

The Poetics of Making

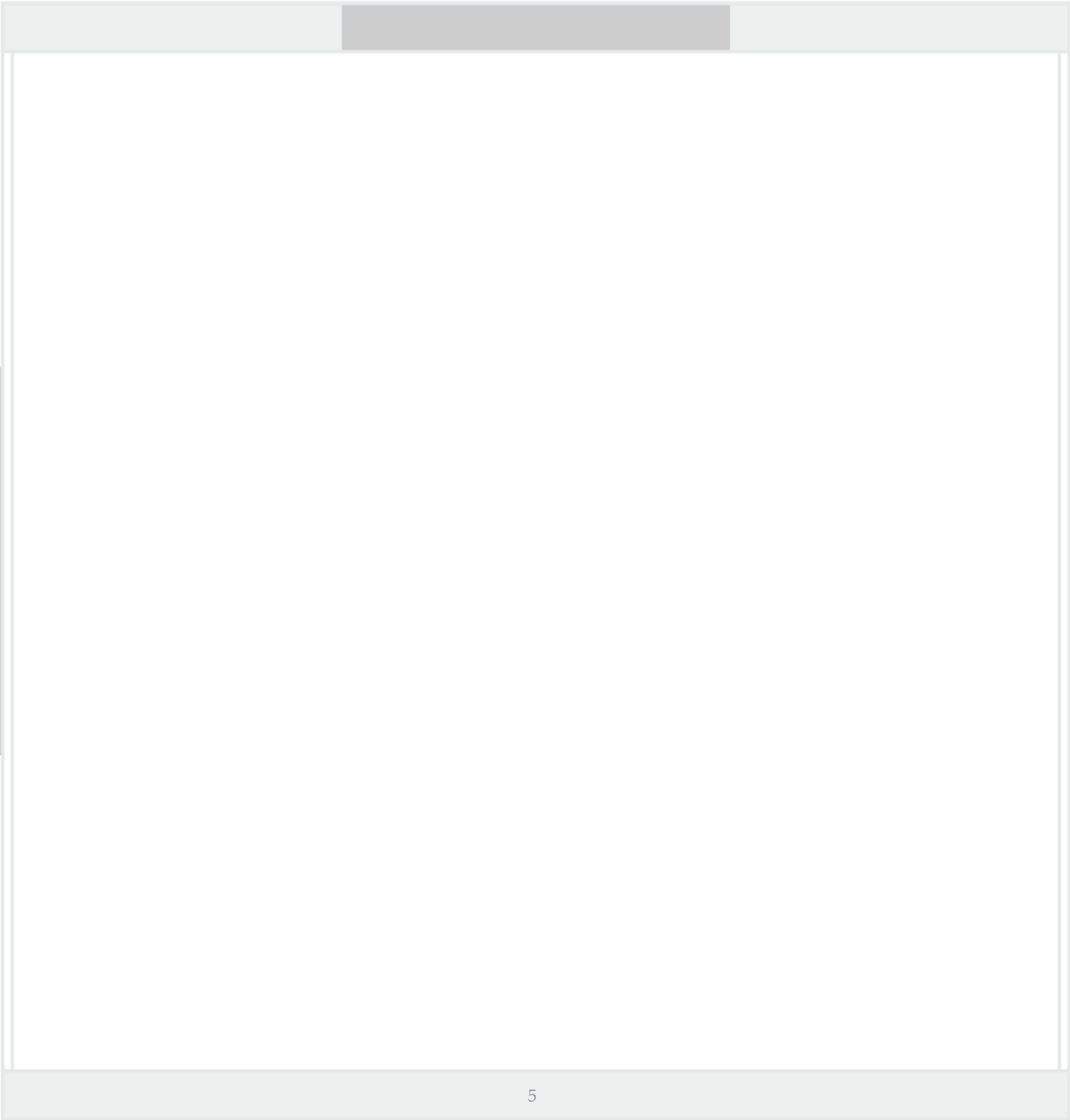
A New Cross-cultural Aesthetics of Art Making in Digital Art through the Creative Integration of Western Digital Ink Jet Printmaking Technology with Chinese Traditional Art Substrates

This exegesis is submitted to AUT University in partial fulfillment of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Abstract

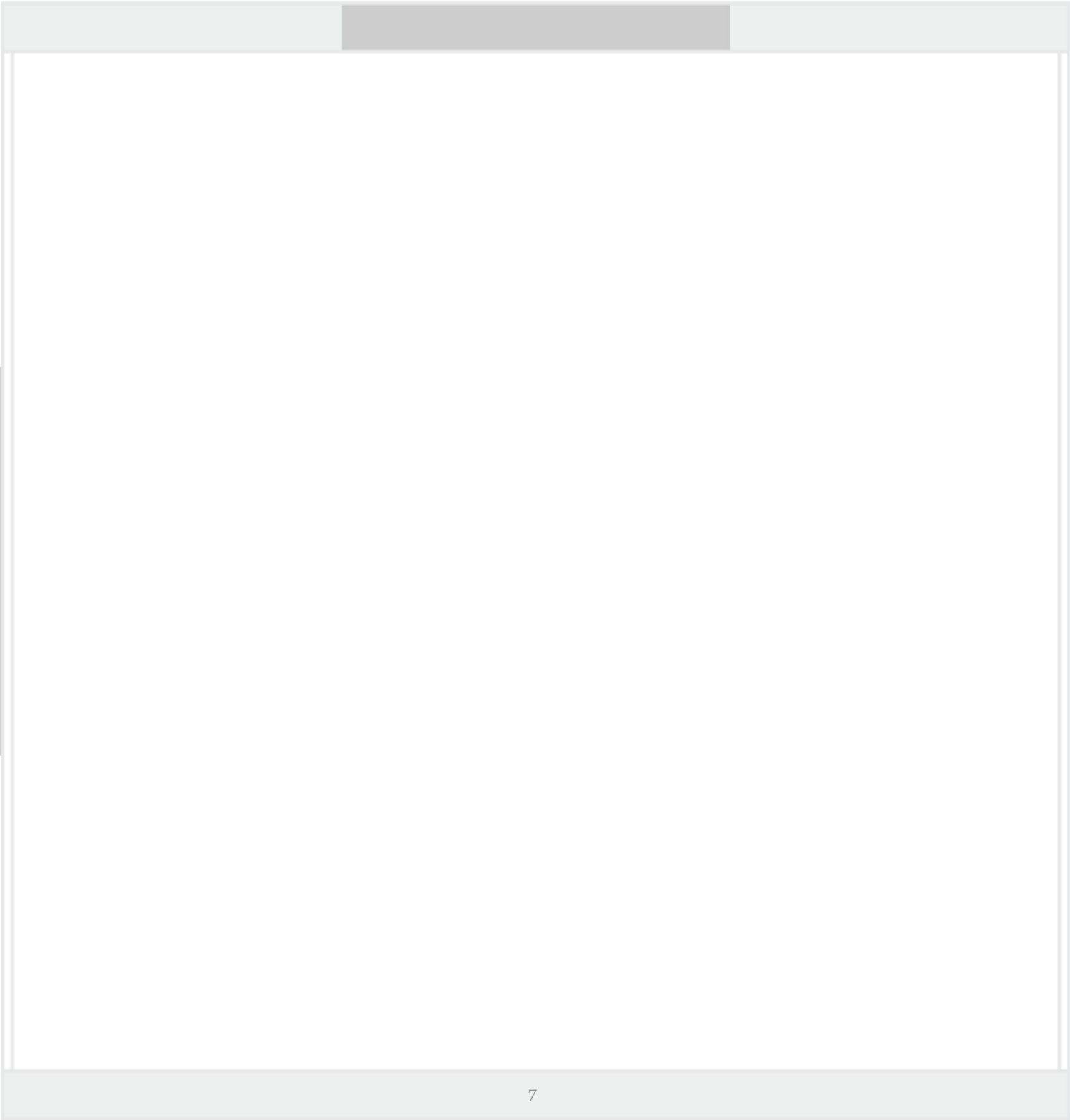
This is a practice-led research project that seeks to explore the cross-cultural aesthetics and conceptual ideas of an art project. I position myself as an art practitioner who intends to apply the Western modes of technological advancement of digital imaging and ink jet technologies to the substrates used by traditional Chinese artists for ink painting and calligraphy, usually called Xuan Zhi [宣紙]. Through this process, the aesthetics and conceptual ideas of both cultures will be explored, examined, analysed and interrogated for the potential development of a new aesthetics in the context of digital art.

There are three major components in this research project; a creative document in the form of a collection of artwork, an exegesis and a collection of documentation. The creative document will be a body of visual image-based artwork that includes a series of collateral works from the ongoing research and practice of the project. It is the negotiated output of a potentially new aesthetics in digital art, specifically in the context of digital still imaging and digital printmaking. The exegesis is an analytical and critical commentary that places the creative document in relevant theoretical, philosophical, cultural and historical contexts. The documentation is a collection of the ongoing empirical practice of ink jet technology on Xuan Zhi. The visual physical form of both the exegesis and the documentation are also included as part of the creative document. These three components together form a unity and are presented as artefacts to represent the main focus of the research – the *Poetics of Making*.



Dedication

To my beloved parents Leung Ho [1918-1991] and Sok-wah Yim [1922-2007].



Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deep gratitude to my wife Wendy and my two daughters Joann and Charmaine for their loving support throughout the research journey of this project.

I extend my gratitude to my supervisors Professor Colin Gibbs and Professor Elizabeth Grierson for their insightful contributions.

To Professor Leong Yap, who gave his invaluable comments on my research direction. To Associate Professor Welby Ings, Dr. Laurent Antonczak, Associate Professor Tina Engels-Schwarzpaul, Desna Jury, Peter Gilderdale, Associate Professor Mark Jackson, Angela Fraser and all my colleagues for their ongoing support.

I would like to thank Hong-lin Xu, Mei-deng Xu and Yiu-tung Leung for their caring and thoughtful support during my research in China and Hong Kong. To Clara and her parents John and Connie So, who provided access to the resources of their museums in China. To Linda Ai, Nicki Xiao and my brother Wai-tong Ho, who brought in Chinese substrates from Taiwan, Hong Kong and China.

Very special thanks to Ching Ye for his ongoing creative input in the design of this project and Nancy Xing for her creative execution of the graphic design of the exegesis. To Sophie Reissner and Katherine Cao, who edited the exegesis. To Nandar Thwin and David Tan, who constructed the display furniture of the exhibition. To Quanmei Jin, who arranged to make the display boxes in Shanghai; and to Jack Xie, who refined the display boxes.

In Hong Kong, I would like to acknowledge the generous support of my sisters Kit-yuk, Kit-hing and Man-cheong Ho, who made the necessary resources available for this research project. To Susanna Chan, who provided me with the relevant academic resources.

To my students; I always feel young at heart when working with them.

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 qualification of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement is made in the acknowledgements.

King Tong Ho

September 2007

Ethics Approval

This thesis had obtained formal ethics approval from the university (Ethics Application Number 05/34) in May 2005.

Title	2
Abstract	4
Dedication	6
Acknowledgements	8
Attestation of Authorship	10
Ethics Approval	11
Table of Contents	12

Overview

Chapter 1

Challenge and Proposition of this Research Project	18
Position of this Research	19
The Poetics of Making	21
My Transformative Identity	
My Research Positioning	
Project Title	22
The Research Statement	23

Rationale and Significance

Chapter 2

Central Idea	26
The Conceptual Context	27
Creative Process	29
Digital Aesthetics	31
Digital Ink Jet Printmaking Technology	33

Relationship to Existing Knowledge	34
Practice-led Research	34
Structure of the Project	38

Chinese Philosophy and Aesthetics

Chapter 3

Introduction	42
Chinese Classical Aesthetic Thought	43
A Contemporary Stance of Chinese Classical Aesthetics	48
Overviewing Analysis	51
The Chinese Worldview	
Transformative Openness	
Virtual Space	
Yi-jing	
Conclusion	55

Digital Art and Aesthetics

Chapter 4

Introduction	68
Knowledge and Technology: The Problem of Knowledge in a Digital Environment	71
Locating 'New' Aesthetics	74
Locating Creativity and Innovation	75
My Photography Stance: The Making of Taking	75
My Chinese Worldview of Virtual Reality	76
Virtual Space in a Digital Environment	77
Technology, Intervention and Daoism	78

Transformative Quality of Digital Imaging Technology	79
Digital Ink Jet Printmaking Technology with Xuan Zhi as a Temporal Fixed Form	80
Visual Perspective	81
One-point Perspective and Multiple Perspectives	
Moving Perspective	
Conclusion	82

Design Approaches

Chapter 5

Introduction	88
Rationale of the Design Structure	90
Simulation	91
Self-cultivation	91
Enlightenment	92
Verification of Poetics of Making	93
The Poetics of Making Approach	95
Conclusion	95

Poetics of Making

Chapter 6

The Poetics of Scholar	101
The Poetics of Clicking [Reflexive Framing: a re-thinking of decisive moment]	106
The Poetics of Mao Artefacts	146
The Poetics of Chinese Worldview	168
The Poetics of Allusion [Joy of Fish]	190

The Poetics of Experience with Nature	194
Emotional Deposition	
The Experience	
The Poetics of Memory	214
The Poetics of Teaching [In Praise of Confucius: Nurture and not Categorise]	234
The Poetics of Natural Vitality [The Five Elements]	250
The Poetics of Nature [The Four Seasons]	262
The Poetics of Ink Jet Printmaking	296
The Poetics of Having A Transformative Identity	332
The Poetics of Writing the Exegesis	372
Conclusion	372

Findings and Conclusion

Chapter 7

Fingings	386
Philosophical Findings	
Aesthetic Findings	
Practical Findings	
Conclusion	393
Bibliography	396
Reference	403

Appendix

410

This practice-led research project explores cross-cultural aesthetics and conceptual ideas in an art project. I position myself as an art practitioner who applies the Western modes of technological advancement of digital imaging and ink jet technologies to the substrates¹ used by traditional Chinese artists for ink painting and calligraphy, usually called Xuan Zhi [宣紙]. Through this process, the aesthetics and conceptual ideas of both cultures are explored, examined, analysed and interrogated for their potential to develop a new aesthetics in the context of digital art.

There are three major sections in this research project, a creative document in the form of a collection of artwork which is the main component, and two supportive components, namely an exegesis and a collection of documentation. The visual physical form of the exegesis and the documentation in themselves are also included as part of the creative document. The creative document and the exegesis represent a nominal 70% and 30% of the final submission respectively.

The Creative Document

This document is a body of visual image-based artwork that includes a series of collateral works from the ongoing research and practices of the project. It is the negotiated output of a potentially new aesthetics in digital art, specifically in the context of digital still imaging and digital printmaking.

The Exegesis

The exegesis is an analytical and critical commentary that places the creative document in relevant theoretical, philosophical, cultural and historical contexts.

There are four main components in the exegesis:

- The critical analysis of the confluent aesthetics in digital art from a cross-cultural perspective
- The conceptual and philosophical development that is embodied in the work (through the commentary on each of the practical works) – the poetics of making
- The design approaches applied in the development and realisation of the project
- The findings

The Documentation

The project includes an archive of ongoing documentation and analysis of the data collected during

experimentation with the technology and substrates. It serves to disseminate the up-to-date knowledge on the project in website format for ongoing discursive or dialectic discourses with researchers and art practitioners in the related areas. It is also a cross-referencing resource for the exegesis. Whilst in progress, the focus has shifted away from the technological and material resolution and centre on the potentiality of classical Chinese philosophical thought and aesthetics in contemporary digital art aesthetics with a core concept of the Chinese poetic thought concerning making. This is a natural development to relocate to a more defined research locus. A collection of practice of ink jet technology on Xuan Zhi accompanies this.

Overview

Through the fusing of technological advancement and creative art practice, this project intends to add new knowledge to the development of aesthetics in the recently emerging practice of digital art.

It investigates the application of high-end² digital ink jet printmaking technology on traditional Chinese culturally specified substrates (Xuan Zhi) in the area of printmaking. It specifically focuses on the potential to create a new art form and aesthetic theory advanced by digital ink jet printmaking technology combined with traditional Chinese substrates. Traditional Chinese substrates are considered in the context of the 'performative reality' of the originals. Through using digital technology, the intention is to materialise a new and yet transformative origin of digital art practice.

The underlying premise of the notion of 'poem' in the Chinese context is expanded into a notion of poetics and away from Western definitions of poem. Referencing Chinese aesthetics, I explore the poetics of materiality through Chinese philosophical concepts with primary reference to Daoism. This will involve the notion of poetics in Chinese aesthetics. My research content is based on the philosophical thought of Tang poems for two reasons: first, it is through the exploration of the philosophy and aesthetics of the poetic ideas behind the poem that I am exploring the poetics of materiality of ink jet technology when applied to Chinese traditional substrates; and second, as a consequence, I shall also create my own poetics as an artist through practice (the visual document) – the poetics of making. This reflects both the focus on the exploration of visual aesthetics and the affirmation of the embodiment of philosophical and conceptual ideas in the work.

Challenges and Propositions of this Research Project

The challenge of this cross-cultural research lies not only in the appropriateness of translation at a philosophical level, but more importantly, the accessibility of cultural difference in thinking. Owen (1992) addressed the same concern when he judged the appropriateness³ of translating Chinese thought. Ames (2003), when translating the *Daojing* [道德經], also acknowledged the challenge of trying to interpret

Chinese philosophy within its own worldview⁴. The lack of translated Chinese-to-English resources makes the communication of ideas difficult. Most interpretation of theory in Chinese aesthetics is different when described in the Western framework of thinking and art practice. To remedy this, it was usual to search for any possible translated version relating to the study, then to consider the framework through which that translation has been made. While I may not always agree with the translations, they nevertheless provide a basis from which I am able to proceed. I also reference ideas by Chinese scholars written in Chinese and I make my own judgements in translating their ideas to develop my own transformative philosophical concepts. I acknowledge that I do not have an academic background in Chinese literature and philosophy and the developed philosophical stance in this thesis might be questionable from the perspectives of Chinese literati. However, the project is not positioned to re-interpret classical Chinese literature and philosophy; rather it yields to the philosophy and aesthetics of Chinese classical art theory and practice to further new directions in the contemporary digital art context. Thus, it is this specific grounding that might shed light on new ideas in contemporary art practices. This approach corresponds with the 'transformative openness' of classical Chinese philosophical aesthetics in art theory and practice. My proposition is that the classical Chinese worldview provides a space to contextualise my practice. Always, there are different perspectives among scholars, both Chinese and Western, of Chinese philosophy and aesthetics. My adaptation and integration of a range of ideas (which might be seemingly at odds with each other) is intended to trigger new thoughts in the context of contemporary digital art practice. As such, as an art practitioner in this practice-led research, the 'questionable' that confronts me will serve to open up potentiality in the ongoing development of art practice and aesthetics.

Position of this Research

This research is unique in the dual position of the researcher being an academic who reflects upon his own practice as a digital imaging artist in a cross-cultural context. Embarking upon Chinese philosophy as an artist and not a philosopher, I draw on the classical Chinese philosophical aesthetics of transformative openness in art practice to develop a contemporary virtual environment using digital art practice. Celebrating the reconstruction of nature's (the universe's) creation processes in Chinese art practice is a fundamental difference from the classical Aristotelian position of the idealised replication of nature,

or *mimesis*. This constitutes the key aesthetic thought of transformation and openness characteristic of Chinese art practice.

Embracing transformative openness, this project proposes that in the contemporary mutable virtual digital environment the processes of art practice trigger potential new knowledge. Furthermore, the artwork is a visual physicality for the temporal actualisation of the still transforming new knowledge in the here and now. This constitutes a virtual space for intellectual dialogues between individuals. In this sense, the artwork as an agent in Chinese differs from the Western view in that it does not operate in an active role to represent concepts (and/or potential knowledge). Rather, the artwork as an agent in Chinese simply provides the openness for its transformative reality to be constantly reviewed.

Referencing the ideas about 'virtuality' as a problem and 'actuality' as the solution of the digital environment by contemporary Western philosopher Levy (2002) , I further propose that virtuality as a problem only posits the potentiality of knowledge and actuality as a solution is a temporal resolution to potential new knowledge. Therefore, actualisation as an act of creation does not constitute new knowledge; rather, it only triggers potential new knowledge.

The potential development of new knowledge is contingent upon two criteria: firstly, the effectiveness of the artist's (self) manifestation of transformative openness in the artwork; second, the continuity of dynamic transformations by the participation of other individuals (others). However, the formation of always-temporal new knowledge is yet dependent on the abilities of individuals (self and others) to actualise (externalise) their interiority.

The aim of this project is to contextualise the Chinese aesthetics of transformative openness through exploring the main theme of *Poetics of Making* in order to provide an alternative philosophical perspective on knowledge and knowledge-making in the contemporary context of digital art and practice. Consequently, it bestows potential new notions of confluent aesthetics developed through cross-cultural dialectic discussions.

The Poetics of Making

This project has a core research focus on the classical Chinese philosophical concept of the poetics of making. I am yielding to the ethos of poetry at the philosophical level to establish my own Chinese aesthetic thinking and through my practice to introduce new notions of aesthetics in contemporary digital art. The aesthetics of my empirical art practice⁵ are associated with how I perceive and feel in my daily experience. It is the locale of self-enlightenment on the philosophical concept of the poetics of making. It is also a locale to communicate the concept with other selves. Drawing ideas from the classic *Book of Songs [Shi Jing] [詩經]*, the approach of my practice has no single determinable intent. The individuality of each piece of work reflects *a single, empirically determined unity of state of mind, situation, and moment* (Owen, 1992, p. 452). The diverse content, aesthetics and ideas of this research are unified spokes which form a collateral wholeness within which to explore the concept of the poetics of making. I have also taken on board Ames and Hall's (2003) insightful comments⁶ about how *Daodejing* functions, and use these to sharpen the position of my research project so that individual selves are required *to supply always unique, concrete, and often dramatic scenarios drawn from their own experience* (pp. 7-8) when encountering my work about the poetics of making in any temporal moments.

Whether creative art practice constitutes new knowledge has, and continues to be, a controversial notion⁷. This project departs from establishing a philosophical stance in contemporary digital art practice in that the artist (self) initiates a perspective or notion of the self through his creative practice. The creativity of self does offer new vision, new perspective or new approaches of making or thinking; however, new knowledge is developed in, and through, the dialectic discussions between individual selves. I have also taken the idea from another Daoist, Zhuangzi⁸ [莊子] (c 300 B. C.), that the *philosophical notion or belief is not debatable, [but] knowledge is* (pp. 216-217). Therefore, the notion of poetics of making in my project serves to initiate a virtual space⁹ for intellectual dialogues to explore potential new knowledge. Individual selves will be triggered to explore the notion of poetics of making and through challenging, interrogating, and reshaping this notion, new knowledge will be developed.

My Transformative Identity

Brought up in Hong Kong, leaving behind my established business to live in Auckland twelve years ago was a turning point in my life. My newly developed second career as an academic is dynamic and full of challenge. Being from a cultural minority, there is always the intermittent self-impulse to question my own identity. Who am I? A New Zealand Chinese or a Chinese New Zealander? The feeling of ambiguity of my identity from being brought up in a Westernised Chinese cultural milieu to adapting to Western-dominated culture, from being a practitioner to becoming an academic, from having the culturally inscribed Chinese-Western thoughts to exploring Chinese thoughts, is a kind of emotional undertow. To substantiate the self, I shuttle between cultures, between identities and between roots. This cross-cultural tension provides a stimulus for such an exploration.

My Research Positioning

At the School of Art and Design, AUT University, I am perhaps the first researcher to advocate exploring the application of ink jet printmaking technology in art practice since 1996.¹⁰ This PhD research project affirms my ongoing research and contribution to the broader context of tertiary education. It also harmonises with AUT University's fundamental philosophy¹¹ that explicitly identifies technology as the active integration of theory and practice.

Project Title

The Poetics of Making

A New Cross-cultural Aesthetics of Art Making in Digital Art through the Creative Integration of Western Digital Ink Jet Printmaking Technology with Chinese Traditional Art Substrates

The Research Statement

This practice-led creative production research adapts a research statement rather than posing research questions. The statement itself gives rise to a series of evolving questions throughout the project and it is through a questioning process that the state of being a reflective practitioner takes place (see methodology below). The statement has been refined to reflect the focus of a philosophical level of engagement in art and design theory and its conceptual realisation in, and through, art practice.

This thesis works towards the development of a new confluent cross-cultural aesthetic of art making in digital art (specifically in the context of digital still imaging and digital printmaking) through the creative integration of Western digital ink jet printmaking technology using Chinese traditional art substrates. This work reflects the embodiment of conceptual and philosophical ideas in the process of art making.

Throughout the process of art making, the following key areas of research were explored:

- Contextual: cross-cultural, classical and contemporary art practice
- Philosophical: aesthetics, poetics
- Empirical: materiality of substrates, data processing
- Technological: photography, digital imaging, ink jet technology

Thus, the process gave rise to evolving questions such as:

- What is a possible new aesthetics as influenced and developed by cross-cultural art concepts in the emergent digital art and practice?
- How do Chinese classical poetic ideas influence contemporary globalised art practice and wherein lies the philosophical notion of aesthetics as poetics?
- How does technology advance the creativity of contemporary art practice?
- What are the possible contributions of Xuan Zhi in the materialisation process of digital artwork in emergent digital art and aesthetics?
- What are the potential contributions of ink jet technology in the materialisation process of digital artwork in emergent digital art and aesthetics?

Endnotes

1 Chinese culturally specified substrates refers to Xuan Zhi [宣紙] or Xuan Paper that is used by traditional Chinese artists, mainly in painting and calligraphy, for the creation of their work. There are as many as a few hundred types of Xuan Zhi. It is called Xuan Zhi simply because the best ones were originally produced from a kind of tree called [ging tan shu] '青檀樹' in Xuan City, An Hui province in China. It is claimed that the best types of Xuan Zhi will last for as long as one thousand years when stored properly. Some artworks from the Tang Dynasty on Xuan Zhi still survive today.

2 High-end refers to the standard quality that is recognised by the professional practitioners in the industry.

3 When translating Wang Fu-chih's [Wang Fu-zhi's] *Interpretations of Poetry [Shi Yi]* [詩譯] and *Discussions to While Away the Days at Evening Hall [Yi Tang Yong Ri Xu Lun]* [夕堂永日緒論], Owen (1992) says: *Much of Wang Fu-chih's sharpest critical and theoretical writing is to be found in his Broad Commentary on the Book of Songs [詩經]...There are, unfortunately, serious difficulties in presenting these works to the English reader. The Shih kuang-chuan [Shi Guang Zhuan] [詩廣傳] has deep roots in the long and complex tradition of scholarship on the Book of Song, and the issues it addresses are often comprehensible only within that tradition* (pp. 451-452).

4 Ames (2003) says: *Chinese philosophy has been made familiar to Western readers by first "Christianizing" it, and then more recently by locating it within a poetic-mystical-occult worldview. To the extent that Chinese philosophy has become the subject of Western philosophical interest at all, it has usually been analysed within the framework of categories and philosophical problems not its own... it has presented us with the challenge of trying, with imagination, to take these texts on their own terms by locating and interpreting them within their own worldview.* (Preface and Acknowledgments, p. xi).

5 Owen (1992, pp. 451-491) when discussing about the critical writing of Wang Fu-chih [Wang Fu-zhi] [王夫之] (1619-1692) and his *Interpretations of Poetry [Shi Yi]* [詩譯] and *Discussions to While Away the Days at Evening Hall [Xi Tang Yong Ri Xu Lun]* [夕堂永日緒論], comments that Wang returns repeatedly to the proposition that aesthetic effect cannot be separated from an empirical event, what the poet really perceived, and what the poet really felt.

6 Ames and Hall (2003, pp. 7-8): *First, when we turn to reflect on how the selected wisdom sayings of the Daodejing function, we can assume that they, like the repertoire of songs, have a kind of unquestioned veracity that comes from belonging to the people and their tradition. We can further observe that this veracity is made corporate by a reading strategy that co-opts the reader. Two often remarked characteristics of the Daodejing are palpable absences: it contains no historical detail of any kind, and it offers its readers no doctrines in the sense of general precepts or universalistic laws. The required "framing" of the aphorism by the reader is itself an exercise in nondogmatic philosophising where the relationship between the text and its student is one of noncoercive collaboration. That is, instead of "the text" providing the reader with a specific historical context or philosophical system, its listeners are required to supply always unique, concrete, and often dramatic scenarios drawn from their own experience to generate the meaning for themselves. This inescapable process in which students through many readings of the text acquire their own unique understanding of its insights informed by their own experience is one important element in a kind of constantly evolving coherence. The changing coherence of the text is brought into a sharpening focus as its readers in different times and places continue to make it their own.*

7 Refer to contemporary scholar Scrivener's (2004) article *The Art Object does not embody a Form of Knowledge* for details.

8 Contemporary scholar Chan Shao-ming (2004) [陳少明], when analysing Zhangzi's *Qi Wu Lun* [齊物論], referenced Western philosopher Wittgenstein's discussion on G.E. Moor's notion of common sense to suggest and make sense that knowledge is debatable but not belief (pp. 216-217).

9 Refer to the chapter on *Chinese Philosophy and Aesthetics* for details.

10 I started to research and practice with technology in 1996 and submitted my practice-led MA thesis at AUT University in the form of digital ink jet print in 2000. In 2001, I designed and included the curriculum of both digital ink jet printmaking and digital imaging technology in the study of photography at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. In 2002, I set up the first small-scale digital ink jet lab for the school and the demand from staff and students was tremendous. In 2004, there were three MA thesis submissions that had applied ink jet printmaking technology for the final presentation of artwork under my supervision. In 2005, I expanded the digital ink jet lab and established a systematic workflow for both creative academic research and the teaching of professional practice. In the recent year 3 (2007) photography paper (Photography Studies 3, Paper reference: 117332) of the Bachelor of Art & Design (Graphic Design), 85% of submissions used ink jet technology for the final production. It is also noted that students in various visual art disciplines (sculpture, painting etc) also adapted ink jet technology in their practice.

11 Under AUT's Distinctive Characteristics Section: *The word "technology" appears in the University's name. It is a word that has, over the years, been related to engineering and applied sciences, information applications, innovation and advancement, interdisciplinary structures of knowledge and application, and the world of work. While retaining aspects of these meanings, at AUT "technology" is best understood by considering its derivation from the classical Greek words for craft (techne) and principle (logos). It is about "know how" and "know why": not just practice and theory, but both. Technology for AUT means the active integration of theory and practice. This integration is fundamental to our philosophy. It pervades all of our work and does much to determine the nature and scope of our curriculum and research interests (AUT Strategic Plan 2002-2007, 2002).*

Rationale and Significance

Central Idea

This practice-led cross-cultural project focuses on exploring the development of a new aesthetics in digital art in the specific area of digital still imaging and ink jet printmaking. Although the first digital artworks were produced more than half a century ago, it is only in the past decade that digital work has started to be accepted as 'art' by artists, collectors and museums. Amongst the predominant digital artworks which have become 'icon artworks'¹² in the recently emergent digital art, there is a unique hybrid character. This hybrid character refers to the interdisciplinary trends of the integrated applications of different media (such as painting, printmaking, and photography) in contemporary art practice. An example of this is Maggie Taylor's (1997) *Two Sisters* (Plate 1). The creators of such icon artwork combined their expertise in their own areas with digital imaging technology although the potential of such a hybrid nature has not yet been thoroughly explored. The inspiration of this research is informed by adopting digital imaging technology into traditional Chinese art practice in a parallel relationship with this hybrid character of digital art.

This project shuttles between a Chinese, predominantly non-instrumental, approach to thinking and making and a Western, predominantly instrumentalist, intervention of new technology. Through the process it is possible to open a new horizon of thought and practice. This is an important aspect of where the possible development of a new aesthetics may be situated. The project provides significant impetus for working cross-culturally between traditional Chinese practices and Western contemporary digital processes.

In addition, a vast number of processing alternatives brought about by the most recent advances in digital imaging technology has added new dimensions to the potential for art and design creative practices. The new technology encourages interdisciplinary practice (in short, it uses more than one medium to produce artwork), or the new domains of collaboration of artists with scientists, technologists, and others to produce new bodies of work. Artists and curators have forecast that the boundary between different media will inevitably become indistinct. For example, through digital technology, the boundary between painting

and photography — once separate media categories — has become blurred. Similarly, artists of various disciplines are adapting digital technology to create ideas, sketch layouts and incorporate technologically developed methods into traditional media and the implementation of final work. For example, Helen Golden often alters the printed surface of digital print with traditional media such as acrylic paint or coloured pencils. She calls her hybrid creative product mixed media ‘tradigital work’ (Herland, 2003). Such new ways of working suggest that artists may have to adjust their balance between technology and creativity in this newly developed workspace. The notion of ‘new’ is not new in this sense. For example, North American artist Robert Rauschenberg applied mixed media in art practice in the Sixties, in which he illustrates how neither hybrid mixed media practices nor engagement with emerging technologies are new. What is ‘new’ in this project is the environment of digital ink jet technology. So the question to consider concerns the characteristics of this environment. How does the specificity of digital imaging and ink jet technology afford new possibilities in the interplays of media?

The Conceptual Context

This project explores the possibility of interplay between Western creative ideas and technologies and the traditional and historical Chinese poetics — as the poetics of materiality.¹³ The philosophical and aesthetic framework of Chinese culture is the core concern, with reference to the Western framework that focuses on recent technological influences, in the development of the primary research questions.

Historically, at least, within the Western metaphysics of being, the way of thinking of oneself, has been assumed to be fixed and stable, whereas the Chinese framework’s is relative to the transformative engagement of oneself and signifies one’s standing in a particular way in the here and now. This is invoking and deferring, and, in this project, it is renovating and innovating in particular ways.

In this project, I position myself within the Chinese philosophical framework of thinking about myself, the artist, in terms of self in order to explore the poetics of art making through materiality. Departing from this fundamental position, I shuttle between both Western and Chinese philosophical frameworks of thinking in a contemporary context where both self and aesthetics are impacted by both Chinese and Western

traditions and influences. In this respect, the self as unique individual is central in the exploration of the Chinese poetics of making and the fusion of Western creative ideas and technologies.

Contemporary philosophers (Fang, 2003) have suggested that in the 21st century, the global trend of philosophical ideas is 'harmony but no assimilation' (p. 2)¹⁴. In this project, the integration of Western technology and Chinese substrates, and the exploration of Chinese classical poetic ideas in contemporary digital creative art practice provides a fertile case study for the development of a 'harmony but no assimilation' global environment. The context of my research for the development of new aesthetics in digital art is significant in this respect.

Lauren Pfister (2003, p. 622) also states that:

The expanding of knowledge in the many different and new sciences, including their rapidly developing attendant technologies, have brought about an international set of interests and concerns related to the diversity of the sciences, the cultural elements in scientific knowledge, and ethical questions which address larger issues of ecological, social, and perennial human needs. Going beyond a "China-West" philosophical focus¹⁵ in these areas would promise an immense amount of new research, new areas for exploration, and, it could be hoped, much more international research cooperation as a consequence.

The key philosophical proposition of this project has been adapted from Daoism¹⁶, making reference to chapter 15 of *Tao Te Ching (Daodejing)* by Lao Tzu (Laozi) [老子] and translated by Lau (2001, first translated in 1963):

Who can be muddy and yet, settling, slowly become limpid?

Who can be at rest and yet, stirring, slowly come to life?

He who holds fast to this way

Desires not to be full.

It is because he is not full

That he can be worn and yet newly made.

孰能濁以<靜>〔止〕之徐清？

孰能安以<久>動之徐生？

保此道者不欲盈。

夫唯不盈，顧能蔽（敝）＜不＞〔而〕新成。

Shu neng zhuo yi <jing> (zhi) zhi xu qing?

Shu neng an yi <jiu> dong zhi xu sheng?

Bao ci dao zhe bu yu ying.

Fu wei bu ying, gu neng (bi) <bu> (er) xin cheng.

In his article *Visceral Manifestation: Chinese Philosophy and Western Phenomenology*, Jay Goulding (2003, p. 368) refers to commentaries on the same chapter by *The Xiang'er*, a classic of early Daoism written before 215 A.D., that focuses on 'clarity and stillness' and 'clarity and brightness', as follows:

While they are learning to be clear and still, their thoughts will temporarily be as if confused and muddy; but since they are confused and muddy, they have maintained simplicity and are about to reach their goal. Finally, in clarity and stillness, they will be able to observe all the subtleties. Since inside they will be clear and luminous, they will not wish to draw near the common. These essentials of clarity and stillness are the delight of the subtle of the Dao. (Stephen Bokenkamp, cited in Goulding, 2003, p. 99)

This is a pertinent expression of the conceptual journey of art making in this project where it departs from the confused and muddy state of mind into fusing the aesthetics and conceptual thinking of both cultures. It is through the practical making of art in parallel to the search for simplicity and subtlety in the art concept and aesthetics that leads to the clarity and stillness needed for the creative development of a new aesthetics. Laozi's ideas of 'muddy and yet slowly become limpid', 'rest and yet slowly become life' and 'worn and yet newly made' could be achieved through the search for simplicity and subtlety.

Creative Process

There are four key areas in this creative process:

1. The incorporation of Chinese classical philosophical and aesthetic ideas as a form of particular poetic immanence, with specific focus on Daoism, and its embodiment in contemporary art practice.
2. The empirical exploration of digital imaging technology and its influence on the creative process of art

practice. A specific focus is on the empirical practice of ink jet printing onto Chinese substrate, i.e. the printmaking process.

3. The realisation of Chinese classical ideas of poetics in, and through, the research processes of art practice.
4. The exploration of a new or unknown knowledge in the emergent digital art aesthetics.

Chang, when working on his 1963 book *Creativity and Taoism* (as cited in Goulding, 2003, p. 373), commented on the highest sense of the invisible, intangible and unknowable poetic feeling:

Whenever the Chinese poet has reached this tranquil depth he [sic] reflects his original simplicity or reveals his inexhaustible inner joy. Primordial innocence and luminous joy are two aspects of the one ontological experience.

He concurs with the Western philosopher Martin Heidegger (1977, p. 373) in his work *Remembrance of the Poet*:

The writing of poetry is not primarily a cause of joy to the poet, rather the writing of poetry is joy, is serenification, because it is in writing that the principle return home consists... To write poetry means to exist in that joy, which preserves in words the mystery of proximity to the Most Joyous.

Chang continued:

his [Heidegger's] reader will be carried directly to the depths of the mind of the poet through the rhythmic flux and share his serenification and joy. In Chinese tradition, this is a way to enter into the Tao (p. 273).

Both Chang's and Heidegger's parallel ideas suggest the joy of writing poetry is in the writing of the poem. Chang described this as the 'poetic feeling'. It is this poetic feeling that I am exploring in the art practice of *The Poetics of Making* and through the process of ink jet printmaking on Chinese substrate to enter into *The Dao*.

In this project, the substrate itself is the substance as the manifestation of the aesthetics of poetics (the exploration of the poetic feeling). Therefore, it is the self-realisation through the art practice that embodies the philosophical notions, conceptual ideas and aesthetics of classical poetry. The practical document *The Poetics of Making* is not a visual illustrative artwork of the poem; rather, it is the fusing of classical Chinese

poetic ideas (feeling) into contemporary creative art making that reflects the transformative showing in the here and now of myself as art practitioner.

In describing the creative approach in this practice-led research, I borrow the Daoist idea of Zhao Wu-ji¹⁷ concerning void and spirit: *I take up my brush and paint. I paint and paint, and a painting is born. Prior to that I have no concrete or predetermined plan* (Hsu, 1981, p. 22).

Digital Aesthetics

Aesthetics refers to a set of principles concerned with the nature and appreciation of beauty, especially in art (see Dickie, 1997). It is also considered as the branch of philosophy that deals with questions of beauty and artistic taste (Concise Oxford Dictionary: 1999). Throughout Western history, from Kant to post-structuralist thinkers, there have been many ways to consider the notion of aesthetics. From Chinese perspectives, the question of aesthetics in this project is considered through poetics – the philosophical aesthetics of classical poetry with major reference to the ethos of Tang Poetry. It embodies the notion of artistic experience and philosophical beliefs. Coupled with this, the impact of new technologies creates new forms of digital aesthetics. In this project, the combination of digital technologies and Chinese traditional substrates challenges new ideas of an aesthetic kind.

The key exploration of this research is based on the creative application of Western contemporary digital imaging and ink jet technology onto traditional Chinese art substrate. Personal discussions with both a traditional Chinese artist and a retired educator in Chinese arts, W. Y. Chan in Auckland (personal communication, Dec 2003) and the renowned pioneer in ink jet printmaking technology, Jon Cone in Vermont, USA (personal communication, April 2004) have revealed interesting insights from their perspectives.

Chan commented that Chinese art substrate is the worst substrate for ink jet digital printmaking when high fidelity of reproduction quality is expected. Chinese art substrate is famous for its archival preservative quality but is a most unmanageable and unpredictable material to work with. That is to say, it is very

difficult to control the outcome of artistic creation when applying Chinese ink. Yet, this is its uniqueness as a substrate that allows the artist to create and explore, as each individual brush stroke on individual substrates is different in certain moments. This is what intrigues and inspires artists during their creative art practice.

While attending a professional workshop in ink jet digital printmaking in Vermont, USA and through my contacts with the expert team chaired by Jon Cone, I considered how the professional philosophy of digital printmakers aims to utilise the benefits of technological advancement for achieving high reproduction quality. It is through the high quality physical and tangible forms that the virtual digital artwork is fully realised. The goal of Cone's team is to combine the technological advancement of software, hardware and the most appropriate substrates to produce the highest quality output digital prints. The team explores and selects the appropriate substrates for best outcomes, rather than adjusting the technology to facilitate the printing quality of the substrates. This provides a broad range of ink jet art substrates of professional standard that enrich the creative arena of art practice.

However, the crux of my project is to work on the unique particularity of the Chinese aesthetic which may at first seem at odds with Cone's aim. This brings to light and suggests a conflict with the traditional Western framework that establishes a fixed identity through technological excellence. The practices of aesthetics and making are quite different when Chinese and Western notions of selfhood are taken into consideration.¹⁸

From the perspectives of both traditional Chinese artists and contemporary professional digital ink jet printmakers, the combination of ink jet technology and Chinese substrate is not ideal for art practice either in the aesthetics or in reproduction quality. Thus, there is the sense that my practice is disjunctive rather than conjunctive. In its disjuncture, it is opening up a transgressive score, establishing new 'rules' for the 'game' (see Lyotard, 1986) of digital imaging. This becomes a transgressive practice. Therefore, the intermingling of imprecision (Xuan Zhi) and precision (ink jet printmaking technology) resonates with my disposition on the potential confluent aesthetics in digital arts.

This is where my project is situated. I do not intend to develop an art form or aesthetics which simulates

both traditional and contemporary art practice; rather, I am exploring the potential of the development of an 'unknown' new art aesthetics through cross-cultural transformative practice and knowledge-based analysis. Subsequently, this project will lead to the openness of discursive discussion between academic research and art practising. This will further the conceptual and practical development of an art form or aesthetics in the context of the contemporary digital art arena.¹⁹

Digital Ink Jet Printmaking Technology

Digital ink jet printmaking technology has advanced in the past decade. It is now a medium that is not only considered as a replacement for chemical darkrooms, but also by many photographers as an alternative for visual artists to produce their work. Artists can produce their works on various kinds of substrates or materials (e.g. paper, canvas, fabrics, metal, and plastic etc) through printing with pigment ink, so long as it can be fitted into the printer. The longevity of print life has been extended to as much as 100 years.

Following are several key issues that allow ink jet printmaking technology to take a predominant place in the art and design industry:

- archival quality (longevity of print life is important as many art galleries will not purchase non-archival prints for collection)
- superior quality of colour reproduction (vibrancy of colour enhances communication of images)
- stability and consistency of print reproduction (cost-effective because of the minimal wastage during production and reproduction), and
- endless choice of material or substrate (extends creativity and encourages inter-disciplinary practice).

There are many examples in contemporary ink jet printmaking and exhibition practice, both nationally and internationally. For instance, Auckland Museum presented a photographic exhibition of body art by international renowned body make-up artist 'Kiwi Jo', Joanne Gair (2001). Limited editions of ink jet prints of David Hockney's paintings are collected by museums worldwide. The majority of these works

were printed with digital ink jet technology. A growing number of international artists are working on limited edition ink jet prints for the final production of their work. Among them are Dorothy Simpson Krause, Helen Golden, David Hockney, Robert Rauschenberg and Sarah Lucas (also refer to the chapter on *Digital Art and Aesthetics*).

Relationship to Existing Knowledge

This proposed project aims to:

- employ cross-cultural concepts and practices in the analysis of contemporary creative thinking and practice
- employ Chinese philosophical ideas in the considerations of visual interpretations of contemporary art concepts and practices
- situate itself within the emerging practice and aesthetics of digital art
- extend the materiality of ink jet technology, and
- extend the creative application of Chinese art substrates.

Practice-led Research

This research has considered and made references to Gray's (1996) ideas on practice-led research. Gray is one of the academic researchers who engages in the development of practice-led research in art and design. She defines the concept of practice-led research within the context of formal research for higher degrees (M.Phil, and Ph.D) as:

firstly, research which is initiated in practice, where questions, problems, challenges are identified and formed by the needs of practice and practitioners; and secondly, that the research strategy is carried out through practice, using predominantly methodologies and specific methods familiar to us as practitioners in the visual arts. (Gray, 1996, p. 3)

Since the emergence of practice-led research in the seventies, practice-led researchers are still struggling in the higher academic degrees context.

Despite the CNAA's liberating policy, through the inclusion of artworks in clear relation to a written text, and the surge of interest in research in Art & Design, the development of true "practice-led" research strategies has been slower than might have been anticipated. Apart from the natural struggle to define and develop any new research approach..., the root of this probably lies in the tensions between professional and "academic" education and research... The discipline of Art & Design (in the UK at least) has always sat uneasily within the academic framework of higher education, and at the research level this is even more pronounced. We all must have struggled at some point in University Research Committees to promote and defend research projects in Art & Design to a perplexed audience of "classical" researchers. (ibid., p. 6)

The polarities between art practitioner and researcher have always been perplexing and the complex duality of practitioner as researcher affects individuals in the pursuit of clarity in the research project.

Struggle also exist at an individual level; if the practitioner is also the researcher, tensions arise in the apparent duality of the role – subjectivity versus objectivity, internal versus external, doing versus thinking, and writing, intuition versus logic. (ibid., p. 7)

This, however, also strengthens the motivation in resolving the ambiguous situation. The gradual emergence of practice-led research by its forerunners has contributed to the recognition of the specific nature and the applied methodologies of practice-led research.

However, I would like to believe that there are real intrinsic motives for practitioners to engage in disciplined inquiry – namely, that there is a real need for research to help resolve the problems and challenges of practice, and create an intellectual social dialogue. (ibid., p. 7)

Parts of the methodologies in this research (refer to methodology section) adapt Gray's idea of intellectual social dialogue amongst practitioners and academic researchers. It is important to clearly identify the framework, the position, and the applied methodologies.

I consider research for higher degrees to be the best mechanism to raise awareness of critical and contextual issues of practice, analyse, and interpret ideas, and develop new cultural strategies. The death of the critic has enabled a new role to emerge – the birth of practitioner-researcher in the visual arts. It remains to be seen whether the critic, curator, cultural administrator will create space to allow the practitioner-researcher to reposition herself. (ibid., p. 8)

In conclusion, she suggests that:

Through technology (in conjunction with our creativity) we are able to perceive new kinds of information: we can make the invisible perceptible and visible; we can manipulate and process large volumes of complex diverse data, and present information in relational, dynamic, and multimedia formats. Perhaps for the first time researchers have the methodological tools to make inquiry through practice in a way which acknowledges and encourage the richness and complexity of those practices. (ibid., p. 8)

It is critical in the design of methodology for this practice-led research to situate itself in the research context where I position my approach as constructivist in the creative and philosophical content, and positivist in the application of ink jet technology onto Chinese substrates. Gray further suggests that the emerging key characteristics and methodologies are as follows:

the positivist paradigm of inquiry is characterised by a realist ontology (reality exists “out there”), and an objectivist epistemology (the researcher is detached); methodology is therefore experimental and manipulative; in contrast, the constructivist paradigm is characterised by a relativist ontology (multiple realities exist as personal and social constructions) and the epistemology is subjectivist; methodologies are hermeneutic (interpretative) and dialectic. (ibid., pp. 12-13)

It is hybrid methodologies that form the basis of this project. These enable me to act with subjective reflexivity upon the objective empirical experiments and practice.

From these basic philosophical positions it is clear that researchers have been characteristically eclectic, diverse and creative in the methodologies they have adapted. When necessary, they have drawn on positivist experimental methodologies, constructivist interpretation and reflection, and invented hybrid methodologies involving a synthesis of many diverse research methods and techniques. So a characteristic of “artistic” methodology is a pluralist approach and use of a multi-methods and technique, tailored to the individual project. (p. 15)

The crux of my methodology is that I am adapting the Western universal ‘known’ as knowledge of ink jet technology to experiment on Chinese substrates (transcendence of universal ideas) in a positivist manner. I intend to develop an ‘unknown’ knowledge in a constructivist manner. According to Chinese classical thinking, I am referring to *nature* (as a positivist) and am constructing (as a constructivist) my selfhood

man as an individual particular and the subsequent poetic feeling to develop an imminent ‘unknown’ aesthetic through, and in, digital art practice.

In this project, I have made references to the framework of Pengelly’s practice-led Ph.D research which Gray discusses²⁰. The documentation²¹ serves as a bridging agent for the research and practice. The exegesis serves as a comprehensive commentary that places the creative document in the academic research context.

I also borrow Frayling’s (1996) idea:

where the end product is an artefact – where the thinking is, so to speak, embodied in the artefact, where the goal is not primarily communicable knowledge in the sense of verbal communication, but in the sense of visual or iconic or imagistic communication. (as cited in Newbury, 1996, p. 2)

The embodiment of conceptual thinking and ideas in the practical work *The Poetics of Making* is a key notion of this research project. In conclusion, Darren Newbury (1996) clearly identifies the potential but dubious situation of practice-led research:

The tendency towards self-reflexivity in contemporary culture, and the blurring of the boundaries between the theorist and the practitioner, the critic and artist/designer, provides a unique opportunity for developing a culture of research in art and design, and a genuinely critical and reflexive practice... (p.2). The institutionalisation of the division between reflection and action, theory and practice, has always been of dubious worth, and should be rejected in favour of a more interactive and interdisciplinary approach, which will be to the benefit of all. (p. 5)

His idea of an ‘interactive and interdisciplinary approach’ parallels my structuring of the project framework.

Structure of the Project

Empirical Research:

- Ink jet technology onto Chinese substrates [Xuan Zhi] (materials/technology)
- Visual aesthetics/forms (technology and creativity)
- Photographic and image editing practices (conceptual and creative actualisation and manifestation)

Contextual Research:

- Creativity and aesthetic theory
- Chinese philosophy
- Chinese poem – aesthetic, philosophical and historical context
- Classical and contemporary art practitioners' work
- Chinese substrate / paper as medium

Technological Research:

- Ink jet technology and substrates
- Digital photographic and imaging editing technologies

The Poetics of Making:

A creative document of digital ink jet prints on Xuan Zhi (Chinese classical art substrates) and a collection of documentation, accompanied by an exegesis that contextualises the research outcomes in digital art aesthetics

Research Area/Content:

Digital aesthetics in the specific area of still photographic imaging in the context of digital ink jet printmaking through the consideration of the application of classical Chinese art aesthetics and substrates

Research Proposition:

Practice:

The integration of ink jet technology and classical Chinese art substrates could potentially contribute to the newly developed digital art aesthetics

Theory:

The philosophical consideration of classical Chinese aesthetics could instill confluent cross-cultural concepts and theories in the global (Western) context of digital art aesthetics

Methods:

- Inquiry through creative practice, empirical testing and philosophical exploration of aesthetics in parallel to establish new aesthetic concepts
- Subjective and creative thinking, reflexive upon the research data and art making

New Knowledge:

- Re-interpretation by making sense of classic material
- Making new connections between ink jet technology and classical Chinese art substrates
- Re-contextualising by reviving classical philosophical aesthetic concepts to suggest new aesthetics in the newly developed digital art practice
- Extending existing research and application of ink jet technology to new territory

Dissemination of Knowledge:

Through exhibitions, academic conferences and global network etc

Remark: This structure makes reference to Gray (2004, p. 161).

Endnotes

12 Icon artwork refers to a specific artwork that is a unique representation of the genre of the medium. For example, Picasso's (1907) *Les Femmes d'Alger* (Olympia) (Cubism), Marcel Duchamp's (1917) *Fountain* (which defined the concept of "ready-made" or "found object") and Dorothea Lange's (1936) *Migrant Mother* (ditto, documentary photography). In photography, Koetzle (2002, p. 7), the editor of *Photo Icons* talks about icons as follows: *And every one of them [photographs] is a key image from the history of the medium: images that have pushed photography forward in terms of either its technology, aesthetics or social relevance. There is a tradition to viewing "icons" such as these by themselves, each on their own.*

13 Refer to *Creative Process* below and the chapter on *Chinese Philosophy and Aesthetics*.

14 The scholars from various countries agreed that human civilization in the 21st century will confront many important problems, its prospect will not be the "conflict of civilization" and the disaster caused by such conflict as some Western scholars have predicted, but rather a co-existence of various civilizations which is claimed by Chinese Philosophy as "harmony but no assimilation" and will accord to the aspiration of the peoples from all over the world. In the new century, Chinese philosophy should obtain much more esteem and therefore the equal communication, dialogues, and fusion between Chinese and Western Philosophical traditions may be expected to enter into a new great phase (Fang, *ibid.*, pp. 1-2).

15 'China-West' or 'Sino-Western' is considered by Lauren Pfister to mean the past developments in Chinese philosophical circles during the last century and seeking to project new and/or worthwhile issues to explore and extend in the upcoming years and decades... (Pfister: *ibid.*, p. 603). Refer to her article for detailed discussion.

16 Saurabh Sanatani (2003, p. 631) gives *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy's* concise definition of Taoism: Taoism is based on the work of Tao Te Ching, composed by the legendary figure of Lao-tzu thought to be a contemporary of Confucius. The book advocates a return to the natural simplicity and detachment from worldly pursuits. Conventional moral, political and social standards are discarded. The word Tao is used in a mystical sense, relating to the unity and inner harmony of all life. This unity is the contentment that a person achieves through the awareness of being a part of the underlying principle of the universe, the Tao, the inexpressible source of living. The nearest that Western philosophy approaches to this concept is in the Greek expression of the logos, the underlying principle in all things... Like teachings of Hinduism and Buddhism, Taoism also puts emphasis on intuitive knowledge rather than on reason. Taoism contains many excellent pieces of advice to attain peace in one's personal life. Taoists saw every change in nature a manifestation of the interaction of two opposite poles of Yin and Yang.

17 Zhao Wu-ji [趙無極] is an eminent contemporary Chinese artist who works and lives in France. The content of his Western painting is commented on by critics as being rooted in his Chinese philosophical thinking.

18 Refer to *Conceptual Context*.

19 Refer to the chapter on *Digital Art and Aesthetics*.

20 Jon Pengelly presents a selection of work from his recently completed practice-led Ph.D. research. The primary element is a series of large scale prints, which explore the creative possibilities of safe, environmentally sensitive and sustainable materials and processes. Although this artwork implicitly embodies and visualises the key concepts of the research, two other elements of the Ph.D submission ensure that the research is completely accessible and methodologically transparent. The first element

comprises two interactive electronic databases which support and generate environmentally sensitive solutions for the practicing printmaker. This has been devised in relation to Health & Safety legislative criteria and the personal health concerns and working experiences of the researcher. This "hazard" database is linked to another database of records of the prints in progress [sic] (visuals, evaluative texts and technical information), so that the results and analysis of safe selections of materials and techniques can be seen in relation to risk assessment and the completed artworks. The second element is an illustrated written text (not included in the show), which allows the researcher to critically situate his work within the professional context of Fine Art printmaking, and in relation to theoretical and methodological considerations. These three elements comprise the thesis in its true sense of the word as "argument", and as a whole clearly demonstrate a structured yet responsive inquiry, which has been initiated in practice and involving a process of critical reflection on and an externalisation of practice. The outcome for Jon (and other printmakers involved in various collaborations with him) has been a creative re-evaluation of practice and the development of a sustainable strategy for future printmaking practices (Gray, 1996, pp. 18-19).

