typical Impressionism' recognized by global art history in general. Painters were still testing and getting familiar with this material and painting methods: the outcome carried a sense of the maladroit and the plain.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 7: Hsueh-Hu Kuo (1908–2012), *Scenery Near Yuan Shan*. Chinese gouache on silk, 91 × 182 cm, 1927, Taipei Fine Arts Museum Special Collection.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 8: Details of Figure 7.

The important Taiwanese art critic, Li-Fa Hsieh (b. 1938), mentioned in his book, *The History of Fine Art Movements in Japan-ruled Taiwan*, that the painters' desire to make art was technically determined by the standard mould of the Japan Salon instead of expressing the 'real' feelings of a colonized society. Despite the fact that authors in the fields of literature and drama were persecuted by the Japanese colonialists, according to the Japanese government, artists retained absolute freedom, of creation and unviolated fair competition at the sacred palace for art (Ni, 2007: p.15). However, records show that ten times at *Taiden* between 1927-1936 and five times at *Fuden* between 1938-1943, the number of Japanese being selected for the exhibition were always more than, or often double, the number of Taiwanese being selected (Kuo ed. *Visual Culture in Taiwan, 1975-1995*, 1995: pp.36-37).

In 1945, the surrender of Japan ended World War II and brought Taiwan its new government under the Chinese Nationalist Party or Kuomintang, KMT. A great tension occurred between this new authority and the Taiwanese people due to the transitional stages of political ideology and social differences. The commander of Kuomintang was Kai-Shek Chiang, who brought his refugee-like army to Taiwan and instigated a cultural shock for the Taiwanese. Because Taiwan had been modernized

by Japan previously, this new regime precipitated unjustified conflicts and a financial crisis during the chaotic post-war period, which led to a catastrophic event—the 228 Massacre in 1947. This was an anti-government uprising, now viewed as one of the most important events in Taiwan’s modern history, a civil revolt in response to government corruption in regions of Taiwan. It began on the 27th of February, 1947, and was violently suppressed by the KMT-led Republic of China government, resulting in the massacre of numerous civilians on February 28. The number of deaths have not been verified until now. This massacre marked the beginning of Taiwan’s ‘White Terror’ period of Kuomintang government, in which inhabitants went missing, died, or were imprisoned for unexplained reasons, victims of this political persecution may number well over two hundred thousand. Taiwanese elites and their families from all sectors were arrested or were killed on suspicion of anti-government activities or spying.⁷

Painter, Cheng-Po Chen (1895–1947) was involved and killed during 228. And this chaos carried on through the ‘Order of Martial Law’, 1949, imposing martial law throughout Taiwan until the order was lifted in 1987. Taiwan was therefore under martial law for more than 38 years. The official art fair proceeded as usual from 1946 under the new government under KMT; consequently, what was considered to be good and correct changed. *Tōyōga* painting became problematic because it was seen as inherited from Japanese art, hence the KMT set out to determine the quintessential national cultural activities including music, drama and art. Its aim was to cease the deepening of Japanese cultural infiltration, to stop people from becoming Japanese and to start making them become Chinese by constructing a Chinese-centred cultural institution (Liao, 2010: p.63). However, as writers were often arrested due to the critical overtones of outrage communicated by their works, most painters painted as if they existed in a parallel world; beautiful landscape, nude and still life works were still typical in art fairs. These paintings definitely did not represent the actual mood of society (Ni, 2007: p.15).

We can sense that the painters’ mild way of reacting to both rulers, Japanese and KMT, was in huge contrast to the tragic history of Taiwan that we now know. The story about Yu-Shan Lin’s work *Handing over Horses* (1943, glue colour painting, see Figure 9, p.30) is a good example of how an artist attempts to deal with potential threats during regime shifts. The painting depicted the scene of a soldier transporting goods and materials with horses, as seen by Lin on the street.

7 Shiao-Feng Lee, *The 228 Incident*, TAIPEI TIMES, Sat, Feb 28, 2004, Weblog. Available from: <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/editorials/archives/2004/02/28/2003100472> [Accessed 26th June 2016].

Originally there were national flags of Japan in the painting, but in fear of invoking 228, in 1947 he re-painted these flags into 'Blue Sky, White Sun, and a Wholly Red Earth', which is the flag of the Republic of China. Until 1999, due to damage to the right side of this work, he re-painted the national flags of Japan as in the original street scene but preserving the left-side as evidence of the persecution of 228 (Liao, 2010: p.72).

Using language to manipulate culture is another familiar means of colonisation. For example my own family's experience describes both how Japan and the KMT controlled speech through the National Language Movement. My grandmother lived through the period of Japanese rule, and was therefore taught to speak Japanese, and was forbidden to speak her mother tongue, Taiwanese. My father was born when WWII was about to end and thus he received a Japanese style education only for a brief period of time. After KMT, speaking Japanese and Taiwanese publicly was banned. Taiwan's main language of communication shifted from Taiwanese to Japanese and then to Mandarin only. This is Taiwanese Mandarin, a variant of Mandarin derived from the Standard Mandarin of Beijing spoken in Taiwan. There were official activities called 'Speak Guóyǔ campaign' (國語, literally "national language") aimed to brainwash the people, and students would be punished for using other languages at school. At that time all forms of media, including soap operas, could only use Mandarin. This language policy was so successful that Taiwanese dialects such as Min Nan, or Southern Fu Jian language, Hakka and the languages of the indigenous people of Taiwan are now in danger of dying out because less and less people in the younger generation speak these languages well and their written works are not popularised.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 9: Yu-shan Lin (1907-2004), *Handing over Horses*. Glue colour on paper, 131.7 × 200.2 cm, 1943, Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts Special Collection.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 10: Kuo-Sung Liu (b. 1932), *Rhythmic Flow*. Ink on Paper, 134.8 × 77.5 cm, 1964, Taipei Fine Arts Museum Special Collection.

There were different ways of modernisation happening around the world and the Taiwanese way of dealing with it indicates its culture being fragmented and traumatised under political control yet still hanging onto its creativity. In order to connect with this new formation of cultural identity, people in the art world rationalized *Tōyōga* painting (see Figure 7 and 8, p.28) by retracing its origin to traditional Chinese painting methods, emphasising the highly coloured meticulous brush craftsmanship, differing from 'National Painting' by the addition of local characteristics. Continuing with the attempt to catch up with the progression of an era, the new form of national painting, modern ink painting (see Figure 10, p.31), was formed during the 1960s, and combined abstract expression, collage and montage, as its intention was 'to integrate elements of East and West' and therefore create a new Eastern narrative (Liao, 2010: pp.82-83). Taiwan's painting continued to struggle under the demand for political correctness, however, by means of re-situating various latest trends of art form into art practice, historic ink painting gained new importance, and was also deconstructed. The Oriental style henceforward became 'liquefied' as an imagination of utopia or a symbol of nonexistent nostalgia. The far-off, poised, dreamy and mysterious literati ink painting, absolutely disconnected with the present, became paradoxically connected with art practice through all kinds of interpretation and practices of alienation.

A New Stage

During the 1970s Taiwan was expelled from the United Nations for many reasons, and its international political status remains a point of contention, unsolved, and problematic.⁸ Under the crisis of national and political identity, the government addressed the establishment of self-identity, calling on all people living in this island to gather together through their communities and deepen the sense of belonging to this island. This international isolation led to the development of the 'Local Movements'⁹ in literature, and later fine art. These movements looked in particular at the cultures of the land and rural life of Taiwan. Artists choosing this subject matter could then reveal traditional Taiwanese features and also demonstrate their pictorial skills. For example Artist De-Jinn Shiy (1923–1981) depicted Taiwanese rural village landscape using water colour and brush marks skills from ink painting (see Figure 11, p.33). However, another major influence was American realist painting, in particular Andrew Wyeth (1917–2009), who was particularly celebrated by 'Lion Art Magazine'¹⁰ as a master of nostalgia and realism. His works deeply affected the Taiwanese realist nostalgia trend in the late 1970s and 1980s (Ni, 2007: pp.27–28). Wyeth's works (see Figure 12, p.33) contain two elements that fit in with the Taiwanese Local movement, one is nostalgia style of yearning for lost things and the other is the painterly skill associated with 'super realism' that inspired Taiwanese painters to look for subjects such as rural ruins or used bicycles (see Figure 13, p.34). Between 1950s–1980s, however, Taiwan was undergoing a major economic transition towards an industrial society.

The choices of subject matter relating to the anxiety of national self-identification have continued to persist after the end of martial law in 1987 until now. The history of Taiwan shows how people have been 'distanced' from politics and art in different periods, yet our imaginations also played a part in building our relationship with the

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- 8 Conventional wisdom has attributed the loss of the UN seat to the then-KMT government's adamant insistence on declaring itself the sole legitimate government of China, albeit with only de facto control of Taiwan after losing the Chinese civil war on the mainland to the communists in 1949. Further information available from: <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/local/archives/2001/09/12/102595/2> [Accessed 26th June 2016].
 - 9 Localism in Taiwan, were anti-formalist movements in literature and later in art for a short period of time in the 1930s and again in the 1970s. Both aimed to reflect social reality and adopted daily life as creative material. In the 1970s due to the damage of being expelled from the United Nations, the field of literature strived to reflect social issue and there was a renewed-exploration of Taiwanese literature under Japanese rule.
 - 10 March 1971, 'Lion Art' monthly publication began to publish, the magazine proclaimed the advent of the era of Taiwan's art magazine, it is Taiwan's first professional journal of the Fine Arts that has been published for over 25 years.

history. Art works from the period of Japanese rule to the new period of the 1970s and the recent efforts made to repair temple art are all clues to the mapping of our cultural and personal relationality, affinity, solidarity, identity and value judgments.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 11: De-Jinn Shiy (1923-1981), *Terraced Paddy Fields*, Tamsui. Watercolour on paper, 55.8 × 4.5 cm, 1981, Taipei Fine Arts Museum Special Collection.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 12: Andrew Wyeth (1917-2009), *Alvaro and Christina*. Watercolour on paper, 59 × 74 cm, 1968, Farnsworth Art Museum collection.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 13: Ming-Chang Hsieh (b. 1955), *Nostalgia*. Watercolour on paper, 56 × 76 cm, 1981, Taipei Fine Arts Museum Special Collection.

The Young Contemporary

The Taipei Fine Arts Museum, which opened in 1983, was the first purpose built museum in Taiwan operating as a platform for hosting modern and contemporary art exhibitions. This is where original pieces of art from Avant-Garde movements such as Cobra, Bauhaus, Dada, and artists such as Paul Delvaux (1897-1994) or Christo (b. 1935) were introduced to the Taiwanese public. In *A Critique on Taiwan Art* (Ni, 2007), Ni indicates that the art museum of Taiwan, was immediately instrumental in channelling integration into global art communities. New information, concepts and materials were more accessible and therefore encouraged corresponding art developments. Taiwanese Neo-Expressionism in the late 1980s, for example, could be said to have been influenced by this international trend. After the lifting of martial law in 1987, artists dealing with local political subjects and the social demands had stronger narratives. These artists used the language of sarcasm (see Figure 14, p.35). However, some of the paintings were considered too ugly and unattractive by the art market and sometimes misunderstood as localism instead of Avant-Garde by the people. Ni repeats that Taiwan is lacking 'cultural depth' and continues to appropriate European and American cultures to produce an account of Taiwanese art, which indicate Taiwanese culture as a subaltern culture and that appears to be empty in soul. These generational shifts have manifested as differing "weights" of culture. The exhibition "Weak Painting" (弱繪畫, Kuandu Museum of Fine Arts, Taiwan, 2009) showed a group exhibition from the "lighter" generation, a name given to artists born after 1975 (see Figure 15, p.36). The word 'weak' is used to name a common attitude amongst this group of young painters of the same generation who address the same subject matter with the use of 'dim' dreamy narrative. For example the kind of

painting that is allusive in meaning, sometimes veering between the figurative and the abstract. Here, the word 'weak' also represents the position of painting in the contemporary art world, which is, having relatively 'weaker' attention than mixed media receives, especially high tech media art. As such, choosing painting as an art material and tradition indicates a 'strong' personal choice. According to one of its curator Ching-Wen Chang, a shared element among these young painters' works is an indescribable indefinite universal; painters are using pictorial languages that defamiliarized realities of their daily life. They did not intend to respond to themes about nation, history or myth but rather their own intimate experiences with people and events (see Figure 16, p.36). These paintings could still be politically motivated but conceal their politics in flourish and skill of painterly seduction: the embedded narratives needed further verbal explanation.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 14: Tien-Chang Wu
(b. 1956)
*Five Phases of President
CHIANG Ching-Kuo*. Oil on
Vinyl, 239 × 246 cm (×5),
1989, Taipei Fine Arts
Museum special collection.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 15: Liang-Yin Wang (b. 1979), *Ice lolly*. Acrylic on canvas, 160×160 cm, 2007.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 16: Chien-Jen Chiu (b. 1981), *Narrative*. Oil on canvas, 130 × 195 cm, 162 × 260 cm, 112 × 145 cm, 130 × 162 cm (x2), 2004, Taipei Fine Arts Museum Special Collection.

