

**Contemporary Chinese Painting and the Studio: When and Where does a
Painting Practice Begin and End?**

Yifei He

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College of Art for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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Royal College of Art

This research is supported by



Author's declaration

This thesis represents partial submission for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the Royal College of Art. I confirm that the work presented here is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

During the period of registered study in which this thesis was prepared the author has not been registered for any other academic award or qualification. The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.

Signature: Yifei He

Date: 15th May 2020

Abstract

This research started with the examination of the shifting nature of the painting studio in the contemporary Chinese context and, in particular, focuses on the ways in which the idea of the studio has become subject to change, through the evolutions of painting practice from the 1970s to the present.

Discussion of the painting studio in China is relatively underdeveloped on a theoretical level and has a tendency to be dominated by approaches that range from the photographic documentation of spaces and artists' texts to artworks that reflect upon issues of studio space. My analysis is based upon first-hand observations, experiences, discussions, interviews and art theory in order to develop critical understandings of the studio and its myriad developments. This hybrid approach gave rise to a new method which places the studio within the much broader notion of the apparatus ('dispositif' in Foucault). In turn, this has led me to identify three conditions of painting practice in the contemporary Chinese context. My practice emerges from an Anglo-Chinese context that I have mapped through interviews with Chinese contemporary painters. The critical revisiting of the Western context starts from the 1970s painting-related practices and notions of the studio, and includes works of Daniel Buren, Robert Smithson, Marcel Broodthaers, Blinky Palermo, Howard Hodgkin, Jessica Stockholder, Ian Kiaer, David Hammons, Tracy Emin and Jutta Koether. In the Chinese context, I use nine case studies in order to develop a more general commentary on the apparatus of painting practices in my interviews with seven Chinese artists from different generations (1950-1990): Jianwei Wang (b. 1958, Sichuan), Xingwei Wang (b. 1969, Shenyang), Xun Yang (b. 1981, Sichuan), Xiaokang Sun (b. 1987, Jinan), Tian Tan (b. 1988, Beijing), Ruozhe Xue (b. 1987, Xuzhou) and Z Factory (art group from 2017), and two related artists who have not been interviewed: Liu Xiaodong (b. 1963, Liaoning), and Jianjun Zhang (b. 1955, Shanghai).

In my research and practice, painting functioned as a mode of thinking that embodies a conceptual and affective engagement with the technical processes; the studio was reevaluated as a critical and affective space, through the revisiting of the methodology of studio painting. My painting-related practice is based upon the revised notion of apparatus, including within this, the notion of *loop* which is understood as a non-dualistic learning process and practice, in order to revisit parts of painting practice and by implication rethink the boundary of painting practice in relation to the studio, especially in regard to the Chinese context. More precisely, my practice embodies different aspects and applications of the notion of the apparatus that in turn enables

broader considerations of different materials and mediums, including installation, performance and video, without resorting to the rhetoric of 'the death of painting' that has been so prevalent in Modernist discourse.

The aim of my research is not to reach a conclusion about when or where a painting begins and ends, but to study the shifting point of the studio, in order to open up the potential correlative frameworks of painting practice and the studio space from the viewpoint of both a practitioner and a researcher. The research leads to the suggestion that a new structure of spatial configurations is starting to occur within Chinese contemporary painting practice. Finally, the application of my findings will hopefully begin to have an implication within the educational framework with the transmission of approaches to painting which will contribute to the way that Chinese artists think and make painting.

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Introduction

This research focuses on the shifting nature of the painting studio in the Western context and the Chinese context particularly, through the changes of painting practice from the 1970s to the present.

Historically, the notion of the artist's studio has shifted significantly. In the Western context, the late 60s and early 70s was a turning point for the notions of studio and site, in relation to material art practices. It was a period during which artists engaged with found objects and the broader environment to shift the notion of site and studio into a temporal concept, seen, for instance, in the work of Robert Smithson and Bruce Nauman. Smithson shifted the categories of medium and the notion of production site in his practice. Nauman made the studio as the place that in the words of art historian Dorothee Brill: 'actually facilitates the dissolution of artistic boundaries through the power inherent within it', (Brill, 2017). As Nauman revisited his work '*MAPPING THE STUDIO II with color shift, flip, flop, & flip/flop (Fat Chance John Cage)*', (2001) and '*Pacing Upside Down*,' (1969), as:

I wanted the feeling that the piece [*'MAPPING THE STUDIO II'*] was just there, almost like an object, just there, ongoing, being itself. I wanted the piece to have a real-time quality rather than fictional time. I like the idea of knowing it is going on whether you are there or not. [...] It [the work '*Pacing Upside Down*'] generally goes back to that idea that when you don't know what to do, then whatever it is you are doing at the time becomes the work. (Nauman, 2005: pp. 399).

After this point, the artistic practice evolved into the post-studio period, pop culture and post-medium, followed by that of the networked condition.¹ For the contemporary artist, the 'updated' studio is a generative space in these new relationships and networks. I believe that new media and networks are blurring the function and the boundaries of the studio, in the Western context. Importantly, in the Chinese context, discussions in relation to the painting studio are relatively underdeveloped on a theoretical level in relation to painting practice. Thus, I suggest that the painting studio is a functioning space and a place that continues to produce methodologies within a mobile system (this will be introduced in Chapter 3). In reflecting upon this, an interesting question occurs that is fundamental to my research project – where is the beginning and the end of contemporary painting practice in relation to notions of the studio?² I ask this in both my writings and practice.

It is important to introduce the concept of the *apparatus* at the beginning. There are several distinct implications of the term *apparatus* in Paul-Michel Foucault's development of this concept. Rather than viewing the operations of state power,

¹ The *networked condition* will be discussed in Chapter 1: 1.4.

² The notion of the end of painting has been perceived within the context of modernity.

Foucault started to examine distinct institutions such as prisons, schools and hospitals, and through this generated series of micro-histories in order to identify specific modes of 'governability'.

What I'm trying to pick out with this term is, firstly, a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions – in short, the said as much as the unsaid. Such are the elements of the apparatus. The apparatus itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements. (Foucault, 1980: pp. 194–228).

Through this notion, Foucault was able to attend to 'relations of forces' (Foucault, 1980: p.196) in order to determine 'the play of power' (Foucault, 1980: p.196) within 'certain coordinates of knowledge'.(Foucault, 1980: p.196). So the apparatus is defined as 'a set of strategies of the relations of forces supporting, and supported by, certain types of knowledge'.(Foucault, 1980: p.196). Thus, the apparatus is a form of heterogeneous network that mediates the intersection of power relations and relations of knowledge. This linking of sets of strategies, networks and relations of forces all provided clues about how this term might become a creative tool in terms of my own project, especially in regard to the way in which a historical setting might be developed that avoid universals, which is central to Foucault's strategy. Giorgio Agamben, in his essay 'What Is an Apparatus?'(2009) defines the apparatus in the broadest possible terms as "a general and massive partitioning of beings into two large groups or classes: on the one hand, living beings (or substances), and on the other, apparatuses in which living beings are incessantly captured." (Agamben, 2009: p.13). Agamben then goes on to expand on the implications of this, stating:

Further expanding the already large class of Foucauldian apparatuses, I shall call an apparatus literally anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviours, opinions, or discourses of living beings. Not only, therefore, prisons, madhouses, the panopticon, schools, confession, factories, disciplines, judicial measures, and so forth (whose connection with power is in a certain sense evident), but also the pen, writing, literature, philosophy, agriculture, cigarettes, navigation, computers, cellular telephones and – why not – language itself, which is perhaps the most ancient of apparatuses – one in which thousands and thousands of years ago a primate inadvertently let himself be captured, probably without realising the consequences that he was about to face. (Agamben, 2009: p.14).

Within the context of the discrete modes of apparatus within capitalist development, the implication is the enormous accumulation of de-subjectification that 'correspond[s] to every apparatus'. (Agamben, 2009: p.21). This critique of the operation of the apparatus alerted me to quite another direction, towards the possibility of utilising the

abstract qualities of the concept towards the generation of new subjective encounters within the background of art.

Further, the question of the apparatus is connected not just to form and figures but also to behaviour, as the German philosopher Byung-Chul Han notes:

The word for 'industry' derives from the Latin term *industria*, which means diligence... Industrialisation not only meant the mechanisation of the world, but also the disciplining of human beings. It installed not only machines, but also dispositifs that optimised human behaviour... (Han, 2017: p.91).

Whereas this manifestation of the apparatus draws the labour process into alignment with that of the machine, aesthetic modes of behaviour have to enable time for enduring because of their orientation towards difference, as opposed to the production of the same thing. The factory is understood in terms of productivity and expenditure, as opposed to the artist's studio, that might be the place of production but signifies modes of interruption at the same time, undoing as much as doing. Part of the aesthetic process is to be discovered in finding ways of managing time outside of the measure employed by dominant economic processes. Following on from this, space becomes equally mutable, because the studio might also be an office space, a thinking space, a factory-like space, a laboratory, workshop, a research centre and a meeting place. These differences within the spatial and temporal conditions of the studio are, in turn, all subject to various forms of social relations. Looking at the studio in this way highlights why it is a critical issue within the construction of art criticism.

Thus, in relationship to art, if we apply this concept of the apparatus, then the actual work, the discourses of art, the studio, exhibition spaces, materials, gestures, auction houses and so on are all in free play that might attract the employment of this term. This would act to define further what the art world is in structural and potentially realisable terms. In terms of my study, it would solve the often-stated binary relationship of the studio space as private and the exhibition space as the domain of the public. This is much more diffuse employment of the concept, and one which is aimed less at a structural critique of terms such as ideology and discourse; rather it is one which is employed on a more subtle level, that contributes to the process of understanding the structural features of the aesthetic undertaking.

It is necessary to note that this notion of apparatus is vital for this research, in particular, for understanding the dynamics of the Chinese context. For this research, on the strategic level, it would free my analysis from lapsing into a series of binary divisions between painting practice – the artist's studio and public spaces or exhibition spaces – and on the other to avoid universalising rhetoric about art in order to restore historical context. On the level of method, this would, in turn, enable me to conduct exact research in the form of interviews about the studio, and enable me to link writings, researches and exhibitions in relation to the studio *within* artistic practice. Thus, the

relationships of artistic production can be revisited with a different approach, which includes the studio and does not draw such demarcated lines of value around process and product within an artistic practice. Strategically this will enable the structural analysis of the foundation and direction of my own studio practice, as well as providing an outline for a new programme of studio teaching in China. For the Chinese context, it provides more mobility and a fluid way of reviewing the painting practice and traditions. Thus, more relevant and contemporary approaches to painting practice in the Chinese context can be considered without reconfirming their political or established role or value in relation to the practical methods. It is important to mention that in this research, reflections on both the Western and Chinese context, including artistic practice, are not directly comparable. The notion of painting's apparatus allows us to deal with its various aims and applications, in all specific contexts and periods.

In this research, the studio is not only a physical entity, but also one part with generative function in the apparatus of painting practice, and it sometimes becomes one part of the artwork itself. Meanwhile, I do not presuppose that painting indicates the artist's practice on canvas or any surfaces alone. The term 'painting' in my research is connected to both time and space, and a spatial gesture, or a notion of space, that is both physical, temporal and virtual. Most importantly, the apparatus for painting practice is a (con)junction of studio space, discourse, mediums, aesthetic practice (decisions, evaluations in the process of practice), the consideration of paradigms and models, spatial enactments and unfolding encounters. This research approaches the apparatus of painting practice from the aspect of production and thinks through the first-hand practice process. More precisely, in this research, I am interested in examining the fluid relationship between what may be seen as exterior to art (the theoretical approach) and what is interior (the aesthetic register). By exploring the connection between practical examples and their conceptual dimension, I am able to create a speculative understanding of the apparatus (space, time, energetics and materiality) of painting, and even teaching³.

Importantly, in this research, my position is in a mobile relationship between the artist or practitioner, researcher and educator. This brings me close to the figure of *loop*⁴- an ongoing and revolving process of learning and practicing; therefore, my position is not in a binary relationship between art history or philosophy and practice. More precisely, it is not practising and then theorising the practice. The historical notions, the philosophical figures and the practice examples, exhibitions and writings are all kinds of materials that I can reflect and recycle into my own practice. In this research, my analysis is based upon first-hand observation, experience, discussion, interviews and art theory in order to develop critical understandings of the studio and its myriad developments. This hybrid approach has given rise to a new method, which places the studio into the much broader notion of the apparatus. Further, this research can also

³ The further pedagogical application of this research will be introduced in Chapter 4: 4.2.

⁴ This notion of *loop* will be expanded in Chapter 3.

provide a new view for the vitalism in contemporary painting practice and notions of the studio from a practitioner's perspective, which can, in turn, be applied and evaluated in relation to a comparative study of the contemporary moment for painting in the complex Chinese context and painting in the Western context with its clear sense of relationship to Modernism.

There are four chapters, that will revisit the idea of the studio and painting practice through the lens of the *apparatus*. The notion of the studio is supplemented by that of the apparatus, that introduces the notion of abstractions of space, time, materiality, discourse, energetics⁵ and history, that are drawn together in the Western context in Chapter 1 and in the contemporary Chinese context in Chapter 2. In Chapter 1, the critical revisiting of the Western context starts from 1970s painting-related practice and notions of the studio, and includes an exploration of some distinguished examples of practice from European and American artists, who worked through the shifting notion of studio in the past forty years. Their practice forms four conditions of apparatus of painting practice: 1) binary condition (Daniel Buren, for instance), shifted and post-studio practice (Robert Smithson, Marcel Broodthaers, Blinky Palermo), 2) temporal condition (Howard Hodgkin, Jessica Stockholder, Ian Kiaer), 3) networked condition (David Hammons, Tracy Emin, and Jutta Koether). In Chapter 2, three conditions of painting practice emerge from the original analysis of my first-hand interviews with seven Chinese contemporary painters of different generations (1960-1990) with varies of education backgrounds: 1) a dualistic condition (Xingwei Wang, Ruozhe Xue, and one related artist: Liu Xiaodong); 2) a temporal condition (Jianwei Wang, Xiaokang Sun, Tian Tan, Xun Yang, and one related artist: Jianjun Zhang), and 3) a networked condition (Jianwei Wang, Xiaokang Sun, Z factory). It is important to mention that the background and meaning of the *temporal and networked* condition in the Chinese context are different from the Western context (where it is indicated by the shifts of the notion of studio and site) and this will be discussed at the beginning of Chapter 2. More importantly, the conditions of the apparatus of painting practice in the Western and Chinese contexts (in Chapter 1 and 2) are conceptual schemers that I understand as a form of relation rather than art-historical categories. Thus, these different conditions of the apparatus of painting are primarily conceptual differentiation, not art historical differentiation. Alongside this, a distinction is made, informed by philosophical non-dualistic encounters – the concept of the loop, that is employed in my three practical examples in Chapter 3. Different aspects of the apparatus of painting practice were tested in these practical examples. More precisely, Example One (What happens in the studio stays in the studio) reviewed the process of painting studio practice and the studio hours or the practice time, and recycled into a new work of performance and installation. Example Two (Emotional Labour) is my solo exhibition, which explores different spatial relationships between painting, exhibition space, the formal studio space and the audience, including the process of viewing and observing, the skills of

⁵ Energetics or Chi refers to the flowing forces and energy that governs the order of universe and creation in relation to the emerging cosmology in Chinese Classics and Chinese aesthetics in ink painting.

painting in the Chinese system were all revisited and challenged. Example Three (You ate my exhibition) is an opportunity to relocate the notion of studio and the painterly experience and knowledge outside of the setting of a formal studio, rather, in a public space which functioned as an exhibition space. The further practical applications from this thesis, including traits in the expanded understanding of the apparatus of art in relation to the historical apparatus in the broader Chinese context, will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Chapter 1 The Western context post-1970

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Chapter 1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the Western context of the notion of the studio and art practice after 1970. I draw out my discussion in relation to Daniel Buren’s ‘The Function of the Studio’ (1971); ‘Critical Limit’ (1970a) and several related essays by Buren and interviews with him, and also Robert Smithson’s writings. In Buren’s practice, he attempts to refine the act of painting to an elemental form in response to specific sites, such as billboards, stairways, parks, markets, galleries, museums, etc. Interestingly, what Buren does not deal with directly is the issue of the function of the studio that he highlights in his essays in relation to the practice process. For example, Buren’s practice of ‘*works in situ*’ do not take the studio as the subject; rather he builds a ‘studio space’ on the legacy of the traditional studio, and the actual nature of Buren’s studio is unchanged (this point will be expanded later). Even though none of Buren’s engagement with sites includes the *studio* itself, Buren’s essays and practice still functioned as a turning-point in the dualistic relationship between the studio practice of painting and its practice outside the studio. After Buren, the notion of *studio* practice is reconceived by ‘non-site’ practice (Robert Smithson), ‘post-studio’ practice (Buren’s reappraisal of the use of the studio in his practice led to the birth of what today is recognised as ‘post-studio’ practice) and painting practice that tries to extend beyond the representational modernist frame.