21 In this project, the documentation is a collation of the ongoing exploration of applying ink jet technology onto Xuan Zhi.

Chinese Philosophy and Aesthetics

This chapter aims to establish the Chinese notions of transformative openness and explores its key essences in a contemporary context through:

- references to classic scholars with a main focus on the school of Daoism
- references to contemporary scholars to develop my contemporary stance of Chinese aesthetics
- investigating the Tang doctrine *The Twenty-Four Categories of Poetry* [Shi Pin] [詩品] to give an analysis of the overarching philosophy of classical Chinese aesthetic thought to contextualise my philosophical proposition in a contemporary context
- establishing the relationship of the notion of transformative openness with human participation in art practice and appreciation within the contemporary context of the virtual digital environment

Introduction

In the past century, the study of Chinese philosophy and aesthetics has been widely explored within the western framework by Western scholars. Within the Chinese framework, most of the eminent scholars who studied and researched in Western countries also adapted Western thinking to critically research and exemplify classical ideas for the development of contemporary Chinese philosophy (see, for examples, Wang Guo-wei [王國維], Hu Shi [胡適], Wen Yi-duo [聞一多], Zhu Guang-qian [朱光潛], Zong Bai-hua [宗白華], Liang Qi-chao [梁啟超], Qian Mu [錢穆], Qian Zhong-shu [錢鐘書] and Feng You-lan [馮友蘭]).

These contemporary scholars integrated the Western structure of philosophy into their research. Wang Guo-wei, whose ideas on classical poetry influenced contemporary study and research, applied the Western dialectics methodology in his analysis of classical poetry (Fo, 2000). At the beginning of this century, Fang Keli (2003) proposed the classical idea of ‘harmony but no assimilation’ [he er bu tong] [和而不同], which emphasises the co-existence of different cultures²². This paved the way to refine the direction of contemporary research in Chinese philosophy.

In this present research, I seek to explore classical Chinese philosophical and aesthetic ideas within the Chinese framework, while at the same time making reference to Western thinking. This is where the uniqueness is situated. The conceptual framework is based on the fusion of Chinese philosophical ideas in aesthetics and the Western approach in creative art practice. The practical framework is based upon the integration of Western technological advancement with traditional Chinese art materials.

Chinese Classical Aesthetic Thought

Daoism, Confucian and Buddhism have always been mainstream in Chinese philosophy and aesthetics. Daoism's idea of the historical unity of man and nature [tian ren he yi] (天人合一) has taken the central role in art and aesthetics. Laozi's *Daodejing*²³ is widely read in China as the classic work in the thought of Daoism. Lau (2001, first translated in 1963) suggested that:

The Lao Tzu [Laozi] has had an influence on Chinese thought through the ages out of all proportion to its length. It is often referred to as 'the book of five thousand characters', though, in fact, in most versions it is slightly longer than that. It is a short work even allowing for the particular style in which it was written is more often than not succinct to the point of obscurity. If the Lao Tzu is widely read in China as the classic in the thought of Taoism, it is no less well known to the West through a long line of translations. In English alone there are well over thirty translations. The Lao Tzu is, without a doubt, by far the most frequently translated work in Chinese, but unfortunately it cannot be said that it has been best served by its numerous translators, as the nature of the work attracted many whose enthusiasm for Eastern mysticism far outstripped their acquaintance with Chinese thought or even with the Chinese language.

The text of the Lao Tzu is divided in two books. This was done probably simply to conform to the statement in the biography of Lao Tzu that he wrote a work in two books at the request of the Keeper of the Pass. At any rate, the division into two books goes at least as far back as the first century A.D. We have reason to believe that the present division into eighty-one chapters – thirty-seven in Book I and forty-four in Book II – also goes back to that time. By the end of the second century A.D., the work was also known by the alternative title Tao te ching [also translated as Daodejing]. More specifically, Book I was known as the Tao ching, and Book II the Te ching. (p. ix, introduction)

In chapter 1 of *Daodejing*: *The way that can be spoken of is not the constant way; the name that can be named, is not the constant name. The nameless was the beginning of heaven and earth; the named was the mother of the myriad creatures* [Dao ke dao, fei chang dao; ming ke ming, fei chang ming. Wu ming, tian di zhi shi; you ming, wan wu zhi mu.] [道可道，非常道；名可名，非常名。無名，天地之始；有名，萬物之母。] (Lau, 2001, p. 2, translated,) has led the way to exploring the relationship between humans and nature. The key concept of 'the way' is that nature (the universe) is profound and mysterious. It is through exploration that humans are able to understand and gain knowledge about nature. And since nature is profound, our exploration (of knowledge) is never ending and ever changing. Therefore, the ethos of Daoism is about the process of exploration, not the outcome. In classical art theory and practice, *Daoists advocate the idea that the essence of the aesthetics of art does not rely on form and material, it is through the aesthetics of form and material that the artist could transform his ideas of 'the way'* (Xu, 2001, p. 25). In other words, the ultimate goal of art aesthetics is to explore the understanding of 'the way'. Thus, it is understandable that the major contents of classical art are closely related to expressing the individual concepts of nature (heaven and earth) and the myriad creatures (including humans). A contemporary scholar of Chinese philosophy, Wang Qingjie (2000), gives an inspiring perspective²⁴ of [heng dao] [恆道], stating that:

dao is neither absolute nothingness, nor the absolutely nameless, nor absolute non-action. It is merely not the thing, not the name, not the action, in other words, not the way... the philosophical understanding of dao as heng dao no longer appeals to metaphysics of Being or the mystic mind. It is rather [a] primordial expression that attempts to capture the natural and historical life experiences of the ordinary Chinese people. (p. 160)

His idea is pertinent in a cross-cultural contemporary context. Though I have described *dao* as profound and mysterious, I have been influenced by his idea of 'not the thing, not the name, not the action, not the way' in the conceptual development of my practice.

Lin (2001) also suggests the pursuit of simplicity, organicness, and austerity in the aesthetic realm of classical Chinese art which refers to Laozi's idea *The great note is rarefied in sound; the great image has no shape.* (*Daodejing*: chapter 41) [*da yin xi sheng, da xiang wu xing*] [大音希聲，大象無形] (道德經第四十一章) and *Great skill seems awkward* (*Daodejing*: chapter 45) [*da qiao ruo zuo*] [大巧若拙] (道德經第四十五章) (p. 262). In Chinese classical ink painting, the simplistic application of greyish (black & white) brush strokes with minimal use of colours has been influenced by the idea of *The five colours make man's eyes*

blind²⁵ (Daodejing: chapter 12) [wu se ling ren mu mang] [五色令人目盲] (道德 第十二章) (ibid., p. 262). It is only since the last century that artists have adapted Western aesthetics of colour in contemporary Chinese ink painting.

The concept of emptiness and fullness is another affinity to the Daoist idea of ‘nothingness’ [wu] [無] and ‘something’ [you] [有]. In chapter eleven of Laozi’s Daodejing:

The thirty spokes converge at one hub, But the utility of the cart is a function of the nothingness inside the hub.

We throw clay to shape a pot, But the utility of the clay pot is a function of the nothingness (wu) [無] inside it.

We bore out doors and windows to make a dwelling, But the utility of the dwelling is a function of the nothingness inside it.

Thus, it might be something (you) [有] that provides the value, But it is nothing that provides the utility.
(Ames & Hall 2000, translated, p. 91)

卅輻同一轂，當其無，有車之用也。

埴埴而為器，當其無，有埴器之用也。

鑿戶牖而為室，當其無，有室之用也。

故有之以為利，無之以為用。

Sa fu tong yi gu, dang qi wu, you che zhi yong ye.

Shan zhi er wei qi, dang qi wu, you zhi qi zhi yong ye.

Qing hu you er wei shi, dang qi qu, you shi zhi yong ye.

Gu you zhi yi wei li, wu zhi yi wei yong.

The Daoist ideas of *nothing – something*, *non-existence – existence* and *non-being – being* imply a clear concept that emptiness and fullness are associated with rather than contradicting each other²⁶. In Chinese classical art practice it is fullness that provides the visual value and form, and emptiness that provides the utility of concept, creativity and insight. In this sense, Chinese art practice is a philosophy in action²⁷.

In Chinese painting art, Ku K’au-Chih [Gu Kai-zhi] [顧愷之] in the 4th Century was arguably the first artist

(painter) who introduced the concept of spirit²⁸ in painting. Ku referred to the spirit as the capturing of the personality of the subject/sitter in portrait painting. Spirit is formless but resides in form. Hseih Ho²⁹ [Xie He] [謝赫] (6th Century) in his *The Six Laws* [Liu Fa Lun] [六法論] has discussed spirit in a broader context beyond the portrait, referring to the spirit of the painting. I would suggest that, in a contemporary context, spirit is something of an immanent essence of the artist. Through encountering the objective external scene which is fused with his subjective or sentimental internal feelings, this immanent essence transcends into the work. In this sense, I consider spirit as a universal immanent essence of the artist and his/ her work.

Qi has always been considered a dominant essence of classical Chinese literature. Ts'ao Pi [Cao Pi] [曹丕] (187-226 A.D.) suggests that *ch'i (qi) has its normative form (t'i) – clear and murky. It is not to be brought by force* (Owen, 1992, translated, p. 65).

Jing Hao [荊浩] (10th Century) in his *Notes on the Method for the Brush* (Bi Fa Ji) [筆法記], a treatise on Chinese classical painting, proposed that it is the vital energy Chi [qi] [氣] that gives 'authenticity' [zhen] [真] to the 'likeness' [si] [似] of form and shape of a painting. Lacking 'authenticity', the image dies.³⁰ Jing's idea of authenticity suggests a parallel expression of spirit.

A collection of collated opinions by West (2000, p. 207) has suggested that qi has the quality of 'life in motion', 'movement through spirit consonance', 'spirit resonance' and 'harmony of the spirit'. Through this research I establish the concept of qi³¹ in relation to emptiness and fullness. Qi is the key essence, 'something'³² (both quality and quantity) from within the artist (scholar) that vitalises his/ her spirit to achieve the state of emptiness. However, qi is not simply the motivating force, but something existing in a constant stage of flux³³ that externalises the spirit of the artist. Qi has the quality³⁴ of vitality, harmony and liveliness, and constantly triggers resonance in the artist who is encountering (experiencing) the external scene and is also unfurling such resonance into his/her artwork through practising. Qi can be nurtured through both theoretical and practical research, which implies that it is stored and depleted through the artist's practice.

Chinese classical poetry is unique and differs from the Western approach of creating an artistic transformative conception with the poem. For generations, it has been the visual conception that the poet

intended to archive. The Tang dynasty is considered as being the zenith in the history of Chinese poetry and it is estimated that some 50,000 poems have been handed down. Despite the concurrent influx of Buddhism in the early centuries and its propagation particularly in the sixth century, Daoism remains the key influence in the philosophical and aesthetic concept of poetry.

When referencing classical Chinese scholars, Hong Huang (1980)³⁵ suggests that *classical Chinese poetry is rich in visual imagery* (pp. 193-194). *It conveys multiple levels of meaning – it presents an elusive sense which contains meaning beyond words* (Ouyang Xiu) [歐陽修]; *it is ambiguous and in such a way that no sign of the intent is visible* (Wang Fuzhi) [王夫之]. Sikong Tu (837-908) describes this as *flavour beyond flavour, resonance beyond harmony and image beyond imagery*; and *not to be trammelled by words* (Yan Yu) [嚴羽]. It is *obscure, or misty* (Huang Hong) and as such *the ideal poetic conception is to be viewed from afar and not scrutinised* (Dai Shulun) [戴叔倫].

Huang's ideas in classical Chinese poetry serve to establish some rapport between China and the West in this project where it seems Western technology is totally at odds with Chinese substrates. Just as Huang references Ezra Pound *et al.* (1980), and *not fawning upon things foreign*, this project fits with the quotation in different ways and at fundamental cultural and philosophical levels.

In parallel, classical Chinese painters also focused on conceptual interpretation rather than form. Gu Kaizhi's [顧愷之] painting theory (345-406) of the spirit of portrait painting, Zong Bing's [宗炳] landscape theory (375-443) and the six painting methods [Liu Fa Hua Lun] [‘六法’畫論] by Xie He [謝赫] (479-502) had stemmed from the aesthetics of artistic conception. Their ideas mainly evolved through Daoist theory [de yi wang yan] ‘得意忘言’ of Zhuangzi [莊子] (369-286 B.C.), which literally means that as long as the conceptual meaning is articulated the text can be abandoned. Wang Bi [王弼] (226-249) extended his idea to [de yi wang xing] ‘得意忘形’ which means that as long as the conceptual meaning is articulated through the artwork, the visual form can be abandoned. In the contemporary sense, visual aesthetics are unimportant in Daoist theory; the artwork is a means to understand ‘the way’. In other words, the representation of artwork itself is not important; it is ‘the way’ beneath and beyond representation that is important. In classical Chinese thinking there is no binary of form and content, or of representation and the thing itself. There is only ‘the way’.

A Contemporary Stance of Chinese Classical Aesthetics

I embrace the contemporary aesthetic stance of both Gao Xingjian [高行健] (2002) and Li Zehou [李澤厚] (2005) in this research to shape and unify a theoretical consideration of digital art practice. Despite their different philosophical stances in art and aesthetics, they have commonality about the creative processes in Chinese art.

Li's idea of the *humanisation of nature* and *naturalisation of humans* (2005, p. 163) provides a contemporary position for the Chinese classical philosophy of the unification of man and nature achieving harmony. He has a focus on the concept of *psychological-emotional construction*³⁶ built up by humans in history (ibid., p. 165) and the *stratification of significance* and *life sedimentation* (p. 159). However, I refer to his concluding comments:

Let us return to persons, to individuality, to sensuousness, and to fortuity. Come back to everyday life! Throw away any shackles of metaphysical ideas and actively greet, constitute, and break up the sedimentations. Art is nothing but the psychological homologue to our sensuous existence; it lies in our daily experience, our psychological-emotional construction. We must incessantly vary and combine sensation, understanding, imagination, and emotion. If we develop these consistently, we will change art from an artistic product designed for only a few elites to an art that is a self-fulfilling expression of every individual. If this occurs, all persons will be able to realise their individual existence by themselves. Their inborn potentialities, talents and qualities of individuality will come into full play, simultaneously embracing and shattering the mental sedimentations to make room for newer processes. (ibid., p.167)

This has commonality with Gao's (2002, pp. 54-55) idea about returning to painting:

A return to painting is a return to real sensations felt by men and women. Only those things an individual feels are worthy of trust, even if they cannot be proven. Let the future bring what it will, what counts is this eternal moment that can change in the blink of an eye... A return to painting is not a return to tradition in order to resurrect the forms and tastes that were amply expressed by the ancients. It is rather a return to discover the remaining and far from exhausted possibilities and to unearth a personal means of expression... A return to painting is a search for new possibilities of expression in art, a search for the infinite within the finite limits of art... A return to painting makes art emerge from the shadow of historicism and dialectics, expresses the face art wore when time began, and allows the works to speak for themselves... A return to painting is

freeing oneself of verbiage, restoring the concept to language, painting where language fails. It is to begin painting where one has ceased to speak.

Gao, referring to his ink painting practice, speaks of art as to return to the present self, to real life, to individual sense and to unearth new personal expression.

Ultimately, art and artwork produced function as the expression of our individuality that transcends time and space with openness,³⁷ and their representation is temporal and transformative. Through the processes of art practice, the significance of life experience, of the here and now, is constantly revealed. Therefore, they externalise our internalised thoughts and experiences³⁸. The artwork as an agent in Chinese differs from the Western perspective in that artwork does not operate in an active role in the representation of concepts. Artwork in Chinese provides the *comprehensive openness*³⁹ of rational and emotional intercourse and interfusion between the cosmos (nature) and human life (Li, *ibid.*, p. 163) and thus its transformative representations are to be reviewed constantly.

Based on the *Twenty-four Categories of Poetry*⁴⁰ [Shi Pin] [詩品] by Sikong Tu (837-908) [司空圖], I explore and extract some key aesthetic essences of this classical Chinese doctrine to establish a contemporary view as an alternative philosophical way of thinking to contemporary digital art practice. I have no intention of critiquing this, but rather will yield to such thoughts so as to develop my own philosophical position⁴¹ within contemporary digital art practice.

Inevitably, meanings and ideas may be distorted⁴² during cross-cultural discourses. Tang (1999), when discussing Chinese and English language communication, also suggests that *For Daoist philosophers, evocation is achieved through using highly metaphorical and highly paradoxical expressions* (p. 9). This also reflects the Dao's transformative proposition and approaches of this treatise and the author Sikong's precise and yet contrasting subtlety in his postulation. However, it is interesting that I am yielding to the English interpretation by Owen in this treatise and feel comfortable to access it through another language. I would then suggest that the inaccessibility in another (Western) environment is a consequence of cultural and philosophical differences⁴³. Some elusive aesthetic modes in the treatise might be ineffable when communicated to the Chinese, yet there is 'something' that stirs my emotions. I would suggest it

is the subtle actualisation of the Chinese Yi-jing⁴⁴ concept in classical art and art practice that bridges my accessibility of being a Chinese when interpreting the doctrine in another (English) language. However, the challenge is the accessibility of my ideas in this exegesis through a global (English) language. Again, cultural difference plays a vital role that distances the communication. It is, then, my artwork in this practice-based project that will take a central role in communicating my individual thoughts in the here and now. Owen (1992, p. 302) has this summed up well:

yet if one juxtaposes the descriptive passages in the various categories [of The Twenty-four Categories of Poetry], one can indeed see subtle distinctions of quality that are both essential part of the experience of poetry and are exceedingly difficult to describe in any language, Chinese or English. The poems teach attention to such subtle differences, how the quality of one scene or tone of voice is unlike another. And it is precisely in that aspect, rather than in the ideology of elusiveness in its own right, that the work represents an important aspect of Chinese literary "thought".

Therefore, it will be the openness of my artwork and its precise, yet contrasting subtlety, that unfolds my transformative philosophical thought and aesthetics: the infinite beyond the finite.

Chan (1999) [Chen Guoqiu] [陳國球] describes⁴⁵:

...the Twenty-four Categories as a contemporary metapoem, referring to Gass's idea of metafiction. The unique essence of metafiction is the fusion of creativity and criticism. Metafiction is an annotation of the construction processes of the fiction and in itself a fiction. It reflects the writer's self-conscious experience about the structure of fiction that is presented through the creative production of a fiction. (p. 11 & 37)

This contemporary Western exemplification of Sikong's *Twenty-four Categories of Poetry* is not new. Throughout Chinese history, scholars categorised this doctrine as a criticism of the aesthetic modes of Tang poem in a poem format⁴⁶. The central idea in the research for referring to this treatise serves to explicitly reflect my position of this research project – it is a creative document as well as a philosophical visual discourse, or 'viscourse',⁴⁷ on classical Chinese aesthetics in the context of digital art. Through the discourse and viscourse, it provokes vigour in the yet immature digital art aesthetics and, in turn, encourages multi-disciplinary art practice to flourish through embracing a diversified range of cultural thoughts.

Overviewing Analysis

This chapter explores the essences of different modes of aesthetics of *The Twenty-Four Categories of Poetry* to give an overviewing analysis of the overarching philosophy of classical Chinese aesthetic thought.

The Chinese Worldview

Cheng (1986) suggests there are three sets ⁴⁸ of general concepts that are important in traditional Chinese cosmological thinking: emptiness-fullness [xu shi] [虛實], yin-yang [陰陽], and heaven-earth-man [tian di ren] [天地人]. He has given a simplified consolidation of the Daoist philosophical beliefs of these three pairing concepts ⁴⁹. And in turn, he has given an overview of the unification of human beings and nature, which is a natural phenomenon within the Chinese worldview. The vigour (qi) (mediating breath or mediating emptiness) is the motivating power that mediates yin and yang, and all things. Achieving emptiness is imperative for the unification of man and nature and it is done through the human spirit, feelings and desires to attain the state of emptiness (void). However, people also have to free themselves from their feelings and desires – state of nothingness, or no-self [wu wo] [無我]. Qi is vital as it mediates not only yin and yang, but in fact all things. Again, the prerequisite for human beings to attain the state of emptiness is the achieving of harmony between the yin and yang that govern and animate all things.

The criticism has twenty-four modes. Referencing the yin and yang concept, each mode yields to, or associates with, the substances of either the yin⁵⁰ or yang⁵¹. Though there are crossovers or interfusion amongst them, it is possible to distinguish them by the contents with which they are associated – nature (natural scene) with yang and human (constructed scene) with yin. Further to this is the 'paired complementary' quality. These paired complementary ⁵² modes are means to complement (or balance) each other through their contrasting qualities. Owen (1992, p. 314) has noted *the qualities of different modes are articulated by the recurrence of common elements in very different scenes to give clearer distinctions between the modes*. The common elements in the scenes and the scenes themselves are either associated with natural scene (yang) or human constructed scene (yin). In addition, the crossovers and recurrent discussions of the twenty-four modes of aesthetics reflects Sikong's aspiration to attain the unification of human and nature.

Sikong (837-908) saw the balancing of physicality (external) and spirituality (internal) as a key aesthetic process for setting free the self, directly or indirectly and of enforcing the unification of human and nature. This is a prerequisite internal state of individual self which transcends the mundane world. Holding back is a strategy (or design approach in a contemporary sense) commonly applied to provide a virtual space⁵³ for intellectual dialogues on the spiritual formless which is embedded in the physical form of the artwork (poem). This holding back strategy leads to the ambiguous, elusive and intricate qualities of Chinese aesthetics. However, these qualities are means only to establish the transformative openness for individuals to contemplate and, through self-cultivation⁵⁴, to attain self-enlightenment⁵⁵. Subsequently, the holding back strategy also effects to initiate appreciation during the process of dialectic discussions. Supplementary to the holding back strategy is the savouring⁵⁶ process. This process expels the potentiality of the implicit vigour of qi⁵⁷ of individual self, or it is otherwise withheld. This has contributed to a lingering quality⁵⁸ additionally found in Chinese aesthetics.

Transformative Openness

Other than Sikong's (837-908) recourse to natural and human-constructed scenes, many scenes of Daoist divinity exist. This seemingly mystic approach, which was commonly applied in Classical Chinese literature and art theory, has accentuated the inability of image and language to articulate concepts and ideas. In addition, the yielding to human-constructed mundanity to contextualise spiritual thoughts is another shortcoming. However, inevitably, this is a universal approach of human intervention⁵⁹. Though it seems odd, the constructed acts of intervention are means to set free the spirituality of the self from the mundane physicality. The Chinese emphasise transformative openness as the ultimate goal in art theory and practice. Tu (2004) suggests that: *The organismic process as a spontaneously self-generating life process exhibits three basic motifs: continuity, wholeness and dynamism. All modalities of being, from a rock to heaven, are integral parts of a continuum which is often referred to as the "great transformation" (ta-hua) [da hua] [大化]* (p. 30). The individual self must transcend through cultivation and enlightenment to achieve a spiritual state of mind that is set free from the restraint of the mundane physicality. Human constructed artwork is a means to provide artists with the experience of fullness through art practice to achieve a spiritual state of emptiness (void); and to initiate the beholder's intellectual engagement to appreciate, with the pre-

condition that the beholder also reaches the state of emptiness. Thus, spiritual dialogues are established between individual selves.

Sikong (837-908) also advocates unconscious, unreflective and spontaneous approaches in art practice. This has been detailed in the mode of The Natural [zi ran] [自然]. This spiritual approach of fortuity is at odds with the sophisticatedly planned holding back strategy. It is another unique example in Chinese aesthetics to interfuse the seemingly contradictory concepts in the processes of art making to attain a balanced wholeness.

The contents of The Natural [zi ran] [自然] are mainly composed of natural scenes (yang) and constructed scenes (ying) with the addition of some mystic scenes of divinity. The implications of these scenes are meticulously arranged in order so as to complement the chaotic design structure of this doctrine in which the philosophies, aesthetics, methods and approaches are interweaving, intertwining and intermingling in a seemingly disordered manner. This corresponds with his intention to give a philosophical criticism about the diverse modes of aesthetics of Tang poetry. Again, this is another approach that was commonly applied in classical Chinese literature⁶⁰ and art practice to attain openness. From a philosophical position, his criticism is also an act of human intervention in nature.

Many modes contribute to the discussion of the chaos and order quality of nature and human respectively. Again these stress that meticulously refined and sensible human thoughts are means to portray and reveal the organic, unpredictable, profound and bewildering essences of chaotic nature. To an extent, though, many modes are ambiguous⁶¹ and not thoroughly comprehensible, yet together they form a philosophical wholeness. The inability of human beings to fully articulate and communicate with each other has also led to the underpinning of transformative openness in Chinese aesthetics. Ambiguity is one of the key aesthetic essences used to achieve ultimate philosophical openness. And since it is ambiguous, it provides a temporal transformative reality that continues to be reviewed.

Virtual Space

Virtual space is spiritual space that enables the individual self to distance oneself from the daily mundane

world. It thus enables potentiality for achieving the state of emptiness. Motivated by the qi of the self, and through the experience of art practice, the individual self is able to reach a state of spiritual emptiness. Contemplation, cultivation and enlightenment are design approaches (or methods), and these are fortified by the holding back strategy. The virtual space⁶² has the qualities of remoteness, unconcern, simplicity, and blandness and is a space for creativity and intellectual dialogues. The savouring process is an agent to initiate and enforce the dialogues between the artist and beholder. However, the prerequisite is that the beholder must also set him-/herself free to reach a spiritual state of emptiness. It is the dialogues in this virtual space that transcend the complexity and restraints of the physicality (image, language etc) through the simplicity of spiritual association. This, in turn, enables and facilitates the spiritual communication between individual selves.

Contemporary scholar Chan (1999, pp. 16-21)⁶³ suggests Sikong has applied two major methods in the doctrine. Firstly, Sikong accentuates the narration (or intention) of the fictional concept image to enforce the reader (beholder) to contemplate, introspect and immerse in the aesthetic experience. Secondly, he further unfolded the concept image with minimum narration to enforce (compel) the reader (beholder) to experience, appreciate and actualise the aesthetics (thought). Chan, using Western terminology, suggests that aesthetic styling (modes of aesthetics) and Yi-jing are signifiers that constitute the signified aesthetic experience. Chan's application of the Western ideas of narration, fictional, signifier and signified used with an intention to make sense of Chinese aesthetics, is arguable. However, his central idea of contemplation, aesthetic experience, the participation of reader (beholder) and the actualisation process has parallels with classical Chinese thoughts and thus has rationalised some key design methods of this doctrine.

Yi-jing

Yi-jing [意境] is a classical Chinese aesthetic concept. It differs from Western life drawing which tends to communicate the concept through the realisation of visual form. Chinese artists usually express their artistic conception as embodying true emotions of internal sentiments. These emotions are sedimented through their subjective experience of the external scene. It is said that the ultimate goal of Chinese artists is to achieve a state of Yi-jing in their work. The significance is that everyone encounters and experiences the same scene (of nature) and internalises it differently. If the artist is able to reveal his internal world

fused with his subjective experience of nature and is able to evoke emotional resonance⁶⁴ in the beholders⁶⁵, it is considered that the artist's work has achieved a state of Yi-jing⁶⁶.

In a contemporary context, I consider that Yi-jing bridges⁶⁷ the conceptual emotional consensus between the creator and the beholder. It is different from, if not beyond, the Western idea of connotation. Through the artwork, if a viscourse is initiated in response to the objectivity (the actual scene that both the creator and beholder have experienced) and subjectivity (the individual's conceptual response to the scene and the artwork) between each other (creator and beholder), it could be considered that the artist has achieved a state of Yi-jing in his/her work. Therefore, a vital essence of achieving Yi-jing in an artwork is that the artist is able to reach a state of fusion between the external and internal world (exteriority and interiority), trigger the beholder's interiority (internalised experience of the external scene), and respond to the exteriority (both the artwork and the scene). When discussing Sikong's *The Twenty-four Categories of Poetry*, Xu (2001, p. 250) comments⁶⁸ that Sikong's idea of *image beyond image, scene beyond scene* is a classical Chinese idea of achieving harmony between subjectivity (concept) and objectivity (scene). This idea of the harmony between the self (artist) and his/her experience (scene) should extend to include the harmony between subjectivity (concept) of individual-selves — artist and beholders and their objectivity (experience). The harmony attained through the intriguing and ambiguous mutual intellectual activities between individual selves constitutes the Yi-jing of an artwork.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored the aesthetic thought of *The Twenty-four Categories of Poetry* and cross-referenced this with the school of Daoism. This enables the present project to develop a contemporary aesthetic stance within its major recourse to classical Chinese philosophies. Art in Chinese is about the process of exploration through art making, and not the outcome. The ultimate goal is to achieve harmony between human and nature and in the Daoist sense, achieving 'the way' which is considered impractical in a contemporary sense. However, art and art practice in Chinese are means for self-cultivation to contemplate our daily experience in order to establish our own individuality. Contemporaries Li Zehou (2005) and Gao Xingjian (2001) also advocate similar ideas of returning to the self and real life (experience).

Their ideas have affinity with classical Chinese classical thought. I extend the importance of the 'virtual space', a spiritual space for intellectual communication. This enforces knowledge making through dialectic discussions and in return motivates further retrospective self-cultivation. Virtual space constitutes the vitality of art and art practice. It is the qi of art practice in a classical sense.

Artwork functions to provide the physicality of virtual space, thus manifesting a temporal actualisation of transformative reality of an individual in the here and now. Transformation and openness are unique essences of the virtual space. Individuals contribute to transformation and, in turn, provide a temporal open-ended reality that initiates further transformative potentiality. Through this correlative process, new knowledge (including aesthetics) is likely to emerge. To be more precise, the artwork in itself does not constitute new knowledge; it provides a virtual space for potential new knowledge. Ultimately, the idea of virtual space on the one hand emphasises the strength and effectiveness of self-cultivation, and on the other hand supplements the weakness of disguising knowledge making in classical Chinese thinking.

Central to the cosmology of attaining unification of nature (the universe) and human beings, the Chinese have developed some complementary and balancing concepts such as ying and yang, fullness and emptiness (void), and chaos and order. In contrast with the Western antithesis, the paired conceptual counterparts complement each other to constantly locate a balance between them in order to achieve harmony. In a way, the temporal transformative reality of the here and now embodies a moment of harmony. This is significant in Sikong Tu's (837-908) doctrine that the twenty-four categories complement and supplement each other. I have suggested, in a contemporary context, that emphasis should be placed on achieving harmony between subjectivity (concept) and objectivity (experience) of individual selves. This constitutes the necessary vigour to attain new knowledge.

Sikong Tu was influenced by Daoism and his doctrine was finely constructed and strived to attain openness. Although it lacks the profundity (of openness) as compared to Laozi's *Daodejing* (c 500 B.C.), it actually is intended to be more accessible through his noteworthy recourse to human-constructed mundane scenes in addition to natural scenes (nature). This is a practical approach that is pertinent to Li's (2005) contemporary idea of humanisation of nature.

The doctrine on criticism of poetry, in itself, is a document of delicately constructed poems in meticulous order to rationalise the twenty-four modes of aesthetics of Tang poetry. Further engagement reveals the chaotic structure of the doctrine. However, it is such a structure that initiates the aesthetic processes, approaches and qualities of Chinese aesthetic thought. The aesthetic essences, including holding back, savouring, lingering, contemplation, self-cultivation, enlightenment, ambiguity, transformation and openness, are scattered throughout the doctrine — a spiritual chaos underpinning the physical order. This is a key Chinese philosophical approach that has been handed down since *The Book of Song* [*Shi Jing*] [詩經].

The doctrine challenges our inability to communicate philosophical thoughts and essences in today's delicately constructed contextualisation of knowledge making. A belief that was posited by Laozi (c 500 B.C.) in the first sentence of the seventy-two chapters' doctrine *Daodejing* [道德經]: *The way that can be spoken of, Is not the constant way* [*dao ke dao, fei chang dao*] [道可道, 非常道] (Translated, Lau, 2001). In a contemporary context, however, yielding to the constantly changing *Invariable Dao*, acknowledging the chaotic, temporal and transformative openness of knowledge, and locating the balance of harmony between individuals, new knowledge will be triggered through vigorous intellectual dialogues.

Endnotes

22 Refer to *Conceptual Context under Rationale and Significance of the Research Study*.

23 I annotate Lau's (2001, pp. ix-xxxix) introduction of *Daodejing* as follow: It is believed that Lao-tzu [Laozi] was a senior contemporary of Confucius (551-479 B.C) and was the historian in charge of the archives of the Chou Dynasty. It is not certain whether Lao-tzu was the author of the 'eighty-one chapters' *Daodejing* or whether he collated it. The philosophical concept of Dao has for centuries influenced Chinese thought and the *Daodejing* is well known to the West through translation. The nebulous meanings of the text and its tenuous structure is unique and in parallel to the concept of Dao.

24 He gives some insightful comments on a variety of perspectives about *Dao (the way)*. He comments that: *the second mystifies dao as the "dark" and "profound", the xuan dao [玄道], which is based on an absolute understanding of the Laozi's concept of wu [無] (nothingness). The mystification of dao exaggerates the inaccessibility of language in articulating dao... In the history of Chinese thought, this mystification and internalisation of dao has played a supplementary role to the "rationalisation" and "totalitarianisation" of dao leading to Confucian metaphysics, and they together have constituted the traditional and the orthodox dogma of dao in China (2000, pp. 157-158).*

25 It is often interpreted that Laozi disputed colours; however, I suggest rather that Laozi disputed excessive use of colours for 'blandness' aesthetics. Also refer to my later discussion on Chinese aesthetics.

26 When translating chapter 11 of *Daodejing*, Ames & Hall (2003, p. 91) comment that: *The classical Western notion of 'Being' used in a metaphysical sense is generally associated with ontological ground – the reality behind appearance – while 'Non-being' is its strict negation. The Chinese existential verb you (something) [有] overlaps with the sense of 'having' rather than the copular, and therefore means 'to be present' or 'to be around' Wu [無] then – here translated as 'nothing' – means 'to not be present' or 'to not be around.'* Wu does not indicate strict opposition or contradiction, but absence. Thus, the you-wu [有無] distinction suggests mere contrast in the sense of the presence or absence of X rather than an assertion about the existence or non-existence of X. You [有] and wu [無] are not ontological categories with all of the philosophical implications that would entail, but are rather, the interdependent explanatory categories of 'something' and 'nothing' of presence and absence. Cheng (1994) also suggests that: *In the Chinese perspective, emptiness is not, as one might suppose, something vague or nonexistent. It is dynamic and active. Linked with the idea of vital breaths and with the principle of the alternation of yin and yang, it is the pre-eminent site of transformation, the place where fullness can attain its whole measure... (p. 36) and Indeed, it is emptiness that enables all things that are full to attain their complete fullness. Thus, Lao-tzu (chapter 15, *Daodejing*) could say, 'the great fullness is as though empty; thus it is inexhaustible' (ibid., p. 46).*

27 Cheng suggests that *emptiness makes possible the process of interiorisation and transformation through which each thing actualises its sameness and otherness and, in so doing, attains totality. In this sense, Chinese painting is a philosophy in action (ibid., p. 38).*

28 In a Western context, *the concept of spirit from the German philosopher Hegel (1807) has dominated Western thinking on aesthetics and metaphysics throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. In terms of the human being, the 'spirit' is something that moves from inside to outside, from the internal state of being to the external forms of the world. Thinking on the 'spirit' tends to immediately default to these Western frameworks (Jackson, 2005). Hegel talks about the spirit manifesting in form via a*

hierarchy of three aspects: Art, Religion & Philosophy, a working through of the spirit to a perfect ideal endpoint. This is not the Chinese way of 'spirit' in focus. But the Western thinking and writing about 'spirit' inevitably defaults to this Hegelian way (Grierson, 2005). In this project, the idea of spirit refers only to the Chinese philosophic thought. Ku K'ai-chih [Gu Kai-zhi] [顧愷之] applied the ideas of 'spirit vitality' (shen-ch'i) [Shen Qi] [神氣] 'to transmit the spirit', 'breath of life' or 'vitality energy', to describe the spirit through form' (sheng-ch'i) [Sheng Qi] [生氣] to apply specifically to the theory of portrait painting (Bush & Shih, 1985, p.14). Contemporary scholars have noted that spirit has been the ineffable essence that is central to art practice throughout Chinese history. Cheng (p. 101) suggests that *Spirit: Shen* [神] (soul, spirit, divine essence) as the artistic creation that is not a mere matter of expressing a complete relationship between man and the universe. The human genius, through its action within the process of the Tao, provides the mysterious becoming that incarnates the shen [spirit] [神]. Stephen West (2000), when translating Bi Fa Ji, [筆法記], suggests that *Spirit* is the ineffable, demonic power of a good work of art, that element that we recognise but cannot describe that sets art apart from craft... (p. 206). Bush (ibid., p.10) refers to Tsung Ping [Zong Bing] [宗炳] and suggests: *Spirit (shen)* [神] is formless but resides in form, and its organising principle (li) participates in all matter and substance, and their reflections. Bush's idea of li [禮] is based upon the Confucian framework that structures the Chinese moral system. In this project, I yield to the Daoist philosophy as the theoretical framework. The common consensus here is that spirit is formless and resides in the form.

The following is a chronological collation of some comments about the concept of spirit (ibid., pp.10-16).

Chang Yen-yuan (ninth century):

'spirit resonance' (for painter, as an image of external reality, 'spirit resonance' is to 'formal likeness' or simulation of forms, hsing-ssu [xing shi] [形似])

'harmony of the spirit' or vital harmony (chi-yün) [qi yun] [氣韻]

(Chi-yün [Qi yun] [氣韻] or shen-yün [Shen yun] [神韻] are terms to express the energies in the 'vital movement' of demons and divinities, as well as human beings.)

Kuo Jo-hsu (1080):

'spirit consonance' (translated by Alexander Soper to reflect the painter's character)

Ching Hao (tenth century):

'Spirit' & 'resonance' become separate concepts.

'Thought' and 'scene' replace compositional placement and formal likeness.

Tosa Mitsuoki (1617-1691):

'spirit's circulation — life's motion'

James Cahill (1961):

'Engender [a sense of] movement [through] spirit consonance'

29 Sze (1959, p. 37) suggests that *The First Canon [Law] of painting, ch'i yun sheng tung* [qi yun sheng dong] [氣韻生動], is a terse statement of the idea that ch'i (the Breath of Heaven, the Spirit) stirs all of nature to life and sustains the eternal processes of movement and change; and that if a work has ch'i it inevitably reflects a vitality of spirit that is the essence of life itself. Man's spiritual resources are regarded as a direct manifestation of this creative power of Heaven. Through developing them, a painter not only nourishes that part of Heaven in himself but, possessing it, is capable of revealing it in his conduct and activity. In his painting, he can draw on these spiritual resources to express the same force in every other natural thing that he depicts; for the subjects of his compositions have always been predominantly from nature.

30 Likeness gets the shape, but drops out the vital energy. Authenticity [zhen] [真] is when vital energy and essence are both abundant [meaning plentiful]. As a general rule, if vital energy is passed only through external pattern and is dropped out of the image, then image dies (West, translated, 2000, p. 204).

West (ibid., p. 204) interprets this as: Image (*xiang*) [象] is constructed to be the total perceivable representation of a thing; it is composed of external pattern (*hua*) [華] or shape (*xing*) [形], vital energy (*qi* or *ch'i*) [氣], and the physical essence of an object (*zhi*) [質]. Authenticity is a product of both essence and vital energy, which are internal.

31 Ames and Hall (2003) suggest that *qi* has to be distinguished from either 'animating vapors' or 'basic matter' because it cannot be resolved into any kind of spiritual-material dichotomy. *Qi* is both the animating energy and that which is animated. There are no 'things' to be animated; there is only the vital energizing field and its focal manifestations. The energy of transformation resides within the world itself, and it is expressed in what Zhuangzi calls the perpetual 'transforming of things and events (*wu hua*) [物化].' It is this understanding of a focus-field process of cosmic change that is implicitly assumed in Daodejing and other texts of this period as a kind of common sense (ibid., p. 63).

In Chinese painting, Cheng (1994) talks about *qi* (vital breaths) as follows: In Chinese cosmology, the created universe arises from the primordial breath and the vital breaths that derive from it. This is why it is important in art as in life to re-create these breaths. 'Bring to life the harmonic breaths' was a canon formulated by Hsieh Ho [Xie He] [謝赫] at the beginning of the sixth century that became the golden rule of Chinese painting (p.100).

32 Owen discusses *qi* in Chinese classical literature as follows: Traditional Chinese thought tended to place value on terms that unified the abstract and the physical, or mental processes and physiological processes. Indo-European conceptual vocabulary grows from the 'death' of metaphors (and the atemporality of abstractions is closely related to the atemporality of death). In the Chinese tradition, too, terms from the sensuous surrendering their 'root' reference to the sensuous. *Ch'i* is grounded in physiological 'breath' and physical 'air' but it carries a weight that goes far beyond the apparently physical. *Ch'i* comes from 'within' the writer, carried to the 'outside' in the breath used in recitation (where it may become the 'wind' (*feng*) [風] that 'influences' the listener). The *ch'i* in a person has both quantity and quality. It is not a natural endowment like *ts'ai*, 'talent' [才] though a capacity for some quantity of *ch'i* may be innate. *Ch'i* cannot be learned or forced; it can, however, be 'nurtured', (*yang*) [養], stored up and depleted in use. Finally, *ch'i* is itself a 'something' and not simply the energy impelling or infusing a something (Owen, 1992, pp. 65-67).

33 Discussing *qi*, West comments that Chinese aesthetic and philosophical concepts are related – the world is conceived of as an evolving organism – and share the sense of a dynamic process of evolving of being in a constant state of motion or flux (ibid., p. 207).

34 Hsieh Ho [Xie He] [謝赫] (6th Century) in his work *The Six Laws* (*liu-fa*) [六法] placed *qi* as the key essence of the first law [*qi yun sheng dong*] [氣韻生動] of classical painting. In *The Six Laws* (*liu-fa*), *qi* as discussed in the first principle of this classical Chinese painting theory has shed light on the contemporary studies and applications of the classical philosophical aesthetics.

Acker (1954) and Fong (1966) have given some thought to the quality of *qi*. William Acker (1954, cited in Bush & Shih, 1985 p.11) says: the first law is taken to describe the vital energy of the painter lingering in a vibrant state to produce the effect of life in a painting. Wen Fong (1966, cited in Bush and Shih, 1985, p.12) describes *qi* as follows: Vitality, Harmonious Manner and Aliveness and *Yün* [*yun*] [韻] is a harmonious expression.

35 Huang (1980, pp. 193-194) summed up the essence of classical Chinese poetry as follows: We should revive the rich visual-imagist tradition of Chinese poetry [classical], what Hulme called a "visual, concrete language", and oppose external logic and syntax as the sole source of poetic creation. The American imagist poet Ezra Pound wrote: "It is

... because certain Chinese poets have been content to set forth their matter without moralising and without comment that one labours to make a translation." This is not worshipping and fawning upon things foreign. Ouyang Xiu [歐陽修] said long ago, "the poet's task is to present an elusive scene so that it seems to appear before the (reader's) very eyes, and to contain therein the endless meaning beyond words"; or, as Wang Fuzhi [王夫之] put it, "true profundity is attained when the poet implants feeling in the scene, in such a way that no sign of the intent is visible".

We should revive the many levels of meaning, the ambiguity that is part of the tradition of the Chinese classical poetic language. This is a quality that has been singled out for comment by many Western sinologists. And yet this is not worshipping and fawning upon things foreign either. Sikong Tu [司空圖], after all, sought the "flavour beyond flavour" [wei wai zhi wei] [味外之味], the "resonance beyond harmony" [yun wai zhi zhi] [韻外之致], the "image beyond imagery" [xiang wai zhi xiang] [象外之象], the "meaning beyond words" [yan wai zhi yi] [言外之意]. Yan Yu urged "the use of living language" (xu can huo ju) [須參活句], advised the poet "not to be trammelled by words" [bu luo yan quan] [不落言筌].

We must revive the suggestive quality traditionally associated with Chinese poetic conception. This may coincide with contemporary Western poetics. But it is certainly not worshipping and fawning upon things foreign. The Tang poet Dai Shulun [戴叔倫] said of the ideal poetic conception: "It is like Lantian in the warmth of the sun, the aura of fine jade wavering in the heat, to be viewed from afar, not scrutinised." And Sikong Tu: "to describe it from a distance is to be there; to approach it is to negate it." Wang Shizhen [王士禎] borrowed the terminology of art-criticism in his description of poetic imagery: "In the distance, the mountains have no folds, the water no ripples, the faces no eyes." Are we to criticise these ideas as too "obscure", or "misty" [meng long] [朦朧]?

We must revive the four-dimensional perspective of the Chinese poetic tradition. We must apply the artistic technique of multiple development of ideas. This is not a poetic extension of Picasso's aesthetics; to understand it, just read the magnificent poetry of the Tang dynasty!

36 Li (2005) has embraced Western philosopher Immanuel Kant in shaping his own aesthetic stance. Jane Cauvel (1999) comments: Many Western thinkers have acknowledged the transformative power of art... Kant's approach was different, and it was his approach that Li finds most fruitful. For Kant, the function of art is not to serve any social or moral purpose, nor does it teach us anything about the external world; rather its value is intrinsic. I call the experience of art as described by Kant transformative, because it activates uniquely human faculties and a special kind of pleasure that only human beings can experience. In doing so, it brings out important aspects of what it means to be human (p. 151).

37 Li (2005) suggests: Therefore, great artworks possess qualities of historicity and openness; they continually renew themselves and reveal new significances in different epochs and to different readers. Artistic significance integrates historicity and openness, the character of which emerges in the incessant creation and enrichment of a person's psychological-emotional constitution, which is neither subjective nor merely experiential; rather, it possesses the ontological nature of the entire life and history of human beings (p. 162).

38 Dale (2004) also addresses the human experience as the core essence of Chinese art and aesthetics. In his introduction to *Chinese aesthetics and literature: a reader*, he comments: ...Chinese aesthetics, in the fundamental sense of artistic values or preferences, are based on philosophically informed understandings of human experience as part of the dynamic world's natural and harmonious balance. Daoist, Buddhist, and Confucian teachings promote this persistently open worldview; revolutionary thought in modern China has interpreted and critiqued these teachings (pp. ix-x).

39 Li (2005) calls it *comprehensive abstraction*, however, I prefer not to use the term 'abstraction' as it usually relates

to the genre and quality of Western abstract art. The key idea is that expressive aesthetics are a consequence of the humanisation of nature and ultimately constitute the comprehensive 'openness' of rational and emotional intercourse and interfusion between the cosmos and human life. Also refer to Dale (2004): *The traditional Chinese apprehension of art does not valorize difference, conflict, and alienation, although contemporary Chinese culture does reflect these modern Western values. The inherent moral optimism of the traditional Chinese worldview precludes tragedy in the Western sense; it minimizes the importance of individual development, inner experience, and free will, all of which are highly valued in Western art. Instead, Chinese art traditionally presents the long view of human experience as revealing a continuously unfolding and harmonious order* (pp. ix-x).

40 Sikong Tu was a Tang Dynasty poet. His *The twenty-four categories of poetry* is a treatise of criticism on the various modes of aesthetics of Tang poetry with an elusive and yet precise approach in presenting the subtle difference between these various modes. Owen (1992, p. 299) describes it as *a hazy imprecision as its highest value, and it was precisely to this genuinely "impressionistic" mode that Ss-K'ung Tu [Sikong Tu] was attracted to... and Elusiveness is more than a value for Ssu-K'ung Tu [Sikong Tu]; it is an obsession...together constituting a complete range of modal variation... whose inclination is to blur all distinctions.*

41 As mentioned earlier, I do not have an academic background in classical Chinese literature. I yield to both Western and Chinese contemporary scholars to apprehend classical Chinese philosophical thought and aesthetics. It is important to note that my critical and analytical discourses on Chinese literature serve to contextualise the philosophical and aesthetic position of this practice-led research project.

42 Owen (1992, p. 302) comments: *When one reads these poems in Chinese, they make perfectly good sense in their own way; but when one tries to translate them, that good sense falls to pieces.*

43 Also see Dale's (2004) opinion on the different worldview between West and East in Ames' (2004) *Language and interpretive contexts: Ames explains the fundamental difference between Western and Chinese worldviews as the contrast between dualistic and correlative thinking. The Western dualistic worldview distinguishes a primal, permanent, and perfect universal order that transcends the transient material world. The Chinese philosophical tradition, in contrast, embraces a dynamic, spontaneous world in which order is immanent and revealed in correlative and complementary relationships – yin and yang. Yet embedded in the English language is an Anglo-Saxon vocabulary that expresses a pre-Platonic, pre-Christian philosophical tradition. Translators are able to minimize the dualistic worldview that is inherent in the English language by invoking the Anglo-Saxon underpinnings of English culture – its oral tradition and correlative philosophy* (p. 15).

44 Refer to later discussion on Yi-jing in this chapter.

45 The English text is my personal translation from the Chinese original.

46 Li (2000, p.229): *The Twenty-four Categories of Poetry is written in the format of poets to associate the readers with poetic thoughts and be enlightened about the diverse modes of aesthetics* (The English text is my personal translation from the Chinese original).

47 Viscourse is a contemporary word for visual discourse.

48 Cheng refers to both chapter 42 of Laozi's *Daodejing* and Si-ma Guang's *Tao-te-lun shu-yao* [Sima Guang De Dao De Lun Su Yao] [司馬光的道德論述要].

49 He says: To simplify this greatly: the Primordial Way (Tao) is conceived as Supreme Emptiness; from this emanates the One, which is nothing less than the primal Breath (yuan-ch'i) [yuan qi] [元氣]. This in turn engenders Two, embodied in the two vital Breaths, Yin and Yang. By their interaction, Yin and Yang govern and animate the ten thousand beings. But between the Two and the ten thousand beings we always find the Three. According to the Taoist tradition, the Three represents the combination of the vital Breaths, Yin and Yang, and the ch'ung-ch'i [chong qi] [沖氣] the "mediating Breath" or "mediating Emptiness". This "mediating Emptiness", which comes from Supreme Emptiness, whence it derives all its power, is necessary to the functioning of the Yin-Yang pairing. It is this which draws and wins over the two vital Breaths in the reciprocal process of Becoming; without it, Yin and Yang would remain formless substances. This tripartite relation gives birth to and serves as the model for the ten thousand beings. This mediating Emptiness, which resides in the Yin-Ying pairing, resides equally in the heart of all things: as it breathes the Breaths and life into all things, it maintains them in relation to Supreme Emptiness, thereby permitting them access to Becoming, to transformation, and to unity...Related to the concept of Three and the position of Man is another idea fundamental to Chinese cosmology: the San-ts'ai [san cai] [三才], the Three Entities of Heaven, Earth, and Man. This idea essentially came from the Confucian tradition...It should be noted that this concept and the Taoist idea of Three (Emptiness-Yin-Yang) are intimately related. Heaven represents Yang and Earth Yin. As to Man, he possesses inner spirit, the virtues of Heaven and Earth and embraces in his heart the quality of Emptiness. Here Man is raised to an exceptional dignity, for he participates as a third member in the creative process of the Cosmos. In no way is his role a passive one: if Heaven and Earth are endowed with intentionality, with a will, Man – through his spirit (hsin) [xin] [心], his feelings (ch'ing) [qing] [情] and his desires (yu) [yu] [欲] or (yi) [yi] [意] – makes his contribution to the process of Becoming, which never ceases to move toward Divine Essence (shen) [shen] [神], for which Supreme Emptiness is the guarantor or trustee. Emptiness-Fullness, Yin-Yang and Heaven-Earth-Man thus constitute the three relational and hierarchical axes around which Chinese cosmology is organised (pp. 33-36).

50 Among them, Firm and Self-Possessed [chen zhuo] [沉著], Decorous and Dignified [dian ya] [典雅], Washed and Refined [xi lian] [洗煉], Intricate Beauty [qi li] [綺麗], Delicate-Fresh and Rich-Lush [xian nong] [纖穠], Reserve / Accumulation Within [han xu] [含蓄], Close-woven and Dense [zhen mi] [縝密], Lucid and Wondrous [qing qi] [清奇], Solid World [shi jing] [實境], Description [xing rong] [形容], Expansive Contentment [kuang da] [曠達] and Melancholy and Depression [bei kai] [悲慨] yield to Ying.

51 Among them, Potent and Undifferentiated [xiong hun] [雄渾], Limpid and Calm [chong dan] [沖澹], Strong and Sturdy [jing jian] [勁健], The Natural [zi ran] [自然], Lofty and Ancient [gao gu] [高古], Swaggering Abandon [hao fang] [豪放], Essence and Spirit [jing shen] [精神], Disengagement and Rusticity [shu ye] [疏野], Twisting and Turning [wei qu] [委曲], Transcendence [chao yi] [超詣], Drifting Aloof [piao yi] [飄逸] and Flowing Movement [liu dong] [流動] yield to Yang.

52 Examples are Swaggering Abandon [hao fang] [豪放] with Reserve / Accumulation Within [han xu] [含蓄], The Natural [zi ran] [自然] with Intricate Beauty [qi li] [綺麗], Disengagement and Rusticity [shu ye] [疏野] with Close-woven and Dense [zhen mi] [縝密], Potent and Undifferentiated [xiong hun] [雄渾] with Firm and Self-Possessed [chen zhuo] [沉著], Lofty and Ancient [gao gu] [高古] with Decorous and Dignified [dian ya] [典雅], Limpid and Calm [chong dan] [沖澹] with Delicate-Fresh and Rich-Lush [xian nong] [纖穠].

53 Cross reference discussion on *virtual space* in the following paragraph.

54 As an example, Expansive Contentment [kuang da] [曠達] is a mode that describes the cultivated self. Through the direct description of both natural and 'constructed' scenes fused with the performed self, it echoes the intellectual quality of self that is set free.

55 Self-enlightenment could be considered as the actualisation of creativity in art practice. It has the qualities of suddenness, unexpectedness, originality and limpidity. The mode Lucid and Wondrous [qing qi] [清奇] is a pertinent example to describe the state of actualising creativity. This mode manifests many physical scenes in relation to limpidity and wondrousness. Though Lucid and Wondrous [qing qi] [清奇] is a complementary aesthetic to Washed and Refined [xi lian] [洗煉], it differs from the other two categories of Limpid and Calm [chong dan] [沖澹] and Washed and Refined [xi lian] [洗煉], it addresses the sparkling quality of freshness (ching) [qing] [清]. It has a comparatively radiant and yet bland quality. Wondrous has qualities of suddenness and unexpectedness. Owen (1992) suggests that *Sekong mitigated the luminosity [radiance] by the limpidity [bland] quality of ching [qing] [清]* (p. 339).

56 The savouring process makes sense through the mode of Reserve / accumulation [han xu] [含蓄]. It is an ultimate expression of the implicit feeling. Owen (1992, p. 328) summarises others' opinions in saying that *it is a strong feeling that is effectively conveyed precisely by being withheld and that conveying is a process*. However, the challenge of this mode is how to withhold and yet able to convey. The idea of savouring makes sense when we refer to the Yi-jing concept that the audience is being engaged with the withheld. It is one of the most sophisticated modes in Chinese aesthetics that within the implicit quality of [han xu] [含蓄], there is the quality of intrigue and vigour to expel, or otherwise, it is forever withheld. It is another example of complexity being apprehended through simplicity. Also refer to footnote 58 on externalisation of self.

57 The mode Essence and Spirit [jing shen] [精神] has the affinity quality of qi. It is the internal quality of humans and is associated with, and influenced by, the exteriority of nature. It is obscure in a spiritual sense. In a contemporary context, it is the motivation behind individuality and could be expelled through qi and qi nurturing. Owen (1992) describes Essence and Spirit [jing shen] [精神] as *the animating essence that gives vitality to things...[it] suggests the way in which that centre of vitality extends and unfolds* (p. 334). Essence and Spirit [jing shen] [精神] is not directly associated with the physical quality. It is a spiritual quality of cultivated-self expressed through physicality.

