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ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of

The College of Art and Design

School of American Crafts

In Candidacy for the Degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS IN CERAMICS

UNTITLED

by

Rachel Yan Gu

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Abstract

The surface of the world is composed of innumerable points which may be abstracted for the sake of comprehension, like molecules, numbers, and pixels, they may also be an apple, a road, or a single person. Under these points, there are numerous nets, which are independent but also link everything together. They combine all of the numerous points together, and are the foundation of the points. I hope to see the nets through the points to explore the core of the world underneath.

I reconstruct the points and nets to create a visual representation of their relationships within our physical reality. My interpretation is a representation of my thoughts of these points in the world and my respect for them. They all come from a symbol that I created, which is extracted from my existence and presents the essence of my thought.

Based on these concepts, I made my thesis works and showed them both in a thesis group show and a solo show. Through the process of the repetition, I tried to connect the abstraction with my practical life: maps, forms, colors and the lines in my sketches. I used one of the most original materials on the earth – clay, to make works, which also became my avatar and shared the same soul with me.

Body of Document

Section I: Context

I was born in a coastal city in northern China and lived there until I graduated from high school. After that, I went to the university in Hangzhou, which is a city in southern China. I was very surprised by the difference in life styles between the north and the south, which is not only the weather, terrain, and language, but also cultural background, diet, and so on. Since then, I began to think frequently about how people, both as individuals and groups, have similarities and differences and how I should consider these.

After coming to the United States, I was more curious and wanted to understand the differences between the east and the west. I researched about the eastern and the western philosophies, and gradually understood the relationship between individuals and groups as well as between groups. After I had a child, I paid more attention to the growth of individuals.

China is famous for ceramics and my life has been increasingly affected by eastern aesthetics and traditional ceramic art. Hangzhou was the capital of the southern song dynasty, and because of Emperor Hui Zong, song dynasty is always considered to be the peak in Chinese art history. Therefore, Hangzhou still has the microcosm of culture and art

at that time, such as the West lake, bridges, and the architecture at my undergraduate university, which all reflect the essence of Chinese traditional aesthetic.

With the background of my art education, I have practiced drawing since childhood. As I have recorded my life using sketches, I always pay more attention to the lines and colors that I see. In my undergraduate degree, I studied ceramics. I learned that clay has to be highly respected because it comes from nature. The process of making ceramics is a ritual for me, using forms, lines, proportion, and so on, to express a kind of calm and respect for the nature.

My studies in fine arts in the United States, has been based on personal perspectives to express emotions and feelings using critical thinking to look at them self in the present. It is a process of continuous innovation. Building on several years of my study, I wanted to combine my experiences and express my understanding of the eastern aesthetic and the relationships between individuals and groups, between groups, and individual reproduction by clay.

Symbol

Symbols are everywhere in our lives. The oldest symbols that have been passed down from ancient culture are letters and patterns. From my point of view, symbols, as part of art, are

expression of human emotions and interpretations. The letters and patterns in ancient cultures reflected their understanding of nature. Those letters and patterns had been circulated and now have different contemporary meanings. Susann Langer's theory resonated with me, as we can see from the following quotes:

“The epic is the first flower – or one of the first, let us say – of a new symbolic mode, the mode of art. It is not merely a receptacle of old symbols, namely those of myth, but is itself a new symbolic form, great with possibilities, ready to take meaning and express ideas that have had no vehicle before.”¹

Susan also states: “In addition to the letters and patterns that were recognized in ancient times, the symbols are also recognized in art forms and these new contemporary meanings are spread by social medias, taught by schools and have become basic common sense in human society” and “The effect of this symbolization is to offer the beholder a way of conceiving emotion.”² This means that different artists have their own symbols that can be recognized publicly and they are the “aesthetic emotion” and the “pleasure” of artists. In *Untitled*, I used this method (connecting a symbol to a contemporary meaning) as the basis of my expression, just like the role of letters in languages.

I started to learn painting techniques when I was very young, so I always observe figures and patterns that are in my life, and this has become one of my habits. Through years of

¹ 1. Susanne K. Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951), 203.