2000s Taiwanese Painters (Chang, 2013) is an example of a fresh account of painting in Taiwan, which sets painting apart from its wounded history. This book is comprised of a collection of interviews with 32 painters born after 1970, all of whom have an academic art background in Taiwan and have been recognized as emerging artists in about the year 2000. Chang's work makes no attempt to frame any 'ism' but simply to present these artists' diverse approaches and their individual life in art practice. In her book, Chang (b. 1976) represents a vision of curating and criticism formed by her association with a considerably younger generation of Taiwanese painters; and the tone of the interviews and how she discusses their paintings, is very different from that of the senior Taiwanese of early periods (Chang, 2013). The early Taiwanese artists were motivated by a strong sense of mission determined by their political situation, namely one of power conflicts, whereas the later generation's thinking is characterized by a rich and undefined storytelling.

In her preface, Chang claims that the development of Taiwanese painting and the maturity of Taiwan's art institutions mean that students are able to: (1.) become highly self-aware artists with styles rooted in deep cultural identities and (2.) to develop different forms of interpretation.

Some of the works are painters' autobiographical expressions, which are perhaps about sadness or sweetness and belong to personal narration but could also be regarded as mirroring everyday life today (Chang, 2013: p.7). This aesthetic pleasure of 'lightness' that shared by the younger generation also acts as a distancing from, mirroring or hammering of social reality: recent protests such as the Sunflower Student Movement in Taiwan¹¹ and the Umbrella Revolution in Hong Kong¹² are examples of 'mild action' clothed in lightness and softness conveyed by symbols such as the sunflower and umbrella that are used to symbolise hopefulness and harmlessness. Though seemingly mild they are steady and determined. The two Student Movements led to the emergence of new political parties that keep innovation going.¹³

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- 11 The Sunflower Student Movement (March 18-April 10, 2014) was a protest driven by students and civic groups protesting the approval of the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement (CSSTA) by the ruling party Kuomintang at the legislature without clause-by-clause review. The movement marked the first time that the legislature has been occupied by citizens in the history of the Republic of China (ROC), which has governed Taiwan since 1945. Adela Lin and Tim Culpan, 'Taiwan Students Occupy Legislature Over China Pact', Mar 19, 2014 3:57 PM GMT+0000. Available from: <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-03-19/taiwan-students-occupy-legislature-over-china-trade-pact-vote.html> [Accessed 14th October 2014].
 - 12 The Umbrella Movement or Umbrella Revolution, is an on-going protest began in September 2014, the Hong Kong Federation of Students and Scholarism began protesting outside the government headquarters on 22 September 2014 against the NPCSC's (National People's Congress) decision on proposed electoral reform, disallowing civil nominations, a 1200-member nominating committee, which would remain nominated by the business factions and strictly controlled by Beijing, would elect two to three electoral candidates with more than half of the votes before the general public can vote upon. The name 'Umbrella Revolution' was coined by Adam Cotton on Twitter on 26 September to describe the large number of protesters who used umbrellas to protect themselves from pepper spray and tear gas, and went on to be widely used in international media and by many protesters themselves. Kelvin Chan, 'Umbrella Revolution' Protests Spread In Hong Kong, Posted: 09/29/2014 7:23 am EDT Updated: 09/30/2014 10:59 am EDT. Available from: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/09/29/hong-kong_n_5899116.html [Accessed 14th October 2014].
 - 13 The New Power Party (NPP; Chinese: 時代力量), a political party formed in early 2015 in Taiwan, emerged from the Sunflower Student Movement in 2014. The NPP won 5 legislative seats in the 2016 general election, 3 from constituencies and 2 from proportional, becoming the third biggest party in Taiwan. Available from: <https://www.newpowerparty.tw/> [Accessed 28th January 2017].
Demosistō (香港眾志) is a political party in Hong Kong established on 10 April 2016. Led by the former leaders of Scholarism, Joshua Wong, Agnes Chow and Oscar Lai and former secretary-general of the Hong Kong Federation of Students (HKFS) Nathan Law, the two

Chang is also mentioned in Sarah Thornton's book *Seven Days in the Art World* (2008). Quoting Francis Bacon she writes:

' You see, painting has now become, or all art has now become completely a game, by which man distracts himself. And you may say it has always been like that, but now it's entirely a game. What is fascinating actually is, that it's going to become much more difficult for the artists, because he must really deepen the game to become any good at all.' (Chang, 2013: p.7)

The question of 'How to deepen the game' in this era when a machine arm could replace the artist's hand, may be answered like this: to keep offering a 'scape' through the painter's eyes. As always, painting has to continue fighting for its existence. Contrary to the 'Weak painting' generation, a painting group called the 'Hantoo Art Group'¹⁴ was established in 1998 by a senior generation. They gathered together and renamed from small groups in 1982 and they are still recruiting new blood. Paraphrased in English, *Hantoo* means 'bold picture' (see Figure 17, p.38). While another newly established group by the same generation of 'Weak painting' is simply called 'Show Your Island Artist Group' (2012). These are examples of groups of painters in Taiwan demonstrate that painting is still actively taking part in the 'game' after the end of martial law in 1987.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 17: Chang-Ling Yang (b. 1975) Pork Belly Series—*Flesh, Flowers and Birds—Waiting for Dawn* (Series: works with no series). Oil on canvas, 130 × 162 cm, 2007.

student activist groups which played an instrumental role in the 79-day occupy protests known as the Umbrella Revolution in 2014. Demosistō aims to achieve democratic self-determination in Hong Kong. Available from: <https://www.demosisto.hk/> [Accessed 28th January 2017].

14 'Hantoo Art Group' has 14 members by now. Available from: <http://hantooartgroup.tw/> [Accessed 28th January 2017].

II. SUBLIME AND SHAN-SHUI

To bridge the concept of the sublime in Western landscape painting and *Qi-Yun Sheng-Dong* in ink painting, and to discuss the differences and similarities of their symbolism, I am reading *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (Burke, 1757); *Landscape into Art* (Clark, 1949); *The Essence and Spirit in Freehand brushwork* (Chen, 1979); *The Aesthetics in Ink Painting* (Shih, 2008); *Representations and Experiences of the Landscape (Représentations et expériences du paysage)* (Grout, 2009); and essays by Alison Smith, *The Sublime in Crisis: Landscape Painting after Turner, British Art and the Sublime* in Nigel Llewellyn and Christine Riding (eds. 2013), *The Art of the Sublime*. My aim is to investigate how the original concept of the sublime and the spirit of *Qi-Yun Sheng-Dong* have remained and also how they have been transformed.

Visual, mental and physical metaphors of our human relationship to the world may be embedded in our concepts of the sublime. The following is Terry Eagleton's observation regarding the European aesthetic tradition:

'Aesthetics is born as a discourse of the body. In its original formulation by the German philosopher Alexander Baumgarten, the term refers not in the first place to art, but, as the Greek *aisthesis* would suggest, to the whole region of human perception and sensation, in contrast to the more rarefied domain of conceptual thought. The distinction which the term 'aesthetic' initially enforces in the mid-eighteenth century is not one between 'art' and 'life', but between the material and the immaterial: between things and thoughts, sensations and ideas, that which is bound up with our creaturely life as opposed to that which conducts some shadowy existence in the recesses of the mind.'

(Eagleton, 1990: p13)

The depictions of the sublime and our understanding of it vary according to individual conditions and multifarious relations. The sense of the sublime seems to float in the acts of viewing, in our use of language, in the pictorial, and in the verbalization of our experiences.

Let us start from an explanation of the word sublime as stated by Riding and Llewellyn:

'... the 'sublime' is many things: a judgement, a feeling, a state of mind and a kind of response to art or nature. The origins of the word in

English are curious. It derives from a conjunction of two Latin terms, the preposition *sub*, meaning below or up to and the noun *limen*, meaning limit, boundary or threshold. *Limen* is also the word for 'lintel', the heavy wooden or stone beam that holds the weight of a wall up above a doorway or a window.' ¹⁵

In John Ruskin's (1819–1900) words, the sublime is defined through its function to the mind:

' The fact is, that sublimity is not a specific term,—not a term descriptive of the effect of a particular class of ideas. Anything which elevates the mind is sublime, and elevation of mind is produced by the contemplation of greatness of any kind [...] Sublimity is, therefore, only another word for the effect of greatness upon the feelings; — greatness, whether of matter, space, power, virtue, or beauty [...] I take the widest possible ground of investigation, that sublimity is found whatever anything elevates the mind; that is, whatever it contemplates anything above itself, and perceives it to be so.' (Ruskin, 1888, *Modern Painters Volume 1*: pp.40–41)

Descriptions of the experiences we may associate with the notion of sublime appeared in physical descriptions of Nature, which often evoked aesthetic expressions of the qualities of horror on the one hand and harmony on the other. For example, the English critic and dramatist John Dennis's (1658–1734) accounts of his journey crossing the Alps, which appeared originally as a journal letter published in 'Miscellanies', 1693, states that:

'...The sense of this produc'd different motions in me, viz, a delightful Horrour, a terrible Joy [...] I was infinitely pleased [...] it is a delight that is consistent with Reason, a delight that creates Meditation. But transporting Pleasures follow'd the sight of the Alpes [...] were mingled with Horrors, and sometimes almost with despair.' (Ashfield and de Bolla ed. 1996: p.59)

Joseph Addison (1672–1719), an English essayist, poet, playwright, and politician, also commented: "The Alps fill the mind with an agreeable kind of horror" (Addison,

15 Christine Riding and Nigel Llewellyn, 'British Art and the Sublime', in Nigel Llewellyn and Christine Riding (eds.), *The Art of the Sublime*, January 2013. Available from: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/the-sublime/christine-riding-and-nigel-llewellyn-british-art-and-the-sublime-r1154498> [Accessed 08 February 2015].

re-ed. 1837, p.374). I think that the greatness, or the indescribable in landscape, depends on the spectator's ability to feel and imagine: it is as if the viewer is stunned in their experience. However, for people who've never been to the Alps, it is only a name of an alp evoking rhapsodical admiration. Physical and sensory engagement with nature, the nature of the 'outdoors' might be the only way to feel its sublimity. In this sense, the sublime implies a realm that exists only in the imagination and can never be reached. Or, another sense of the sublime happens in the 'speakable' region through which writers attempt to reproduce their feelings in words.

It is possible that words of appreciation and visual reproductions, photographs and paintings, might also stimulate our imaginations to their limits. I am also interested in how the distinct pixels of the digital image and photography leads to a habitual way of experiencing images and changes our way of memorizing things. The emphasis on close up details also detaches us from the 'real thing', presenting us with another 'layer' of representation that we take as 'reality'.

I find what I would call experience of the feeling of the sublime in the vibrations of my heart and in relation to what I term the meaningful. Take the sense of greatness, for example; it should be related to something that is considered meaningful which could 'elevate' the mind. Some works of art require interpretation to be experienced as 'touching', whereas other artworks that are accompanied by a 'touching' explanation have little impact on the experience of the sublime. Some paintings are appreciated for their mysterious qualities while the importance of others depend upon our understanding of their history and background stories.

In reflecting on the experience of sublimity, I am struck by the following two questions: how can the sense of the sublime be transformed into the 'sublime' as a judgement? Does painting still have the capacity to carry the sense of sublimity in a world of new media art forms, which may provide much more effective stimulation to the viewer?

At the beginning of Alison Smith's essay, 'The Sublime in Crisis: Landscape Painting after Turner', the author states that between 1750 to 1850 the sublime was associated with a new emotional response to landscape in art, which was first developed by Romantic painters and then elaborated in the art of J.M.W. Turner, whose painting was described as successfully capturing the effect of boundlessness that Burke and Kant saw as a prerequisite for the sublime in verbal and visual representation—the sublime being something that can be evoked but not

achieved.¹⁶ I found a similar understanding of the sublime in both comments on the Alps by John Dennis and Joseph Addison.

The sublime functions as the result of sensations experienced by individuals. It is evoked by the material qualities of landscape painting, the symbols, colours and depiction of light. However, the seemingly intuitive judgements of the sublime are the result of knowledge gained from art history and the consequent trained interpretation of the landscape but this is disrupted by the disturbed relationship people have with the natural environment that amounts to alienation.

In Ruskin's third volume of *Modern Painters* (Ruskin, 1856), the author recognised that the sublime was beyond representation, and can only in part be recognised through symbols or the fragmented and disordered images that accompany but do not in themselves constitute greatness.¹⁷ My question arising from this quote is the following: can a painting with fragmented and disordered images, that do not consist in greatness themselves, still constitute a sense of the sublime or greatness through other means than the image itself?