In order to refuse the *studio* as the ‘first frame’⁶ of the artist’s practice, Buren utilises the ‘*work in situ*’ approach as his practice strategy, in which the studio space is not where his practice can actively be sited. Rejecting the dualistic model, I believe Buren’s strategy has been superseded in painting’s current context. Since the Modern movement, when Duchamp established the new mode of ready-mades in art creation, art production has operated most fundamentally at a conceptual level. The origin of the meaning of the art object, including the status of the artist and the object, have been interrogated. However, the difference between the artist’s studio as a private site and the gallery or museum as a public site remained unchanged. As painting was declared dead in Douglas Crimp’s essay ‘The End of Painting’ (1981), and the apparatus of art had already changed since Buren into the post-studio condition; the post-medium condition; the contemporary and networked conditions⁷. This is pointed out by the American art historian David Joselit in his essay ‘Painting Beside Itself’ (2009) where he analyses the relationship between contemporary painting practice and the networked condition. It is thus crucial to rethink the whole apparatus of art in relation to its impact on the beginning and the end of painting practice. More precisely, it is important to return to a conception of the ontology of painting from the very start of practice, or the studio as a way to break the classical tropes of painting, rather than in their historical formation (take Isabelle Graw’s book *The Love of Painting* (2018) as an example).

This chapter will revisit painting practice from 1960 to the present, in the Western context, through the lens of a reassessment of the relationships between those three spaces which fundamentally impact on the painting practice: the studio or the space of production; exhibition space and space for thinking, to address how painting’s potential can be fulfilled in different frameworks. In this chapter, my analysis of Western notions of the studio follows the shifts of the conditions in artistic practice and in four critical aspects: 1) Daniel Buren and his legacy; 2) non-site and post-studio practice (Robert Smithson, Marcel Broodthaers, Blinky Palermo); 3) the notion of temporal condition (Howard Hodgkin, Jessica Stockholder), and 4) networked condition (David Hammons, Jutta Koether, Tracy Emin).

1.1. *Daniel Buren and his legacy*

⁶ Buren described the studio as a ‘first frame’ in his essay ‘The Function of the Studio’ (1979): ‘The importance of the studio should by now be apparent; it is the first frame, the first limit, upon which all subsequent frames/limits will depend’. (Buren, 1979: p.51).

⁷ The networked condition of art apparatus in the Western context will be expanded in 1.4 Networked condition.

Buren's conception of the apparatus of art is formed in his practice and written essays, which reflect and critique the site of production and the site of the exhibition. His three essays 'The Function of The Studio'(1971); 'Function of The Museum'(1973a) and 'The Function of an exhibition'(1973b) have been discussed in detail from 1971 onwards. 'The Function of The Studio' (1971), in particular, acts as a turning point for art practices during the 1970s. After 1973, anti-form⁸, the de-materialized practices emerged. These three essays, including his essay 'Critical Limit'(1970a), present Buren's account of the framework of his practice. However, Buren's practice was also limited by his position in relation to the value system of art production (which established the belief that the mode of abandoning the studio in artistic practice is better than other approaches) that he built.

There are some similarities between the situations of the practice that Buren confronted in the 1970s and that which Duchamp confronted in the early part of the Twentieth Century. On the one hand, Buren tried to escape the 'modernist logic', as Rosalind Krauss suggested in 'The Optical Unconscious' – 'the grid, the monochrome, the all-over painting, the concentric figures'. (Krauss, 1994: p.20). In his another essay 'It Rains, it Snows, it Paints' (1970b), Buren uses an example of rain to represent the unavoidable history that related to painting practice; he said,

[...] we can now say, for the first time, that "it is painting" as we say, "it is raining" When it snows we are in the presence of a natural phenomenon, so when "it paints" we are in the presence of a historical fact. (Buren, 1970b: p.43).

What Buren was challenging was the situation in which the studio space is isolated from the outside world, and in order to question this relationship between these two realms, Buren introduced the ideas of 'painting as "visual tool"' and '*work in situ*' into his practice. Painting became reduced to stripes of paint, and the studio was refused and abolished in Buren's practice, and thus this realm of the studio remained unchanged.

On the other hand, in the early Modernist period, Duchamp was confronting both the heritage of painting as a historical form and the logic of formal painting practice. The term 'painting', at that time, implied a continuous and closed tradition of practice, with certain methods and a specific value system of representing and showing. These 'legacy' approaches are related to the ideology of painting – the artist, the painting on canvas, and the dualistic relationship between the studio and the exhibition space. This was 'very retinal' (Ashton, 1966: pp.244-246), as Duchamp said in an interview in 1966. Duchamp, in order to challenge the repetition of unbearable history of painting practice

⁸ Anti-form is 'a term, originating in the late 1960s, applied to certain types of works that react against traditional forms, materials, and methods of artistic creation— Arte Povera, Land art, some kinds of Conceptual art, and the early 'provisional, non-fixed, elastic' sculptures of Richard Serra, for example. Robert Morris, who wrote an article entitled 'Anti-Form' in the April 1968 issue of Artforum, defined the term as an 'attempt to contradict one's taste'. The nature of the material means the form itself is no longer exactly fixed or determined.' (Chilvers and Glaves-Smith, 2009: p.24).

on canvas, and to avoid the repetition of his own practice, applied his strategy of 'taste' through different mediums⁹. While, the understanding of works of art still remained in the situation where the viewer can 'grasp them as wholes' (Greenberg: (1945) 1988: p.35), as Greenberger noted, which is a traditional condition of apparatus of art. In this traditional condition, the method of observing a painting and the approach of practice is already designed by the tradition of painting: the painting was something that could only be found and happen on the canvas. What Duchamp tried to challenge was the historical forms and meanings that painting practice carried, and the distinction between painting and other mediums remained.

If we take this traditional notion of painting into another context, a conventional form of painting was described as 'a stable prison' (Foucault, 1983: pp.15-17) by Foucault. In the book *This is not a Pipe*, Foucault utilized Magritte's work- "The treachery of images (This is not a pipe)" to rethink the truth of an object in relation to the permanence of a work of art. As Foucault stated, the visible reference points of a conventional painting are 'a stable prison':

It is the drawing with the painting, firmly and rigorously outlined, that must be accepted as a manifest truth. [...] The pipe represented in the drawing – whether on blackboard or canvas, little matter – this "lower" pipe is wedged solid in a space of visible reference points: width (the written text, the upper and lower borders of the frame); height (the sides of the frame, the easel's mounts); and the depth (the grooves of the floor). A stable prison.' (Foucault, 1983: pp.15-17).

Importantly, Foucault emphasises that the 'stable prison' can be 'broken': by challenging the traditional bond between text and image; the process of looking and reading, taking Magritte's work as an example, 'the commonplace (common ground or shared conceptual site of language and drawing, and of visual and verbal representation) – the banal work of art or everyday lesson – has disappeared'. (Foucault, 1983: p.31). Relating this to painting practice, if the commonplace or relationships in the discourse are not changed, the result would be that a 'painting' is still a 'painting', and the painting practice would still follow the tradition of conventional painting. In effect, Foucault's notes throw light on the practice of painting: the manifest truth that *painting* carries make the whole discourse and mode of production of painting a stable form. As a result, *this way of doing painting (oil on canvas) is a painting, while others are not*. In other words, the condition of traditional painting practice is separated from other mediums and other approaches.

Buren, in relation to this discourse, stated, 'The studio is, in fact, where I find myself'. (Davidts, 2009: p.80). It is clear that the function of the *studio* is not fundamentally distributed. What emerges from this statement is that the situation of the artist's studio

⁹ For example, in Duchamp's work *The Large Glass* (1915–1923), he attempted to shift the medium of the canvas to a condition of transparency.

is still separate from outside spaces. From a practical point of view, that statement can be translated as ‘I practice. Therefore, I am’. In effect, Buren highlights the dualistic relationship between the condition of being inside the studio and being outside. The presupposition of the studio space and the outside (public space and exhibition space) is already and still there when Buren practices. Only when the artist thinks about how to install or present their works or other reflections on the relationship between their work and what is outside it, the gap between the notion of the space of production and the space of exhibition become narrower. However, in this apparatus, *the presentation of the artwork does not change the studio*. As shown in Diagram 1,

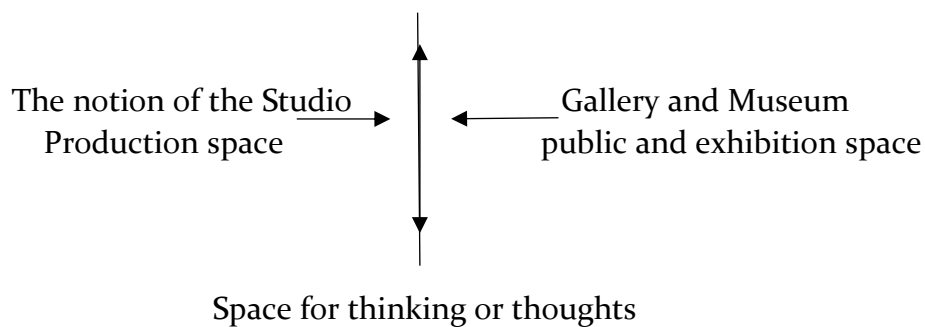


Diagram 1: Dualistic apparatus in Buren’s practice and the late modern period

By analysing the interviews with Buren and his work through the lens of the apparatus, we can revisit the notion of the studio and apparatus that applies to his practice. In doing this, three points that inform Buren’s approach need to be discussed further: 1) Painting as a ‘visual tool’; 2) What does Buren mean by ‘*work in situ*’? And 3) Buren’s site-specific practice.

1.1.1 Painting as a ‘visual tool’

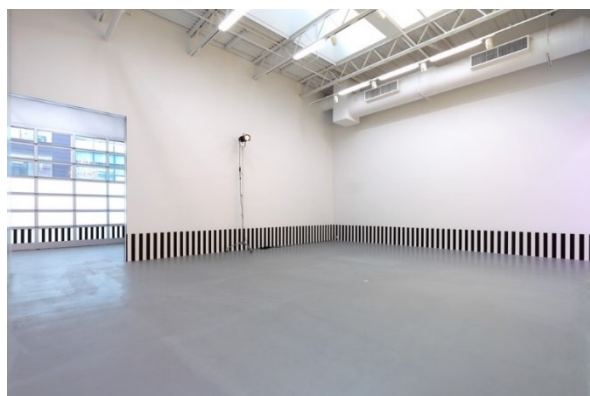


Fig 1-1 Daniel Buren
Skirt, Work In Situ 2013 (Ref. Wide White Space Gallery, Antwerpen January 1969)
 1969/2013
 printed paper white and black

dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist and Petzel, New York.

In Buren's essay 'The Function of The Studio' (1971), the studio is 'the place where the work originates; a private place, an ivory tower perhaps and a stationary place where portable objects are produced.' (Buren, (1971) 1979: p.51). The studio as 'the first frame' has been separated from the museum and gallery space and functions, and the artworks produced inside the studio are foreign to the outside world. It is a dualistic relationship between the studio and the gallery and museum or exhibition space. In order to challenge this traditional notion of the studio as a private space, away from the exterior conditions and the public, Buren utilises his strategy of *painting as a visual tool* to break the dualistic relationship and the '*work in situ*'¹⁰ to settle his work in a specific site. Buren recalled the very beginning of his applications of stripes, and the related term he named 'visual tool', in an interview in 2015, saying:

I kept stripes because it was a sign, very easy to see and to play [with]... I was still working with it 50 years later. I cannot say it is the same, but I use it, and it's the reason I invented a term which I called "visual tool": it's not only something you can recognize; it's also something you can use to change an environment. It's not strictly striped any more – I can use any material – but it's always there; the use of the visual tool is always somewhere. (McDermott, 2015).

Painting, in Buren's famous stripe series, is minimised and reduced to a command: 'Striped Bands, alternatively white and coloured, each 8.7 cm wide, plus or minus 0.3 cm'. (Buren and Cotter, 2006). Buren's 'visual tool', like any other tool that features one or two functions, meanwhile 'does not count for much in the final production'. (Buren and Cotter, 2006). Buren uses the standard metre as an example to explain his visual tool, stating:

It's very similar to the standard metre, which in some societies allows everyone who constructs to refer to this measure. It's a tool which, in the same way, allows you to measure, but which additionally leaves its form in front of your eyes. (Buren and Cotter, 2006).

In this way, Buren 'freed' painting practice from the studio by reducing painting process to its very origins. In 'The Function of The Studio' (1971) Buren set out the two extremes of artwork and its condition: 1) all works are the same, responding to their conditions and the trend of curatorial fashion passively, and 2) different conditions make artworks different. (Buren, (1971) 1979: p.54). Buren's strategy is the latter; painting is symbolised in the stripes, and this stripe is repeated as a certain form in different sites, as Buren states in his essay 'Beware!' (1969).

¹⁰ The 'work in situ' will be discussed in 1.1.2.

Repetition. The consistency – i.e., the exposure to view in different places and at different times, as well as the personal work, for four years – obliges us to recognize manifest visual repetition at first glance...This repetition provokes two apparently contradictory considerations: on the one hand, the reality of a certain form (described above), and on the other hand, its cancelling-out by successive and identical confrontations, which themselves negate any originality that might be found in this form, despite the systematization of the work. (Buren, (1969) 1973: p.15).

The ‘visual tool’ carries a mode of production. Buren uses it to set up a production strategy and blends it with his value system. Actually, the ‘visual tool’ is a response to the condition of not having a studio and creates a practical method that does not require studio space and different materials – stripes. For example, his installation *A Rainbow in the Sky* (2009) in One Colorado Courtyard, Buren introduced his stripes into an industrial style of flags.

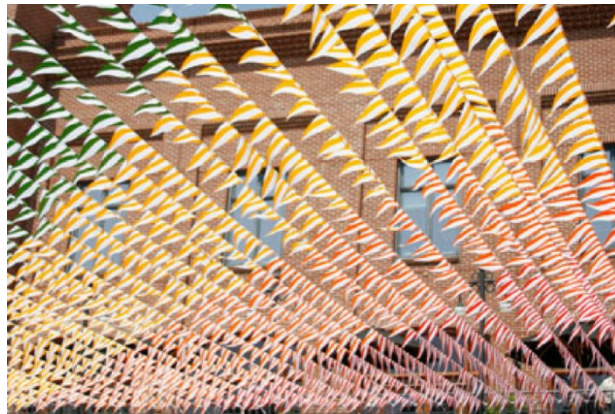


Fig 1-2 Daniel Buren, *A Rainbow in the Sky*. With Daniel Buren
In partnership with Armory Center for the Arts & One Colorado Courtyard
Aug 8 - Nov 15, 2009. One Colorado Courtyard, Pasadena, California. Courtesy of FLAX
(France Los Angeles Exchange). All rights reserved.

Importantly, Buren’s ‘visual tool’ is not an open system; Buren’s stripes function as a material statement and a finished sign which need no further interventions from the viewer. However, the notion of the formal studio in his practice remains untouched. In the catalogue for *Intervention II* (Buren and Cotter, 2006), Buren reflected on the issue of whether the studio is a habit which may be called into question. Buren did raise the question of the importance of the function of the studio, but his subsequent practice did not engage with the traditional notion of the studio. He stands against it, and for *work in situ*.

1.1.2 What does Buren mean by 'work in situ'?

The term 'work in situ' was part of the title of Buren's exhibition '*Intersecting Axes: A Work in Situ*' in 1983. '*In situ*' marked the relationship between the work and the site where the work was exhibited and linked it to the specific site and conditions. Meanwhile, Buren provides his version: in reviewing the term '*in situ*', he says, 'To work in situ, as I mean it, implies the loss of the studio'. (Buren and Cotter, 2006). The condition of not having a studio (or the loss of a studio), for Buren, 'calls into question the form of production'. (Buren and Cotter, 2006).

However, a prior notion is already here before Buren questions the form of production, and before withdrawing from the studio. The prior notion is that the situation of the studio is still special and separate from other conditions and spaces. Due to this pre-existing dualistic notion of the studio, Buren's practice did not challenge the studio (which was abandoned by Buren at the very beginning of his practice). In Buren's 'work in situ' practice, the space of the studio does not exist, no matter whether his practice *refuses the studio* or *marks the loss of the studio*. In other words, Buren's '*in situ*' deals with wider conditions, but excepts the studio itself. Buren explains his term 'work in situ' in relation to a number of artists' biographies, by stating:

The time-honored expression "lives and works in..." used in biographies suggests that the studio of the artist is situated in the city mentioned and that he never works anywhere but in this city...The person who lives and works in the same place equally "lives and works *in situ*" without, however, being nomadic. (Buren and Cotter, 2006).

