

Yi-Jing within Time

The Implication of *Yi-Jing* into Moving Image Medium

Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning, except where due acknowledgment is made in the acknowledgments.

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Abstract

Yi-Jing [意境] is a significant classic Chinese art concept that might be broadly understood as a certain conceptual and perceptual communication between artists and viewers. It was originally derived from Chinese poetry and was then adapted by a range of classical art forms such as Chinese painting and calligraphy. This project sets out to explore the notion of *Yi-Jing* within time and movement with its primary focus on video editing and digital manipulation. The research is intended to offer an alternative perspective to the appreciation of moving image. The project uses contemporary moving image mediums to reveal the uniqueness inherent within Chinese aesthetic values and to strengthen their accessibility to a western audience. It is hoped that the project might potentially open up a contemporary universal context for *Yi-Jing* and its application through the advancement of contemporary technology.

Introduction

Traditional Chinese artists do not show much interest in the apparent literal or visual analysis of objects to pre-establish certain methodical distinctions to enable certain representations or symbolisations. Jullien^[1] suggested that *the history of Chinese aesthetic is the evolution of transcending the representation of reality* (1995: 82). Such evolution is influenced by the Taoist belief^[2] that reality is beyond the reach of humanity's literal or visual denotation. The moment we try to describe or denote reality, we have already lost our grasp of the indescribable nature. So what do traditional Chinese artists have to offer that transcends the representation of reality?

Yi-Jing [意境], one of the most significant Chinese art concepts to be based on this profound Chinese philosophy, offers a mode of communication within which artists make sense through allusion rather than denotation, and viewers interpret meanings that are not only perceivable but also intelligible. *Yi-Jing's* significant influence can be found across various traditional Chinese art forms. This project intends to push the implication of *Yi-Jing* further from traditional Chinese painting, a static visual configuration of the dynamic world, to the moving image medium, a dynamic visual medium.

[1] Jullien in his book *The Propensity of Things* says “*The history of Chinese aesthetic as a whole is an evolution from the initial primary concern for external resemblance to a desire to transcend purely “formal” representation of reality* (1995: 82).

[2] Lao Zi's (C.571-C.471) statement of “*The Tao that can be told is not the permanent Tao*” [Chang Translated (2006: 3)] (道可道 非常道) is one of the most profound philosophical foundations that the traditional Chinese aesthetic is built upon. However, this exegesis does not intend to engage in an analytical discussion of the Tao's philosophy.

This project uses *Yi-Jing* as its theoretical foundation to explore time and movement. Thus, *Yi-Jing* is one of the key areas that will be researched. And through research on the Chinese aesthetic thinking about the dynamic transformative world, it may potentially pave a new ground for the aesthetic concept and the appreciation of contemporary moving image medium. To enable the application of the *Yi-Jing* concept into the moving image medium, the research then extends to the unique nature of time and space that the medium holds.

There are five main sections (Fig. 1) within this exegesis. The discussion starts with an introduction to the overall theoretical context of my research. Based on that the second part contextualises the critical framework of this project. The third part rationalises a methodology that is specifically designed to achieve *Yi-Jing*. What follows is a commentary on the practical work in relation to *Yi-Jing*. The last section is the conclusion that summarises the research project.

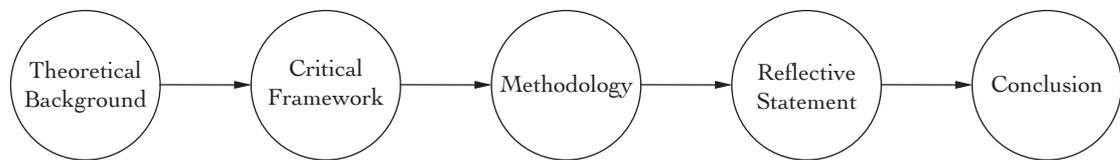


Fig. 1 Lu
2006

Chapter 1 Theoretical Background

1.1 *Yi-Jing's* Definition

Yi-Jing is a complex classical Chinese art concept with multiple layers of meaning. *Yi-Jing* has two organic, inter-related components. The first component concerns the carrier offered by the artist through the artwork. It serves to facilitate the viewers' intellectual engagement by providing incitement. It contains a certain provocative and ambiguous quality, thus becoming the agent that leads to the second component that triggers open-ended interpretations beyond the artwork. Pu suggested that *Yi-Jing* refers to *both the carrier(s) within the work that serves as the allusive and ambiguous leads for viewers to contemplate and the provoked semblance, scenes, desires, meanings, emotions and visions that are beyond the carrier itself* (2000:15). Through the viewers' personal perceptions and conceptions with the carrier, the absent multitude of meanings will start to emerge. Such organic interplay firmly connects these two components and constitutes the *Yi-Jing* concept. *Yi-Jing* opens up the horizon of creative thinking, enabling artists to make sense of their communication through allusion rather than representation. Viewers interpret meanings that are not only perceivable but also intelligible.

Example

This painting (Fig. 1.1) by Beihong Xu, one of the most influential contemporary Chinese painters, reflects his interest in horse painting. This interest arose from his empirical encounters with horses, especially with their spirits. In a Chinese context, the running horse can be related to motivation and vitality. There is a Chinese proverb called “Wan Ma Ben Teng” (万马奔腾), that literally refers to the running of ten thousand horses. It describes the spiritual vitality of the running horse. When viewers connect this cultural idea with the painting, the feeling of effervescence is stimulated by the artwork. Xu Beihong’s horse paintings often appear in calendars because the horse is one of the 12 Chinese zodiacs, and an auspicious symbol for an energetic and prosperous new year. Such an interpretation of meaning is profoundly shaped by the Chinese cultural environment. While Xu was originally creating the artwork, he may not have been aware of such implications in his painting. It is the viewers’ location of his work in this particular Chinese cultural context that brings the reference to the artwork, thus extending it beyond what the artist may have intended.



Fig. 1.1 Xu, B. H. (1925)
Running Horses

1.12 The Carrier of *Yi-Jing* and the Provoked

In this project, I shall locate two major interrelated components of *Yi-Jing*: the carrier and the provoked. The discussion about the carrier of *Yi-Jing* reveals artists' philosophical thinking behind their art creation. The elaboration about the provoked aims to contextualise the art appreciation processes within the *Yi-Jing* framework.