I'm looking at the order of elements in paintings to compare landscape within traditional Western painting and *Shan-Shui* ink painting. It is important to see how similar elements such as the horizon, mountains, clouds, trees and figures are used to serve different purposes. According to *Landscape into Art* (Clark, 1949), landscape has been playing different kinds of functions at various periods of history, while remaining closely connected to people's beliefs and their understanding of nature. I understand the forms of elements in a given painting to act as evidence of the painter's 'optical will'. These forms of elements, in turn, enable the viewer to make an interpretation of the work.

The forest, which was once seen as dangerous, and the garden—with or without fence or walls (*Hortus conclusus*, the enclosed garden), as a 'materialized heaven' that persuade people of what heaven looks like—are two places that represent the action of human activities, claims of ownership and beliefs. According to the first

16 See Andrew Wilton, *Turner and the Sublime*, exhibition catalogue, British Museum, London 1980, quoted from Alison Smith, 'The Sublime in Crisis: Landscape Painting after Turner', in Nigel Llewellyn and Christine Riding (eds.), *The Art of the Sublime*, January 2013. Available from: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/the-sublime/alison-smith-the-sublime-in-crisis-landscape-painting-after-turner-r1109220> [Accessed 26 August 2014].

17 See Alison Smith, 'The Sublime in Crisis: Landscape Painting after Turner', in Nigel Llewellyn and Christine Riding (eds.), *The Art of the Sublime*, January 2013. Available from: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/the-sublime/alison-smith-the-sublime-in-crisis-landscape-painting-after-turner-r1109220> [Accessed 26 August 2014].

chapter of *Landscape into Art: 'The Landscape of Symbols'*, whereas walled gardens represented a peaceful paradise, the mountains and forests outside of the garden walls were considered wild, dark, and horrifying. In the mediaeval period, they were usually painted in ideo-image ways, which may be because mountains were seen as so immense and incomprehensible, whereas specific natural objects, as found in the gardens, were depicted in a more realistic style. The grotesque and unusual stone shape mountains have gradually been romanticized, celebrating the mysterious power of nature and the sublime. This is a question in relation to the 'modern' painter's personal observations, which led Cézanne, for example, to keep painting Mont Sainte-Victoire as an independent subject, over and over again. Stones, trees and mountains are understood as natural symbolic objects in ink painting; this is the main idea of the category of *Shan-Shui* painting, which is different from Western landscape painting insofar as the latter often sees these as subordinate values. According to *Landscape into Art* (Clark, 1949), the symbols of natural objects in early mediaeval art usually have little relation to their actual appearance, and were, to a certain extent, the outcome of mediaeval Christian philosophy:

'If our earthly life is no more than a brief and squalid interlude, then the surroundings in which it is lived need not absorb our attention. If ideas are Godlike and sensations debased, then our rendering of appearances must as far as possible be symbolic, and nature, which we perceive through our senses, becomes positively sinful.' (Clark, 1949: p.2)

The aim of pursuing harmony is to explore how to express vividness. Vividness is divided by *Qi-Yun Sheng-Dong* into four characters. This is brought up by He Xie (謝赫, 5th century) in "Six principles of Chinese painting" from the preface of his book *The Record of the Classification of Old Painters* (古畫品錄序, c. 530). The concepts within *Qi-Yun Sheng-Dong* to *Shan-Shui* are, I think, as important as the sublime is to traditional Western landscape painting.

The first principle of the six states the aim of creating vitality and spirit resonances. *Qi* means energy or soul; *Yun* indicates harmonized rhythm; *Sheng-dong* means bringing a sense of the vivid. Since ink leaves marks on cotton paper or rice paper based on motions of the hand holding the brush, basic gestures that came from calligraphy such as the dot, dash, hook, bend, downstroke, upstroke and wavelike stroke are intimately related to the expression of elements of *Shan-Shui*.

In *The Aesthetics in Ink Painting* (Shih, 2008) Shih mentions *Travellers Among Mountains and Streams* (谿山行旅, ink and slight colour on silk) by Kuan Fan (c. 950–

c. 1032) (Figure 18, p.44) as an example of how difficult it is to explain exactly how a painting of an enormous rock could strike viewer's heart because it is not a typically lyrical example of *Shan-Shui*. In short, it is its visual impact that releases the penetrating power of the essence of nature and the force comes from its pictorial structure which determines the form (including texturing methods, variation of ink colours) and effect (the sense of might, strength). These elements are inseparable.

Shih also talks about how ink painting can transform the limited human notion of landscape into the notion of infinite nature. This is grounded in the "traditional ink grammar" dealing with brush and ink. Masters such as Tao Shi (1642-1708) and Bao-Shi Fu (1904-1965) all developed their own grammar for ink, and gave a detailed account of the painting process as a seemingly transparent instruction. However, the pursuit of *Shan-Shui* is abstract. For example, it is very difficult to speak of the ideal state between *Shan* (mountain), nature and the human. Similarly, it is very abstract to speak of the life sentiments between *Shui* (water), nature and the figure.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 18: Kuan Fan (c. 950-c. 1032), Travellers among Mountains and Streams. Ink and slight colour on silk, 206.3 × 103.3 cm, the Northern Song (960-1127), National Palace Museum, Taipei.

There are four principles of “Don’t” in ink painting according to Shih’s book (Shih, 2008: pp.47-60)—

1. ‘Do not waste’, which refers to leaving white spaces. The emptiness of these white spaces demonstrates what is there and what is not there. It is the place of coexistence, of existence and nil. The gentlest touch makes the most obvious differences.
2. ‘Do not break’, which refers to the arrangement of spaces, is especially important for the vertical type of *Shan-Shui*. The spaces should possess *Qi* which means to have a fluent energy. The proportion of every element of the painting should be appropriate to a clear structure. In addition, clouds play an essential intermediary role between sky (heaven) and earth (the world of mortals).
3. ‘Do not obstruct’, which is related to how different elements of marks are shaped, along with the control of variation of ink colours, which should be well composed.
4. ‘Do not disarray’, which means that when the painter is not able to compose his/her mind, hand and the medium, ink or paint, then the result leads to a failure of the first three principles of “Don’t”, and results in a work that is but an unattractive mess unable to deliver a main feeling.

Dialectical process is a significant character in Asian culture and Confucianism praised the ideal of The Doctrine of the Mean (中庸; *Zhōng-Yōng*), which requires people to self-cultivate general social conventions and to keep their emotions neutral. This means avoiding extremes. In ink painting, it refers to the pursuit of somewhere “between resemblance and non-resemblance”. That is, not painting for soulless imitation, yet not painting poor quality abstraction. *Shan-Shui* master Xian Gong (龔賢, 1618-1689) expounded details of his idea of how to realize the spirit of stone, tree and mountain in his theory of *Shan-Shui*, including fascinating technical descriptions. Among them, he considered that the ingeniousness of stone consists in when it is not square nor round, which echoes the notion of *Zhōng-Yōng* in *Shan-Shui*.

Another special aesthetic aim addressed by the ‘ancients’ is painting in order to release one’s mettle, which is supposed to surpass the mundane. In Chinese, this is called *Yi-Qi* (Shih, 2008: p.27). I think this establishes the main difference between *Shan-Shui* and the sublime when expressing nature under traditional categories. Whereas sublimity lies in awe of the unknown power of nature, *Shan-Shui* lies in how *Yi-Qi* from the heart of the painter can represent his/her vitality and how lines

and dots can be transformed into natural depicting symbols. Therefore *Shan-Shui* does not emphasize the partial darkness of nature as the sublime does.

In traditional Western painting, land and light are constructed in a different way to how the earth is in *Shan-Shui*. In Western painting, 'land' refers to territory such as sacred places, authorities and states, the colonized or conquered, or the ideal of paradise, and as landscape supporting narrative stories. 'Earth' in *Shan-Shui*, however, is not specifically rendered but recognized only in relation to other elements in the painting; airy white space for example could suggest ground, sky, clouds, snow or a sea of clouds according to the context.

Rest During the Flight into Egypt, painted by Gentile Da Fabriano (1423), is described in *Landscape into Art* (Clark, 1949) as the first painting uniting the light of the landscape as a whole. It does this by using the colour gold to cover the earth rather than as decoration. Henceforth, colour turning into light has been explored in landscape painting and I consider this essential for evoking sublimity. People have special feelings for certain colours, both in the West and East, and gold is seen as the light of god. The magic of the Western use of light speaks through the light of the sun/moon, the angel's ring of light, flame in the dark etc. Light in *Shan-Shui*, on the other hand, is a point of divergence created by every minute gap between ink marks. Light exists because of the gaps that were left not because of colours were added.

Cloud, as an obscure thing, contributes greatly to the construction of atmosphere in the tradition of Eastern and Western landscape painting. According to Hubert Damisch,

' For although cloud may offer a particularly inspiring prop for daydreaming and flights of imagination, this is seems to be thanks not to its outline, but on the contrary to whatever it is about it that defines the regime of delineation and pertains to its material nature, its "matter" aspiring to "form"'. (Damisch, 2002: p.35)

This gives painters freedom to use cloud as a tool to manifest their will. Take Christian painting, for example. Cloud might be arranged in a symbolic pattern so as to build a perspective that hints at the path to heaven as a metaphor of approaching truth, bridging sky and earth. Or, in Western landscape painting, its unstable formation with no definite outline creates 'breathing space' and is a challenge for the painter who desires to sprinkle emotion "naturally" through gesture.

In *Shan-Shui*, void is often related to airy material such as mist and is crucial for creating depth in non-linear perspective ink painting composition. For example, distant hills and hills in the foreground are built in the rhythm of dark and light ink colours. The voids in between are used to suggest subtle clouds and mists in the mountains by lighter and the lightest ink. To make a strong comparison between objects, distant hills in the mist are seen as weak objects, whereas trees or stones in the middle distance, rendered in relatively heavy ink, as firm substance. Interestingly, if a road is left as a void in the woods, it then serves the purpose of breathing space, similar to a pond or waterfall that is left as void between dense ink marks. Although fog in *Shan-Shui* needs to be left blank instead of adding white colour, it can also be depicted as dense fog by layering inks or by defining the proportion of the void between objects. It is the interlacing shade of ink that defines what is weak and what is firm. Thus, spatial mobility is created.

Sublime and Qi-Yun Sheng-Dong

Here, I'd like to discuss the similarities between the sense of the sublime and *Qi-Yun Sheng-Dong*. In order to address the pursuit of 'the form beyond the figurative shape of the subject' in ink painting, I will compare this with the notion of the sublime and discuss its relation to the sensations of the painter.

I think that there are different experiences of the sublime and also *Qi-Yun Sheng-Dong* that lies in the sensory experience of the painter, the viewer and the writer. During the time of transforming these sensations into words, something might have uncontrollably changed or there might be an unexpected clarity of some issues raised. I am seeking to look into the sensations of the sublime and *Qi-Yun Sheng-Dong* as a painter, a viewer and writer.

My hypothesis is: *Qi-Yun Sheng-Dong* is the basic element for achieving a sense of the sublime in painting, regardless whether it is oil painting or ink painting. The painting that emerges with a sense of *Qi-Yun Sheng-Dong* does not necessarily possess a theme that was traditionally seen as sublime-related. History or war painting, for example, has sublimity in meaning. However, its ability to evoke the emotional sublime depends on how the physical material of the brush marks effect the viewer's sensation.

In the case of painting, I think that the material of art making functions as the intermediary for the painter, the viewer and the writer to experience a narrative that is lead by their own imagination and sensation. For painter, painting a scene of a protest that they personally experienced, for example, is a mode of embodying a

narrative that might raise a sense of sublimity. For the viewer, a personal experience happens when being intrigued by the painting; immersed in an imaginary context and a possible collective sense that the image presents. The writer uses a mode of a narrative that has the possibility of embodying the image when writing about a painting.

Therefore, I suggest that the sublime cannot be stated as a goal but may happen as an effect within the artwork. Whereas *Qi-Yun Sheng-Dong* is a particular skill in painting, however, this is a skill as if in a state of magic. In ink painting, *Qi-Yun Sheng-Dong* has been the highest pursuit in painting; painters dedicated themselves to bringing out the life and energy of the material through brush marks. I consider that this vividness of energy is the link to the sensations of the painter and the viewer and is related to the sublime in different ways. As a painter, making brush marks is the placing of one's touch on a surface through material. As Deleuze (1981) writes, '[Francis] Bacon repeatedly says that sensation is what passes from one "order" to another, from one "level" to another, from one "area" to another (Gilles Deleuze (English edition), 2003: p.36)'. The painter puts down a pre-visual sensation through the act of making, while simultaneously, the 'thinking hand' brings out another level of sensation. As Deleuze (1981) describes, 'Between a color, a taste, a touch, a smell, a noise, a weight, there would be an existential communication that would constitute the "pathic" (nonrepresentative) moment of the sensation' (Gilles Deleuze (English edition), 2003: p.42). I would sum up this condition as the necessary environment for the senses to 'govern' skill, as if it is a state of magic, with the aim of 'developing' the possible sublimity within the work.