Two important points about Buren's practice can be highlighted in this: 1) by 'freeing' painting from studio practice with stripes as a 'visual tool', Buren avoids and abandons the studio and the studio's traditions; 2) further, since he has abandoned and refuses a studio, this form of artistic production has been questioned and placed outside of the traditional notions of the studio, taking Buren's practice '*work in situ*' as an example. By using these two reference points, the studio has been isolated, and the notion of traditional studio practice has been avoided. The notion of the studio is still a solitary space in a dualistic relationship with the exhibition space and its surroundings.

1.1.3 Buren's site-specific practice

After setting out the two steps above, Buren continues by discussing his site-specific practice. He explains his experience of '*work in situ*' as:

‘In situ’ means, at least in my understanding of it, that there is a voluntary bond between the site of perception and the ‘work’ that is produced, presented, and exhibited there. (Buren, 1985, in Davidts, 2009: p.66).

There are three sites in Buren’s statement – the site of production, the site of the exhibition and the site for thinking. In order to work in specific sites and against the dualistic tradition of the notion of the studio, Buren combines these three sites as one, as Buren explained his *in situ* practice: ‘Quite simply, a work which not only has a relationship with the place in which it finds itself, but also which has been made entirely in this place.’ (Buren and Cotter, 2006). Taking the *Structure for Two Catalpas* (1987) for instance, the site of production, the site of the exhibition (museum or gallery space) and the site for thinking are all located in the same place. As Buren observes in the interview in the catalogue for *Intervention II*: ‘One could replace the expression with reference to myself by: “D.B. lives and works where he exhibits”’. (Buren and Cotter, 2006). In this way, Buren located his practice in *the site*, and avoids questioning the legacy of the *studio*.



Fig 1-3 Daniel Buren. *Structure for two Catalpas*, work in situ. 1987. [Reproduced in Buren and Cotter, 2006. *Daniel Buren, Intervention II - Works in Situ*. Oxford: Modern Art Oxford].

Importantly, there is another perspective through which to revisit the painting practice: through the lens of the apparatus. The whole apparatus of painting practice, as introduced before, is a (con)junction of studio space, discourse, mediums, aesthetic practice (decisions, evaluations in the process of practice), consideration of paradigms and models, spatial enactments and unfolding encounters. We can distinguish two views of the apparatus of painting: a micro view of the apparatus that points back to painting itself, and a macro view of apparatus which points to the broader art system, by revisiting Buren’s notion of the studio as the ‘first frame’ established in his essay ‘The Function of the Studio’ (1971) and in another essay ‘Critical Limits’ (1970a):

The importance of the studio should by now be apparent; it is the first frame, the first limit, upon which all subsequent frames/limits will depend. (Buren, (1971) 1979: pp.51- 58).

The whole discourse is based on what is being exhibited and that only, as if the place where it is visible were of no importance. [...] Art as it presents itself to us, refuses to reveal all its underlying “supports”, “frames” or “limits” concealed under the many forms of the “pure experience”...The simple ignorance of these limits or the wish to mask them as an equally simple but essential consequence: as soon as one reveals these limits, the whole discourse on art as it has flourished in the past is cancelled out. (Buren, (1970a) 1973c: pp.45-46).

The notion of the ‘studio as the first frame’ presents the micro view of the apparatus (pointing back to the painting studio practice). In the essay ‘Critical Limits’ (1970a), Buren highlights the traditional discourse associated with painting practice, with a macro view of ‘the whole discourse’. In ‘Critical Limits’ (1970a) the whole discourse of painting practice includes ‘its support (canvas/wall/store windows); the museum or gallery space; cultural limits or knowledge in general (the period) and in particular media (such as TV, newspapers...); Object-Sculptural-Environment-Arte Povera-Technical Art; Painting (vertical stripes white and coloured alternately)’.(Buren, (1970a) 1973c: pp.45-52). It is clear that Buren has noticed that the boundaries of the mediums and materials of painting practice and its dualistic forms of production that form traditional painting practice were shifting. What Buren did was to abolish the studio and establish his value system or apparatus of practice in this micro view of apparatus by reducing the importance of painting as signs and gestures into space, mediums and so on (so that it is unnecessary to have a studio); and avoiding the studio more clearly in the macro view of apparatus which includes the studio, the gallery, museum, exhibition space, the public, art market, economic context and so forth. Thus, the whole model of Buren’s *site-specific* or ‘*in situ*’ practice does not include *the studio*.

However, in ‘Critical Limits’ (1970a) Buren provides a sense of the ‘new support’ or frame in painting practice, which is ‘a place defined a priori as artistic, and different every time’ (Buren, (1970a) 1973c: p.55). In effect, Buren attempts to update the notion of the exhibited space as a new condition in which artworks can be shown outside of the formal exhibition space (for example, on billboards, flags, boats, stairs and so forth). While, the ‘first frame’ (the studio) was not re-thought. Buren’s stripes respond to the location where the work is shown. Whereas, the studio is abandoned by Buren: he tries to merge the three sites (site of production, site of the exhibition, site of thinking) into one in his site-specific practice, but the dualistic relationship between the studio as private site and the gallery space as the public site is not challenged.

Even though Buren did not include or challenge the traditional notions of the studio directly in his practice, he still offers the possibility of a ‘new support’ which helps to move the process of presenting works outside formal exhibition conditions and the

traditional indoor exhibition space, and which is also a strategy that shifts the notion of the site of exhibition. This strategy of ‘*work in situ*’ and Buren’s site-specific practice also throw light on post-studio and non-site practice (such as that of Robert Smithson).

1.2. Non-site and post-studio practice

Robert Smithson	1967 1968
Marcel Broodthaers	1968
Blinky Palermo	1970, 1972

Korean-American curator and art historian Miwon Kwon provides a clear definition of the site in her book *One Place after Another*:

Whether inside the white cube or out in the Nevada desert, whether architecture or landscape-oriented, site-specific art initially took the site as an actual location, a tangible reality, its identity composed of a unique combination of physical elements: length, height, depth, texture, and shape of walls and rooms; scale and proportion of plazas, buildings or parks; existing conditions of lighting, ventilation, traffic patterns; distinctive topographical features, and so forth. (Kwon, 2004: p.11).

In relation to Kwon’s definition, the sites for artistic practice, more precisely, are three spaces around the painting practice (in the contemporary context): the tangible spaces – the studio– ‘existing conditions of lighting, ventilation, traffic patterns, distinctive topographical features” (Kwon, 2004: p.11) and the exhibition space – ‘length, depth, height, texture, and shape of walls and rooms’ (Kwon, 2004: p.11); and the space for thinking and thoughts: the space of reflection on the subject and the ideal. In this chapter, a triangular relationship (the diagram will be introduced later) between these three spaces – the studio, the public and exhibition space and the space for thinking or thoughts – will be introduced, discussed across the example of three related artists’ practices (Robert Smithson, Marcel Broodthaers and Blinky Palermo).

In order to challenge the tradition of the artist’s studio, Buren chooses to create his works at specific sites and utilises his stripes to reflect the condition of the windows, the galleries, the billboards, the streets and the city. Buren highlights the site’s material conditions while leaving behind the site of the studio. Buren dispenses with the limitations of the studio as the first frame, then falls into another frame: *the site as a frame*. Taking his practice of site-specific and work *in situ*, for example, the dualism of the studio (first frame) and the outside (public space) is always there. For Buren, the *site* itself becomes the first frame in his site-specific practice.

In comparison, Robert Smithson can be thought of as pushing the materiality of the site in another direction. The materiality of the site has been revisited and dematerialised in Smithson's practice of a conceptual site. Smithson introduces the notion of non-site in one of his writings, 'A Provisional Theory of Non-sites' (1968), as follows:

The non-site is a three-dimensional logical picture that is abstract, yet it represents an actual site in NJ. (The Pine Barrens Plains). It is by this three-dimensional metaphor that one site can represent another site which does not resemble it – thus, The Non-Site. (Smithson, (1968) 1996: p.364).

More importantly, Smithson points out the 'metaphoric significance' in the idea of the non-site: 'Non-site itself exists as a space of metaphoric significance'. (Smithson, (1968) 1996: p.364). This metaphorical approach enables Smithson to revisit the notion of the *site* through different layers of time. In his famous work *Spiral Jetty* (1970), for example, the spiral jetty provides a varying format of image, time and space. As the sea salt crystallises on the jetty and melts again as time and seasons change, every second the jetty is different. In this way, geographic time from nature and historical time from the human society meet together in this work, and *Spiral Jetty* offers a new way of understanding artworks: a new optic of mobility relations, configurations and index of presentations.



Fig 1-4 Robert Smithson, *Spiral Jetty* (1970). [Reproduced in Robert Smithson, 1996. *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*. CA: University of California Press. page 143].

Compared with Buren's site-specific *in situ* practice, Smithson transfers the *site* to the *non-site*, engaging with a conceptual and metaphoric site. Smithson describes a 'trip' between the *site* and *non-site* as a vast metaphor. And during the process of this trip, Smithson dematerialises the *site* itself, as he states in his text 'A Provisional Theory of Non-sites' (1968):

It could be that "travel" in this space is a vast metaphor. Everything between the two sites could become physical, metaphorical material devoid of natural meanings and realistic assumptions. [...] Let us say that one goes on a fictitious trip

if one decides to go to the site of the Non-Site. The "trip" becomes invented, devised, artificial; therefore, one might call it a non-trip to a site from a Non-site. (Smithson, (1968) 1996: p.364).

Further, Smithson used the notion of a metaphorical site to break the dialectic bond between the site and the non-site and then expanded the notion of mediums by de-categorizing and combining sculpture, drawings, writings, film, objects from nature etc., into his practice. Still taking *Spiral Jetty* (1970) as an example, which revisits and de-categorizes the material and notion of the site (including the studio). British Scholar Peter Osborne also makes observations on the de-classification and categories of this work in *Anywhere or Not at all: The Philosophy of Contemporary Art* as:

This site was a rotary that enclosed itself in an immense roundness. From that gyrating emerged the possibility of the Spiral Jetty. No ideas, no concepts, no systems, no structures, no abstractions, could hold themselves together in the actuality of that evidence. My dialectics of the site and non-site whirled into an indeterminate state, where solid and liquid lost themselves in each other. [...] No sense wondering about classification and categories, there were none. (Osborne, 2013: pp. 96-100).

Unlike Buren, Smithson redefined the metaphysical as well as the physical mobility of the artwork and made the notion of the site of production more responsive, and this led an opening up framework of his practice. In Smithson's text 'A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey' (1967) for example, the opening up condition helps Smithson to shift the bus tour to an aesthetic event. Smithson connects the words that he read from the newspaper on the bus with the changing views of the scenery outside the bus's windows:

The Passaic (West) end of the bridge rotated south while the Rutherford (East) end of the bridge rotated north; such rotations suggested the limited movements of an outmoded world. "North" and "South" hung over the static river in a bi-polar manner. One could refer to this bridge as the "Monument of Dislocated Directions." (Smithson, (1967) 1996: pp.70-71).

With the movement of the bus and the ever-changing landscape outside, the shifting view of the scenery becomes a 'hypothetical continent' (Osborne, 2013: pp. 96-100). In 'A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey' Smithson utilises these shifting experiences as material and as an object to point back to the notion of an *ideal site*. The 'site' mutates from the "cinema-ized" site' to 'non-site' and to 'temporal site', as Smithson states:

The bus passed over the first monument. [...] Noon-day sunshine cinema-ized the site, turning the bridge and the river into an over-exposed *picture*. Photographing it with my Instamatic 400 was like photographing a photograph. [...] Across the

river in Rutherford, one could hear the faint voice of a P.A. system and the weak cheers of a crowd at a football game. Actually, the landscape was no landscape, but “a particular kind of heliotypy” (Nabokov), a kind of self-destroying postcard world of failed immortality and oppressive grandeur.[...] Everything about the site remained wrapped in blandness and littered with shiny cars-one after another they extended into a sunny nebulosity. (Smithson, (1967) 1996: pp.70-73).

By dematerialising the notion of the site as non-site, de-classifying materials and mediums of practice (event, paper, film, bus tour, objects from nature and so on), then introducing the notion of geographic and historical time, Smithson investigates the dualistic relationships in Buren’s space of production, exhibition space and space for thinking on art practice. This strategy is also utilized in another of Smithson’s works, *Floating Island* (1971), which is a sketch of proposed work¹¹. Smithson positions his thinking on the shifting views of the landscape as aesthetic thinking. The relationship between the site of production, the site of the exhibition and the site for thinking is not fixed. The notion of the site turns out to be an ever-changing context; plants and soil are installed in a boat. The floating island makes a specific site a non-place. On this island, the work remains unfinished with the moving flow, and the limits of artistic practice are blurred.

In this way, Smithson’s practice is freed from the traditional context of the studio. Instead, he tested materials from both the macro version of the apparatus of art - from the external natural site and the gallery site, and the micro version of apparatus - from the side of material practice and the side of a conceptual framework. More precisely, this strategy helps him to open up the dualistic relationship between the studio (production space) and gallery space. The site of production and the site of the exhibition has been dematerialised (as non-site) and revisited as an element to prompt his practice. In Smithson’s practice, the site functions as a new starting point of practice; a thinking point, rather a physical space. By introducing different layers of time into his practice, the site of production is in an ongoing condition (in relation to the continuation of time) and sometimes join together with the site of thinking as one. As another outcome of this strategy, Smithson turns the medium of his practice (installation, sculpture, film) into a hybrid. This way of shifting the apparatus of art was clearly established by Smithson, whose practice is one example of the post-studio practice that changed the way art was made and consumed. Another shift can be seen in the work of the artist Marcel Broodthaers, in his review of the process of delivering artworks in his installations (1968).

In 1968, Broodthaers established his project- *Museum of Modern Art, Department of Eagles*, and exhibited different sections in European countries during the following four years. The ‘*Museum of Modern Art. Department of Eagles. 19-century Section*’ (1968) took

¹¹ It is a sketch (Graphite on paper, 47cm x 60cm) of a barge carrying rocks and trees, which is pulled by a towboat around Manhattan.

place in Broodthaers's apartment in Brussels, which exhibited some photocopies and post-cards of the original artworks in the museums' collections and several empty shipping crates with 'PICTURE', 'WITH CARE' and 'KEEP DRY' stencilled on the surface, even though there were no paintings, either in the shipping box or in the 'exhibition space'. The protective frame for the painting was thus shown without the actual paintings. Unlike Smithson, who has a sense of the apparatus and directs his practice towards unifying it, Broodthaers suspends the certainties of the practice of painting. The painting on the canvas is not there, but the elements of its apparatus are, pointing towards painting and its condition in the institutional collections. In this work, the canvas is absent, and thus painting became a metaphoric medium.

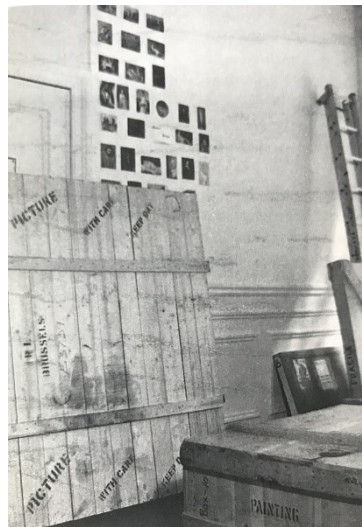


Fig 1-5 Marcel Broodthaers, Museum of Modern Art. Department of Eagles. 19-century Section, 1968. [Reproduced in Crow, 2005. *The Rise of the Sixties: American and European Art in the Era of Dissent*. London: Laurence King Publishing, page.176]

In both Smithson's and Broodthaers' practice, one element is hard to ignore: the 'ready-made'. Duchamp, with his *Bicycle Wheel* in 1913, first coined the term 'ready-made' in relation to artistic practice, and this was quickly picked up by the Dada movement. The found materials in Smithson's practice are water, mud, the coast of New Jersey: in other words, all were constructed from the natural materials already present. Instead of relocating them to a gallery, these 'ready-made' materials from nature takes the materiality of practice onto another level, beyond Duchamp. This level of practice could only develop through his sense of contemporary art's apparatus, which the artist seems to want to unify. In Broodthaers' work, the painting and its related materials function almost like Duchamp's ready-mades, non-art objects that are utilised in the artwork. As a result, the artwork provides the gallery or museum space with a sense of the practice from a macro view of the apparatus.

The third example of alternating the notion of the studio and gallery space is the work *Window I* (1970) by the artist Blinky Palermo, who utilised the painted surface in various

spaces, and was noted by the art historian Gloria Moure as ‘redrawing the line between the real and painted space’ (Moure, 2003: p.49); because of the ongoing nature of his work, the painted surface became ‘material substance’, (Moure, 2003: p.63), and functioned as painted forms. It connects the studio as a space of production and the gallery space in a symbolic context. The gallery space functions as a visual cue between different forms, as the image below, shows – the drawings on the flat surface of the wall space and the gallery space. In this work, the gallery’s wall, which normally functioned as the ‘traditional support of [hanging] painting’ (Moure, 2003: p.71), questions the situation of painting practice. Between the actual and the painted space, the space of production and the exhibition space, *painting* is no longer supported by the canvas with a frame; rather, painting is in the spatial relationships.