1.121 The Carrier of *Yi-Jing*

The concept of *Yi-Jing* has been broadly applied across various classical Chinese art forms. Each medium has developed its unique essence within its carrier. For example, in Chinese poetry, the carrier comes outward in the form of words and lyrics. In a visual context, such as Chinese painting, the carrier refers to the semblance that people can visually perceive within the artwork. It should be visible, tangible, ambiguous and open-ended. For this moving image project, the carrier comes outward in the form of a series of visual sequences that emerge through the continuity of the frames. The time dimension created through the visual sequences is capable of revealing the process of certain transformation performed by the dynamic world. This shall be elaborated further in the discussion about the Chinese aesthetic thinking about dynamic nature.

Movement as Xiang: the Carrier of *Yi-Jing* within This Moving Image Project

“*Xiang*”[象]^[1] in Chinese is regarded as visual semblance. In a visual context, it is associated with the sensuous appearance of a thing or an idea. Within Chinese painting, *xiang* refers to its visual elements. As to moving image, the illusion of reality created enables the aesthetic of movement to take shape in visual forms. This meets the key essence of *Xiang* for being visible and sensuous. Thus I would like to establish my position that the aesthetic of movement created by moving image can also be regarded as the *Xiang* in this project.

[1] Stephen Owen: *Xiang refers to the normative visual schematization of a thing or of the embodiment of an idea. It is neither the particular thing nor the idea of a thing* (1992: 587).

The Harmony between the Manifestation of Nature and the Expression of Emotions within *Xiang*

In the ninth century, Jing^[1] suggested that within Chinese painting, the semblance (*Xiang* 象) should not simply serve to capture the likeness of the external visual form (*Hua* 华). The key value of *Xiang* lies in revealing the *authenticity* (*Zhen* 真) of the subject matter. Jing said that the seizing of external likeness (*Hua* 华) does not necessarily imply the achieving of *authenticity* (*Zhen* 真). *Authenticity* is the intrinsic qualities of the subject matter that are embedded. (Owen, translated. 1982: 328)

This moving image project does not simply intend to use the dynamic semblance representationally. Informed by Jing's thinking, this project intends to use the aesthetic of movement as semblance to manifest the immanent *authenticity* that underpins the transformation of nature. Extending the implication of the visual carrier into a moving image context can enrich artists' means for manifesting their resonances of the exteriority. It also opens up a new horizon of the communication of concepts and the appreciation of art that takes place through viewers' engagement with the carrier of *Yi-Jing*.

[1] Jing Hao (C. 850 - ?) was the author of "Bi Fa Ji" [笔法记] which is one of the earliest treatises on the criticism of Chinese landscape ink painting.

In addition to the manifestation of nature, the artists' creations could be considered as their subjective responses to incitement provoked by the exteriority such as natural phenomena, theoretical issues and social and political developments. Once the artists' emotions are motivated by exteriority, they will then unfurl themselves through art creation. While conducting the paint, the brush will follow the artists' subjective emotional resonances triggered by exteriority, rather than restricted by the visual forms of the subject matter. Often perspective, light and shadow are not adhered to. Consequently, within the artwork, the allusions offered by the artists are the paradoxical expressions ^[1] of the resonances triggered by exteriority rather than by the rigid denotation of it.

The journey of art making is a process of achieving harmony between the manifestation of objective nature through scenes and the expression^[2] of the artists' subjective emotions and ideological thinking, resonated by external incitement. The process of achieving harmony is another core essence of the *Yi-Jing* concept in this research project.

[1] Paradox is often used in many Chinese art practices. In early Chinese opera on the empty stage, the performers have to use all that they have: visual body language (dance-acting, pantomime and the visible, physical result of acting) and voice (aural) to actualise a scene that looks different in reality. Even the application of propensity (Shi) within Chinese painting that uses the static to connote the dynamic can be regarded as Paradox. Paradox is a significant approach towards the creation of the carrier. *Through such unreal but thought-provoking* [Brechtman (1999:6)] visual carriers, viewers need to actively draw all the clues from the carrier and correlate them to their understanding of the exteriority to make sense of it through their own intellectual engagement.

[2] According to Cahill: *The traditional art making in China presents a gradual, cumulative mastery of the artists' means of manifestation and expression* (2002: 3).

The Provocative Incitement within the Carrier

As suggested by Ames: "*In China, artwork arises from a relationship of incitement rather than from a method of representation*" (2002: 41) Incitement is a key term for describing the way that Chinese artists approach their viewers. It indicates that the underpinned meaning of the carrier lies beyond itself. Instead of using rigid representations, Chinese artists have chosen to use the carrier within the work to offer the starting point of the pathway towards a certain multitude of ambiguous meanings. In doing so, artists are not only trying to intrigue the viewers for active engagement, but also to leave them space to develop infinite possible interpretations.

It is through the carrier that artists manifest their subjective emotions stirred by nature. The incitement offered within the carrier serves as the initial trigger of the journey of interpretations. Through incitement, artists provoke the viewers to play an active role by engaging with the artwork rather than being merely passive receivers of it.

1.122 The Provoked Resonance

Since Chinese artwork does not function as the visual representation of meanings, in order to conceive the incitement offered by artists, viewers must go through certain processes of association and correlation. This is a process of discovering the inner connection between the visual carrier within the artwork and the nature they have encountered or their subjective consciousness. Human consciousness is not only capable of recognising things, but also of sensing things at a profound level. The Chinese aesthetic thinking about scene (*Jing* 境)^[1] and emotion (*Qing* 情)^[2] is the acknowledgement of viewers' sophisticated consciousness. As an outcome of the association between the artwork and the nature that they are exposed to, viewers can gradually see certain scenes (*Jing* 境) within or beyond the artwork. As the result of correlating the artwork with viewers' subjective consciousness, they can also experience certain emotional responses (*Qing* 情) that are not perceivable but intelligible within the artwork.

