

Synecdoche: the ever-changing tendency in nothingness and oneness

INTRODUCTION

To start with, everything begins from nothing from a human point of view. The nothingness that alchemists spent their whole life searching for truth of life in Zen Buddhism and Taoism; the zero-point energy state that physics and quantum scientists left in unverifiability by abstracting every atom (Pantano, 2022, p.194). In other words, acknowledging oneself being nothing in art allows every possibility out of pure curiosity and manifestation without restriction of standard procedures.

On the other hand, one concerns about the overall translucent harmony and proportionate coherence, details such as lines, shades, texture and use of materials are as vital as the former. All works made in the year constitute intersections of uncountable encounters instantaneously from the material and maker in progress to visitors and installation of the exhibition.

Given that one's states are no fewer complex than galaxies collide that simultaneously change the entire structure of the universe (Jung, 2014), the tactile yet immaterial experience affects multidimensional realities at once. In short, this praxis explores the endless tendency towards oneness and nothingness as the synecdoche of one's journey between material to immaterial dimensions.

THE CONCEPTUAL GROUND

ENLIGHTENMENT

In the early stages of the journey, embracing small things that brings enlightenment was once the only intention of the journey. Among metaphysical ideas, enlightenment comes along with awakening through light and shadow work. According to Leonard Angel (Morley, 2016), enlightenment is defined as pursuing humanistic well-being in the west and mystical awakening in the east. Furthermore, Wabi Sabi (Kempton, 2019) as in Japanese culture, the inner aesthetics of wholeness are enchanted in a passive gesture of nothingness. While exploring philosophical materiality and metaphysical ideas, one later developed from solely material and technical plane to a holistic experience that set the non-dual yet indefinite ground for the praxis.

NON-DUALITY/ TENDENCY

The oneness and nothingness in the praxis do not fall into a counterbalanced manner, but rather essential states that point back to the present in terms of non-duality; The material itself (here glass, metal and wood) falls into a shattered or fullness condition among its formation and progress; the light and shadow work that review the underlying stages of psychological oneness; the immaterial connection among one, the material and the surrounding. All of them are regarded as temporary states of the journey leaning towards one another, instead of a mechanic oppositional definition/ restriction.

MULTIPLICITY

As born and raised with a combination of influences, spoken and written languages in Hong Kong, one has been searching for a unspoken and universal language that binds personal and collective systems. While contradicting ideas often creates a disjunction between spoken statements and the viewer's interpretation based on their situated knowledge, one consciously incorporates different viewing positions into the total in light of one's level of sensitivity to the surroundings.

Associating with both eastern and western ideas, there are metaphorical connection and synchronisation with cross-disciplinary artists: the furniture designer and embroidery artist Chris Liljenberg Halstrom, the Canadian painter Agnes Martin pursuit and the stained glass artist Johannes Schreiter. To be specific, the unconscious concentration in the process of making that neglects everything else pointing towards the present moments impersonally and the imperfectly perfection in sequence and structure that flows between material and immaterial dimensions. By visualizing the embedded complexities in a detailed yet subtle manner, the praxis is intended to evoke long-term existence in memory and frequency through physical and thoughtful multiplicity.

(conti.) THE CONCEPTUAL GROUND

EVER-CHANGING TEMPORALITY

While artisan glass is visibly permanent for centuries in terms of human measure, atoms are in fact holding their place with level of tensions slowly adjusting in reaction to the surroundings along the linear timeframe.

Setting oneself in the 1970s chaos magic and new age theology, linear sense of past, present and future are types of realities that served as a restriction/ guideline for material realities. When time does not serve as one of the dimensions in the universe, the inner transformation of materials would be apparent and visible in relation to the surroundings. Taking stained glass as an example, the embodiment of moments and vitality preserve the past to the future as a physical evidence. In which, also live at the present simultaneously reacting to the surroundings that review the underlying capacity, as internal as the ever-changing tension between glass and lead profiles, and external stimuli as humidity and air pressure of where the panel is located.

Stained glass tradition is historically constructed with figurative instruction to articulate lights as a transcendent momentum of specified religious story, glorified memorial of beings to later a collective and expressive evidence of certain culture and society. In general, stained glass is the eternity with its nature of material that last for centuries and transcendence that accommodate other dimensions out of human reach. In contrast, when oneself interpret with a broader sense in relation to the timeframe of universe, it is simply no difference with the others in terms of a temporary existence on a material dimension.