² 1. Susanne K. Langer, *Feeling and Form* (USA: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), 394.

experience, I prefer to express thoughts through graphics and drawings rather than words. In *Untitled*, I used lines to show my inner thoughts which cannot be clearly expressed in words. So, I created a symbol, which represented my understanding of lines and aesthetics in my life, and most of my understanding of lines and aesthetic were influenced by the eastern aesthetics when I was in China.

Eastern Aesthetics

My university was located in Hangzhou, which was the capital city of Southern Song Dynasty in ancient China, and the Southern Song Dynasty was famous for landscape painting. During that time, a huge group of secular landlords and their scholar-officials “were content with what they had and wanted to keep and perpetuate it. Consequently, they idealized feudalistic country life with its pastoral ways, thoughts, and feelings.”³ Therefore, the whole city was built around the West Lake to conform with this kind of thought and aesthetics. My university, China Academy of Art, also conforms to this overall atmosphere. “The vistas and objects offered in a complete, panoramic scene give viewers more room for discovery and expression by means of their own aesthetic sensibility.”⁴ To be specific, it means “symmetry being replaced by balance and proportion,

³ 1. Zehou Li, *The Path of Beauty: A Study of Chinese Aesthetics*, trans. Lizeng Gong (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press (Hong Kong) Ltd, 1994), 182.

⁴ 1. Zehou Li, *The Path of Beauty: A Study of Chinese Aesthetics*, trans. Lizeng Gong (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press (Hong Kong) Ltd, 1994), 187.

space acquiring greater significance, few being preferred over many – these increasingly became the most developed forms, means, and techniques used in all branches of the arts.”⁵



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7



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I lived in Hangzhou for seven years, and my understanding of aesthetics was influenced by the atmosphere that I mentioned above. While I was walking around the school and the city everyday, I extracted the essential part of this aesthetic: concision, positive and negative space, proportion, lines, flow within space. In *Untitled*, I integrated these concepts to create

⁵ 1. Zehou Li, *The Path of Beauty: A Study of Chinese Aesthetics*, trans. Lizeng Gong (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press (Hong Kong) Ltd, 1994), 194.

⁶ Yanting Mai, (*Xihu*), Jun 25th, 2011, France Medias Monde, France,
<http://www.rfi.fr/tw/%E4%B8%AD%E5%9C%8B/20110625-%E8%A5%BF%E6%B9%96%E5%88%97%E4%B8%96%E9%81%BA-%E6%89%BF%E8%AB%BE%E4%B8%8D%E6%94%B6%E8%B2%BB%E4%B8%8D%E6%BC%B2%E5%83%B9>

⁷ Junyao Tang, (*China Academy of Art*), Jul 28th, 2017, ZJOL, Hangzhou, China,
http://js.zjol.com.cn/yxw_zxtf/201707/t20170728_4672747.shtml

⁸ Shu Wang, (*Suianshanju*), Apr 3rd, 2016, DINZ CULTURE MEDIA CO. LTD., Germany,
<http://www.dinzd.com/works/wangshu01.html>

my own symbol, and I used this symbol to represent myself and the works. The way I arranged forms and surfaces aimed to convey the spirit of concepts. Therefore, the works are my self-portraits, which are also the core of my Chinese cultural background that I wanted to express.

Pixel

What is pixel?

In digital imaging, a pixel, pel,⁹ or picture element¹⁰ is a physical point in a raster image, or the smallest addressable element in an all points addressable display device; so it is the smallest controllable element of a picture represented on the screen.

Each pixel is a sample of an original image; more samples typically provide more accurate representations of the original. The intensity of each pixel is variable. In color imaging systems, a color is typically represented by three or four component intensities such as red, green, and blue, or cyan, magenta, yellow, and black.

When I was a little girl, I watched TV shows. When I was close to the TV screen, I could only see three colors: red, green and blue, but when I stayed farther from the screen, it showed images. On my way home walking from school, when I passed the advertising posters, if I stood close to the posters, I could only see red, green and blue colors. But if I

⁹ 2. James D. Foley and Van Dam Andries, *Fundamentals of Interactive Computer Graphics*, (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Pub, Co., 1983).