However, although emotion and scene present themselves in two different forms, they are still inter-related. They both are the responses to the same given incitement aroused from the consciousness of the same person. Scenes actualise emotions, emotions infuse scenes. The provoked resonance is the integration of scene and emotion in harmony. Jiao summarised the Chinese aesthetic concept of *Qing* and *Jing* as the "fusion of emotion and scene" and as a method to create "poetic feeling of the world" (2003: 8). Such fusion provides this project with a significant aesthetic genre to refer to.

[1] According to Owen (1982: 506), *Jing* refers to "the scenes perceived from a particular place at a particular time, thus implicating the 'point of view' of the subject."

[2] *Qing* (emotion) refers to "a particular 'feeling' or 'subjective state' stirred by a particular object, experience and circumstance." (Owen, *ibid*)

Conclusion

Overall *Yi-Jing* provides a unique perspective for engaging with art making and appreciation. The carrier and the provoked are the two significant inter-related components of *Yi-Jing*. The carrier initiates the intellectual communication. Without it, the whole process becomes an intuitive fantasy. The provoked is the viewers' resonance to interpret beyond what is carried. Without the viewers' intellectual engagement, the carrier remains simply the aesthetic elements of a work. *Yi-Jing* offers a perspective to engage with art making and appreciation. Such perspective has the potential and flexibility to be applied across various art forms and media. Within this research, I intend to explore the *Yi-Jing* concept through moving image.

1.2 Chinese Aesthetic Thinking about the Dynamic World

The motif of dynamism within the traditional Chinese worldview is a significant theoretical foundation for this project. That is what makes it appropriate to extend the implication of *Yi-Jing* into a moving image context. According to Chinese cosmogony, the world is dynamic, organic and transformative. Mote (C. 470 – C. 390) stated that: *Nothing is totally fixed... The spontaneously self-generating life need not be forever identified as it now assumes* (Ames translated, 2002:120). Chinese thinkers believe that nature is continuously transforming. The motif of self-generation allows such transformation to expand endlessly without requiring any external source of power to energise it. All things exist as components of the all-inclusive nature. As they perform their own modality to interact with each other they constitute the great transformation of nature. There are two important beliefs within Chinese aesthetics, *Chi* and *Shi*, that reveal the implications of the transformative nature within the cosmos.

Chi

In Chinese philosophy, “*Chi*” [氣] refers to the *vital force that infuses the spontaneously self-generating and constantly transforming world* [Owen (1982: 526)]. It energises the transformations of all things within nature and determines the way their modalities unfold through time. Nature is vital force (*Chi*) in display [Ames (2002: 32)]. Consequently, when artists are exposed to nature, the immanent *Chi* that energises the transformation can be conceived of from the dynamic visual display of the transformative nature. In Jing’s discussion about the authenticity of *Xiang*, he suggested that *Chi* is one of the key components within authenticity. Moving image is a spatiotemporal medium that is capable of displaying the process of transformation dynamically. Such dynamic display opens up a new engagement for artists to manifest *Chi* and for viewers to conceive *Chi*. However, moving image still cannot change the fact that *Chi* can only be manifested rather than represented. Ho^[1] suggests that “*Chi constantly triggers the inner resonance of the artists whilst encountering the external scene*” (2005:222). Within this project, through observation of the transformative nature, I am allowing my consciousness to resonate with the *Chi* of nature. Then I intend to unfurl such resonance into my artwork to achieve the manifestation of the *Chi* through moving image practice.

[1] Ho provides certain insights of *Chi* in relation to art practice: *Chi is not simply the motivating force, but something being in a constant stage of flux that externalises the spirit of the artists. Chi has the quality of vitality, harmony and liveliness and Chi constantly triggers the inner resonance of artists whilst encountering (experiencing) the external scene and also unfurls such resonance into their artwork through practicing. Chi can be nurtured through both theoretical and practical research, which implies that it is stored and depleted through artists’ practice* (2005: *ibid*).

Shi

Shi [势]^[1] means “propensity” or “tendency”. It shuttles between the static and dynamic. It allusively illuminates certain force and movement without defining the whole process. It is inter-related with Chi. Within Chinese painting, Shi is manifested through the static presence of Chi in a dynamic configuration. It is another significant adhered to used within Chinese aesthetic thinking that concerns the motif of dynamics. Even though the painting is a static configuration of nature, Shi activates the allusions to dynamic transformation beyond the finite visual reality of the artwork and thus evokes the infinite. Fig 1.2 is a painting conducted by a classical Chinese landscape painter, Tao Chi [石涛], . He once described that within his painting the mountain flows like the river. The transformative reality enables him to see mountains as ocean waves frozen in time (Translated by Ames, 2002: 23). Such

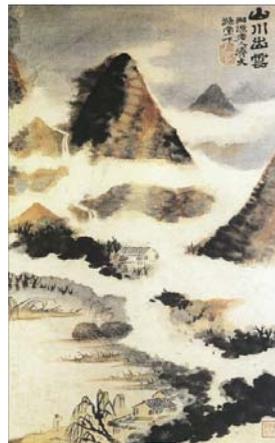


Fig. 1.2 Shi, T.
Chinese painting

[1] According to Jullien, “it (*Shi*) openly oscillates between the static and the dynamic points of view, it provides us with a thread to follow, sliding between the different levels in which our own analysis is trapped” (1995: 12).

experience of movement within the static painting is triggered through the seizing of Shi. Shi allows traditional Chinese artists to manifest their understanding of the transformative nature without the visual descriptions of it. Such allusion enables viewers to conceive of the static image as dynamic. The process can be regarded as the triggering of the dynamic scenes (infinite) beyond the static artwork (finite).

From the viewers' point of view, an appreciation of such dynamic transformation of a static image may be regarded as an experience of “*wo you*” [卧游]. Literally “*wo*” means “*crouch*” or “*lay down*”; “*you*” means travel or tour. This term is used to describe the transformative reality that can happen when viewers relax their bodies and minds, which enables them to travel within the time and space of the painting. The Shi within the apparent “static” form sets viewers into a mood of seeing it as a continuing process. For example, while appreciating this painting (Fig. 1.3), I might enter into a state of hovering over the mountains and valleys to enjoy the amazing scenes.