To attain unification of humans and nature, the internal qi must be associated with the external qi of nature – Potent and Undifferentiated [xiong hun] [雄渾], which is a philosophical response to nature, with an emphasis on the belief that the constantly existing vigour (qi) is a consequence of the chaos and order of nature.

58 When translating the tenth century Jing Hao's *Bi Fa Ji*, [筆法記] a treatise of the methods of Chinese painting, West (1985) suggests: *"resonance" in poetic terminology often means a kind of lingering sensation or flavor that stays with the reader [beholder] as a kind of aesthetic recall* (p. 205). He refers to *Bi Fa Ji* to associate vital energy (qi) with resonance and suggests a relationship between them as a sense of immediate power (qi) within the painting itself and an affective power (resonance) that lingers after the act of perception.

Jullien (2004), when discussing the Chinese aesthetics of 'lingering tone' and 'lingering taste', says: *the least fully rendered sounds are the most promising, in that they have not been fully expressed, externalized, by the instrument in question, whether zither string or voice. And it is thus that they manage to sustain (as formulated in this lovely expression) a "lingering" or a "leftover" tone [yuyin] [餘音]. Such sounds are all the more able to extend and deepen themselves in the minds of their hearers for having not been definitively realized; as so they retain something more for later deployment and keep something secret and virtual within. In short, they remain heavy with promise... The same holds true for the experience of taste. The most solemn ritual sacrifice (such as offerings to the royal ancestors) is reduced to the greatest simplicity: the fish is not cooked, the great broth is not seasoned. Such simplicity is, in and of itself, a sign of solemnity; in addition, it is the least pronounced flavor, the least seasoned dish, that possesses the highest degree of potential flavor. Exactly like the leftover tone, the "lingering" or "leftover flavor" (yuwei) [餘味] evokes a potential, inexhaustible value, ever more desirable as it continues to avert its own*

consumption (p. 67).

59 The mode Decorous and Dignified [dian ya] [典雅] epitomises the concept of human intervention. The aesthetics is closer to the mundane life; the internalisation of daily experience culminates in a sense of human intervention. It is constructed with a feeling of non-constructedness. It is our response to the man-made material world. Again, the approach of constructed and yet non-constructedness is a constituent of the aesthetics of transformation and openness.

60 In their philosophical translation of *Daodejing*, Ames and Hall (2000) also address the *Daodejing's* non-linear and non-consequential mode of presentation : *Little wonder that the text can initially give its readers the appearance of being fragmentary, disconnected, and occasionally, even of being corrupt. It should not be surprising, then especially to the modern Western reader who might be used to a more linear and sequential mode of presentation, that the Daodejing seems to be something less than a coherent whole. But first impressions in this instance are belied as the architecture of the text emerges from different directions* (p. 7).

61 In a broader contemporary global context, it is often mistaken that the ambiguous essence lies in the narration of the artwork (such as the episodes of a story) and in some situations it is. However, the ambiguity is generated at a conceptual level (internal) and is not necessarily imbued in the physicality (external) of the visual form of the artwork. Therefore, any highly narrative approach in art practising and the artwork produced does not contradict the ambiguous quality at a conceptual level.

62 The fifth mode Lofty and Ancient [gao gu] [高古] is momentous to my idea of a virtual space. It gives a philosophical overview to the sense of aloofness that detaches one from the mundanity of life; remote and unconcerned in character. It yields to the spiritual simplicity of the void. A mode that is associated to the formless, freely (unbounded) philosophical space; yet is unable to be articulated without reference to human mundanity.

63 The English text is my personal translation from the Chinese original.

64 French photographer Marc Ribond, one of the very first photographers who photographed China after 1957, quotes the painter-poet Wang Wei of the Tang dynasty on the 'interior resonance' of the beholder. Though his main area is in documentary, he visited Huang Shan many times and produced a book about Huang Shan. He is one of the very few photographers whom I believe is able to capture and portray the spirit of the Chinese from a Western perspective. I would quote Ribond's passion (1990) for Huang Shan: *Why does this mountain, more than any other, attract so many men and women of all ages and from every province? Chinese man, who in the city and even in the country gives in to the pressure of the anonymous masses, finds in himself, when he stands before these mists and peaks, a new individuality. Here, as nowhere else in China, I have met individuals, not a collectivity. If down through the ages this place has inspired pictorial and poetic creativity, it is not only because the mist refines and shapes the splendors of the landscape, but also because the man who allows himself to be enveloped and captivated by the mist is plunged into a harmony and mystery that the painter-poet Wang Wei of the Tang dynasty called 'interior resonance.' Standing atop of the Capital of Heaven, lashed by the wind, face-to-face with the most beautiful landscape in the world, who has not experienced this strange resonance and the irrepressible urge to intone a song in praise of the mists?* (p. 139)

65 The participation of the beholder as a counterpart that constitutes Yi-Jing has also been discussed by Chan (1999, annotated and translated from Chinese). He says: *many scholars have suggested that The Twenty-four Categories of Poetry is a criticism on styling [feng ge] [風格] and Yi-Jing. Styling is the artist's subjective approach in structuring the artwork.*

However, without the conscious participation of the beholder, the aesthetics function of the artwork will not be actualised (or concretised). The effective actualisation of aesthetics by the beholder constitutes Yi-jing (p. 4).

66 Fong quotes Yu-kung Kao (1991) as follows: *In poetry criticism, The eighth-century poet Wang Changling [王昌齡] describes the conception of the poetic world as passing through three successive stages: “objective description” (wu jing) [物景], which deals with the external world, “affective state” (qing jing) [情景], which is concerned with emotion, and “ideational state” (yi jing) [意境], which describes an aesthetic idea (p. 25).*

67 Gao’s idea, that state of mind [Yi-jing] *is inside the painting; it also emanates from it*, also suggests that Yi-jing functions to communicate (p. 50).

68 The English text is my personal translation from the Chinese original.

Digital Art and Aesthetics

This chapter explores digital aesthetics through Chinese philosophical thinking established in the previous chapter to foster an augmented and expanded potentiality in the field of digital aesthetics. The main discussions focus on:

- Investigating of contemporary knowledge making and digital technology to locate new aesthetics and creativity
- Establishing my own views on the media in contemporary digital environment
- Associating and rationalising Chinese aesthetic ideas with digital art aesthetics.

Introduction

Digital art and aesthetics started to emerge in the mid-1980s with the democratisation of digital imaging technology. Though digital art includes a broader area of art practice through the application of digital technology such as video (moving image), 3-dimensional imaging, and still imaging, this research focuses on digital still imaging and ink jet printmaking technology in the emerging digital art and aesthetics. From its infancy, artists were restricted in the physical output of the artwork both in terms of reproduction and archival quality. The majority of artworks produced were only viewed on the computer monitor or TV screen in virtual status. Contemporary conceptual artists might not necessarily require a high quality physical print output as the process of art making is central to the art activity. However, in the area of digital still imaging, fulfilling the commercial demand for curators and art collectors is a crucial factor. The pursuit of producing museum archival prints has been a critical goal of artists such as Maggie Taylor (2003, plate 1) and Dorothy Simpson Krause (2004) who have been exploring these possibilities as early as the late Eighties. Though the technology of converting digital files to photographic chemical printing was successful, the investment was tremendous for individuals and the process was monopolised by photographic printing laboratories. Moreover, artists were not satisfied with the limited choice of chemical photographic printing substrates.

The emergence of digital ink jet technology⁶⁹ for the commercial market was a turning point. Mega-

corporations such as Epson, Canon and Hewlett Packard launched the technology for commercial use in the eighties. It was intended for producing one-off prints with outstanding colour reproduction, however, it was vulnerable to fading. Concurrently, traditional printmakers such as Jon Cone, Graham Nash and R. Mac Holbert started to investigate the potential of producing museum archival digital prints with Scitex Iris ink jet printers. Their explorations were significant in two respects; first, they addressed the demand from artists to obtain an archival physicality of their digital works and, as such, motivated the democratisation of digital outputs. Secondly, they extended the plasticity of creative manifestation through the inclusion of a diverse range of materials in art practice and opened new horizons in the pursuit of digital art aesthetics. Their ground-breaking research and experimentation were also noticed by commercial manufacturers and the consumable value of ink jet technology has dramatically increased by multi-billions of dollars over the past several years. Ink and paper were the most profitable consumables. Not surprisingly, paper manufacturers such as Hahnemuhle and Legion saw the commercial potential and started to produce ink jet printing paper to ensure a dominant market share. What is intriguing about ink jet technology is the capability to print on any substrate. This opens up to endless possibilities for artists. In Jarvis's (2004, p.

10) *Toward a Digital Aesthetic:*

Pop Art enlivened the printmaking business and since printing is one of the only two ways in which digital art is visualized; two-dimensional digital art is essentially a printmaker art. Prints are the chief means by which the digital artist can materialize imagery into a physical commodity and, in turn, access their most viable market. Richly colored, long lasting, affordably priced, digital art prints stand poised to, once again, enrich and enliven a print market.

In summary, the potential of ink jet printmaking technology is enormous both in terms of art and the commercial market.

This project exploring ink jet technology with Chinese substrates aims to extend the creative horizon of digital art practice and aesthetics. It is predicted⁷⁰ that digital ink jet technology will continue to flourish and become a dominant medium for the production of digital artwork. It is interesting to note the influence of art and art practitioners in promoting the commercial value of this technology. Take Epson as an example; this company has been portrayed as the principal pioneer in the development of ink jet technology and its contribution to digital art. It has done this by strategically marketing artists' work printed with its

consumables. However, the ultimate goal of Epson counts on the commercial potential of a much broader range of consumers and not merely the artists themselves. The potential of ink jet technology is also reflected in the increasing number of digital ink jet printmakers in the United States and Europe, as well as the acceptance of ink jet prints by museums and art collectors. This is also supported by the success of archival expert Henry Wilhelm⁷¹ who has set forth a systematic standard in assessing the longevity of ink jet prints.

The interweaving of digital still image editing technology⁷² with ink jet technology is intriguing to artists who work with mixed media. It has allowed some artists to establish a prominent status in the recent short history of digital art. The evolving hybrid nature⁷³ of practice and aesthetics is fundamental in the development of digital aesthetics.

These new art making tools [digital technologies] have revolutionized commercial art, photography, television, music and film and, as such, the term digital art is spread so thinly across so many artistic endeavors to be, as an art movement, virtually transparent. (Jarvis, 2004, p. 2)

However, I suggest that it includes any art making practices across all areas such as sculpture and installation. Jarvis also explores the possible aesthetic of digital art through perceptual, representational, political and cultural aspects of art making.

An aesthetic is not as much about the appearance of the artwork as it is the complex networks of perceptual, presentational and even political rules that determine the strength and relevance of an artistic statement. In this regard, an aesthetic acts as the filter or context through which specific work is seen to be necessary in its making and through its practice should offer a means by which we expand our perception of what art can be. (2004, p. 3)

In a globalised, omnipresent technological environment, political and cultural aspects could be dominating influences on the development of an ideology of digital aesthetics.

With respect to the originality of digital art:

While there is no common look to the art being made, every digital artist has to share two basic modes of display. That is, work can be expressed on a monitor or as digital print. Since the original work occurs and

resides in the digital matrix of computer memory and storage systems, this original is essentially immaterial and virtually non-existent until expressed in either of these two forms. Due to its infinitely reproducible binary nature and the fact that some form of reproduction or expression is required to materialize the original into any visible form, digital art is simultaneously an original and a reproduction. (Jarvis, 2004, p. 6)

I argue that the organic nature of a work of digital art in computer binary code means it is not an original. It is merely a composition of a limited number of binary codes. It has to be materialised either by displaying it on a monitor or as a print in tangible visible form. I consider the materialised visible form as the 'reproducible original' which has a similar nature to a negative or positive in photography. And does the original in digital art matter? From the Daoists' perspective, the computer code as an organism of myriad creatures belongs to the profound mystic universe. The materialised art form of computer codes by humans is a temporal part of the process of art making as a means to understand 'the way'⁷⁴ and intellectual thought between selves.

Though the majority of discussion about digital aesthetics centres around *the fluidity of wizardry of image manipulation for surreal, grotesques, hyper-real, tabloid approaches* (as Jarvis⁷⁵ [2004, p. 7-10] has also discussed), less has been said about the augmented and expanded potentials or abilities to foster the higher level of sophistication that digital imaging technology is able to offer in traditional art making. Possibly this area of research and practice has been undermined by the aspiration of contemporary artists to produce alternative new aesthetics. As an art teacher and researcher, I advocate the exploration of such possibilities in digital aesthetics.

Knowledge and Technology: The Problem of Knowledge in a Digital Environment

In 2006, there was an advertisement on the local television marketing Auckland University of Technology, with a quotation from an AUT graduate that *The more we know, the more we don't know*. Confucius (c 500 B.C.) said: *It is through learning that we realise our lack of knowledge* [xue er hou zhi bu zu] [學而後知不足] (chapter 18, *Classic of Rites* [Li Ji] [禮記]) and [xue er bu ji, you kong shi zhi] [學而不及，猶恐失之。] (chapter 8, passage

17, *Analects* [Lun Yu] [論語]). The profundity of knowledge making has always been acknowledged, and continues to be so with the current advocacy of life-long learning.

However, Laozi's (c 500 B.C.) concept that knowledge is driven by our desire to know more has become a controversial position in a contemporary context. Laozi advocated discarding knowledge⁷⁶ through banishing wisdom (*chi*) [zhi] [智], human-heartedness (*yan*) [ren] [仁] and skill (*hau*) [qiao] [巧] to achieve Unadornment (*sue*) [su] [素] and Unwrought Simplicity (*pok*) [pu] [樸]; thus discard the excessive (*sum*) [shen] [甚], the extravagant (*chai*) [she] [奢] and the extreme (*tai*) [tai] [泰] (Fung, 1983, pp. 187-189).

It is common for Chinese philosophers, or sages, to deliver their concepts through written passages and to tackle ideas from a diverse range of perspectives with different levels of engagement and learning. Individuals are enlightened progressively through ongoing critical engagements with these passages. The drawback of this approach is the lack of a systematic strategy in the delivery of the different levels and depth of knowledge. The knowledge delivered may be ambiguous. However, this correlates with Laozi's notion of contentment. As an example, Laozi's idea of *innocent of knowledge and free from desire* [*wu zhi wu yu*] [無知無欲] (chapter 3, *Daodejing*, 500 B.C., Lau, translated, 2001) might be interpreted as a total negation of his unfathomable depth of knowledge of the Daoist doctrine *Daodejing*. However, further investigation into other passages reveals that he only negated the excessiveness of knowledge and desire (see *Daodejing* chapter 46: *he who knows the contentment that comes simply through content, will always be content*⁷⁷ [*gu zhi zu zhi zu, chang zu yi*] [故知足之足，常足矣]. And also in *Daodejing* chapter 64: *to desire what is undesired, to study what is unstudied*⁷⁸ [*yu bu yu, xue bu xue*] [欲不欲，學不學]).

I agree with Laozi's (c 500 B.C.) idea that nowadays there is an excessive supply of 'new knowledge'. However, until we internalise and filter such new knowledge, it is but new information only. Consuming 'knowledge' is simply related to our desire. To limit our desire of knowledge is to be selective in what we want to acquire. To be selective we must be analytical and not simply consume. Selective knowledge making is a process of self-cultivation through limiting our desire. To be selective, our mind is *enlightened* (*ming*) [明], *quiescent* (*ching*) [jing] [靜] and *liberal* [*rong*] [容]. These are the essences of the state of being *void* (*hsu*) [xu] [虛]; and thus *achieving Dao* (*de dao*) [得道].

Laozi (c 500 B.C.) also advocated the idea that *great knowledge is like ignorance* [da zhi ruo yu] [大智若愚] (chapter 45, *Daodejing*). This suggests knowledge making as a conscious process of cultivation of ignorance. This state of ignorance differs from primeval ignorance; it is a state of *enlightened ignorance* through the internalisation of knowledge. However, his idea of ruling a nation by leaving people content in their *primeval state of ignorance*⁷⁹ has for centuries discouraged the Chinese from pursuing a system of knowledge making, especially in science. This obsolete concept is a weakness in his school of principles. The ruling by a sage, a person of great knowledge or wisdom, of the primeval ignorant nation is impractical in a contemporary sense.

Laozi's insight of a person of 'great knowledge' being as though ignorant has been consistent with his philosophy of locating a harmonious balance between two extremes. A person of great knowledge is one who is enlightened through conscious cultivation and who is able to find a balance between primeval ignorance and enlightened ignorance. Often, in the processes of knowledge making, the ultimate goal is to balance the odds at a certain moment, in a specific environment, for a definite purpose and, as such, the two extremes are constantly changing to complement each other. Again this correlates with his idea of *the way that can be spoken of is not the constant way*⁸⁰ (chapter 1, *Daodejing*, Lau, 2001, p. 3, translated)

In today's technologically driven, globalised environment with a seemingly excessive supply of knowledge, we find ourselves struggling to catch up with the pace of new knowledge. We remain in the state of primeval ignorance until we have internalised the selected knowledge. This selective process of specific knowledge choosing, and internalising it, involves our intellect. To stay ignorant of unwanted knowledge requires great wisdom. I advocate a philosophical approach of 'in classical, for contemporary' [wang gu xun jin] [往古尋今] to facilitate the selective process. This means to yield to the 'constant' (classical) knowledge (gu) [古] that is handed down to the contemporary. Such an approach is not just adapting and applying the constant knowledge to the variability of the contemporary (jin) [今]; the constant knowledge that continues to exist should be valued for its potential to inspire present thoughts in knowledge making. Zhu (2006, p. 69) comments⁸¹:

The Chinese philosophical and aesthetic concepts of 'constant is new' [yi gu wei xin] [以故為新] is an approach that has recourse to the actualisation of mental discoveries. There is no absolute constant, or absolute new. It is the realisation of new through revealing the constant; new in the mental experience of the self and not in the

new variable of the external phenomena. New is the mental discovery of life experience.

The potentiality of constant knowledge provides an infrastructure for contemporary knowledge making, and again, my concept of ‘in classical, for contemporary’ also aims to locate the balance between the constant (classical) and the variable (contemporary). In the category of Delicate-Fresh and Rich-Lush (Hsien-nung) [Chinese term] of the Twenty-Four Categories of Poetry: *The more you go forward along with it. The more you understand it truly. If you hold to it without ceasing, You join with the old and produce the new* [Cheng zhi yu wang. Shi zhi yu zhen. Ru jiang bu jin. Yu gu wei xin.] [乘之愈往。識之愈真。如將不盡。與古為新。] (Owen, translated, pp. 308-309). Another Chinese philosophical idea of ‘continuity and mutation’ [tong bian] [通變] in Liu Hsieh’s (465-522) [劉勰] classical treatise in literature *Wen-hsin tiao-lung* [Wen Xin Diao Long] [文心雕龍] also advocates the complementing function of constant (continuity) [通] and new (mutation) [bian] [變]. Therefore, referencing constant knowledge is a strategy or design approach that will efficiently facilitate the pursuit of contemporary knowledge making in order to achieve enlightened ignorance.

Locating ‘New’ Aesthetics

Where exactly does this thesis intend to locate ‘new’ aesthetics? Contemporary Western concepts⁸² suggest that socioeconomic and political circumstances are key constituents contributing to new aesthetics. Analysing the visual physicality of genres is an effective approach, or method, in redefining new aesthetics in the here and now. To an extent, it is also applicable to the development of classical Chinese aesthetics. However, this thesis locates the new aesthetics in ways that introduce a new philosophical thinking which approximates contemporary digital aesthetics. This ‘new’ is the revitalisation of the constant (gu) [古] to *find bridges between artists and cultural legacies in order to secure their own paths* (Gao, *ibid*, p. 47). To revitalise the constant is to instil new concepts in the constant and to keep the constant always new. This new is also a re-location of the constant to a new context - from Chinese art to digital art. This new is a ‘constantly new constant’ in a new context.

Locating Creativity and Innovation

Inevitably, new aesthetics relate to creativity and insight. The concept of creativity and innovation has been extensively discussed in the context of art and design theory and practice, with innovation being a contemporary term associated with technology. And yet defining creativity is problematic. The quantitative comparison of creativity in music between Western and Chinese by Hieronymus (1999) is an example that has already disregarded the cultural differences⁸³ in philosophical ideas about creativity. Vaske (2002) suggests that non-conformity and originality are two fundamental qualities of creativity.⁸⁴ However, he stresses that Mayer (1995) says it is crucial to locate the aspect or perspective of the property of creativity (or innovation) which is undertaken.

This present research positions creativity by re-locating it in culturally specific classical Chinese aesthetic thought. It crosses the cultural and media boundaries to instil it in the context of digital art. Furthermore, it takes a non-self-centred perspective where creativity lies in the collaboration between individual selves and at the same time challenges the dominating emphasis of innovation in physicality (visual quality) of digital still imaging and ink jet printmaking technology. Such perspectives correspond to the creative processes set out for this project.⁸⁵

My Photography Stance: The Making of Taking

In this practice-led research, photography is the key medium of creativity. There are two main approaches: namely photo taking and photo making. Photo taking tends to take a more objective role by allowing the natural phenomena to unfold and the work is seen as a representation of the act of internalisation. Photo making unfolds the internal emotions of the artist. The work, therefore, could be a representation of the act of externalisation.

However, there is crossover between the approaches of photo taking and photo making. The phenomenon of crossover could be explained through Li's (2005, p. 163) concept of the *naturalisation of humans* and the *humanisation of nature*. The moment of photo taking is a process of active observing (of nature), and is an objective response to nature. However, it also involves the subjective intervention of the photographer

during the decisive moment of taking. On the other hand, photo making is a process which actively actualises the culminated subjectivity of the photographer. In turn, the culminated subjectivity is also influenced by the photographer's accumulated objectivity. The fusion of subjectivity and objectivity is a primal essence in any art form. In my practice, photo taking or making, it is always a discourse of openness with nature in the here and now, and it is always transformative. The artwork produced is a carrier of my subjectivity (human) in response to my objectivity (nature). It is through the artwork that human beings share the experiences that Li (ibid.) considers as the life sedimentation.

Gao's (2001, p. 40) comment, that photography is only able to select, paraphrase, and is free only within the limits of nature and unable to re-create nature, is arguable. However, this is an argument extended from the scientific reproductive quality of this medium that is underpinned in human consciousness. The current technological transformation of photography into digital form has presented the potentiality to liberate such constraints and provides fertile ground for a dynamic and continuous transformation in creativity and physicality. My works preserve the 'reality' ethos and reproductive quality of photography; yet the technological digital capabilities allow me to constantly reconstruct a temporal physicality to manifest my poetic feeling of a transient moment. For me, photography is a medium to experience the poetics of 'the Making of Taking'.

My Chinese Worldview of Virtual Reality

Virtual reality was a term coined by Jaron Lanier in the mid-1980s to describe the conceptual state of the diverse range of digital art practice with computer technology. Virtual worlds⁸⁶ could be regarded as simulated reality. A contemporary Western philosopher, Levy (2002), has also offered insights about virtual reality of the digital environment. His key proposition⁸⁷ is that *virtuality is actuality*, and *virtual can be compared to a problem and actual to a solution and actualisation in this sense is an act of creation* (p. 8). He further suggests that the artwork (of any nature, digital or analogue) possesses both *aspects of possibility* (such as simply being an object of commercial value) and *virtuality* (p. 10). It is the aspect of artwork as a *virtual object* (virtuality) that enables the *actualisation of* (such as to transmit a historical or cultural event) the 'reality' (p. 10). In a way, Levy rationalises the virtual reality of the digital environment with a traditional notion of

art (artwork) functioning as a bearer of ideas or concepts. He, therefore, suggests the term *virtualisation and actualisation art* rather than *digital art* and concludes that *virtuality is not an imaginary or false world, virtuality is the very dynamic of our common real world. Virtuality is not the kingdom of lies but the very dimension through which truth and lie can exist* (p. 16). And he posits an idea that contemporary artistic research is probably the discovery and the exploration of *the new kinds of truth brought about by the dynamics of virtualisation* (p. 16).

Virtual reality in the Chinese worldview is defined by the complementary paired concept of virtuality and reality. Virtuality is represented by combining two characters [xu] 虛 (void) and [ni] 擬 (imitation, or simulation). Void is in a state of *subconscious and imitation is an act of consciousness*.⁸⁸ Reality is represented by combining two characters, namely, [zhen] 真 (real) and [shi] 實 (solid or firm and fixed).

Virtuality may be interpreted as being in a state of irrational, subconscious perception (void) and yet rational and conscious conception (imitation). Reality is the human consensus of certain ideas, rituals and protocols at a certain moment. In this sense, the complementing pair of virtual realities is an intervening human act to consolidate the conception of certain reality through an interfusion with certain subconscious perceptions of natural phenomena and human consensus of ideas, rituals and protocols at certain moments to represent a phenomenon.⁸⁹ It has the quality of human intervention (order) of the void of nature (chaos) which attain an agreeable consensus (temporal order). It is transformative (chaos) and yet real (order). It is subconscious, irrational (chaos) and yet conscious and rational (order). Virtuality initiates the association of natural phenomena to construct, or imitate, agreeable reality. Thus, this constitutes harmony between man (intervention) and nature, to 'achieve Dao'.

Virtual Space in a Digital Environment

Levy's (2002) notions of virtual reality focus on the qualities of virtuality but rarely respond to the qualities of reality. In a way, reality has the correlate quality of realisation and actualisation, and his idea only extends to the dissemination of knowledge. My earlier proposition about virtual reality as a complementary pair enables a dialogue to be established. Through the dialogue between virtuality and reality, knowledge is not only disseminated but also interrogated. Levy's idea of artwork as a virtual object which makes sense

of the virtual nature of digital art corresponds to my idea of a virtual space in art practice⁹⁰ existing as an intellectual space for dialectic communication. Qualities of imperceptibility, untraceability, fluidity, mutability, and plasticity provide fertility to the dynamic and broadness of the virtual space in such an environment. These qualities constitute the vigour of qi which motivates artists to explore and contribute to the yet-to-be-defined digital aesthetics. Gemeinboeck (2004) suggests the idea of virtual reality as *a space of negotiation that enables a self to produce performative realities in which the boundaries between the Self and the allegedly Other are of a liquid nature* (p. 52). She also posits the idea that virtual reality technology is a *'thinking apparatus' that not only allows but also provokes to explore the transformation of the real, the body and the Self through the concept of virtual* (p. 52). This is also an egocentric self-centred space. However, her virtual reality as a thinking apparatus parallels with my idea of virtual space as a space for intellectual communication between selves. In my position, this virtual space is an interactive space expanded from self to individuals at a spiritual level. To a certain extent, the current scepticism about digital art as an art form has been partly caused by the inability of a broader audience, the beholders, to reach the spiritual state of the virtual space to communicate with the artist (or vice versa).

Technology, Intervention and Daoism

This project, which is technological in nature, is framed within the Chinese worldview with Daoism as the core philosophical reference. At a literal level, it is in opposition to the Daoist resistance to craft and technology. Daoists advocate a return to natural simplicity and detachment from worldly pursuits. This ideological thought is considered utopian and is generally irrelevant in a Western contemporary context. According to Li (ibid., p. 163), the advancement of craft and technology is a natural development of *humanisation of nature*. He (1998) also comments⁹¹ that *the overly emphasised transcendence of reality and recalling to the vague Daoism of Chinese art has resulted in its current stagnant and stationary status, distancing from human daily life* (p. 164). However, further investigation reveals that Daoism only opposes excessive voraciousness in craft and technology. Laozi (c 500 B.C., *Daodejing*, chapter 11) discusses the utilities of cart, pot and dwelling and suggests that it is the space inside these man-made appliances [*sic*] which provides utilities.⁹² The physicality of the appliances is brought to light by craft, and technology provides the space of spirituality. Zhuangzi (c 300 B.C.), a follower of Laozi, held a more steadfast position of detaching from

the daily mundane through distancing himself from craft and technology. Yet he celebrated the death of his wife through drumming, which is an act of art practice with craft and technology of using the musical instruments. Fong (2001) quotes Xu Beihong on the Chinese artistic expression of *spirit-resonance* [*shen yun*] [神韻]⁹³ and also suggests that it is the ingenuity of technique craft and technology that transforms, or resonates with, the spirit in the physical form, or likeness. Therefore, it is the technology (and craft) in art practice that provides the utility to reveal concept, creativity and insight. Again, Ho's suggestion to review the application of Daoism in contemporary art practice with craft and technology, is pertinent. Ho (ibid.) suggests:

Staying away from the civilised material world is utopia; unable to survive as technology has overpowering nature and is disconnected from daily experience and familiarity. Art in this sense will only imitate the affected past and lack of contemporary essence. (p. 57)

The practising of technology is an act of artistic intervention through thoroughly conversant skill to achieve a spiritual state and to express this through artwork. The creation of artwork is simply a process of human endeavour contingent upon the abilities to exercise, but without excessive reliance upon, technology (and craft) to express and share spiritual experience and the potential knowledge with the other selves.

Transformative Quality of Digital Imaging Technology

The highly organic form of digital technology is composed of '1 & 0' binary code. This simple mathematically ordered system is able to transform through multiple, unrestrained and limitless chaotic combinations to assume a perceivable identity of its own. Even further, this perceivable identity continues to mutate and transform without a foreseeable fixed destination. The process of mutation is imperceptible and untraceable. In the Daoist worldview, this '1 & 0' binary code⁹⁴ of fluid transformative quality is one of the myriad organic substances that constitutes the vigorous chaotic nature (the universe). The always perceivable and yet transforming identity is contingent upon the capability of the artist to exercise and retain a temporal order to serve a certain role in the here and now through the visual form. Whilst this *recognisable form* (*cheng ti*) [成體] disperses, so does its role as it *forms a design* (*cheng zhang*) [成章], but not the always transforming identity.⁹⁵ This transformative quality is different from the egocentric Western

concepts of *transforming ordinary and mundane matter into a visual representation and is undergone at the hand of the artist* (Seifert, 1994, p. 77); it is the collaborative effort amongst individuals in a spiritual state that constantly motivates the transformation to disperse a temporal identity at a certain moment. From the Chinese perspective, art practice with digital imaging technology (as is the case for other media) is, in itself, a never-ending transformative process. The artwork produced only disperses a temporally recognisable form with a temporal fixed design to establish a virtual space for dialectic communications in order to attain a temporal identity.

Digital Ink Jet Printmaking Technology with Xuan Zhi as a Temporally Fixed Form

The exploration of Western instrumentalist intervention of ink jet printmaking technology with traditional Chinese substrate Xuan Zhi is a materialisation process of digital artwork. This process and its physicality provide a temporally fixed form for the dissemination, interrogation and potential resolution of new aesthetics to further the conceptual and practical development of contemporary digital art. This fixed form constitutes both a temporally transformative reality of my art practice and a virtual space for intellectual dialogues. This corresponds with Laozi's (c 500 B.C.) idea of physicality as the utility for spiritual virtual space. The creativity and creation of new knowledge lie in the potentiality triggered between selves. In this sense, the artworks in this thesis are temporal new origins of the ever-transforming concept of the poetics of making.

The combination of sophisticated preciseness of ink jet printmaking technology with the capricious plasticity (when it interacts with inks) of Xuan Zhi is a parallel disposition of the integrity of today's photography⁹⁶ that is advanced by the mutable nature of digital imaging technology. This seems odd given the current pursuit of precision quality of ink jet technology and its attributed extravagant digital aesthetics. My stance of exploring the primitive, imprecise, unpredicted and unusual through the transmutation of the ink jet process on Xuan Zhi is intended to locate and fill gaps in the theory and practice of contemporary digital aesthetics. Consequently, this will instil new practices, applications and concepts to the already rich classical Xuan Zhi aesthetics.⁹⁷ This also corresponds to my philosophical approach of 'in contemporary,

through tradition' [wang gu xun jin] [往古尋今].

Visual Perspective

One-point Perspective and Multiple Perspectives

In the visual manifestation of art practice, Western art media are able to construct the illusive depth through the application of the scientific one-point perspective. Until now, except with the intention of breaking the rules, Western artists generally conform in applying one-point perspective in their art practices. However, digital imaging technology provides the potential to re-think and challenge both the conceptual and practical approaches of the legacy of one-point perspective in Western art practice. Take the medium of photography with the one-point perspective being inherited permanently (when the photograph is taken with an optical lens) as an example – digital imaging technology brings extensive post-production capabilities⁹⁸ to photography and sets out to develop new aesthetics. Within only a decade, photography has been amalgamated into the territory of digital art. From a technical perspective, any artwork which takes its form from the organic computer binary coding system is included in the medium of digital art. In the current digital environment, the one-point perspective is rarely a fundamental conformity of the visual construction of artwork (including photographic work) because of the extensive embracing of multi-layering capability. As a result, it has far reaching influences for artists to revitalise art genres such as collage, montage, surreal and grotesque, and to a certain extent constitutes the fashionable hyper-real aesthetics; add to these the hybrid-multi-media interdisciplinary approaches.⁹⁹ Until today, the dazzling, multifarious, variegated and loosely scattered visual physicality has become a major constituent of digital aesthetics. To an even greater extreme, it conforms to the hyper-real aesthetics¹⁰⁰ that transcend reality. The shift from the dogmatic one-point perspective to the multiple perspectives used in classical Chinese painting is significant in contemporary digital art practice.

Moving Perspective

Classical hand-scrolling painting is a typical example of multiple perspectives in classical Chinese

painting. Gao (ibid, p. 47) calls it a pointillist perspective. In a way, the multi-layering capability of digital technology has enforced artists to adapt unintentionally or subconsciously these multiple perspectives, or pointillist perspective. I suggest that in a contemporary digital environment, the Chinese approach of multiple perspectives contributes to the key visual essences of digital aesthetics. This approach is less familiar in the Western context.

In my own digital practice for this research, I further the concept of Chinese multiple perspectives to construct my own moving perspective through the interfusion of one-point and multiple perspectives. In some of my digital works, I composed many images of photographic origin in a manner such that they are merged and yet were not layered. Whatever approach I take, each photographic image creates a one-point perspective. Through merging many layers of images, I have created a visual guide for beholders to wander through. To be specific, at a glance, my work¹⁰¹ conforms to one-point perspective; further investigation reveals that the work is composed of a series of one-point perspectives and, as such, that the visual construction is seemingly based upon multiple perspectives. However, the uniqueness is on my strategic approach of establishing a continuous visual flow, which I name *moving perspective*. This moving perspective has affinity with both the Western one-point and the Chinese multiple perspectives and I suggest that it is this moving perspective approach that constitutes the qi, or vigour of my work.

Conclusion

In its infancy, the introduction of Chinese aesthetic thought into digital art is a political incentive to add an augmented and expanded potentiality to the development of confluent cross-cultural aesthetics. Advocating Laozi's (c. 500 B.C.) proposition of enlightened ignorance for contemporary knowledge making in today's technologically driven environment, I set out to revitalise the culturally specific Chinese 'constant' aesthetic thought and relocate this in a new context. Through instilling new concepts, new insights and creativity are likely to emerge. Acknowledging my stance which is to experience the poetics of 'the making of taking' by using photography as the main medium in this project and exploring moving perspective with digital technology, I suggest the philosophical idea of qi as one of the key essences of digital aesthetics. Addressing a non-self-centred collaborative position with the otherness (individual

selves) and with an emphasis on the spirituality of innovation rather than the physicality, a 'digital virtual space' is proposed to correspond with the earlier proposition of an intellectual 'virtual space'. This draws on Levy's (2002) position that virtuality is actuality and, as such, that actualisation is an act of creation which provides a solution to a problem in digital art practice; in addition, this virtuality brings new kinds of truth through artistic actualisation. Taking a Chinese worldview, virtual reality is complementarily paired; and through the creative act of human intervention that lingers between spirituality (virtuality) and physicality (reality), it is possible to attain a harmonious orderly solution within a chaotic problem. Again, virtual reality is a temporal human constructed order at certain moments in a constantly transforming chaos. As such, that 'virtuality' as a problem only posits the potential of knowledge and 'actuality' as a solution which is a temporal resolution to new knowledge. Therefore, actualisation as an act of creation does not constitutes new knowledge, rather it only triggers potential new knowledge.

The scope and dynamic of the digital environment creates a fertile ground for the vitality of the digital virtual space to exist through collaborative interrogation in the pursuit of new knowledge. This digital virtual space differs from the self-centred space of Western thought such as Gemeinboeck's (2004) thinking apparatus and Levy's (2002) virtual object.

It is commonly interpreted that Daoism opposes craft and technology and it therefore may seem at odds to apply Daoism to technology-dependent digital art practice. I argue that Daoism considers craft and technology to be the utilities to reveal concepts, creativity and insight. Daoism only opposes the excessive voraciousness of craft and technology. I, therefore, extend Daoism's idea to contemporary art practice by applying technological advancements as the utilities to facilitate the spiritual space. The practising of technology by artists is an act of artistic creation in sharing spiritual experience with the other selves. However, the potential development of new knowledge is contingent upon the ability of the artists to free themselves from excessive reliance upon technology.

Digital imaging technology is capable of transforming limitless chaotic combinations into a perceivable identity. This identity continues to mutate without a fixed destination, and as such is an ever-ending transformative process. From the Daoist's perspective, digital art practice is never intended to achieve a fixed identity. It only disperses a temporal, recognisable form (cheng ti) [成體] to serve the role of a

design (cheng zhang) [成章] and yet the identity continues to transform. It is the intellectual collaboration amongst individual selves that motivates the dispersal of a temporal identity in the here and now.

In this project, digital ink jet printmaking on Xuan Zhi endows a materialised physicality and provides the utilities for a spiritual virtual space to actualise a temporal physicality of the always transforming humanly constructed virtual reality. It is a temporal new origin for the potential resolution of new aesthetics and a temporal identity of the ever-transforming concept of the poetics of making of this practice-led project.

Endnotes

69 In reviewing the development of digital art, I have made reference to an unpublished article *The Digital Trend in Photography* in report format that I wrote in 1999 and submitted to the School of Art & Design for the strategic planning of curriculum development.

70 Also refer to my unpublished article *The Digital Trend in Photography*.

71 For detailed discussion about his work, refer to his website <http://www.wilhelm-research.com/>.

72 There is currently a wide range of still-image editing software available such as Adobe Photoshop, Microsoft Digital Image suite and Corel Paint Shop, with Adobe Photoshop being one of the most popular softwares.

73 Cross reference chapter on *Central Idea*.

74 Cross reference chapter on *Chinese Philosophy and Aesthetics*.

75 For detailed discussion, refer to Jarvis' (ibid., p.7-10) *A Brief Digression* in his *Toward a Digital Aesthetic*.

76 An annotated note on Fung's (1983) chapter of *Attitude Toward Desire and Knowledge* (pp. 187-189).

77 *Daodejing*, chapter 46: *There is no disaster greater than not knowing contentment with what one has; no greater sin than having desire for acquisition. Therefore he who knows the contentment that comes simply through content, will always be content* (Fung, ibid., p. 188).

78 *Daodejing*, chapter 64: *"to desire what is undesired" (yu bu yu) [欲不欲] is to reach a state in which the desires become fewer or are entirely absent, that is, one in which it is "the undesired" that constitutes the object of desire. "To study what is unstudied" (hsu bu hsu) [學不學] is to reach a state in which there is no knowledge, that is, one in which it is "the unstudied" that constitutes the object of study. The common masses mistakenly suppose that learning is in learning; the sage teaches that non-learning constitutes learning* (Fung, ibid., p. 189).

79 Fung (ibid.): *Lao-tzu speaks when it says: "Therefore the Sage rules the people by emptying their minds, filling their bellies, weakening their wills, and toughening their sinews, ever making the people without knowledge and without desire" (chapter 3). By so doing he causes the people to rest content in their original and primeval state of ignorance. It is such primeval ignorance, as opposed to the conscious cult of ignorance, which is the distinguishing feature between the common people and the Sage* (p. 190).

80 Cross reference chapter on *Chinese Philosophy and Aesthetics*.

81 The English text is my personal translation from the Chinese original.

82 *Analysis of aesthetic and ideological change involves engagement with broad socioeconomic and political circumstances as well as with aesthetics. But genre analysis is always best pursued through comparison of specific examples. (in Photography: a critical introduction) and Thus genres are defined not by uniformity, but by clusters of characteristic themes, formal and*

aesthetic concerns, and ideological preoccupations. They are revitalised through aesthetic experimentation and through new issues, often typifying attitudes and discourses characteristic of particular eras... It is productive to analyse genres in terms both of specific historical traditions within visual culture and of contemporary issues and aesthetics (Wells, 2004, p. 294).

83 Hieronymus (1999) quoting Wong's quantitative comparison between Chinese and Western music, noted that there were extremely small changes in the genre of Chinese music over the past 400 years as compared to the Western and concludes that it is *the social structure surrounding an individual, i.e. a society of resignation and acceptance versus a society desiring change and exploration, will effect the creative thought process within the social classes* (p. 13). This disregarded the difference between cultures in philosophical thought about the spiritual functionality of music.

84 Vaske (2002): *The word creativity comes from the Latin word "creare" meaning to "bring something into being that did not previously exist". Webster's dictionary defines creativity as being: "Marked by the ability or power to create; having the quality of something created rather than imitated... However complex and unfathomable, it appears that there is a consensus among respondents that creativity means non-conformity, originality. This ties in well with Mayer's findings. However, Mayer notes in the "Handbook of Creativity" that, despite the consensus in defining creativity, many "basic clarifying issues such as whether creativity refers to a product, process or person, whether creativity is personal or social, whether creativity is domain-general or domain-specific, and whether creativity is quantitative or qualitative" are not resolved yet. He further emphasises the need to focus research in these issues* (pp. 4-5). Subsequently, he locates his research only in the perspective that creativity is a property of the individual and limits the scope of the study to discuss one fundamental issue: What are a creative person's unique stimuli?

85 Refer to the chapter on *Rationale and Significance*.

86 Gemeinboeck (2004), in her article *Article Reality: space of negotiation*, quotes Lanier and De Kerckhove (1999): *the majority of current virtual worlds, including games, could be regarded as "simulated reality", whether they simulate our physical surrounding or one that has arisen from our fantasy. In such a simulated reality not only the world itself is pre-programmed but, likewise, the role the participant assumes* (p. 52).

87 I have collated some of Levy's (2002) key ideas in his article *Welcome to Virtuality*: *'virtuality' is not the opposite of 'reality' but rather of 'actuality'; ... the role of art is described in terms of the play of the virtual against the possible; Human languages are tools for the virtualisation of real time, actual things, and ongoing situations. Since the emergence of those languages, complex feelings, knowledge and concepts are externalised, materialised, exchanged and can travel from place to place, time to time and mind to mind; ...virtuality, indeed, does not mean imaginary; ... image is virtual on the hard disk and actual on the screen; Virtualisation is digitisation and actualisation is display; Interactivity is actualisation; ...virtual can be compared to a problem and the actual to a solution. Therefore an actualisation is not a destruction but, on the contrary, a micro invention, a production, an act of creation; ... A work of art, for example, possesses simultaneously aspects of possibility and virtuality. As a source of prestige and aura or as pure commercial object, a picture is a tank of possibles ('the original'). This way, it cannot be realised (by exhibition or by sale) simultaneously here and there. But as a support of a mental model, as an image to be interpreted, as the transmitter of a tradition to be continued or to contradict, as an event in cultural history, a picture is a virtual object. In this way original copies, photographs, reproductions, digitisations, samplings, installations on interactive systems are actualisations. Each cultural or mental effect produced by one of these actualisations is again an actualisation of the picture* (pp. 7-17).

88 Refer to Li (2005, p. 203) about the subconsciousness and consciousness with the concept of virtuality and his reference to [xu (mo) ni zhen shi] [虛(模)擬真實] about virtual reality (pp. 31-37).

89 Cross reference my practical work, *Huang Shan*.

90 Cross reference chapter on *Chinese Philosophy and Aesthetics*.

91 The English text is my personal translation from the Chinese original.

92 Cross reference my discussion on my practical work *The Scholar*.

93 Fong (2001): *For Xu, the contemporary renowned Chinese painter, both form-likeness and spirit-resonance are a matter of techniques. While "spirit" represents the essence of form-likeness, "resonance" is the transformation of form-likeness. Thus if someone excels in form-likeness, it is not hard for him to achieve spirit-resonance* (p. 254).

94 Cross reference my discussion on the practical work *Daoism*.

95 Powers (2000) when using the dragon as an example to discuss about the Chinese transformative identity in his *Vision and Identity in Qu Wu Lun* (c 300 B.C.), comments: *When a form unifies into a whole with distinct contours, it assumes a recognizable form (cheng ti) [成體]. As the form disperses, so does its current role, but not its identity, for now it forms a design (cheng zhang) [成章]. The action of condensing and dispersal implicitly associates Laozi with the dragon's transforming power because that is the way "transformation" in dragons is expressed* (p. 86).

96 The 'honesty' quality of photography has been discussed extensively since its invention. Whether it was Zola's (1900's) idea or Sontag's (1970's), who had the similar belief that *you cannot claim to have really seen something until you have photographed it*, the integrity of a photograph, though nowadays disputable, is still the bastion that a photographic artist would cling to; see Sontag's (1979., p. 89) and Zola's (ibid., p. 87) idea of 'photographic seeing'.

97 Stephen Owen (2003), in his article *History and Contemporary: the influence of technological development on tradition*, suggests that in the long term, the only hope of tradition is finding new modes to revitalise tradition by scholars, and not to preserve it (p. 208). The English text is my personal translation from the Chinese original.

98 For detailed discussion, refer to my Masters thesis (2000) *Photographic Representation: An investigation into emerging photographic technologies, using street theatre in Hamilton*.

99 Cross reference the chapter on *Central Idea under Rationale and Significance*.

100 Examples are Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* movie series and Hironobu Sakaguchi's movie *Final Fantasy*. Although these two examples are moving images, their aesthetics also apply to still images.

101 Cross reference my work *The Scholar* as an example, 'in focus and out focus' is a key visual structure of this work, the shuttling between focus and out of focus creates the moving perspective that guides the beholder to wander spontaneously and scrutinise, thus initiating a virtual space for dialectic discussions.

Design Approaches

This chapter overviews the design approaches in the actualisation of creative ideas, philosophical concepts and in the manifestation of aesthetics through practice. The design approaches in this project are unique in that they refer to the Western research system but apply the Chinese classical philosophical thought and approaches to art practice as the main methods to actualise the potential new knowledge, or aesthetics.

Introduction

The methodologies in this project involve the subjective and creative response of the researcher as an art practitioner to critically engage in the reflexive process of art making. At the same time, they involve reflecting upon the undeveloped or unexpected visual aesthetics through the empirical making of art and the experimentation of applying ink jet technology on Chinese substrates. This might be described as creative reflection within the heuristic research process of art making.

It is an interactive process between the use of traditional materials and the application of digital technology. Through the process, the knowledge of ink jet and its application to art making will be negotiated in developing the 'unknown' visual art aesthetics. The visual unknown or 'unexpected' aesthetics is a vehicle that furthers potential newer aesthetics at a philosophical level and, in turn, consolidates and conceptualises the visual unknown and unexpected.

This practice-led research departs from the medium of photography to engage with the sedimentation of my life experience to negotiate, respond and reshape the aesthetic concepts in the poetics of making. In turn, this serves to enlighten myself (the self) in, and through, the practice.

This process is further supported by the exploration of the conceptual, philosophical and aesthetic context of Chinese art practices and classical poetry; the traditional, historical and cultural context of Chinese substrates in art practice; the contemporary digital art practices, and the technological influences in the creative process of art making. These contextual research data are interwoven and further negotiated and

analysed through the ongoing reflective process of art making.

A collection of practical works is the core output which provides the visual physicality that houses the virtual space – an intellectual space inviting beholders to be involved in the potential evolvment of confluent new knowledge. Ultimately, it is the collaborative involvement of individual selves to further sediment experiences which serves to reshape existing knowledge.

I have made reference to Nancy de Freitas's (2002) idea of active documentation where the documented data is an active source in providing ongoing input for the creative and practical development of the artwork. However, I have adapted her idea in a different way. My proposition is that my creative process is an intuitive and spontaneous response during the critical thinking phases and the process of instant documentation would interrupt the creative development of the work.¹⁰² Instead, I consider the ongoing art practice and sedimentation of experience¹⁰³, in themselves, as a form of conceptual documentation. De Freitas's approach is a scientific approach that will, in turn, provide knowledge-based resources to rationalise art practice and the dissemination of knowledge. My idea of conceptual documentation requires the researcher to constantly respond to the art practice in an active manner through contemplation (as a process of interrogation) to attain enlightenment. Although this approach falls short of providing analytical data in its physical form, it enforces the active intellectual engagement of the artist in the ongoing process of art practising without interruption. In turn, it reveals orderly data at a conceptual level through the sedimented experience of the seemingly chaotic creative process.

A collection of experimental ink jet prints will be included as evidence of my conceptual documentation. Together with the selected artworks, they provide the virtual space to establish intellectual dialogues for knowledge dissemination. My conceptual documentation is considered as part of the reflective process where the participant, I, linger between the constructivist's creative thinking and (in response to) the positivist's research data.

A selection of the ongoing practical work is compiled and presented in a creative document *The Poetics of Making*, accompanied by an exegesis that contextualises the project. These works represent a temporal physicality that responds to my philosophical concepts about the poetics of making in, and through, the

exploration of the aesthetics of contemporary digital art in the here and now.

Rationale of the Design Structure

The design structure takes a Western contemporary approach with key reference to Carole Gray's (1996) ideas¹⁰⁴ for practice-led research to rationalise the objectives, infrastructure and the potential achievement of new knowledge. However, it is the methods¹⁰⁵ that yield to Chinese thought in the processes of knowledge making.

Each chapter of the exegesis explores the central concept of the poetics of making from diverse and yet coherent aspects of aesthetics to establish the continuum of my own philosophical thinking for this research project. Each chapter could be considered as an individual component that directly or indirectly embarks upon a mutual (intellectual) space of dialectic discussions. The interweaving cross-cultural concepts and interdisciplinary practices are intended to provide the potential development of a confluent aesthetics of Eastern and Western thoughts, contemporary and traditional, as well as the technology and craft of virtuality and actuality. This offers an open-ended disposition of my own philosophical thoughts within the temporal and mercurial nature of contemporary digital art and aesthetics.

Chinese classical philosophy differs from the Western in that it pays less attention to the methodology of knowledge making. The Chinese emphasise the *moral qualities than the intellectual and material capacities of man* (Fung, *ibid.*, p. 2) and thus the methodology developed is a means for self-cultivation.¹⁰⁶ For centuries, it is this notional motive that the practising of art is considered as a means for self-cultivating morality. In this sense, Chinese has much to offer in the methodological approach of contemporary art making.¹⁰⁷ As an example, in my practice work *The Scholar*, I suggest the classic idea of qi nurturing¹⁰⁸ as a conceptual approach of cultivating knowledge and, as such, I advocate self-cultivation as a contemporary method of rationalising knowledge (moral and intellectual). In the following, I detail the methods applied in the creative processing and manifestation of ideas of my art practice.

Simulation

One of the Chinese methodological approaches is the simulation¹⁰⁹ of preceding artworks. There are two levels in the simulation process. First, simulation of the craftsmanship and aesthetics; secondly, through the simulation process, individuals are enlightened to further develop their own artistic creativity. Simulation, as one of the methodological approaches, aims to recontextualise the existing (constant) (gu) [古] knowledge. For example, my idea of moving perspective in digital art practice is developed from the unique Chinese aesthetic of multiple perspectives. This is a significant process of research through experimental practice. The first level of simulation instils the self with constant (gu) [古] aesthetic or philosophical knowledge. Simultaneously, it strengthens the artistic, technical or technological competency of the self. It is the second level that engages the self to further potential intellectual development to attain new knowledge (conceptual, philosophical, creative or technological).

Self-cultivation

Contemporary art practice has been extended to include design practice. Often, art and design are amalgamated. With recourse to the Chinese worldview, I suggest that art deals more with the inner qualities (moral) and design deals more with the external qualities (knowledge). In a way external qualities (knowledge) can be shared between individuals and internal qualities (moral) cannot. The Buddhist idea of self-enlightenment makes sense in the process of art making. A more strategic methodological approach to initiate dialectic discussion of art practice would further the effectiveness of achieving self-enlightenment. According to Fung (ibid.), *Chinese has done so less effectively in the systematic making and disseminating of knowledge* (p. 3).

Therefore, in this exegesis, another approach is to investigate the central idea of the poetics of making from a diverse range of concepts and practices. For example, the *Mao Series* seems unrelated to poetic ideas as it usually evokes a political connotation. The *Re-thinking of Decisive Moment*, on the other hand, has a focus on the conceptual methods of photography. The *Poetics of Having a Transformative Identity* discusses identity. The contextual diversity of these works has been set out as a strategy to embark upon the concept of poetics of making through art practices. The approach has been inspired by the Buddhist

approach of suggesting something seemingly irrelevant to culminate in what Li (ibid.) describes as the 'life sedimentation' to achieve sudden enlightenment.¹¹⁰ 'Sudden' in this sense should be taken to mean 'triggered', as enlightenment is a consequence of the sedimentation of life experiences.

Therefore, this exegesis also employs the Chinese philosophical idea of self-cultivation¹¹¹ as a strategic approach towards knowledge making. However, the precondition of self-cultivation is the self-harmonisation of thoughts and feelings through inner transformation.¹¹²

The logic of this approach seems odd at first glance; yet it is through providing a gradual development (sedimentation) of knowledge from a diversity of perspectives that self-enlightenment is initiated, and this is the central idea of the poetics of making. Another uniqueness of this approach is that it does not posit an argument for dialectic discussion; rather, it only establishes an open-ended dialogue for a transformative communication. Individuals develop their own self-cultivated knowledge about the poetics of making which correlates with the concept of openness in the process of knowledge making. This approach extends the strength of Chinese philosophy in influencing contemporary art practice. Each component stands alone in its own right; together they constitute the sedimentation of experiences of individual selves and, through the process of harmonious internalisation, achieve self-enlightenment about the concept of poetics of making. Again, the Daoist philosopher Zhangzi (c 300 B.C.) sheds light on knowledge making through his approach of *opening of the mind and trance meditation, as well as through other ways of discipline in daily life* (Schipper, 2000, p. 36). His ideas influenced his successors and the design approach of this project follows ideas in a similar vein.

Enlightenment

Through the process of achieving enlightenment,¹¹³ the self gains knowledge (internalisation). Laozi (c 500 B.C.) did not stress the distribution of knowledge; however, the ultimate goal for gaining knowledge which is describable is to achieve the 'Invariable' [chang] [常] (universality and eternity). In other words, gaining knowledge is a process and not a solution to *achieving Dao (de dao)* [得道]. Laozi stated clearly that *the describable Dao is not the Invariable Dao* [dao ke dao, fei chang dao] [道可道，非常道。] (chapter 1, *Daodejing*)

(Fung, *ibid.*, p. 181). This correlates with the idea that *Chinese stress upon the moral qualities of man [sic] rather than the intellectual and material qualities* (*ibid.*, p. 2). Gao (*ibid.*) also emphasises *contemplation*¹¹⁴ as a key approach to develop new vision in art practising. Looking at the methodologies used by the three main Chinese schools Daoism, Confucianism and Buddhism, there is common ground that yields to self-enlightening as essential to the delivery of their philosophies. That is, enlightenment not by the external, but by the internal self. Yet, the internalisation of nature only inspires the self. It is through the ongoing internalisation processes that refer to, and sediment, the external phenomena (nature) that the self will then be enlightened. Rote learning, as one of the methods of self-enlightenment, is effective only when the internal self is actively engaged with the exteriority. The contemporary Eastern rote-learning approach of knowledge delivery has, to an extent, missed the core essence of achieving self-enlightenment. In a way, the effectiveness of rote memory as a method of knowledge making should not be disputed. Through our life-long internalisation of exteriority (nature), at some stage, self-enlightenment will likely happen.