I'd like to discuss the sublime by starting with a statement by Jean-Luc Nancy:

'One may be tempted to imagine that our epoch is rediscovering the sublime, its name, concept, or questions. But clearly, this is by no means the case, for one never returns to any prior moment in history. The sublime is not so much what we're going back to as where we're coming from [...] The question of the sublime is passed on and down to us as the question of presentation [...] It is also therefore a matter of something that overflows art in art itself, or of something that overflows from out of art, and puts into communication or contact all instances of presentation [...]' (1993: pp.1-2).

Here, I'm discussing ideas from an essay on landscape painting by Alison Smith (2013). She claims in her title 'The Sublime in Crisis' that the sublime has been discussed at different times and in various ways in Western landscape painting

history. Smith (2013) says, 'In the visual arts the sublime tends to be associated with the period of roughly 1750–1850 when a new emotional response to landscape first developed in the work of Romantic painters, and found full expression in the art of J.M.W. Turner.'¹⁸ Her selection of landscape paintings in the mid-eighteenth century starts with a painting by Turner, which is considered in relation to 'the Burkean sublime—the experience of terror and awe', and goes on to indicate the changing relationship between people and nature after industrialisation. Since the elitism of the Romantic sublime becomes pictorial cliché, the Pre-Raphaelite aesthetic (paintings by Sir John Everett Millais, Bt (1829–1896) for example, see Figure 19, p.50) aimed to give precedence to the familiar and everyday over the sublime, which is to 'stay true' and 'less intentionally dramatic'. Therefore, the Pre-Raphaelite aesthetic can be described as 'anti-sublime', although this new language for evoking the sublime developed in response to the influence of science, with its emphasis on specificity. Smith uses paintings by William Dyce (1806–1864), William Holman Hunt (1827–1910) and Thomas Seddon (1821–1856) as examples to interpret Pre-Raphaelite period landscape paintings, which tend to fail in evoking sublimity visually, despite innovatory, skilfully and mathematically complete representations of the landscape (see Figure 20, p.50). Smith goes on to explain that viewers have difficulties in extracting ideas from painting itself and the sublime significance of the scene is better evoked through verbal means. In presenting later Victorian landscape painting, led by the return of the sublime, these painters developed a landscape of immersion recalling Turner's sublime (see Figure 21, p.50). Whereas other paintings of this period of religious scepticism express spiritualism and the otherworldly with a sense of grotesque, (see Figure 22, p.51)¹⁹ this painting by George Frederic Watts (1817–1904) presented at the end of the essay, echoes not only Turner's sublime but points forward to the abstract sublime (see Figure 23, p.51).

18 See Alison Smith, 'The Sublime in Crisis: Landscape Painting after Turner', in Nigel Llewellyn and Christine Riding (eds.), *The Art of the Sublime*, January 2013. Available from: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/the-sublime/alison-smith-the-sublime-in-crisis-landscape-painting-after-turner-r1109220> [Accessed 20 November 2016].

19 Smith quotes from Ruskin, 'The Art of England', in Cook and Wedderburn 1903-12, vol.33, p.227 in 'The Sublime in Crisis: Landscape Painting after Turner'.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 19: Sir John Everett Millais, Bt (1829-1896), *The Order of Release 1746*. Oil on canvas, 102.9 × 737 cm, 1852-3, Tate collection.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 20: William Dyce (1806-1864), *Pegwell Bay, Kent—a Recollection of October 5th*. Oil on canvas, 63.5 × 88.9 cm, 1858-60, Tate collection.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 21: Sir John Everett Millais, Bt (1829-1896), *Dew-Drenched Furze*. Oil on canvas, 102 × 737 cm, 1889-90, Tate collection.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 22: William Holman Hunt (1827–1910), *The Triumph of the Innocents*. Oil on canvas, 156.2 × 254 cm, 1883–4, Tate collection.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 23: George Frederic Watts (1817–1904) and assistants, *Chaos*. Oil on canvas, 106.7 × 304.8 cm, c.1875–82, Tate collection.

I find the painter's difficulty in representing the sublime lies in the disconnection with the viewer's sensation despite the painter having a sublime purpose in mind according to Smith. Referring to paintings that 'lack the sublime', Smith argues that there is a crisis of the sublime because of the artists' choice of subject matter: that is themes responding to rapid social and economic change and the expansion of knowledge. For example, the flourishing of Victorian geology allowed artists to focus on microscopic detail but the artist then became lost in the method of obsession at the expense of the human endeavour and of holding the image as a whole. And the Pre-Raphaelite obsession with meteorology similarly resulted, as Hunt describes, in 'Our hearts are not touched'.²⁰ However, my point is that the crisis of the sublime is a crisis of *Qi-Yun Sheng-Dong*: that is when the viewer loses connection with the materiality of the painting.

²⁰ Smith quotes from Alfred William Hunt, 'Modern English Landscape Painting', *Nineteenth Century*, vol.7, May 1880, p.785.

In reflecting on the experience of sublimity (please see above pp.39–42), there arises the question of: how the sense of sublimity may be transformed into the 'sublime' as a judgement. Does painting still have the capacity to carry the sense of sublimity in a world of new media art forms, which may provide much more effective stimulation to the viewer?

'In broad terms', as Philip Shaw (2006) describes, 'whenever experience slips out of conventional understanding, whenever the power of an object or event is such that words fail and points of comparison disappear, then we resort to the feeling of the sublime. As such, the sublime marks the limits of reason and expression together with a sense of what might lie beyond these limits; this may well explain its association with the transcendent, conceived by the theologian John Milbank "as the absolutely unknowable void, upon whose brink we finite beings must dizzily hover" (2004: 211)' (p.2).

Although sometimes a high-quality digital image of a painting offers us incredible clarity and allows us to zoom in on details, there is a substantial difference between seeing a painting on a shiny screen and the actual materiality of the painting in real space being affected by the visual temperature in the air. This material encounter is crucial to how the paint, the marks and their form, can evoke our feelings and imagination. The ekphrastic response to the painting is itself another work and cannot 'represent' the painting. Using the theme of the painting to explain its sublimity is to deal only with verbal meaning, which I think offers little understanding about the viewer's relation to the painting itself. I suggest a painterly sublimity is closer to a sense of great admiration for the skilfulness of the painting, that which reaches a state beyond the viewer's imagination. Or, the painting's subject evokes so much resonance in the viewer that he or she feels that they feel overwhelmed by a deep emotional connection.

Take my experience as a viewer of, for example, *The Monk by the Sea* (1808–1810) by Caspar David Friedrich (1774–1840). When I view this image on-line, I know it is a sublime-related painting from my art historical knowledge. However, when I saw the 'real' painting in the museum in Berlin, a strange feeling occurred; the frame of mind I received (or I imagined) from the painting is so strange, so still and so powerful; the colours are pure and clear, the touch of marks are minimal and gentle, the lines are clean and simple. I feel this conceptual frame of mind creates a far away world from the present yet touches a strange grounded place in the viewer's heart. Another example from my own experience is the sense of horror and shock from a safe distance that I experienced from a painting by Francisco Goya (1746–1828), *Saturn*, also called *Saturn Devouring His Son* (1820–1823). The vigour of the

paint and striking form makes its visual sensation very effective to me as a viewer. Its spiritual energy and fleshy vividness transpire beyond its form, which is brought into being by strong brush marks.

My other experience of engaging with a seemingly formless form of brush marks, was brought about by Mark Rothko's breathing colour blocks; they are another kind of bodily form with corporeal and vital breath built through colours. The existing code of representation and narration in his painting, acts through colour blocks. As Philip Shaw (2006) describes, 'In these postmodern approaches to the sublime, much turns to the relations between the material and the immaterial. For Lyotard, the status of a sublime "Thing" (1991: 142) is determined again by its resistance to "mind": "[The sublime thing] is presence as unrepresentable to the mind, always withdrawn from its grasp. It does not offer itself to dialogue and dialectic".(142)' (p.130). When being surrounded by paintings in Rothko's room at Tate Modern, the paintings directly attempts to 'release presences beneath representation, and beyond representation. The colour system itself is a system of direct action on the nervous system' (Gilles Deleuze, English edition, 2003: pp.51-52). The sense of losing oneself, merging with the scape, being overwhelmed and nothingness are merely the speakable part of the sensations that render the forces of the image.

As mentioned above, different routes point to the sense of sublime. The sublime has no permanent image but can be sketched out as an 'invisible shape' through different kinds of brush marks in painting. Brush marks and colours form the rhythm of a painting. As Deleuze puts it, 'one discovers rhythm as the essence of painting. For it is never a matter of this or that character, this or that object possessing rhythm. On the contrary, rhythms and rhythms alone become characters, become objects. Rhythms are the only characters, the only Figures.' (Gilles Deleuze, English edition, 2003: pp.xiv-xv). I am now proposing a link between Deleuze's concept of rhythm and the notion of *Qi* in painting. In my report I mention that in the practice of ink painting, *Qi* means energy or soul; *Yun* indicates harmonized rhythm; *Sheng-Dong* means bringing a sense of the vivid. When arranging the pictorial spaces, the spaces should possess *Qi* which means they should have a fluent energy (see also pp.43-45). These are elements that are not non-illustrative but form the narration of the painting and are created by the body of brush marks. *Qi* is embodied in the painting image.

To understand *Qi-Yun Sheng-Dong*, it is necessary to consider that the basic meaning of the Chinese word for painting—*Hui-Hua*—encompasses both the acts of painting and drawing (Wu, ed. 2012: p.31). *Hui* means placing colours. *Hua* means to mark something off. Various gaps happen in between the two motions: the gap

between thinking and acting; the gap between seeing and thinking; the gap between seeing and acting; and the gap between stopping and starting. The gap is the time to breath in and breath out. The gap is a crucial space to bring out *Qi-Yun Sheng-Dong*, which is created through *Bi-Mo* (see Figure 24, p.54).

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 24: Kang-Long Pong (b. 1962), *Mountainous Landscape*. Ink on paper, 243 × 121 cm, Taipei Fine Arts Museum.

Bi-Mo is used to analyse the act of *Hui-Hua* in ink painting's terminology. *Bi* represents the methods of 'painting' such as drawing the outline, wrinkle, rub and dot. *Mo* indicates the different effects that ink can present such as splashing, penetrating the thin ink with the thick ink, accumulate or wash. The ink colour expressions such as dense black, dry brush, thin, thick or wet are practices of *Bi-Mo*. In the times of He Xie (謝赫, 5th century), ink painting was portrait-oriented, the "Six principles of Chinese painting" originally targeted portrait painting (please see above p.43). The first principle states the aim is to create vitality and resonances with the spirit. *Qi* means energy or soul; *Yun* indicates harmonized rhythm; *Sheng-Dong* means bringing a sense of the vivid. *Qi-Yun* was then the core standard of a successful portrait. To achieve *Qi-Yun* is to bring out the essence of the inner spirit of the subject.

The concept of *Qi-Yun* has developed through time and has become the general standard in other ink painting categories, such as *Shan-Shui* (Mountain and water) and *Hou-Niao* (Flower and bird). In the era of Ching, Painter Xun Fang (1736–1799)

in *Shan Jing Ju Hua Lun* (Sanjingju Painting Theory, 1795) writes that *Qi-Yun* happens in between *Bi-Mo* (Chen, C.-X., 1991: pp.338–339)²¹. Once *Qi-Yun* is embodied by *Bi-Mo*, *Sheng-Dong* is the result. Chuan-Xi Chen explained that after the theory of *Qi-Yun* began, artists talked about painting the subject's 'second form' as 'the form beyond objective shape' in painting, that is the realm of approaching *Qi-Yun*. In other words, *Qi-Yun* is the subject's form that exceeds its shape; it can only be sensed and cannot be captured by depicting merely the subject's shape (Chen, C.-X., 1991: p.340). Deleuze's description of painting forces could help understand *Qi-Yun*: 'In art, and in painting as in music, it is not a matter of reproducing or inventing forms, but of capturing forces [...] Force is closely related to sensation: for a sensation to exist, a force must be exerted on a body, on a point of the wave.' (Gilles Deleuze, English edition, 2003: p.56). Deleuze describes how the subject's 'second form' exceeds the subject's shape when discussing how 'Bacon is a painter of heads, not faces [...] it is a spirit in bodily form, a corporeal and vital breath, an animal spirit' (Gilles Deleuze, English edition, 2003: p.20).

Deleuze's narration is the observer's position of the subject's 'second form'. Painter Yu-Tao Chen (b. 1918) describes in his book, *The Essence and Spirit of Xieyihua* (1979), how *Qi* functions through movement when creating ink painting: 'When moving the brush, do not get stuck in your hand. Do not condense in your mind. It should be as natural as not noticing how it becomes. When you are absorbed in full concentration, you do not notice the brush, and the brush is not interrupted by the hand'²² (p.30–33) (see also report p.45).