Fig. 1.3
Song, W.Z. (1899)

Although this moving image project is capable of revealing a process of transformation, the continuous transformation of nature is still beyond its scope. Consequently, the implication of *Sbi* is still applicable and significant to this moving image project. This concept shall be further elaborated within the section on moving image in relation to the Chinese aesthetic about the transformative world.

1.3 Moving Image

Moving image is a spatiotemporal medium that makes time re-experienceable. It extends visual images from a static form to a dynamic form. Wee once pointed out that “*Light-space-time continuity in the synthesis of motion... The eye is basically an instrument for analysing changes in light flux over time*” (2003: 49). Light moving in time is the common ground of vision and projection, one of the major methods of presentation that moving image uses. The use of light in movement can offer the viewer temporal engagement with the artwork and create the illusion of the transformation of the reality.

Furthermore, such technical development of the science of vision offers a flexible medium that artists can use in conjunction with their intelligence for their various artistic pursuits. As described by Shaw: “*You can turn over that page of an art history and then search in your mind of films you have seen in that style, subject and technique then match the examples you discover*” (2003:52). It is believed that such flexibility within moving image may enable this project to explore the notion of *Yi-Jing*.

For example, the process of creating the carrier of *Yi-Jing* is a journey of achieving harmony between the manifestation of nature and an expression of the artists' subjective emotions. We may find certain traces of such ideas in the genres of realism and expressionism in cinematography where there is a more definite polarity between objective reality and subjective emotion. The Realists emphasise using cinematography as a tool to represent reality. Expressionists see cinematography as a medium for their subjective expression. Perkins pointed out that film should integrate both the projection of reality and the expression of human feelings (2003:456). Cinematography is a complex medium within which artists may deal with both objective nature and their subjective emotions in relation to each other. Such complexity offers this project the flexibility to manifest nature and express subjective emotions. Furthermore, this project intends to harmonise a depiction of nature with artists' subjective emotions, thereby triggering viewers' resonance in a more efficient and poetic way.

In conclusion, Yi-Jing provides an open-ended mode of perceptual and conceptual communication that could be applied to various art forms. It is the philosophical belief of transformative reality that makes it appropriate to extend the implication of *Yi-Jing* into moving image.

Chapter 2

Conceptual Framework

Based on the discourse about *Yi-Jing*, Chinese transformative cosmos and moving image, this chapter aims to synthesise these philosophical concepts, aesthetic thinking and theoretical ideas into a more systematic pattern to formulate the conceptual framework of this project.

The Incitement within Moving Image

With the integration of movement and audio, technology is able to imitate the reality through more sensuous stimulations. Brecht once accused cinema of being the “*result of a production that took place in the absence of its audience*” (2003: 297). In other words, passivity had replaced the ability to participate in the artwork. It is the intend of this project, however, to motivate the viewers to actively conceive rather than merely receive it.

To accomplish this, I explore the aesthetic of movement to achieve certain incitements within the carrier and examine the potential resonances that can be triggered. Within Chinese cosmology it is believed that movement is the result of the interaction between one thing and another. It can suggest not only the modality of one particular thing but also its relation to its companions in interaction. Within the artwork, the aesthetic of movement performed by one participant could be used to allude to its “absent” companions of interaction. The absent thus takes shape within the viewers’ intellectual resonances. This project therefore intends to use movement in an allusive and ambiguous way to manifest the relationship and interaction between things and to create the dynamic visual carrier of *Yi-Jing*.

In addition, since movement is temporal, it provides a very different engagement when compared to Chinese painting, a static configuration of nature. With Chinese painting, viewers are given the option to constantly refer to the static image to make sense of it. Such constant physical reference does not apply to moving image. Instead, viewers are provided with a sequential series of temporal frames. Although viewers are physically removed from the work, they might not be removed from their experience of the work. On the other hand, such temporal engagement with the artwork can be used to arouse viewers' interest to re-examine the artwork and their experience of it within themselves. As a result, the resonances triggered may linger on. Gessner provides an example: the sudden flash of the close up of a dead child in its mother's arms may give a strong and long-lasting impact to the viewer (1968: 5). This project intends to apply the unique modality of moving image to offer incitement through the creation of a time-based carrier.

Shaw once proposed the idea of the transformation from a *cinema-language into a cinema-tool*. *The artistic strategy involves forming the work in such a way that the viewers must ultimately create the image by renouncing their traditionally passive role* (2003: 425). *Yi-Jing* provides a framework for using an artwork as the starting point for a journey of interpretation, rather than as a self-contained creation that displays all answers within itself. Through the incorporation of *Yi-Jing*, this project manifests an artistic strategy with a particular theoretical, philosophical and cultural grounding that challenges the traditionally passive role of the moving image audience. Such strategy of incitement acknowledges viewers' sophisticated consciousness within which the absent multitude of meanings becomes present.

Enriching the Language of Manifestation

While *Yi-Jing* is providing moving image with an alternative mode of conceptual and perceptual communication, moving image is also enriching the language of manifestation and allusion. The artists' consciousness encounters, interprets and resonates to the dynamic transforming world. The viewers at some later stage encounter, interpret, and resonate with the artwork, which within this project is also dynamic. Moving image has made time re-experience-able. Such dynamic displays of the aesthetic of movement offers artists a new mean of manifestation. It also enables viewers to draw clues from the aesthetic of movement to develop their own interpretations.

The Integration of the Chinese Aesthetic Thinking of the Dynamic World into Moving Image

Moving image has extended art-making from a static configuration of nature to a dynamic visual display of nature. However, the infinite nature is beyond our grasp. The limited durations of moving image are incapable of covering the whole process of transformation that is forever expanding. It is argued that it may not be necessary to reproduce such endless processes mechanically. Many filmmakers chose to use “*a phenomenological correlation between the experience of scale and experience of duration*” to create the illusions of time in reality. *In film...within an hour, we scan the life-span of a man of seventy.* (Stewart, 2003: 73). It is an illusion of using certain fragments of time to suggest a continuous process of transformation. Such illusion is incomplete. It shows certain parallels to Chinese painters’ approaches to use a static image as an allusion to the constantly transforming nature. Thus, the aesthetic thinking about *Shi* becomes significant to this moving image project. Lao Zi (C.570-470) once pointed out that “*Completeness without completion is useful. Fulfillment without being fulfilled is desirable*” (Translated by Chang, 2006: 23). This project intends to explore how these limited fragments of time and duration can be used to manifest the propensity of certain phenomenon, thereby suggesting a continuous transformation of all things in nature without the description of the whole process.