More importantly, Palermo’s work presents an example of practice from the micro view of the apparatus of painting, which returns to the definition of a painting. In Palermo’s retrospective show ‘*Retrospective 1964 – 1977*’ (2011) at CCS Bard, the conventional relationship between the canvas as a practical form and the gallery walls were challenged more clearly. In this series of work, taking ‘*Tagtraum II (Nachtstueck) / Daydream II (Night Piece)*’ 1966 and ‘*Untitled*’ 1972 (in fig 1-6) as example, the canvas is used as a ‘substance’ (Moure, 2003: p.63) and placed with wood and other material surfaces. The thinking behind this suggests that paintings as objects have been transferred into the three-dimensional spaces and were materialised in the space of the gallery as one part of the work. In this context, the painting or painted objects thus have a relationship of exchange with their surroundings and the space of the gallery operates as the context for thinking.

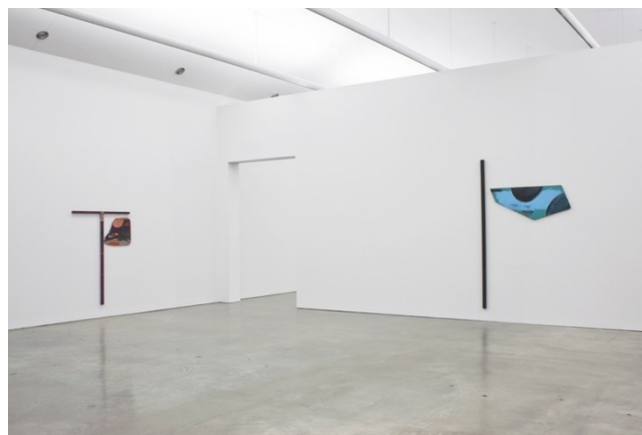


Fig-1-6 Blinky Palermo. Installation view of Blinky Palermo: Retrospective 1964-1977, CCS Bard Galleries, 2011. Photo: Chris Kendall.

Since Smithson’s notion of non-site provides an opportunity to consider the site as a metaphorical site, the dialectic relationship between the studio (as the space of production) and the exhibited space moves into a triangular relationship: the studio, the exhibited space and the thinking space (for instance, in the work of Broodthaers and

Palermo). The relationships between these three spaces were dualized for each other in the tradition of atelier painting practice and untouched by early Modernism; as Buren's reflections demonstrate, they have been transformed and exchanged with each other, as in Diagram 2:

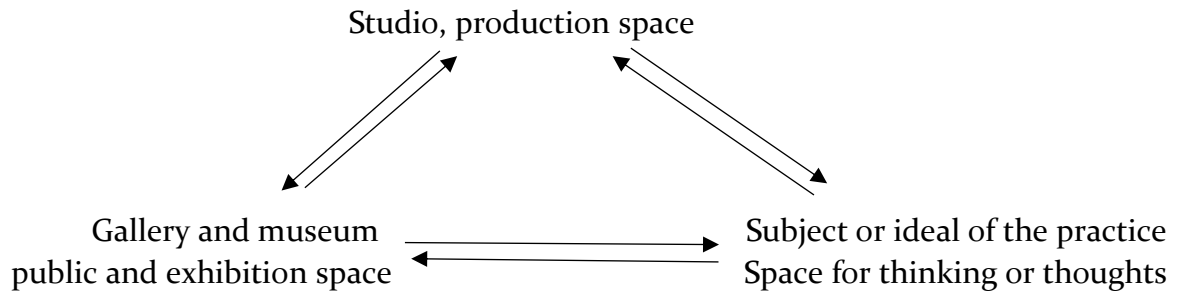


Diagram 2: Apparatus in Smithson and related post-studio practices

In relation to this diagram, by practising between the external space, the gallery space and the *non-site*, the space of production and the studio, the space of exhibition (the gallery and museum) and the site for thinking and thoughts become interchangeable in the process of artist's practice, and these movements influence the outcome of the artistic practice. Smithson's work includes the relationships in the diagram – from his thoughts from the tour of the Monuments of Passaic to the *Spiral Jetty* and to the *Floating Island* – the space of production, the natural space and the conceptual space (non-site) were in exchange with each other. In other words, his notion of non-site describes the transformative process in these three spaces. For Broodthaers, the empty shipping crates test the relationship between the process of production and the exhibition space (museum and institutional space) in the view of a macro view of apparatus of painting (which refers to the gallery or museum in the art system), by removing the physical painting. In this work, painting is in a conceptual space. Palermo transformed the shapes of windows and painted objects with a micro view of apparatus of painting; in his work, the notion of the site of the traditional exhibition space and painting became a symbolic space for thought. Due to this ability to transform, in these artists' practice, the outcomes were limited by neither the space of production nor the exhibition space. The support for a painting is no longer the canvas or the frame alone.

1.3. The notion of the temporal condition

Howard Hodgkin	2013 - 2014
Jessica Stockholder	1995, 2015
Ian Kiaer	2008

As discussed in the last two sections, an artist working within pre-established knowledge; the traditions of painting and related techniques will operate within a

dualistic (studio and gallery) apparatus (Diagram 1), and the painting studio will have a stable, fixed position as the space of production. Whilst, Smithson chooses to shift this notion of site and studio into a position of exchange as Diagram 2 shows, there can be other challenges to the 'beginning and end of painting'. There exists a third condition of painting practice, which may start from, utilise and even expand the traditional medium of painting and the notion of the studio, in order to draw out the temporal condition of painting practice. In relation to this, in this section, I will be exploring the varied practices of Howard Hodgkin, Jessica Stockholder and Ian Kiaer.

Hodgkin's process of painting in the studio extends both the painting itself and the notion of the studio in terms of both spatiality and temporality. On a spatial level, in the interview with Alan Yentob ('A Picture of the Painter Howard Hodgkin', 2006), we are given a snapshot of the relationship between Hodgkin and his studio. There are canvases leaning back-to-front against the wall, but these simply hide smaller paintings leaning likewise against the wall. Otherwise, there is nothing to see as evidence of practice. In the interview with Alan Yentob, Hodgkin also declares that he is unsure as to what processes lead to a painting being declared as finished (Hodgkin, 2006), but the completion of a painting might extend over a period of two years, and even longer in some cases (for example, *Indian Waves* (2013-2014); *Over to You* (2015-2017); *Indoor Games* (2016-2017); *Portrait of the Artist* and *Listening to Music* (2011-2016) etc.). It is clear from his statements that there is no programmatic determination for this process, but rather the possibilities in painting practice inscribed into the relation of subjectivity, materiality and temporality.



Fig 1-7 Howard Hodgkin, *India Waves*, 2013-2014. 22.9 cm x 30.5cm, oil on board.
[Reproduced in Clayton and Bonacina, 2017. *Howard Hodgkin: Painting India*. London: Lund Humphries Publishers Ltd, page 62.]

On the level of temporality, many of Hodgkin's paintings consist of a number of limited marks or gestures, increasingly fewer over the years of his practice, but also extended intervals of non-action in the form of waiting and thinking. What is clear is that there is an abstract structure that regulates the working process, and that this, in turn, is integrated into the overall apparatus of making and distributing art. It is evident that the studio is a very particular space, certainly one that maintains privacy, even secrecy.

What is demonstrated in the studio is the withdrawal of paintings from everyday visibility. Likewise, concepts are withdrawn: the artist simply states that he doesn't know why he paints. There is nothing that explains this transfer of sense, only the fact that it occurs. This is the rhetoric inherited from modernity of the private painter. Discourse is part of the construction of the apparatus: the story of the artwork is a constituent feature of art history, and for the most part, artists aspire to be part of such a narrative, no matter the degree to which they may publicly deny such a desire. So, for Hodgkin, the process of painting starts in the studio, then leaves the studio for a journey: to India, for example, which returns in the memory of India when the painting is finished back in the studio. The notion of taking part in a detour serves as a trope through which the works in question might be figured, and the studio is a spatio-temporal site over the two years, or a longer period, in a single painting.

Hodgkin uses this extended time to develop a process which builds layers of paint on each work, which represents the related periods of practice time. His practice thus disturbs and expands the stable framework of traditional painting practice, within itself. It may be argued that the long span of time involved in each painting is not something new in the history of traditional painting practice process in the studio. But Hodgkin is an example of a painter who uses the time in his painting studio practice to expand the conciseness of the gestures of painting and the notion of the studio. The periods of painting, the periods of thinking, the travelling time outside and back to the studio, in Hodgkin's practice, together help to contribute one painting. Hodgkin's painting includes his memory and experience of long-distance travel: in other words, he is painting the continuity of time. His durational process opens the closed relationships of indoor practice to an outside. Interestingly, in most of the photos of Hodgkin's studio, only a few paintings are facing outwards; most of his canvases and other supports are turned to the studio wall, which serves to conceal their progress. In the interview with Alan Yentob in 2006, Hodgkin painted one brushstroke on one of his paintings, but when he finished the stroke, he turned the painting to face the wall again. The interviewer's encounter with the front of the canvas might last just a few seconds. It is uncertain whether Hodgkin's working process is like that, or whether the whole setting was just arranged for the day of the interview. But it is certain that the artist's own encounter with the painting is a long one, as most of the paintings take years before the final brushstroke. The thinking space exists in the layers of practical conditions. Thus, Hodgkin turns the stable model of traditional painting practice inside out. In other words, the condition of his painting practice turns out to be a durational and temporal situation, rather than the stable notion in traditional painting practice.

On the other hand, the American artist Jessica Stockholder's practice provides an example of working with the materiality of colour and the colour of materiality under this temporal condition. In Stockholder's practice, the colours are used as visual elements; the painting stands as a motivational gesture supporting her practice, as she explained in an interview at Art Basel 2014:

I might say painting or picture-making holds my work together. Paint as a material is more plastic and mobile than most material – you can do a lot with it very quickly. Painting also proposes a fictive, illusionistic space that I employ to bump up against the more literal experience of things in the world. (Kurchanova, 2015).

Thus, in Stockholder's case, the empirical knowledge gained from painting practice has been transformed into a visual language during the process of practice, and the physical action of painting functions as intersections through different materials. As Miwon Kwon mentioned in her essay 'Promiscuity of Space: Some Thoughts on Jessica Stockholder's Scenographic Compositions' (2004), Stockholder's work combines three different notions of space deriving from the Abstract Expressionist period – 'residual or mimetic space' (Kwon, 2004: p.58); 'ideal or transcendent space' (Kwon, 2004: p.58) and 'literal or phenomenological space' (Kwon, 2004: p.58), and these form her practice's framework.

Taking Stockholder's work *Sweet for Three Oranges* (1995) as an example, various materials (the wood and the trees; the furniture and gallery structures; walls; oranges, baskets and gas tanks) work together coherently; the orange colour in the space is a sign of artistic practice through different conditions – working with found objects; working inside the studio, and working in a gallery setting. Obviously, it is not a random combination of materials in space. Behind the repeated orange colours, overlapping and being reconstructed through the artificial wall is the desire to permeate through the pure modality of materials. The different orange objects, oranges, bricks and cans, are indications of Stockholder's visual language in space; the large-scale paintings on the wall function as a way of cohering the elements.



Fig 1-8 Jessica Stockholder. *Sweet for Three Oranges*, 1995. Installation view. Courtesy of the artist and Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York. © Jessica Stockholder.

In another exhibition, *Door Hinges* (2015), it is increasingly clear that Stockholder's painting skills and experience infiltrate the whole process of practice rather than just on the canvas. Stockholder made a painted installation of the intersection at Kavi Gupta Gallery in Chicago. By working across a variety of surfaces and material aspects, the colours functioned as large fields in space to provide the context for the artwork to settle in. The whole work is viewed as a picture in its surroundings, or even beyond the wall or context, as seen in the shapes of brushstrokes in *Wall Hardware* (2015). As Stockholder mentioned:

Exploring the ways in which paint evokes fictive experience segues into the question of what each of us brings to perceiving the world. There is a world out there – we are in agreement about that most of the time – but how we perceive and make sense of it comes through the frame of ourselves – physical, psychological and intellectual. (Kurchanova, 2015).

In this context of working through various materials alongside the painting experience, Stockholder gave her thoughts on the moment of finishing one work, in an interview with Paul Laster in 2016, as follows:

I start to feel bored, like there's nothing left for me to do. The work can develop, be turned upside down or cut in half or left alone for six months and then returned to. Whatever the case, I don't want to get too comfortable with the result, even if I'm generally satisfied. (Laster, 2016).



Left: Fig 1-9 Jessica Stockholder, *Door Hinges* (installation view), 2015, Kavi Gupta | Elizabeth St., Chicago, IL. Photographer: Evan Jenkins. Courtesy of the artist and Kavi Gupta.

Right: Fig 1-10 Jessica Stockholder, *Door Hinges* (installation view), 2015, Kavi Gupta | Elizabeth St., Chicago, IL. Photographer: Evan Jenkins. Courtesy of the artist and Kavi Gupta.

Before moving to the third example of artistic practice, let us consider a question that Maurice Merleau-Ponty posed in his essay 'Eye and Mind' (1964): How could a *mind* paint? This question is important in thinking about the artist's mind or action of

thinking as a defined starting point of their painting practice, and this is linked with the artistic individual's notion of practice. As Merleau-Ponty noted:

Indeed, we cannot imagine how a mind could paint. It is by lending his body to the world that the artist changes the world into paintings. To understand these transubstantiations, we must go back to the working, actual body – not the body as a chunk of space or a bundle of functions but that body which is an intertwining of vision and movement. (Merleau-Ponty, (1964) 1993: pp. 123-124).

The British artist Ian Kiaer gives some hints on this question:

How do you know when a work is finished? Could you consider work to be finished despite it conveying a substantially different appearance or meaning than originally intended?

There is a moment when a work closes down, that it becomes full, and the individual elements seem to work in an interesting way. At that point, I have to decide whether to break the work open again or leave it. It's the equivalent I suppose to scraping a painting down with a palette knife to open it up again. The use of the model as a strategy by its nature presents itself as unfinished, as something experimental or a model of something, quite provisional. (Kiaer, 2004).

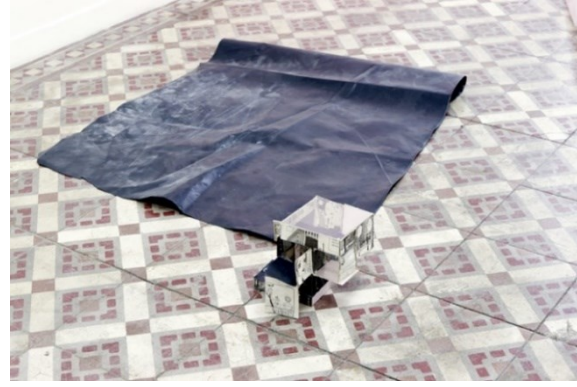
In Kiaer's case, different thinking models can be viewed or considered in relation to painting practice, including the site of production and the studio. Kiaer observed, in his contribution to 'Paint Club: A Visual Symposium' (2013), that 'the studio is not a physical space, but a space of thoughts'. (Kiaer, 2013). Thus, the notion of the studio is fundamentally free. Kiaer's practice is about the movement inside the thinking process; his practice also exchanges and sets the represented space of the work and medium of the artwork free (referring to Diagram 2). Kiaer actually utilizes *thinking* as a way of practice. As he states, he works with the relationships between models in relation to painting, which he explains in the same Symposium, as follows:

For me, the model brought a kind of a way of rethinking painting. [...] I am interested just in the gesture [of] what model could be in relation to painting. Somehow, if someone thinks about a paintings relationship to model, it allows one to revisit things in a way. Otherwise, if one just looks at it in terms of various cannons [of] history, it would make it very difficult. (Kiaer, 2013).

Kiaer has applied architectural and the utopian models throughout his projects, taking *Endless House Project: Ulchiro Endnote / Pink* (2008) as an example, the model for the 'endless house' derives from the thinking of Romanian architect Frederick Kiesler¹². This

¹² Ian's 'Endless House' is an ongoing project, which started from Ian's PhD research (2008): 'Ian's doctoral thesis was entitled Endless House: Models of Thought for Dwelling. He researched the question of the house as model of thought, looking in particular

is evidenced in the combination of the transparent painting on the wall, the small model on the floor and the plastic fabrics. In this work, Kiaer pointed out the possibilities of connections between painting and what is outside it. When painting functions as one element in an ideological model and follows the process of thinking, the framework of his practice becomes free and continuously shifting – a temporal condition.



Left: Fig 1-11 Ian Kiaer, *Endless House Project: Ulchiro Endnote / Pink, 2008*
Exhibition view, *Nothing Personal*, Marcelle Alix, 2011 / photo: Aurélien Mole
collection Fonds de dotation Famille Moulin, Paris.