¹⁰ 1. Rudolf F. Graf, *Modern Dictionary of Electronics*, (Oxford: Newnes, 1999), 569.

stood farther, they were images of advertising. Although they are the same things, they are quite different when we look at them from different perspectives. This was my new understanding of micro and macro, which might be explained as seeing what I expect to see.

Why pixel?

Point. Chuang Tzu emphasized “Qiwu” in the second chapter of the Chuang-tzu, which means “the theory of non-distinction, especially the non-distinction of right and wrong.”¹¹ He said, “If one can transcend the distinctions between things, one can enjoy the absolute freedom and have the absolute happiness” and “because he transcends the finite and identifies himself with the infinite, he has ‘no self’ . Because he follows the nature of things and lets everything enjoy itself, he has ‘no achievement’ . And because he is one with the Tao, which is unnamable, he has ‘no name.’”¹²

From my personal understanding, the existence of one thing depends on so many complicated factors and these factors affect and offset each other, so that is why and how one thing exists in the world. These factors are different from advantages and disadvantages, because advantages and disadvantages are always from someone’s subjective judgment. A smooth circle can be used to represent the existence of something abstractly, because its compositions offset each other with no edges and corners. From a macro perspective, the smooth circle is an abstract point. And points can be viewed as people, villages, apples,

¹¹ 1. Yu-lan Fung, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*, edited by Derk Bodde (New York: A Division of Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1966), 227.

¹² 1. Yu-lan Fung, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*, edited by Derk Bodde (New York: A Division of Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1966), 228.

light or historical events, with minimalized differences. That is represented in the philosophical theory as “what is rational is actual and what is actual is rational” by Hegel.¹³

Net. There are three phases in the development of early Taoism:

The first phase is called “Quanshengbihai”, which means “to escape”. “This is the method of the ordinary recluse who flees from society and hide himself in the mountains and forests” to “avoid the evils of the human world.”¹⁴ It is shown that when a person sees the world as an outsider, just like an audience, who is watching a movie but he is not part of the movie, he is just an audience. This is “to escape” in the first phase. “To escape” is not only about the physical body, but also relates to human mind, jumping out of the daily life and thinking about the nature of life.

The second phase is that “Things change, but the laws underlying the changes remain unchanging. If one understands these laws and regulates one’s actions in conformity with them, one can then turn everything to one’s advantage.”¹⁵ Only in this way, we can

¹³ “Hegel’s Critique of Metaphysics,” Cambridge University Press, Sep 2009,
<https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/hegels-critique-of-metaphysics/what-is-rational-is-actual-what-is-actual-is-rational/95C78A980666BD6706D1009A1A3CFD95>

¹⁴ 1. Yu-lan Fung, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*, edited by Derk Bodde (New York: A Division of Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1966), 65.

¹⁵ 1. Yu-lan Fung, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*, edited by Derk Bodde (New York: A Division of Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1966), 65.

understand the "laws" to connect real things in the reality. It is just like connecting real points with multi-dimensional nets to imagine an independent system in mind, which is also the operation of the real life.

The third phase is that “By seeing things from this higher point of view, one can transcend the existing world. This is also a form of “escape”; not one, however, from society to mountains and forests, but rather from this world to another world.” “To see things from a higher point of view, however, means to abolish the self.”¹⁶ "Abolish the self" means to see the world without bias. Without human nature, someone will be able to go beyond the real world. In such a purely objective circumstance, the world becomes an abstract net with multi-dimensions. Those nets connect all points, and to each other to form my complex multi-dimensional existence.

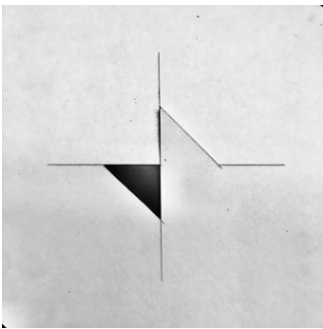
From a two-dimension perspective, these abstract points are just like the pixels on the screen and the abstract nets are the complex images composed by the pixels. We see all the images from our eyes and visually they compose all the world around us. Because all the images are made of pixels, the world is made of pixels. I tried to express the abstract concepts of points and nets through my works in *Untitled*. Throughout the whole process,

¹⁶ 1. Yu-lan Fung, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*, edited by Derk Bodde (New York: A Division of Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1966), 66-67.