In conclusion, while extending the implication of *Yi-Jing* into moving image, it is crucial to explore two key areas:

1. The potential for applying the aesthetic of movement to manifest my resonance to nature.
2. The creation of incitement within the artwork to trigger the viewers' resonance. As a result the viewers will be able to play a more active role as their intellects engage with the artwork.

The project also intends to consider *Shi*'s potential influence on the moving image. This will enable an ambiguous and allusive application that expresses my understanding of the dynamic and ever-transforming world.

Chapter 3 Methodology

Methodological Approach towards Yi-Jing

This project formulates a Chinese methodology that is appropriate to the nature of *Yi-Jing*. It reflects the influence of certain cultural values, philosophies and histories that have built up a rich and complex foundation for the research. My design structure is greatly informed by Liu's analysis ^[1] of the Chinese art making and appreciation. Within my design structure (Fig. 3.1), the focus has been drawn on myself (the artist), my art practice and exteriority (nature). Ames suggested that: *incited by the world outside, he (artist) in turn stirs up the readers' emotions* (2002: 152). The action of art creation can be regarded as my subjective responses to the incitement of exteriority. Exteriority mainly refers to nature. Resonated and motivated by incitements from exteriority, I can then unfurl myself through the action of practice. Such action can be regarded as the externalisation of my interiority. Alongside I am using contemplation as my design method in order to facilitate my engagement with both exteriority and my practice.

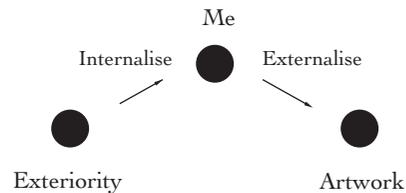


Fig. 3.1
Lu (2006)

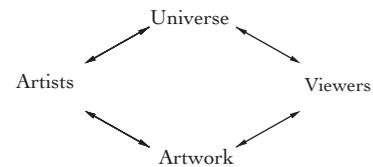


Fig. 3.2 Liu
(2005)

[1]: Liu suggested (Fig 3.2) that exteriority serves as the mutual connection between artists and viewers. Incited by nature, artists manifest their resonances through the creation of their artwork. The artwork then provokes the viewers' resonances as they refer back to their experience of nature to interpret the artwork (2005:22).

3.1 Design structure

The design structure consists of two components: the internalisation of exteriority and the externalisation of interiority. The research process has been constantly shifting between the two.

3.11 Internalising Exteriority

Internalising exteriority is the process of exposure to exteriority and the internalisation of it.

Exposure to Exteriority

Traditional Chinese artists have a very close relationship with nature (the exteriority). Exteriority provides them with the infinite resources to carry out and explore their aesthetic thinking and appreciation. According to Ames: “*The Chinese aesthetic appreciation of the nature is the merging of the self into an expanded reality through transformation and participation*” (2002: 55). Informed by this, I constantly and actively participate with exteriority at both conscious and subconscious level to allow myself to be resonated and inspired by it. It may be understood as a process whereby the researcher maximises the chances of discovery in the research process. My research question about Yi-Jing offers the focus while still allowing me to be open with various exteriorities. Exposure to exteriority acts as a catalyst for me so that I can constantly exercise my perceptiveness in the discovery of ideas for my research about Yi-Jing.

Within this project, my engagement with nature is conducted through observation and video documentation. Observation is the initial encounter with nature. Transition and movement are the core themes of this project. Because of the temporality of movement and transformation, during observation I might sometimes be unable to respond to every transient moment, or even a sequence of moments, before they vanish. Such post-engagement with the phenomena and practical work is therefore ongoing throughout the research process. Video documentation is capable of recording the process of transformations. It gives me the flexibility to review the moments repetitively during the later stages of contemplation.

Internalisation of Exteriority

While engaging with exteriority, I associate all aspects of my past experience and knowledge to facilitate my perception and conception of it. Then interpretations begin to emerge as I oscillate between exteriority and my interiority. Such oscillation enables me to be resonated by exteriority and to conceive the underlying immanent authenticity. Concurrently, I can accumulate such experiences into my own interiority. This can be regarded as a certain internalisation process. The internalisation of exteriority becomes the original infinite source of motivations and inspirations for later externalisation.

3. 12 Externalising Interiority

Once my interiority is resonated, fulfilled and motivated through the internalisation of exteriority, I am able to externalise my interiority through my art practice. The engagement with exteriority can motivate and inspire me. However, it does not give me any specific solutions to the creation of practice. It is through 'action in practice' that the ideas generated during the previous internalisation are actualised, tested, refined, fully explored or even transformed into new ideas. Such an externalisation process refers to the fusion of manifestation and expression.

The fusion of manifestation and expression reveals the harmony between the artists' subjective interiority and nature's objective exteriority. Unlike the methods of life drawing, while creating the artwork, traditional Chinese artists do not need to have their subject matter in front of them. In doing so, they are allowing their brushes to run freely to follow their understanding of the exteriority, rather than being restricted by the external form of the exteriority.

Informed by this, I decided to take a certain construction approach towards my practice. Inspired and motivated by my engagement with nature, I constructed some scenes myself. Such construction offered me more control over different aspects of the scenes. As a result I can manifest my emotional resonances more freely. It also enables me to explore the interaction between things deeply with less distraction.