WAYS OF DOING

THE FLOW

Designs are not fine-tuned to perfection unless they are delivered in the process of making. In Henri Bergson's term "elan vital", existence is only manifested when one act comes in after another. Giving certain direction/ limitation and design of the outline, materials react naturally and create organically to how they were structurally man-made. In this sense, design is less an intended outcome but a direction for materials flow. On the other hand, materials are less of summoning by the maker, but rather a living matter that evolves together with one's act in progress.

According to Japanese philosopher D.T. Suzuki, the idea of Zen Buddhism is fundamentally based on minimising mind activity and capturing the freedom of life as it flows. Put it in another word, unknown events are to be embraced as a discipline or experience and let occurrences involve the journey without overflowing with interpretation based on situated or taught knowledge.

While in the world of western new age divinity, coincidence (or miracles) happens in respond to the alignment of the same level of frequency. Events will only align with the designed procedure, when all levels of energy or atom share identical channel of vibration. In which, accidents are unavoidable in material realities and emerge according to the presence of events given the ever-changing tendencies between realms that are unreplicable at the moment.

Taking glassmaking as example, float glass always comes with unexpected event due to its relatively harsh nature in comparison to other types of glass. Given that float glass is produced as window glass mechanically, the ready-made core of the pieces indicates a lower fluidity for later manipulation. Regardless of silver stained, enamel or black tracing paint, when additional glass pigments are fused onto the surface, the piece of float glass gets easier to shatter.

(conti.) WAYS OF DOING

(conti.) THE FLOW

The more the same piece is being fused in the kiln, the more fragile the shatter will become. In addition to the harsh nature of float glass, the higher fusing the float glass scheduled, the more uncontrollable the outcome would be.

Here also indicated the frequency and intensity of design amendments made according to the unexpected outcomes of glass cutting for the ultimate panels. In terms of the interacting nature of stained glass design and conceptual aesthetics between wholeness and fragments, an additional layer of depth accommodates the unexpected shattered pieces as by adjusting pieces one after another.

THE ABSTRACTION

According to Agnes Martin, the mind has to be emptied for paintings to be seen (Cotter, 1998). In order to visualise the patterns appearing on canvas at the moment of drawing, one strives for a deconditioning state to align with the tranquility in surrounding immaterial dimensions. That results in a timeless yet basic manner of abstraction which does not require further explanation but direct experience.

In the eastern idea of nothingness, “wu-wei” is one of the interpretations that indicates surrendering oneself seamlessly to its spatial and psychic environment through not doing or not exerting (Morley, 2016). Setting the subject - one, away from what bothers, will finally return to stillness that allows a relationship between subject and object or simply the subject oneself to flow naturally.

Among western idealists, separation of mind and body would return one to consciousness (Descartes, 1641). By abstracting every situated knowledge, one shall then point back to the present. In this sense, subject and object are complementing co-existence of each other, responding to the non-summoning relationship between one and the materials. Instead of a casual relationship of two ends, the identity of subject and object are then folded into states or conditions based on occurrence.

As a result, the tendency towards one another in a non-duality manner highlights the elasticity of abstraction given the ground of nothingness, ultimately with tranquility as the best word of description for all.

From fundamental materiality to spiritual realm levels of matter and energy, the lens of freedom and the spirits in the void are settled in a gesture of abstraction by fully immersing oneself in progress and let things flow as they occur; base on the unpredictable nature of stiff float glass in kiln forming process; the unexpected shatters results from one's reverse procedure of painting before cutting; the record of patterns located from separating mind and spirit from body to invisible realm.

Furthermore, patterns and forms appear on canvas are with no specific meaning that pointing towards any events, while also not completely mechanical repetition. The more one sketches, the more it returns to a form of purity and innocence. The more formless the forms are, the more it is left to the interpretation of the viewer. In light of that, the relationship lies between changes according to one's state of being, that shifts from just an object or piece of work to expanded opportunities for thinking and connecting in dimensions.

Throughout the months, the way of working is clearly reviewed and examined through repetition of returning to a zero-point of creation by destruction of forms that no longer flow and reconstruction to catch the flow at the present. Thanks to the elasticity of abstraction and accessibility to equipment, there is capacity to tolerate contingency, variability, novelty and uncertainty by constantly establishing boundaries and breaking them on top of condensation and expansion of time and space.

DESTRUCTION/ RECONSTRUCTION

The American spiritual author Adyashanti once stated that enlightenment is in fact sanding away the untruth, reviewing the underlying pretence and destructing them. In a metaphoric sense, spiritual and psychological path is a process of destruction and purification, while one's states have been collapsed and reconstructed by consolidation of works over the year.