I chose the details in my life to compose Untitled. I chose colors and lines in my life both randomly and unrandomly. Through these concepts, I developed my thesis show Untitled.

Evolution

The symbol is divided into four parts, represented in the image below. I was interested in the arrangement and the distribution of these four parts and I built a set based on these four parts. In the process of the evolution, there were two factors that affected my decisions.



Symbol

When small pieces get together they will generate powerful energy, which shows the beauty of collective and it is the first factor that affected my decision. For example, the desert consists of sands, material consists of molecules, and tribes consist of individual human beings. As the species at the top of the food chain, human beings also experience this process, which leads to the increase of population and creativity. “The evolutionary success of a species is measured by the number of copies of its DNA. If no more DNA copies remain, the species is extinct, just as a company without money is bankrupt.”¹⁷ Another

¹⁷ 1. Yuval Noah Harari, *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2015), 83.

example is the Kowloon Walled City in Hong Kong: “according to the 1971 census, there were 100,04 people occupying 2,185 dwellings in the Walled City” By the late 1980s there were more than 35,000 residents.”¹⁸ People with different responsibilities form social groups, and the steady growth of these social groups facility the development of society. So, the concept of the power of collective is present in my thesis works, and during the process of ideation I used repetition. In my thesis work, there are many examples of repetition: for example, the repetition of my own symbol, the repetition of drawing a part of a scene, the repetition of casting forms, the repetition of sanding and glazing, and finally the repetition of the arrangement of individual pieces. In this way, I hope to express my understanding of collective.



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¹⁸ 2. Girard Grey and Lan Lambot, *City of Darkness: Life in Kowloon Walled City* (Hong Kong: Everbest Printing Co Ltd, 1999), 69.

¹⁹ Sinian Xiang, *They are like big walls that buildings are not only connected but cheek-to-cheek*, Jul 5th, 2016, Zhihu, Beijing, <https://www.zhihu.com/question/22107864>

Secondly, I was interested in considering the causal relationship of everything's appearances. "We can only have opinions about things that belong to the world of the senses, tangible things. We can only have true knowledge of things that can be understood with our reason."²⁰ Because of this trait, it is a human instinct to think after observation. "such as the perception of events as happening in time and space, and as processes conforming to an unbreakable law of causality", and "because you are a human being, you will inevitably look for the cause of every event, because the law of causality is part of your makeup."²¹ So while I was combining the symbols, I focused on patterns, and I wanted my audience to think about the patterns, as a way to interact with my work.

About the pixels in my life, the concept was based on choosing squares of the sketches of my life, which was the same process as choosing pixels on a screen. The sketches were of things that people placed randomly on the shelf and some equipment around the studio. This was a method to record my life, and was also a method to extract pixels through my eyes. I also used the images of the map from Google Maps, which were taken by satellites, to extract the colors of the locations where my family lived in the world. I wanted to express my understanding of my life from both macro and micro perspectives. This approach was aligned with Jostein Gaarder's thoughts "if we recognize that everything happens from necessity, we can achieve an intuitive understanding of nature as a whole. We can come to realize with crystal clarity that everything is related, even that everything is One. The goal

²⁰ 1. Jostein Gaarder, *Sophie's World* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 87.

²¹ 1. Jostein Gaarder, *Sophie's World* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 324-325.

is to comprehend everything that exists in an all-embracing perception. Only then we achieve true happiness and contentment.” and “To see everything from the perspective of eternity”.²²

I thought people were more likely to focus on details in their lives but I hoped to view and analyze these microscopic things from a macro perspective, so that people’s minds were not limited to the details. By doing so, this would have a long-term influence on their lives in the future. As an individual, a person always has limitations, but it is easier to get the senses of happiness and peace if the person is always open-minded and absorbing new things. Therefore, I made the works described in the body of work in my show *Untitled*.