Apart from scene construction, it also requires my critical and creative engagement with the usage of video camera to be able to manifest and express in an effective way. According to Bondebjerg: *Imagination and intelligence are in action behind the apparently mechanical machine of the camera, in just the same way as they guide the action of the brush* (2000: 5). In the process of recording, I need to consider the usage of the video camera such as lighting, focus, zoom and so on in relation to my understanding of the essence of exteriority and my emotions resonated by it. The more this process is exercised, the more coherent the control of camera and my resonated interiority will be. Chinese artists believe in the unification of mind and body. Once the artist reaches a certain level, the body will follow the mind spontaneously to manifest and express what the mind wants to communicate through the tool. Such exercise allows me to create the artwork freely and intuitively.

This approach may be illustrated through the ‘flower in water’ experiment developed in May 2006. I started by watching the rain through a window (see Fig. 3.3). At that time I was not engaging in a deliberate search for ideas. Somehow the distorted image created by the water on the glass gradually caught my attention. Inspired by the unexpected encounter, I began experimenting in an open-ended contemplative manner with distortion and water in the studio (see Fig. 3.4). While developing the practice, I constantly considered the use of lighting and focus to achieve the effective manifestation of my interiority. By reviewing and examining the practice repetitively, it then became the motivation and inspiration for my later practice.



Fig. 3.3 Lu 2006
Photograph of window



Fig. 3.4 Lu 2006
Studio Shooting

3.2 Design Methods: Contemplation

Contemplation has been a major approach throughout my research process while engaging with the exteriority (nature) and practice (artwork). According to Merton: *Contemplation is the deep resonance in the inmost center of our consciousness. It is a vivid, transcendent and infinitely abundant source* (1961:3). Since *Yi-Jing* is concerned with the ambiguous resonance triggered by incitements, contemplation is integrated into the entire research process. Through contemplation I am able to seize the potential incitements from exteriority and then manifest them through my practice. The ongoing contemplation also puts me into a viewer's position to examine the resonances triggered by the practical work. Contemplation operates as a catalyst for creative thinking and simultaneously as a device for critical and evaluative decision-making while engaging with exteriority and my practice. The more contemplation is exercised, the more responsive my sensitivity to external incitements will be. This can increase my chance of discovering nature's incitements to achieve *Yi-Jing*. Such a contemplative approach interweaves the processes of intuition, indwelling and correlation.

Intuition

The whole contemplation process starts from intuition^[1]. It is the ability to sense and discover potential development at an instantaneous but concise level. While being exposed to infinite exteriorities, intuition enables me to quickly locate certain clues and potentials. Also, intuition is the instant response to the phenomena without referencing a certain knowledge or logic. By stepping back from the rationalised pre-plan of the practice and the theoretical framework, I am able to open myself up to more possibilities of discovery.

[1] As pointed out by Moustakas: *In the intuitive process one draws on clues, one senses a pattern and underlying condition that enables one to imagine and then characterize the reality, state of mind or condition.* [1990: 23]

Indwelling

When compared with intuition, indwelling^[1] is a deeper engagement than intuition. It is the process of following the clues seized during intuition and developing them into a more complex and profound understanding about the experience of exteriority or the artwork produced. It is the deep self-dialogue between my interiority with the experience (of exteriority or the artwork). Indwelling drives me towards all aspects of my past experience and knowledge that allow me to resonate to the exteriority to seize the constituents and qualities that make up such an experience resonated.

[1] Moustakas suggested that Indwelling refers to the process of *turning inward to seek a deeper more extended comprehension of nature and meaning of a quality or theme of human experience... one allows the phenomenon to speak directly to one's own experience, to be questioned by it. In this way, one is able to encounter and examine it, to engage in a rhythmic flow with it - back and forth, again and again. until one has uncovered the multiple meanings* (1990: 25).

Correlation

While indwelling is working as the search for the deeper understanding of resonances, correlation draws emphasis on seeking the interplay between relevant things and experience from a larger scale in an unconfined way. Such interplay leads to the fusion of various interrelated things, such as emotions (*Qing*) and scenes (*Jing*), theory and practice.

Conclusion

Because essentially this project is located inside a traditional Chinese paradigm, I have not applied a Western methodology to the research process. Rather, I have drawn a methodological approach out of the core principle within Yi-Jing and adapted it to enable discovery, creation and evaluation during the research process. Within this research there are two key stages: internalising of experienced 'data' and the externalising of fulfilled interiority. My main purpose has been to create artworks that can provoke viewers' resonance, thereby encouraging them to play an active role and communicate with me through my work. Contemplation has enabled me to investigate the application of Yi-Jing principles through the design of a methodology that creates a concordance and harmony between subject and method. It is within contemplation that exteriority is internalized, resonances are triggered, emotions (*Qing*) and scenes (*Jing*) are harmonized into fusions, externalisation is illuminated, practices are examined and decisions are made.

Chapter 4

Reflective Statement

While engaging with the practice, *Yi-Jing* provides a Chinese aesthetic perspective that allows me to explore my ideas openly rather than simply to illustrate them. Inspired by various exteriorities that I have been exposed to, the central exploration of the practice is about time and *Yi-Jing*. This chapter provides a brief commentary on the exhibition project produced. The focus of the discussion is on the process of gathering inspiration from exteriority, the approaches towards manifestation and my associated disposition towards *Yi-Jing*.

The Scholar's Space

Since childhood, I have been exposed to the *'four treasures of the scholar'*. These comprise the ink stick, the brush, paper and the inkstone. These four inanimate items are indispensable to any traditional Chinese scholar and consequently hold great significance. They can be found in many traditional Chinese scholars' studio. I have always been fascinated by them and have wondered how an artwork might emerge through an artist's interaction with these tools. After absorbing the ink made by grinding the ink stick on inkstone, the soft brush then sweeps across the surface of the paper creating various visual patterns that actualise the artists' thoughts and emotions. During this process the mind, body and tool are unified in the creation of this work.

In the final work, *'the Scholar's Space,'* I have utilised a spatiotemporal environment to externalise and manifest my conception and emotional feelings towards the poetic atmosphere within which Chinese scholars and art practitioners gather their thoughts, carry out their scholarly work and indulge themselves through art practice. The manifestation of such an environment is achieved through scene construction, filming and editing. During the manifestation process, I have considered lighting, composition, movement, timing and the transitions between scenes. The nature of these moving image 'languages' enables me to render such an environment effectively as a carrier of *Yi-Jing*. Apart from the four treasures, I have also introduced into the work some related accessories such as the brush hanger and a candle. These elements are used to enhance the poetic quality and visual texture of the film.