Weaving the above notions together, *Hui-Hua* in ink painting is often thought of as being carried out through *Bi-Mo*; the brush marks should be embodied by *Qi-Yun* to form the 'shape' beyond the figure of the subject. The aim of this practice is to create the vivid energy within *Hui-Hua*. In other words, the painterly thoughts are communicated through *Qi-Yun Sheng-Dong*. The gaze in ink painting is practiced via *Bi-Mo*. The sensation in ink painting is contained in *Sheng-Dong*.

Philip Shaw uses the work of the American abstract painter Barnett Baruch Newman (1905–1970) as an example of the Postmodern sublime, which I would like to propose bears a direct relation to the practice of *Qi-Yun Sheng-Dong*. The sublime, Shaw explains, emerges in Newman only as an instant of creative intensity, derived not from God, nature, or indeed from the mind, but rather from the event of artistic

21 Original text: 方薰(清) (1795) 《山靜居畫論》所謂「氣韻有筆墨間兩種」。

22 Translated by me from the original text: 「運思揮毫，意不在於畫，故得於畫已。不滯於手，不凝於心，不知然而然……在專神貫注下，手不知筆，筆不知手」。

creation. 'The sense of the beyond, that which is, is nothing other than an effect of oil on canvas.' (Philip Shaw, 2006: p.7). Emphasizing the 'bringing out—the essence of inner spirit of the subject', *Shan-Shui* does not recommend painting directly from nature; the pursuit of *Shan-Shui* is to bring together the heavens, earth and the human as a whole. This idea is abstract. For example, to expound the ideal state between *Shan* (mountain), nature and the human, or the feeling of life between *Shui* (water), nature and the figure (see also pp.44) is very difficult. *Shan-Shui* is an idea that can be realised through ink and paint on paper. The effects of *Bi-Mo* on the painting surface that possess *Qi-Yun Sheng-Dong* is the realization of how to 'bring out the sense of sublime' using the abstract idea of bringing together the heavens, earth and human as a whole.

Walking into the Landscape-Like

'The rhythm of walking generates a kind of rhythm of thinking, and the passage through a landscape echoes or stimulates the passage through a series of thoughts [...] This creates an odd consonance between internal and external passage, one that suggests that the mind is also a landscape of sorts and that walking is one way to traverse.' (Rebecca Solnit 2001: pp.5-6)

In this section, I discuss paintings that have the qualities I intend to define as 'landscape-like'. I will do this by looking at different painterly approaches. The process of painting is like journeying through material. The traces are the things that are being made in the mind. The scape of brush marks is both a means and an end, travel and destination of the painter's mind and sensation. The paintings that I propose as landscape-like painting all have objects to be read as symbols, yet the focus point is not symbolic. The idea of 'landscape-like' applies to all subjects that appear to be embedded in brush marks. I will elaborate this idea through examples of paintings drawn from different traditions and my own paintings.

1. The Mental Ground

I am interested in investigating how paintings that I consider relevant to my practice demonstrate the key points that connect and disconnect with the past and the present. This will entail the influences of Taiwanese society and 'world trends'. When I understand painting in terms of chronology, I feel the substantial influence and importance of history. I looked at Cheng-Po Chen's painting (see Figure 25, p.57) in particular to understand the importance of place and localism. He was a person with multiple identities under an era of political turmoil. He was Taiwanese, Japanese and

Chinese. Or, I would say, he was not Japanese or Chinese but, rather, represented the development of his time. The landscape of his painting carries specific political reasons that make this scape not only his landscape but a window for generations to see a period of art history in Taiwan that is highly political driven. He is a floating subject collaged with fragments of consciousness and all his bewilderment and confusion are manifested in his use of materials, and in his painting. According to the art critic Li-Fa Hsieh, painters, who were also intellectuals, under Japanese rule were consciously carrying a strong sense of history in their understanding of contemporary reality; this was their central concern and mission. Their aim was to strive to be featured in the Empire Art Exhibition, held in Japan and Taiwan between 1938 to 1945, in order to make a contribution to the national movement of Taiwan (Hsieh, 1995: p.20). True, painters needed to sense the 'flavour', the ideology at that time, in order to gain recognition from the main stream. Since the Japanese authority advocated 'art with local colour', Cheng-Po Chen became the first Taiwanese artist whose work could be displayed at the Empire Art Exhibition in Japan. His reception of this award for his work acted as a 'witness' for later generations to feel the impact of this art movement and period of history. My engagement with the 'landscape-like' also includes my interest in spaces of cities, including parks and gardens, and his paintings of parks are particularly interesting examples of the use of observation. This painting shows the remains of an interest in symbolic character and the order of space in the East but using Western materials to make paintings for a new era in Taiwan.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 25: Cheng-Po Chen (1895-1947),
Chiayi Park. Oil colour on canvas, 60.5 ×
72.5 cm, 1937.

Cheng-Po Chen (1895-1947) used the recently taught media of oil paint to depict a new landscape: a new public park signifying a period of benevolent rule under Japanese authority. He depicted red-crested cranes (also called the Japanese crane) known as a symbol of luck, longevity and fidelity in Asian culture, and swans under

thick, heavily painted trees with dense brush strokes. Although he was taught Impressionism, his painting carries a sense of 'weirdness' that really interests me. It seems he was not interested in catching real light and shadow as pursued by the early Impressionists, and his brush marks are not as clear and meticulous as Georges-Pierre Seurat, or as bright and cheerful as those by Pierre-Auguste Renoir. It is hard to see the 'scape' of his garden, as the land and sky are undistinguishable. Spaces are only seen through gaps in between brush marks. His glowing garden scene is made by mysterious lights and slightly muddy, sticky, colour that speaks of the humidity of tropical lands. Trees cover most of the painting. The repetition of colours on the trees and leaves and the directions of the brush marks work to pile up the density of the image, making the composition of the image not very pleasurable. However, these red-crested cranes on the water resemble white clouds, partly lifting the heaviness of this painting.

Coincidentally, another painter Wong-Shen Su (b. 1956), who also comes from Chiayi like Cheng-Po Chen, was born after WWII and 228 thus experiencing Taiwan's period of martial law (1949–1987) followed by Taiwan's industrialized period. He depicts a land with numerous symbols related to Taiwanese historical and local memories such as temples, ancient city gates and structures, tunnels, bridges and electrical towers. The 'land' is built by dense brush strokes that shape it into a smoky dark cloud that contains all things. These tiny pieces of objects glow and float in a mysterious light that surrounds each of them. Gaps in between brush marks make the black space breathable. It is a land that has no distance. The relations between brush marks resemble methods of ink painting, the repetition of loose or dense marks with clear areas to form the object (see Figure 26, p.59).

Dubuffet's painting above provides a further example of a painting and depicts a muddy and 'moist' landscape (see Figure 27, p.59), full of details that are not meant to be read as symbols. Its beauty lies in the layers of broken strokes such that one does not know where they start and stop. This is a land that has no distance. Only the force of each brush mark bonds the whole scape. The sense of stickiness comes from its very fleshy colours, where figures are embedded inside the landscape, or vice versa. As Deleuze writes, 'Bacon constantly says that sensation is what passes from one "order" to another, from one "level" to another, from one "area" to another. This is why sensation is the master of deformations, the agent of bodily deformations' (Deleuze, 1981: p.36). It is as if the painting is a warm body with earthy skin that bears scratches, which were stretched out by the painter's gestures and embodied in the paint. The colours intermingle with each other as if the inner flesh and outer skin are blended. There is no clear edge in the image. It seems to have some lines dividing 'ground' and 'sky' yet they do not make the image quieter

in a way that a horizon line usually functions. It is an expanding and drifting-scape full of painterly pleasure.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 26: Wong-Shen Su (b. 1956), *An Island of Castles*. Oil and acrylic colour, 90.5 × 116.5 cm, 1999, National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts collection.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 27: Jean Dubuffet (1901–1985), *The Busy Life*. Oil colour on canvas, 130.2 × 195.6 cm, 1953, Tate Collection.

Another example of an expanding and drifting-scape full of painterly pleasure I am intrigued by is the painting by Luc Tuymans (see Figure 28, p.61). His paintings are described as being 'characterised by a sense of anxiety and impending doom.'²³ He has described their atmosphere as representative of his own personality, one of 'constant fear and constant uneasiness. A constant restlessness' (Ulrich Loock, Juan Vicente Aliaga, Nancy Spector, Luc Tuymans, London 1996: p.16)²⁴. What I sense is a grand composition of brush marks, loose and firm, that build an unknown space that can carry collective narratives. Tuymans creates a haunting void that invites the viewer to input narration. The gestures of the white paint mark out cloud-like shapes that release the space inside the 'cage'. As Hubert Damisch puts it: 'On a conceptual level, a "Cloud" is an unstable formation with no definite outline or colour and yet that possesses the powers of material in which any kind of figure may appear and then vanish' (2002: p.31). The white marks are the trick of senses; the thin white bars making great tension with the airy white 'clouds' that compel the viewer to stand in between horizontal lines. As the viewer, I could be inside or outside the 'cage'. This illusion of uncertainty of ones own position is an unlocking of the cage that put our mind into this haunting void. Cecily Brown's painting of fleshy pink fragments of figures has the vigour of abstraction yet also conveys powerful bodily sensations (see Figure 29, p.61). In her 'landscape-like' mental ground, we do not ask where the place is, but are absorbed into the scene created by the brush strokes. The physical quality of the material of brush marks in this painting composes the touch and surface, which, I argue, reaches the magical stage of *Bi-Mo*. The scape is the agent of bodily deformation that makes the mental ground a place to explore the painterly sublime within the rhythm of *Qi*.

23 Available from: <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/luc-tuymans-2612> [Accessed 1st February 2017].

24 Ibid.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 28: Luc Tuymans (b. 1958), *Within*. Oil colour on canvas, 223 × 243 cm, 2001.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 29: Cecily Brown (b. 1969), *The Girl Who Had Everything*. Oil colour on linen, 254 × 279 cm, 1998.

2. Room Garden

In her book, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*, Rebecca Solnit says that, ‘the passage through a landscape echoes or stimulates the passage through a series of thoughts’ (2011: p.6). I would say for a painter, the passage into a landscape *is* the painting process. The painter is walking the landscape as well as making one.

Similarly, this personal landscape described by the French philosopher, Gaston Bachelard, could start from an image of a room:

‘[...] the Middle Ages, which was the great age of solitary patience. But I can well imagine this patience, which brings peace to one’s fingers. Indeed, we have only to imagine it for our souls to be bathed in peace. All small things must evolve slowly, and certainly a long period of leisure, in a quiet room, was needed to miniaturize the world. Also one must love space to describe it as minutely as though there were world molecules, to enclose an entire spectacle in a molecule of drawing.’ (Bachelard, 1994: p.159)

Take the *Painted Garden of the Villa of Livia* (see Figure 30, p.64) for example, it was originally painted on the marble walls of the dining room of a summer house, the suburban Villa of Livia Drusilla, who was the wife of Augustus. When we see landscape, we are normally either within it or seeing from an unreachable distance. Here, a garden-scape made by hand on a flat marble square unfolds the insight of this painter, and expands our experience of painting.

In Bachelard’s *The Poetics of Space* (1994), *felicitous space* is described as both protective and imaginative (1994: p.xxxi), where one could feel secure and also connected to the cosmic; the kind of space imbued with imagination that nearly always exercises an attraction. This room, with its painted garden for example, functions through the visual memory of walking in a garden. Its coloured natural symbols also provide reverie as much as reality, thereby achieving the sense of coolness, peacefulness and beauty of an ideal garden-scape. This fresco explains how I see the interaction between painting and ‘real’ space, as a form of inter-subjectivity. As Bachelard says: ‘the corner is a haven that ensures us one of the things we prize most highly—immobility’ (1994: p.137). This room, with its fresco garden, cuts out the exterior, the ‘real’ landscape, and provides those inside with an inward vision and a sense of intimacy.

It somehow also fits with one of the points addressed in *Landscape and Power* (Mitchell, 2002: p.5) but is also slightly at variance with his concept: it is a cultural space mediated by a natural scene. It is both a presented and represented space, both signifier and a signified; a frame and yet within a containing frame; a real place and its simulacrum; a package and the commodity inside the package. The rhythm of walking generates a rhythm of seeing and vice versa. Experiencing the scene echoes and stimulates a series of thoughts or feelings, letting the mind wander. As we walk, the scenes are changing, our mind wandering with the act of browsing and anything and everything comes into our eyes. There is then a similarity to be drawn between this garden fresco room and the hand-scrolls of ink painting, which is another way to 'own' a piece of landscape. But the experience of seeing a scroll is intimate, the viewer has direct physical contact with the object, it may be rolled and unrolled at his/her own pace, allowing the viewer to linger on some passages but skim through others. As Bachelard says: 'who sees things from the angle of the values of intimacy, this dimension can be infinite one' (1994: p.86). I assume our imagination functions differently when we are projecting onto an immobile image than a moving picture. The ability to feel intrigued by an image lies with the viewer. Here, whilst observing a still image, the "landscape-like" experience turns the painting into a vast stretch landscape that we travel, driven by our own sensations.