The Body of Work

Untitled 1

The idea of this work was derived from a flower bed that I saw in a big plaza in my hometown. The flower bed is in the biggest plaza, which is located at the heart of the city, in front of the government building, with a main road in the middle of it. One day, as I was taking a walk after dinner in the plaza I suddenly saw a huge square flower bed. The

²² 1. Jostein Gaarder, *Sophie’s World* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 251.

flower bed and the red flowers in it, which were called *Salvia Splendens*, attracted my attention immediately. I have known this flower since my early age, and it represents the memory of my hometown. The picture below was shot by myself at that time. I could see the huge change of the vigorous city in recent years from the blooming flowers in the huge flower bed. This kind of vigor and vitality were what I wanted to express, so I created a group of works based on this experience.

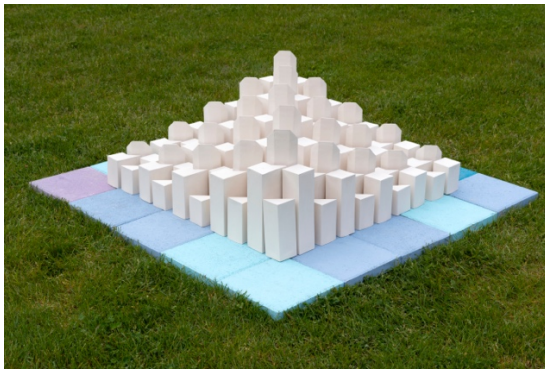


Flower Bed

I transferred my symbol from two-dimensions to three-dimensions and made an arrangement of the four parts from high to low to highlight this form. Then I made the height of all the parts varied, and arranged them into five rows and five columns, if you looked at the whole work from the top, it is a square. There are one hundred pieces in total in this work. I used one diagonal as the base line of the height, and arranged each line from high to low in order from the diagonal to the sides. The five different heights reinforced the layer of each line and the in well-proportioned relationship. I wanted to lead the audience not only to summarize the rule of the arrangement and also to realize that eventually these one hundred pieces composed a basic square. I put cement tiles underneath them to imitate the flower bed, with the dreamlike colors of the sky from the photo my

husband took from his hometown.

The method used to create this work was to cast forms from plaster molds and fire them to Cone 8 without glaze. I hoped to show exuberant vitality through this work, just like the flowers in the flower bed. This work represents abstractly, through symbols I created, the status of growth of all the things in the world.

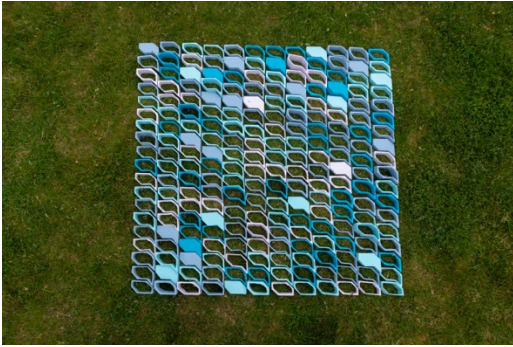


Untitled 1

Untitled 2

In this work, I also used my symbol and the four colors in the first work to create a square. I made each part from press molds and used a saw to cut them into small pieces. The height of the tiles is designed to simulate the heights of the tiles in the plaza, but with subtle differences in the heights.

Finally, I decided to take the pictures of these two groups of works on the lawn, because I wanted to see the contrast between the softness of grass and the hardness of ceramics, and the colors also echoed the colors of the sky.

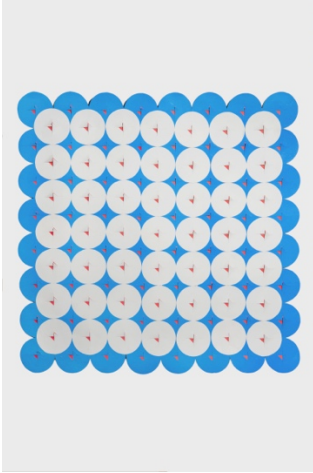


Untitled 2

Untitled 3

In this work, I used colored paper to copy the symbols and made them into a big square, and it was placed on the wall. Because the original model of this idea was made of paper, I continued to use this material and retained the red color, which appeared in the middle of the symbol. Red was shown by cutting the edges on the symbols, representing blood and life. Blue represented the broad sea and the sky, and was designed to be the background of the white symbols, which were the second layer of the combination. In order to show the layers, I folded two parts forward and kept the other two parts flat.