Therefore, my stance in the methodological approach has been constructed such that each component of this exegesis provides individuals with an open-ended dialogue about the poetics of making for practising enlightenment (xi ming) [習明] in order to attain Invariable Dao (chang dao) [常道].¹¹⁵ Through practising enlightenment, knowledge is also gained. My approach adapts the concept of self-enlightenment without disputing the knowledge gained. Instead, both intellectual and moral qualities are attained. The design structure also corresponds with contemporary Western scholar Scrivener's (2002) idea of *defining the goals and norms of the activity of the art research project, rather than justifying the art object as a form of knowledge* (Abstract). The artwork in my practice offers the opportunity for contemplation, cultivation and enlightenment to attain and disseminate knowledge through open-ended intellectual dialogues. In this sense, the artwork is a carrier to initiate the dissemination of knowledge.

Verification of Poetics of Making

Zong Bai-hua [宗白華] (1999, pp. 248-252) suggests¹¹⁶ a verification process for the classical concept of emptiness and fullness in art practice. This is a contemporary approach that rationalises the transformative effectiveness of artwork and art practice. The visual emptiness of the artwork is a physical performing

space for artists or creators and a contemplating space for the beholders to associate with their internalised experiences (sedimentation). This initiates the virtual space where mutual intellectual dialogues between the artist and the beholder are triggered.

Although Zong (1999) asserted that once totality is achieved through the physicality of fullness and the transformative reality of emptiness, and the transformative effectiveness is verified, he did not suggest a method of verification. I adapt his idea of a verification process to interrogate the concept of poetics of making. Referring to Lu Chi (261-313) [Lu Ji] [陸機], one must empty one's mind to achieve a state of limpidity.¹¹⁷ This emptied limpidity is what enables artists to actualise (ning-ssu) [ning si] [凝思] their yi¹¹⁸ (concept) in fullness in their work through the creative process. Ultimately, this results in achieving the transformations of things¹¹⁹ at their finest (miao) [妙] — a process of fulfilling and unifying. In Chinese classical thought, yi (concept) [意] is an individual act of a particular way of understanding. Yi (concept) is not universal. Therefore, the transformative effectiveness and totality are the key essences in the verification process.

However, a scientific approach of verification and its effects are arguable, if not disputable. In this project the application of such verification is intended to advocate the vigour of knowledge making in art practice, rather than to design an effective verification process. This harmonises with my intention to extend the Chinese worldview of art practice from the emphasis on internal moral qualities to include external intellectual and material qualities. Therefore, I simply posit a temporal solution with openness in order to initiate vigour into furthering the potentiality of knowledge.

The verification process involves both external and internal qualities to achieve totality. For externality, through the artwork and art practice, the artist should be able to actualise his particular way of understanding the concept; and offers a temporal solution to his own particularity of the concept and yet provides the necessary openness to initiate the potentiality for further knowledge. With regard to internality, the artist should be able to provoke the other selves to attain what Tang (1999) calls the *metaphorical silence*¹²⁰, and reach a limpid state to contemplate, cultivate and be self-enlightened. This encourages the other selves to engage through *quiet observation* and *direct experience* in order to achieve a new horizon of openness. This contributes to the sedimentation of a continuous process of actualisation of knowledge which supplements

the dynamic continuity of transformation in knowledge making.

The Poetics of Making Approach

My approach includes a diverse range of contents and complex ideas in such a way that together they operate through correlative intentions in response to the Chinese worldview of nature in the material world of my art practice. This corresponds with the *highly determined intention*¹²¹ of classical aesthetic thought about the making of poetry. Each work stands on its own and engenders an affluent and unparalleled consideration of the cultural or philosophical significance of the poetics of making. The unity of these works constitutes a crossover of aesthetic perspectives, of congruent profusion, to the self (myself). This provides an evolving potentiality of confluent new knowledge through dialectic negotiations in a broader community.

Owen (2004, p. 90) comments that *many poems were built upon the movement between exterior 'world' and interior 'response'*. Murck (2000, p. 4) also notes the common approach of the underpinning nebulous poetic allusions of a poetic landscape [painting].¹²² This present project emphasises the vigour created between the self and the other selves, and extends art practice as a means for moral cultivation and enlightenment to knowledge interrogation, actualisation and realisation. As such, the artwork provides a virtual intellectual space for the sharing and exchanging of knowledge. Ultimately, the individual self will establish a unique perspective of his/her own about the poetics of art making that is seemingly ineffable and yet mutually communicable with others. Subsequently, these different perspectives between individual selves will trigger dialectic discussions and thus new knowledge is likely to emerge.

Conclusion

The design approaches and methods applied in this project inhabit and contemporise classical Chinese philosophical ideas in art practice by referring to the Western contemporary research structure. Applying the unfamiliar and seemingly enigmatic classical Chinese philosophical thought and approaches in contemporary art practice is challenging. Yet, the research approach enables the core research goal of

developing a confluent new aesthetic thought through sedimentation of life experience. This, in turn, produces the visual intellectual dialogues which will further newer knowledge. Through further ongoing cross-cultural dialogues to constantly sediment new knowledge, it may bring about cultural consensus to attain systematic thoughts and approaches within the context of digital art aesthetics and practicing. In a philosophical sense, the application of Chinese approaches with an emphasis on applying moral qualities to contemporary Western research will balance contemporary dedication that leans towards the pursuit of intellectual and material qualities.

The design approaches verge on the interiority of individual self through processes of simulation, self-cultivation and enlightenment such that the effectiveness remains uncertain. The verification process also requires further investigation and development. However, I believe that in my practice the inclusion of a diverse range of contents with complex ideas facilitates dialectic negotiations. Through cross-examination of these ideas with the materiality of art practice, and the cultural and the philosophical aspects of the concept of poetics of making, it will attune any dubious shortcoming of these approaches.

Endnotes

102 Gibbs (2006) my supervisor, in his article *Reflections through invisible glass walls: A self-study of the teacher and artist*, holds a similar view.

103 Cross reference discussion on *Chinese Philosophy and Aesthetics*.

104 Cross reference discussion on *Structure of this Project*.

105 Cross reference discussion on *Practice-led Research*.

106 See Fung Yu-lan's (1937) *A History of Chinese Philosophy*. Fung comments that *epistemology has not formed an important part of Chinese philosophy, not only because Chinese philosophy has not cared to pursue knowledge purely for its own sake, but also because it does not demarcate clearly the distinction between the individual and the universe; whereas, the subjective ego to pursue knowledge has been a key feature of modern western history. Logic is a requirement for dialectic discussion and like epistemology has failed to be developed in China. However, the emphasis upon the way of the "Inner Sage" has delved deeply into the methods of self-cultivation – the method of conducting study and in this respect, China has a contribution to offer (pp. 1-4)*. Buddhism also stresses self-cultivation as a mean to set free the self, rather than knowledge making. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (1998, Olson, translated) discussed the Buddhist idea of *nibbana: Peace means the tranquility that comes from a mind that has attained nibbana or a condition of openness and emptiness that constitutes freedom, a going beyond all things: beyond body and mind, and beyond all the laws of limiting body and mind (p. 150)*.

Fong (1999), an internationally renowned historian in Chinese arts, also says: *The tenth century saw the growth of Neo-Confucianism, a philosophy that advocated the reordering of society by the fusing of the spiritual with the material and by the objective study of the moral principles of nature (p. 21)*.

107 The classical Chinese and contemporary notion of art making are not contrasting with each other in that they both consider the artwork itself as a means only. The value is not on the artwork itself. They both value the externalisation of the internal qualities of individuals. The key difference is the functionality of art that the Chinese have emphasised; the cultivation of individuals to adapt to the moral disciplines within a broader context of society. Instead, contemporary art making puts emphasis on making an individual statement of the subjective ego to influence the objective non-ego of a broader context.

108 Refer to Ho's (2005) conference paper *Chi's Nurturing in Contemporary Art and Design Education (pp. 210-230)*.

109 Fung's (ibid.: p. 6) sagacious comment from a historian's perspective that *forgery has its own value in the ideas expressed. This is evidential that in Chinese painting and other art disciplines' tradition to simulate preceding artworks and it is in these forgery works that until today the aesthetics and philosophy of a certain period still survives. And though there may not have been any of the original work of a certain artist that survived, the artist still continues to influence contemporary knowledge in art making*. Renowned contemporary painter Zhang Da-qian (2005, p.73) [張大千] emphasised the imitation of classic artwork and made many forgery paintings in addition to his own works. He valued the process of imitation that enables an artist to transcend another's craft and spirit to supplement the intellectual repository of the individual. Townsend (2002) in discussing Western classical aesthetics explores Plato's idea of imitation and suggests that: ...

Images and pictures are only imitations of imitations. But the concept of imitation that has emerged is dialectical. Dialectical means that we know something in relation to something else; the term designates the relation... (p. 7). Refer to Townsend's Aesthetics: Classic Readings from Western Tradition for detailed discussion of Plato's idea of imitation.

110 From the Buddhist point of view, sudden enlightenment is the ultimate achievement of self-enlightenment.

111 It is also arguable that self-cultivation has affinity with self-reflection. I would suggest that self-reflection takes the position of egocentric self to influence others. Also refer to the Buddhist idea of no-self [wu wo] [無我] that self-reflection is an act of self-cultivation when the self has reached the state of no-self. Awakawa (1981, pp.27-28, Bester, translated) when discussing Zenna (Zen) suggests that Zenna refers to "fixing of mind", "thought control" or "quiet reflection" and It refers to the practice of meditating the true nature of things and pacifying the restless ratiocinative processes so as to achieve spiritual integrity and control...Once one has tasted this completely novel experience, one discovers a safety and freedom from care such as nothing else can offer. Profit and loss do not exist; one simultaneously transcends and engulfs the ordinary clamor of the world; here, there is nothing, and never has been anything, apart from the whole; there is nothing to bewail in "loss," any more than there is anything to rejoice at in "gain." Also see Dale (2004): Traditionally in Chinese culture, art is an expression of essence – the meaning, often the emotion, of a moment within the flow of dynamic and harmonious natural world. Further, art in China has traditionally been a practice that is transformational and continuous, both an act of self-cultivation and an interpretation of a rich, dynamic tradition (pp. ix-x).

112 Tu (2004) in his *The Continuity of Being* says: I must caution, however, that the aesthetic experience of mutuality and immediacy with nature is often the result of strenuous and continual effort at self-cultivation. Despite our superior intelligence, we do not have privileged access to the great harmony. As social and cultural beings, we can never get outside ourselves to study nature from neutral ground. The process of returning to nature involves unlearning and forgetting as well as remembering. The precondition for us to participate in the internal resonance of the vital forces in nature is our own inner transformation. Unless we can first harmonise our own feelings and thoughts, we are not prepared for nature, let alone for an "interflow with the spirit of Heaven and Earth." It is true that we are consanguineous with nature. But as humans, we must take ourselves worthy of such a relationship (pp.37-8). Also: ...The mind forms a union with nature by extending itself metonymically. Its aesthetic appreciation of nature is neither an appropriation of the object by the subject nor an imposition of the subject on the object, but the merging of the self into an expanded reality through transformation and participation (p. 37).

113 In chapter 16 of *Daodejing*, Laozi (c 500 B.C.) discusses the idea of enlightenment (ming) [明], which means understanding: all things, howsoever they flourish, return to their root. This returns to their root is called "quiescence" (ching) [jing] [靜] which is submission to "fate" (ming) [命], means fate of life. Submission to fate is called the "Invariable" [常] [sheung]. To know the Invariable is called enlightenment (Fung, *ibid.*, p. 181).

114 Gao (2002): *The mental state of the painter when he is painting, that state embodied by the painting, is akin to the spirit that pervades classical Chinese poetry. Though imbued with poetry, this state of mind does not turn to lyric but to the landscape in order to reach the spirit. It first appears through contemplation. The atmosphere and images in the painting are not aimed at eliciting associations with concrete ideas but offer a way into it in order to see and see anew (p. 49).*

115 When discussing the practising of enlightenment (chap ming) [xi ming] [習明], Lao-tze again emphasised the moral qualities such as 'liberal' (jung) [rong] [容], or 'without prejudice' (kung) [gong] [公], and in chapter 27 of *Daodejing* The man who comprehends the Invariable and relies upon it for his actions, does not follow his own partial opinion, and therefore is without prejudice [gong] [公] and Therefore the Sage is invariably in the most perfect way helping men, and so does not turn his back on men. He is invariably in the most perfect way helping creatures, and so does not turn his back on creatures. This is

called practising enlightenment [xi ming] [習明] (Fung, 1983, p. 182).

116 The English text is my personal translation from the Chinese original.

117 According to the treatise on *The Poetic Exposition on Literature* [Wen Fu] [文賦] by Lu Chi (261-313, translated by Owen, p. 110): line 45: *Empty the limpid mind (ning-ssu) [ning si] [凝思], Fixes his thoughts (ch'ing ch'eng hsin) [qing cheng xin] [罄澄心]*, Owen annotates this as follows: ...The modifier "limpid" may best be understood here as the result of the emptying process: "he empties the mind so that it becomes limpid." Each of the three stages – attainment of the preconditions of composition, meditation before composition, and here, composition itself – repeats the essential process, beginning in emptiness and proceeding to fullness. And This is the compound for "concentration": thoughts that had previously been moving about, now become "fixed" on a single point.

118 Owen (ibid., p. 81): ...we can agree with Kuo's conclusion, that yi here is an individuated act of mind, someone "forming an idea" about the world. Thus what we see in a particular work is not a universal "concept" or yi, but rather a particular way of understanding that implicates the individuality of the writer... also Yi is usually spoken of as occurring in the mind rather than the world. It is often the act of giving relation to the data of the senses (p. 594).

119 Lu Chi (ibid., translated by Owen p. 110, line 46): *Fuses all his concerns together [眇眾慮], miao chung-l'u [miao zhong lu]*: Owen annotates this as follows: *Based on a passage in the Shuo-kua [Shuo Gua] [說卦], discourses on the Trigrams, in the Book of Changes: Spirit [in]fuses (miao)...The Shuo-kua passage seems to describe how spirit operates in even the finest (miao) transformations of things, thus fulfilling and unifying them.*

120 Tang (1999): *With a totally different outlook on language Chinese philosophers and poets have managed to maintain their composure amidst the linguistic crisis. They firmly believe that language is nothing but an instrument of expression, nonessential and dispensable. Because of this functional view of language Chinese philosophers stress semantics rather than syntax in their discussions. They are more concerned with the context of language use, or with the speech event, the "parole". In their opinions language is a game, and the use of language a game-playing that requires tactful maneuvering. Such a tactic for maneuvering language is found in metaphorical silence practiced by Chinese philosophers of all schools. Paradoxical as it may seem, the tactic of silence possesses advantages unsurpassed by other tactics. It renders to the text gaps and holes that provoke the reader's imagination and encourage him [sic] to search for its hidden meanings. It liberates the words from their rigid reference so that they are transformed from physical marks into artistic symbols. Language is no longer the shackles or prison-house of thought but a horizon that opens on more horizons. Since truth or meaning does not lie in language but in the horizons it reveals, silence in the forms of suggestion, evocation, "quiet observation" and "direct experience" provides Chinese philosophers and poets with a most effective means for obtaining truth or literary understanding. (p. 20).*

121 Cheng (1986) suggests that: *Chinese poetry, as a mature language, attained under the T'ang a high degree of complexity and freedom [writing system]... In spite of this freedom, their language was never given up entirely to arbitrariness or to fantasy: it operated through highly determined intentions...Chinese thought lies in the unfailing correspondence between the material universe and the universe of signs (p. 32).*

122 Murck (2000): *Quite naturally, not everyone who sensed he was viewing a "poetic landscape" could identify the poetic allusions. The original literary meanings, some of which were obscure at the time the first examples of these paintings appeared, were given alternative explanations. The eight Xiaoxiang titles were often said to be simple exercises in painting beautiful scenery and atmospheric effects. Scholar-officials who recognised the poetic allusions may have encouraged others to read the works apolitically as "beautiful scenery" – the prudent reading (p. 4).*

Poetics of Making

This chapter provides commentaries on the practical works of poetics of making. Through contextualising my art practice, it becomes possible to respond, correspond and unite the interiority and exteriority of the self so as to achieve harmony. *Daoist and Confucian [teachings] share a common belief in harmony, balance and a cyclical view of reality and advocate a moderate stance in human belief that there are never extreme in all things* (Ropp, 2004, p. 106). This partly contributes to the optimistic approach¹²³ and the formation of poetic thoughts to ease the self of any tragic encountering. *This is further strengthened by the worldview of emphasis on society rather than individual, thus tying individual to the society* (ibid., p. 107).

The Chinese associate humans with nature and emphasise the internalisation of natural phenomena to locate harmonious fusion between the external scene (jing) [境] and internal emotion (ching) [qing] [情]. When critiquing painter Tsui Bai Wah's [Xu Bihua] [徐畢華] work, contemporary scholar Lai Chung Yin [Lai Zongxian] [賴宗賢] (2003, pp. 58-62) refines this classical aesthetic idea by referring to the Buddha's Wah Yim Jing [Hua Yan Jing] [華嚴經] to describe the emotion-scene state [qing jing] [情境] that the artist achieves. Fong (1999, p. 25), in his *Along the Riverbank*, refers to Tang poet Wang Changling's [王昌齡] conception of the poetic world as being associated with three main levels. First, the objective description (wu jing) [物境] deals with the external world. Second, the affective state (qing jing) [情境] is concerned with emotion; and third, the ideational state (yi jing) [意境] describes an aesthetic idea.¹²⁴ Fong and Lai agree with each other that the Chinese concept of poetic is lyrically evocative and not narrative. Furthermore, the fusion of scene (jing) and emotion (ching) correlates with the concept of self-enlightenment through daily experiences, and as such, the mental fusion, in itself, is an act of art practice.

Each work of the creative document imbues a concept of its own and is contextualised as a stand-alone practice. Together they constitute a dynamic exploration and interrogation of poetic ideas of art practice to correspond to the philosophies and aesthetics of classical Chinese ideas and their applications within contemporary digital art practice. The significance of the aesthetic quality of poetics is unfolded through the continuity of the recurrence of subtle and variable ambiguity, thus manifesting the illusive and intriguing poetic feeling in, and through, the process of art practice — the innermost emotional feeling in

response to the external phenomena.

The first commentary on the work *The Scholar*¹²⁵ gives an overarching philosophical approach in the actualisation of my art practice for this project. It details some underpinning philosophical and aesthetic aspects (from the established classical Chinese aesthetics and philosophies in the earlier chapters) that are associated with the art practice in this project.

The Poetics of Scholar

The Scholar explores my philosophical ideas and beliefs about qi [氣] through a new approach in contemporary art practice. During the process of actualising one's creative or conceptual ideas, the artist as a scholar shuttles between 'emptiness and fullness' [xu shi] [虛實] and it is qi [氣], the intangible energy that unites one's mind with one's work. Qi is the vitalising force of the 'spirit' [shen] [神] of the artist (scholar) and his/her artwork.

A scholar acknowledges the profundity of knowledge¹²⁶ in the universe and nature. It is his sense of innocence that triggers his commitment to research; his/her conscientious concentration that allows him/her to reach a temporal solution; his/her insight that resolves unpredictable outcomes. Most importantly, it is his/her qi, the vigorous energy that constantly motivates his/her spirit.

The scholar is always in the state of being empty and full, knowing and not-knowing, humble and proud, cautious and confident, internalising and externalising with imprecision and precision as he/she moves between intellect and action.

The associated conditions of insight and wisdom are key intellectual qualities of scholars. Wisdom, which yields to knowledge and research, provides a locus for nurturing insight. Insight¹²⁷ is a concurrent and immediate creative activity. Qi is the vigour that triggers the wisdom and insight of the scholar to attain effective new knowledge. Wisdom is a locus for the scholar to achieve a state of fullness and insight to achieve a state of emptiness.

The key method applied to the practice of this artwork is the artist's concentration on the communion of mind and matter while making art. This has been the dictum of the traditional Chinese approach, where making art is a way of self-cultivation,¹²⁸ an emanating reflection of one's internal sentiments and the actualisation of scholarly knowledge. Through the making of art, the scholar (of art practice) apprehends the unity of man and nature, thus 'achieving the way'.¹²⁹ Self-cultivation provides a locus of insightful creative practice.

In the making of this artwork, I have drawn from the basic Western visual construction of 'in-focus and out-of-focus'. Throughout the practice, I shuttle between in-focus and out-of-focus both in the photographic and the digital editing processes. This practice also draws on Monet's work where brush strokes have created an unsettling and lingering resonance between in-focus and out-of-focus that may be perceptible to viewers when they change their viewing distance.

In the digital creative process, I apply these concepts from the Chinese painting tradition [yi zai bi xian] [意在筆先], in that an idea has been established and set free through the brush into the artwork. This is a consequence of the process of self-cultivation. Through intense practice¹³⁰ to manoeuvre the digital mouse in a nimble and adaptive manner, I am able to reflect upon my thoughts while depleting and infusing the innate spirit through qi into the artwork.

The artwork reveals and unfolds my experience through the creative process where I am always in a lingering state of mind seeking harmony between murkiness and limpidity, simplicity and complexity, tangibility and intangibility, naivety and sophistication, void and plenitude, fragility and rigidity, traditional and contemporary, ambiguity and certainty.

The essence of this work is the unsettling and ineffable sentimental feeling that is created. This, I would suggest, is the qi that unites the spirit of my mind with my work. Through the creative practice of the artwork, I actualise my knowledge and philosophical beliefs as an artist in ways that address my cultural identities as a Chinese living and working in a multicultural community, and an artist and educator in a variety of art fields.

This artwork also addresses the concept of 'image beyond image'¹³¹ [xiang wai xiang] [象外象] in that through the actualisation of the form the artist might be triggered by other associated experiences. Such experiences then interweave into the practice. This process of materialisation expands and unfurls through the viewer's individual particularity and association to experience the world beyond. The concept of image beyond image is an intellectual relationship between the artist and the viewer. The viewer might be triggered to associate, through the artwork, with something that has been experienced but is beyond what the image (artwork) is intended to express. This concept might be enigmatic from a Western framework of visual interpretation. However, traces of parallel reference can also be found in a contemporary Western context.¹³²

Through the artwork, I suggest that a contemporary scholar is humble to acknowledge that an individual is a micro-organism among the myriad creatures of the universe; he/she only knows of something (which is nothing); he/she is empty and only yields to learning or researching the unknown, that he/she will be full at a certain moment. Motivated by qi, researching is always in a state of fluidity between the knowing and not knowing; it is an ongoing, temporal and ever-changing journey and never anchors at any certain moment. Through the research process, knowledge, which is always temporal, can be attained.

This work explores and establishes the notions of a contemporary scholar. It suggests that the scholar is one who evolves a particular excellence only in a very specific area. The scholar acknowledges his/her lack of comprehensive excellence in other particulars and thus encompasses and appreciates the others. Through his/her focused vision, the predisposed wisdom of his/her own research locus, his/her creative insight and his/her inexorable commitment, the scholar is able to attain new knowledge in and through his/her research practice. However, according to Daoist philosophy, the scholar is always in a state of flux as he/she seeks harmony.





The Poetics of Clicking [Reflexive Framing: a re-thinking of decisive moment]

This series of works, *The Poetics of Clicking [Reflexive Framing: a re-thinking of decisive moment]*, sets out to give a contemporary reconsideration of the concept of *decisive moment* in photography. This was coined by Henri Cartier-Bresson in 1952. In this work, I explore the methodologies and aesthetics brought by digital technological advancement to photography in relation to Chinese thinking.

The significance of Cartier-Bresson's (1952) concept¹³³ lies in the fixing of a precise and transitory instant without any manipulation of the reality when clicking the camera or any act of post-intervention (Plate 2). The concept of reality, in itself, is controversial and has posited continuous contentions to the medium of photography. However, it is his notion of manipulation that needs to be redefined. One of his methodologies is 'waiting' for the decisive moment. Many of his iconic decisive moment images were taken through the persistent patience of waiting. The visual composition, lighting, gestures and expressions were meticulously 'planned' before freezing the moment. Attuned to it is the often-reflective response of his subjects. To a certain extent, his interpretation of manipulation might not include his well-planned approaches in the pre-photo-taking stages. He located his idea of decisive moment as purely the moment of photo taking – a moment of highly selective preciseness in his own belief. He disguised any post-manipulation of photographs, though until today there is no common consensus on defining post-manipulation.¹³⁴

Evans, in the 1930s, applied an approach to his famed series *The Subway*¹³⁵ in which he photographed people in the New York subway where the subjects were unaware of being taken (Plate 3). He called this a genuine revelation of the personality of what Erving Goffman (1989, quoted in Jussim), the eminent psychologist, calls the private self, in contrast to the public 'performed self'.¹³⁶ Both Cartier-Bresson's and Evans' pursuit of capturing 'decisive' moments have been for centuries a dogma of photographic artists.

Cartier-Bresson and Evans took different approaches or methods in pursuing the decisive moment. Cartier-Bresson took a more self-orientated stance and his work has a highly controlled technological sophistication capturing the perfect manifestation of the moment. The visual traces of his participation

are apparent. This is core to the Western egocentric philosophical approach in photography (and art practice) where the artwork is a means of self-disclosure. Although his philosophical stance was located in an objective position to fix the moment of happening, there is yet a strong feeling of subjective-self underpinning his scrupulous virtuosity. Evans, on the other hand, allowed his subjects to perform¹³⁷, whether as their public or private selves. Both of their photographic approaches in selecting subjects and scenes are highly contrived. Yet in Evans' work, the subjects being photographed had ownership of their own-self. Though Evans also emphasised that his method¹³⁸ was nearest to a pure record of the camera with minimum intervention by himself, I would suggest that his own subjectivity is ingeniously concealed in the 'naturalness' aesthetics of his work.

In this work, my methodologies¹³⁹ concur with Evans in that I am highly selective with my subjects who are also unaware of being photographed. I also do not look through the camera viewfinder to frame my pictures. The major unique difference of my approach is in the pursuing of the moment. I do not decide the moment; I let the moment unfurl. To do this, I am for most of the time moving to make myself unobtrusive; I do not hold my camera up but just let it rest on my body; I click reflexively and on some occasions intuitively without necessarily watching my subjects and scenes. I describe my approach as reflective in selecting subjects and scene but reflexive in photo taking. In a way, I contrived through intensive observations to select subjects and scene. When the moment arrives, I do not take control of it and I click naturally. Though it is yet arguable that the act of clicking, though spontaneous, in itself is a controlled act of self-disclosure, I would yield to the Chinese aesthetics of *naturalness* (jerum) [zi ran] [自然]. Art practising is a self-cultivation process that allows the self to unfold a temporal transformative reality.¹⁴⁰ The self-disclosure is the manifestation of externalising the interiority of self's belief about nature.

The visual aesthetics¹⁴¹ of my work differs from Cartier-Bresson and Evans in its 'chanceness', 'freeness' and 'detachment', in contrast to their 'highly engaged participation' and 'fastidious self-expression'. It has the quality of genuine subtlety of a 'constant moment' which is about to emerge but which is not distinct or fully realised. It is withheld and distanced. It could be argued that the aesthetics of my work are within the same vein as Martin Parr's (2007) snapshot aesthetics¹⁴². However, the seeming 'chanceness' and 'freeness' visual qualities of Parr's work (Plate 4) are means to conceal his contrivance. Parr's decisive moment is also self-controlled and self-expressive.

The unique aesthetics of my work lies in the philosophical approach of the moment that verges on Chinese philosophical aesthetics with major reference to naturalness (jerum) [zi ran]. A moment that is a natural disclosure of the subject; a moment that is captured by chance with least intervention; a moment that is spontaneously and fortuitously refractive, yet in response to the interiority of the self; a moment that responds to the *humanised nature and naturalised self*⁴⁴³ (Li, *ibid.*, p.162). Behind this seemingly snapshot essence unfurls a moment of openness and an invitation to interrogate further the confluent development of the conceptual aesthetics of decisive moments.







































































The Poetics of Mao Artefacts

The Communist Party of China (CPC) led by Mao established the People's Republic of China in 1949 through implementing a one-party communist system in the country. The Western worldview generally negated Mao's dictatorial system. However, it is evident that throughout Chinese history, there has never been a democratic system ruling the nation. To the Chinese, his unification of the nation made him a hero. For Mao, art and literature were a means to serve the ruling of the country. His policy of *Letting A Hundred Flowers Bloom*¹⁴⁴ [Rang Bai Hua Qi Fang] [讓白花齊放] in May 1956 asserts this. Mao himself was made an icon through his appearance in the contents of art making, which was also a strategy to promote his political supremacy. This constitutes the omnipresent presence of the 'Mao artefact' phenomenon throughout the country since his rule and until today. However, the Cultural Revolution was a tragedy for the nation. It was one of the most chaotic periods in the contemporary history of China. Was Mao a hero to the nation? Or a tyrant? As stated, this project is not concerned with the political stance of the Chinese nation. This series of photographic documentary works, through exploring the 'Mao Artefact' phenomenon, examines the Chinese cultural concept of the poetics of making.

Why do the Chinese continue to preserve Mao artefacts?

In China, rarely is it possible to capture on camera the agony of people in the way that Selgado¹⁴⁵ (1999) did. The agonised content is evinced through embracing their disentangled memories of daily life. It is therefore not uncommon to find collections of Mao artefacts in different forms such as posters, badges and statues. The presence of objectified Mao recalls their disentangled agonised memories for daily reminiscence. Balance through imbalance – these memories are possibly transcended by ethereal memories which are propelled by poetic reverence to Mao. To an extent, it is more reminiscent of the era of agony than of the person (Mao) who imposed the agony. In a way, the invisible entwining memories of agony are made visible through the presence of Mao artefacts.

However, it is deeply rooted in Chinese tradition that tragedy¹⁴⁶ is a natural phenomenon of balancing order and chaos. The phenomenon of preserving Mao artefacts is not simply a reminiscence of tragedy; it is individuals' sense of calming¹⁴⁷ so that life will go on. The artefacts are signs of didacticism¹⁴⁸ in such a worldview.

Traditionally, there are poetic allusions underpinning the painting of the scholar-painters. Behind the seemingly apolitical 'beautiful landscape' paintings are manipulated, ingenious, intricate self-expressive emotions. The poetic concept¹⁴⁹ or poetic intent is more significant than the physical reality of it. The *Mao artefact* phenomenon is another way of poetic calming for those who experienced the chaos of Cultural Revolution.

The Western classical philosopher, Aristotle (384–322 B.C.), suggested that tragedy¹⁵⁰ was the core grounding of the poetic in art and art practice (Townsend, 2002). He proposed four causes; namely, material cause, formal cause, efficient cause, and purpose cause, which together offer another perspective on the Mao artefact phenomenon. The Mao artefacts are the material cause for recalling (imitating) the tragedy. Different 'things' will evolve through individuals' personal experiences, which is the formal cause. The act of preserving Mao artefacts is a process of efficient cause that subsequently constitutes the purpose cause to arouse individuals' emotions in response to one's self experiences, which is rarely a political exposition.

However, my perspective of the Chinese poetic concept varies slightly in that the Mao artefacts are not the cause of recalling (imitating) tragedy. It is the process of reconstructing self-experiences that constitute it. In other words, the preservation or collecting of Mao artefacts is a process that causes individuals to interweave their own self-experiences of real situations (things), thus arousing their emotions. In this sense, the artwork only provides a carrier to trigger the emotion of individual self. The poetic arouses the emotional response of self to the artwork which is influenced by the individual's own self-experiences of real situations.





































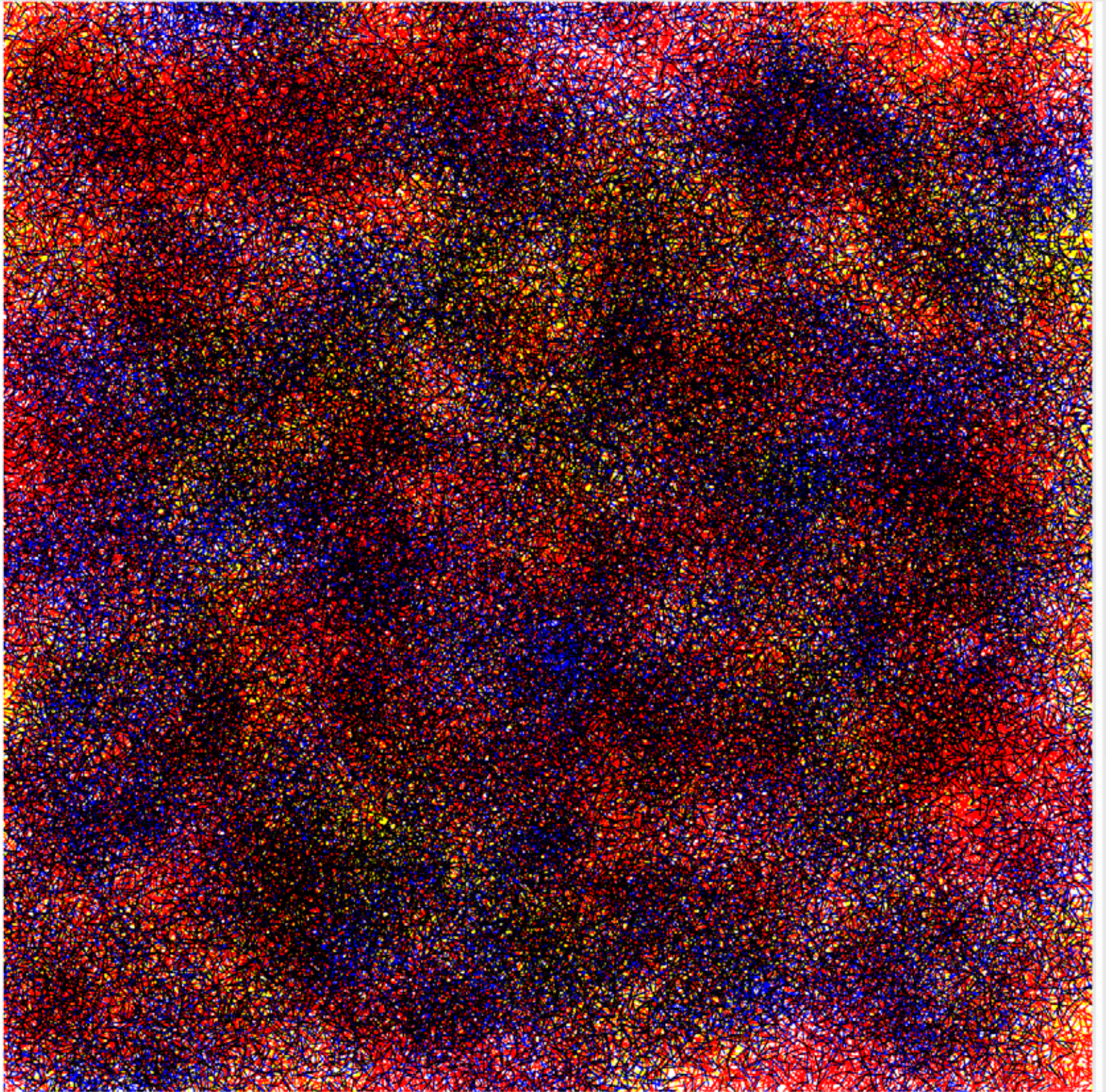


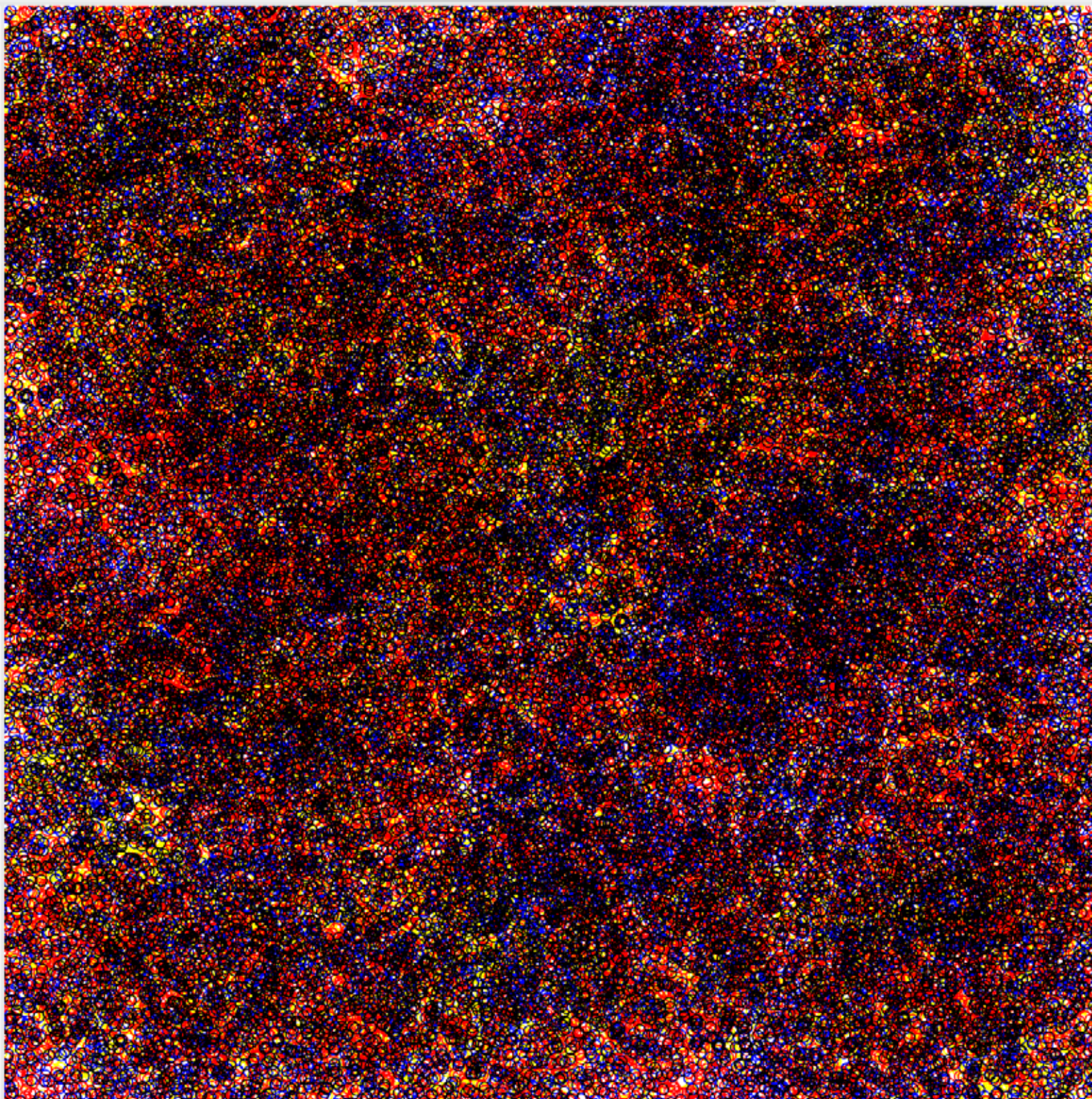


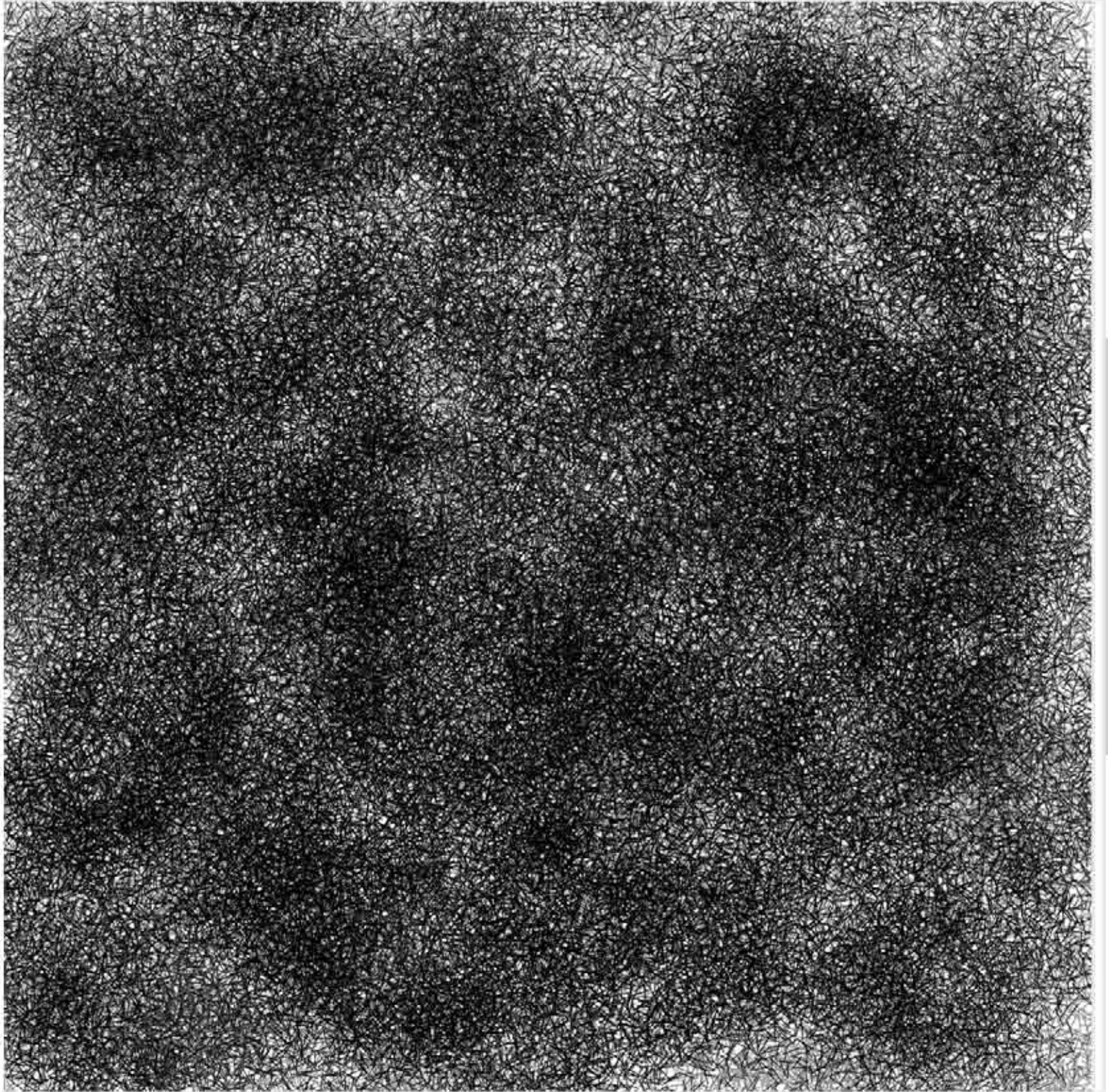
The Poetics of Chinese Worldview

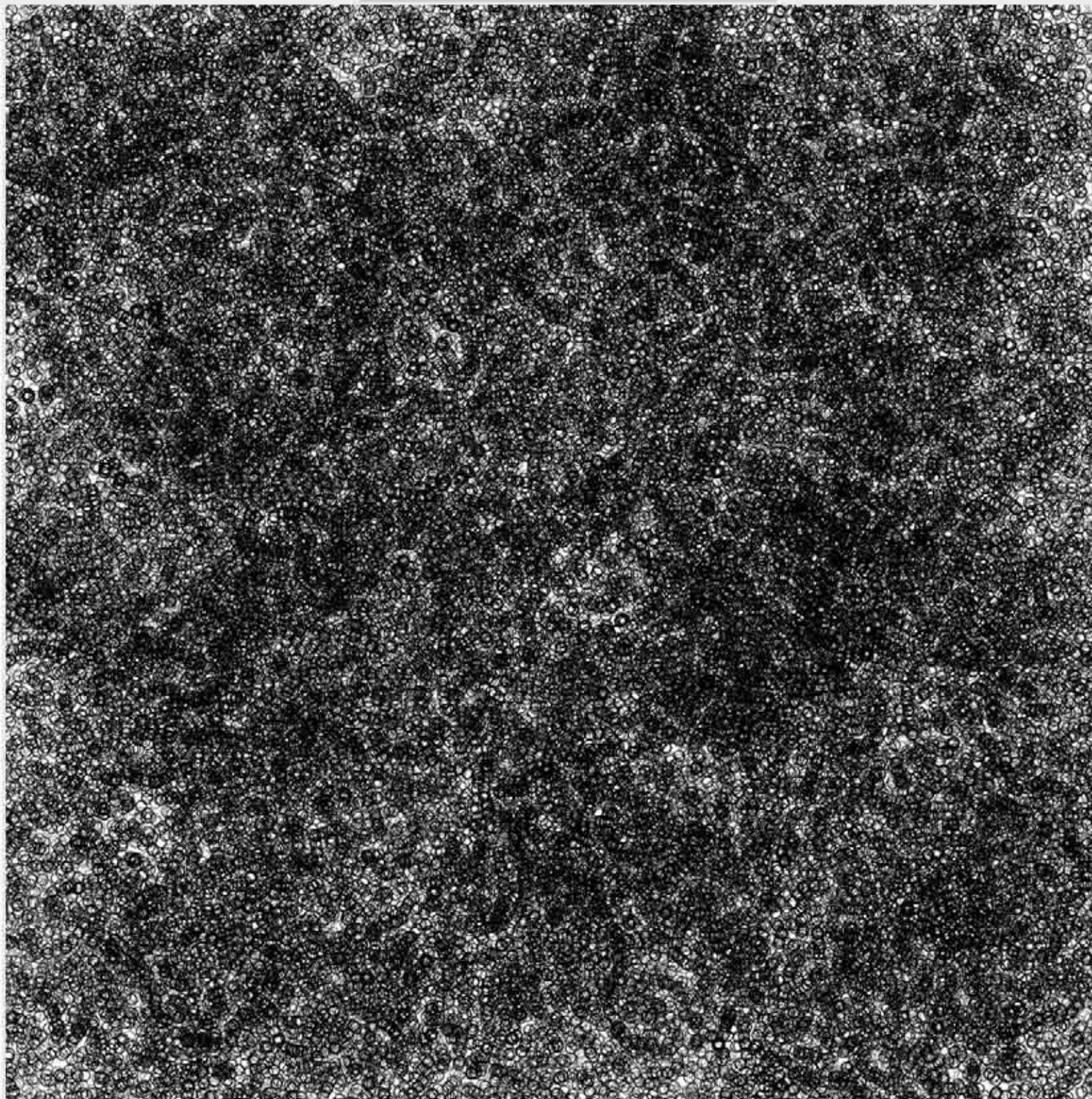
This series of work *Chaos and Order* explores the mathematic aesthetics¹⁵¹ of chaos in mutation through re-creating the Chinese worldview of nature (the universe). Departing from one single computer binary code of '1' and '0' respectively, and yielding to Daoism that *The way begets one; one begets two; two begets three; three begets the myriad creatures* [Dao sheng yi, yi sheng er, er sheng san, san sheng wan wu.] [道生一，一生二，二生三，三生萬物。] (Daodejing, chapter 42, Lau, translated, p. 63), each of these works is created through either the myriad '1' or '0'. The continuous orderly repetition of '1' or '0' constitutes shades of grey, light and shadow and the freely chaotic forms. Myriad repetitions give birth to the unfathomable profundity of nature.

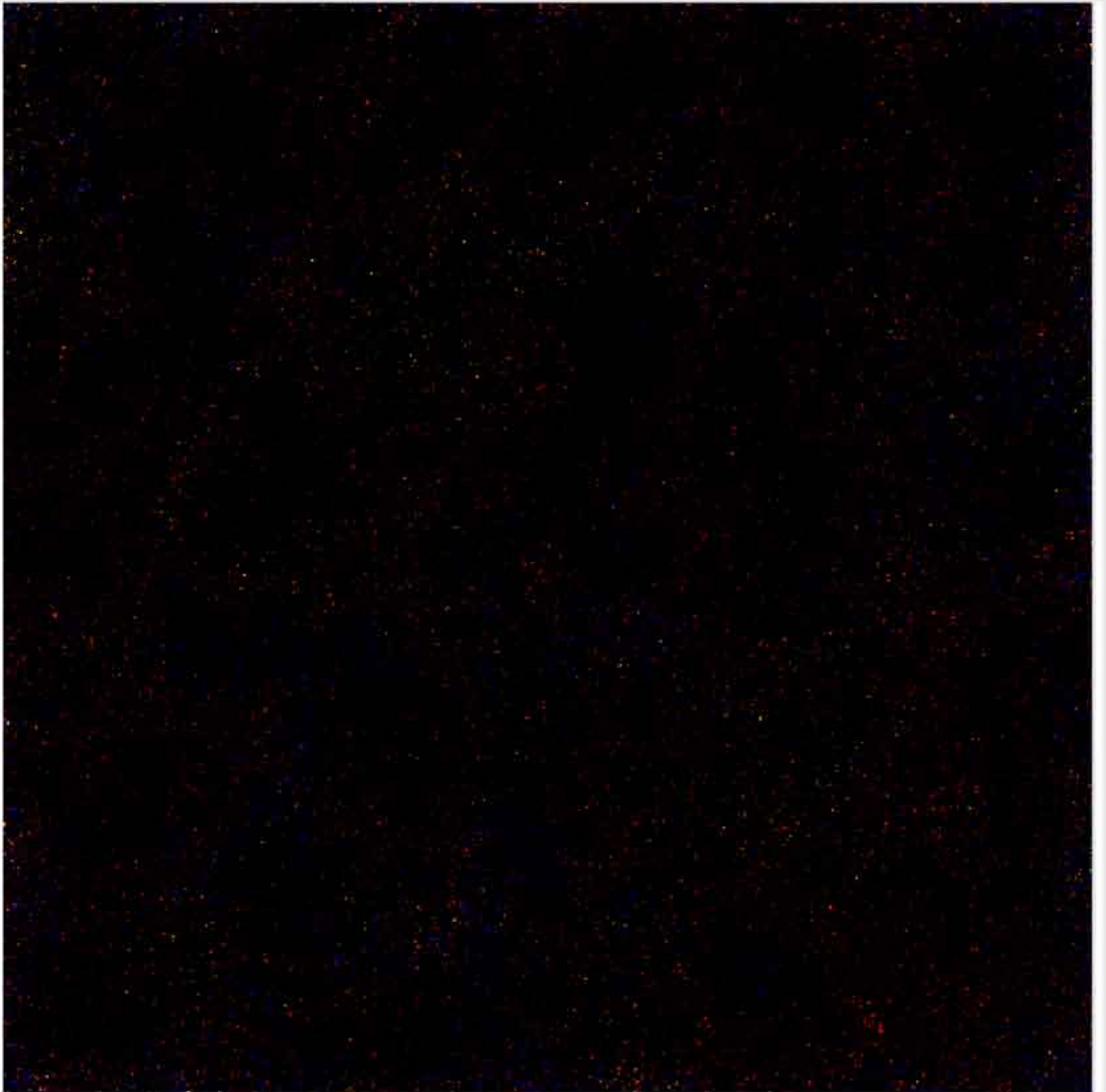
The method of applying the seemingly automative process of repetition to develop self-structural forms reveals the chaotic and mutable nature of the orderly science and technology. Through the tedious¹⁵² self-experience of 're-creating' nature¹⁵³ with technology, the self is enlightened to endeavour continuity, wholeness and dynamism — a spontaneously self-generating process.¹⁵⁴ It is a process of contemplation in balancing chaos and order to attain the state of void. It is a process of spontaneity¹⁵⁵ (naturalness)¹⁵⁶ [zi ran] [自然] to reconstruct nature. It is also a concurrent process of internalisation and externalisation of nature. Through the experience, the subjectivity of self is dedicated to fully embrace the objectivity of technology; and finite is transformed to infinite. It is also the authentic manifestation of technological skill (craft)¹⁵⁷ through attaining the state of void. The work bestows a virtual reality¹⁵⁸ of nature — a subjective objectivity¹⁵⁹ to unfurl a contemporary consideration of the Daoist stance on craft and technology.