Emptiness: black as empty space

During scene construction, I chose to leave the background black. This decision was inspired by the use of empty space within traditional Chinese painting. Generally, traditional Chinese artists strategically leave some “empty” space within the painting in order to create a certain ambiguity of space for viewers to meditate upon. They can fill the emptiness with their own internalised disposition to the atmosphere. By doing so, they can play an active role in constructing ‘meaning’ within the artwork and thus externalise their own thoughts. The empty black in *‘the Scholar’s Space’* serves as one of the carriers that provides ambiguous connections between the scholar’s treasures such as the inkblock, ink, a table, a brush, painting marks and the poetic atmosphere of his working environment.

While editing the resonance of black is interfused with the audio texture of the cello[1]. The slow transitions of movement constitute the gradual development of the density of ‘emptiness’ and its direct influence on viewers’ perception and conception of the atmosphere. This approach is intended to heighten an emotional and highly attentive response to the work. As such a fusion of emotions and scenes emerges, it thus initiates the establishment and appreciation of *Yi-Jing*.

[1] Umebayashi, S. (2005). *Interlude 1*: from the soundtrack *2046*.

The Tour of Time and Space

'The Scholar's Space' also extends the idea of emptiness in Chinese painting (as a static configuration) into moving image (a dynamic configuration). In the spatiotemporal environment, emptiness is no longer static. It becomes temporal and transforms in time. As the camera flows horizontally from the act of ink making to the brush hanger, and then to the reflection of the burning candle, the temporal black that resides between these scenes creates a certain visual rhythm. This gives viewers the time and space to meditate and respond to the transformations within the environment. This 'emptiness' also serves as an allusion to the ambiguous transition and relocation of time and space. Such an emphasis on horizontal camera movement pays homage to the aesthetics of handscroll [2] used in Chinese painting. During the appreciation of the painting, viewers need to manually unroll and re-roll portions of the work from right to left to 'travel' through a series of landscapes and thereby conceive the progression of time. Inspired by this technique, the directional flow of the camera facilitates the viewers' immersion into the environment of the scholar's space. This provides a harmonious exposure to the time, space and environment expressed through the integration of the scenes.

[1] Some early Chinese paintings were presented as handscrolls that provided the painter or calligrapher with a continuous horizontal surface of silk or paper on which to develop a composition.

Propensity (*Shi*)

Throughout the entire film, the visible aesthetic of movement serves as the carrier of *Xiang*. It facilitates to manifest the poetic authenticity of the scholar's space and triggers viewers' ambiguous interpretation. Propensity is one of the key qualities that this moving image project employs to manifest authenticity. The fragments of time within each of the scenes reveal the propensity of the ongoing transition. Even when the scenes are moved into the darkness, viewers may still conceive them as an ongoing transformation that constitutes the poetic environment. For example: the repetitive rhythm of grinding in a circular motion [Fig. 4.1], the swaying of the brushes on the brush hanger [Fig. 4.2], and the distortion of the reflection of the wavering candle flame [Fig. 4.3].



Fig. 4.1 Lu 2006

Studio Shooting



Fig. 4.2. ibid.



Fig. 4.3 . ibid.

Incitement within the Carrier

Within *The Scholar's Space* instead of depicting body gestures, I chose to use objects within the environment as allusive incitements. Through the interactions between brush and ink, light and objects, ink and the transforming reflection of the candle flame and ink block and ink stick, viewers may perceive the unfathomable and poetic human action of art practice within the space. For example, at the beginning of the film, through the movement of light that radiates across the candle stand and brushes [Fig. 4.4 and Fig. 4.5], viewers may subtly encounter the scenes where a scholar lights up a candle and then moves tranquilly through the space. Similarly, viewers may conceive the scholar's control of the brush by witnessing how the ink mark follows the shadow of the brush. [Fig. 4.6]



Fig. 4.4. *ibid.*



Fig. 4.5. *ibid.*



Fig. 4.6. *ibid.*

Colour and Lighting

Candles were deeply rooted in traditional Chinese society as they were widely used by scholars to conduct their work at night. The reddish warm tone served as an allusive incitement to the authenticity of the candlelight. The subtle and rhythmic change of lighting on the objects also served to connote the wavering movement of the candle flame. Such an aesthetic may be regarded as a reference to the traditional Chinese cultural context and the manifestation of my emotional feeling towards the poetic atmosphere.

Openness as Closure

Towards the end of the film, the camera moves from the ink marks on paper to the environment that surrounds the human interaction. It creates a sense of unity within which transformations take place. The swaying movement of hanging brushes implies continuity and a sense of lingering. As the scene fades into darkness, it creates an 'open' ending for the viewers to continue their contemplation.

Conclusion

The practice '*the Scholar's Space*' may be regarded as my journey to externalise my emotional feelings about the Chinese cultural environment that nurtures and inspires me.

The practice openly explores the unique modalities of moving image in relation to significant aesthetic essences of *Yi-Jing*'s visual carrier of *Xiang*. The spatiotemporal environment has been used to enrich my approach towards the manifestation of authenticity. This project also explores the notion of incitement within the spatiotemporal environment. Such incitement acknowledges the viewers' advanced consciousness and invites them to play a more active role in their appreciation of moving image. In addition to this, such incitement encourages viewers to develop infinite possibilities of interpretation that may serve to sustain an ambiguous framework. Therefore, through the integration of significant Chinese aesthetic notions such as incitement, ambiguity, harmony, authenticity and propensity into a spatiotemporal context, the practice has been able to effectively render the dynamic carrier(s) of *Yi-Jing*, to connote the film's atmosphere and to provoke viewers' emotions and heightened levels of contemplation.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Informed by the Chinese aesthetic, transformative reality, this research has sought to extend the implication of *Yi-Jing* from a static visual context into a dynamic aesthetic environment in order to suggest an alternative engagement and appreciation of moving image. It has enabled me as an artist to employ the aesthetics of movement to manifest the authenticity of nature and to express emotions triggered by nature. The unique modalities held by moving image offer viewers the temporal and dynamic engagement with the carrier(s). This helps to trigger the externalisation of individuals' fusion of *Qing* (emotions) and *Jing* (scenes). Furthermore it opens up the horizon to a kind of perceptual and conceptual communication within moving image where artists are able to construct meaning through allusion rather than representation and viewers are able to interpret meanings that are not only perceivable but also intelligible.