The scale of this piece dictated how to display the work. I hung this work on the wall which was facing the door so that the audience could see it immediately while they were walking into the entrance. The work was the background of the whole exhibition and it echoed the two pieces above (Untitled 1 and Untitled 2). The work shows the visual effect which resulted from pure repetition.



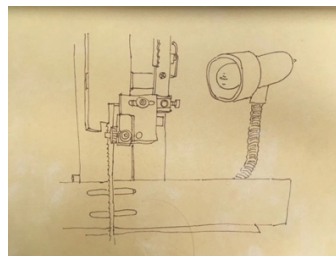
Untitled 3

Untitled 4

The four pieces in this set “Untitled 4” created one symbol, and I cast them from plaster molds. I then used underglaze pencil to draw a part of the plaster band saw that was in my studio. After that, I cut off a 1.5 inch x 1.5inch square as a frame to select four small scenes on the sketches and drew each of them on the interior of each ceramic part. I also selected the main colors of the scenes and dipped underglazes on the surface of the ceramic parts to show the colors I selected. This method of decoration was similar with the hills in Chinese landscape paintings, where you can see multiple layers from top to bottom. Finally, I decorated the surface with light pink transparent glaze to show a sense of peace and quiet, which was how I felt when I was working in the studio.



Untitled 4



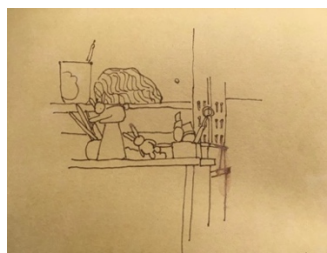
Drawing of the Saw

Untitled 5

I used the same technique that I used on Title 4 on this work, and the sketch was my classmates' working space in the studio. I didn't glaze this piece, but kept the strokes of the underglaze dipping technique to enhance these marks. I expressed my version of details in my life and my feelings through the lines in these two works (Untitled 4 & 5).



Untitled 5



Drawing of the Studio

Untitled 6

In this work, I chose one part from the four parts of the symbol to make eight multiples. I then rearranged them to build up a new structure. The colors were chosen from the image of my parents' home on Baidu Map, their home is a four-floor apartment with a red and blue roof. The method of the decoration combined watercolor and stippling. Watercolor was the first technique that I learned when I started to learn drawing and painting. The image created by this technique was water-like and gave me a sense of the calm in nature. I used these colors to express fantasy and beauty, just like the leaves fallen together on the ground in autumn or the patterns of rocks on shorelines under water. In the middle of the

piece, the negative space was combined into small squares to show the gradually changing colors inside.



Untitled 6



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Untitled 7

For this work (Untitled 7), I used similar techniques I used in Untitled 6. I chose one piece from the four parts of the symbol and arranged them into a circle, which was different from how I arranged them in Untitled 6. It was easier to show the gradually changing colors on this form. The colors of this work were also from the Baidu Map, and this time I chose the image of the place where my son was living at that time. The place was a two-floor house which was surrounded by trees and paddy fields.