In terms of "solve et coagula", dissolving and coagulating bring the separated fragments back to a new form of progression. Working day and night over the first year of one's journey, the pause and restart has only been more frequent over the months from tests and design in July and August, a pause in September, followed by intense progress from October to December. Working nonstop for weeks of full days lies in an unstable and exhausting frequency, yet the repetitive move and settle found its own rhythm.

Carl Jung once wrote, a secret order lies in all disorder and a cosmos within all chaos. From systematic and mechanic repetition to chaotic location of fragments, tension lies in every single piece of work, as small as a dot and large as the entire structure. The tension releasing nature is no difference in the appearance of delicate circles or in pointy and constructive pieces.

Given "7" and "12" are the first series of systems that occurred from drilling circles on glass sheets by drilling machines and closing by fusing the circle in delicate form while also the offcuts back together in sculptural form. The cycle/ concept of making use of every bit of handful materials collapsed the boundary of traditional stained glass paintings into glass objects as on the plinth in the installation, while also reinterpreting the tradition into another form of practicality that goes from two dimensions to three. Further onto the entire sensation and experience with natural daylight that redefined the possibility of the "endangered craft".

"2", the visual abstraction of moments, is sourced from the surrounding sensory experience over the year. According to the gallery label from "Collection: 1940s—1970s" in the Museum of Modern Art, Agnes Martin recalled that her work is more of what is evoked in mind and less of what is seen. Patterns in "2" abstract symbolic meanings out of expressionism, and also destroy the predominant presence of figurative form in traditional stained glass creation. Whenever one looks into the drawings, the more abstract it is, the more disruption of situated knowledge aroused. In which, boundless imagination and transcendent realm are remained.

THE PRAXIS (with reference to supporting document from p.4)

The initial plan in July was a holistic window divided into 6 to accommodate 228 pieces of small squares in appropriate proportion without losing the core sense of tranquility. After the initial draft and conversations with the stained glass specialists, frits, sandblasting and even graffiti spray painting were three of the alternatives for taking away the transparency at the back of the clear squares.

After a few weeks of painting and acid etching tests, the next was to scaled down to the window size of maker studio with full set of measurements and shades distribution based on cost, time, techniques and material availability.

(conti.) THE PRAXIS (with reference to supporting document from p.4)

The third version before the start of the academic year in October was further reduced to the size of desk at 16:9 scale, mainly due to the unmatched synergy of lead profiles and 5cm squares, with also planning to apply the wandering line technique as inspired by Johannes' panel along the stairwell upon tests on combinations of translucency.

Exploring the notions of enamel screen printing by scale of water, clear flux, mixing medium and enamel powders. In order to achieve a similar level of translucency and shimmering effect, the kiln schedule of tracing black glass painting on sandblasted surface was the same with enamel fusing on flat float glass. With neutrality and calmness as the initial words in mind, ideal results lie between the sandblasting effect to solid opaque, while more translucent than that plexus glasses in Johannes' formations (Schreiter, 1988).

From abstract expressionism in drawing to the play on the gritty plane of fluidity in enamel paste, there was always new formation in terms of a reverse way of working. Likely Johannes Schreiter the german stained glass artist worked in a way by placing lead on glass initially with lead lines as the major character of the panel, instead of the classic medieval way of hiding the lead lines seamlessly by paint. One was leaning towards having lead lines as the major in panel 2 by working with materials that were already made on hand. Setting lead profiles as the subject and glass as the backdrop of possibilities, and vice versa in close up. The formation of panel 2 was largely relied on the decision made in the presence of doing, namely process oriented instead of design oriented.

No matter panel 1 with enamel as the largest backdrop or panel 2 with lead profiles as the core, glass itself performs the most with imperfections from screen printing in the shimmering sense of calmness with significant individual hand drawn details that assemble the entire tranquility. Lines stand out from sandblasted ground in panel 1 - the conceptual wholeness, serve as part of the grid-like continuum of "2" are not fully blended into the wobbly screen printed surface and remain proportional when viewed close up.

NEUTRALITY/EMPTINESS

Neutrality (Morley, 2016) is rather a consolidating state of silence, density and metaphysics with the luminosity of white and a darker shade. From a metaphysics point of view, white is the light that accommodates and cleanses all negativity with reference to the divine lunar frequency. On the other hand, white is known as the new beginning or purity in the eastern culture, while grey is more of the symbol of neutrality and emptiness.

According to Keiji Nishitani (Morley, 2016), everything is in a relation with everything else by simply focusing on emptiness from a viewpoint beyond physical human beings. In which, the void itself is where consciousness comes as a full cycle of realisation. With also reference to Taoist Zhuangzi, "dan" the detachment - blandness is where one with no projecting any meaning beyond the work itself and leave them associate with "mo" the non-differentiation and the surrounding at peace.