Right: Fig1-12 Ian Kiaer, *Endless House Project: Ulchiro Endnote / Pink, 2008*
Exhibition view, *Nothing Personal*, Marcelle Alix, 2011 / photo: Aurélien Mole
collection Fonds de dotation Famille Moulin, Paris.

In this section, works of three artists demonstrate examples of extending and testing the period of practice: through the notion of time (Hodgkin); colour and materials (Stockholder) and models of thinking (Kiaer), by revisiting the moment of thinking in relation to the beginning of painting practice and attending to the temporal condition, these practices become discursive. In this temporal condition, Hodgkin's painting and Stockholder's practice provide a method that opens up the framework of practice within itself. Hodgkin integrates a durational model within his practice, the period of each action on canvas between different paintings having been consciously targeted and extended. As a result, the period of travelling in India, outside the studio, is much a longer one than the period during which the painter remains in the studio; one painting may take years to finish. Representing the expanded duration of painting practice, the boundaries between studio practice and everyday experience become unclear. Stockholder introduces an updated notion of modality to her practice. The painting and pigments function as visual signals in relation to other materials. In this term, all the colours of materials and the materiality of colour become visual verbs or elements to be reconsidered. The gallery space, the studio and its exterior permeate each other. In term of Kiaer's practice, his practice is set within a testing model: his practice focuses on his thinking process of testing relationships and categories; on the activities of mind and

at Curzio Malaparte's Casa Malaparte, Ludwig Wittgenstein's Kundmangasse, Konstantin Melnikov's Cylindrical House Studio, and Frederick Kiesler's unbuilt notion of the 'Endless House'. (The Ruskin School of Art, n.d.).

thinking through different materials. This thinking process in Ian's example is available to the viewer through the work, the idea of the model and the relationships between objects in the gallery space, rather than in an established condition. Kiaer's practice points out the conceptual process of the space of thinking in relation to the studio, in the context of the whole model.

1.4. Networked condition

David Hammons	1983, 2011
Jutta Koether	2009
Tracy Emin	1996

As discussed above, Western contemporary artists, such as Ian Kiaer, began to think through the conceptual models of art practice. As mentioned in the introduction, in this research, I want to explore the fluid connections between what may be seen as exterior to art (the theoretical or conceptual approach) and what is interior (the aesthetic register or practical examples), in order to create a speculative understanding of the notion of painting. Thus, in this context, by thinking through and applying the notion of apparatus, we can revisit the idea of the network within the apparatus of painting on both aesthetic and theoretical levels.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Clement Greenberg's famous essay '*Modernist Painting*' (1960) highlighted the purity of painting¹³, but this formalism was too exclusive for some groups of artists, who were already changing their attitude to studio and exhibition, and to the current discourse of art. Anti-form¹⁴ (Robert Morris, Lynda Benglis and Eva Hesse etc.) and Conceptual Art¹⁵ (Robert Barry, Joseph Kosuth and Sol LeWitt etc.) challenged Greenberg's approach to Formalism. Some of them started to write about their own ideas and practices, for instance, Robert Morris's '*Anti Form*' (1968) and '*Continuous Project Altered Daily*' (1970) and the art historian Rosalind Krauss interrogated Greenberg further in her essay '*Changing the Work of David Smith*' (1974) and continued her interests in Formlessness. In 1977, the term of *network*, which was used by the French Fluxus artist Robert Filliou and American artist George Brecht to explain the post-avant-garde formation of the ongoing international network of artists. Filliou stated in the video *Porta Filliou* (1977):

¹³ In '*Modernism Painting*' (1960), Greenberg stated as: 'It quickly emerged that the unique and proper area of competence of each art coincided with all that was unique to the nature of its medium. Thereby each art would be rendered 'pure', and in its 'purity' find the guarantee of its standards of quality as well as of its independence.' (Greenberg, (1960), O'Brian, ed, 1993: pp.85-93).

¹⁴ Definition of Anti-form please see footnote 8, p.23.

¹⁵ Conceptual art is 'a widespread movement from the mid-1960 through the 1970s, Conceptual art emphasized the artist's thinking, making any activity or thought a work of art without the necessity of translating it into physical form. The term gained currency after the publication in the summer 1967 issue of *Artforum* of the Minimal artist Sol Lewitt's article 'Paragraphs on Conceptual Art'. (Clarke, 2010: p.65).

The way I see the network, as a member of the network, is the way it exists artistically through the collective efforts of all these artists [...] but this artistic network itself – it may help to think of it as being part of the wider network where artistic activity becomes just one of the elements of the human network. (Filliou, 1977).

Bruce Latour can be seen to expand Filliou's ideas and developed the Actor-Network Theory (ANT) within the context of social theory, in 1996, and pushed it further, as 'a metaphor of connections':

Small scale/large scale: the notion of network allows us to dissolve the micro-macro-distinction that has plagued social theory from its inception. The whole metaphor of scales going from the individual, to the nation state, through family, extended kin, groups, institutions etc. are replaced by a metaphor of connections. A network is never bigger than another one, it is simply longer or more intensely connected. [...] Inside/outside: the notion of network allows us to get rid of a third spatial dimension after those of far/close and big/small. A surface has an inside and an outside separated by a boundary. A network is all boundary without inside and outside. [...] Literally, a network has no outside.[...] The great economy of thinking allowed by the notion of network is that we are no longer obliged to fill in the space in between the connections – to use a computer metaphor we do not need the little paint box familiar to MacPaint users to "fill in" the interspace. A network is a positive notion which does not need negativity to be understood. It has no shadow. (Latour, 1996: pp.371-372).

In relation to the apparatus of painting, from the perspective of scale, this networked condition helps painting practice connected intensively to relationships around and outside the studio. From the perspective of space, the networked condition is all connected conditions and mediums, which has no distinctions (as the notion of the network gets rid of the spatial distinctions between spaces). In this way, the notion of the studio is unbounded; painting can operate as a more flexible method of working through discursive formations of the potential subject and object, simultaneously linked with other systems and frameworks. In this networked condition, the whole apparatus of painting practice continues expanding from the canvas and frame. This implied painting practice is no longer a finished or a gestural action on the surface of a support. Instead, the artist goes beyond the limitations of painting's medium specificity.

By applying Latour's perspectives, one is able to review a generation of artists who developed both spontaneously and formal networks. And in this section, three practical examples (from 1980 to 2011) are discussed: David Hammons (*Bliz-aard Ball Sale*, 1983); Jutta Koether (*Lux Interior*, 2009) and Tracy Emin (*Exorcism of the Last Painting I Ever Made*, 1996). Their practices provide parameters for painting and its materiality in this

networked discourse, with colours, fabrics, marks, touches, displays, installations, conversations, events and virtual networks.

David Hammons can be seen as an example which provides a framework which allows a critique of both the gallery system and painting practice itself. Painting in Hammons's practice emerges from both conventional and unconventional materials, in his work *Bliz-aard Ball Sale* (1983) and his later works¹⁶. In his famous work *Bliz-aard Ball Sale* (1983), David made ice balls in different shapes and sold them to pedestrians in Cooper Square in New York. It is clear, from the photographic evidence, that the red carpet under the ice balls makes the whole display into a pictorial experience. The gestures of setting the ice balls on the red carpet required painting skills in terms of how to put colours on the canvas and generate meaning. Further, this work was documented in photographs. As none of these photos shows that Hammons sold the ice balls, while the artist stated that the ice balls were all sold, and only the artist knows what happens on that day, the performance remained as an impossible-to-trace event; the beginning of this work is clear, but the ending of the work is uncertain. In this work, Hammons used an unstable material (an ice ball); he dissolved the modality of an artwork and a painterly practice with the audience reactions and gestures are out in the formal gallery exhibition space, rather, in the everyday context.

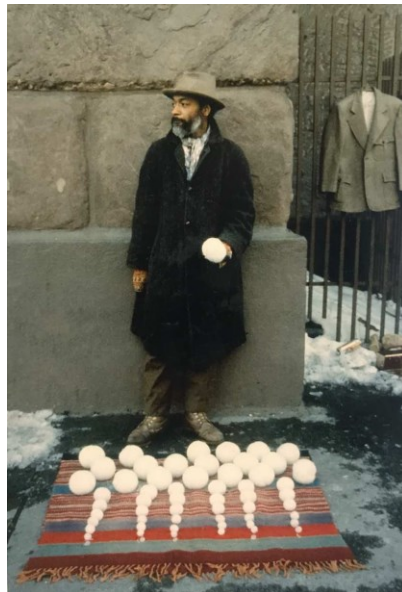


Fig 1-13 David Hammons, *Bliz-aard Ball Sale*, 1983, Cooper Square, New York. [Source: Reproduced in Filipovic and Lewis, 2017, cover page.]

¹⁶ For example, in his recent show 'DAVID HAMMONS' (2011) at Mnuchin Gallery in New York: the images or colours on canvas were obscured, covered with broken garage bags and disposable plastic sheets and fabrics or even a closet. The whole work functioned as painterly gestures with cheap packing materials in the gallery space, challenging painting displayed in the look luxuries gallery conditions.

The second example of operating in this networked condition is the work of German artist Jutta Koether, whose practice also shows intensive connections between the painting practice and vary conditions of materials in a gallery setting. In her exhibition *Lux Interior* (2009), Koether introduces a multiplatform between the painting and the gallery so that audience could engage with and reflect the definition of painting. A single painting with an unsuitable wall was installed together in the space between the wood floor and the unfurnished ground in the gallery. In this work, the metaphoric tropes from painting are more flexible: Koether wove French painter Nicolas Poussin's painting- '*Landscape during a Thunderstorm with Pyramus and Thisbe*' (1651)- into her works on canvas; installation; performance(alongside the installation); talks and writings¹⁷. In this practical example, painting practice is no longer just on the canvas, but extended and contextualized through the classical tradition of the landscape painting; Koether's performances and talks within the contemporary context. As a result, the gallery's furnished area was turned into a stage space inside itself. In relation to Latour's notes on the *network*, 'A network is all boundary without inside and outside.' (Latour, 1996: p.372), there is no spatial boundary between inside or outside of the gallery space in this work. Importantly, Koether's practice not only gestures away from painting (on the canvas) but also refers to the place of painting practice in a newly understood context – the network, where painting is no longer a separate movement or activity within the studio. Rather, it explores the perception of painting practice as a material in the context. The experience and knowledge from the painting practice functioned as the background for artistic practice.

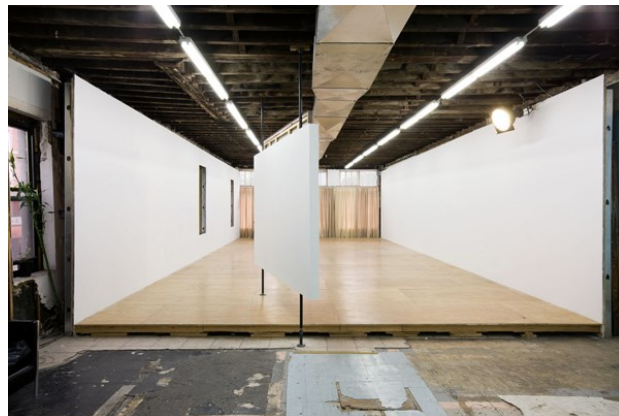


Fig 1-14 Jutta Koether, *Lux Interior*, Reena Spaulings, New York, 2009
Courtesy of the artist and Reena Spaulings Fine Art, NY/LA. Photo credit: Farzad Owrang.

Whilst Tracy Emin's fetishizes the formal studio painting practice and the related gallery system and reinforces it. In 1996, Emin provided a semi-opened model in her

¹⁷ Detailed information of this exhibition: "Accompanying the exhibition's single painting is an archive compiled by the artist, a sort of extended footnote comprising her readings on the reintroduction of Poussin into modern art historical interpretation, preparatory sketches made while planning the exhibition, and song lyrics by The Cramps (the exhibition is named after the horror-punk band's front man who passed away this February)." (Contemporary Art Daily, 2009.)

installation *Exorcism of the Last Painting I Ever Made* (1996) in Galleri Andreas Brändström in Stockholm. As the title of this work, '*Exorcism of the Last Painting I Ever Made*' (1996) suggests, the modality of painting has been centralized, followed and critiqued in extreme conditions: the last painting she made. The artist worked for two weeks in a semi-opened painting studio space that was built in the gallery space; the audience could observe the studio space from a wide-angle lens in the wall. The whole exhibition includes 'a collection of works, produced naked in a gallery in 1996 as a performance; also comes with CDs, magazines and a radio' (Brown, 2015). Importantly, in this work, painting practice has been settled in the network of several realms: the realm of formal studio practice; the realm of the gallery and the public space and a realm of a performative space. More precisely, the studio painting practice is tested, and the desire for the pure modality of painting is pushed and highlighted to its limit. The original aura of the traditional conception of painting is preserved in this work – an artist alone in the studio – whilst also 'selling' it to the audience as a fetish. The studio is half-opened for the viewers; the whole process of the practice of painting is the work itself and its revisiting. As a result, the original condition of 'working in the studio' was transformed into the condition of an exhibition. The mode of 'painting in the studio', including the studio itself, became an installation or an artwork.



Fig 1-15 Tracey Emin, *Exorcism of the Last Painting I Ever Made*, 1996. Installation including 14 paintings, 78 drawings, 5 body prints, various painted and personal items, furniture, CDs, newspapers, magazines, kitchen and food supplies, dimensions variable. [Source: The Saatchi Gallery, 2003, 100: *The Work that Changed British Art: Works that Changed British Art*. page.98.]

More importantly, these three artists' practices exemplify how the subject of painting can expand outside itself, becoming presents in performances¹⁸ and between various

¹⁸ I mean *performance* in double sense: literally and as painting both relating to gestures contained within their respective works.

mediums or contexts. Since the boundaries and categories between different spaces and mediums are eliminated in the context of this networked condition, it allows the artistic practice to exist in more connected and diverse relationships. In this way, painting practice is in a more open condition with extended connections within the relationships of integrated practices. Thus, the relationship between the painting practice, audience and notion of the site are in a dynamic condition; the artistic practice exists in different layers of frameworks and is not finished on the canvas or in the studio. For instance, both Hammons and Emin's work ensures that painting practice is no longer a secret inside the studio; rather, it can be positioned and become revalued, as a conventional and unconventional medium, in the network of the conditions of everyday life or the gallery space. For Koether, the painting practice connects networks of practice and other approaches; audiences are invited to encounter it across a range of platforms to make the whole work a multifarious experience, which can be experienced in different sequences or forms.

This chapter has revisited four conditions of the apparatus of painting from the late Modern period in the Western context in order to establish a mode of understanding the limits of a painting practice. This period charts a moment when the relationships between the studio space and exhibition space, including the public space changed from the binary condition (for instance Buren) to the shifted and post-studio practice situation (Smithson; Broodthaers and Palermo) and temporal condition (Hodgkin and Kiaer, for instance), including the networked condition (Hammons; Koether and Emin). The shifts in conditions of apparatus of painting in the Western context thus indicates changes around the notion the artistic studio and the notion of site. It is necessary to emphasize again that these conditions are conceptual schemers that I emerged in the late Modern condition, not art historical differentiations, or models of 'progression'. My discussions of the Western and Chinese conditions are not compared in order to assign validity to one over the other, because it is vital to remember that the historical aims and targets were different in specific periods in each context. The next chapter will continue to apply the notion of apparatus as a critical lens to review the Chinese painting practice and its related historical context, based upon contemporary Chinese artists' thoughts, taken from original interviews and understood in through their own methods of painting-related practice and its relation to the studio.

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Chapter 2 Introduction

This chapter explores interviews with seven Chinese artists¹⁹ as well as two related Chinese artists, who apply different methods in their painting practices. It utilises information and insights that were gleaned through visits and interviews that I made to the artists' studios in China, 2018. In this chapter, discussions will be drawn out through

¹⁹The interviewed artists were chosen because of the relation between their painting practice and studio, as well as their educational backgrounds. Most of the interviewed artists were living and working in Beijing during the interviews. Up until 2019, most of the interviewed artists had changed their studios and moved once or twice around Beijing. It should also be mentioned that there is a distinct difference in the contemporary art context (market; galleries; institutions and museums) between Beijing and Shanghai. The environment of contemporary art in Beijing is more official, more influenced by the city's own sense of a strong cultural and political environment. In Shanghai, the art scene and market are much 'younger'. With the further development of public spaces along Shanghai's Huangpu Riverside, a group of private collections and museums opened there around 2012, including the Long Museum (founded by Liu Yiqian and Wang Wei) and the Yuz Museum (founded by Budi Tek), and contemporary art fairs emerged there around 2014 (West Bund Art & Design; ART021). Compared with Beijing, the contemporary art context in Shanghai is more commercial, more fashion orientated, and more open than Beijing. In Shanghai, there are relatively fewer government restrictions on the content of the artworks, and it is increasingly similar to the Western contemporary art context (as Shanghai experienced different modernity from Beijing, due to the history of 'Shanghai International Settlement', from 1843 to 1941).