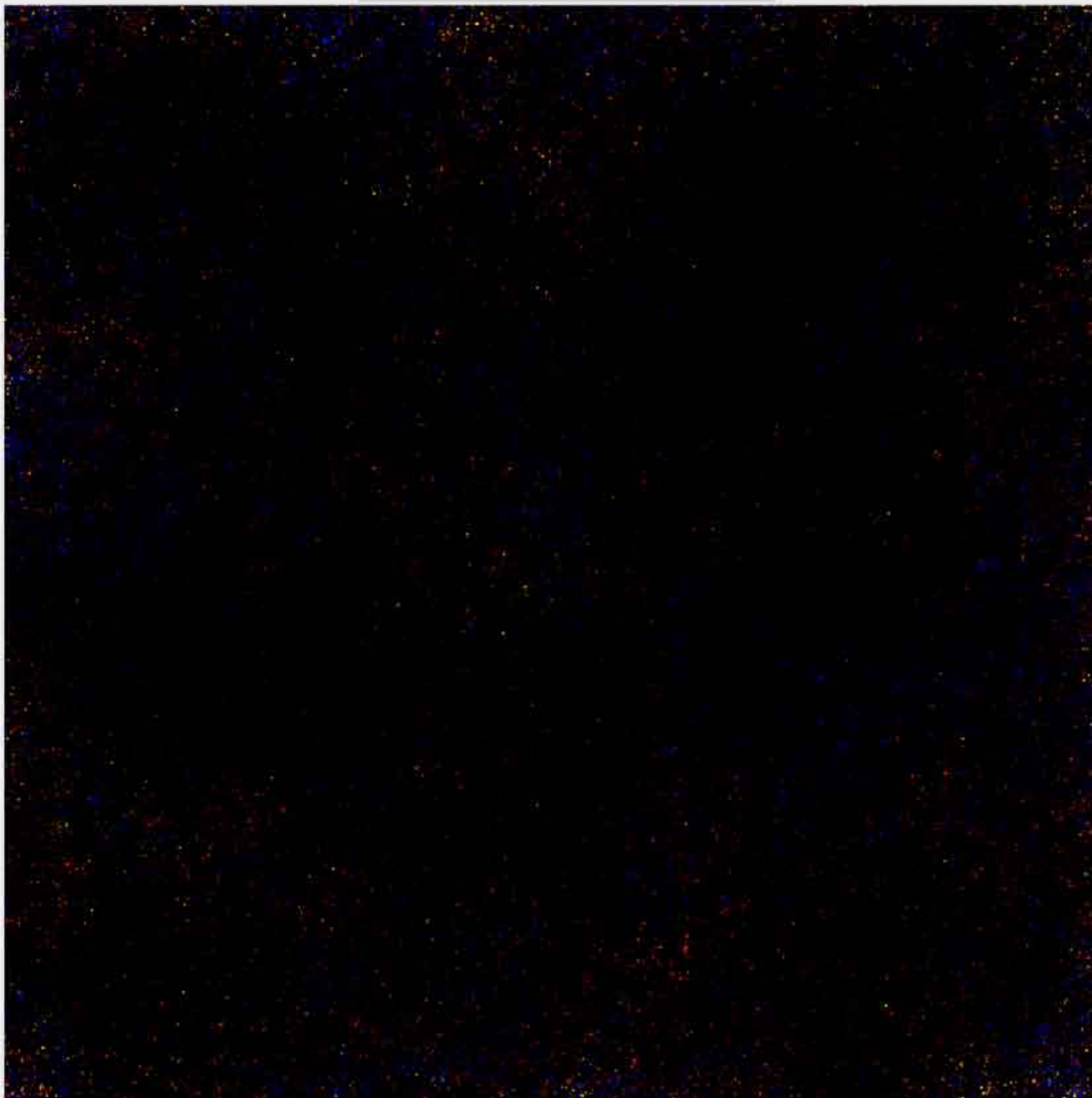


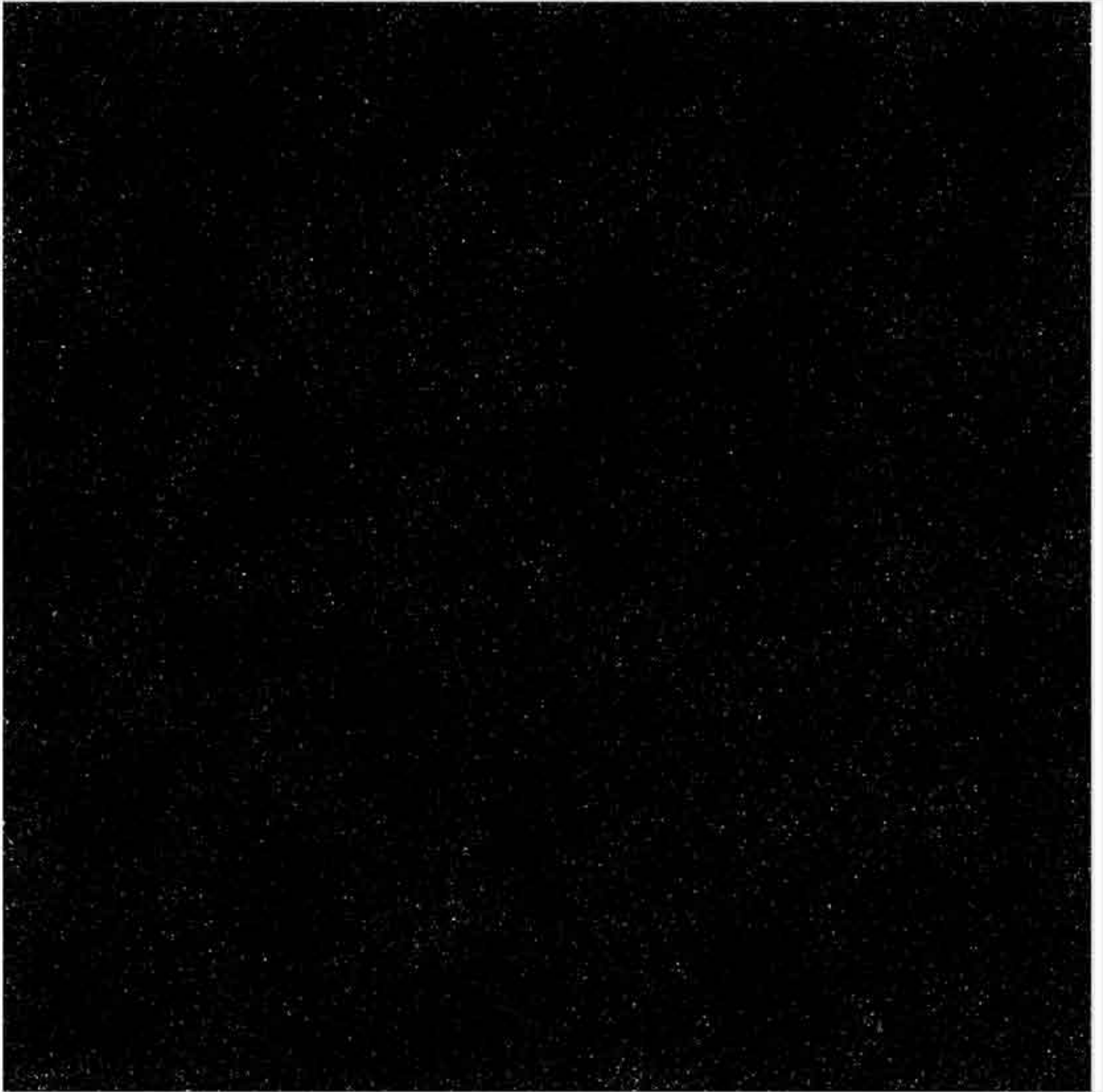


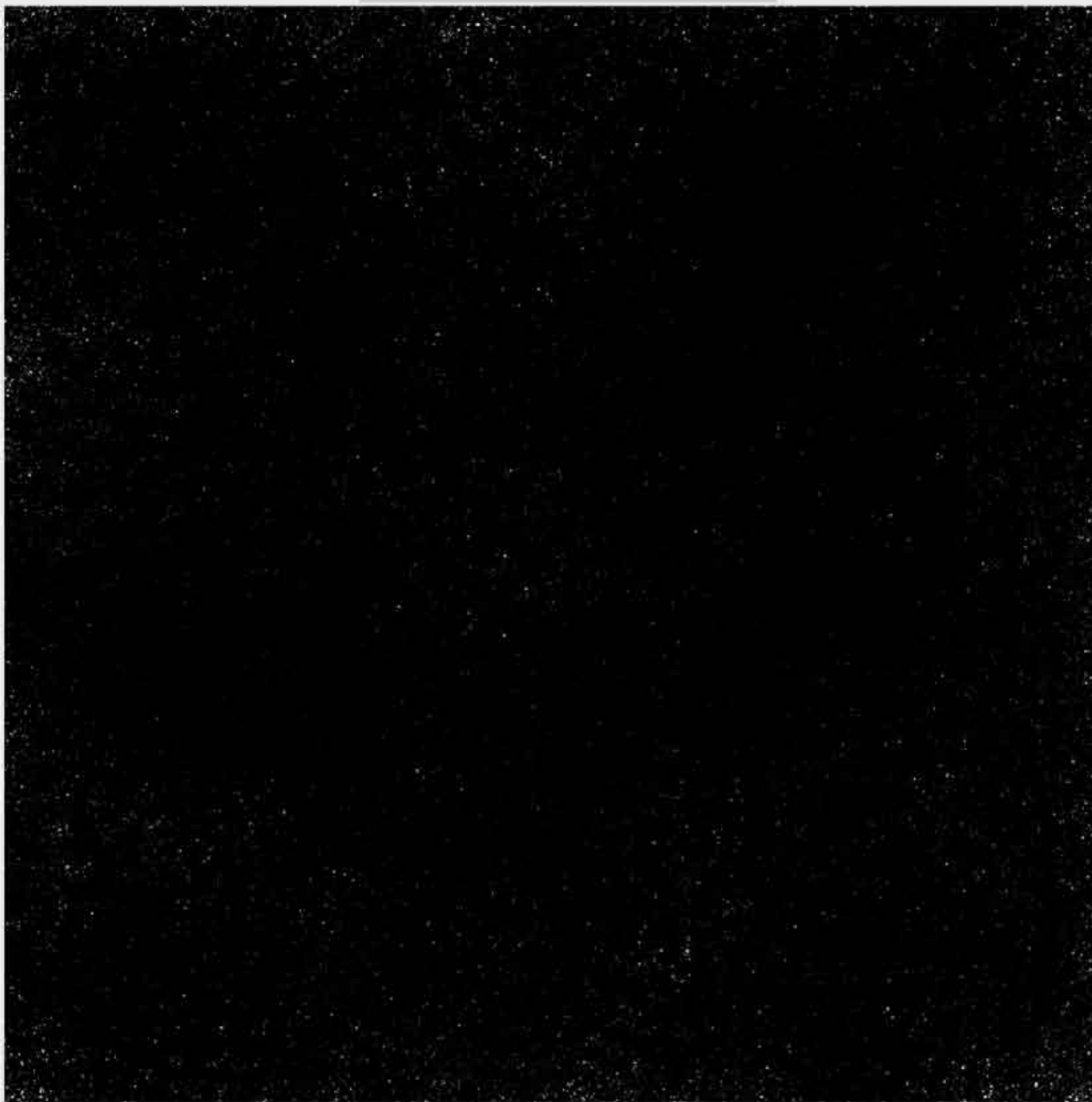


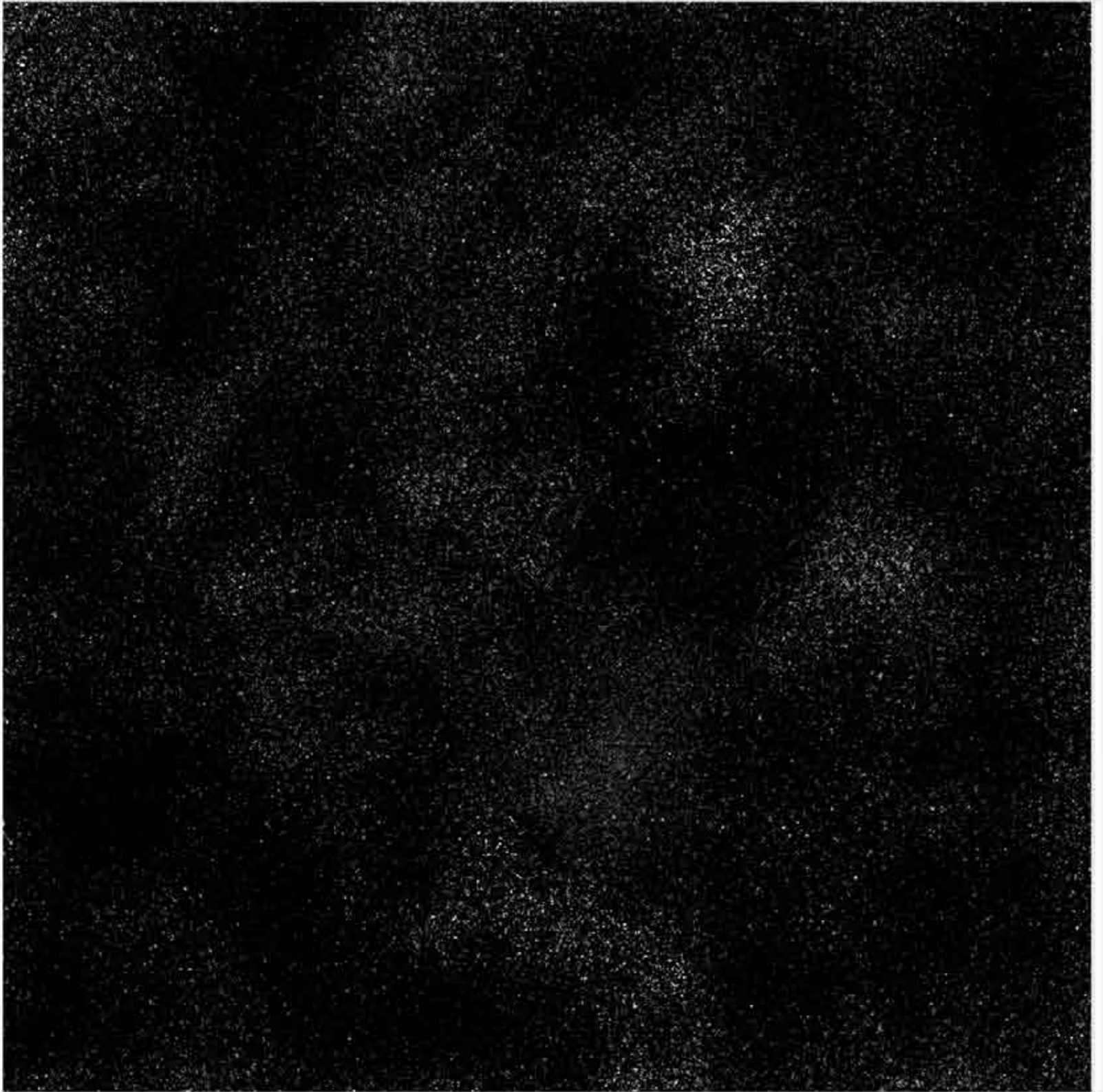


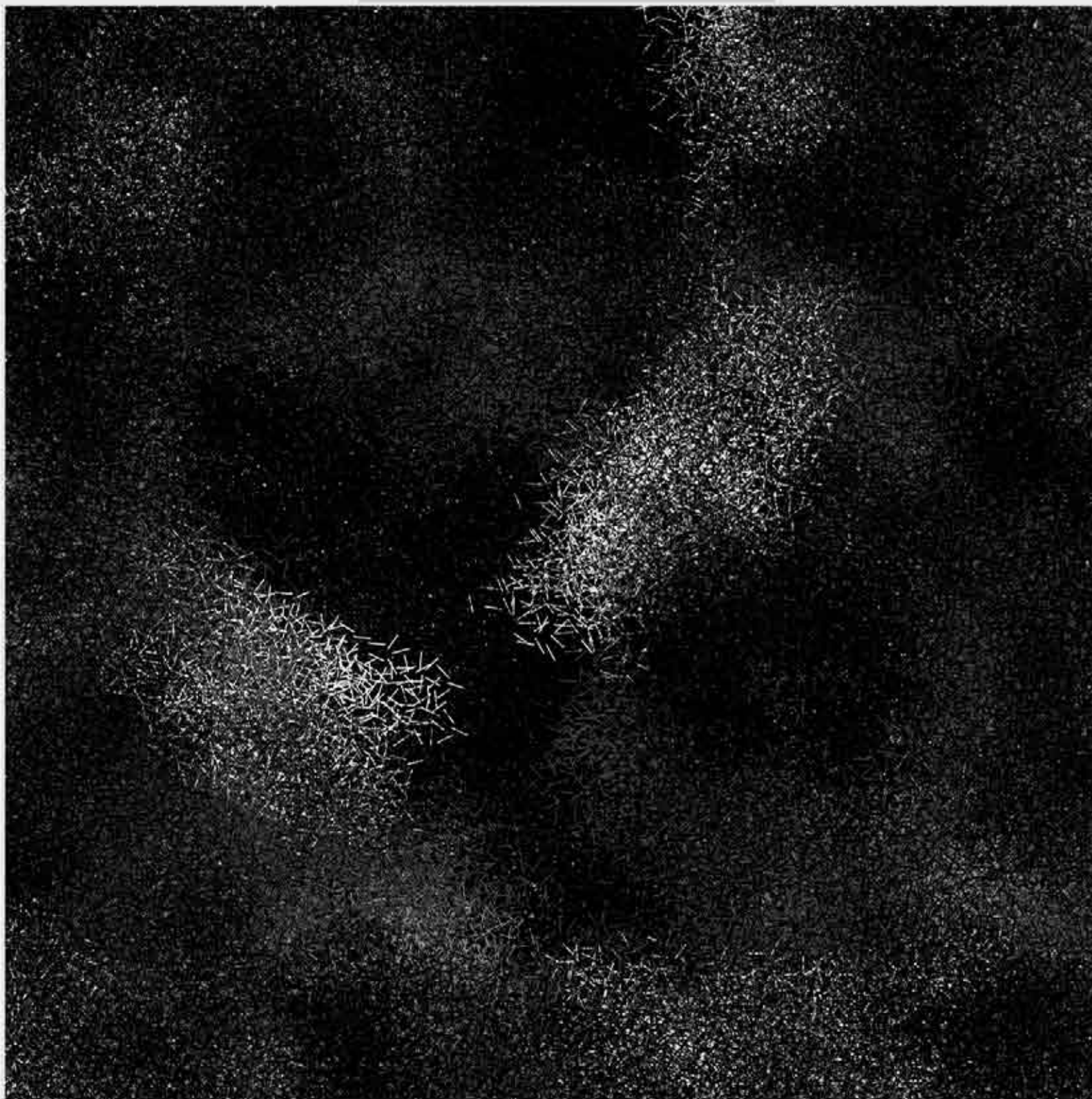


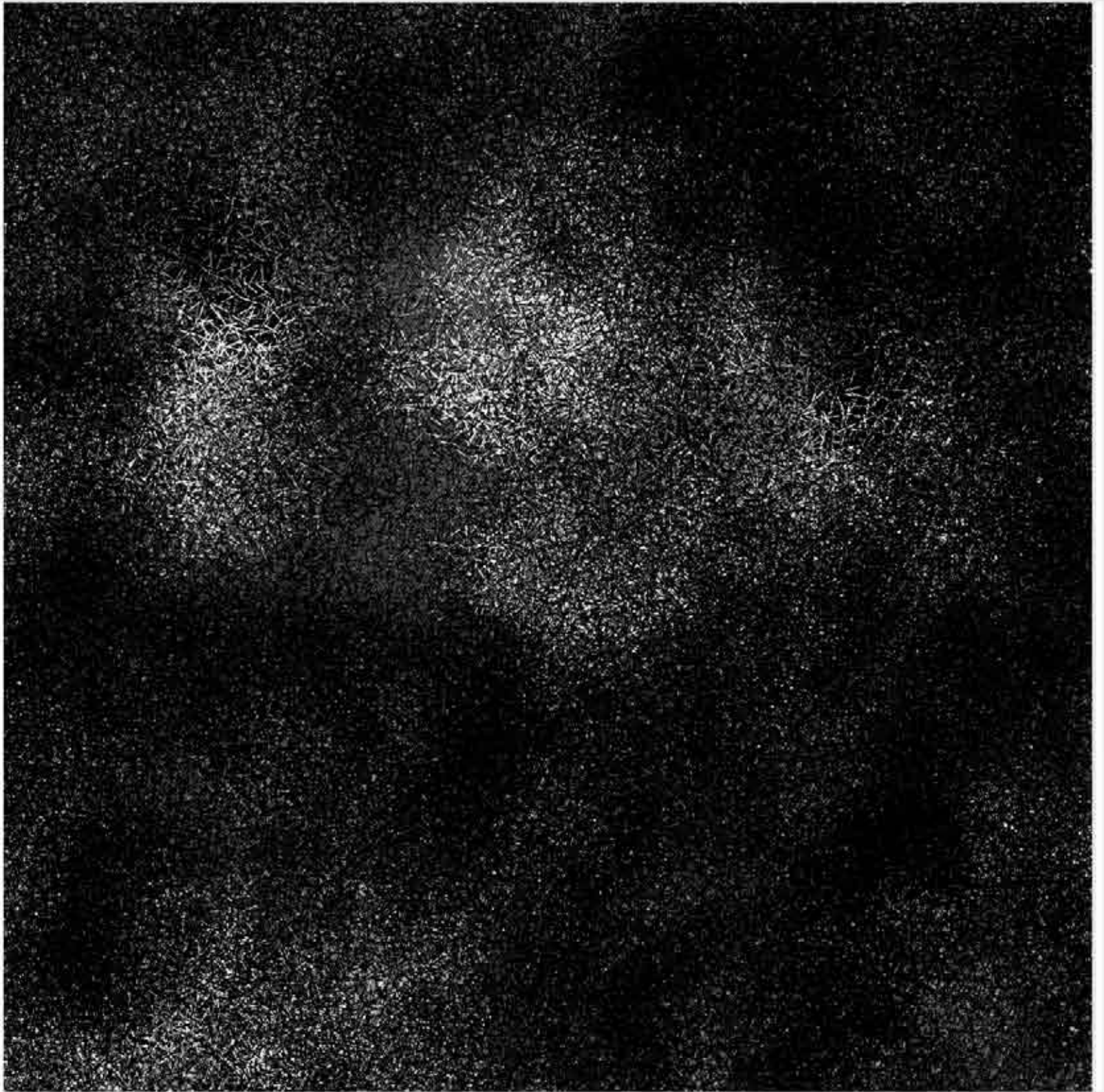


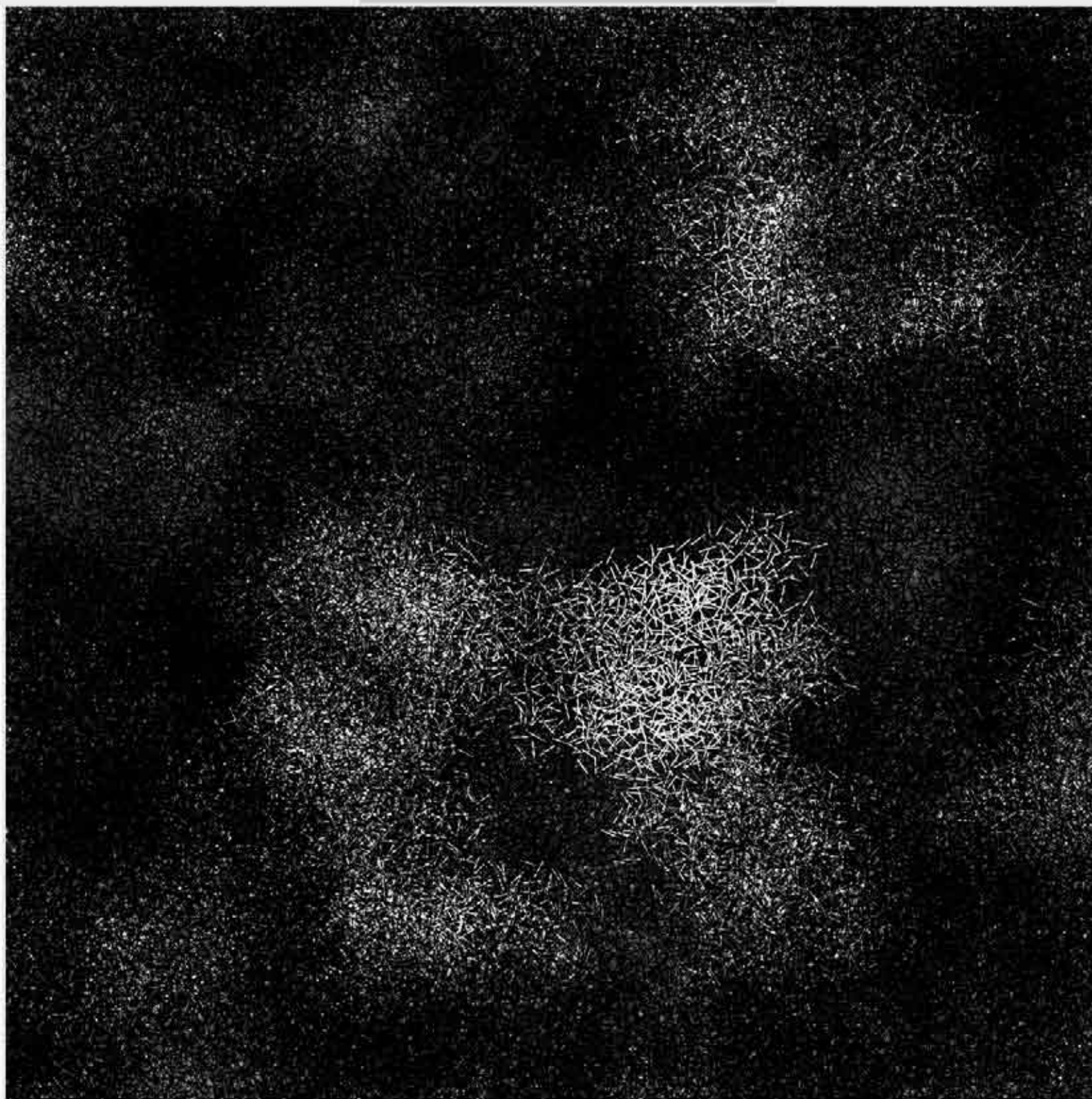


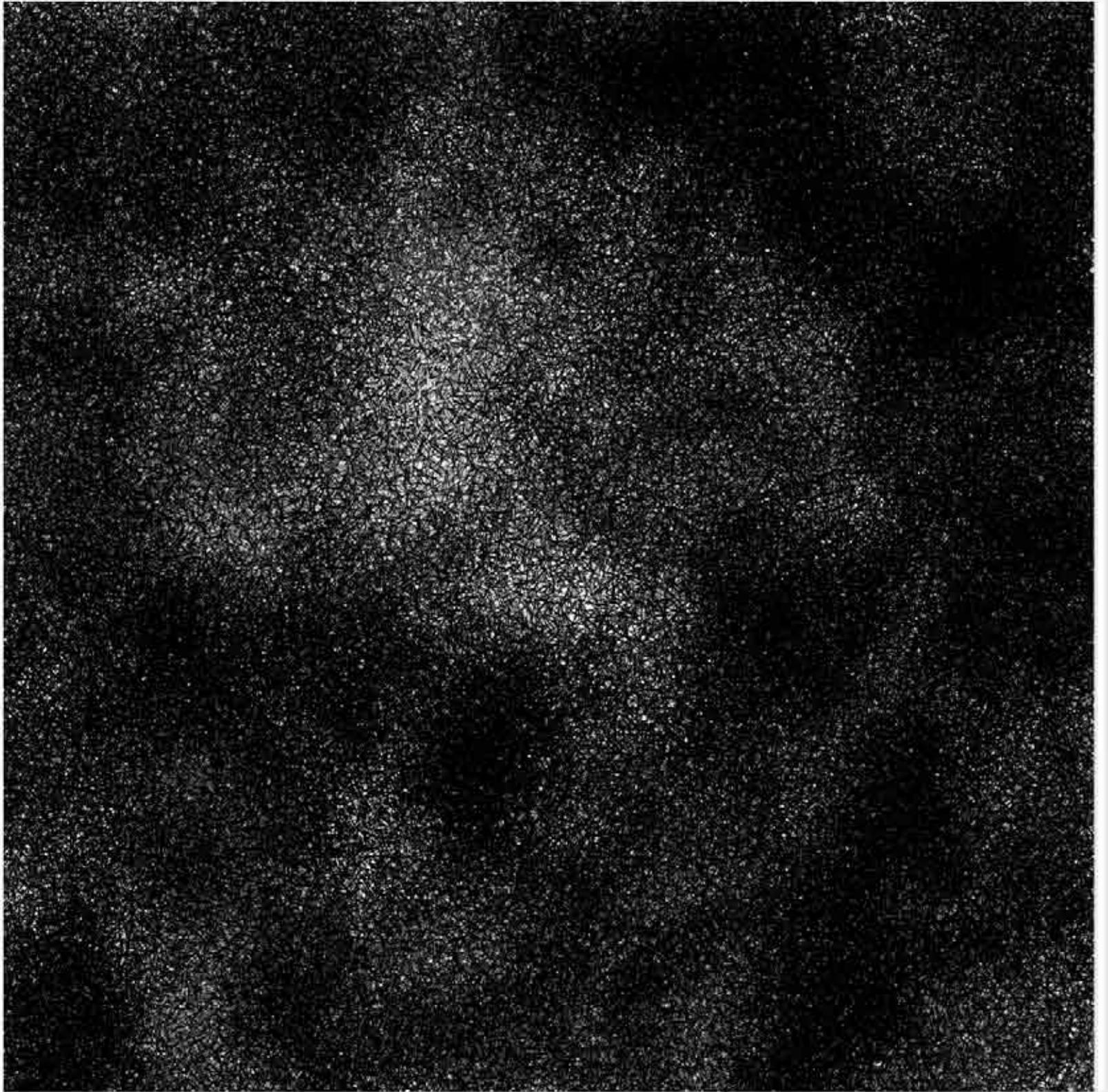


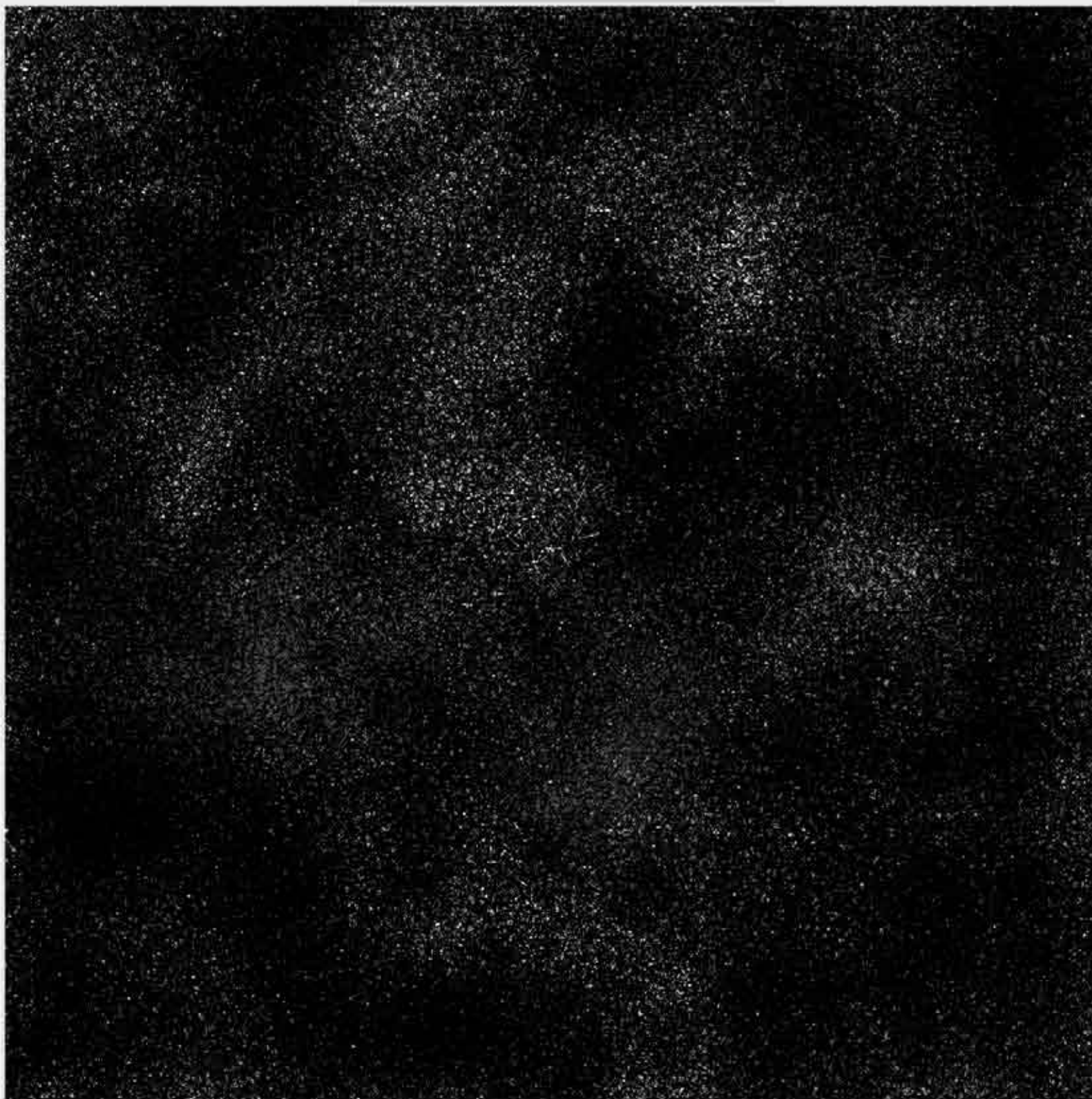


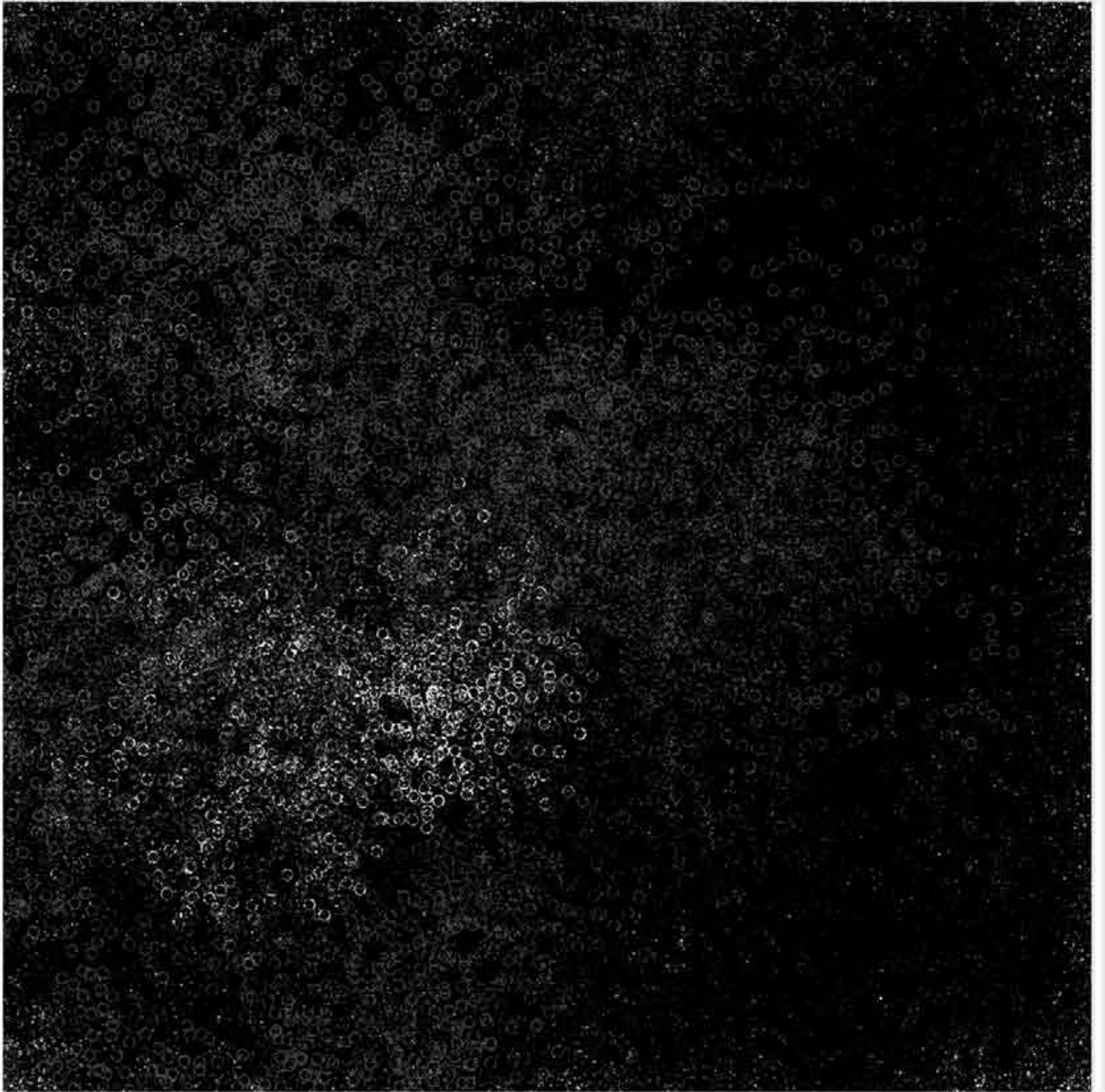


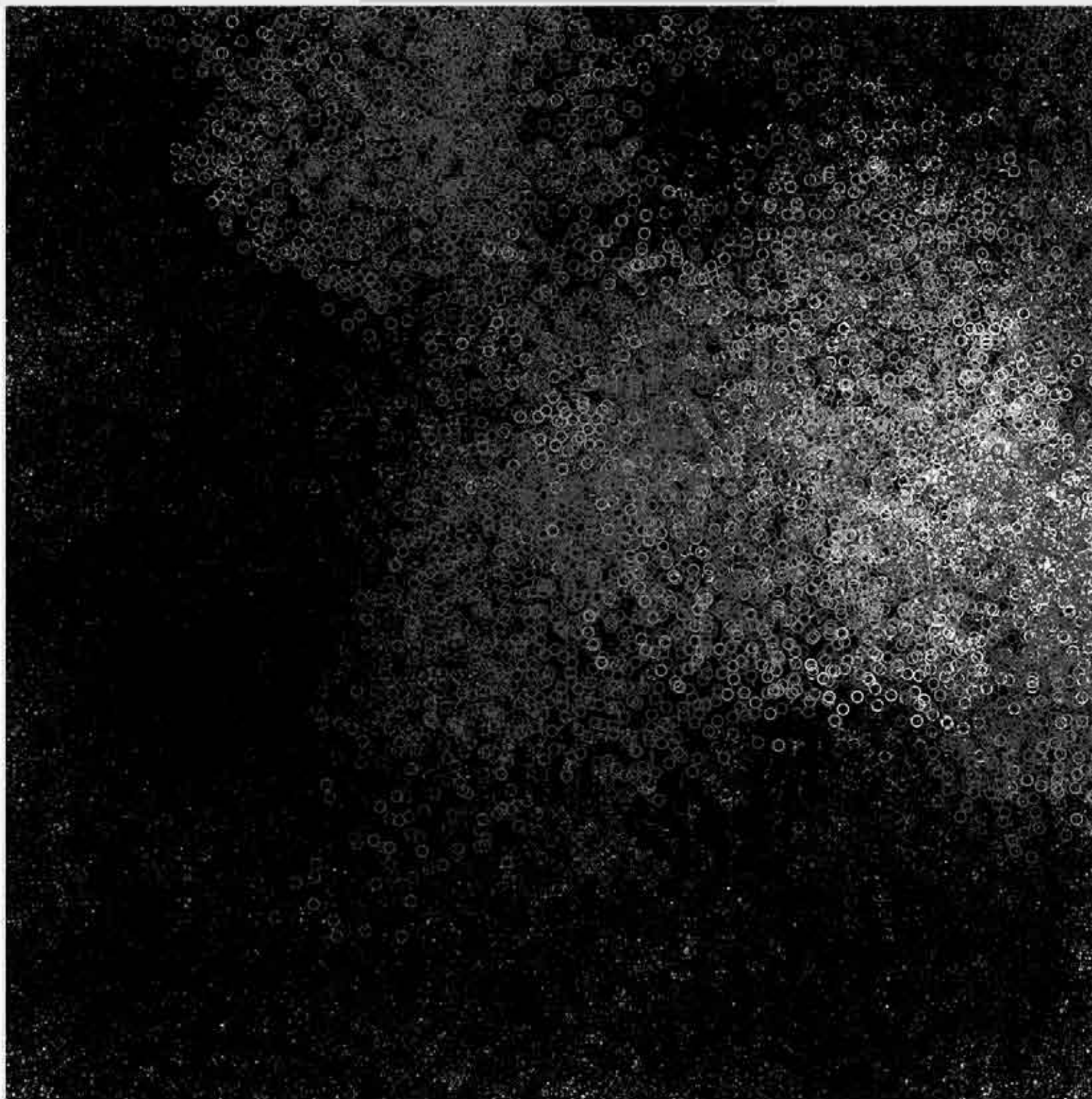


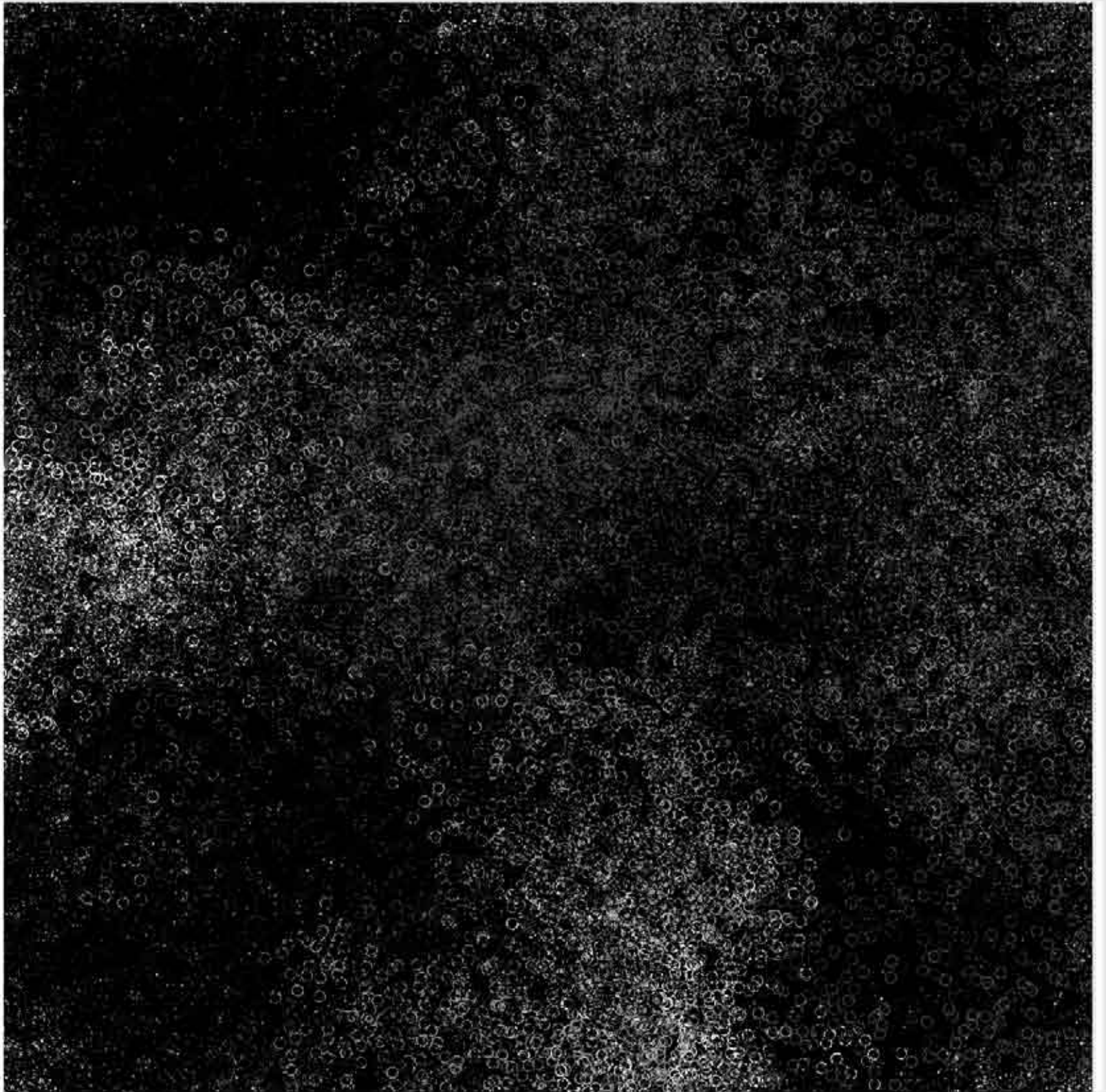


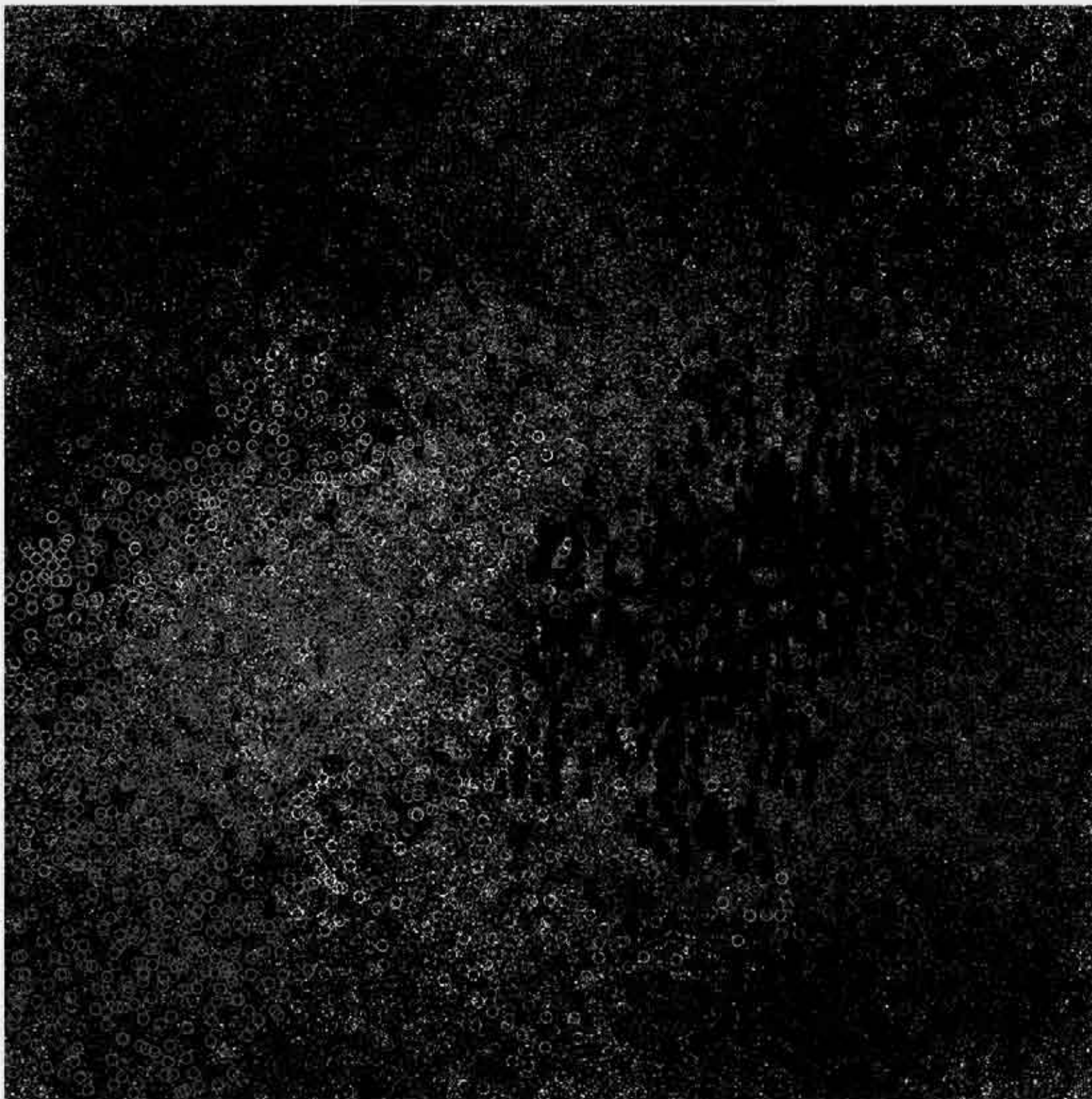


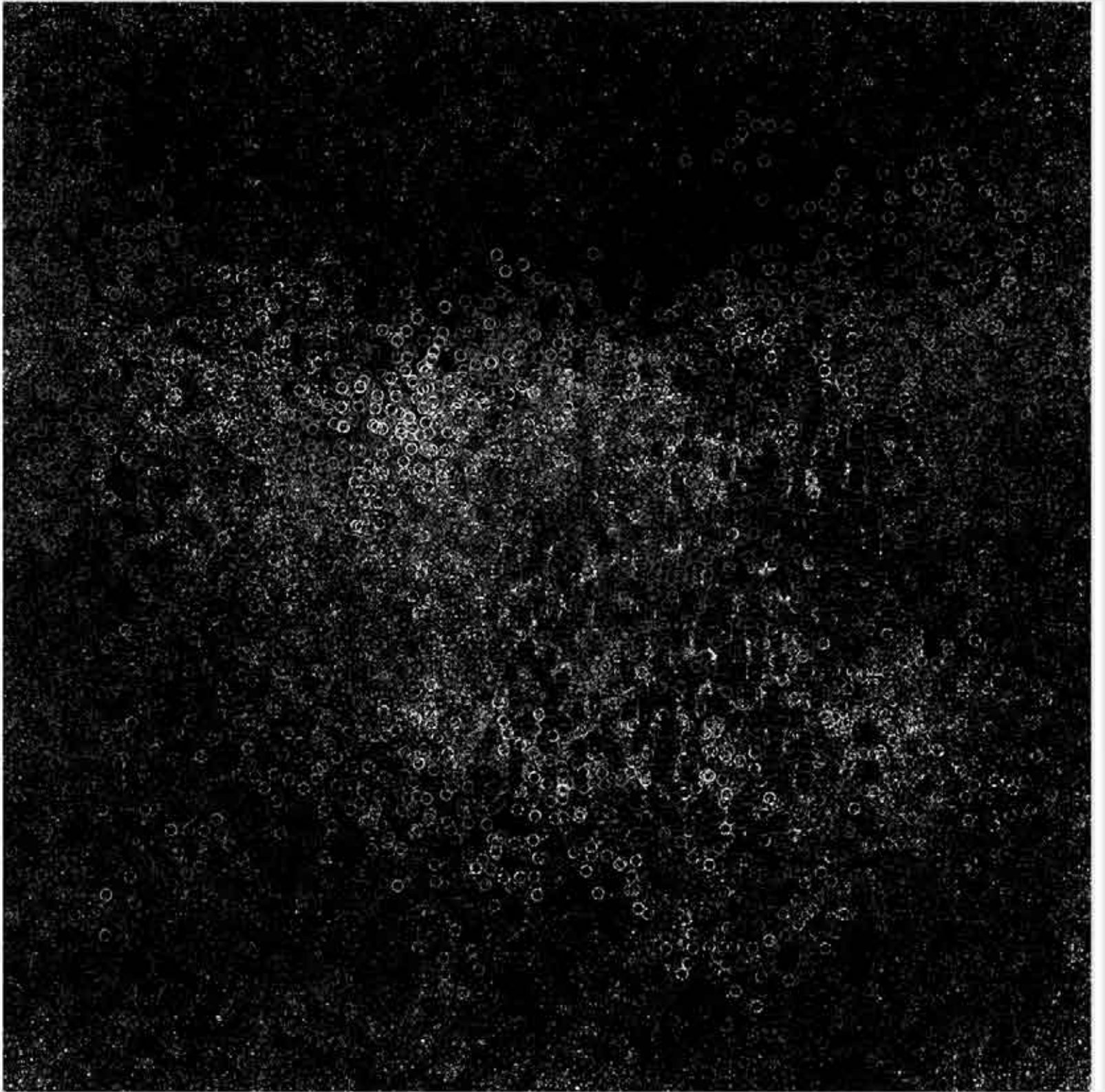


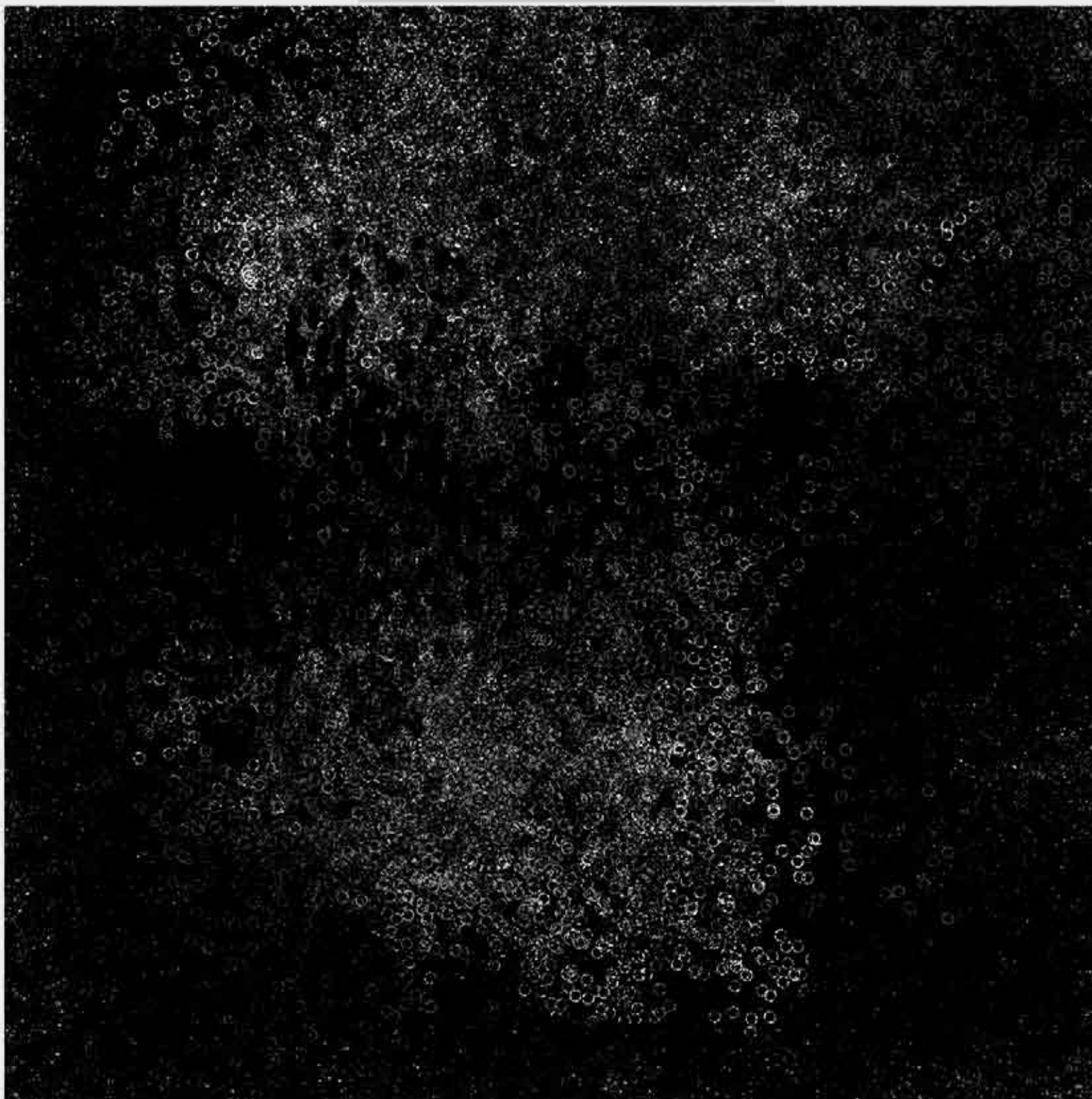












The Poetics of Allusion [Joy of Fish]

This work is inspired by one common question that my Kiwi friends typically ask. Are the Chinese happy in the current buoyant economical environment? Nowadays in China, the average quality of life in a material sense has been upgraded, despite the poverty existing in the remote rural areas. Are they really happy? However, most of the time, behind the literal implication the question is in fact a connotative one questioning the existing communist system in China in a polite manner. In a way the question that should be asked is: Do the Chinese enjoy their life under a communist system, despite the improved standard of living? The question posed is a consequence of different perspectives aroused between the two cultural norms of capitalism and communism. This project does not intend to establish and discuss any political stances; rather through the work *Joy of Fish*, I am posing the consideration of what Powers (2000) says of Zhuangzi's doctrine *Qi Wu Lun* that *distinctions, identities arise as a consequence of perspective* (p. 81).

This work *Joy of Fish* is inspired by Zhuangzi's (c 300 B.C.) parable that challenges the idea of knowing and believing. It is also a response to my established position¹⁶⁰ that knowledge is debatable, but not belief. In the parable, Zhuangzi argued and through his dialogue with his friend he was able to conclude that the fish are happy. Through the parable, a question is posed: do we really know? Or do we believe we know? This also initiates the dialogue about the identity of 'self and otherness'¹⁶¹ in which identity arises through the perspectives of individual. Zhuangzi suggested that *to discriminate between alternates is to fail to see something* (Graham, 2000 translated, p. 67).

In my work, the fish are vivacious and energetic, and from their expression, it is likely that we believe they are happy. However, the fish had been chased by me during the shoot for several hours; they were exhausted, as I was too. Knowing their experience, I believe that they were unhappy. In one way, I am making an assumption through my personal experience without referencing others' knowledge. In another way I simply make a distinct comment under a certain circumstance. Powers (ibid.) suggests that *... all perspectival views are admissible, but not at the same time and not under all circumstances* (p. 93). Then the question is why would I create such a work that will likely suggest that the fish are happy which is in contrast with my belief about them? As such I have posed an openness that contrasts with my belief.

Throughout Chinese history, it was not uncommon for the educated elite to criticise the imperial power

through paintings that embodied poetic allusions. Underpinning the seemingly apolitical beautiful scenery is potentially a poetic intent (Murck, 2000, p. 1 & p. 4) of significance to the painter. Over time the poetic intents are distanced from the physicality of the painting. Murck (ibid.) therefore suggests that *understanding the “poetic concept” or “poetic intent” will give clues to why [Chinese] educated men [sic] painted and the idea [poetic intent] of a painting was more significant than the physical reality of it* (p. 4). And yet, the problem arises: how are individuals able to justify any poetic intent underpinning the work?

Through the *Joy of Fish*, I have offered an open-ended allusion — an answer with no answer, to respond to a question that has always been asked, which involves the complexity of knowledge, belief and cultural differences. The Otherness (individual self) will need to establish his/her own perspective, investigate the poetic intent of my work and manifest a temporal transformative reality of his/her own belief.

The poetic intent as one of the constituents of transformative openness in Chinese aesthetics provides allusive references to art historians and critics with clues to develop knowledge and, through discourses, to rationalise their beliefs that are always temporal and transformative.





The Poetics of Experience with Nature

Emotional Deposition

The Huang Shan trip¹⁶² is a trip to encounter nature — of aesthetic experience; for contemplation; for cultivation and enlightenment. The trip triggered an emotional resonance in me. In Huang Shan, anyone would be enlightened by Zhuangzi's concept of the restraint of language and image. *It can't be described, it has to be seen*¹⁶³ (Zao, 1990, quoted in Riboud). Enveloped by the mists and cloud in front of the peaks of Huang Shan, I was captivated and infused by the poetic and pictorial scenery, and was plunged into a state of harmony with nature — a state of self-resonance.¹⁶⁴

I was stirred by nature — the peaks, the mists, the clouds, the wind and the natural phenomena¹⁶⁵ of balancing the constant chaos with temporal order in the here and now.

I was stirred by the dignity of the carriers¹⁶⁶, humbled and enlightened by their perseverance, the art of their unification with nature: simply bamboo shoulder poles and their bodies.

I was stirred by the granite steps and by the people who, for centuries, built them. Climbing Huang Shan is about climbing thousands of steps. For Riboud (ibid.), *each step gradually reveals a little more of another world; each step brings new visual fulfillment* (p. 134). For me, each step further reveals the spirit of the people who built it; each step evokes the persistence of the carriers; each step constitutes sedimentation of experience with nature; each step brings me closer to nature.