The intended absence of colour on panels is also the state of tranquility and serenity in neutralising and transmuting dark to light at its higher realm. One may interpret it as an action of releasing and healing traumas in terms of shadow work; also the new beginning of experiencing balance in the play of nature of materiality.

ENAMEL SCREEN PRINTING (with reference to the supporting document p.8 - 9)

Widely inconsistent bubbly patterns were made out of excess use of water and unstable screen printing process. As one of the results from the first batch of enamel tests, that reflects and captures light at presence without complete filter. A shimmering effect is created out of the void on imperfectly printed surfaces, which accommodates more light than the perfectly screen printed ones given the same enamel paste and kiln schedule.

(conti.) ENAMEL SCREEN PRINTING (with reference to the supporting document p.8 - 9)

However, a slight level of yellowish as that happened to opaque glass appeared in the enamel results as well. In order to cancelled out the yellowish effect in forming enamelled float glass, colours in both the panels are not actually white, but rather characterised by palettes of blue, black, white and clear flux during the second batch of enamel tests. On top of that, there was only one pass on each piece of glass, causing it to gently glow in natural light vibrations.

As a result, the translucent white glaze is achieved with delicate voids shimmering under natural sunlight, while keeping largely bubbly surface is emphasised as the contrasting state of the procedure.

ACID ETCHING (with reference to the supporting document p.6)

Acid etching introduces light into non-direct natural light to the interior, which creates the largest contrast with lead profiles in panel 2. The consistency of the portions of white spirit and bitcherman glue was settled after initial trials with pieces of 5cm squares. To prevent bitcherman glue drying, white spirit was constantly added into the mixture during the process.

Regarding the choice of patterns, repetitive dots and lines on square planes are transferred from individual squares pieces to the top right rainbow corner with subtle black matt of glass paint. Additionally, the replicable flower of life pattern was made to a different kind of sublimity to infinite replicable. Each of the strokes was drawn with metal stick and bitcherman glue that two pieces of 6 x 9 cm size cause more than 2 full afternoon to complete and followed by etching in acid in hours with braiding and cutting as the closing. Given that the mechanics of flower of life is more of a mystical sacred geometric shapes and forms, the pattern was believed to be an astral travelling machine through a cosmic vessel which gives an extra sense of alchemy and spirituality with the stacking leads.

LEADING AND SOLDERING

The organic patterns and fragments were counterbalanced by the black lead lines that assembled as panel 2, while two rectangular pieceS of subtleness were leaded by a single piece of lead profile in the middle and surrounded the two to appear visually the same size with panel 2. Due to the fact that pressure and tension of two pieces of glasses are concentrated on this single piece of lead, it was easily bent before cementing. Whilst, due to the complexity of panel 2, the size of glass fragments were kept on adjusted with diamond pads throughout the leading process. The ultimate size of panel 2 was slightly larger than expected and extra pieces of leads were added to secure the panels in frames.

The void that appeared out of overcuts like the semicircle lies in the bottom right was covered with extra pieces of lead. Given that the pieces are stacked in staircase order, the quality of weatherproof was not affected, while adding extra attraction to contrast with acid etched clear pieces and forming the bold characters of the panel. On the other hand, relatively small voids on the top half of the panel were covered by trimming off the heart of lead and sliding the cuts into the corners, followed by fixing with soldering at matrix joints to close the void with also served as decoration purpose.

OBJECTS

The metal pieces were made in March and displayed in the work in progress summer show. During the summer, 9 pieces were fused in the same schedule as that in project "7" and "12" and designed to follow the same outcomes of slumping into three-legged constructive objects. Due to the fact that the forms and shapes of the 9 pieces were not as controllable as those in the two projects, which the outcomes of slumping were foreseeable in a useless manner. Given the redesigning progress of panels during the months, they fell into the same results with the metal pieces remaining unchanged over months in the studio. Thanks to the pause and restart rhythm developed over the year, the need

(conti.) OBJECTS

to keep things flowing and move was growing. In which, all the 9 fused pieces were on the first day of September for further manipulation.

The idea of smashing glass pieces into tiny fragments and powders was developed in weeks of stopped vibration and paused progress. and restarted by idea of casting them into a glass block. With fundamental role of supporting the metal pieces, the void in the middle is also designed to be used as book and phone stands. Given that the form of the block is relatively symmetrical, blue foam was used to be the model of the mould. However, it took ages to physically remove blue foam with scrapers out of the plaster mould due to the heat generated while plaster is curing.