Daniel Buren's 'The Function of the Studio' (1971); art historian David Joselit's essay 'Painting Beside Itself' (2009) and several Chinese and Western critical texts. As previously discussed, Buren highlighted the importance of the function and practice of the studio outside the studio itself. While David Joselit notes networked approaches to studio practice in his essay 'Painting Beside Itself' (2009), he highlights the question of how painting belongs to a network and shifts the studio space to an integrative surface for painting practice. In order to follow these discussions, it is necessary in the first instance to point out the meaning of the term 'contemporary' in the Chinese context. Generally, the beginning of Chinese contemporary art is widely acknowledged as taking place in 1989, the year in which the 'China/Avant-Garde Exhibition' was held at the National Art Museum of China, heralding the first contemporary art movement within China.²⁰ This means that Chinese 'contemporary' painting has around 40 years of history, starting from the late 1980s. From 1994 onwards, as art historian Hung Wu noted, many artists and critics preferred the term 'contemporary art' (*dangdai yishu*) or 'experimental art' (*shiyan yishu*) to 'modern art' (*xiandai yishu*) (Wu, H., 2010: p.184). There are several definitions of *contemporary* in the Chinese context articulated by curators and critics, as the art curator and critic Hanru Hou²¹ and Pauline J. Yao (M+ Hongkong)²² have observed:

The term 'contemporary' can be used to refer to the adoption of particular art forms and styles, or to experimental strategies surrounding the making of art. [In the Chinese context], it is art's intersection with space – spaces for making, for thinking, for sharing, for exhibiting – that has most deeply impacted our understanding of certain art in China as 'contemporary'. (Yao, 2018: p.117).

Chinese contemporary art movements have been the result of international exchanges and have had a major dynamic impact on the process of China's modernisation. It is true that Chinese contemporary art has gone through a very particular history, a history of the way that Chinese cultural and artistic traditions, as well as economic and social reality, negotiate with modernity, which has been historically generated by Western modernisation in its industrialisation and social

²⁰ Art critic Minglu Gao states that 'It was a time when people entered a dialogue with Western contemporary art'. (Materials of the future: Documenting Contemporary Chinese Art From 1980-1990. Interview Minglu Gao, 2009.)

²¹ 'Hou Hanru is now the Consulting Curator at The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Chinese Art Initiative. Hou joined the Guggenheim in 2015 and is a prolific writer and curator based in Rome, Paris, and San Francisco. Hou is the artistic director of MAXXI, National Museum of 21st Century Art, Rome.' (Hanru Hou. MAXXI) More information on Hanru Hou is available at: <https://www.maxxi.art/en/hanru-hou/>.

²² 'Pauline J. Yao is a curator, writer, and co-founder of the nonprofit art space Arrow Factory in Beijing. A co-curator of the 2009 Shenzhen Hong Kong Bi-City Biennale of Architecture and Urbanism and recipient of the CCAA (Contemporary Chinese Art Award) Art Critics Award, she is a regular contributor to *Artforum*, *e-flux Journal*, and *Yishu Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art*. She joined M+ as curator in November 2012.' (Pauline J. Yao. Rockbund Art Museum). More information available at: <http://www.rockbundartmuseum.org/en/artist/overview/fc1ctu>.

and political democratisation, and its appropriations of other cultures in colonial history. In such a process, specific ways of engaging with modernity and cultural products have engendered a powerful creative force in global artistic and cultural life. (Hou, 2002: p.74).

In terms of artistic practice, in the Chinese context, the concept of a studio mainly denotes a fixed location that is separate from the other types of space. Most painting studios have functioned only as traditional sites of production; however, around 2000 new methods of contemporary painting practice emerged and required analysis. In relation to the art history, in the Western context, there is both a clear continuity and discontinuity of sense in relationship to art history from the 1960s to the present, as the UK critic Michael Archer notes in *Art Since 1960* (1997):

Psychoanalytic, philosophical and other cultural theories became increasingly important towards the end of the 1970s in the formulation of a critical postmodernism. The work which these theories were used to interpret continued the question of the nature of art that begun in the 1960s. Alongside this, however, was a resurgence of broadly traditional painting, which, viewed at the time as a largely conservative reaction to the experiments of the 1960s and 1970s, was supported by the explosion of the art market during the financial boom of the 1980s. (Archer, 1997:p.7).

Compared with the structural development of Western models of art practice,²³ there was lack of clear distinctions in the periods from the Modern to Postmodern and to contemporary in the Chinese context. What Chinese artists addressed from 1980 to 1990, as Hung Wu has observed, was 'in separate temporal/spatial schemes'²⁴(Wu, H., 2008: p.293), in the 1980s 'modern art 'and 1990s 'contemporary art' (Wu, H., 2008: p.293). More precisely, there are three traditions or systems of art practice, according to the important Chinese contemporary art critic and curator Dawei Fei reviewed in the article 'As the beginning of the twenty years- the 80s and 90s contemporary art'(2009), 'Chinese ink painting; Western realistic painting and the contemporary art'. Fei also points out two periods in the development of Chinese realistic painting, as:

First, in 1942, President Mao gave his important speech at *Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art*, which highlighted art should serve politics, and specifically the advancement of socialism. This forum laid the foundation for the development of realistic painting in China, also separated the Chinese realistic painting from the Western context. Secondly, from the 1950s to the mid-1960s, aesthetic theory and

²³As discussed in Chapter 1, the Western notion of non-site and post-studio practice, including the temporal condition of artistic practice around the 1960s to 1970s, shifted the boundary between the notion of the production space and the exhibition space, including the categories of the medium.

²⁴ More reflections on the Chinese Modernity and Post-modernity and its traits will be discussed in this chapter, 2.2. Temporal condition will be expanded in Chapter 4.

ideology from Soviet tradition started to influence China profoundly and replaced the French academic painting traditions gradually. (Fei, 2009, *my translation*).

I will push Fei's statement further in relation to the current Chinese contemporary painting practice and context, more precisely, from a view of both a researcher and practitioner. First, the Classic tradition of Chinese ink painting practice returns us to the non-dual philosophy between human and nature (for example, theories from Taoism²⁵), including the notion of learning from nature. The Chinese traditional ink painting practice involves mixed patterns of behaviours in relation to the ancient Chinese aesthetics, which pursues the harmony and unity between the human; nature and the cosmos. Within this studio practice is found the poet-painter and the painter-monk, which involves a different knowledge of practice from that understood in Western art history. It is necessary to introduce the conditions of the painter-monk's practice in Chinese traditional ink painting. Painter-monks²⁶ normally have a deep knowledge of literature and the ancient Chinese classics. The original social role of the painter-monks varies between scholars; officers; monks; zen master. They prefer to pursue the individual's spiritual mediations in nature rather than pursuing material wealth. For example, the poet-monk or painter-monk chose to live alone in secluded mountains; and transferred their ideas and feelings into their ink paintings of natural subjects and poems. This way of working across different mediums (ink paintings, literature, text, nature) was usual in their practice.

Secondly, I will focus on the Social Realist painting, which absorbed the Soviet Realistic tradition of studio painting in the early 1900s, in the Chinese context. The Soviet Realistic tradition of painting practice is based upon the Western Realistic tradition of art (as in the case of the French painter Gustave Courbet) and combined with the Soviet tradition (which located the function of art is to serve and educate people- a political and propaganda use) from the late 1800s to the 1900s. Thus, this tradition of Soviet Realistic painting carries the binary notions in the Western context, between the studio and exhibition space, but also between the subject and object in relation to the painting practice. In the 1960s, a Chinese version of the Social Realistic Painting model formed, which was inspired by the Soviet tradition, within the background of the Chairman Zedong Mao's political promotion, through a system that taught life drawing from models and plastic skills as the main subject of practice. A distinctive example is the painting studio within the academic framework of fine art²⁷ in China. This academic

²⁵ The related notions in non-dual philosophy will be expanded in Chapter 3.

²⁶ Some of them carried strong personal perspectives on society, but their opinions and talents did not relate their social background at that time. The first painter-monk recorded was Juran, a Chinese landscape painter in the late Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms. There are four famous painter-monk masters in the Ming Dynasty: Zhu Da, Hong Ren, Kun Can and Shitao. They had a great influence on the future generation of ink painters.

²⁷ There is the basic information on the institutions of Fine Art in China and the related framework of the Fine Art Programme:

1) There are eight distinguished institutions of Fine Art in China. They are: the Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA, in Beijing);

framework of Fine Art education can be traced to 1949; when Beihong Xu²⁸, the first chairman of the Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA), introduced and promoted the European atelier system, especially, the practice of Social Realism which involving painting objects from life, into CAFA's curriculum, this combined framework was applied widely to those of the painting programmes at the other seven fine art institutions in China. After that, the models of both practical traditional ink painting and Social Realistic painting have continued to have an impact on the later painting practice in the Chinese context up to the present. Thirdly, the Western-influenced contemporary art practice is more recent, and have been popular in the contemporary period in China (the early 1990s): these include Pop art, new media, post-medium approaches, and so on.

More importantly, Fei notes out that 'These three traditions or systems formed in different periods, but they coexist in contemporary Chinese art.' (Fei. 2009). Thus, artists born from the 1960s to today's younger generation contend with these different traditions of the practice of painting. Likewise, the Chinese contemporary painting context is a mixed situation with these three practical traditions: the Classic tradition form Chinese ink painting practice; Social Realist painting and the Western-influenced contemporary art practice. Each of these three traditions carries different behaviours and empirical knowledge of painting practice and gives rise to various conceptual relationships between practice and the studio context. More precisely, for most Chinese artists, the notion of the studio is not only concerned with physical space but also with the meaning of a spatial notion of practice and work within a historical framework, including methods of operating in the studio space and practical ways of working with specific materials. The artist observes these traditions and the management of the studio in relation to a set of preconceptions.

However, most of the studies of Chinese contemporary art after 2000 explore the influence of the Western painting (as a pure medium and category); this includes the

the China Academy of Art (in Hangzhou); Hubei Institute of Fine Arts; Lu Xun Academy of Fine Arts; Sichuan Institute of Fine Art; Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts; Tianjin Academy of Fine Arts and Xi'an Academy of Fine Arts. (Listed in alphabetical order) Sometimes this list includes the Academy of Arts & Design, Tsinghua University.

2) The basic framework of the Fine Art Programme is the BA study (Four years: the first- to third-year study is based on life drawing and sketching skills classes. The fourth year focuses on the individual's practice for the degree show.), and MA study (Three years: the first year is based on life drawing and sketching skills classes. The second and third years focus on personal exploration and essay writing). The Painting department in China usually means the Oil Painting department, specifically. The traditional Chinese ink painting department is another separate programme. The Oil Painting department includes four or five studio programmes: students and the lead tutors from each studio can choose from each side: 1) Realistic painting studio; 2) Expressionistic painting studio; 3) Figurative painting studio; 4) Abstract painting studio; 5) Experimental material studio (based on materials study, such as pigments, colours, etc. (Not all of these eight institutions have this studio programme). Generally, fine art students spend more than half of their study hours on plastic skills training (for example, the first year and second year of the four-year BA study and the first year of the three-year MA study).

²⁸ Beihong Xu was a painter and educator; he studied painting at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in 1919..

Asia Art Archive online catalogue (*Materials of the future: documenting contemporary Chinese Art From 1980-1990*) and the *Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art* (2014-2019), while very little research focuses on the Chinese contemporary painting practice from 2000. Thus, in the Chinese context, it is crucial to consider and analyse how artists practice in this mixed framework of contemporary painting practice. Unlike the historical approach to Chinese contemporary art in relation to the early modern period, such as Xiaobing Tang's book *Visual Cultural in Contemporary China: Paradigms and Shifts* (2015), this research provides an analytical view by a researcher and practitioner (artist) actually in the process of analysis, and focuses on examples in Chinese contemporary painting practice.

It is within this context that I have conducted interviews that concentrate on the methods of studio practice and the function of the studio with seven Chinese artists: Jianwei Wang, Xingwei Wang, Xun Yang, Xiaokang Sun, Tian Tan, Ruoze Xue and Z Factory (art group), as well as two related artists that I have not interviewed: Liu Xiaodong and Jianjun Zhang. The artists interviewed have developed their own approach to painting practice from 1990 to the present. The selected artists represent Chinese contemporary painting practice by different generations (the late 1950s -1990s): the post-cultural revolution generation; mid-career artists; and the young artists who graduated after 2010, and these artists have varied educational backgrounds.

The interviews I conducted are semi-structured: that is, they follow a set of questions (Appendix ii, pp. 133-134), but I have allowed the interviewees to deviate from these where they wish to. The interview method - summative and keyword content analysis²⁹- is from the data collection methods used in a qualitative research approach. The interviews include fixed questions to examine shifts in the nature and use of the artist's painting studios, and they feature open questions for each artist in order to test the boundaries of the relationships between painting practice. The interviews are thus used as a method for providing qualitative data on the different notions of the studio and the painting methods in Chinese contemporary painting practice. The analysis of the interview materials focuses on the changes in the practical methodology of painting practice both within and beyond the studio in order to reflect on the research question. The interview allows the artist to talk about their practice and their studios (function, location, condition, etc.). The analysis of the studio in this chapter and research is on the emerging conditions of painting practice in the Chinese contemporary painting context. During the summative and keyword content analysis, three conditions of painting practice became apparent: 1) a dualistic condition (Xingwei Wang, Ruoze Xue, Liu Xiaodong); 2) a temporal condition (Jianwei Wang, Xiaokang Sun, Tian Tan, Xun

²⁹Summative content analysis is one of the most widely used qualitative research methods. This analysis starts from the use of keywords.' (Hsieh, S. Shannon. 2005). In this research, the summative and keyword content analysis on these interviews focused on 'studio', 'painting', 'practice', 'exhibition', 'gallery', 'wall', 'place', 'space', 'condition'. The keywords in the answers from the artists interviewed to the nine questions (Appendix ii, pp. 133-134), which asked (on the artists' daily painting practice and their notions of the studio were collected and are analysed in this chapter.

Yang, Jianjun Zhang), and 3) a networked condition (Jianwei Wang, Xiaokang Sun, Z factory).

As should by now be clear, I am trying to map these paradigms of painting practice in relation to an evaluation of the interviewed Chinese artists' painting practice, and the related practical frameworks of the studio, in order to explore how these two elements affect each other and develop in the Chinese context, which may also throw light on contemporary painting practice in the Western context. The question of how the function of the studio has shifted in relation to painting practices in this new background is crucial, and is the subject of this analysis of the contemporary Chinese context of painting.

In this chapter, I would like to identify three possible conditions of contemporary painting practice in the Chinese context (from 1996-2019) and to clarify the traits of each situation. Those three traditions of painting practice, that mentioned earlier, function as the historical backgrounds for the three main conditions of painting practice in the Chinese context. Certain artists can work across these three conditions. These are described below.

The first of these is the dualistic condition of the formal studio painting practice,³⁰ where the studio functions as a workplace to deal with formal problems of painting and is separate from the exhibition space. In the Chinese context, the dualistic condition of studio painting practice indicates the binary relationship between the studio and exhibition spaces. Painting practice and the studio are still related according to the formal practical model; the studio is the place where the painter addresses technical painting problems. In this binary condition, the painting practice starts on the canvas (when the brush touches the surface of the canvas), and its finished statement is on the canvas, which is not changed by its contextual spaces or in an exchange with the outside environment. Within this dualistic framework, the artist is not exploring an expanded sense of the painting practice directly; what the painter is confronting is the pictorial details and the technical issues around the painting. The domestic 'professional' sphere inside the studio is maintained as separate from outside frameworks. In my interviews, I relate this approach to the practice of the artists Xingwei Wang (b. 1969), Ruozhe Xue (b. 1987) and the related artist Liu Xiaodong (b. 1963).

The second, temporal condition of painting practice is common in the contemporary Chinese context. This temporal condition indicates the indistinct history of the Chinese modernism and post-modernism³¹, which is different with the temporal condition in the Western context (caused by the developments and shifts in the notion of the *site*). As a result, this temporal condition includes the conjunction of mixed notions and patterns

³⁰ In this chapter, by 'formal or traditional painting studio or painting practice' I mean painting in oil in the Western tradition which was adopted in China around the 1600s. I will use 'traditional Chinese ink painting practice' to distinguish it from this.

³¹ This point will be expanded later in this chapter, 2.2.

of painting practice, for example, those of the post-studio or the post-medium approaches. In the Chinese context, what the Chinese artists encountered, as mentioned earlier, was a 'separate temporal/spatial schemes' (Wu, H., 2008: p.293) in the 1980s and 1990s. In this temporal condition, the urgent aim for the artist was to redefine the authority of art, both official and unofficial, and the situation of being either inside or outside the art system, including rethinking 'art system's role in arranging the condition for privileging certain styles, techniques, media and genres within the overall system'(Berghuis, 2014: p.17), as the art historian Thomas J. Berghuis notes. In this temporal condition, artists adopt the practice of painting but also work across other methods and materials; painting practice becomes a departure point for testing the relationship between the studio and painting practice; the studio is a meeting point between the artist and their practice, and the function of the studio can be tested in the painting practice. The artist, who worked within this temporal condition of practice, takes painting as a strategic model, and knowledge and experience from painting practice provide those artist opportunities for combining painting-related methods with other models. The artists I have interviewed exemplifying this approach in their practice are Jianwei Wang (b. 1958), Tian Tan (b. 1988), Xiaokang Sun (b. 1987), Xun Yang (b. 1981) and Jianjun Zhang (b. 1955).