²³ (*Baiyunxincun*), Nov 14th, 2019, Baidu Map, Beijing, China,
[https://map.baidu.com/search/%E7%99%BD%E4%BA%91%E6%96%B0%E6%9D%91/@13538044.909999983,4680989.131658907,16.99z/matype%3DB_EARTH_MAP?querytype=s&da_src=shareurl&wd=%E7%99%BD%E4%BA%91%E6%96%B0%E6%9D%91&c=1&src=0&wd2=%E5%A4%A7%E8%BF%9E%E5%B8%82%E8%A5%BF%E5%B2%97%E5%8C%BA&pn=0&sug=1&l=4&b=\(1104297.960000001,-1154475.25;22075817.96,10134100.75\)&from=webmap&biz_forward=%7B%22scaler%22:2,%22styles%22:%22pl%22%7D&sug_forward=162d3d14ef7868516f476085&device_ratio=2](https://map.baidu.com/search/%E7%99%BD%E4%BA%91%E6%96%B0%E6%9D%91/@13538044.909999983,4680989.131658907,16.99z/matype%3DB_EARTH_MAP?querytype=s&da_src=shareurl&wd=%E7%99%BD%E4%BA%91%E6%96%B0%E6%9D%91&c=1&src=0&wd2=%E5%A4%A7%E8%BF%9E%E5%B8%82%E8%A5%BF%E5%B2%97%E5%8C%BA&pn=0&sug=1&l=4&b=(1104297.960000001,-1154475.25;22075817.96,10134100.75)&from=webmap&biz_forward=%7B%22scaler%22:2,%22styles%22:%22pl%22%7D&sug_forward=162d3d14ef7868516f476085&device_ratio=2)



Untitled 7



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Untitled 8

In this work, I used four sets of the symbol and arranged them into a form, which looked like a blossomy flower. The colors on this piece were from the image of where I was in Google Maps, this was the ceramics studio at RIT. The reason why I chose these colors for Untitled 6-8 was because all my family members lived in different parts of the world. The emotions caused by the distances between us had already become a part of my life for a long time. I hoped to express this feeling through these works and invoke some thoughts about life. The colorful strokes showed my vision of the future. I hoped that my emotions and feelings of longing for my family members would be expressed through these works.

²⁴ (Shizikouxiang), Nov 14th, 2019, Baidu Map, Beijing, China,
[https://map.baidu.com/search/%E7%8B%AE%E5%AD%90%E5%8F%A3%E4%B9%A1/@13195426.049999993,3344545.737051962,18.86z/matype%3DB_EARTH_MAP?querytype=s&da_src=shareurl&wd=%E7%8B%AE%E5%AD%90%E5%8F%A3%E4%B9%A1&c=243&src=0&wd2=%E8%A1%A2%E5%B7%9E%E5%B8%82%E5%B8%B8%E5%B1%B1%E5%8E%BF&pn=0&sug=1&l=14&b=\(13185451.138166744,3340967.958350449;13195892.961026866,3345811.0600301716\)&from=webmap&biz_forward=%7B%22scaler%22:2,%22styles%22:%22sl%22%7D&sug_forward=925c550fa50f24b35a3ac8ee&device_ratio=2](https://map.baidu.com/search/%E7%8B%AE%E5%AD%90%E5%8F%A3%E4%B9%A1/@13195426.049999993,3344545.737051962,18.86z/matype%3DB_EARTH_MAP?querytype=s&da_src=shareurl&wd=%E7%8B%AE%E5%AD%90%E5%8F%A3%E4%B9%A1&c=243&src=0&wd2=%E8%A1%A2%E5%B7%9E%E5%B8%82%E5%B8%B8%E5%B1%B1%E5%8E%BF&pn=0&sug=1&l=14&b=(13185451.138166744,3340967.958350449;13195892.961026866,3345811.0600301716)&from=webmap&biz_forward=%7B%22scaler%22:2,%22styles%22:%22sl%22%7D&sug_forward=925c550fa50f24b35a3ac8ee&device_ratio=2)



Untitled 8



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Display of Work

My works were displayed in two exhibitions: one was a group show in which I exhibited with other graduate students, and another one was my solo show. Because these two exhibitions took place at the same time, I divided the works into two parts. There were a few works in the group show because of the limited space, and the majority of the works were displayed in my solo show.

There were four pieces, which you can see photographed at the installation and pictured below in the group show. They were all displayed on the pedestals. I colored the pedestals

²⁵ (My Location), Nov 14th, 2019, Google Map, California,

<https://www.google.com/maps/@43.084722,-77.6776524,228m/data=!3m1!1e3>

with two different shades of blue, which were used on Untitled 2. These three colors created a dreamy environment for the four works in the group show.