With painted and silver stained float glass offcuts were the only material as in the block, the inner fluidity of float glass can be condensed and visualised given the nature of fusing instead of melting. Shades of pale green and milky white appears as the result of coarse offcuts and fine powders.

Whilst, metal pieces were fully patinated throughout the summer due to humidity environment and nature of mild steel. The three pieces were then sandblasting for a smooth surface while also leaving one in rainwater for the natural touch of orange patinations.

Combining the two, glass and metal, grey and frosty, fragment and wholeness, the objects energise as additional depth of the installation, while also demonstrate one's multiplicity and adaptability together with the panels throughout the journey.

PLINTH

Mainly due to site specific reasons of the red brick wall, solid grey carpet and full height clear glass, the wooden plinth is touched with ultimately layer of varnish after wiping off dust from sanding with damp fabrics. The thin layer of varnish serves as the protective coat to seal the surface of the MDF board plinth due to the fact that there are rainwater leakage from the ceiling at the middle of the area. Additionally, varnishing thin instead of thick layers prevents the plinth from a shiny white surface that overwrites the main subjects of the installation. At the same time, keeping the plinth rough and raw immerses itself seamlessly into the site without creating unnecessary contrast when visitors step out of the lift into the area.

INSTALLATION (with reference to the supporting document from p.17)

MEASUREMENT & CONSIDERED ELEMENTS

To ensure accuracy and the ideal proportion of panels, panel size, scale of mixtures and all details are evidenced including various measurements and adjustments during production. With the intention to let the work speak for themselves and leave the audience to activate the new perception/ understanding, the sequence of visiting the top floor is the ideal place for glass installation. In terms of the light that finally comes after the long white painted corridor of fully exhibiting wall-mounted works. Details of the symmetrical and total field was designed with layout plans including concerns of light changes and traffic flow.

LIGHT

When viewing the panels, the wooden frame against clear window glass established a stable contrast between translucency and solidity from enamelled glass pieces to lead lines to wooden frame and steel rods to overall clear window at the back. While at night, additional light were installed with the intention to focus on the panels under dim interior light and reflective clear window. In which, also created the contrast of halo effect in natural daylight of passing through the back and extended into the skyline of buildings.

(conti.) INSTALLATION (with reference to the supporting document from p.17)

HEIGHT/ TRAFFIC

Whether visitors enter from lift or the other entrance along the corridor, eye sight are matched from exhibitor statements on the wall to hanging panels and objects on plinth.

Two panels were hanging by class steel rods at 150cm from the ground at general eye level, with also the vertical and horizontal center of the full height window.

At a distance about 4 steps each from the panels and from the corridor entrance, the glass and metal objects were place on top of a 95cm tall varnished MDF plinth with their top matching the bottom of the panels at 120cm from the ground.

The entire traffic flows along with the subtle connection between panels and objects in light of spraying scent of palo santo that creates a harmonious sensation and calming effect within the area.

The whole area act a a loose container that integrates time with changing of natural light, scent upon ventilation, ever-changing virtual space in all-rounded experience.

IMPROVEMENT

The one thing to improve, visitors on wheelchair had to tilt their heads up in distance, which indicated that the height are slightly unapproachable as similar as that in architectural fitted enormous stained glass windows in church settings. Another type of sublime is indicated while additional assisting aids such as magnifying devices could have been included for all.

CONCLUSION

According to Ando Tadao, architecture should be kept in silence and let the light and wind speak for it. Metaphorically, the installation is intended to let the change of natural daylight to be fully experienced and interpret with personal situated knowledge.

In a literal interpretation of nothings and oneness, the production was leaning towards a negativity of desisted and uncontrollable base. However, the results turn in largely positivity based on feedback received in person during the open day.

Contrast and differentiation between/within pieces/ materials/ light efface the significance within the space by practical measurements and installation. The results grasp a sense of coherent between presence-absence without eliminating characteristics of individual pieces.

From tiny drawing extend to all directions, the way of installation and framing limit the way of viewing to some extent. In addition to the changes in scent and full height natural and artificial lighting, patterns and objects enveloped viewers within one's worldview encapsulated in limited use of colour and variations of shades; indicating the inner tension and vibrancy by physical observations in person and further extend beyond to infinity as a space.

All in all, ever-changing synecdoche that lies between intersection of oneness of all things and nothingness is enclosed with a quote in Wassily Kandinsky's Point and Line to Plane, "not everything is visible and tangible, under the visible and comprehensible there lies the invisible and incomprehensible."

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