Giorgio Morandi's work provides another example of having intimacy with a room, or a corner (see Figure 31, p.65). His work is like a landscape of solitude for the imagination. In his humble-sized painting, there are luminous walls of colour purposely placed, together with an austere sensuality and yet painterly vigour.

In the previous section on the *Sublime and Qi-Yun Sheng-Dong*, I mentioned that the gap is the time for breath in and breath out (see report p.54). This gap is a crucial space to bring out *Qi-Yun Sheng-Dong*, created through *Bi-Mo*. In Morandi's painting, the materiality of his subject lies in between the real and the abstract, as *Shan-Shui* demands. The lack of significant metaphor in his painting makes his work free from literal meaning. The viewer has to be as quiet, as if alone in a room, reading his brush marks as if reading a text.

The Painted Garden of the Villa of Livia is an illusion of walls and garden, while Morandi's still lifes, each with its horizon line, gives me the illusion that I am seeing a landscape in his lines of composition. His expressive paint and lines of marks remind me of the notion of *Yi-Qi*; some are loose and light, some are quite intense and thick. His marks remain a trace of his gestures, which can be read across the painting. The subtle gaps he left between painted areas create airy spaces, as

recommended by *Shan-Shui*. He also makes these spaces fluid within the still life. The proportion of colours correlate closely with structures and division of spaces. Thus every gentle change has its drama within.

I find the way Morandi handles subject matter is as though walking the same route. Through the repetition of painting the same set of bottles, he bonds the internal and external passage of traversing a metaphorical landscape, practising what *Shan-Shui* pursues, that is to bring the heavens, earth and human together as a whole (see above pp.44-47).

‘[...] Where is reality—in the sky or in the depths of the water? Infinity in our dreams is as high in the firmament as it is deep beneath the waves. One cannot pay too much attention to double images like the star-isle in a psychology of the imagination. They are like the hinges of a dream which, turning on them, changes its register, its matter. Here at this juncture, water grasps the sky. Through dreams, water comes to signify that most distant of homes, a celestial one [...] Thus water, by means of its reflections, doubles the world, doubles things.’ (Bachelard, 1983: p.48)

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 30: Partial Triclinium paintings (painted c. 30-20 BC) from the Villa of Livia at Prima Porta, Rome, now in National Roman Museum.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 31: Giorgio Morandi (1890–1964), *Still Life*. Oil paint on canvas, 248 × 280 mm, 1960, Tate collection.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 32: Shih-Tung Liu (b. 1970), *Clouds on the Shinning Water*. Oil and mixed media on canvas, 130 × 194 cm, 2012, Taipei Fine Arts Museum collection.

Taiwanese artist Shih-Tung Liu (b. 1970) presents his floating garden in a void through his use of mix media collage and oil paint (see Figure 32, p.65). Compared to the heavy and dense garden scene in *Chiayi Park*, painted by Cheng-Po Chen, 1937 (see Figure 25, p.57), Liu's garden is rather light and loose. The latter is composed from found images and cut-out shapes, which the artist has placed onto the painting so that the brush marks are either covered or revealed. Both paintings show the continuing exploration of the subject within natural elements and offer different perspectives on how to paint. Liu's ripped pieces of natural elements echo

the Taiwanese love of colourful delicacy as in the depictions represented by *Tōyōga* painting during Japanese ruling (see report p.22) in a different technique. His loose white paint brush marks also hint at the inner cultural attitude towards the notion of *Shan-Shui*, which is the pursuit of somewhere “between resemblance and non-resemblance” (see report p.45).

To continue the discussion on the usage of void in landscape-like painting, in Liu’s painting (see Figure 32, p.65), spatial mobility is created by floating brush marks, whereas the painting by Chih-Hung Kuo (b. 1982) is a groundless scape, in which mobility is brought about by the significant gaps between brush marks (see Figure 33, p.66). It is a scene that has no scape; the fragmented natural elements are stuck onto the picture stroke-by-stroke, clean and bright, as if pausing in the middle of nowhere. We can assume, based on the title *For Standing Here 23*, that the painter has established a viewing point for the viewer, which is on the same side as the railings, facing the unknown place. Its incompleteness makes people wonder where are we standing and what are we gazing at, or looking for.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 33: Chih-Hung Kuo (b. 1982), *For Standing Here 23*. Oil on canvas, 80.5 cm × 83.2 cm, 2016.

III. MY OWN PAINTINGS

My practice starts 'in between'. I'm looking into brush marks to find figures, as if hovering in between the figure and the abstract. Leaving voids, covering up to erase something, or keeping the condition of approaching the shapes; these are my painterly translation of things—I consider appearances to hold potential symbols and incomplete symbols. This idea is elaborated through three main aspects of my proposed landscape-like painting: the political, brush marks and alternative nature. 'We never look just at one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves' (Berger, 1972: p.9). I'm painting moments and places as extended gaps of time and space, the fragmentation of continuity, edges of other edges, and bodies inside other bodies. I paint that which reflects the cultural position I stand in; my distance to an event and the relationship I have with the chosen subject. The passage from the beginning of a painting to finishing it, is a constant flow of thinking and gazing. Things inhabit us, in the same way that we inhabit them. Take painting for example, the process of painting hand to the material, to surface is a translation of gestures and movements. Objects, spaces, places are part of the architecture in our mind-scape; the other part of our mind-scape is built by senses. Objects, spaces, and places can be brought into the painting as abstract material, the painter's feelings are transformed into sensations through concrete material, thus becoming a painting.

Often my subjects encompass the representation of natural elements and urban symbols. The painting series I present in this research is my painterly translation of my responses to urban life experiences and the cultural and confusing diversity of my situation as a Taiwanese painter working in London. My painting attempts to connect to my cultural background by using sensual landscape language and symbolism to tell stories of places and people. The materiality of brush marks and their gaps reflect the hesitation and attempt to describe space. This method also relates to the temporality of the gaze and uncertainty of reality. It is my aesthetic.

We gaze at what we encounter, or, we encounter that which we've gazed at. 'Gazing is a performance that orders, shapes and classifies, rather than reflects the world' (John Urry and Jonas Larson, 1990: p.2). Gazing is an act of layering our thinking visually. I think there are moments where we all gaze at something, as both an insider and outsider. These positions are divided by the fact that we live in different spaces, our different time lines connecting with things and activities are experienced with different levels of concern. These different world wide historical trajectories produce relativity between the centre and the peripheral in political,

cultural, social and market terms. My paintings aim to reveal observations based on my experience of these environments.

To paint is to connect memories, stories, places and meanings of images, not to represent them but to reflect on them as a collective. My personal and social identity is key. I am looking at gazing both as a tourist and as a non-tourist, both relate to what is being framed in my painting. I find painting can be a container for invisible things; often the meaning lies outside the image and is about the quest for authenticity. A painting itself is a 'staged authenticity' (John Urry and Jonas Larson, 1990: p.10, MacCannell, 1973). Originally, this term is used to describe the staging of local culture to create an impression of authenticity for a tourist audience. Culture is itself created, detected, defined and named by the audience of both insider and outsider. Culture is a summary of how we present ways of living and thinking through change. I consider 'staged authenticity' to be predicated on knowing that there is a gaze, and that presentation is intended to be seen. New media images and advertisements are especially targeted forms of information, which affect my awareness of my own distance to certain events and my preference for particular subjects.

Writing is rethinking painting again. It is the gaze after the image being painted that enables me to unpeel the concepts from gesture to gesture, surface to surface, layer to layer, in the material and in the mind. Painting is a slow response to a remote event; it is a new construction of the power of looking based on the co-presence of the real and digital information, which we are able to see, are made to see, or allowed to see. The relation between parts of the painting blend with social relations that I implant in the images. Through gazing at my own paintings I encounter the path of writing places, stories and dreams, to be found in fissure of time. Through writing about looking and my encounter with landscape-like paintings, I aim to place my different modes of voice.

The Untold Island

Her homeland is an island.

After she experienced touring around an island, she painted the 'face' and other body parts of it. She looked at the island as an outsider and painted it as an insider; then looked at the painted face as an outsider again. She knew nothing about the island before and later, she knew something about the island. The face like any other face stays changing over time. She painted the face and washed out the paint (See Figure 34, 35 and 36, pp.70-71).

Island is the starting point of my research about the blurring of identity. Guishan Island (Turtle Island), which was formerly a pre-military base site, is now a natural conservation tourist spot for hiking and whale watching. Naming a place is giving it an identity. The identity of a place shifts by human activities and political position. I painted this island as if painting a portrait, to express my sense of drifting in identity issue. The island presents as an intermediary figure for the fictitious relation between me and the paintings. The paintings are in the state of blur; they're neither reality nor complete fantasy, and can be viewed as a state of *Shan-Shui*. I pursue the island's 'second form' (see report p.55), that which embodies *Shan-Shui's* practice.

The island is a mountain, a rock, a being. I experienced touring around this island as if observing an unreachable body. It is always a partial version. We cannot see the whole of an island, we cannot see the whole of a mountain. We don't see the whole of our own body. We gaze the parts and sense the whole. In reaching distance we touch to explore the vision. When not in touching distance, we hold a vision for landscape to turn something into landscape. We need distance mentally and physically to enable us to view the '-scape'. The '-scape' in vision and the '-scape' in mind. Landscape happens when people hold the heart to see.

I turn paint into 'touch', through those 'touches' enable me to re-see the '-scape' happening in between marks. Brush mark in Chinese is *Bi-Chu*; *Bi* means 'pen or brush'; *Chu* is the Chinese word for 'to touch or to make contact', which visualizes the action of making brush marks by media and gesture. *Bi-Chu* is the result of movements in painting and the construction of '-scape' in painting. Every stroke abuts against each other, or disperses, collects as groups, points to different directions and forms of corresponding relations. In the painting, the island's body shifts into liquid and colours, and colours and liquids turn into another body. Turn the rhythm of my brush marks into a pictorial skin of a recollected face. The island becomes the view in memories; the memories in the scene; the landscape-like memories; the memory-like landscape (see Figure 37 and 38, pp.71-72).

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 34: Meng-Ju Shih, *Your Face*. Oil colour on canvas, 81.28 × 116.84 cm, 2014.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 35: Meng-Ju Shih, *Your Neck*. Oil colour on canvas, 81.28 × 116.84 cm, 2014.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 36: Meng-Ju Shih, *Your Back*. Oil colour on canvas, 81.28 × 116.84 cm, 2014.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 37: Meng-Ju Shih, *Turtle Island*. Oil colour on paper, 1.5 × 10 m, 2015.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 38: Meng-Ju Shih, *Shan-Shui*. Oil colour on canvas, 107 × 127 cm, 2017.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 39: Meng-Ju Shih, *I Don't Write
Poems for Flowers*. Oil colour on
canvas, 71 × 56 cm, 2017.

Interior Landscape

She wants to express silent daily rituals through cultivating objects as a personal garden; picking up fragments from day dreams.

I painted a group of paintings as the sum of daily lives, to face moments that linger; the moments that offer a stillness of expression. For example, watching flowers transform from being fresh to brown and dry is a journey in silence. What fascinates me is that they are constantly forming a new order whilst at the same time deconstructing the previous order. Their scape is a state of existence in the world (see Figure 39, p.72). The still life is a genre that has a long tradition in oil painting. The Tate glossary definition for still life is: 'One of the principal genres (subject types) of Western art—essentially, the subject matter of a still life painting or sculpture is anything that does not move or is dead.'²⁵ I consider still life painting as an interior landscape of repose, composed of neglected familiar things. As Bachelard writes, 'And indeed we should find countless intermediaries between reality and symbols if we gave things all the movements they suggest. George Sand, dreaming beside a path of yellow sand, saw life flowing by. "What is more beautiful than a road" she wrote. "It is the symbol and the image of an active, varied life." (Consuelo, vol. II, p. 116).' (Bachelard, 1994: p.11). The interior landscape is a gaze expanding into a room beyond the frame. It blossoms from something and carries a charm as a short fiction that can be brought up in daily conversation. The painting refreshes the status of self. I start from making brush marks as if travelling with no purpose, then gradually they settle and become the agents of inner enchantment.

The Distance

News images are floating and repeating on the screen. Images that make her feel helpless and guilty; suspect or expectant; sorrowful or hopeful: they all travel in a non-physical form to her eyes. She picked up the messages that have most relations to her own stand point and planted these images in her painting with her own meaning.