Thirdly, the networked condition in painting is one that can co-exist with the other two conditions. Importantly, in the Chinese context, this networked condition as a new and forming condition of painting practice. The networked condition offers a new relationship between painting practice and studio space. Within this context, painting practice (colour, gesture, movement, model-making) is de-centralised from the canvas and the traditional studio practice methods. Painting can be situated not only on the surface of the canvas, but also in other discourses or events. The artist's painting practice is dependent on various studio situations, both virtual and physical: the studio as living space, the online studio and the living space as practice space. Meanwhile, the studio is characterised as temporary, dispersed and nomadic, and the artist will return to their studio or 'base camp' to convert their ideas into paintings. In this networked condition, painting serves as a continuous model, and the studio functions as a lived-in space; I explore this in the practices of Jianwei Wang(b. 1958), Xiaokang Sun(b. 1987), and Z Factory (art group from 2017).

2.1. The dualistic condition

Xingwei Wang	1995,2011
Ruozhe Xue	2017,2019
Liu Xiaodong	2003,2019

As mentioned in the introduction, in the Chinese context, the concept of the studio still mainly functions as a fixed site of artistic production that is separate from all other types

of spaces, similar to Buren's observation in 'The Function of the Studio': 'When the work is in place, it does not take place (for the public), while it takes place (for the public) only when not in place, that is, in the museum'. (Buren, (1971) 1979: pp. 51-58).

So, when an artist is sitting in front of an empty canvas in a formal or conventional painting studio, what is he or she looking at? What is he or she waiting for? Within the traditional painting studio, painting practice mainly concentrates on the surface of the canvas. The notion of a formal artistic studio is a 'unique' space gives an *a priori* meaning to the practice inside; what happens on the canvas inside the studio as the only site for production is separate from the conditions outside it. In the course of my interviews, two artists, in particular, Xingwei Wang and Ruozhe Xue, articulate this spatial thinking associated with this dualistic condition of traditional studio painting practice.

Xingwei Wang (b. 1969), one of China's most established and wide-ranging contemporary painters, focuses mainly on technical issues in his painting practice. He graduated from the Department of Fine Arts, Normal College of Shenyang (University three-year college Diploma) in 1990. His studio presents a traditional routine of studio painting practice: a painting practice on canvas inside a studio. Since the 1990s, Xingwei Wang has developed a practice that draws on Western and Social Realist references within a Chinese context. His figurative paintings centre on the pictorial composition and the materiality of painting.

For Xingwei Wang, the studio still functions as a workplace where the artist deals with the technical issues of painting, and as a space that is isolated from its surroundings. Xingwei Wang seems to have chosen the medium of oil painting and related techniques as a matter of course. As a result, in his practice, the studio exemplifies Buren's 'ivory tower'; the studio's walls are boundaries with the outside world. In the interview, Xingwei Wang talked about the function of the painting's frame. Traditionally, frames are a way to secure painting from damage and physical intrusion, symbolically adding to their value; the frame can be seen to function as a sign, asking for the audience's attention or focus. Xingwei Wang's painting practice focuses on canvas: the space for painting practice is related to the size of the canvas and the frame; his focus is on the pictorial details from the daily life and technical issues of painting, as he observes:

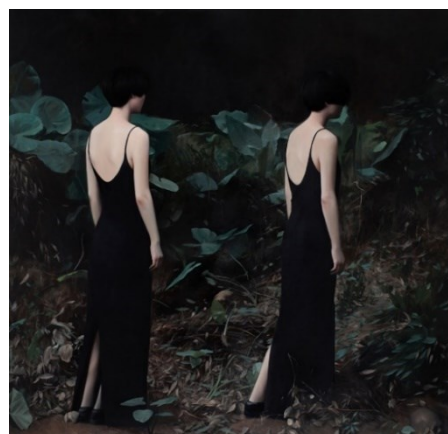
Paintings for me do not change with the walls. [...] The artist does not face the meaning of his actions directly. What the painter encounters are the visual fragments and the technical issues within a studio. As a painter, what happens on canvas is the most crucial thing in front of him or her. (Appendix ii, p.143).



Left: Fig 2-1 Xingwei Wang, *Pura Tanah Lot Temple No.2*, 2011. Oil on canvas, 150cmx150cm. Courtesy of Xingwei Wang and Galerie Urs Meile.

Right: Fig2-2 Xingwei Wang, *The Oriental Way: The Road To Anyuan*, 1995. Oil on canvas, 186x 146cm. Courtesy of Xingwei Wang and Galerie Urs Meile.

Likewise, the studio of the artist Ruozhe Xue also functions mainly as a site of production. Xue (b. 1987) is a Beijing-based painter who finished his BA Degree in the Oil Painting programme at Central Academy of Fine Art (Beijing) in 2012 and graduated with an MA from the Royal College of Art, London, in 2015. His painting practice focuses on intensifying the psychological tension between the painted figures and the internal narrative of the pictorial space on the canvas. In his view, the studio is wherever he is holding his brush or pen. He states in the interview: ‘Now, if I take out my pen and start to do sketches or painting in the kitchen, then the kitchen is my studio’. (Appendix ii, p.146). However, no matter where the location of Xue’s studio is, the notion of the studio is as the only site for production, existing in opposition to the other spaces outside; the notions of traditional studio practice frame the methods that the artist uses to manage and occupy space and carry out their practice.



Left: Fig 2-3 Ruozhe Xue, *Near, Far*. Oil on linen, 137 x 171cm 2017. © Ruozhe Xue.

Right: Fig 2-4 Ruoze Xue, 1-0, 220cmx230cm, oil on linen, 2019. © Ruoze Xue.

In other words, the notion of conventional studio practice as an invisible sign of production frames the painter's actions. Only when the artist uses the studio wall³² as a chance to imagine his work hanging in the exhibition space does this gap between the 'ivory tower', the unique studio, and the public space of exhibition become closer. As Xue sums up:

The function of the studio wall is more to do with imagining it as the wall in the exhibition space. The wall is important to me. With this distance between me and the wall, I can review what happens on the canvas, including the wall, and review the mistakes and the parts that need to be adjusted on canvas. (Appendix ii, p.150).

Thus, here the formal studio is in a binary relationship with its surroundings. Importantly, within this condition, painting is manifested as an unquestionably pure medium, as Xingwei Wang states:

My painting is a finished statement on canvas, which is not changed by its surroundings, with no exchange with the areas outside of the canvas. (Appendix ii, p.143).

What is clear is that, in this dualistic condition, the notion of painting (the medium of painting; the related studio practice methods) and the notion of traditional studio practice is purified and dualized with other mediums and conditions, which is similar to the context of the Western Modernism: the spatial organisation of the traditional painting studio involves certain arrangements between painting practice and methods, which helps to guarantee the purity of the medium and the category of painting, as art critic Brian O'Doherty mentions in his book *Studio and Cube*: 'Painting was the white gallery's best friend, modernism's avatar. No matter how radical its innovations, the canvas hung quietly on the wall.' (O' Doherty, 2007: p.39).

Consequently, the pattern of methods and behaviours of artists' practice will not easily be changed, even though the conditions of the studio vary, taking the condition of Xingwei Wang's previous studios as an example, which he summarises as follows:

I have changed studios many times in the past ten years. I can give you a brief timeline of my changing studio. At the very beginning, before I got married in Shenyang, I taught in a middle school and shared a small office space with two other colleagues. At that time, I painted in the office space, which was around 10 square metres. In the school's summer and winter vacations, I was able to complete

³² For the artists interviewed, there are three relationships between painting practice and the studio wall; it can be seen as: a spatial division that marks the difference between the inside and outside conditions of a studio; a support for hanging artworks; a thinking space for considering the painting, alone or in relation to other materials.

some more significant paintings and occupy more space in the office. During that time, I also had a separate room in my parents' house as a studio space, and at that time, my brothers were my models. When I got married in 1994, the north-facing room in my own house was my studio. After that, I rented a bigger room from my neighbour. Then I moved into a room in a greenhouse. Around 1998, I changed my studio to a factory warehouse for a year. Then my studio moved to an upstairs room in a hotel for just under a year. I moved to Shanghai's Moganshan Road in the following years and settled into a studio there. Later my studio was in the Caochangdi Art District in Beijing; after that, my studio moved to Huantie District (Beijing). Because of the forced eviction of the Huantie District in November 2017, my studio is here [Galerie Urs Meile Gallery's residency studio] until the November (2018). (Appendix ii, p. 142).

Even working with different materials, the artist, who applies this purified notion of painting from the dualistic condition of studio painting practice, will show no change in his or her working methods. Another artist who is worth considering in this context is Liu Xiaodong (b. 1963), was not interviewed by me. Liu graduated from Central Academy of Art with an MA degree in Painting in 1995 and presented his work at the 1993 Venice Biennale. He and Xingwei Wang are two iconic painters in the Realist and Neo-Realist painting tradition. Even though Liu decided to use a mechanical brush in an installation as part of his practice (for example, in his show *Weight of Insomnia* (2019) at Lisson Gallery, London), his painting practice is still something that happens on the canvas do falls within this dualistic and stable condition. Even as he questions authorship in painting the spectre of the dualistic condition of the formal studio painting practice is still indisputably there.



Fig 2-5 Liu Xiaodong, Three Gorges Immigrant. Oil painting on canvas, 200 x 800cm, 2003. Copyright to Liu Xiaodong.

As discussed above, in the conventional painting studio, the artist is focused on what happens on the canvas, as Xue's statements demonstrate. Among the artists interviewed, Xingwei Wang and Ruozhe Xue's approaches represent a traditional studio painting practice, which means that their painting practice starts from when the brush touches the canvas. These two artists' practices represent the traditional perception of studio painting practice: painting on canvas is the only method adopted in practice, and the studio functions as the invisible frame in their practice. This spatial perception of the

space around the studio practice recalls the dualistic relationships in Buren’s practice and the early Modernist period (outlined in Diagram 1) that was introduced in Chapter One:

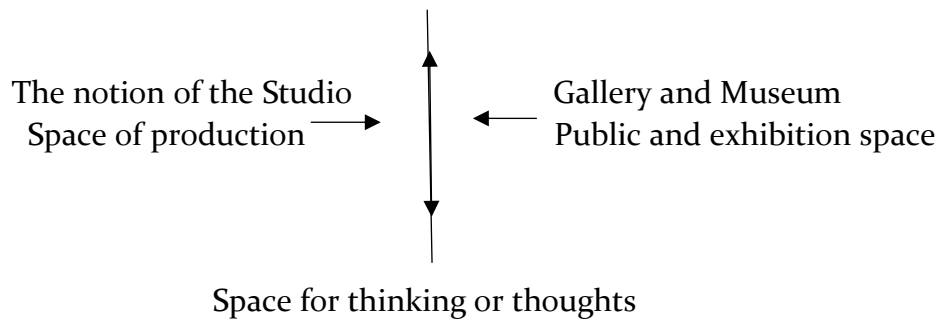


Diagram 1: Dualistic apparatus in Buren’s practice and the late modern period

Further, as introduced at the beginning of this chapter, the Chinese academic painting studio framework of leaning and practice follows the Social Realistic tradition. Thus, the artists who choose to apply the practical methods of their previous academic training will operate under a dualistic condition of painting, as the examples of Xingwei Wang; Ruozhe Xue and Liu Xiaodong demonstrate. In their practice, the site of production and the exhibition site is separate: the studio is the only site of production, which is indisputably isolated from the exhibition space where the paintings exist for display. The category of painting exists as pure and distinct from other mediums.

Interestingly, the definition of practice duration is not a fixed one in the traditional painting studio. There is often no distinction between practice time and time spent on other work. The artist’s practice and working time is integrated, especially for the artist who deals with multiple tasks related to art – for example, an artist who is also a college tutor (Ruozhe Xue for instance). Interestingly, in an artist like Ruozhe Xue’s practice the blurring of the distinction between other occupations and his ‘practice time’ leads to a blurring of the spatial boundary of the studio as he describes the period of his practice: ‘The studio door is just a concrete definition of space, not a mental distinction between different conditions’. (Appendix ii, p.150).

2.2. Temporal condition

Jianwei Wang	2011, 2015
Tian Tan	2014,2015
Xiaokang Sun	2016
Xun Yang	2012
Jianjun Zhang	2019

As already discussed, the temporal condition of painting practice in the Chinese painting context is different from that which exists in Western conditions. In the Western context, there are several notions of site and the medium after Buren. First, the site involved in site-specific and minimalist practices is a physical location, and the practice is aware of its surroundings: the site is part of the context of the site-specific artwork. Examples of artists working in this way include, as well as Buren, Hans Haacke and Mel Bochner. Second, Robert Smithson uses the notion of non-site to challenge the closure of the conventional art object. As Smithson observes, it ‘just goes on permutating itself into this endless doubling, so that you have the non-site functioning as a mirror and the site functioning as a reflection’. (Smithson, (1969) 1996: p.193). The third notion is that of the shifting concept of the studio in the post-medium context. Rosalind Krauss highlights the significance of the invention of mediums in artistic practice, saying:

Carving, painting, drawing, were all in full flower before there was any socially distinguishable group to call itself artists. But mediums then individualise their practice; they intensify the skills associated with them; and, importantly, they acquire histories. For centuries it was only within and against the tradition encoded by a medium that innovation could be measured, just as it was in relation to its reservoir of meanings that new ranges of feeling could be tested. (Krauss, 1997: p.5).

Thus, the notion of the site has shifted from being a tangible location a mixed concept of social, cultural and economic impacts in the culture of new media. For example, Hito Steyerl uses her practice and writings to push the notion of the site towards the division between actual and virtual space, between the setting and the ‘space’ of the screen.

In the Chinese context, this temporal condition of art or painting practice is caused by an indistinct and discontinuous history of Chinese Modernity and Post-modernity. This ambiguity between Modernity and Postmodernity may be linked with the term ‘total modernity’³³ (which can be traced in Hu Shi’s ‘trinity principle’³⁴), which was defined by

³³ Gao Minglu (born 29th October 1949) has been an active critic, curator, and scholar of contemporary Chinese art since the mid-1980s. He is a professor at The University of Pittsburgh. He was also one of the curators of the 1989 ‘China/Avant-Garde Exhibition’ at the National Art Museum in Beijing. More information on Minglu Gao is available from: ‘Gao Munglu’ *Pittsburgh University*, [online] Available at: <https://www.haa.pitt.edu/people/gao-minglu>.

³⁴ Hu Shi is one of the leaders of China’s New Cultural Movement (the mid-1910s to 1920s). The trinity principle- ‘particular time,

the Chinese scholar Minglu Gao in his book 'Total modernity and the avant-garde in twentieth-century Chinese art' (2011), as follows:

Rather than instituting a split between the different autonomous spheres - religion, politics, morality, and art - the mainstream of Chinese intellectual thinking in the modern and contemporary period tends to try to close the gap between different fields as well as between past and present [...] Chinese modern and contemporary art is fundamentally concerned with how they integrate art and social projects, and how to fuse the benefits of a modern environment with a deeper understanding of current living space, in order to create a totality: a totality that can merge cultural, aesthetics, and life as a whole. The consciousness of modernity in China, therefore, has long been framed with what I call the project of "total modernity". (Gao, 2011: p.3).

Hung Wu noted on the discontinuity in Chinese Modernity and Postmodernity as a 'pattern of rupture', as follows:

It is a "pattern of rupture" caused by violent intrusions of sociopolitical events [...] The result has been a series of deep ruptures as a general historical/psychological condition for artistic and intellectual creativity. Each rupture has forced artists and intellectuals to reevaluate and reorient themselves. [...] This pattern of response explains the sudden change in artists' attitudes after 1989, and also enables us to see 1980s "modern art" and 1990s "contemporary art" not as two consecutive trends, but as disconnected endeavors conceived in separate temporal/spatial schemes. (Wu, H., 2008, in Condee, et al., eds, 2008: p.293).

Because of those traits of Modernity and Postmodernity in the Chinese context, examples of related art practice during Modernity and Postmodernity are not as clearly separated as they are in Western art practice (such as non-site or post-studio practices etc.). In China, from 1985 till the present, the framework of painting practice moved slowly from the dualistic condition to the temporal condition. In this way, in the Chinese context, this temporal condition of art practice is a conjunction of the mixed and blurred notions of Modernity and Post-modernity, which includes post-studio practice and the shifting notion of the studio.