Group Show 1



Group Show 2



Group Show 3

My solo exhibition was displayed in two different rooms. I used eight paper symbols to create the title of the exhibition: four of them were white and they were on the top and four were blue and they were the background of the white ones. I did not use words in the title because the paper symbols which involved all the basic concepts and there were no words to describe them properly. I put some paper symbols below the title so that the audience could take one back as a souvenir. There were three pieces in the main room; two largest pieces and the paper piece. The reason why I put them in one room was because they were larger in scale and their square forms echoed each other. The square paper work hung on the back wall echoed with the paper title, so that the concept of the whole exhibition could be emphasized, and viewers could see the whole from the entry. The rest of the works were

displayed in the second room. All of them were decorated with the strokes and the patterns painted on the surfaces of the form which also echoed each other.



Solo Show 1



Solo Show 2

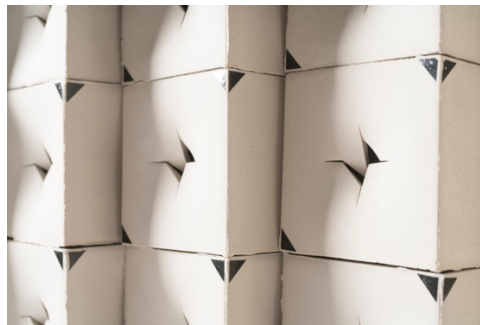
Epilogue

Untitled 9

This work was made after the thesis exhibitions. I cast more than 100 cubes from a new mold and put most of them together to make a new work. In the past, I tried to express the abstract concept of a point and a net through cubes, because it seems to me that a cube is similar as it also illustrates the concept of point.

Compared with the works in my thesis exhibitions, there are three major improvements in this work. 1, I tried to keep the extra clay in the edges after I opened the plaster molds. Influenced by Eastern Ceramics, I focused to use the language of clay, which is called “Nixing”, to express the relationship between individuals and modern society. 2, I

simplified the color and only used black and white. In addition, I cut black decal paper into triangles with the same size of the triangles in the symbol. They were also designed at the two corners of each square to echo the symbol. This repetition was designed to emphasize the center symbol and to enhance the relationship between individual cubes and the whole work. 3. There was a slight distance between each column and the shadow of the distance enhanced the overall feeling of the form.



Untitled 9

Untitled 10

In terms of firing method, I also tried smoke firing. I built a sagger with bricks in a gas kiln and left some small gaps for oxygen coming into the sagger. I put each cube in the sagger first, and then put coarse grog to cover the bottom of each cube. The goal of doing this was to keep the original white color on the bottom of each cube, because the coarse grog could prevent the smoke from covering the surface. Then I put sawdust onto the grog which almost covered the top of the cubes. In order to enhance the strength of smoking, I added charcoals and cobalt oxide powder to produce blue and grey color. After unloading the kiln,

I put the cubes with similar colors into three lines three columns to create a whole piece.



Untitled 10

Untitled 11

Compared with the work I introduced above, I tried to put three cubes which were smoked fired. I used salt instead of cobalt oxide, which produced pink color and light green crystals on the surface of the clay. I combined these cubes together in order to connect pink color on the top of the them.



Untitled 11

Conclusion

This was the first time have combined many concepts with my ceramic work. The concepts I have focused on combined to make ceramics more attractive because it is not only about the word “Nixing” (the nature of clay), but also about the subtle combination of clay and artist’s own story.

I think there will be two ways to improve my work in the future. One way is to demonstrate the combination of material and formality, which is also the combination of clay and form language. Another one is to continue to develop conceptual languages that combine with my personal experiences. The concepts that I express now are more about the existence of objects; I didn’t integrate my own emotion, such as like or dislike, my idealization, or some of my subjectivity (whether to change status or not) into my work. A deepening of conceptual stance depends on the enrichment of my life experience and thoughts with a stronger heart.

I have continued to use the same symbol that I used in my thesis works in the new work. Building on that, I have developed a new form language and included some of my daily drawings. During the making process, I have always felt unsure about how to express my

ideas. This is the beginning of a new body of work. Creating artistic work is a process of thinking, suffering, creating, surprising, and then recreating, and this is the beauty of art.

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