The news images I choose as references to make paintings from, range from political protests that I am personally involved with, to an historical image of a protest. From two Korean government officials meeting at a table to a scene from

25 Available from: <http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources/glossary/s> [Accessed 25 October 2016].

the British parliament, I am interested in the relation between news images and the reality we presume based on our particular viewpoint. This shows our different distances in relation to certain issues and the emotional link we have when seeing a commonly shared gesture in a protest for instance. The temporary landscape formed by the faceless crowd is for me a force of potential and a view about the future.

Take the bird's-eye view image from a protest, 'Democracy at 4 am', which I participated in 2014 for example (see report p.37 about the Sunflower Movement). Looking from above was not my experience in the protest and not my view on-site. However, it shows a summarized description for the protest—the shape of this protest, this temporary scape, was formed because of the people's 'will'. The shape of this specific 'will' was formed by a faceless crowd. In this news image, the faceless crowd shared one body, one pattern. When I was in the crowd, I felt the anxiety, the sense of helplessness and hopelessness for this chaotic politics. In my drawings, I responded to this protest image—I started from keeping the urban signs and the crowd and then focusing on patterns of the faceless crowd, until only the 'will' remains. This is carried out by one gesture in a flow, and carried on the same gesture after running out of ink. The traces of the emptiness are the message that remains (see Figure 40, p.75).

In comparison to my personally involved protest experience, a black and white footage of a protest in a news report caught my eye—particularly the gesture of a woman. She raises her arms high up in the picture, which makes me think of the repetition of gestures in protest scenes. The ghost of the past comes to the present when people still need to fight for the same values over time. Lifting up one's hands can represent many actions such as worship, surrender or celebration etc. This is a gesture that exposes one's vulnerability and is also a powerful sign of openness, showing the will to embrace the unknown (see Figure 41, p.75). I made these paintings to show my faith in fighting for the right thing.

Using the image of the meeting of two Korean government officials, showing the two opposing parties sitting face to face at the meeting table with a bright and colourful landscape painting with flourishing atmosphere as the background, this painting attempts to reflect the fresco in Sienna, *The Allegory of Good and Bad Government* (painted by Ambrogio Lorenzetti, 1338). I presume, nowadays, that any party considers themselves the good one, the right one. No party is the bad one. I suspect, they are in each other's landscapes but they want a different future for their landscapes. I have compassion for the two Koreans meeting since my hometown also has conflicts regarding political identity. I painted the background

'forward' to show my real sense of this meeting is that whoever leads the people into the future, is leading to the ever-changing elsewhere. This notion reflects every nation that struggles to exist, the people who are walking into a landscape-like, unsolved future and deferred present (see Figure 42, p.76).

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 40: Meng-Ju Shih, *Democracy at 4 am—Sunflower*. Pen on paper, 18 × 25 cm (6 pieces), 2016.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 41: Meng-Ju Shih, *The Certain Event*
Oil colour on canvas 101.6 × 137.16 cm 2016

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 42: Meng-Ju Shih, *The Meeting*. Oil colour on canvas, 160 × 120 cm, 2016.

Storyteller

She placed her multiple memories together in her painting as one thing linked to another. To present the odd and the abstract is where inner and exterior landscapes meet. She looked at the land with her memories and felt the sorrow.

‘Art takes a bit of chaos in a frame in order to form a composed chaos that becomes sensory, or from which it extracts a chaoid sensation as variety.’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: p.206)

After I went to the White Cliffs of Dover, someone told me it was an important defence spot during wartime. Another friend told me it was a famous suicide spot. Later, the news about the refugee crisis was often linked to Dover. These are not my memories of this landscape. Those messages were added into my memories after my visit to the place, they were not formed on-site. I placed my version of Dover beside my version of the memories of 228 and White Terror (see report p.29) as a memorial to the land of human sorrow. The two paintings show my different

distances to so-called collective memories. However, we are both the refugees of history (see Figure 43, p.78).

Stories of 228 and the White Terror in Taiwan are the collective memories that I was told since I was young, but they are not my personal memories (see also report p.30). As I watched films and documentaries about these events, they became part of the sorrow land in my mind. In a 1995 Taiwanese film, *Super Citizen Ko* (超級大國民), the background story of White Terror in Taiwan in the 1950s is told through the memories of an old man. The man's heart was full of guilt because his innocent friend was executed but he served a life sentence as a political prisoner and was eventually released. After being released, the old man started searching for his dead friend's grave and finally found it in a bamboo grove in the mountain. He lit candles on each of the graves in the grove (see Figure 43, the left side piece, p.78).

'Perhaps art begins within the animal, at least with the animal that carves out a territory and constructs a house (both are correlative, or even one and the same, in what is called a habitat). The territory-house system transforms a number of organic functions—sexuality, procreation, aggression, feeding. But this transformation does not explain the appearance of the territory and the house; rather, it is the other way around: the territory implies the emergence of pure sensory qualities, of sensibilia that cease to be merely functional and become expressive features, making possible a transformation of function.' (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: p.183)

I want to display a state of mind in between sense and nonsense, fullness and void, amidst the fragments of a tourist wanderlust. I aim to express *Yi-Qi* (see report p.45) though brush marks between the abstract and the figurative; weak and firm. I aim to emphasize the sense of the sublime though a kind of narration that is evoked by certain events (see report pp.39-42). The elements I combined in the work *In Between* (see Figure 44, p.79) for example, are translated from the vivid rituals that I encountered in a touristic gaze which formed my sense of foreignness. The scenes touched my heart, as it is a telling of stories from a foreign land. The work is blended with three events I encountered in 2015 to express my sense of 'staged authenticity' (John Urry and Jonas Larson, 1990: p.10, MacCannell, 1973) in seeing the celebrations of the living and the dead. I visited an island called Castle of Finland in Helsinki on All Saint's day in 2015 and followed the event. This religious festival blurs the line between a ritual and tourist attraction. Since the host spoke Finnish, my understanding of the process was through visual language. I recognized that the costumes of the participants are Halloween ghosts. The dead beings

revived through the rituals of the living. Somehow, I remembered the black cows in the Peak District of England; they are the silent flesh of being that show no less sublimity than the human ritual in my eyes.

I frame a particular scene based on a street festival view in London in another piece *In Between* (see Figure 44, the left side scene, p.79) which is a twist of religious ritual since annual festivals can form the traditions of a community. Similarly on my trip to the island of the Castle of Finland in Helsinki on All Saint's day, I was walking near the celebrating crowd, when I saw the lights and stepped forward. As Dubuffet depicts a land full of layers of broken strokes called *The Busy Life* (1953) (see Figure 27, p.59), I want to express the living energy in the activities I encounter when walking on the city street, where we are in each other's experience of festival, staging together the city life's authenticity.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 43: Meng-Ju Shih, *We are Both the Refugees of History*. Oil colour of canvas, 81.28 × 116.84 cm (2 pieces), 2015-2016.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 44: Meng-Ju Shih, *In Between*. Oil colour on canvas, 151.5 × 232 cm, 2015–2016.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 45: Meng-Ju Shih, *This is Our Habitat*. Oil colour on canvas, 101.5 × 71 cm, 2015.

The Window View

They are the window views when she pauses: the freeze-frame.

She looked at posters, the remains and the present one. In between the old and fresh objects she found something present and something absent in the traces and gaps.

I produced a series of paintings reflecting an advertisement I read in the London underground: this is our habitat. The seeing of infinite signs around us leads us from objects to abstract ideas and desires. I am exploring the still images of urban life that carry the cultural messages of staged authenticity. We are surrounded by images of an alternative way of life proposed by the market (see Figure 45, p.79).

I painted an image based on the remains of an advert on the wall, which might commonly be encountered on the London underground. I recognized that the image used to be an advertisement based on its frame and position in the space. Without clear information, the image is abstract and landscape-like. During the time spent waiting for trains, these adverts are our windows to an imagination beyond images and words, created by ourselves. Adverts present dreams: we jump in and become the dreamers. Seeing the remains of an advert is like seeing the ruins of a message (see Figure 46, p.80). The original, or intended, meaning becomes abstract. The abstract image delivers purely by itself. My imagination is projected onto the remains, without the desire for the image, but as a piece of scape outside of its frame (see Figure 47, p.81).

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 46: Me facing a piece of scape from a frame.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 47: Meng-Ju Shih, *Posters' Posters*. Oil colour on canvas, 137.16 × 40.64 cm, 2016.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 48: Meng-Ju Shih, *Box Life*. Oil colour on canvas, 60.96 × 76.2 cm 2017.

When something is placed on the wall, it is often for the purpose of being presented. Its functionality is transformed by the act of placing it on the wall. Placing tanks in an aquarium, for example, is an urban structure presenting the 'life' of the water world. This man-made nature is framed so that it can be exhibited. I once again recalled the advert: 'This is our habitat' (see Figure 48, p.81). The display of objects in museums and galleries are also for a cultural purpose. I was particularly intrigued

when I saw a girl leaning her body to observe a carpet on a museum wall, as if she was leaning 'into the landscape'. I consider this condition to be a mental and emotional landscape. As she was looking 'inward', I was looking 'outward'; she was in my landscape (see Figure 49, p.82). An example for the condition of 'looking inward as looking outward' is when a window shopper wanders along the street browsing the interior designs of the stores. As Rebecca Solnit says: 'A lone walker is both present and detached from the world around, more than an audience but less than a participant' (2001: p.24). I walk past a shop one day and what strikes me is that the window frame presents this condition of 'looking inward, as looking outward'. In the store, there are layers of colour boards resembling Mark Rothko's painting of colour blocks, which have been placed facing out the window. I think that this design has appropriated the museum wall set up, using the colour boards to break up the plane vision from the outside. Suddenly the space of the shop is not only for the functional activity inside, it is showing me, as an outsider, a cultural frame embedded in an ordinary street view. This is just one of the devices that leads to London's city atmosphere (see Figure 50, p.83).

A walker pauses to see things. An internet user freezes the screen to capture a scene. I am using a freeze-frame image to re-interrogate an observation of sorrow. Making connections and exchanging information on line are common urban ways of wanderlust in the digital world. These disembodied journeys we make on line can take us from a laughing video clip one minute, to a heartbreaking scene the next. I freeze the scene as an entry point to the beginning of conscious observation of the visibility of invisible sorrow (see Figure 51, p.83).

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 49: Meng-Ju Shih, *Inward*. Oil colour on canvas, 51 × 137 cm, 2016.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 50: Meng-Ju Shih, *Rothko in Hair Salon*. Oil colour on canvas, 71.5 × 101.5 cm, 2016.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 51: Meng-Ju Shih, *Hold*. Oil colour on canvas, 121.92 × 91.44 cm 2015–2016.

The Garden, the Alternative Nature

She wanted to re-describe a mixed taste of strangeness and familiarity. In the brush marks full of rich, subtropical plant shapes and colours; in the traces that embody the rhythm of speeds; in the clarity and vagueness within the figures, she was exploring mutual expressions of density, thinness, blankness and fullness.

She wanted to describe a mixed experience of strangeness and familiarity. The projection is the living one; we are the dead ones, she thought. Confronting moving images of senses, touches and sounds, how silent we are, she thought.

Last summer, she visited a painter in mountainside near Taipei. The painter built a small bamboo grove in front of his house so that he could brew tea in the grove. This summer, she visited a space where she felt as if it was a small planet covered with colours.

I want to present our relations with parks and gardens in relation to alternative nature through making paintings. Gardens and parks are one of the symbols of urban life and of civilized aesthetics. Their images are deeply embedded in various art languages at different times: the notion of the garden as a form of cultivated nature turns into our daily, urban landscape (see Figure 53, p.85). I painted a water and ink long painting using symbols of nature, such as rocks, trees and water. This painting was presented as a book that can be extended out to the whole length, resembling a hand-scroll as an example of one of the ink painting forms for landscape. It can also be folded and can be read like a book, page by page (see Figure 52, p.85). Whereas in a scene depicting a street corner in Taipei, on the other hand, I echoed the colourful subtropical plants that often appear in glue colour paintings to represent local atmosphere and light. The gaps and lines that I employed use the method of *Shan-Shui*: they compose the mixed feelings of strangeness and familiarity that I experienced after a year of absence from this place and my return to the scene with a fresh gaze (see Figure 54, p.86).

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 52: Meng-Ju Shih, *Short Story*. Water colour on paper, 14.8 × 21 cm (70 pages), 2016.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 53: Meng-Ju Shih, *The Pool*. Oil colour on canvas, 121.92 × 91.44 cm, 2017.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 54: Meng-Ju Shih, *Stars in the Air*. Oil colour on canvas, 121.92 × 91.44 cm, 2016.

I recall different modes of observing artwork about gardens. The examples I refer to are the Triclinium paintings from the Villa of Livia at Prima Porta, Rome, now in the National Roman Museum and *Worry Will Vanish Horizon*, audio-video installation by Pipilotti Rist (see Figure 55, p.87). These two art works refer to nature through different mediums and at different times but both are set in a room and in an urban living context. Both examples present different environments for imagination to take place. Apart from going to the wilderness, the real wild, what we mostly experience is 'the alternative nature'.