I was stirred by the artists, the painters, photographers¹⁶⁷ and masses; by their engulfing in nature; by their insights and creativity.

I was stirred by Xuan Paper — its primitivism; its delicacy; its fragility; most importantly, its intimacy with ink and artists.

The Experience

For centuries, Huang Shan has inspired Chinese artists in their art practice. Huang Shan is unique for its granite stone, pine trees and the mist. Climbing the mountain region is an amazing experience; it entails actually climbing up and down on granite stairs. It took centuries to build these walkways and is a mission that will not come to an end.

In Chinese cosmology, Huang Shan is a celestial (divine) representation of Heaven.

In this work *Huang Shan*, I digitally composed many scenes that I encountered. To me, the work is not unreal or imaginary as it is a unification of the real scenes that I had experienced in Huang Shan. In a contemporary digital context, it is considered 'virtual reality'.¹⁶⁸ However, the composed unification of real scenes is also a temporal physicality of my harmonious spiritual experience with nature. It is a fusion of my external and internal world towards Huang Shan. I borrow Francois Cheng's idea (1986) that *the combined imagery strives for something that transcends the individual images* (p. 47). *The constructed elements of nature are not perceived simply as external decorations but as participating intimately in the human drama* (p. 41). This digitally composed work is the transformative reality of my externalised interiority.

It has already been noted that Chinese classical painting does not follow the scientific one-point perspective — rather, it follows multiple perspectives. To be more precise, I consider it as moving perspective.¹⁶⁹ The idea of moving perspective can be found in classical hand-scrolling painting in which the beholder unrolls and re-rolls to view individual (or part of the individual) scenes of the painting. When beholders view my *Huang Shan* work in this manner, they are moving from scene to scene. What is unique about this work is that multiple scenes are compiled together and become one virtual scene to represent reality — the reality of my interiority. Thus, the moving perspective has created the vitality of qi¹⁷⁰ that endures the spirit.

I also have transformed the nuances of hue in the photographs to become shades of black ink. The radiance of mountains connects with the brilliant white sky through the effect of water-diluted black ink employed by Chinese ink painting aesthetics. The diverse range of shades of black ink also creates a depth¹⁷¹ of virtual space¹⁷² that is continuously moving, thus traversing the emptiness of whiteness¹⁷³. Through the simplicity of hue, it evokes the complexity of the poetic intimacy between Huang Shan and the Chinese,

between what Daoism always advocates: human and nature.

Infusing classical Chinese aesthetics in my digital work is the way of securing my own path through bridging the gap between artistic and cultural legacies.¹⁷⁴

This work *Huang Shan* comes from the way I composed the scenes that I had experienced to reveal my internal sentiments about the Chinese artists' concealed affection towards Huang Shan.

































The Poetics of Memory

This series of work is the practice of digital recycling of damaged physicality of aged images. The originals of these works were taken within a time span between the 1970s and 1980s relating to scenes of unique cultural aspects at that time. The gradual disappearance of these scenes is a natural phenomenon of the transformative qualities of daily mundane life. These scenes were a temporal identity of the then society and were internalised through photography to become the interiority of self (myself). In time, influenced by the humanisation of nature (Li, 2005), the interiority of self continues to undergo transformation. These originals are a constant revitalising agent that re-weaves my memories for internal transformation.

Because of the constraints imposed by the archival quality of chemical photographic technology, the physicality¹⁷⁵ of the original images has undergone gradual decay and become decomposed. Through the art practice of digital restoration, and without intending to regain their original aesthetics, my aim is to instill new spiritual and physical aesthetics in these works. In a way, I intend to recycle the 'constant' to develop a 'new' contemporary origin.

In this series of works, the 'new' is located in the 'new ways' of relocating classical 'constant' thoughts of poetics to the digital terrain through recycling and revitalising of cultural legacies. The technological restoring capabilities provide a 'new constant' (both virtual and physical) to bridge contemporary (new) and classical (constant)¹⁷⁶; the impossible is made possible and 'constant' is renewed and relocated. The ingenuity of technology also offers a thinking apparatus¹⁷⁷ (Gemeinboeck, 2004) for the self (myself) to intervene in my 'constant' memories, to resonate, transform and actualise, thus providing an intellectual interactive space through the temporal orderly physicality of my 'chaotic' memories. This temporal form (recognisable form)¹⁷⁸ [cheng ti] [成體] plays the role to initiate 'new constant' poetic thoughts in the here and now within the context of digital art practice. This temporal form is also a perceived temporality of a design (cheng zhang) [成章] of the ever-transforming identity of my memories.

The restoration process as a thinking apparatus provides me with a digital virtual space to re-call, to muse over, to savour and to re-weave my mundane memories. It is a virtual space of reminiscence to unify the past and present. Thus, the physicality of these works is an embodiment of the epitome of my nostalgia. Underpinning the deep rich nuances and the imbued sparkling vibrancy lie my hazy and murky

memories: the child's play; the kindred intimacy; the urban density; the far-reaching and faded glories; the colonial; the stronghold of feudalism; the patriarchy; the preservation; the primitive; the decay; the immobilised; the estrangement; the cliché; the ambivalence and so on. For the artist-self, the poetic of the recycling (or restoring) art practice lies in manifestation and actualisation of my interiority of these lingering memories.

This series of works provokes bland moments of calmness, stillness, remoteness and silence — the poetics of memory.





































The Poetics of Teaching [In Praise of Confucius: Nurture and not Categorise]

There is a Chinese proverb [tao li man men] [桃李滿門], which literally means *a house fully loaded with peaches and pears*, that describes a great teacher. Traditionally, peaches and pears are an allusive representation of students of unparalleled quality. A few years ago, I was delighted to receive a peach plant as a gift from my first group of postgraduate students. It was a young plant and yet it was baring four mature peaches at the time I received it. I made photographs of the four peaches. I planted it in a big pot and since then it has been well nurtured by my wife. There is a gradual increase in the number of maturing peaches annually with more than fifteen this summer. Last year, I took a second photograph of the peaches.

I compiled these two photographs of peaches in a series of documentary works on Confucius that I did in the 1980s to form this collection of work. Although Confucian philosophy is only a minor element of this project, I have always taken his dictum of *nurture and not categorise* [you jiao wu lei] [有教無類] as my teaching stance. Not categorising is a naïve statement in the contemporary context. We establish sophisticated systems to categorise ourselves wherever and whenever needed and in such a way that categorisation becomes the norm of our mundane daily life. Nowadays, it seems as if we are born to categorise and be categorised.

In my peach photographs, each of the peaches is unique and different, some very healthy and mature, some greenish and some decayed. Each of them radiates and disperses its verve; they are performative in the Confucius sense. I did Chinese calligraphy for the first time with the four Chinese characters of the dictum nurture and not categorise to be included in the second set of photographs. I spent several hours practising cursive script style so I might 'create' my first calligraphy work. Being a novice calligrapher, my calligraphy might be unseemly and naïve. However, it is the naivety of my calligraphy that constitutes the spiritual essence of this practice.

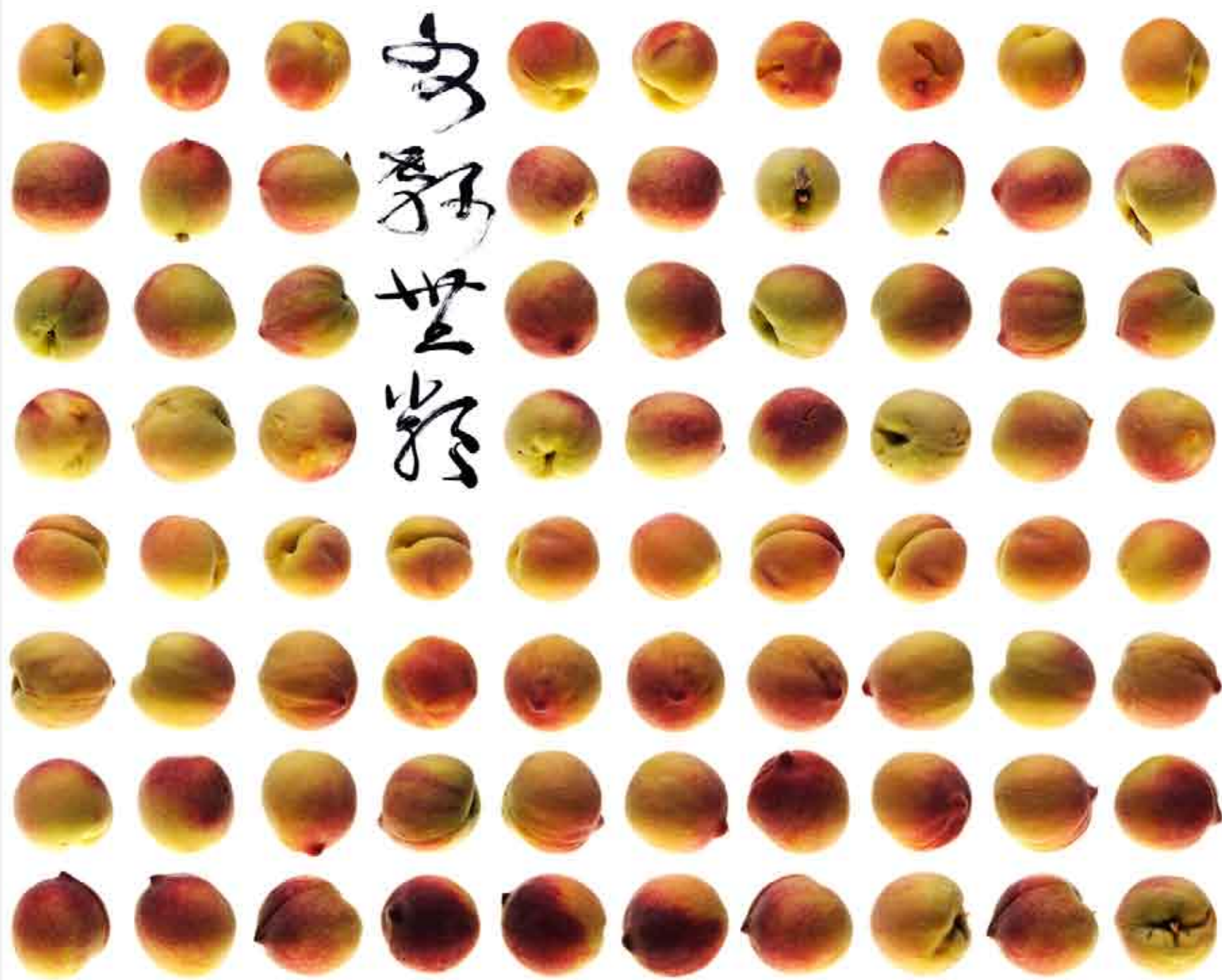
This work, on the one hand, challenges the naivety of the artist, myself; and through this, suggests the naïve integrity of my philosophical belief of being an academic and teaching. In reality, I must follow the 'norm' to categorise my students. In a way, I am always finding the balance between 'to categorise' and

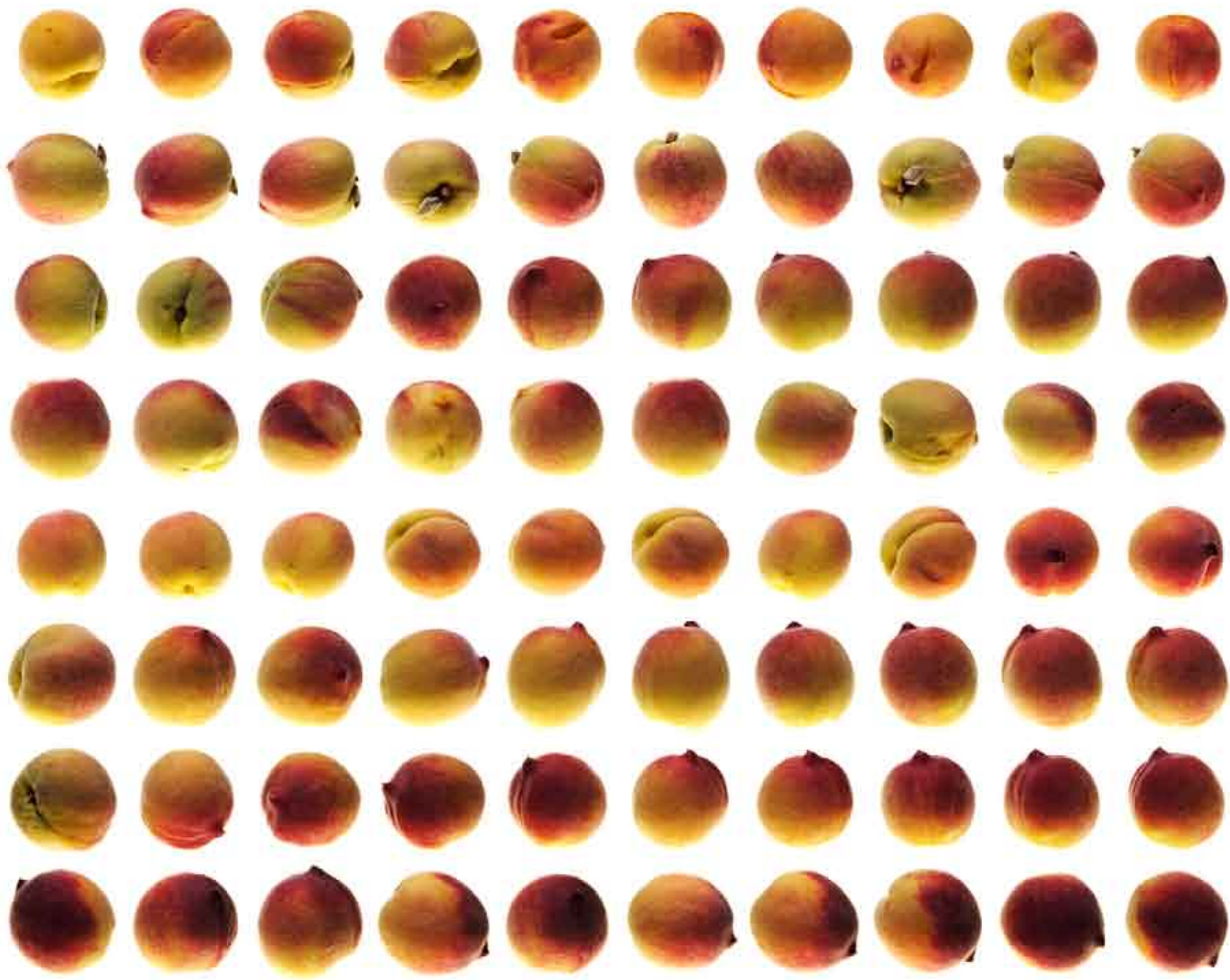
‘not to categorise’; between naivety and integrity.

The series of documentaries on Confucius include three main areas; namely the Confucius Academy [xin tan] [杏壇], the Confucius Estate [kong fu] [孔府], and the Confucius Forest [kong lin] [孔林]. A recent reviewing of the archive and selecting of images in this documentary is one of the ongoing processes of externalising my interiority for a temporal transformative reality. My current perspective has changed from an outsider to an insider — from a photographic practitioner who documented Confucius to an art teacher following Confucius’ nurturing stance. Liu Xie says: *Antiquity, however remote, appears before us, face to face* [zhong gu sui yuan, ai yan ru mian] [終古雖遠，儼焉如面] (Yang [yan yu] [嚴羽], 1983, translated, p. 8).

In the work *Confucius*, the physicality of intense light and shadow radiates subtle and sophisticated nuances, together with simplistic colour hues, it disperses a sense of remoteness, quietude and tranquillity.

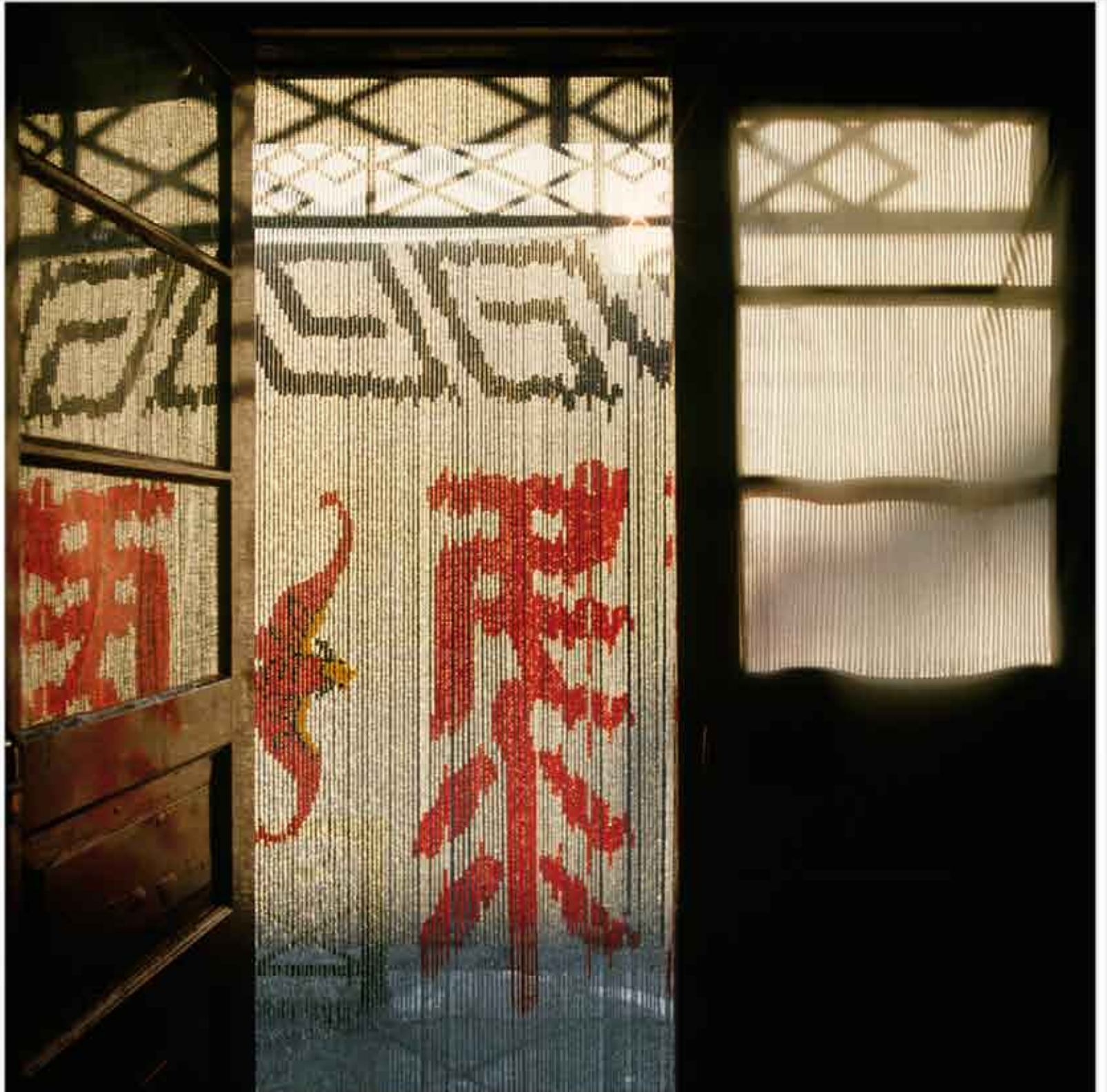
Placing these two collections (peaches and Confucius) with seemingly different aesthetics and unrelated concepts together is a challenge. It challenges the balancing of contemporary and constant, the new and constant new of the naive but firmly held belief, nurture and not categorise.





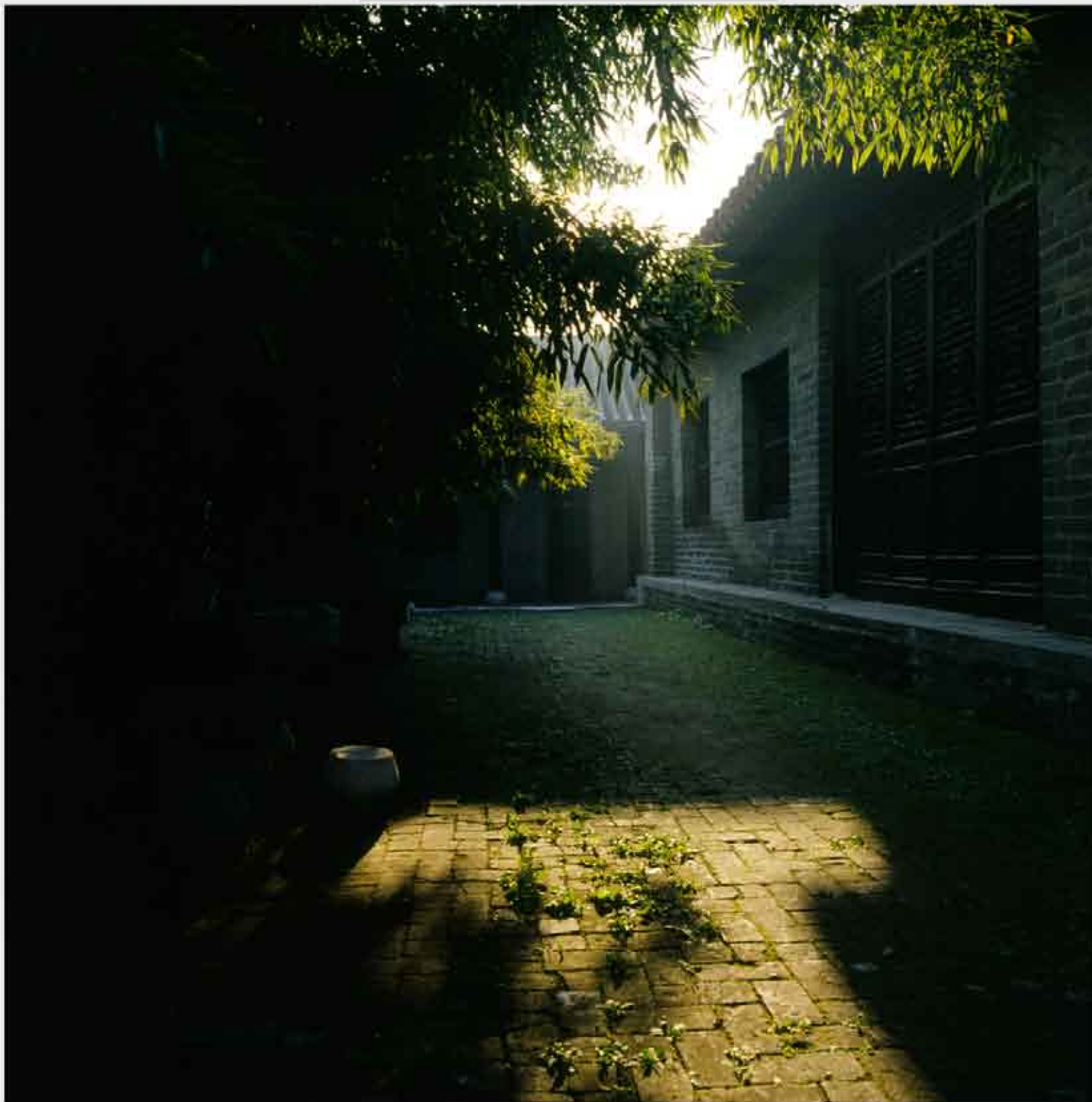






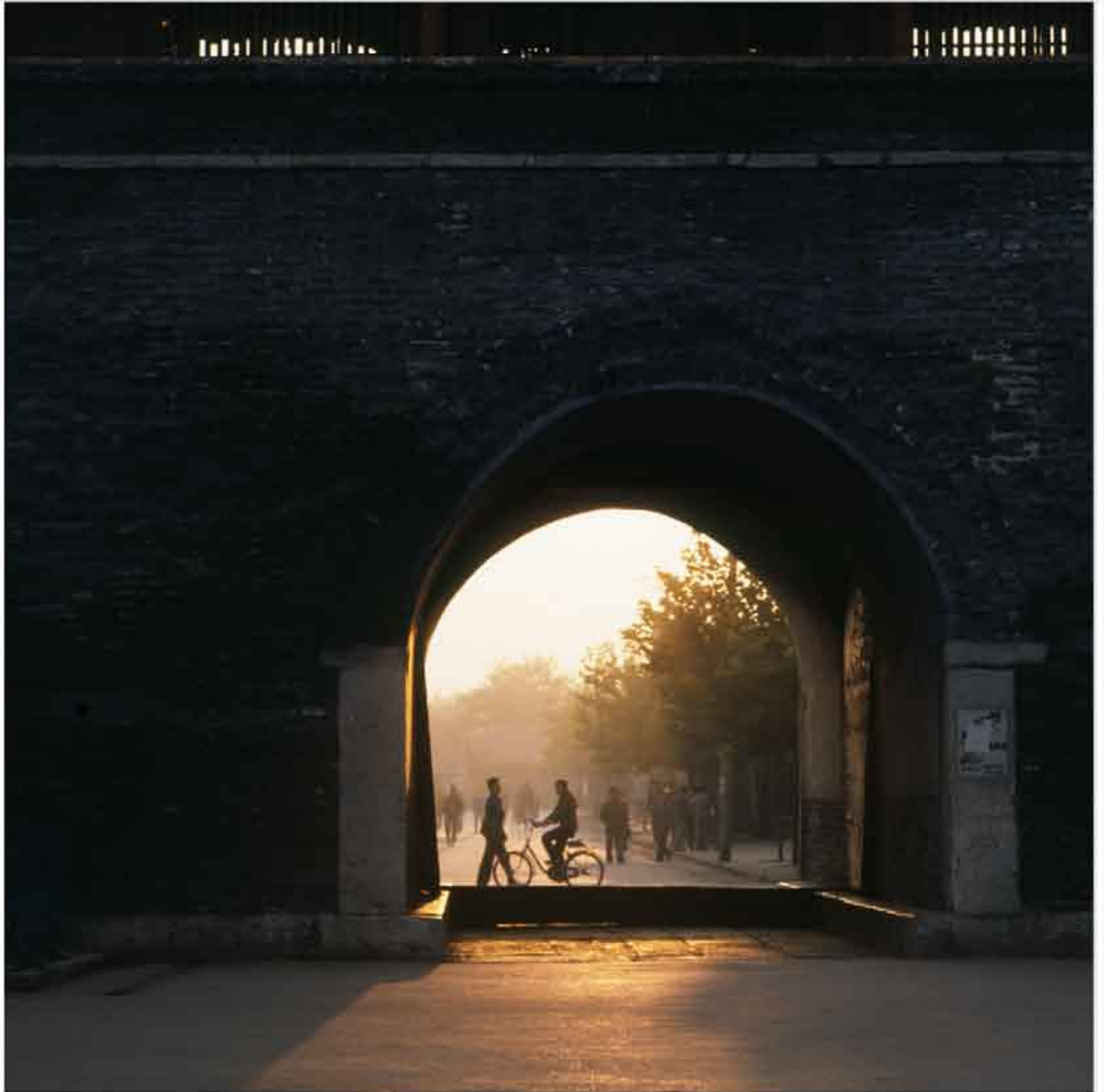


















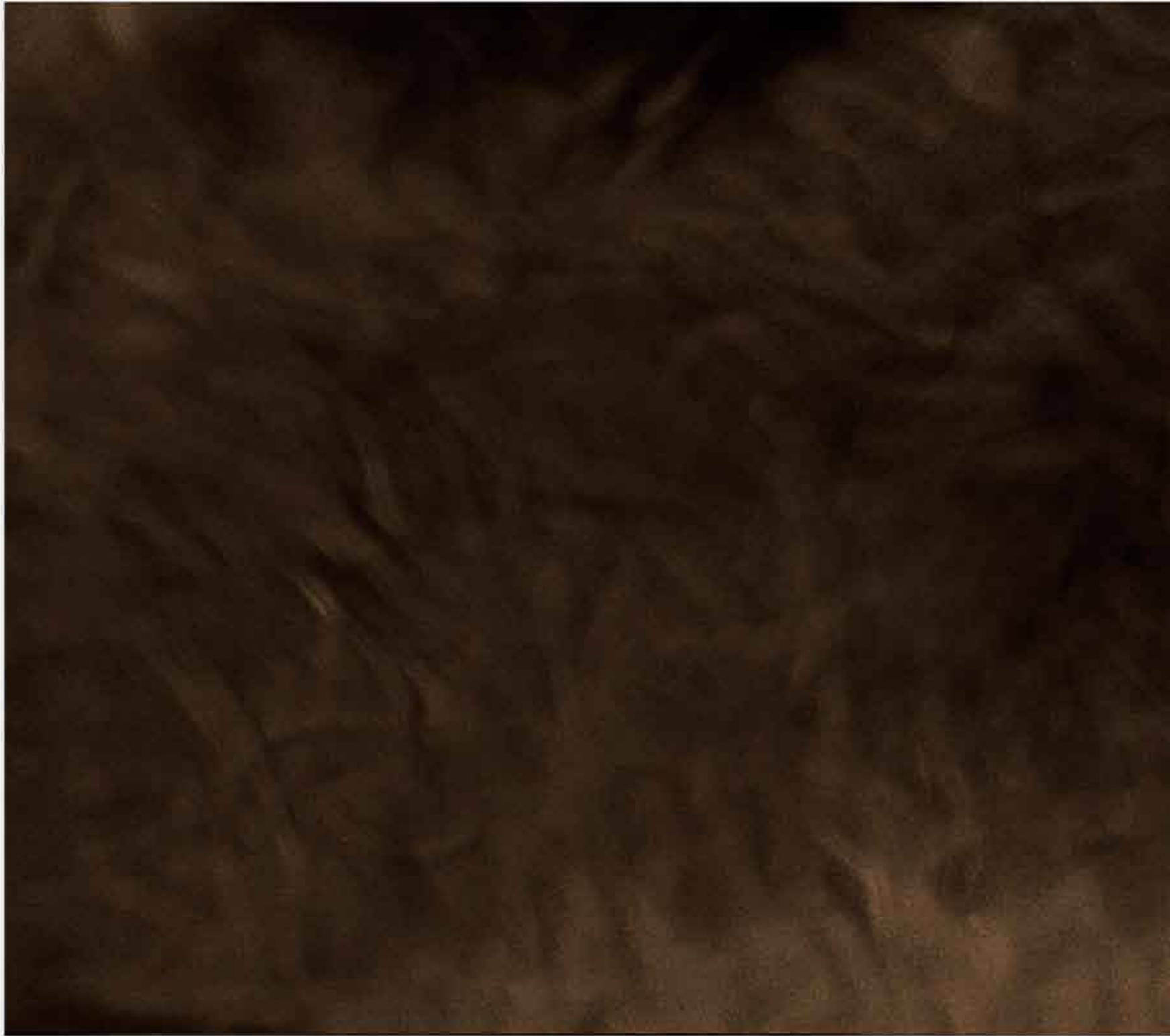
The Poetics of Natural Vitality [The Five Elements]

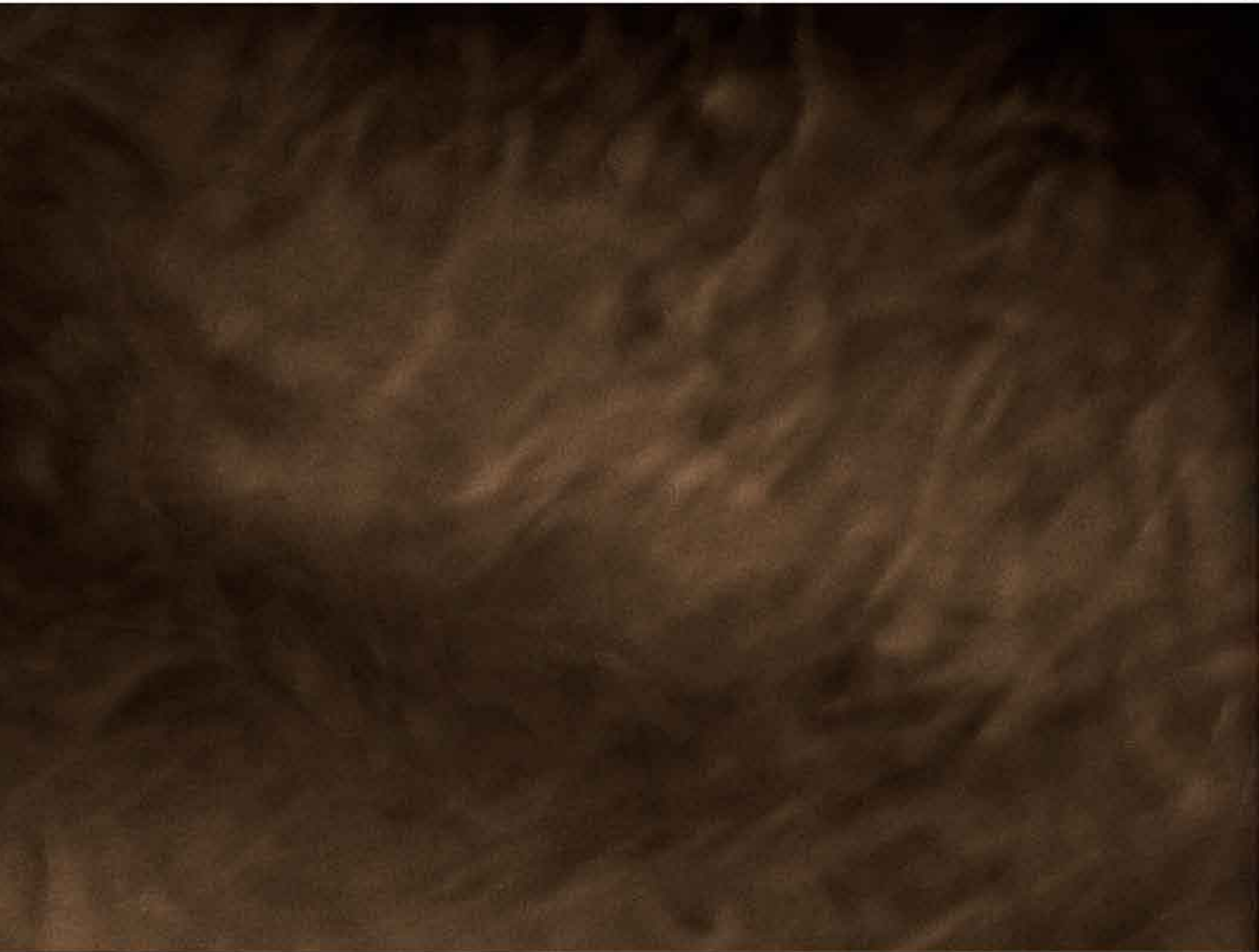
The Five Elements of Metal, Wood, Water, Fire and Earth are organic elements which constitute a system of forces (qi)¹⁷⁹ that *exists to sustain the transformation of yang and its union with yin* (Tu, 2004). These constantly changing and moving elements are performative in nature (the universe) and are persistently transforming in physical form. Through the unification of yang and yin, all things are vigorous. It is this worldview that ‘all things’ exist with internal qi that corresponds and seeks harmony with the external qi of nature (the universe).

Setting out from the belief in the Five Elements as the self-generated superfluous vital force which motivates all myriad things, this series *The Five Elements* explores the Chinese philosophical worldview of qi through the physicality of the five organic elements. Each of the five works is developed for one element and together they form a wholeness of transforming qi. The physical forms of these organic elements are vaguely discernible. The ostensibly repetitive and changing forms in each work insinuate the profundity and obscurity of nature. This seemingly ambiguous approach of philosophical likeness in physical unlikeness creates the sense of detached remoteness. This sets free the self from daily mundanity, thus arousing genuine subtlety of emotions within the beholder. The repetitions of ever-changing and re-defining forms propose what Owen (ibid.) calls *animated identity* and refer to the *spirit (shen) [神]* of a thing that has unified its transformation (pp. 345-346). This animated identity continues to transform and constitutes the enduring vitality of qi of all things.

Through the premeditated creative process of capturing a temporal natural transformative state¹⁸⁰ of The Five Elements and the subsequent digital intervention, the works endow the seemingly non-existent physicality of these organic elements and are intensified by the underpinning sense of blandness within the intricate nuances of colours. There is an orderly established pattern in the works – the unadorned primitive, the chiaroscuro, and the incessant repetition. The juxtaposition of sombre darkness and hues also implies an inner feeling of the determined force and transforms to accomplish a conceptual state of limpidity (ch’ing) [qing] [清] and wondrousness (ch’i) [qi] [奇]. However, it seems achieved and yet uncertain. It is this finely crafted holding back strategy¹⁸¹ that transcends physicality to a state of spiritual sensitivity for further savouring – ultimate expression is achieved when it is implicit.

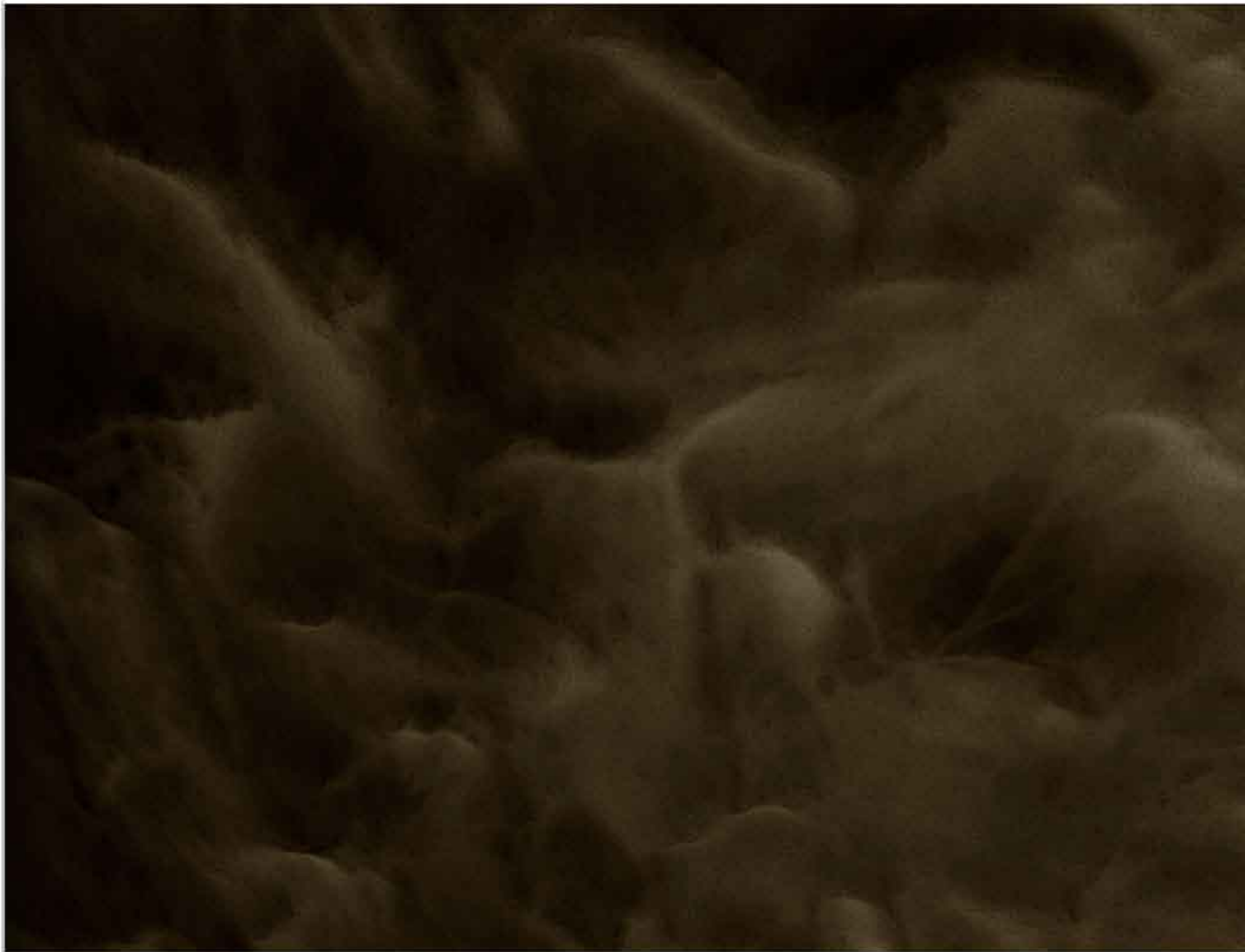
Much inspired by Qingjie Wang's (2000) philosophical proposition¹⁸² of Dao of 'not *the* thing, not *the* name, not *the* action, not *the* way', this work is intended to pose the consideration of the things, or not the things; the action, or not the action; the way, or not the way; ultimately the qi, or not the qi.

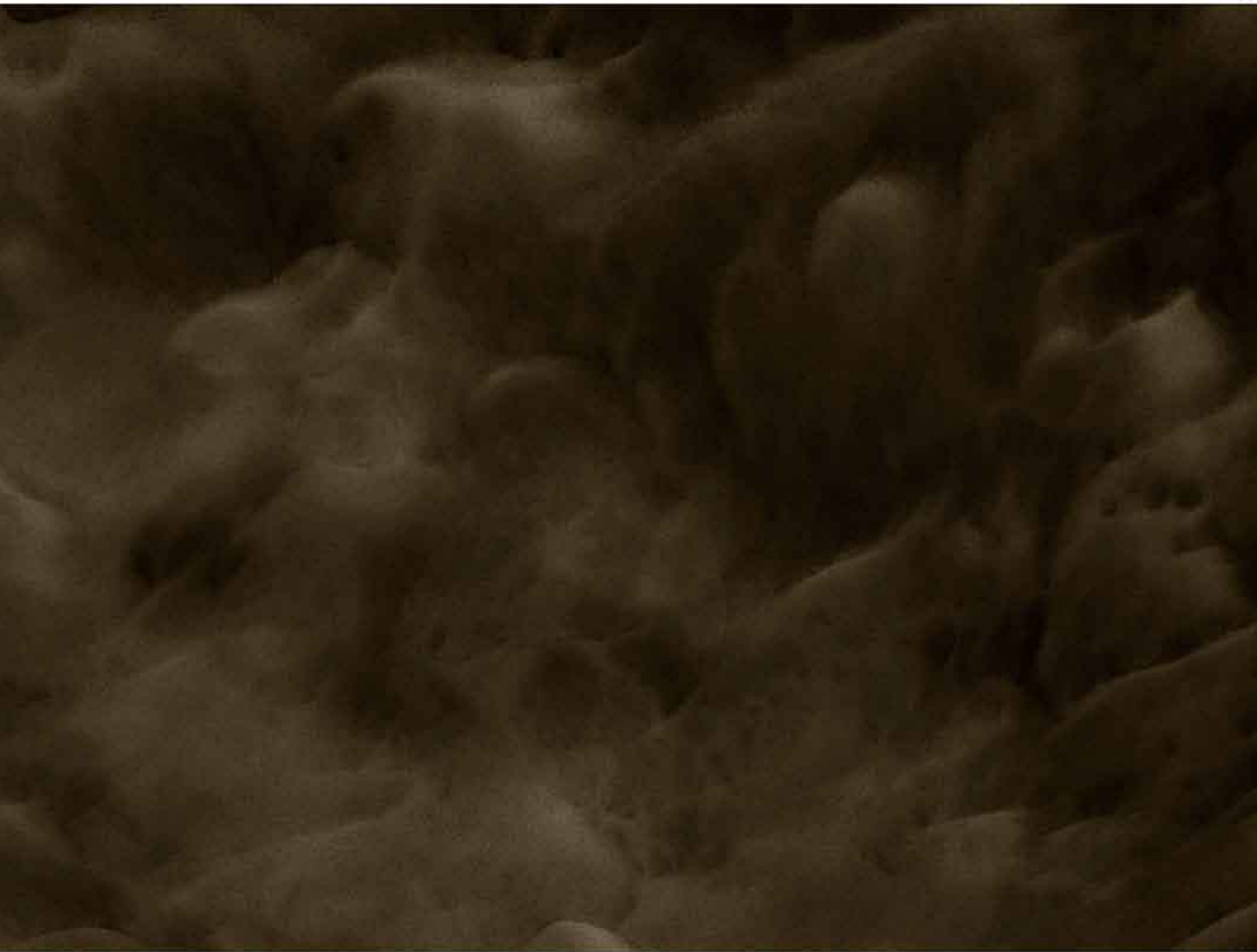


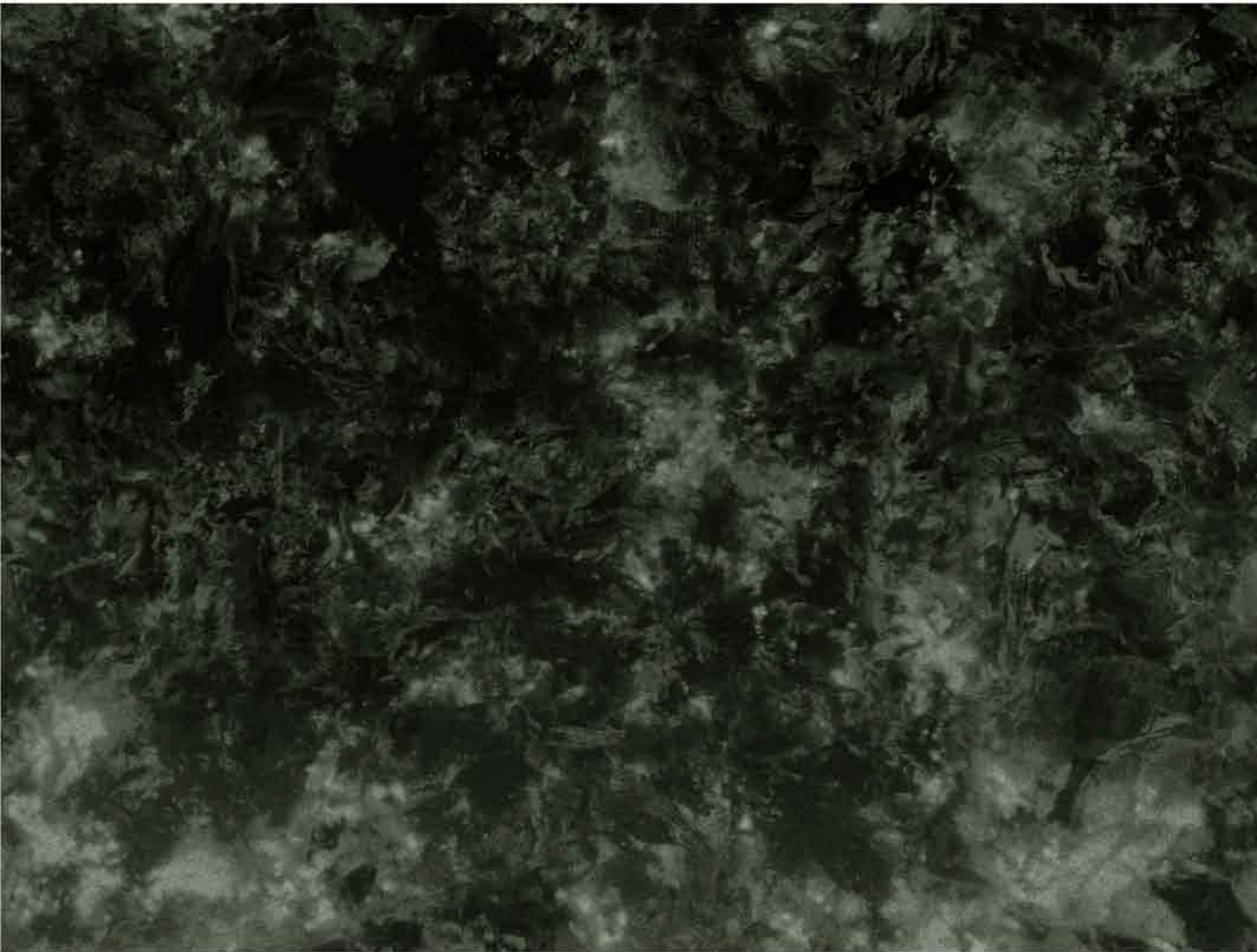


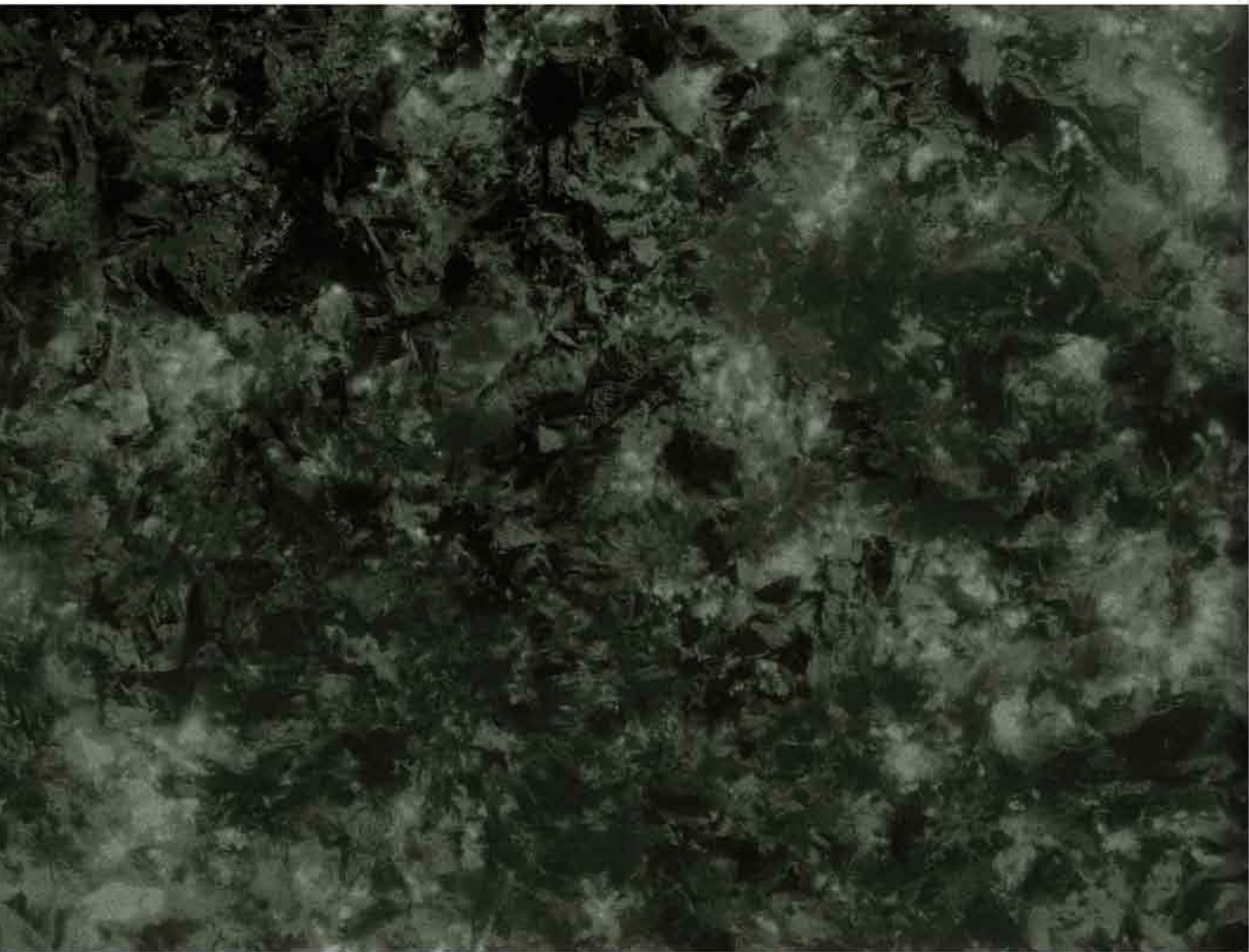












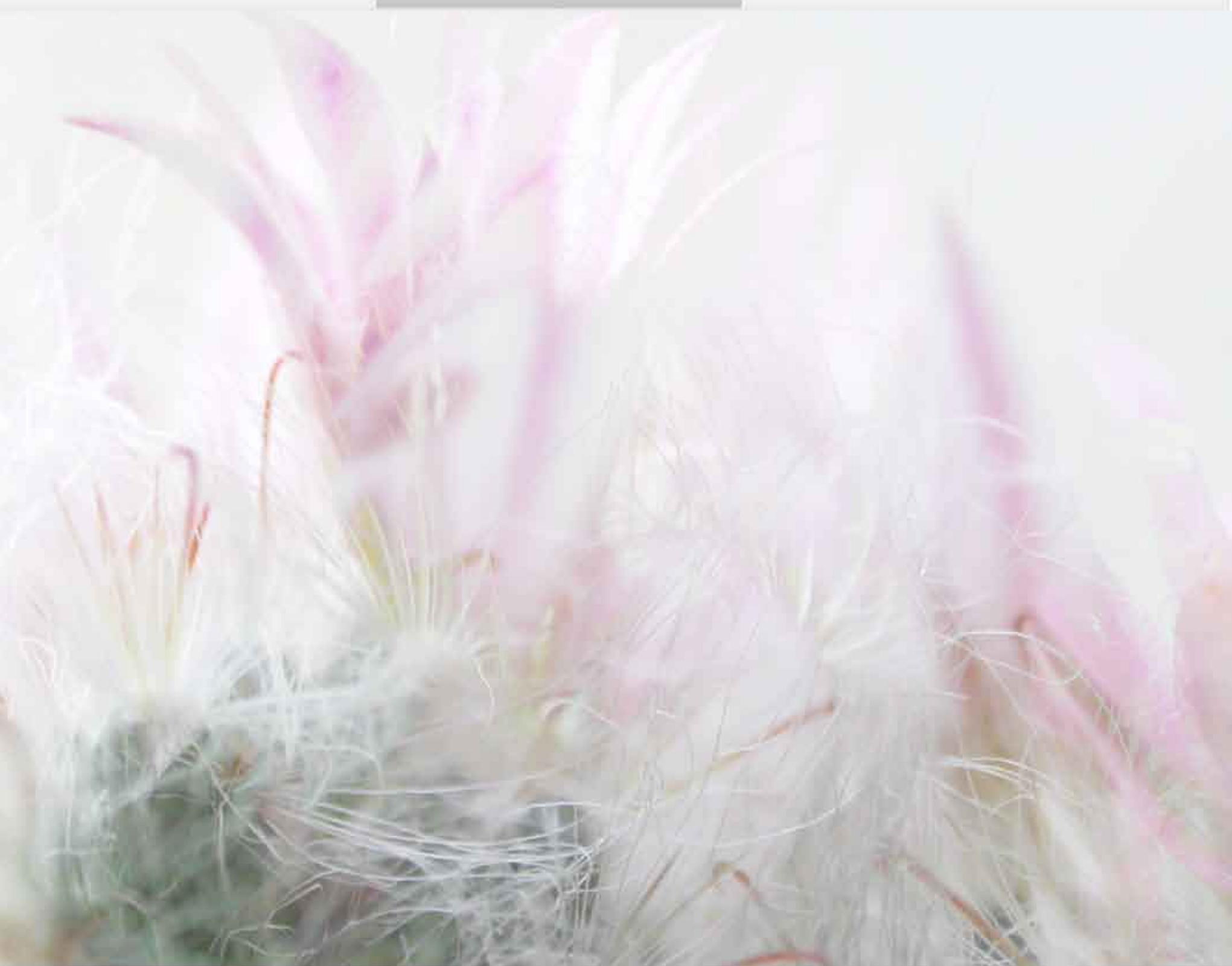




The Poetics of Nature [The Four Seasons]

The Four Seasons is a continuity of the enigmatic *The Five Elements*. It includes the major essences of Chinese aesthetics – the hand-scrolling format; the repetition of elements, colour tones and hues and forms; the moving perspective; the content of nature. There is one unique conceptual essence in this series of work – seeing largeness in smallness. The idea of seeing largeness in smallness is discussed by Zhang (2002) to respond to art critic Shen Kuo's [沈括] (1031-1095) philosophical principle of *seeing smallness in largeness*¹⁸³ to view the details of a scene from a cosmic angle. Taking the unconscious, unreflective and spontaneous¹⁸⁴ approaches of the mode of The Natural¹⁸⁵ [zi ran] [自然] in the photo-taking process, without any intention other than capturing the microscopic world of natural scenes, it allows me to reach a spiritual state of wandering in the creative process. Thereafter these are meticulously composed. However meticulous this is in the digital editing process, I maintain the same conceptual approach of The Natural with a wandering mind. The content, though pristine, is banal in a contemporary sense. The moving perspective¹⁸⁶ created by the intertwining and intermingling physicality of elements, colours and forms, constitutes a dynamic continuity. The repetition, albeit mundane, impels the pulsated 'breath-momentum' (qi shi) [氣勢]. Attuned to it is the lingering rhythm attributable to the in-and-out focus. However, it is the significant and yet oblivious empty 'whiteness'¹⁸⁷ that establishes the remote virtual space for further savouring. The luxuriantly abundant naturalness of microscopic 'smallness' of nature is transformed to the chaotic and profound macroscopic 'largeness' of nature. This series, in association with *The Poetics of Natural Vitality: The Five Elements*, explores aesthetic qualities of disorder within order, complexity within simplicity, completeness within incompleteness, activity within inactivity, and emptiness within fullness to trigger intellectual dialogues of seeing largeness in smallness. It is the poetic thought of 'image beyond image'¹⁸⁸ which is rooted in Chinese philosophy that is attributed to the functionality of transformative openness.











































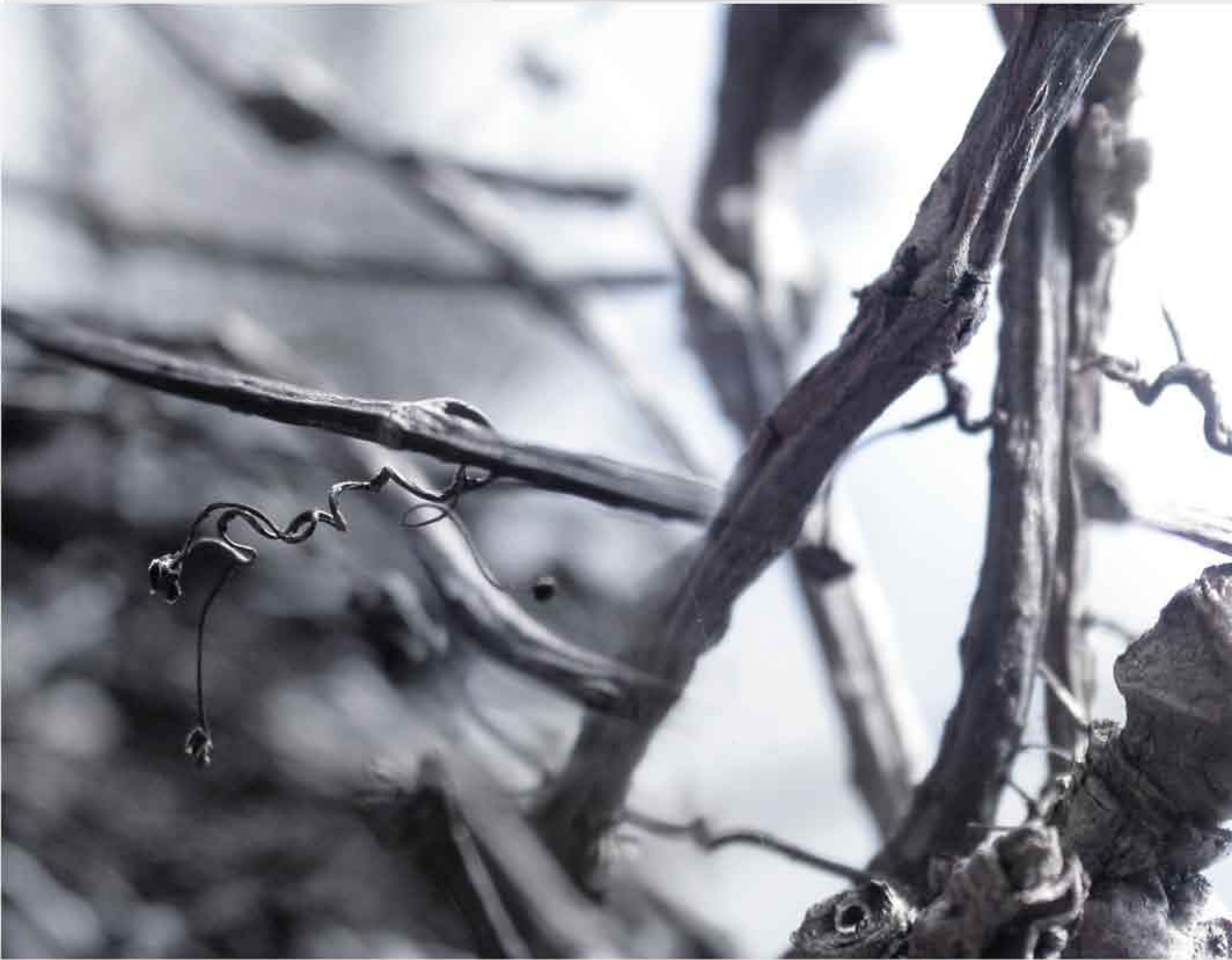






















The Poetics of Ink Jet Printmaking

The empty (white) space¹⁸⁹ is fundamental in Chinese aesthetics. It is a space for rhythmic breath. This empty physicality and its openness provoke the individual's spiritual contemplation to shuttle between interiority and exteriority to achieve an interwoven fullness. Qi is the agent that resides in between the ink (occupied space) and empty space. Colours, hues, tones, densities and their fusion are embraced to resonate with the empty space. Qi is activated in a rhythmic manner and is expelled outward to the empty space. This enables the externalisation of individual self through the form and formlessness of the artwork. Contemporary artists¹⁹⁰ have applied and extended the concepts of empty space to the occupied space of the artwork, to achieve emptiness through the interplay with fullness. To be more specific, contemporary artists have manifested the concept of empty space through the interfusion and interplay of colours, tones, hues and shadows. This approach, together with the 'scientific depth' created through Western chiaroscuro construction, has extended the rhythmic dynamic of qi. In other words, the contemporary interplay between empty space (white) and occupied space (colour, hue, tone etc) has enriched the vigour of qi – emptiness as fullness and fullness as emptiness, thus enhancing the fusion of spirituality and physicality, and enriching the concealed ambiguity for further savouring.