To realise this project, a specific methodology has been designed to incorporate the nature of *Yi-Jing*. The methodology was formulated to enforce discovery, creation and evaluation of this research. This methodology yields to nature as the source of knowledge and experience, thus inspiring me as an artist to externalise my interiority through art practice. The process can be regarded as a journey of achieving harmony. Throughout the whole process, contemplation is employed to bridge the internalisation of the exteriority (nature) and the externalisation of the interiority (self).

'*The Scholar's Space*' serves as an open-ended exploration of these complex conceptual and methodological frameworks. The work is intended to manifest my emotional feelings towards the Chinese cultural environment. Such a process is consistent with the methodological approach of externalising my interiority. The manifestation through moving image is conducted in three stages: scene construction, filming and editing. During these stages, I have integrated the

unique modality of moving image with some key Chinese aesthetic essences such as ambiguity, incitement, harmony, propensity and provocation to establish the potential carrier(s) of *Yi-Jing*. While Chinese aesthetic thinking enables me to intensify the visual texture of the film, the authenticity manifested through spatiotemporal media also enables the rendering of the poetic atmosphere of the scholar's space. In summary, I would suggest that the concept of *Yi-Jing* has the flexibility and potential to be extended into the contemporary moving image medium. Such extension may offer artists and viewers an alternative approach for moving image design. The approach enriches artists' aesthetic approaches towards the rendering of visual carrier(s). The application of *Yi-Jing* into moving image also encourages viewers to utilise their advanced consciousness to respond to the artist through the dynamic carrier(s) within the artwork and thus establishes a perceptual and conceptual communication between them and the artist.

Appendix

Documentation of the *Flower Water Series*.

Inspired by the integration of video footage within the earlier work of the harbour project, the focus of the research shifted from animation to video editing, which may be regarded as a more specific kind of moving image. Such a strategy required me to be constantly open to exteriority while searching for subjects to shoot. Furthermore, it offered me the flexibility to constantly review and contemplate my practice. This led to an illumination of its development. Such a process is consistent with the methodological practice of internalising the exteriority and externalising the interiority.

The development process

An encounter with raindrops on a window pane provided the inspiration for the Flower Series (see P36 in the methodology section for details).

Lighting

As an extension of this, I began to construct scenes and experiment with lighting in order to enhance the potential of the forms and the spaces they inhabited.



Fig. 6.1 *ibid.*

Light from the beneath.



Fig. 6.2 *ibid.*

Light against the camera

Eventually, back lighting [Fig. 6.2] was chosen because the bright background effect that resulted produced certain references to the use of white within Chinese painting aesthetics. Such aesthetics helped to create an ambiguous space for viewers to poetically contemplate form and atmosphere.

Experiment with the distortion of water and glass.



In addition to the inspiration that exteriority provided, the Chinese aesthetic value of vagueness^[1] also influenced my approach towards the practice.

In Chinese literature, flowers often operate as metaphors for beauty. For most Chinese, a direct confrontation with the flower can be too abrupt. Consequently, instead of showing the flower directly, I experimented with blurring and distorting the lens. The aesthetic of distortion created by the running water enabled me to create the vague and ambiguous space in-between the flower and the viewer.

The flower appears to be trying to hide its beauty behind the water distortion. This more nebulous treatment of the subject may be used to further heighten viewers' interest in engaging with it. The transformative interactions between the flower and water [through distortion] serves as the incitement that triggers responses to multiple layers of interpretation. Such an aesthetic experience thus constitutes the conceptual and perceptual communication between artists and viewers.

[1] Chinese artists tend to take a certain nebulous approach towards meaning within their work. Vagueness may be regarded as the acknowledgement of the viewers' advanced consciousness through the implication of incitement. In Chinese, “雾里看花” literally means ‘watching the flower through the fog’. Such vagueness achieved by distancing oneself from the subject matter may leave more room for the viewers' imagination.

The research was further developed through experiments with certain cinematic language like changes in focus, composition and shooting angle.



Fig. 6.3 ibid.

Similar to distortion, the use of the blurry image [Fig.6.3] at the beginning provided the ambiguity that might raise viewers' inclination to engage, meditate and use their own perception and conceptions to develop their interpretations.

Although these works were not chosen as the final exhibition piece, the experience, strategies and aesthetics gained through the research significantly influenced the development of “*The Scholar’s Space*”.

First, the research made use of the aesthetics of distortion and reflection as a method of developing a carrier for *Yi-Jing*. These characteristics were heavily used in the final project in such sequences as the distorted reflection of the candle in the running ink.

Second, I began to explore further how one might use the space in-between the subject matter and the camera to achieve a certain vagueness that might create an ambiguous environment. Filming the brush through the paper for example extended the filmic approaches discovered when using water distortion in the flower series.

Third, the flower and *The Scholar’s Space* series showed certain parallels in their consistent concerns with the communicative ability of empty space. Although the earlier work uses white and the latter black, both approaches serve as the carrier of *Yi-Jing*. Viewers may develop their own interpretations of the ambiguous space or environments within which the transformations unfold.

When compared with *The Flower Water* series, *The Scholar’s Space* reveals a stronger sense of direction in the process of triggering viewers’ resonances. Consequently, viewers’ interpretations of it tend to be less diverse. However, I believe that both projects contrast to traditional Western concerns with literal description of transformative reality. The construction of certain provocative qualities in *The Flower Water* series, and *The Scholar’s Space* manifest the carrier of *Yi-Jing*. Thus, these works have the potential to trigger a deeper level of interpretation. As a film maker, I see such a transformative process as key to the essence of *Yi-Jing*.

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