The garden fresco of Villa of Livia is painted to serve as a cooling indoor space for walking in a summerhouse. Whereas the movement of the audio-video installation by Pipilotti Rist in a gallery space happens beforehand, the transport to the gallery, walking into the room, and then lying down. These are mobile images in comparison to immobile people. The images move, giving rise to the experience of a garden within the sense and smell of a gallery.

When I visited the National Museum of Rome and saw the Fresco garden, Villa of Livia, I controlled the speed and angles of my vision. The scene changes as I walked along the walls. When I went to Hauser & Wirth and saw the aforementioned video work projected onto the two walls, I accepted whatever images were offered to me.

I stepped back to the entrance of the gallery room and viewed the whole scene. I only felt I had control of my vision again when, instead of being lost in the vision on the screen, I stepped back to the entrance of the gallery room and saw people lying down on the pillows in this blacked out space. This video of screening natural elements is a selective sensation to stimulate the viewer. I re-select a view of my own perspective in the gallery space, and focus on the silence and stillness of the crowd (see Figure 56, p.88).

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 55: Pipilotti Rist (b. 1962), *Worry Will Vanish Horizon*. Audio-video installation (video projection on two walls, carpet, blankets, with music by Heinz Rohrer), 2014 at Hauser & Wirth.

To echo the cultivated nature of a public garden, I implanted an image of trees that falls in line with the urban in painting, using brush marks “between resemblance and non-resemblance” (see report p.45) that develop a limited freedom in lines, gaps and colours (see Figure 57, p.88). Living in the city is to be part of a larger group experience. People make brief connections via different urban spaces. Walking on the street, or in the park is one of the ways for brief social engagement. When *Pokemon GO* released their mobile application in 2016 for users to play it by smart phone, it created a temporal spectacle of people standing still in the woods playing the game, or walking in the parks. They locate their eyes on the screen and the digital map, instead of looking at the actual place they are in. I recall my visit to the museum room displaying the fresco garden of Villa of Livia, the walking experience is dependent upon the fictitious scene on walls (see Figure 30, p.64).

My observation of people’s relation with the alternative nature starts from a gallery space presenting a digital garden video, which people are receiving by simply lying on the ground, and proceeds to reading the landscape in a form of book, to the active illusion of the digital game *Pokemon GO*. I find a space that combines visual illusion with real physical ‘travelling’, even if the destination is only symbolic, a new form of man-made landscape, indoor climbing space.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 56: Meng-Ju Shih, *Wanderlust*. Oil colour on canvas, 121.92 × 91.44 cm, 2015–2016.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 57: Meng-Ju Shih, *Fall in Line*. Oil colour on canvas, 152.4 × 121.92 cm, 2016–2017.

As the original idea of the fresco garden of Villa of Livia was built into a summerhouse, the indoor climbing space is an alternative structure for people to climb on the walls, instead of climbing actual rocks in real nature. This alternative nature provides a new group experience in an urban context while at the same time keeping people in each other's landscape (see Figure 58, p.89).

The climbing space provides the user with rocky structures full of colours and different angles of surfaces. I view this as the aesthetic of our digital era, aiming to create a sense of otherness indoors. Through physical training, it shortens the time people need to actually travel to climb or hike in the nature, while also developing the spirit through mental training: exploring landscape means exploring the self. The sensation of climbing these concrete objects is paralleled by the act, which also involves touching, of painting with a brush on canvas, instead of interacting with a screen. The communication between people takes place through movements. We are in each other's landscape. Our bodies are part of the scape. We are exploring inwards as well as reaching outwards. We are the scape (see Figure 59 and 60, p.90). With the memories of indoor climbing in mind, I paint the alternative landscape as a scene I see in daily life. People still have a strong connection with landscape, even in this changing form of land and scape.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 58: Meng-Ju Shih, *The Wall, Rocks and You*. Oil colour on canvas, 51 × 137 cm, 2016.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 59: Meng-Ju Shih, *The Wall, You and Me*. Oil colour on canvas, 90 × 65 cm, 2017.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 60: Meng-Ju Shih, *The Space, You and Me*. Oil colour on canvas, 130 × 180 cm, 2017.

CONCLUSION: Formless form

The island as my starting point for this research, stirs up questions of identity, of place and cultural connections in relation to aesthetics. Through my proposed idea of 'landscape-like' painting, I have elaborated how the representation of natural elements and symbols in classical landscape and *Shan-Shui* painting has changed under the context of Taiwan art history.

Through my doctoral research and my exploration of painting through the concept of landscape-like, I have realized that this emphasis on the materiality of paint and brush marks, not only gives sensational visuality to the subject, but also gives a new bodily sense to the meaning of the image through the brush marks, which is also the unique sense of 'touch' painting retains in this digital era.²⁶

The introduction begins by referring to the painting *Handing over Horses*²⁷ (see Figure 9, p.30) to indicate that art history in Taiwan sprouted from the soil of political conflict. Having researched the historical context and the political impact of how painting was renewed by the western stream of art and concluding with a demonstration of a landscape-like history in Taiwan I have developed an alternative to the dominant art historical trajectory that concentrates on representational modes of landscape painting. In particular I discovered, and have elaborated on, how contemporary painters make use of fragmented elements and concepts from their cultural heritage to demonstrate a perspective of otherness. In Taiwan, each period of painting presents a big leap in reaction to art movements outside Taiwan and political shifts inside Taiwan. The instability of Taiwan's political status also affected, and continues to affect, the development of art through waves of ideological invasion. For the generation of artists after martial law ended in 1987²⁸, the challenge became one of creating one's own 'accent' in painting, and to continually reshape and confirm it in order to shape the culture of the future.

'These artists seek to create an independent and striking visual language that communicates their sense of self, and engages with the social and political

26 For clarification, the sense of 'touch' I mention here focuses only on painting and differs from Laura U. Marks' (2002) discussion on haptic visuality on video works.

27 This glue colour painting by Yu-Shan Lin (1907-2004) was finished in Japanese ruling, 1943; due to the February 28 Incident under the KMT government, 1947, Lin repainted the flag in the painting, covered the Japanese flag and kept it secretly for almost 60 years, until in 1999 Lin repaired the damaged part of the painting and repainted the Japanese flag in the renewed part to restore the original flag. Available from: <https://nchdb.boch.gov.tw/web/cultureassets/Antiquity/fprint.aspx?p0=9359> [accessed 30th January 2017].

28 See page 32-37 for more details.

influences and traditions that have infiltrated their culture.’ I quote, from the catalogue of the project *Future Island*²⁹ (see Figure 61, p.93) in London Start Art Fair 2016. Including the work of thirteen contemporary artists from Taiwan, this exhibition aims to present the ‘future island’. Each artist investigates their notions of identity and the unique position of Taiwanese culture in our current context. The explicit strategy of this project within this one-week annual art fair, is to frame the work as the ‘future island’, that is to speculate on the future of the island of Taiwan. Among the various media, painters present—images of what the future might be, or of what may left. Following on from my research, I am able to identify various landscape-like elements that are embedded in the scene, regardless whether these paintings are depicting remains of Utopian nature (for example, keeping the old trees) within current cityscapes (see Figure 62, p.93), or landscapes that convey ominous, otherworldly scenes and Dystopian visions (see Figure 63, p.94). For example the tree painting (see Figure 63, p.94) could be seen as a variant of *Shan-Shui* in a contemporary context that presents a sense of anxiety amidst the urban. Whereas my cityscape *Stars in the air* (see Figure 62, p.93) more directly relates to the explicit painting methods of *Shan-Shui* referencing the gaps between the act of *Hui-Hua* (see report pp.55-54) and pointing to the void. In *Shan-Shui*, the void is often related to airy material such as mist and is crucial for creating depth in non linear perspective ink painting composition. Thus spatial mobility is created (see report p.47). As opposed to using machines to demonstrate the alienating qualities of our future landscape in this ever changing high-tech world (see Figure 62, p.93) these painterly narratives exist as social testaments of attention and memory.

29 *Future Island* was curated by Mehta Bell Projects showcased in Saatchi Gallery London between 15-18 September 2016. Presenting works by 13 Taiwanese artists: Chang, Ban-Yan / Chang, Teng-Yuan / Chang, Ting-Tong / Ting Cheng / Chiu, Kuo-Chun/ Huang, Chun-Ming/ Huang, Pei-Hang / Kuo, Wei-Kuo / Shih, Meng-Ju / Shih, Serra / Tsai, Hsaio-Chi and Kimiya Yoshikawa (Japan) / Xu, Yu-Xin / Hua Yeh. Available from: <http://www.mehtabellprojects.com/future-island-start-art-fair> [Accessed 30th January 2017].

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 61: Exhibition photo—*Future Island* group exhibition at Saatchi Start Art Fair, London, 2016.

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Figure 62: Exhibition photo—*Future Island* group exhibition at Saatchi Start Art Fair, London, 2016. Front piece—Ting-Tong Chang (b. 1982), *Monday to Sunday*. Mixed media, 60 × 30 × 12 cm, 2016. Painting—Meng-Ju Shih (b. 1986), *Stars in the Air*. Oil on canvas, 121.9 × 91.4 cm, 2016.

[Image removed for copyright reasons]

Figure 63: Teng-Yuan Chang (b. 1983), *Overlapping the plant*. Acrylic on canvas, 73 × 60.5 cm, 2016.

As I mentioned early on in the report, Taiwan's international political status remains a point of contention: it remains unsolved and problematic (see report p.32). This political issue is the elephant in the room when attempting to describe what the future holds. The wider shared global uncertainty about the future leaves us islanders with a profound sense of scepticism. Artists in Taiwan foresee and imagine the political future of the island through *Shan-Shui* and a 'landscape-like frame'. This 'second form' of 'scape' is triggered by the disturbed relationships people have with their environments. Thus the imagination within the landscape-like form finds its metaphors in relation to the future of the island. Each message delivered by an art work contributes as a piece of the jigsaw of the future island.

During my research I've been observing subjects in relation to alternative nature and express this through landscape-like painting methods. My first series of portraits for an island (see Figure 34, 35 and 36, pp.70-71) set on the military base of Turtle Island, I consider to deliver my thinking through metaphor about the blurriness of an island's identity, Taiwan.

I went on to depict the shape of a faceless protest crowd but failed to deliver my aim to express the power of the flow of people and turn the energy of their quest for reshaping identity to an image built by tension through a tangle of brush marks.³⁰ I later found my expression for this protest crowd through another painting with a

30 I have removed this painting from thesis.

different method focusing on the gesture of a single woman, and this allowed me to make a series of 6 drawings about the flow of my gestures (see Figure 40, p.75).

Another subject I wanted to deepen my painting language for, is the moment of intimacy people have with water in the garden. In urban living, I consider a round pool as a metaphor for a lake, an in an urban environment it is an alternative lake. The time people spend sitting around a pool is for me an indirect connection people have with nature and self. At the same time, it is an interesting moment for mind and dreams to meet. My first tryout, a painting set in the V&A courtyard, on this subject was ineffective, however, because I was too caught up in the scene. I found expression for the pool through another painting (see Figure 53, p.85) based on the sounds of running water and the painting moved into abstraction.

Having made the painting 'Posters' Poster' (see Figure 47, p.81) I want to explore further the subject of ruins through decayed advertisements in the underground. For they are in the state of being in between demolition and waiting to be rebuilt and carry a sense of the imprints of the past and possible futures that I find echoing the process of civilization.

My next step continuing my journey through landscape-like painting will be to look at the relation between self, room and the window view, whatever is outside—even outer space. This comes from my memory of looking down to the round pool at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. It led to my thinking about water, daydream and reflection of thoughts. I find this also relates to the various alternative natures people make to build a sight specific emotional and sensational connection.

For example, the exhibition teamLab (f. 2001, Tokyo, by Toshiyuki Inoko) created in Pace Gallery London in 2017 called *Transcending Boundaries*, uses digital technology to design a space containing symbols of natural elements such as water, flowers and butterflies that offer an environment of alternative nature. The experience of this gallery space is the opposite to visiting a butterfly house in a zoo, which is also another form of alternative nature because the habitat is fake. The technology won't 'fail' the visitor, the butterfly is designed to 'come to you' and to make you enchanted by its magic. Whereas in the butterfly house in a zoo, visitors have to 'come to them' and respect their habitus and their individuality, as they will come near you or escape from you.

Landscape-like painting is an alternative nature that provides a pictorial land for the viewer to re-experience the directness and simplicity of being an observer encountering a piece of 'land' as a surface: these marks and paint speak as

painterly sensation. My aim is to continue exploring painterly languages created through *Bi-Mo* with the hope that the sense of *Qi-Yun Sheng-Dong* within the painting could lead the viewers to find their imagery between the lines and gaps, colours and marks, and to find their own place in the frame. They come to find it for themselves.

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