The practice of ink jet printmaking on Xuan Zhi is an artistic exploration that is beyond the practice of printmaking technology; it is a poetic experience of intimacy between exteriority (external phenomenon) and interiority (internal self); between materiality and spirituality.

During the experimental ink jet printmaking process with Xuan Zhi, my preliminary approach was to record the technical data of each print for reflective analysis. This pursuit of preciseness that aims for a controllable and predictable quality in mass quantity had allowed me to respond to the unique aesthetics of a wide range of substrates. It also initiated me to make decisions and to further extend the potentials through actualising my virtual digital works in the printmaking process. Thus, I am able to establish a knowledge-based technological infrastructure of my ink jet printmaking craft. This simulation process¹⁹¹ and the knowledge developed had inspired me in the subsequent processes of self-cultivation and enlightenment. After this approach, I took a fortuitous approach¹⁹² when combining digital works with the substrates. This process¹⁹³ was extensive and is crucial to the outcomes of this project. It is also in parallel to my photography stance. To be specific, the process of combining substrates with digital art works is

random, nevertheless, there are subconscious internal activities guiding the combinations. The majority of the prints in the *Documentation* were produced in this chance manner to explore the unexpected. Finally, through the sedimented experiences, I made a specific selection on some substrates and printed a limited quantity of display prints in larger scale (the *Creative Document*) and the *Exegesis*. The selection of digital works for the display prints aims to give a balanced overview of the emerging aesthetics and as such that each individual display print needs to resonate to both the aesthetics of materiality and philosophical concepts. I also had printed a collection of the same digital file with a range of substrates (and vice versa) to be included in the *Documentation*. This consolidated the findings of potential visual aesthetics. All together (*Creative Document*, *Documentation* and *Exegesis*) represent the temporal new aesthetics of this project in the here and now.









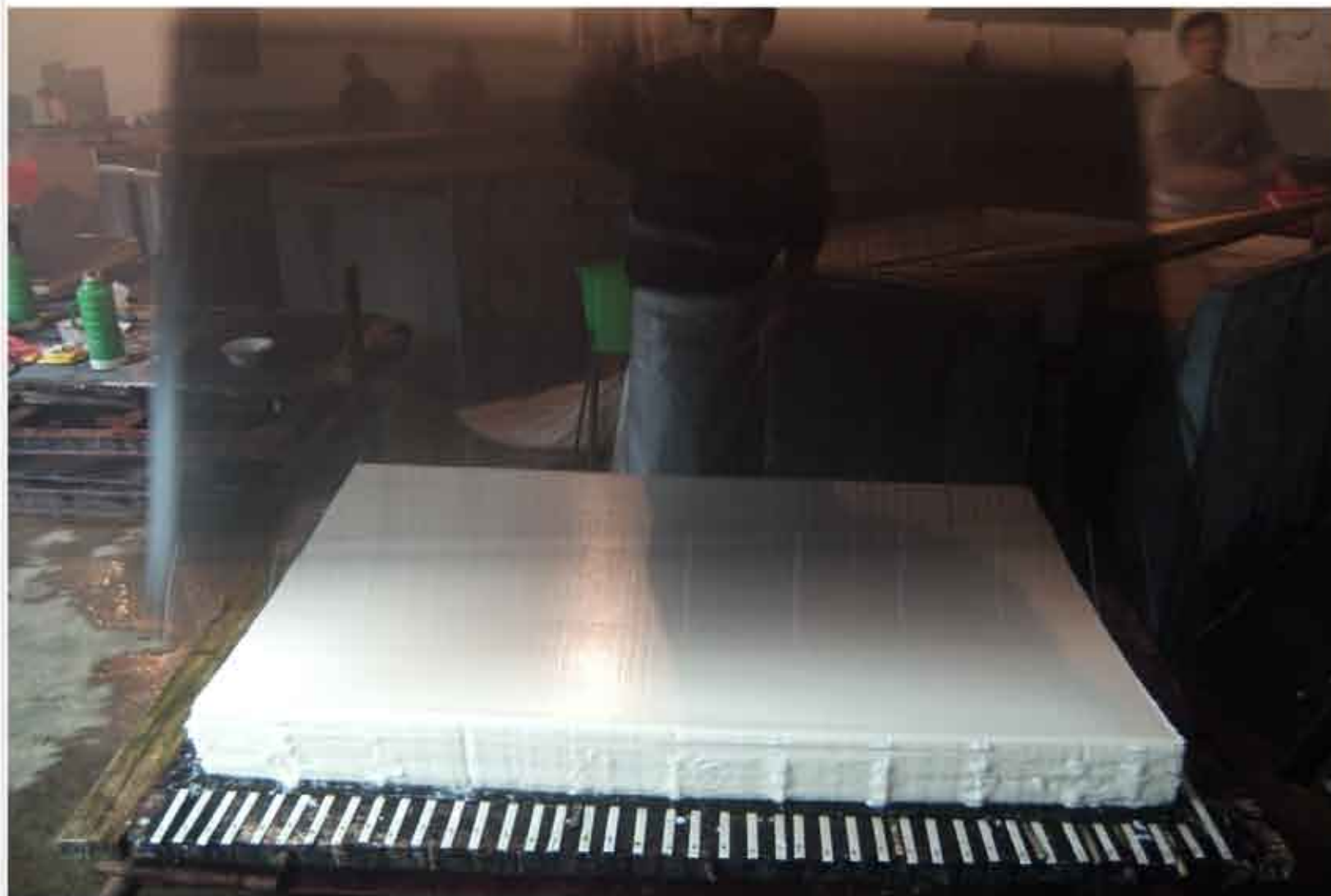


















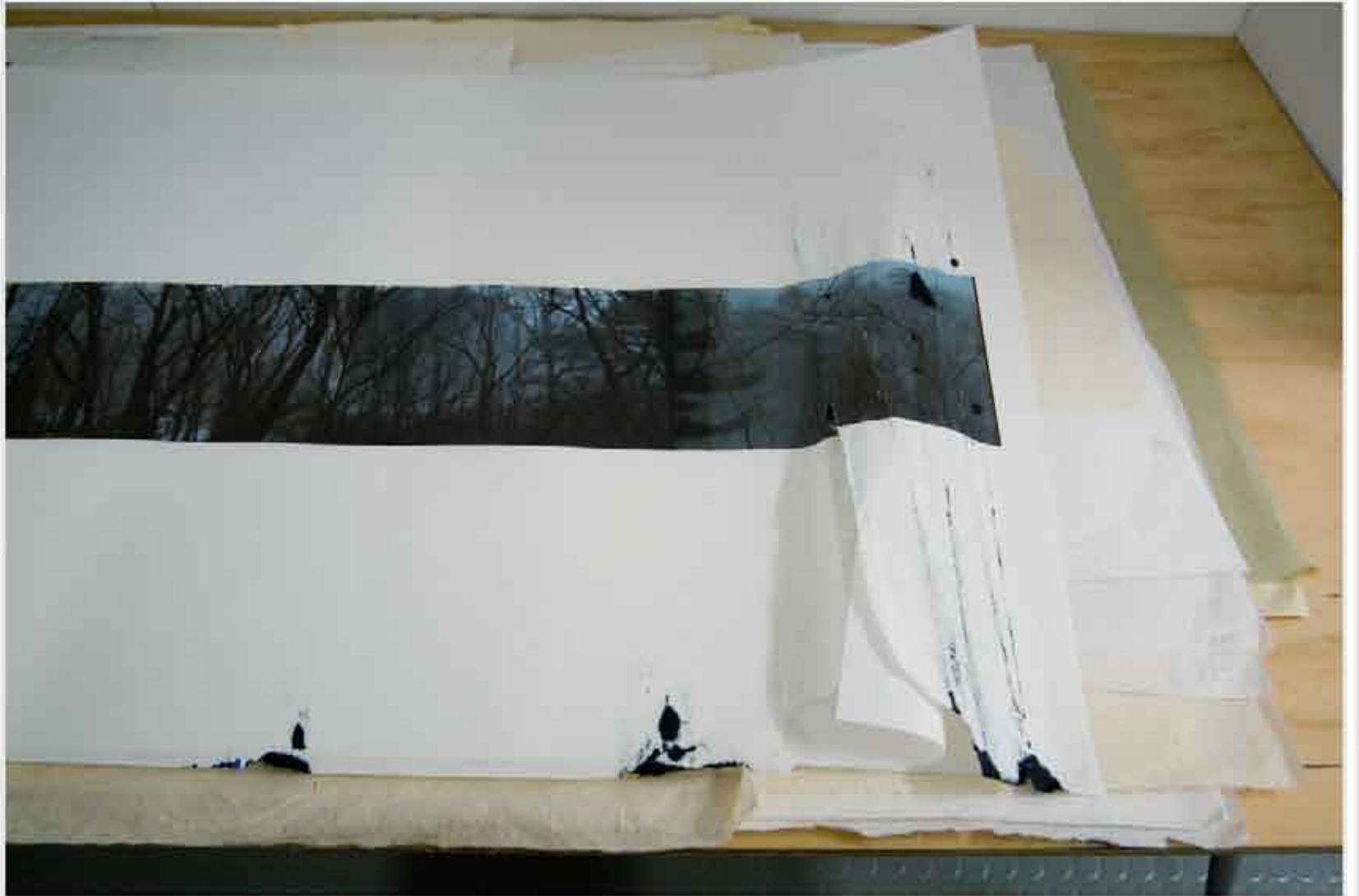




























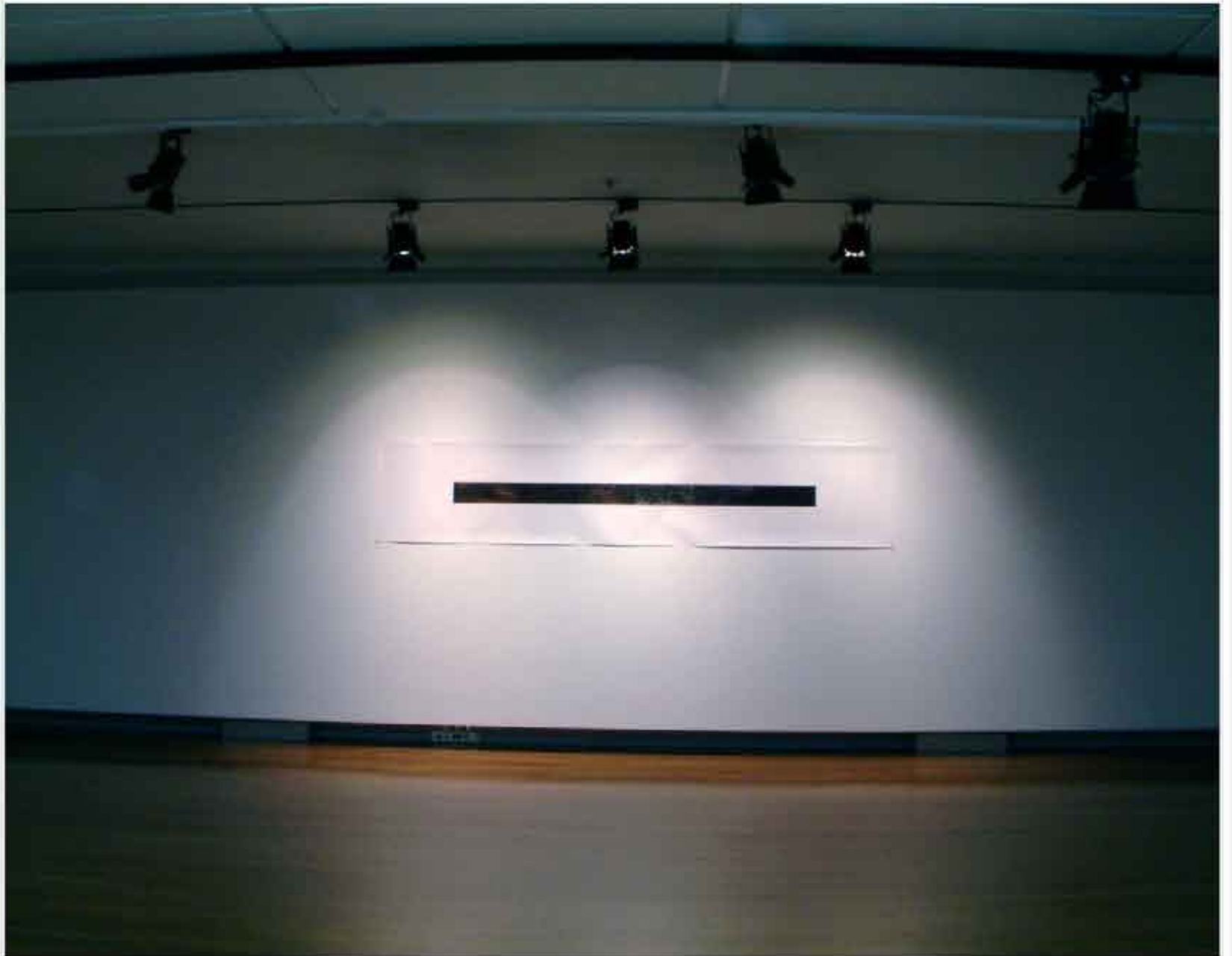












The Poetics of Having A Transformative Identity

The sentimental ambiguity of my identity that continues to resonate is another form of qi that motivates my drifting between cultures, between identities, and between roots. This internal poetic lingering of the self constantly redefines my identity. From Tuan's (2007, pp. 158-171) perspective of *The Triune Roots of Identity* in the context of history, geography and language, I am a New Zealand Chinese, simply because I think in my Chinese language; have no sense of rootedness with New Zealand history; and am thronging with geographical belongings of the past. However, I decline and struggle to accept my inability to adapt to another cultural milieu and, as such, this constitutes an undertow of my identity. This seemingly nugatory lingering induces me to cling to my own cultural domain and revives my ambition to imprint Chinese cultural marks onto the Western domain in which I live. I feel imbued with dedication to undertake the mission to ensure my Chinese identity in a Western domain. Such proclivity is reflected in my keenness to establish a Chinese cultural profile in my academic profession. This seemingly contrasting cultural inclination is a revelation of 'reversing identity' phenomena — slanted towards becoming a Westerner in a Chinese domain and a Chinese in a Western domain.

In 1986, I took a research trip with my two younger sisters to search for my roots – the hometown where my late father was born and brought up. Within my memories was rejoicing. The place was unfamiliar and yet very familiar. It was so different in lifestyle and yet I blended in with ecstasy and complacency. I photographed with inspiration. I talked to people. I observed and scrutinised. Every scene, everyone and every object had an affinity with me. I felt at home.

This spiritual sustenance inspired me to photograph Auckland, my other home, since my migration to New Zealand. Recalling my memories while reviewing the photographs that were taken, again I linger with bewilderment; the photographs are simply an exotic revelation of being an observer. To me they seem familiar and yet unfamiliar. They simply do not trigger my emotional resonance. In time, these photographs may imprint cultural and historical reminiscences as a New Zealander. However, it is not until I have developed a sense of cultural closeness with New Zealand that these photographs will recall *deja-vu* for me. In this sense, it is the embedded cultural tie of the individual self that induces resonance. The work itself is a physicality to facilitate the spiritual engagement of the selves and in-between selves. This corresponds to my stance of an artwork being a mutative and transformative representation that

triggers poetic externalisation of the self.

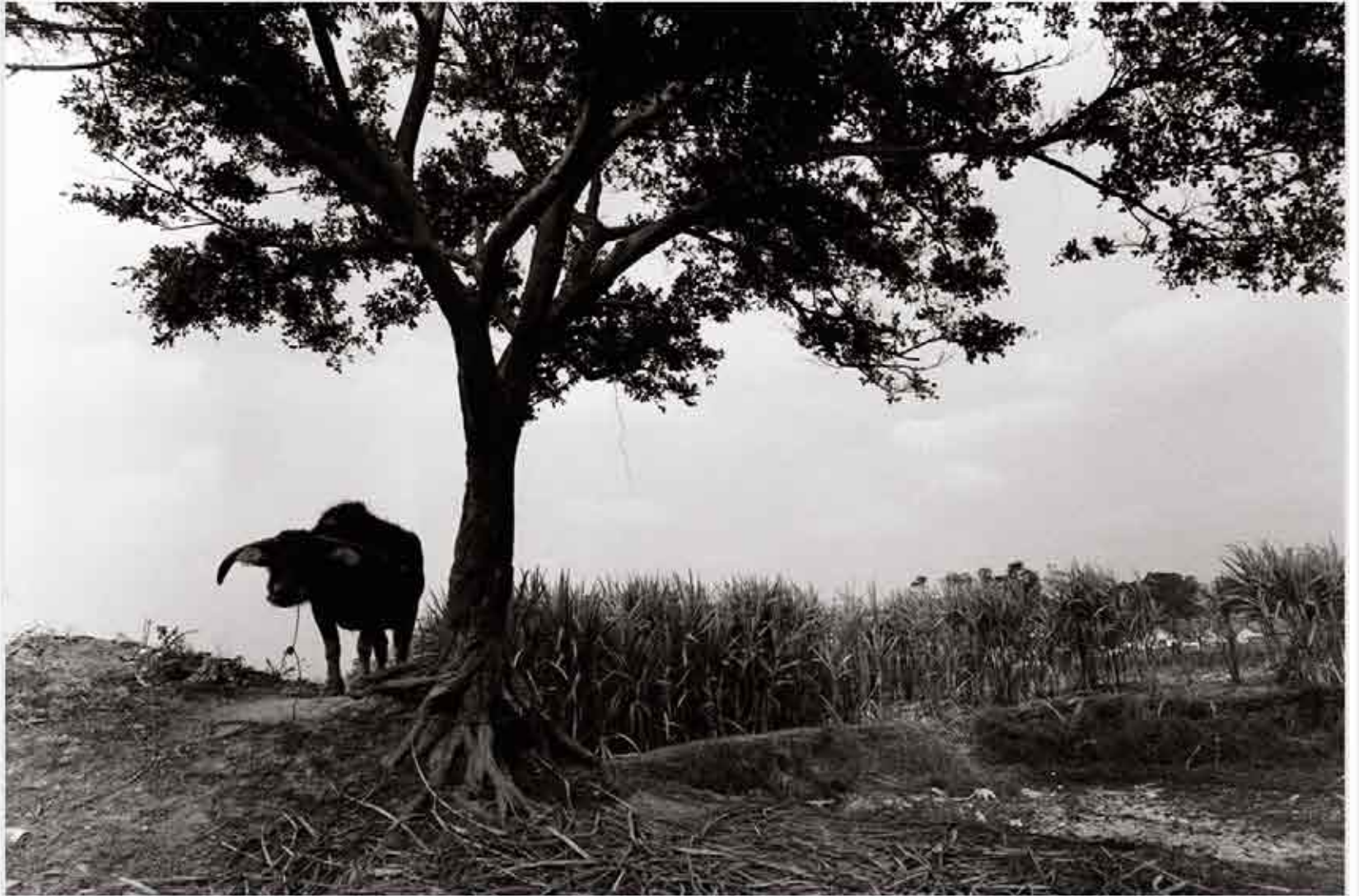
Contemplating my own photographs of root searching, Tuan (ibid.) reminds me of my identity – being a Chinese and constantly yearning to transform my identity, and yet, do I really want to?

























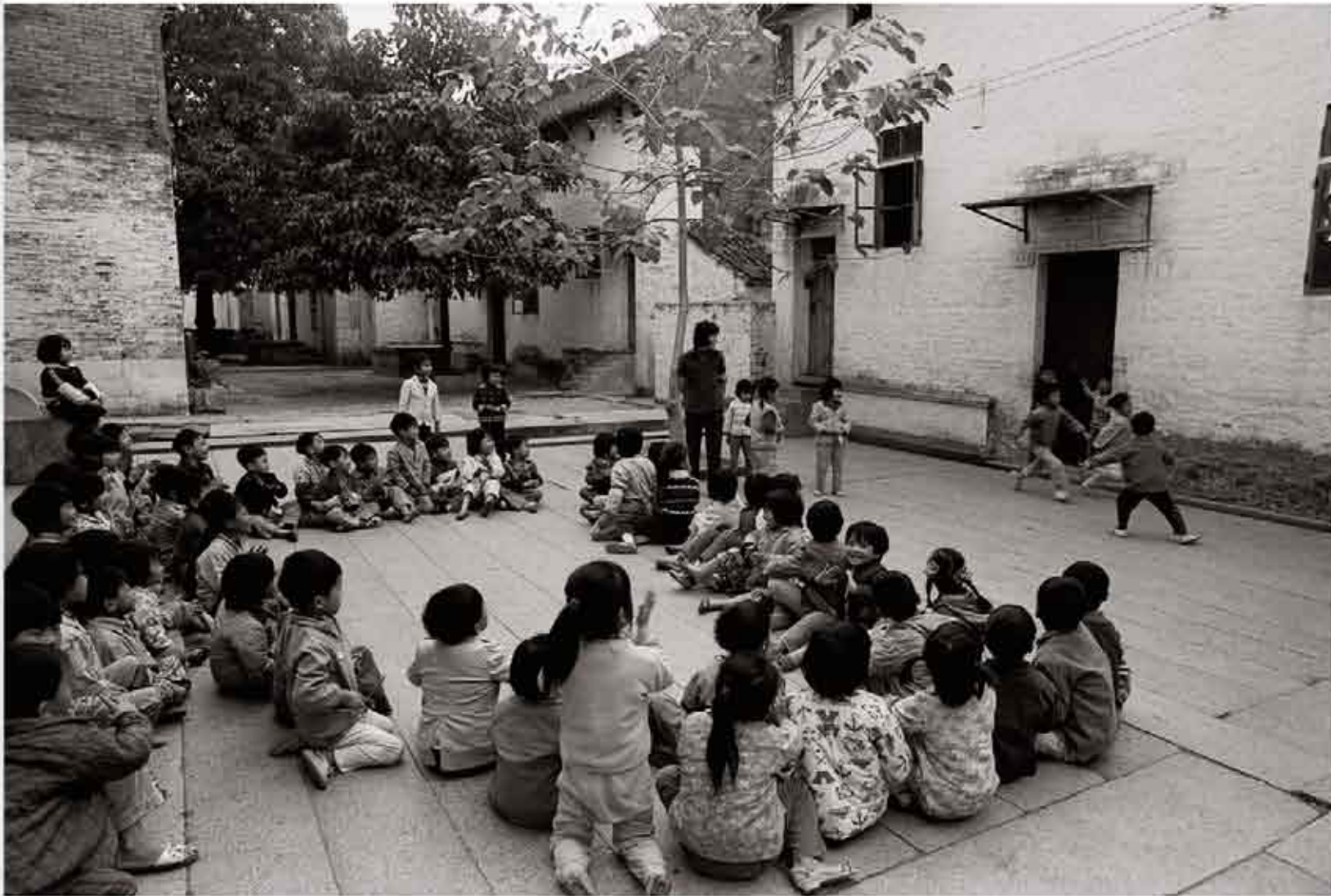






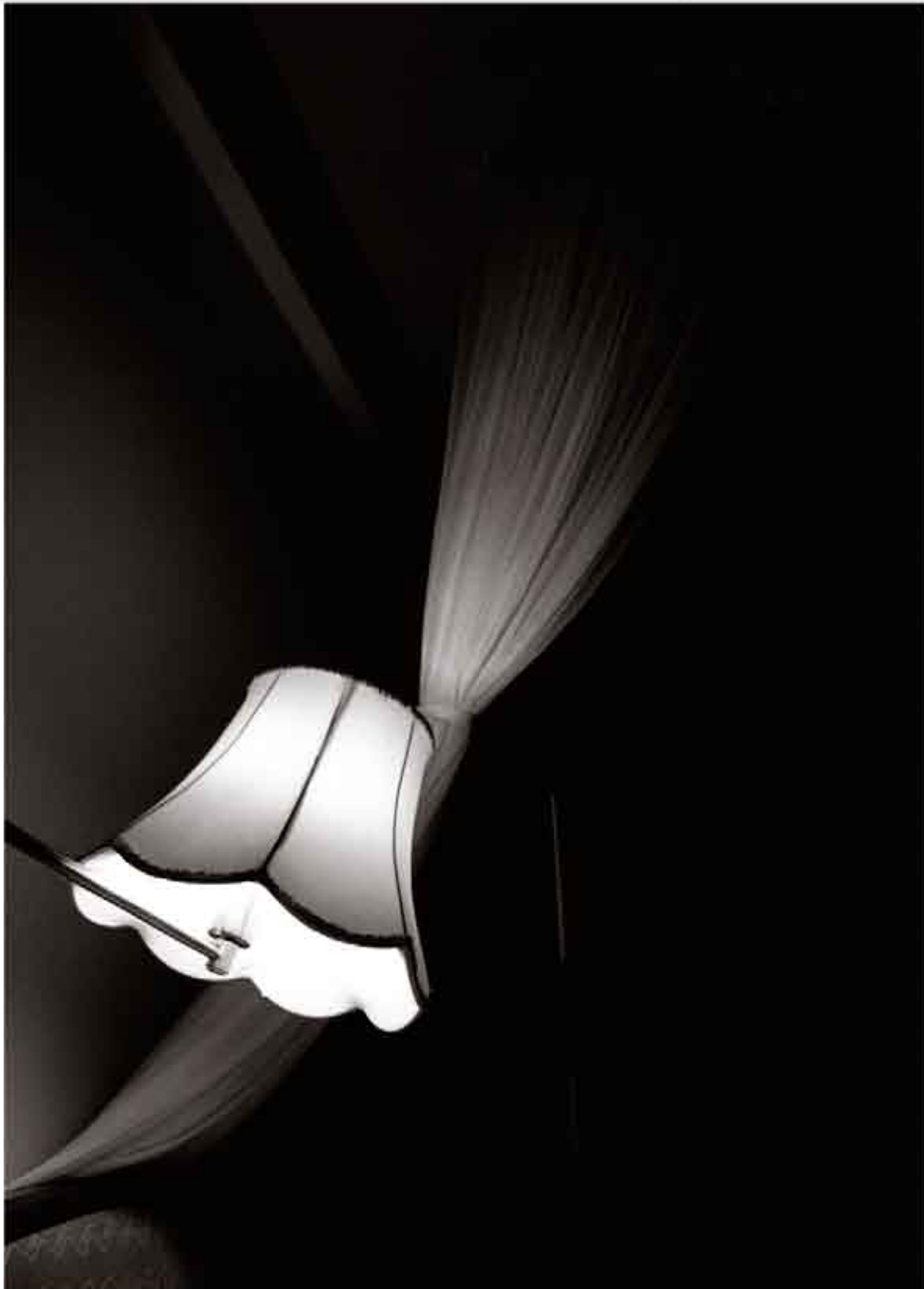














































The Poetics of Writing the Exegesis

Writing the exegesis of this research is a part of the exploration of the concept of poetics of making. It was a challenge for me because I do not have an academic background in literature (English or Chinese). To achieve the poetic aesthetics in my exegesis, I researched the content of poetry extensively. To achieve a poetic aesthetics of the self involved the tedious processes of finding the appropriate words, terms and phrases to write in a second language. It is my linguistic deficiency that, on one hand, the exegesis is not thoroughly accessible, and yet on the other hand, it is the poetic manifestation of the self. It was a pleasing experience for the self (myself) who struggled to externalise the poetic experience of the research project. During the writing, there was always the tension coming from the inability to communicate complex ideas. The self always shuttled between accessibility of meaning and poetic aesthetics. The always-unsettling state of making decisions for achieving a balance correlates with the Chinese philosophical thought of locating the mean (zhong) [中] or neutrality (Jullien, 2004, pp. 47-53). I am in debt to the scholars who have inspired me, Stephen Owen, Roger T. Ames, David Hall, Pauline Yu and the others. Their ideas and writing style have inspired me. And through the ongoing sedimentation of my writing experience, I am able to externalise the poetic feelings of my practice. In a way, the physicality of the exegesis represents the poetic manifestation of my writing.

It is a subjective decision to keep the ever-complex ideas as they are, in order to preserve their poetic essences. In a way it is this crudeness with preciseness that corresponds to my practice of researching Xuan Zhi (crudeness) with ink jet technology (preciseness). Again, the self constantly relocates to achieve a temporal balance between accessibility of ideas and poetic aesthetics.

Conclusion

Whether they are about the phenomenon of Mao artefacts, or the subconscious decisive moments, or Confucian teaching stances, these works explore the poetics of art making through self-enlightenment. The internalisation of exteriority (experiencing with nature) only nurtures the internal repository of self for the potentiality of achieving the state of self-enlightenment. It is the self (as artist), through the art

practice that simulates (natural phenomena), self-cultivates and self-enlightens to unfurl and externalise its interiority. Qi is the vigour that motivates the artist's vision, predisposed wisdom, creative insight and inexorable commitment. This unifies the spirit of the artist and his/her work to attain new knowledge in and through his/her research practice in the constant state of flux while seeking harmony.

Endnotes

123 Ropp (ibid., p. 106) quotes Keightley and notes the profound philosophical optimism of the early Chinese.

124 Also refer to my earlier discussion on Yi-jing in the chapter on Chinese aesthetics.

125 The original full version of *The Scholar* was written in a full paper format to contextualise the practical work that I exhibited in 2005 as a part of the commitment to this PhD research study. It was subsequently developed to become a conference paper *Chi's Nurturing in Contemporary Art and Design Education* and was presented in the 34th Annual PESA Conference - Critical Thinking and Learning: Values, Concepts and Issues held in Hong Kong in 2005. In this exegesis, *The Scholar* is a simplified edited version and as such that some of the discussions are amalgamated into other parts of the exegesis.

126 Cheng (ibid., pp. 100-101) discusses the fundamental notions of Chinese painting, suggesting that *it is the li (inner principle or structure) of the painter that is given to the ch'i (vital breaths) that permits artists to go beyond any tendency they might have toward over-realistic illusionism. What is essential is less a matter of depicting the outer aspects of the world than of seizing the inner principles that structure all things and connect them to each other.* Also see footnote 49 that Cheng refers to the Confucius' system of Li. I would, however, refer to the Daoist philosophy again that it is qi that motivates the spirit of the scholar/artist to attain knowledge.

Su Shih (1037-1101) suggested that *he was not preoccupied with any single thing, and thus his spirit communed with all things, and his knowledge encompassed all the arts* (Bush & Shih, 1985, p. 207).

127 Laozi (c 500 B.C.) in chapter 10 of *Daodejing* suggested the associated relationship of wisdom and insight: *With your insight penetrating the four quarters, are you able to do it without recourse to wisdom?* (Ames and Hall, 2003, translated, p. 90)

In their commentary, Ames & Hall suggest that *Penetrating insight is not inspired by some instrumental, enabling, 'tried and true' wisdom, but is rather an immediate and fundamentally creative activity out of which fresh and efficacious intelligence arises to guide the way* (ibid., p. 90).

128 Self-cultivation is a central objective in Chinese art practising tradition. Ames & Hall (1995, pp. 190-191) suggest that 'Cultivation' usually translates the character xiu [修], as in 'cultivating oneself' (xiu ji) [修己] or 'cultivating one's person' (xiu shen) [修身]. The character xiu, translated 'cultivate', is most commonly glossed as 'effecting proper order' (zhi) [治] in a socio-political rather than an organic sense. The point that we need to make is that the cultivation of self as a cultural product allows for a greater degree of creativity than the more restricted horticultural or husbanding metaphors might suggest, even though such metaphors are frequently encountered in the classical corpus.

Poet Huang T'ing-chien (11th Century) emphasised the importance of concentration developed through the study of Tao and practice of ch'an [禪] meditation (Bush & Shih, ibid., p.195). However, the practice of ch'an is a Buddhist activity though it has also been influenced by Taoism. Ch'an, the same as art practising, is only one of the activities of self-cultivation. Dale (2004, Introduction) also suggests that: *art in China has traditionally been a practice that is transformational and continuous, both an act of self-cultivation and an interpretation of a rich, dynamic tradition.* Also cross reference discussion on the chapter *Design Approaches*.

129 Ames and Hall (ibid., p. 33) suggest that: *The achievement of order and harmony in nature and society – that is to say, the achievement of effective way-making or dao – is a multifaceted effort that is dependent less upon uncovering true principles or right forms of conduct than on the exercise of imagination and creativity within the most deferential of contexts. In fact, the broadest context – the one leading to the richest resources for Chinese ‘way-makers’ – has been built from the contributions of both the Confucian and the Daoist sensibilities.*

Tung Yu (early 12th Century) also draw on the classics of Taoist philosophy in commenting on art appreciation that *the act of creation is described as the union of subject and object in keeping with ch’an [meditation] attitude towards nature* (Bush & Shih, ibid., p. 195). Also cross reference discussion on the chapter of *Chinese Philosophy and Aesthetics*.

130 Su Shih [Su Shi] [蘇軾] (1037-1101) said that: *However, there is Tao and there is skill. If one has Tao and not skill, then, although things have been formed in one’s mind, they will not take shape through one’s hand* (Bush & Shih, ibid., p. 207).

131 The concept of ‘image beyond image’ was discussed in the literature review of my PhD final proposal, making reference to Chinese poetry. Here is an excerpt from the discussion: *When referencing classical Chinese scholars, Huang suggests that classical Chinese poetry is rich in visual imagery (1980, pp. 193-194). It conveys multiple levels of meaning from presenting an elusive sense, containing meaning beyond words (Ouyang Xiu) [歐陽修]; it is ambiguous and in such a way that no sign of the intent is visible (Wang Fuzhi) [王夫之]; Sikong Tu [司空圖] described as ‘flavour beyond flavour’, ‘resonance beyond harmony’ and ‘image beyond imagery’; and not to be trammelled by words (Yan Yu) [言語]. It is ‘obscure’, or ‘misty’ [模糊] (Huang Hong) and as such the ideal poetic conception is to be viewed from afar, not scrutinised (Dai Shulun) [戴叔倫] (Ho, 2004, p. 19-20) .*

132 Kotz discusses the approach of artist Mark Morrisroe in terms of specularisation. She describes Mark’s work as follows: *A key photograph, occurring late in Morrisroe’s work (Untitled, 1988), depicts a grainy yellow sky with an out-of-focus silhouetted seagull hovering. It too ‘speaks of’ AIDS, of a documentary image. By insisting on the importance of that which remains outside representation, the work provides a compelling challenge to the documentary tendency towards total specularisation. An experience is offered, but it remains mute, ineffable. You’re only given a little access, but may be that’s an antidote to being given too much (Kotz, 1998, p. 214). I would suggest that Morrisroe’s approach is a parallel concept of ‘image beyond image’, yet Chinese thought is not a ‘specularisation’ approach, it triggers the resonant response of individual’s experience.*

133 Henri Cartier-Bresson said in 1952: *Of all the means of expression, photography is the only one that fixes forever the precise and transitory instant. We photographers deal in things which are continually vanishing, and when they have vanished, there is no contrivance on earth which can make them come back again. We cannot develop and print a memory... We must neither try to manipulate reality while we are shooting, nor must we manipulate the results in a darkroom. These tricks are patently discernible to those who have eyes to see. And To me, photography is the simultaneous recognition, in a fraction of a second, of the significance of an event as well as of the precise organisation of forms which give that event its proper expression (Ritchin, 1999, p. 147). His concept was made possible by the capability of fixing a moment through the technological advancement of 35mm small format camera, which provided mobility to photography of the time. And since then, the conceptual and aesthetic territories of photography have been widely expanded.*

134 As for an example from a contemporary perspective, whether the chemical process of ‘black and white’ prints is a post-production process is already arguable.

135 In his project *Subway*, he reveals the individual’s private self. Walker Evans’s (1938) *Many Are Called* showed a

series of candid photographs taken in the New York subway. *With his camera hidden inside his coat – the lens peeking through a buttonhole – he captured the faces of riders hurtling through the dark tunnels, wrapped in their own private thoughts.*

136 In Jussim's (1989) *The Eternal Moment: Essays on the Photographic Image*, she quotes Erving Goffman: *the self is a performed character, not an organic thing that has a specific biological location and whose fundamental fate is to be born, to mature, and to die* (p. 179). Goffman suggested each individual has an idealised self, a self carefully chosen for public display, a 'performed' self.

137 Evans (1938): *The guard is down and the mask is off; even more than when in lone bedrooms (where there is a mirror), people's faces are in naked repose down in the subway* (p. 152).

138 Evans (1938): *Theorists claim almost everything for the camera except the negation that it can be made not to think and not to translate its operator's emotion. This collection [The Subway] is at least an impure chance-average lottery selection of its subjects – human beings in a certain established time and space... Actually the ultimate purity of this method of photography – the record method – has not been achieved here, but it is present as an unfulfilled aim: ...people [in his photographs] came unconsciously into range before an impersonal fixed record machine during a period of time, and that all these individuals who came into the film frame were photographed, and photographed without any human selection for the moment of lens exposure. I do claim that this series of pictures is the nearest to such a pure record that the tool and supplies and the practical intelligence at my disposal could accomplish* (p. 160).

139 These methodologies are made possible by the fully automatic functionality of digital advancement in photography.

140 Refer also to my discussion of Chinese aesthetics regarding transformation, openness, continuity and naturalness (jerum) [zi ran].

141 This series of work has the qualities of Swaggering Abandon [hao fang] [豪放], The Natural [zi ran] [自然], Close-woven and Dense [zhen mi] [縝密], Disengagement and Rusticity [shu ye] [疏野], Solid World [shi jing] [實境], Transcendence [chao yi] [超詣]. Refer to the chapter of *Chinese Philosophy and Aesthetics* for details.

142 In Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia (2007): *The term snapshot aesthetic refers to a trend within fine art photography in the USA from around 1963. The style typically features apparently banal everyday subject matter and accentred framing. Subject matter is often presented without apparent link from image-to-image and relying instead on juxtaposition and disjunction between individual photographs. The style became especially fashionable among from the late 1970s until the mid 1980s. Notable practitioners include Nan Goldin, Wolfgang Tillmans, Martin Parr, William Eggleston, Terry Richardson, and Corrine Day. In the recent years also young contemporary photographers, such as Hiromix, Ryan McGinley and Arnis Balcus have gained international recognition thanks to snapshot aesthetic. From the early nineties the style became the predominant mode in fashion photography especially within youth fashion magazines such as The Face - photography from this era is often associated with the so-called 'heroin chic' look (a look often seen as having been influenced particularly by Nan Goldin) (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Snapshot_aesthetic). And: Martin Parr (born 1952) is a British documentary photographer and photojournalist. His photographic projects take a critical look at modern society, specifically consumerism, foreign travel and tourism, motoring, family and relationships, and food. Parr is probably best known for his photography at New Brighton in the 1980's. His use of high saturation colour in photography produces some, at first glance boring and subdued images, though when you look a little deeper into them and the history behind them they are highly profound. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Parr,*

2007).

143 This is developed from Li's (ibid., p. 162) idea of *the humanisation of nature and the naturalisation of humans*.

144 For further reference, see Naranarayan Das's (1976) *A Fresh Look at China's Hundred Flowers Period* [Chong Xin Shen Shi Zhong Guo De Bai Hua Qi Fang Shi Qi] [重新審視中國的百花齊放時期].

145 Ritchin (1999) in his article *The lyric Documentarian*, talks about the work of renowned contemporary renowned photojournalist Sebastiao Salgado and comments: *There is an exalted beauty to the people – an emaciated boy using a cane stands nude under a withered tree on a carpet of sand, a woman with diseased eyes radiates a visionary sadness. A bruising conflict is created between the formal radiance of the imagery and their agonising content as proud, attractive sufferers* (p. 149).

146 Ropp (2004): *Confucians and Daoists shared a faith in harmony, balance, and a cyclical view of reality that also worked against the development of tragedy. Confucians urged moderation in all things, and Daoists argued that all situations and qualities contain the seeds of their opposite* (p. 106).

147 Ropp (ibid.) refers to Plaks: *Chinese appreciate in the final calming "afterglow" a sense of the completion of a cycle, the implicit assumption that "life goes on" and that the completion of one cycle is the prologue of another. Ropp suggests: This insistence on seeing life as the ceaseless alternation and interplay of life and death, joy and sorrow, summer and winter, order and chaos, has been an awe-inspiring vision the Chinese have found deeply satisfying and meaningful. Such a worldview goes far to account for the relative absence of tragedy* (p. 108).

148 Ropp asserts that *didacticism has been one trademark of Chinese literature* (p. 115). However, the Confucians, Daoists and Buddhists have different approaches in didacticism. Confucians yield to the wen and li to approach an orderly society; whilst Buddhists approach it through the concept of impermanence of life and Daoists advocate the relationship of man and nature. The ultimate goal is to attain a spiritual state of harmony between individuals, cultures and other myriad elements.

149 Refer to Murck (2000), who when discussing about the subtle art of dissent of a painting collection *The Eight XiaoXiang* of the Song dynasty [*Eight Views of the Hsiao and Hsiang Rivers*] [南宋王洪的蕭湘八景], addresses and explores the underlying messages – poetic concept' or poetic intent' of the scholar painters who traditionally are cadre members of the reigning officials. He comments: *Understanding a painting's poetic message – the "poetic concept" or "poetic intent" – gives clues as to why educated men painted. Identifying what is literary in "literati painting" sheds light on the educated elite's insistence that the idea of a painting was more significant than the physical reality of it – an approach that over time resulted in some sketchy and visually undistinguished pictures. It also helps to explain why gentleman-scholars claimed that their ink plays were vastly superior to the more finished pictures of accomplished craftsmen. Professional painters without deep learning could not hope to understand or match the scholars' ingenious word game, even though their technical command of painting as a purely visual art might be greater. Although many of the messages contained in the paintings in this study are melancholy, for the afflicted intellectual the process of communicating such sadness in subtle and original ways was salutary. Manipulating poetic allusions to send a hidden barb could be a most gratifying form of self-expression* (pp. 4-5).

150 Aristotle (384-322 B.C., cited in Townsend, 2002, p. 24): *A tragedy, then, is the imitation of an action that is serious and also, having magnitude, complete in itself; in language with pleasurable accessories, each kind brought in separately in the parts of the work; in a dramatic, not in a narrative form; with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its catharsis*

of such emotions (Chapter 6, *Metaphysics*).

151 Zi (2002) in his discussion on mathematic [computer] art describes the key quality of mathematic aesthetics is chaos in mutation. He says: *The Chinese believe that the ordered universe evolved from the disordered chaos [wu xu de hun dun] [無序的混沌]. A contemporary notion [in digital technology] suggests that chaos refers to the instability phenomenon of a stability system. It is a non-linear complex system that enables a self-structured system to evolve. It has an intrinsic orderly quality and is seemingly an automation system... Chaos phenomenon reveals the mathematic aesthetics has been transcended from the essence of scale to structure and mutation. Euphonious melody is an example. Mathematic reveals the structure of chaos in melody – the unity of order and disorder. It is this structural aesthetics that gives pleasure to our sense of hearing... The aesthetics of structure [visual] lies in the spatial structure, whilst the aesthetics of chaos lies in mutation* (pp. 27-28). The English text is my personal translation from the Chinese original.

152 As an artist, the mechanical repetitive action of continuously adding and compiling the same conformed element for two weeks is seemingly a very boring and non-creative work. However, it is this repetitive boredom that triggers the self to enter the state of void. The work of French painter Frank Vigneron has parallel references to mine. His paintings are composed of repetitive rectangles and spirals that explore the attaining of the state of void.

153 Vigneron (1999) notes that: *One of the bases of Chinese aesthetics is that the goal of art is the reconstitution by the artist of the Universe's creation process – this is fundamentally different from the Aristotelian position of idealised replication of Nature (called mimesis).* This is another apocalypse of the transformative quality of Chinese aesthetics.

154 Tu (2004) suggests that *The organismic process as a spontaneously self-generating life process exhibits three basic motifs: continuity, wholeness and dynamism. All modalities of being, from a rock to heaven, are integral parts of a continuum which is often referred to as the "great transformation" ta-hua [da hua] [大化]* (p. 30).

155 Vigneron (ibid.) gives a succinct explanation of the Chinese aesthetic perspective of spontaneity and interiority: *The only possible instrument to achieve this is spontaneity. However, this is not the so-called western concept of 'total freedom'. The sine qua non condition here is a perfect integration, within the deepest recesses of the artist's being, of everything he has perceived in the external world. If he succeeds in this, he will have interiorised so much knowledge extracted from all possible sources, that he will be able to create, in a method of choice, a new personal experience capable of rendering his own internal universe, and thus the Universe itself. The interiorisation of his individual experience makes him capable of using it without even realising it, and it is that absence of conscious act that most Chinese theorists call spontaneity.* Tu (ibid.) gives another perspective: *The Taoist idea of tzu-jan ("self-so") [zi ran], which is used in modern Chinese to translate the English word nature, aptly captures this spirit. To say that self-so is all-inclusive is to posit a nondiscriminatory and nonjudgemental position, to allow all modalities of being to display themselves as they are* (p. 31). However, I would add that through the process of self-generating spontaneity, the artist (self) attains total freedom – a state of void (emptiness) to enable himself to externalise his interiority through the practice.

156 Cross reference the discussion on *The Poetics of Clicking [Reflexive Framing: a re-thinking of decisive moment]*.

157 Contemporary scholar and painter He Huai Shuo (1998) [何懷碩] suggests that: *'The processes of achieving Dao [state of void] is through observation, contemplation and enlightenment of the self about the universe (nature); the achieving of skill (craft) is through concurrent enduring observation and empirical practical of skill. Through the practice of skill (craft), one is enlightened to achieve Dao, concurrently, through achieving Dao, one is enlightened to transcend his skill (craft) to art.'* (p. 252). Ho has established a contemporary perspective about the relationship of Dao and the practice of skill (The

English text is my personal translation from the Chinese original).

158 Refer to the chapter on *Digital Art and Aesthetics* for detailed discussion.

159 Tu (2004) also comments: *The mind forms a union with nature by extending itself metonymically. Its aesthetic appreciation of nature is neither an appropriation of the object by the subject nor an imposition of the subject on the object, but the merging of the self into an expanded reality through transformation and participation* (p. 37).

160 Refer to the paragraph on *Poetics of Making* under the section of *Position of this Research*.

161 Zhuangzi (ibid.): *Without an Other there is no Self, without Self no choosing one thing rather than another* (Graham, translated: p. 61).

162 I took a research trip to China in early 2005 for this study. I went to Huang Shan, Jiang Yuan, Wu Xie and Shanghai for about two weeks. I photographed extensively, obtained many Chinese reference books, and most importantly, I purchased about 40 kilograms of more than 50 types of Xuan Zhi for my practical research. It was an inspiring trip and motivated me to reallocate my long-term strategy of my academic research to focus on the content of art practice in China.

163 The celebrated French photographer Marc Riboud (1990), in his photographic book *Capital of Heaven*, quotes the renowned Chinese painter Zao wou-ki [Zhao Wu Ji] [趙無極]; Riboud was convinced and made many trips to Huang Shan [黃山] after 1983.

164 Riboud (ibid.) quotes the Tang painter-poet Wang Wei [王維] and his concept of *interior resonance* and says: *Why does this mountain, more than any other, attract so many men and women of all ages and from every province? Chinese man, who in the city and even in the country gives in to the pressure of the anonymous masses, finds in himself, when he stands before these mists and peaks, a new individuality. Here, as nowhere else in China, I have met individuals, not a collectivity. If down through the ages this place has inspired pictorial and poetic creativity, it is not only because the mist refines and shapes the splendors of the landscape, but also because the man who allows himself to be enveloped and captivated by the mist is plunged into a harmony and mystery that the painter-poet Wang Wei of the Tang dynasty called "interior resonance."* Standing atop the *Capital of Heaven*, lashed by the wind, face-to-face with the most beautiful landscape in the world, who has not experienced this strong resonance and the irrepressible urge to intone a song in praise of the mists? (p. 139) However, Riboud's idea of new individuality has given a new identity to the individual self and contradicts the classical Chinese concept of interior resonance which is a state that through introspection and contemplation leads to being self-cultivated and enlightened.

165 Riboud (ibid.) has given an inspiring insight on the phenomena of nature: *But it is the mist and the clouds which enchant the eye. They purify and delineate the planes of the landscape, expunge the superfluous, erase disorder. By sliding a fleecy veil behind a peak – brilliant brushstroke of Nature! – the mist shows not the chaos of the mountain but only the line of a crest, the volume of a rock, the shape of a pine. A picture is drawn before our eyes. It may be the most beautiful in the world, yet it lasts but a moment. Pushed by a sudden gust of wind, the mist envelops it, and everything disappears. Ephemeral, the scene will never be the same again. In the mountain, the wind is king. It commands the clouds, raises them up, thrusts them aside, summons, then disperses them. The clouds, obedient to the wind, provide all sorts of surprises. We watch for them in the west; they appear in the east. We look for them overhead; they unfurl at our feet. Clouds enjoy slithering up the mountainside. On reaching the saddle, they are suddenly transformed into a vast, billowing expanse, cascading down into the next valley,*

completely engulfing it. Thus is formed the North Sea, most famous of the cloud seas [yun hai] [雲海] in the Huang Shan [黃山]. This sea obeys rules proper to its element: islands, reefs, peninsulas emerge in a tidal rhythm. In the calm of evening, by the water's edge, the poet discovers its shores, its coves. A sudden gust roils its vaporous surface. A crag withstands the waves' assault. Lashed by blue foam, like a ship half seas over, its prow cuts through the ebb and flow. Swamped and drawn under by the mists, the crag disappears, only to re-emerge, proud but still buffeted by the swell. Lying on the smooth rock of the West Balcony, I discover in the storm-swept sky other clouds playing a game of mimicry: dragons and horsemen, lianas and sea wrack, scarves and cascading hair mingle, blend, untangle. All is movement, explosion, light; all is gray, blue-gray, white (p. 138).

166 Even today, the majority of consumable material resources are still carried up to Huang Shan by men and women carriers. It takes about three days for a carrier to finish a return trip up the 4,000 steps from the valley. Riboud (ibid.) praises the carrier in a noble way: *In the Huang Shan, the bearer [carrier], like the poet and the artist, has been ennobled. Along the paths, he is always given the right of way. He alone proudly refuses to have his picture taken. The artful way in which he lashes down and balances the most varied loads is a secret to be envied. He bends and yields to the rhythm of the pliable bamboo. His load often exceeds his own weight. He also carries men. On chairs he carries tired Japanese tourists or overseas Chinese, for whom this mode of transportation is one of the status symbols of newfound wealth. The mountain echoes with the songs of the bearers... The need to sustain effort engendered rhythmic and recitative chant* (p. 137).

167 I was fortunate to meet with a group of seniors who had become amateur photographers after their retirement. Climbing and photographing Huang Shan brought them together, to share their joy, their wisdom, and to be close to nature.

168 Cross reference my idea of virtual reality in the chapter *Digital Art and Aesthetics*.

169 The main difference between Chinese painting and my work is that individual images of my work, originating from the medium of photography, follow the one-point perspective. When these images are compiled together, the phenomenon of multiple one-point perspectives emerges and the traces of these perspectives have intrigued the beholder to travel with the traces subconsciously and intuitively. I name this *moving perspective*. On the other hand, Gao (2001) has suggested the idea of *false perspective*, that is inspired by Munch's work of a painting of geese. He says: *You use ink to spark a direct vision, and while blank white spaces provide the effects of light, the arrangements of whites, blacks, and grays are transformed into spaces where depth is created. This kind of "false perspective" can go so far as to resemble photography, as though it were distancing itself from the Chinese tradition of ink painting* (p. 48). Also cross reference chapter on *Digital Art and Aesthetics* for further discussions on moving perspective.

170 Cross reference *The Scholar* for detailed discussions about qi and spirit.

171 In his ink painting Gao (2002) has acknowledged the flatness of Chinese ink painting and that he would yield to shades of black ink to establish a visual depth for his work. He says: *aside from the nuances of hue traversed by the passage from white to black, you also discovered that gradated shades and the use of light effects create contrasts and confer depth to the painting* (p. 47).

172 This virtual space resides in the physicality of my digital artwork corresponds to my concept of spiritual virtual space. Cross reference chapter on *Chinese Philosophy and Aesthetics* for detailed discussion.

173 Gao (ibid.) says: *The void in traditional Chinese painting functions as a kind of psychological space. Those great white expanses are not there only to provide a space on which to write dedications but also to serve as a haven for imagination and to*

cleanse the palate in preparation for the taste of ink. Covering every bit of the surface is completely taboo, because it leaves no place for the imagination to spread itself (p. 48).

174 Gao (ibid.) suggests that: *contemporary artists need to find bridges between artistic and cultural legacies in order to secure their own paths* (p. 47).

175 Here the physicality refers to the physical material of colour transparency. In time, fungus, dirt and scratches are formed and the colours fade out.

176 Cross reference *Locating New Aesthetics* under the chapter *Digital Art and Aesthetics*.

177 Cross reference *Virtual Space in a Digital Environment* under the chapter *Digital Art and Aesthetics*.

178 Cross reference *Transformative Quality of Digital Imaging Technology* under the chapter *Digital Art and Aesthetics*.

179 Tu (ibid): *The theory of the Five Agents of the Five Phases (wu-hsing)[wu xing] [五行] [The Five Elements] need not concern us here. Since Chou [Tun-i] [Zhou Dunyi] [周敦頤] makes it clear that "by the transformation of yang and its union with yin, the Five Agents of Water, Fire, Wood Metal, and Earth arise" and that since "the Five Agents constitute a system of yin and yang," (Chan, Wing-tsit) [Chen Rongjie] [陳榮捷] they can be conceived as specific forms of ch'i. That humankind receives ch'i in its highest excellence is not only manifested in intelligence but also in sensitivity* (p. 35). Also cross-reference discussion on *The Scholar*.

180 I photographed the natural transformed forms of rust, ash, vapour (boiling), heat haze and sand particles to represent Metal, Wood, Water, Fire and Earth respectively.

181 Cross reference chapter on *Chinese Philosophy and Aesthetics*.

182 Cross reference *Chinese Classical Aesthetic Thought* under the chapter *Chinese Philosophy and Aesthetics*.

183 Zhang (ibid.) comments: *Shen Kuo, an art critic of the eleventh century, maintained that the constant shifting of perspective in a Chinese painting is an outgrowth of the philosophical principle of "seeing smallness in largeness" – namely, viewing the details of a scene from a cosmic angle...Likewise, the entire world of nature, in all its splendor, can be captured in the painting of a single flower, bird, fish, or insect. By the means of a single flower, the artist brings forth the dynamics of the whole universe. We can indeed "see largeness in smallness" (pp. 5-6).*

184 Cross reference discussion on spontaneity (jeren) under the chapter *Chinese Philosophy and Aesthetics*.

185 Cross reference chapter on *Chinese Philosophy and Aesthetics*.

186 Cross reference *The Poetics of Experience with Nature* and chapter on *Digital Art and Aesthetics*.

187 Cross reference *The Poetics of Ink Jet Printmaking*.

188 Cross reference the discussion on *Chinese Philosophy and Aesthetics*.

189 Cross reference the discussion on *The Poetics of Experience with Nature*.

190 One of the influential contemporary painters to execute the empty space through the "occupied space", Karin Li [Li Keran] [李可染] is a representative figure that has adapted Western painting aesthetics to manifest the empty space to the extreme.

191 Cross reference the chapter on *Design Approaches* about simulation, self-cultivation and enlightenment.

192 I did not intend to perceive what would be achieved. I sent my digital files on a queue to print and picked any substrate randomly to feed the printer.

193 Cross reference the discussion on *The Poetics of Clicking [Reflexive Framing: a re-thinking of decisive moment]*.

Findings and Conclusion

In this research, Western digital imaging technology is the locus of departure. Through the practice-led research process, it is intended to materialise a new and always transformative 'origin' in digital art practice. The research adapts a key statement of poetics of making rather than a research question and works towards the development of a new confluent cross-cultural aesthetics.

With recourse to Chinese aesthetics and philosophical concepts, the poetics of materialisation is an experience of obsessive immersion with our senses¹⁹⁴ to attain self-enlightenment.

Then what are the findings? How does my research work to contribute to a confluent aesthetics that possibly is unfamiliar to the counterpart of the other culture?

In the commentary on *The Poetics of Making*, I strategically discuss through each of the practices the poetic views of the media I use (*The Poetics of Clicking*); my culture (*The Poetics of Mao Artefacts*); my philosophy (*The Poetics of Chinese Worldview*, *The Poetics of Allusion* [*Joy of Fish*]), things that have influenced my beliefs (*The Poetics of Teaching* [*In Praise of Confucius: Nurture and not Categorise*], *The Poetics of Natural Vitality* [*The Five Elements*] and *The Poetics of Nature* [*The Four Seasons*]); my emotional experiences (*The Poetics of Experience with Nature* [*Emotional Deposition and The Experience*], *The Poetics of Memory* and *The Poetics of Ink Jet Printmaking*), and my identity (*The Poetics of Having A Transformative Identity*). The philosophical position of self (myself), that is transformative and signifies the stance in a particular way in the here and now, is key to answer to the findings of this research. Such encompassing diverse contents, aesthetics and ideas in this research are unified spokes to form a collateral wholeness which explores and responds to the concept of poetics of making. The exegesis (as the correspondence of knowledge) is the materialised daily mundane sustenance for the individual self (myself) to communicate the poetics of making. Ultimately, it is the experiences of the others through viewing, reviewing, contemplating and self-enlightening as they establish their views on the poetics of making.

What then are the possible contributions of the integration of Chinese Xuan Zhi and Western ink jet

technology in the process of materialisation of digital artwork? Does the impact of new technologies create new forms of digital aesthetics? Again, the integration of material (Xuan Zhi) and process (ink jet) of new technologies is not new in itself. The new visual physicality provides an intellectual locus for dialectic communication and potential resolution of the new – a new view on the poetic experiences of material, technology, and the consequent aesthetics and philosophical concepts. In a sense, the research provides the potential essences of a new environment. Therefore, the research output includes three main parts (the creative document, the exegesis and the documentation) and is an artefact of a temporal physicality of a new view. Does it matter whether these provide a new horizon of thought in digital art? It does, not only in a materialised sense, but also in a philosophical sense. The materialised artefact, through extensive experimental medium interplays Western creative ideas and technologies with traditional and historical Chinese poetics and substrates, and provides a fertile repository for further investigations.

Taking the Chinese perspective, the aesthetics in this project is considered through poetics. The poetics of making in this project is the fusing of classical Chinese poetic ideas (emotional feeling) with contemporary creative art making that will reflect the transformative showing in the here and now of myself as art practitioner. My key proposition in this project refers to Daoism which sharpens the position of the self (myself) through the always unique, concrete, and often dramatic scenarios drawn from my own experience. Thus I am constantly reviewing my own concepts of poetics of making in any temporal moments in the here and now. As for the self, the joy of making is one of the key essences in, and motivation for the research on poetics of making.

With regard to the technological aspects, the aim of contemporary digital printmakers is to achieve the best reproduction quality in their virtual digital art. This is manifested through establishing a precise ink jet printmaking system applied onto reliable ink jet substrates. I have taken a disjointed view to explore the unmanageable and unpredictable quality of Chinese art substrates instead. The crux of my project lies in the interactions of unpredictability and plasticity of substrates with preciseness and reliability of technology. This bridges cross-cultural academic research and art practising. It also leads to an openness in dialectic discussions to initiate new aesthetic thoughts.

In today's technological environment, I advocate the philosophical approach of 'in classical, for

contemporary' [wang gu xun jin] [往古尋今] to facilitate the pursuit of contemporary (jin) [今] knowledge making by referencing the 'constant' (classical) knowledge (gu) [古] and relocating the balance between constant (classical) (gu) [古] and variability (contemporary) (jin) [今].

The design approach explores classical Chinese philosophical and aesthetic ideas within the Chinese framework, while making reference to Western thinking. The conceptual framework is based on the fusion of Chinese philosophical ideas in aesthetics and the Western approach in creative art practice. The practical framework is based upon the integration of Western technological advancement with traditional Chinese art materials. Therefore, the aesthetics of the practice yields to the ethos of Chinese poetry at a philosophical level and associates with my daily experience in a contemporary digital environment. The practice is a place of self-enlightenment and communication with other selves and, as such, that self-cultivation, self-enlightenment, dialectic interrogation and actualisation are key methodological approaches to rationalise knowledge in the digital virtual environment.

Findings

New is never new in a philosophical sense. From the Daoist's perspective, nothing is new and everything is new. This paradoxical approach to new defines new as 'renewed', and relocated as new.

In this sense, the findings are not new, and yet are always new in a contemporary environment. In this project, the new is located in the digital art context (not Chinese art); the new refers to the fusing of aesthetic qualities of both Western digital image editing and ink jet printmaking technology with classical Chinese substrates; new in extending the application of Chinese material in a global context; new in cross-cultural aesthetic thought and forms; new in the potential of confluent aesthetics through exploring and challenging the cultural differences and gaps of concept and philosophy of art and its communication.

I have collated the following new findings of this project that explicitly reflect my position of this research project – it is a creative document as well as a philosophical visual discourse on classical Chinese aesthetics in the context of digital art.

Philosophical Findings

- The integration of ink jet technology and Xuan Zhi is a re-branding or re-packaging (relocating) of the physicality of digital artwork in a new environment. Therefore the exploration of digital technology with Xuan Zhi is a relocation of constant aesthetics to a new digital environment.
- Art practice triggers the spiritual experience of poetics. This relocates the constant (gu) [古] Chinese aesthetic thoughts in a new digital environment which renews the physicality of artwork. The temporal physicality (that is the artefact as research output) is effective only as it provides the initiative to create a spiritual virtual space for dialectic discussions.
- The design approach applied is a relocation of classical Chinese philosophical methods in art practice to a contemporary new context.
- The 'new' technology is new, however, it is the outcome of the human being's constant aspiration to renew the existing knowledge and to humanise nature. Yet again, through the processes of renewing (humanisation of nature), we yield to nature, and in turn, we (humans) are naturalised. The 'new' is the constantly changing and mutating intellectual experience with nature.
- Locating a balance is a constant and never-ending human aspiration as we re-new knowledge that ultimately re-news our own philosophical thinking. And in art practice, our desire to create new aesthetics provides a temporally renewed physicality of our intellectual thoughts. The effectiveness of 'renewed' aesthetics that resides in the temporal physicality lies in the ability to trigger spiritual resonance amongst individuals in a constantly changing environment.
- The new digital technology in my research only provides the self a virtual space. The new situates in the experience (and the sharing) of the self, as every moment is seemingly repetitive, yet is constantly transformative. In this sense, only the experience of self is new.
- The renewing and relocating of Chinese philosophical thought that underpins the practice offer a confluent philosophical thought on digital art and art practising. Such new confluent thought

can only be effectively implemented through individuals' intellectual engagement with, and resonance with, the artworks.

Aesthetic Findings

Xuan Zhi, with its imprecise nature, when encountering the preciseness of ink jet technology introduces new aesthetics in physicality. The primitivism of Xuan Zhi integrates with the sophistication, dynamic and richness of colour hues of inks and evolves unexpected interactions of diverse sensual experience – the succulence, the lushness, the scents, the textures, the vibrancy, the sturdiness, the fragility, the delicacy and the vivacity. Yet these are the sensual pleasures that are brought about through the temporal physicality of the artwork. The sensual pleasures triggered are crucial in initiating the virtual space of mutual intellectual communication between selves. It is at this philosophical locale that newer aesthetics are potentially constituted.

Yielding to classical Daoism and Sikong, and the contemporary Gao and Li, I summarise the aesthetic findings as follows:

- The ethos of Daoism on art practice is about the process of exploration, not the outcome. There is no binary complementation of form and content, or of representation of the thing itself. There is only 'the way'.
- Art and art practice function to express individual concepts about nature (heaven and earth) and the myriad creatures (including human). As such, nature is a 'stimulus' in the process of art practice and its appreciation.
- The richness of visual imagery initiates multiple levels of poetic resonance.
- Art practice provides a constantly cyclic process of what Li (2005) calls the humanisation of nature and naturalisation of humans.
- Art practice is a means to provide profound possibilities to unearth personal expression (Gao,

2002). Artists must return to the present self, to the real life and to the individual sense for new expression. Thus, artwork functions to express our individuality.

- The classical concept of achieving the state of emptiness (void) is imperative for the unification of man and nature and, as such, to free humans from their feelings and desires (state of nothingness, or no-self). This seemingly contradicts Gao's (2002) idea of personal expression and is instead a complementing concept which balances the self and nature in attaining the unification of man with nature.
- Qi is vital as it mediates not only yin and yang, but also all other things.
- Classical aesthetic concepts concerning contrasting qualities are complementary pairs which achieve a harmonious yin and yang balance for the unification of man and nature, and, as such, the contents of these pairs are associated with nature and man.
- Art practice and the artwork are processes and locales that provide the constant internalising and externalising of human's thoughts. Motivated by qi, and balancing physicality (external) and spirituality (internal), man is able to achieve a state of emptiness in order to unify with nature. It is in such a state that the spiritual dialectic communications between selves (artist and beholder) become effective.
- Holding back is a sophisticated planned strategy to provide a virtual space for a savouring process for the artist to expel the implicit qi. This holding back strategy also contributes to the lingering quality of appreciation. Again, the spiritual approach of fortuity is complementarily paired with the holding back strategy in order to attain unity.
- Art practice is a universal act of human intervention; therefore the mystic approach and yielding to the human-constructed mundane are shortcomings that are inevitable in supplementing the articulation of ideas.

- Coupled with the holding back strategy, narration of fictional concept images enforces the reader (beholder) to contemplate, introspect and immerse into the aesthetic experience, in order to appreciate and actualise the aesthetics [thought].
- Cultivation and enlightenment are methods to achieve a spiritual state of mind that is set free from the restraints of mundane physicality.
- The organic, unpredictable, profound, bewildering and chaotic quality of nature and the orderly, meticulously refined and sensible human thoughts are key aesthetic essences.
- Remoteness, unconcern, simplicity and blandness are qualities of spiritual virtual space that provide individual self-distance from the mundane daily world to enable creativity and intellectual dialogues. As such, the complexity and restraints of the physicality (image, language etc) are transcended through the simplicity of spiritual association.
- Yi-jing is a key philosophical aesthetics owing to which, through the spiritual dialogues triggered by the artwork, certain spiritual consensus is attained between the subjectivity of individual selves in response to the objectivity of the phenomena. It is in such a state of harmony that totality between selves and nature is achieved.

Practical Findings

Taking a non-self-centred position in exploring digital imaging and ink jet technologies with Xuan Zhi, the experimental processes and the experience encountered give joy to me (as the artist). Encountering Xuan Zhi's primitivism in its delicacy and fragility, and its interactions with technology, the poetic intimacy transcends my human physical senses (the five senses). The more I experience, the more I feel naive, and the more I am enlightened (or potentially enlightened), and the more I appreciate the unexpected, unpredicted and capricious. It transcends joy to a void state of remoteness and calmness.

Is not the archival physicality important? Or the creative manifestation? Does the research open up a

new horizon in the pursuit of digital art aesthetics? Do the cross-cultural aspects constitute confluent knowledge and aesthetics?

The materialised ink jet artwork produced from the 'reproducible originals' of organic computer codes represents a temporal transformative reality. It is in a temporally recognisable form with a temporal fixed design that aims to represent a temporal identity. This brings about the sharing of intellectual thoughts between individuals. In a sense, I have provided the augmented and expanded potentials or abilities to foster further development in a philosophical and cross-cultural context. As such, the archival physicality, in itself, is not a main concern. In a way, a confluent aesthetics is the outcome of a knowledge-selecting process, through self-cultivation, to being enlightened. Ultimately, the process frees up the self to enter a state of void and to be able to stay ignorant of the unwanted knowledge – a state of enlightened ignorance through the experimental practice. As such, greater wisdom is attained through constantly internalising the selected knowledge.

The experimental practice of ink jet technology with Xuan Zhi is also the revitalisation of the constant (Xuan Zhi) through using new (ink jet technology) concepts to relocate the constant in a new (digital environment) environment. The creativity lies in re-locating the Chinese aesthetics within cross cultural and media boundaries. In doing so, it challenges the present predominant emphasis on creativity (innovation) in the physicality of digital still imaging with ink jet printmaking technology. This fills the gaps in the theory and practice of contemporary digital aesthetics. In this sense, a comparison of the visuality (high reproductive fidelity of colour tones and hues) between Xuan Zhi and other ink jet materials, is irrelevant. The artwork and the 'new' aesthetics developed simply question the current norm of ink jet aesthetics. The bland colour hues and tones, the subtle but undefined definitions, the inconsistency and the instability are unique and contrast with the 'norm' ink jet aesthetics. Such qualities are brought about by the organic primitive nature of Xuan Zhi. Yet together, Xuan Zhi and ink jet technology constitute the sense of unconcerned simplicity that is remote from the norm for aesthetics. Consequently, this questions the norm for aesthetics and, as such, that individual selves will hold back and immerse themselves into the aesthetics to contemplate, to savour, to linger and to appreciate and actualise their own aesthetic thoughts. Therefore, new aesthetics is located in the initiation to question the norm through the intellectual virtual space. The creativity and creation of new knowledge lies in the sophistication of these intellectual processes between selves that

is triggered by the 'new' aesthetics of my artwork. The fortuitous approach of combining digital images with the diverse range (of different types) of Xuan Zhi creates the random encountering of content (of the images) and material (of the Xuan Zhi) that accentuates the profundity and remoteness of the potential new aesthetics.

Whether it is the primitive Xuan Zhi, or the contemporary digital imaging and ink jet technology, the human being's eagerness to intervene through art practice to unearth self-expression of individuality (Gao, 2002) constitutes the constant cyclic process of humanisation of nature and naturalisation of humans (Li, 2005). From this perspective, through this project, the ultimate goal of my project is to free up the self (myself) from the restraints of technical and technological proficiency and, as such, that craftsmanship is not traceable, yet embedded in the aesthetics. This has a philosophical underpinning that influences the 'new' aesthetics of my fortuitous approach in photography, in digital image editing and in the ink jet printmaking with Xuan Zhi. The 'new' aesthetics of my artwork reflects my pursuit of the naturalness, crudeness, naivety, openness and ignorance. Yet further investigation reveals the actualised qualities of aesthetics are indeed humanised (naturalness), precisely controlled (crudeness), sophisticated (naivety), finely crafted (openness) and manoeuvred (ignorance). Such actualised aesthetic qualities are the constantly transforming and balanced temporality of the physicality (external) and spirituality (internal) that are motivated by the vigor (qi) of the self (myself) for achieving a state of harmonious totality with nature. Thus, through the visual 'new' aesthetics, spiritual dialectic communication between selves (artist and beholder) is apprehended. In a way, the 'new' aesthetics is rich and unique in initiating multiple levels of poetic resonance.

Artwork is a carrier of subjectivity (human) that responds to objectivity (nature) and shares life sedimentation with the otherness. The 'new' aesthetics is imbued with transforming renewed memories. This constitutes the poetics of art practice (making). Yet, it is not a reminiscent representation of life sedimentation; rather, it is a temporal reality of the renewed and relocated memories of the self in the here and now. The poetics are situated in the making (of the artwork), and not in the artwork. Therefore, the technological and philosophical explorations through the processes of photography, digital imaging editing, ink jet printmaking with Xuan Zhi are intended to pursue the poetic experience that ultimately is sedimented in the temporal reality of the artwork. In this sense, the 'new' aesthetics also functions to

trigger the other selves to immerse in a state of appreciating resonance and attain an agreeable consensus of certain ideas, rituals and protocols of the poetics of making in the here and now.

Therefore, the artwork is a temporal new 'origin' that does not only disseminate 'new' aesthetics (knowledge); concurrently it interrogates the 'norm' for the aesthetics of current knowledge. It is again an act of human intervention that is intended to achieve a temporal harmony between selves and with nature through attaining certain consensus on the ever-transforming concept of poetics of making.

Conclusion

In this project, re-interpretation of classical (ku) Chinese ideas and materials and relocation to a digital environment constitutes new knowledge. The aesthetics explored and developed has offered potential dialogues for considering a confluent philosophical thought and approach to digital art and practice. It also questions the current 'norm' aesthetic pursuit of digital ink jet printmaking technology and ink jet artwork. Connecting classical Chinese substrates with ink jet technology and re-contextualising classical philosophical aesthetic concepts posits new insights; yet the challenge might be unresolved, at the least in the here and now. For younger Chinese generations that are much influenced by Western cultures, the 'unfamiliar' Chinese classical ideas proposed in this project might be passé. For Westerners, this might be inconsequential. However, our aspiration to change is invariable. In this sense, the Chinese philosophical and aesthetic idea of transformative openness that underpins all things is relevant and pertinent to be adapted and applied in the constantly mutating global environment. In time, again, the 'unfamiliarity' that stays on will be sedimented to become 'constant'. And in this sense, unresolved and unfamiliarity are qualities of the 'new'.

It might be said that new as unfamiliar and unresolved is another Daoist paradoxical approach to defend the research findings. Then it is the materialised artefact that I have produced that serves as a carrier of a temporal resolution of my intellectuality in action through this practice-led research project. The artefact is a container of temporal new aesthetics and new philosophical concepts in a new locality. Most importantly, it provides a virtual space that the other selves will encounter in my experience of poetics

of making and through dialectic communications and negotiations to internalise their experience and externalise their intellectuality.

I would want to draw to a close by profiling my philosophical position as a practitioner that has been much influenced by the Late Ming painter [wan ming hua jia] [晚明畫家] Chen Jiru (1558-1639) [陳繼儒]:

Hide the skill;

Then hide the fame;

And then hide the self.

The self is set free.¹⁹⁵

[先藏用，次藏名，又次藏身。]

xian cang yong, ci cang ming, you ci cang shen.

The seemingly pessimistic approach is in fact constructive; the ultimate goal of *hiding* (the skill, the fame and the self) is to achieve the spiritual state of freedom [yi] [逸], yet actively engages with the daily mundane. *Hiding* [yin] [隱] is freeing of the self in the mundane world¹⁹⁶ (Xu, 2003, p. 6). To be specific, maintaining a mental state of seclusion ('out' world) to achieve untrammelled spiritual freedom in and through the mundane ('in' world). This is not a passive approach, and is more than active; rather this is proactive; proactive in constantly immersing in the daily routine but freeing the mental self from the material world.

Endnotes

194 Our five senses of sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch with the physicality of our daily mundane sustenance provide the aesthetic depository that enables the ultimate transcendence to self-enlightenment.

195 The English text is my personal translation from the Chinese original.

196 The English text is my personal translation from the Chinese original.

Bibliography (referred to in the text)

Ames, R. & Hall, D. (2003). *A philosophical translation: Dao De Jing "making this life significant"*. New York: The Ballantine Publishing Group.

Ames, R. (2004). Language and interpretive contexts. In C.H. Dale. (Ed.). *Chinese aesthetics and literature: A reader*. New York: State University of New York Press.

AUT University (2002). *AUT strategic plan 2002-2007*. Auckland: AUT University

Awakawa, Y. (1981). *Zen painting*. (J. Bester, Trans.). USA: Kodansha International Ltd.

Bhikkh (1998). *Food of thought: Some teachings of Buddhadasa Bhikkh* (Olson, G. A., Trans.). Taiwan: Xiang Guang Shua Xiang

Cartier-Bresson, H. (1980). *Henri Cartier-Bresson/Photographer*. London: Thames and Hudson Ltd..

Cauvel, J. (1999). The transformative power of art: Li Zehou's aesthetic theory. *Philosophy East and West*, 49, (2) 150-173. USA: University of Hawai's Press.

Chang, C. Y. (1963). *Creativity and Taoism: a study of Chinese philosophy, art, and poetry*. New York: Harper Colophon Books.

Chen, S. M. (2004). *Qi Wu Lun ji qi ying xiang*. Beijing: Beijing University Press.
陳少明: (2004). 《齊物論及其影響》. 北京: 北京大學出版社.

Cheng, F. (1986). Some reflections on Chinese poetic language and its relation to Chinese cosmology (S. Owen, Trans.). In S. Owen. *The vitality of the lyric voice*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Cheng, F. (1994). *Empty and full: The language of Chinese painting* (M.H. Kohn, Trans.). Boston : Shambhala Publications Inc. (Original published 1991)

Confucius (c 500 B.C.). *The Analects*. Retrieved September 12, 2006 from <http://www.confucius.org/main01.htm>

Dale, C. H. (Ed.). (2004). *Chinese aesthetics and literature: A reader*. New York: State University of New York Press.

Das, N. (1976). A fresh look at China's Hundred Flowers Period. In *China Report*, 12, (5-6) 45-53.
Retrieved Feb 25, 2007 from www.sagepublications.com.

- de Freitas, N. (2002). *Towards a definition of studio documentation: Working tool and transparent record*. New Zealand : AUT University.
- Dickie, G. (1997). *Introduction to aesthetics: An analytic approach*. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press.
- Evans, W. (1966). *Many are called* (J. Agee, text). USA: Yale University Press. (Original published in 1938).
- Fang, K. (Ed.). (2003). *Chinese philosophy and the trends of the 21st century civilization, vol. 4*. Beijing: Commercial Press Ltd.
- Fo, C. (2000). *Research in the poems of Guo-wei Wang*. Beijing: The Press of Beijing University.
- Fong, W. C. (1999). Riverbank. In M.K. Hearn & W.C. Fong, (Eds.). *Along the riverbank: Chinese paintings from the C. C. Wang Family Collection*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art
- Fong, W. C. (2001). *Between two cultures: Late-Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Chinese paintings from the Robert H. Ellsworth Collection in The Metropolitan Museum of Art*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art.
- Fung, Y. (1983). *A history of Chinese philosophy* (D. Bodde, Trans.). USA: Princeton University Press.
- Gao, X. (2002). *Return to painting* (N. Benabid, Trans.). New York: Perennial.
- Gemeinboeck, P. (2004). Virtual Reality: space of negotiation. *Visual Studies*, 19, (1) 52-59. Retrieved on January 22, 2007 from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1472586042000204843>
- Gibbs, C. J. (2006). Reflections through invisible glass walls: A self-study of the teacher and artist. *Waikato Journal of Education*.
- Goulding, J. (2003a) Visceral manifestation: Chinese philosophy and Western phenomenology. In K. Fang. (Ed.), *Chinese philosophy and the trends of the 21st century civilization, vol. 4* (p. 99). Beijing: The Commercial Press.
- Goulding, J. (2003b) Visceral manifestation: Chinese philosophy and Western phenomenology. In K. Fang. (Ed.), *Chinese philosophy and the trends of the 21st century civilization, vol. 4* (pp. 360-417). Beijing: The Commercial Press.
- Gray, C. (1996). *Inquiry through practice: Developing appropriate research strategies in art and design*. Retrieved April 15, 2004, from <http://www.2rgu.ac.uk/criad/cgpapers/ngnm/ngnm.htm>
- Gray, C. & Malins, J. (2004). *Visualizing research: A guide to the research process in art and design*. England:

Ashgate Publishing Limited.

He, H. S. (1998). *Chuang zao de kuang juan*. Taipei: Li Xu Wen Hua Shi Ye You Xian Gong Si.

何懷碩: (1998). 《創造的狂狷》. 台北: 立緒文化事業有限公司.

Hieronymus, B. (1999). *The creative process is profoundly altered by changes in technology*. USA: Florida Atlantic University, MA thesis.

Hill, J. (1983). *Walker Evans at Work*. London: Thames and Hudson Ltd..

Ho, K. T. (1999). *The digital trend in photography*. Auckland: AUT University.

Ho, K. T. (2000). *Photographic representation: An investigation into emerging photographic technologies, using street theatre in Hamilton, NZ*. Auckland: AUT University.

Ho, K. T. (2005). Chi's nurturing in contemporary art and design education. In M. Mason, (Ed.). *Conference proceedings: 34th annual PESA conference - critical thinking and learning: values, concepts and issues* (pp. 210-230). Hong Kong: the Philosophy of Education Society of Australasia Inc.

Hsu, K. Y. (1981). Colour and light in the canvases of Zao Wou-ki (D. Yu, Trans). In S. C. Soong & J. Minford, (Eds.). *Trees on the mountain: An anthology of new Chinese writing*. Hong Kong: A Renditions Book.

Huang, H.(1980). The new poetry – a turning point? (A Misty Manifesto). (Z.Y. Zhy & J. Minford, Trans. and adapted). In S. C. Soong & J. Minford, (Eds.). *Trees On the mountain: An anthology of new Chinese writing*. Hong Kong: A Renditions Book.

Jarvis, J. D. (2004). *Toward a digital aesthetic*. Retrieved on April 8, 2004 from <http://www.dpandi.com/essays/jarvis2.html>

Jing, H. (2000). Bi Fa Ji (S. West, Trans.). In S. Bush & H. Shih, (Eds.). *Early Chinese texts on painting*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. (Original published 10th Century)

Jullien, F. (2004). *In praise of blandness: Proceeding from Chinese thought and aesthetics* (P.M. Varsano, Trans). New York: Zone Books

Jussim, E. (1989). *The eternal moment: Essays on the photographic image*. USA: Aperture Foundation Inc.

Koetzle, H-M. (2002). *Photo icons II 1928-1991: The story behind the pictures*. USA: Taschen.

Kotz, L. (1998). Aesthetics of "Intimacy". In D. Bright, (Ed.). *The passionate camera: Photography and bodies of desire*. UK: Routledge.

Krause, D. S., Schminke, K. & Lhotka, B. P. (2004). *Digital art studio: Techniques for combining inkjet printing with traditional art materials*. USA: Watson-Guptill Publications

Lai, X. Z. (2003). *Yi jing yu chou xiang: Dong xi kua wen hua gou tong zhong de yi shu ping lun*. Taiwan: Hong Ye Wen Hua Shi Ye You Xian Gong Si.

賴賢宗: (2003). 《意境與抽象: 東西跨文化溝通中的藝術評論》. 台灣: 洪葉文化事業有限公司.

Laozi (2001). *Tao Te Ching: A bilingual edition* (Lau, D. C., Trans.). Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press. (Original published c 500 B.C.)

Levy, P. (2002). Welcome to virtuality. In C. Beardon & L. Malmborg, (Eds.). *Digital creativity: A reader*. Netherlands: Swets & Zeitlinger Publishers.

Li, J. W. (2005). *Dian ying xu ni: Zao qi Zhong Guo dian ying mei xue*. Hong Kong: Hui Zhi Chu Ban You Xian Gong Si.

李健文: (2005). 《電影虛擬: 早期中國電影美學》. 香港: 匯智出版有限公司.

Li, Z. & Cauvel, J. (2005). *Four essays on aesthetics: Towards a global view*. UK: Lexington Books.

Lin, C. M. (2001). *Difference and praxis in contemporary philosophy of art*. Taipei: New Century Publishing Company.

Lyotard, J. F. (1986). The Postmodern condition : a report on knowledge. *Theory and history of literature*, vol. 10. Manchester: Manchester University Press

Murck, A. (2000). *Poetry and painting in Song China: The subtle art of dissent*. USA: Harvard University Press

Newbury, D. (1996). Knowledge and research in art and design. *Design Studies* 17. Retrieved April 15, 2004 from <http://www.biad.uce.ac.uk/research/rti/rtrc/pdfArchive/da8.PDF>

Owen, S. (1992). *Readings in Chinese literary thought*. USA: Harvard University Press.

Owen, S. (2003). History and contemporary: the influence of technological development to tradition [Li shi he gong shi: Jiu ji shu fa zhan dui chuan tong wen hua zhi ying xiang jin xing de si kao]. In 'Zhong Guo Chuan Tong Wen Hua Yu Er Shi Yi Shi Ji' Conference Proceedings. Beijing: Zhong Hua Shu Ju Bian Ji Bu.

斯蒂芬·歐文: (2003). 《歷史和共 時: 就技術發展對傳統文化之影響進行的思考》刊於《“中國傳統文化與21世紀” 國際學術研討會論文集》. 中國: 中華書局編輯部.

- Owen, S. (2004) Omen of the world. In C.H. Dale, (Ed.). *Chinese aesthetics and literature: A reader*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Pfister, L. (2003). The creative potential and philosophical importance of going beyond a "China-West" philosophical focus in 21st century Chinese philosophy. In K. Fang, (Ed.). *Chinese philosophy and the trends of the 21st century civilization*. Beijing: The Commercial Press
- Parr, M. (2005). *Fashion Magazine by Martin Parr*. United Kingdom: Martin Parr Publishing.
- Plaks, A. (1977). Towards a critical theory of Chinese narrative. In A. Plaks (Ed.). *Chinese Narrative: Critical and theoretical essays* (pp. 334-39). Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Powers, M. (2000). Vision and Identity in Qu Wu Lun. In P. Yu, P. Bol, S. Owen, & W. Peterson (Eds). *Ways with words: Writing about reading texts from early China*. USA: University of California Press.
- Riboud, M. (1990). *Capital of Heaven* (J. Wood, Trans). New York: Doubleday.
- Ritchin, F. (1999). The lyric documentarian. In S. Salgado. *An uncertain grace*. USA: Aperture
- Ropp P. (2004). The distinctive art of Chinese fiction. In C.H. Dale. (Ed.). *Chinese aesthetics and literature: A reader*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Sanatani, S. (2003). How to compare Oriental and Western philosophies? In K. Fang (Ed.). *Chinese philosophy and the trends of the 21st century civilization*. Beijing: The Commercial Press.
- Schipper, K. (2000). Taoism: the story of the Way. In S. Little, (Ed.). *Taoism and the arts of China* (pp.35-6). USA: The Art Institute of Chicago.
- Scrivener, S. (2002). *The art object does not embody a form of knowledge*. Retrieved on December 2002 from www.cynara.demon.co.uk.
- Seifert, T. A. (1994). *A study of two artists: Implications for curriculum in photography*. USA: Texas A&M University.
- Sikong, T. & Chen, G. Q. (1999). *Er Shi Si Shi Pin*. Taipei: Jin Feng Chu Ban She.
司空圖著,陳國球導讀: (1999)《二十四詩品》. 台北: 金楓出版社
- Sontag, S. (1979). *On Photography*. England: Penguin Group
- Tang, Y. (1999). Language, truth, and literary interpretation: A Cross-cultural examination. In *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 60, (1) 1-20.

Taylor, M. (2003). Distracted cats. In *PEI, Nov-Dec 03*, 41.

Townsend, D. (2002). *Aesthetics: Classic readings from Western tradition*. Beijing: Peking University Press.

Tu, W. M. The continuity of being. In C.H. Dale, (Ed.). (2004). *Chinese aesthetics and literature: A reader*. New York: State University of New York Press.

Tuan, Y. F. (2007). *Coming home to China*. USA: University of Minnesota Press

Vaske, H. (2002). *Why are you creative?* USA: Fivedegreebelowzero Press.

Vigneron, F. (1999). *Le Songe Creux: Paintings by Frank Vigneron*. Hong Kong: unpublished.

Wang, Q. (2000). Heng Dao and appropriation of nature - a hermeneutical interpretation of Laozi. *Asian Philosophy*, 10, (2) 149 - 163.

Wells, L. (2004). *On and beyond the white walls: Photography as art*. In L. Wells (Ed.). *Photography: A critical introduction*. New York: Routledge.

Wikipedia. Martin Parr & snapshot aesthetics. Retrieved August 8, 2007 from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Snapshot_aesthetic and from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/wiki/martin_Parr

Xu, L. S. (2003). Chen Jiru de mei hua shi shu. In J. L. Mo (Ed.), *Xue dao yang chen: Zhong Guo yi shu shi wen ji*. Hong Kong: Fine Art Department, The Chinese University Press.

徐麗莎: (2003) 《陳繼儒的梅花詩書》刊於莫家良主編:《學道揚塵:中國藝術史文集》.香港:香港中文大學藝術系.

Xu, L. X. (2001). *Introduction to Chinese aesthetics*. Guangzhou: Guangdong People Press.

徐林祥著: (2001) 《中國美學初步》.廣州:廣東人民出版社.

Yang, L. (1983). Quoted in S. C. Soong & J. Minford, (Eds.). *Trees on the mountain: An anthology of New Chinese writing*. Hong Kong: A Renditions Book.

Yu, P., Bol, P., Owen, S. & Peterson, W. (Eds). (2000). *Ways with words: Writing about reading texts from early China*. USA: University of California Press.

Zhang, A. (2002). *A history of Chinese painting* (D.J. Li, Trans.). Beijing: Foreign Languages Press.

Zhang, D. Q. & Xu, J. R. (2005). *Da Feng Tang zhong long men zhen*. Shanghai: Shanghai Shu Hua Chu Ban She.

張大千著,徐建融導讀: (2005).《大風堂中龍門陣》.上海:上海書畫出版社.

Zhu, L. Z. (2006). *Zhong Guo mei xue shi wu jiang*. Beijing: Beijing University Press.

朱良志: (2006). 《中國美學十五講》. 北京: 北京大學出版社.

Zhuangzi. (1985). The sorting which evens things out (A. G. Graham, Trans.). In S. Bush & H. Shih, (Eds.) *Early Chinese texts on painting*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. (Original published c 300 B.C.)

Zi, M. J. (2002). Ji suan ji yi shu de zhen di - Fa xian yu biao xian zi ran de shen ceng zhi mei. In J. Y. Gu (Ed.), *Shu Zi Hua Yi Shu Lun Tan: Hui gu yu zhan wang*.. Hang Zhou: Zhe Jiang People's Fine Arts Publishing House.

資民筠: (2002). 《計算機藝術的真諦—發現與表現自然的深層之美》刊於辜居一主編《數字化藝術論壇: 回顧與展望》. 杭州: 浙江人民美術出版社.

Zong, B. H. (1999). *Yi jing*. Beijing: Beijing University Press.

宗白華: (1999). 《藝境》. 北京: 北京大學出版社.

Reference

Artpaper Inc.. *Glossary of paper related terms*. Retrieved July 15, 2004 from <http://www.artpaper.com/glossary.htm#GlossS>

Aziz, A., Cucher, S. (1996). "Notes from Dystopia". In H. v. Amelunxen, S. Iglhaut, F. Rotzer. *Photography after photography: Memory and representation in the digital Age*. (pp. 126-129). Munich: G+B Arts.

Barthes, R. (1991). *The responsibility of forms: Critical essays on music, art, and representation*. California: University of California Press.

Burke, G. (1989). *Imposing narratives: beyond the documentary in recent New Zealand photography*. Wellington: Wellington City Art Gallery.

Eggleton, D., Potton, C. (1999). *Here on earth. The landscape in New Zealand literature*. New Zealand: Criag Potton Publishing.

Enyeart, J. L. (1994). Pathways to The Future of Digital Imaging. *Image*. Spring/Summer 94, (37), (1-2), 33-34. New York.

Fung, S. K. & Lai, S. T. (1984, Compiled). *25 T'ang poets: index to English translations*. Hong Kong: A Renditions Book.

Gombruch, E.H. (1999). *The uses of images: Studies in the social function of art & visual communication*. London: Phaidon.

Grotta, S. W. (1994). *Digital imaging for visual artists*. New York: Windcrest/McGraw-Hill.

Hall, S. (1997). *Representations: Cultural representations and signifying practices*. London :Sage Publisher.

Hall, D., Ames, R. (1995). *Anticipating China: Thinking through the narratives of Chinese and Western culture*. New York: State University of New York Press.

Hall, D., Ames, R. (1987). *Thinking through Confucius*. New York: State University of New York Press.

Hansen, C. (1992). *A Daoist theory of Chinese thought: A Philosophical Interpretation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hall, D., Ames, R. (1998). *Thinking from the Han : Self, truth, and transcendence in Chinese and Western culture*. New York: State University of New York Press.

Hapkemeyer, A., Weiermair, P. (1996). *Photo text text photo: The Synthesis of photography and text in contemporary art*. Zurich: Edition Stemmle.

Hoffmann, Donald D (1998). *Visual intelligence: How we create what we see*. New York: WW Norton & Company.

International Association of Fine Art Digital Printmakers. *What is digital printmaking?*. retrieved on Jan 31, 2000 from <http://www.iafadp.org/processes/methods.html>

Knight, J. & Jefsioutine, M. (Eds.). (2002). Understanding the user: Research methods to support the digital media designer. *Research Issues in Art Design and Media*. Summer 2002, (3). Retrieved May 15, 2004 from: <http://www.biad.uce.ac.uk/research/rti/riadm/issue3/introduction.htm>.

Koestler, A. (1970). *The act of creation*. London: Pan books Limited.

Kohler, M. (Ed, 1996). Constructed realities: The art of staged photography. In H. v. Amelunxen, S. Iglhaut, F. Rotzer. *Photography after photography: Memory and representation in the digital Age*. (pp. 126-129). Munich: G+B Arts.

Laozi (1998). *The essential Tao: An initiation into the heart of Taoism through the authentic Tao Te Ching and the inner teachings of Chuang-tzu* (Cleary, T. translated). USA: Castle Books (Original published c 500 B.C.)

Lister, M.(1995). *The photographic image in digital culture*. London: Routledge.

Little, S., Eichman, S. (Eds.). (2000). *Taoism and the arts of China*. Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago.

Liu, S.H. & Allinson, R. E. (Eds) (1988). *Harmony and strife: Contemporary perspectives, East & West*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press.

Luciana, J. (1999). *The art of enchanced photography: Beyond the photographic image*. Gloucester: Rockport Publishers.

Lunenfeld, P. (1996). Art Post-History: Digital Photography & Electronic Semiotics. In H. v. Amelunxen, S. Iglhaut, F. Rotzer. *Photography after photography: Memory and representation in the digital Age*. (p. 95). Munich: G+B Arts.

Manovich, I. (2001). *The Language of new media*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.

McCullough, M. (1996). *Abstracting craft: The practice digital hand*. USA: MIT Press.

Meyer, P. (1995). *Truths & fictions: A journey from documentary to digital photography*. New York: Aperture Foundation Inc.

- Minford, J., Lau, S. M. (Eds.) (2000). *An anthology of translations – classical Chinese literature, Vol. 1: From antiquity to the Tang dynasty*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press.
- Muller-Pohle, A. (1996). Analog, Digital, Projective. In H. v. Amelunxen, S. Iglhaut, F. Rotzer. *Photography after photography: Memory and representation in the digital Age*. (p. 229). Munich: G+B Arts.
- Pearsall, J. (Ed). (1999). *Concise Oxford dictionary*. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press.
- Popper, F. (1993). *Art of the electronic age*. London: Thames and Hudson Ltd.
- Savedoff, B. E. (1997). Escaping reality: Digital imagery and the resources of photography. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 55, (2), 213-214.
- Schon, D.A. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. New York: Basic Books.
- Steier, F. (Ed, 1995). *Research and reflexivity*. London: Sage.
- Taylor, M. C., Saarinen, E. (1994). *Imagologies*. London: Routledge.
- Turner, J. A. (translated). (1989). *A golden treasury of Chinese poetry*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong.
- Uelsmann, J. (1985). *Process and perception*. USA: University Press of Florida.
- Walk, J. (1983). *Art in the age of mass media*. London: Pluto Press.
- Wall, J. (1994). Digital phantoms. Millar, J. (interviewed), *Creative Camera*, 326, 24-28.
- Wands, B. (2002). *Digital creativity: techniques for digital media and the internet*. New York: Wiley.
- Whale, G. (2001). *Digital printmaking*. London: A. & C. Black.
- Wu, H. (1996). *The double screen: Medium and representation in Chinese painting*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Wu, H. & Phillips, C. (2004). *Between past and present: New photography and video from China*. New York: ICP

Reference Web Sites

<http://mitpress.mit.edu/e-journals/Leonardo>

<http://nearbycafe.com/cafe/photo.html>

<http://photoarts.com>

<http://www.acp.au.com>

<http://www.aec.at>

<http://www.arts.arizona.edu>

<http://www.bitweaver.com>

<http://www.commartarts.com>

<http://www.digitaldog.net>

<http://www.giclees.com>

<http://www.iafadp.org>

<http://www.inkjetmall.com>

<http://www.journale.com>

<http://www.kodak.com>

<http://www.mopa.org>

<http://www.pdn-pix.com>

<http://www.peimag.com>

<http://www.p-o-v-image.com/epson>

<http://www.rps.org>

<http://www.tssphoto.com>

<http://www.webphotojournals.com>

<http://www.wilhelm-research.com>

中文參考書目

美學—理論 (Aesthetics – Theory)

李澤厚著: (1987). 《華夏美學》. 臺北: 三民書局.

李澤厚著: (1990). 《美的歷程》. 臺北: 三民書局.

聶振斌、滕守堯、章建剛著: (1997). 《藝術化生存--中西審美文化比較》. 成都: 四川人民出版社.

朱光潛著: (1999). 《談美書簡二種》. 上海: 上海文藝出版社.

葉朗著: (1999). 《美學的雙峰-朱光潛、宗白華與中國現代美學》. 合肥: 安徽教育出版社.

羅以平著: (2002). 《美學資訊學》. 廣州: 中山大學出版社.

陳振濂著: (2002). 《書法美學》. 西安: 陝西人民美術出版社.

杜道明著: (2003). 《中國古代審美文化考論》. 北京: 學苑出版社.

美學—文學 (Aesthetics – Literature)

錢鐘書著: (1999). 《談藝錄》. 北京: 中華書局.

佛雛著: (2000). 《王國維詩學研究》. 北京: 北京大學出版社.

葉嘉寶著: (2001). 《王國維與其文學評論》. 石家莊: 河北教育出版社.

王國維著: (2003). 《王國維文學論著三種》. 北京: 商務印書館.

美學—文化及哲學 (Aesthetics – Culture and Philosophy)

王明居著: (1999). 《叩寂寞而求音--<周易>符號美學》. 合肥: 安徽大學出版社.

周春生著: (2001). 《直覺與東西方文化》. 上海: 上海人民出版社.

鄭鴻著: (2002). 《老子思想新釋》. 上海: 上海文藝出版社.

魏明德、沈清松、邵大箴著: (2002). 《天心與人心--中西藝術體驗與詮釋》. 北京: 商務印書館.

葉朗、費振剛、王天有著: (2002). 《中國文化導讀》(上、下冊). 香港: 香港城市大學出版社.

唐詩 (Tang Poem)

- 蘅塘退士著: (1968) .《唐詩三百首》. 台南: 台南新世紀出版社.
- 施蟄存著: (1988) .《唐詩百話》. 上海: 上海古籍出版社.
- 徐淵沖著: (1992) .《唐宋詞一百首》 100 Tang and Song Ci Poems. 香港: 商務印書館.
- 胡漢生著: (1997) .《唐樂府詩譯析》. 北京: 北京大學出版社.
- 孟二冬著: (1998) .《中唐詩歌之開拓與新變》. 北京: 北京大學出版社.
- 聞一多著: (1999) .《唐詩雜論--詩與批評》. 北京: 三聯書店.
- 李浩著: (2000) .《唐詩的美學闡釋》. 合肥: 安徽大學出版社.
- 王堯衢著: (2000) .《唐詩合解箋注》. 保定: 河北大學出版社.
- 呂德申著: (2000) .《鐘嶸詩品校釋》. 北京: 北京大學出版社.
- 詹福瑞著: (2001) .《歌者的悲歡--唐代詩人的心路歷程》. 保定: 河北大學出版社.
- 張海沙著: (2001) .《初唐佛教禪學與詩歌研究》. 北京: 中國社會科學出版社.
- 于唐著: (2001) .《朱自清、胡適、聞一多解讀唐詩》. 瀋陽: 遼海出版社.
- 王明居著: (2001) .《唐詩風格論》. 合肥: 安徽大學出版社.
- 康萍著: (2001) .《唐宋詞三百首》. 香港: 商務印書館.
- 羅時進著: (2001) .《唐詩演進論》. 南京: 江蘇古籍出版社.
- 張忠綱、吳懷東、趙睿才，綦維著: (2000) .《中國新時期唐詩研究述評》. 合肥: 安徽大學出版社.
- 賈晉華著: (2001) .《唐代集會總集與詩人群研究》. 北京: 北京大學出版社.
- 洪謨著: (2002) .《唐詩與人生》. 上海: 上海古籍出版社.
- 陳曉芬著: (2002) .《傳統與個性--唐宋六大家與儒佛道》. 上海: 上海古籍出版社.
- 孫琴安著: (2002) .《唐詩與政治》. 上海: 上海人民出版社.
- 蘅塘退士著: (2002) .《唐詩三百首—繪圖本》. 香港: 萬里書店.
- 康萍著: (2002) .《唐詩三百首》. 香港: 商務印書館.
- 薑劍雲著: (2002) .《審美的游離--論唐代怪奇詩派》. 北京: 東方出版社.
- 聶永華著: (2002) .《初唐宮廷詩風流變考論》. 北京: 中國社會科學出版社.

胡可光著: (2003) .《政治興變與唐詩演化》. 北京: 中國社會科學出版社.

吉民周著: (2003) .《唐詩鑒賞辭典》. 上海: 上海辭書出版社.

張晶著: (2003) .《禪與唐宋詩學》. 北京: 人民文學出版社.

陳炎、李紅著: (2003) .《儒釋道背景下的唐代詩歌》. 北京: 昆侖出版社.

聞一多著: (2003) .《唐詩雜論》. 北京: 中華書局.

餘恕誠著: (2003) .《唐詩風貌》. 合肥: 安徽大學出版社.

吳經熊著: (2003) .《唐詩四季》. 臺北: 洪範書店.

綜合 (Miscellaneous)

羅蘭·巴爾特著、孫乃修 譯: (1992) .《符號禪意東洋風--巴爾特筆下的日本》. 香港: 商務印書館.

陳昌謙著: (1996) .《當代中國攝影藝術史1949-1989》. 北京: 中國攝影出版社.

羅蘭·巴爾特著、趙克非譯: (1999) .《明室攝影縱橫談》. 北京: 文化藝術出版社.

華特·班雅明著、許綺玲譯: (1999) .《邁向靈光消逝的年代》. 臺北: 臺灣攝影工作室.

劉半農著: (2000) .《半農談影》. 北京: 中國攝影出版社.

曹天生著: (2000) .《中國宣紙》. 北京: 中國輕工業出版社.

陶明君著: (2001) .《中國書論詞典》. 長沙: 湖南美術出版社.

錢存訓著、鄭如斯編訂: (2004) .《中國紙和印刷文化史》. 桂林: 廣西師範大學出版社.

徐雁著: (2004) .《故紙猶香》. 太原: 書海出版社.

田洪生編: (2004) .《紙鑒》. 太原: 山西古籍出版社.

杉浦康平編著、楊晶、李建華譯: (2006) .《亞洲的書籍文字與設計》. 北京: 三聯書店.

Appendix

This appendix includes:

- A list of some core research activities that relates to this research project.
- Images that were referred to in the text.

Exhibition and Seminar Presentation

- Solo exhibition *The Five Elements* in X-space Gallery, AUT University in May/June 2003
- A seminar about the exhibition work was presented to the staff of AUT in June 2003.
- Solo exhibition *The Scholar* in X-space Gallery, AUT University in July 2005
- Catalogue written for *The Scholar* exhibition.

Research Trip

- Research trip to the United States in April 2004
 - I spent one week in Vermont, attending the ink jet digital printmaking workshop organized by Jon Cone of Cone Editions Ltd. In this workshop, I researched into the philosophy of digital printmakers. It advanced my professional knowledge and concepts about ink jet printmaking. Most importantly, I clarified my position in this research project. I spent another week visiting museums in New York, focusing on digital work, printmaking, photography and Chinese Painting. I also interviewed a renowned digital artist Daniel Lee.
 - Seminar presentation on the research trip to postgraduate students at AUT in May 2004.
- Research trip to Hong Kong, Shanghai, Jingxian County of Anhui Province, Huang Shan for 3 weeks in January 2005
 - During the trip, I visited and made some academic links with the HK Heritage Musuem, The Art School of HK Arts Centre and the Dept of Creative Arts of HK Institute of Education. I met with some renowned contemporary art and design practitioners. I purchased related reference books and ink jet materials. In Jingxian County, visited and documented the manufacturing of Xuan paper and purchased 40kg of different types of Xuan paper. I visited Huang Shan and some villages and photographed extensively. I met with a traditional Chinese printmaker to

research classical woodblock printmaking techniques and aesthetics. In Shanghai, I explored and purchased related resources such as books and props with a specific focus on Chinese philosophy & aesthetics. I visited museums and art galleries.

- Research trip to Southern China in November 2005
 - I carried out a research trip to China to visit a private museum called Good World Furniture Museum to photograph research data that constituted part of the practical context. I purchased related reference books.

Research trip to Paris and Hong Kong in July 2006

- I visited museums and galleries and gathered new technological ideas and information. During the same trip, I visited the Art & Design Faculty of University of Guangzhou to establish academic links. I shared teaching approaches of the Eastern and Western cultures with colleagues.

Research Output

International Conference Presentation

October 2005

Ho, K. T. (2005). Chi's Nurturing in Contemporary Art and Design Education. *34th Annual PESA conference - critical thinking and learning: values, concepts and issues*. Hong Kong: The Hong Kong Institute of Education.

This paper was inspired by the catalogue that I wrote for my exhibition *The Scholar* in July 05. I extended the catalogue into a full paper. The conference, entitled *Critical thinking and learning: values, concepts and issues*, had a focus on the educational system and approach between the East and West.

June 2006

Ho, K. T. (2006). Documind. *Photography and the city*. Dublin: UCD Clinton Institute for American Studies in University College Dublin.

This paper *Documind* was developed from a draft that was intended to become part of my PhD exegesis. I used a series of historical photographs I had taken during the handover of Hong Kong in 1997 to discuss the shifting cultural identities of the people and the city of Hong Kong. Eventually, *Documind* was not included in the practical work and exegesis of this project.

Publication

Ho, K. T. (2005). Chi's Nurturing in Contemporary Art and Design Education. Mason, M. (Ed). *Conference Proceedings: 34th annual PESA Conference - critical thinking and learning: values, concepts and issues*. Hong Kong: the Philosophy of Education Society of Australasia Inc., pp. 210-230.

Journal Publication

Ho, K. T. (2005). The Wishing Tree. *Photo Pictorial*, 476, pp.70-71.

Ho, K. T.(2005). The Work of Catherine Chi. *Photo Pictorial*, 476, pp.34-37.

Ho, K. T. (2005). Photography in the Digital Era. *Photo Pictorial*, 477, pp.60-63.

Ho, K. T. (2005). The Work of Joe Lin. *Photo Pictorial*, 477, pp.26-31.

Referencing Images

The material on this page has been removed by the author of this exegesis.