Within the contemporary context, I am interested in how the studio can be considered an unfixd site as well as used to develop a spatial and temporal strategy for painting practice. The Chinese artists interviewed provide perspectives on the relationships between the site of production, the studio and painting practice. There are four artists whose practice can be regarded as being within this temporal condition of painting practice: Jianwei Wang, Tian Tan, Xiaokang Sun and Xun Yang, as well as another related artist, Jianjun Zhang.

specific space, my truth' functioned as a principle of Chinese modernity. (Gao,2011:p.3).

As discussed before, Buren positions the studio in opposition to his practice, as is seen, for example, in the work such as *Work in Situ*. Compared with Buren, Jianwei Wang's studio functions as an elastic site. Jianwei Wang, whose work is experimental in medium and form, has been active in Chinese contemporary art since the 1970s. As he states,

For more than ten years, I have been concerned with the influence of current intellectual discourse and different media on contemporary art. This curiosity has prompted me to use diverse media to create a new language for art. That is why in my work I utilize a wide range of media, including film/video, theatrical performance, and painting. (Jianwei Wang, *Foundation for Contemporary Arts*).

Jianwei Wang (b. 1958), studied at Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts in Hangzhou (later known as the China Academy of Art) with a BFA in 1988. Interestingly, his realistic painting 'Dear Mum' won the gold prize for painting in the 6th National Exhibition of Fine Arts, China 1984³⁵. 'Dear Mum' is a painting of a soldier writing a letter to his mum from the trenches on the front line. The subject matter may indicate his interests in the relation between the individual and society which emerged later in his practice. From the 1990s, Jianwei Wang's practice turned to an examination of Chinese social reality by using the relationship between painting and new media art. For him, painting became part of a whole vocabulary along with other materials, such as video and installations, as is evidenced in his solo show *Yellow Signal* (2011)³⁶.



³⁵ The 'National Exhibition of Fine Art' is a unique and official national art evaluation system in China. It is co-sponsored by the Ministry of Culture, the Federation of Literary and Artistic Communities and the Association of Fine Artists.

³⁶ Here is the basic information on this show: 'An exhibition designed specifically for UCCA's Big Hall, *Yellow Signal* is an evolving process, an ongoing exhibition that will unfold in four consecutive parts. Chapter One: *Making do with Fakes* features eight videos projected upon four large gateways, or portals. Exhibition-goers can choose from which side they enter the portals, which in turn affects the way they experience the projected images. Chapter Two: "We know what we are doing..." is an installation of several thousand basketballs and a maze of linked basketball hoops snaking throughout the exhibition hall. Chapter Three: *Internal Conflict* presents a series of dynamic mixed-media installations, while Chapter Four: *Go to the Conference Room on the 13th Floor for Free Films* features a rubber staircase and an attempt to create a "physically impossible space." (UCCA, 2011).

Left: Fig 2-6 Jianwei Wang, *Yellow Signal (Chapter One: Making do with Fakes)*, Eight-channel video installation, Dimension variable, Installation view at Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing, 2011. Copyright to Jianwei Wang.

Right: Fig 2-7 Jianwei Wang, *Yellow Signal (Chapter Three: Internal Conflict)*. Installation view at Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing, 2011. Copyright to Jianwei Wang.

In particular, in his practice, the notion that the production of an artwork is no longer framed on the canvas or focused inside the context of the studio. Rather, his practice moves to an overall approach to the art production system. He coins the phrase 'local and independent production', which for him is a space or scale strategy that enables a critical distance with global trends and art system. Another term 'rehearsal', he uses as a temporal strategy of extended preparation towards the *beginning* of a work *continuously*.

First, to test the notion of space or scale in relation to the individual artist's practice within contemporary art production, Jianwei Wang utilises the strategy of 'local and independent production'. The idea of 'local or independent production' is a strategy generated in contrast to the system of mass production against a background of globalization. Jianwei Wang's practice is articulated as a domestic network, develops from his studio practice, as he observes:

The point is not to predicate the location and the function of my practice before I begin. In the process of practice, the 'local production' strategy makes a distance between me and the art system, which creates the chance for me to consider how to work with this distance. The 'independent production' strategy is to find how to contribute to the whole system at a distance that this local practice has generated, to think about how to interact with the issues that are not trendy in the art system (Appendix ii, p.138).

This 'Local and independent production' strategy helps Jianwei Wang to locate his own practice without the influence of, or reference to, the art world; this strategy also highlights a sign that the Chinese contemporary artist has begun to critique the relationship between their practice and the global environment. In the interviews, Jianwei Wang uses the impact of globalisation on his neighbourhood as an example to explain the relationship between individual activities and larger-scale trends, between his models of production and the larger art system:

Well, 'local and independent production' is a mode of making; this model does not presume that the practice can function immediately in the art system. For example, we always talk about globalisation, but what is the relation between globalisation trends and you? The facts of my neighbourhood, the old lady who is selling water, is more important than globalisation trends for me. (Appendix ii, p.138).

Importantly, this strategy of 'local and independent production' helps Wang to introduce a distance between the heritage of studio practice models and the wider art system. These methods also provide a dynamic condition for his practice and combine the relationships inside the studio with the outside world. For Jianwei Wang, the studio is of fundamental importance as the physical site. As he notes,

For me, the studio means not only a spatial concept but also a mode of making. The fundamental function of the studio is a site of doing. Of course, you can consider yourself a nomad. But nomads still need space. Like farmers, how do they work without the land? For the artist, the studio allows possibilities to open up the practice that might exist before the methodology emerges. (Appendix ii, p.137).

Secondly, the time-strategy in Jianwei Wang's practice is related to the term 'rehearsal'. To deal with the matter of time in his practice, he borrows the concept of the rehearsal, which is the process of preparation for a performance-related arts production (music, theatre, film production, etc.),³⁷ and integrates it into his daily studio practice. Jianwei Wang takes his everyday practice as a rehearsal towards the *beginning* of his practice: for him, the 'rehearsal' is about the movement of forms³⁸; each day's practice becomes a latent start for the next loop of 'rehearsal'. In other words, his rehearsal is a practice which is a detour from the very first *beginning*.

In his solo show *Dirty Substance* (2016), the artworks are indications of the process of testing methodologies in his studio practice. Jianwei Wang links the question of the studio practice's beginning with his *rehearsal* to explore the question: 'How is the process of the contradictive notion of completeness rehearsed? And exhibited?' (Long March Space, 2015). In the show, the painting functioned as a punctum which was linked with the installed work (for example, the red containers from the painting can be linked with the curved installation); the junction between the created space of painting practice and the studio space is the shifting place where a painting practice can start or depart from the studio space. This can be related to Diagram 2: Apparatus in Smithson and related post-studio practice – the site of production, the studio and painting started to shift and exchange with the site of thinking.

³⁷ More definitions of the rehearsal in a general performing arts context can be found in Barbara Simonsen's book *The Art of Rehearsal: Conversations with Contemporary Theatre Makers*" (Simonsen, 2017).

³⁸ As he noted in the interview, 'rehearsal is also the movement of form in its authentic resistance to interpretation.' (Appendix ii, p. 139).

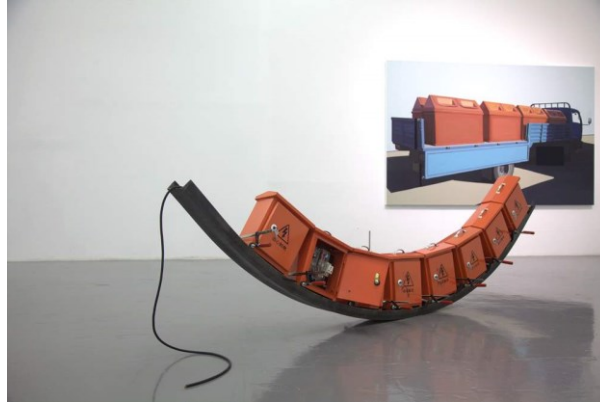


Fig 2-8 Jianwei Wang, *Dirty Substance*, Long March Space, Beijing, 2015. Copyright to Jianwei Wang.

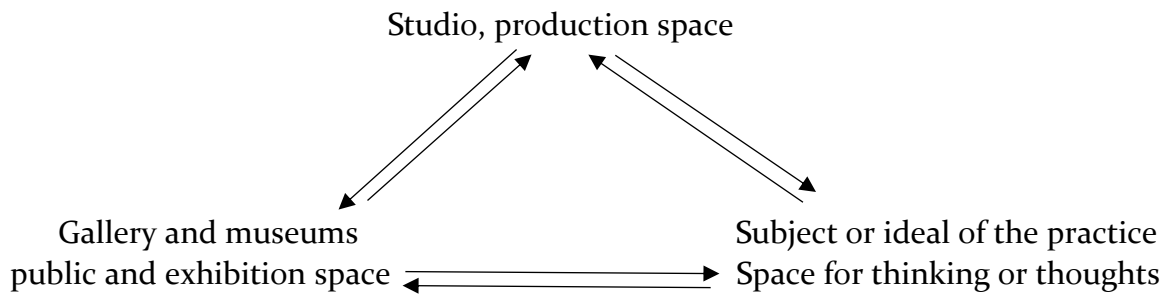


Diagram 2: Apparatus in Smithson and related post-studio practice

Jianwei Wang is an example of an artist making actions based on the framework that is generated from daily traditional studio practice but transcending it by revisiting the notion of daily studio practice in relation to strategies of scale or space (Local and independent production) and strategies of time (*rehearsal*), in order to avoid a method that reproduces the banality of the art system. As he said,

[...] the process of the practice or production is meaningless [to present in the outcome]. [...] Only when the original concept is not strong enough, then the process of production is recalled and shown as one part of the artwork. For the artwork, the unrecalled part of the work is the core part of my practice.³⁹ (Appendix ii, pp.136-137).

For me, I want to rid myself of imagination about my practice. What I am facing in the studio every day are questions and hypothesising about practice. For me, it

³⁹ Wang also mentioned an example of making glasses in relation to the 'unrecalled part' of the making of his artworks, with which I cannot completely agree, as he said: 'Take the glasses that we wear as an example, when you are wearing glasses; you may not pay attention to their production process; for example, how many technical difficulties must have been overcome [during the process of making them].' (Appendix ii, p.137).

is wasting time to think about this question [the ideal condition of studio]. (Appendix ii, p.139).

Thirdly, Jianwei Wang understands the studio not only as a site with a productive function but it is also as a site that facilitates literal and critical reflections, importantly, as a site of a metaphorical social relationship which is associated with the networks outside the studio:

As I mentioned in my previous interview, my studio is my society. Some people take it as a statement. I consider it as the normal condition of my everyday practice, which is the same as saying 'I will have my lunch today'. (Appendix ii, p.136).

Thus, for Jianwei Wang, the studio is a shifting space of modes of making that is kept lively by his processes. The studio is not a unique space of production, but a regular part of his daily life. In other words, Jianwei Wang's notion of the studio is not in a dual relationship with the studio's surroundings or the exhibition site; it is between the actual space and the thinking space that is generated from the studio. Jianwei Wang highlights the notion of contextualised relationships around the studio. For example, he poses the question 'Who is the audience in the studio?' to explain his perception. He observes:

First of all, it is crucial to know: Who is the audience? When three of us are sitting here together, who is the audience? Most of the time, the audience is a virtual concept. I prefer to locate the 'audience' in the specific group or individual, for example, with three of us sitting here, I will ask 'what is Yifei's opinion?', or 'what is Boxin Xu's (the assistant who is present) opinion'? If you see that three of us are all the audience, then there is no question about who the audience is. (Appendix ii, p.140).

Jianwei Wang, then, pushes the relationships between the audience and the 'studio's walls' further. He believes that there is a bigger group beyond this immediate audience. His imagining of an audience is alive and problematic action for him. He also observes that in the context of China, when thinking about the 'audience' from a historical perspective, it is always a collective concept. He makes the point as follows:

Secondly, from an artist's view, what does the artist imagine about the audience? To think about the third man beside you and me, what is the education of that person? I mean, it is impossible to make an artwork that matches another person's imagination or the broader group of the so-called 'audience'. You can write ten pages about how you imagine and define your audience. You would be very lucky if one of these unknown audiences agreed with one page of your description. That might be the best result. More specifically, I refer to the concept of the audience in China. The audience, historically, has been called 'the general public', 'the people'; it is a collective noun. (Appendix ii, p.140).

With his methods and understanding of the studio and studio practice, Wang highlights the possibility that domestic relationships, generated from a traditional notion of the studio, can be utilised to create spaces for new frameworks of practice. For example, in his show *Wang Jianwei: Yellow Signal', Chapter One: Making do with Fakes*, (2011), the gallery space was divided by four walls; several performances were situated in these spaces and happened simultaneously. He makes a junction zone for several contexts: a performance context (the schedule or experience from a theatre studio) and an exhibition context. In this way, different models and moving relationships of this work formed an ongoing shifting and temporal condition in Jianwei Wang's practice.



Fig 2-9 Jianwei Wang, *Yellow Signal (Chapter One: Making do with Fakes)*, UCCA, Beijing, 2011. Copyright to Jianwei Wang.

Thus, the framework of Jianwei Wang's practice has evolved gradually, and his methods draw on empirical studio knowledge and models (the notion of *rehearsal* from theatre and systems of mass production); then places the studio practice in a functioning network that connects with the outside, and shape his own strategy ('Local and independent production'). As a result, Jianwei Wang's methodology is able to consider a painting practice as being what happens on the canvas, as in the traditional studio painting, in his earlier art practice in the 1980s, but he also sees the studio painting practice as a gesture in the space (for example, Jianwei Wang, *Dirty Substance*, Long March Space, Beijing, 2015).

On the other hand, in the approach of artist Tian Tan (b. 1988), who studied in the UK and US; and gained an MFA degree at Hunter College (New York) in 2019, the function of the studio was not at the centre of his consideration of practice. Tian Tan's undertaking of reflection and research outside the studio before making his artworks is a core part of his practice and means that his studio is brought closer to a temporal space. In his view,

If the decisions and stages of the practice have already been decided outside of the studio, just like the script of each act, then the studio is like a warehouse

containing all the costumes or materials, or a site to finish the practical parts in. (Appendix ii, p.150).

For him, these reflections are about the relationship between his daily experience and the art system, as well as developing a practice that speaks about this system of evaluation itself. As he mentions in the interview, ‘I need a long time to research [...] I spend most of the time reflecting on my daily experience and my position in relation to my artworks’. (Appendix ii, p.150). As in Tan’s work *How to Make a Contemporary Artwork*, (2014-2015), his methods are a composite of other artists, using them as raw materials for his own practice. In this work, he built a database of active artists from the top ten international art galleries’ archives and analysed their methods and display solutions. He then reviewed and combined the summarised methodologies from his database into his practice and made a series of works with titles, for example, “Marianna Uutinen + Pat Steir + Jitish Kallat” (2014) and Kai Althoff + Gabriel Kuri + Glenn Ligon, (2015) etc..



Left: Fig 2-10 Tian Tan, “How to make a contemporary artwork”, Marianna Uutinen + Pat Steir + Jitish Kallat, 2014. © Tian Tan.

Right: Fig 2-11 Tian Tan, “How to make a contemporary artwork”, Kai Althoff + Gabriel Kuri + Glenn Ligon, 2015. © Tian Tan.

In this series, Tan asks whether a contemporary artist could be formulated by studying the way other successful artists create art, this then leads to the question of what the function of this revaluation of practice as the artwork is when it is placed in the system. As he states,

The starting point of my work was my experience of seeing the exhibition of contemporary art around China. The techniques of some contemporary artworks are better than Western artworks. I was thinking, what are the reasons why Chinese contemporary art has grown so fast in such a short period, and why do the artworks in contemporary Chinese galleries look similar to the works in the Western countries? If some of those works were taken to London or New York

galleries, they would not make a big difference to what is happening in Western galleries. (Appendix ii, p.150).

Tan's practice posits the studio as a space where different practical methods can be mixed in different locations. He uses various studio practice paradigms from other artists to formulate his methods of practice. Studio space is not the core part of Tan's practice, as an example of the young generation artists who started their practice from the 2000s, his methods and practice are also developed outside of the studio.

Further, Tian Tan explicitly defines his practice time as that which includes time spent outside the studio. For him, the studio functions as a state of mind and not a physical location. His reflections concern the relationship of his work to his daily experience. For example, Tan has the experience of working with a design team to create interior decoration schemes for various spaces; the team has several samples of decoration to meet different conditions and the requirements of the space and the customers. Tan also worked as an assistant in a gallery in Beijing where he observed the demand-supply relationships first hand and Tan's reflection on this experience of being both in and outside the art world is present in his art practice. Before he begins practicing in the studio, he has already decided all the strategies of that he will employ. For him, reflection on different situations is the most crucial part of his practice, and this process of research through reflection extends his practice. As he states:

The studio time is more about doing, and I have made all my decisions before I am in the studio. [...]The period of thinking and reflecting is my working hours. At some point, my practice time is outside the studio. (Appendix ii, p.150).

In both Jianwei Wang and Tian Tan's reflections on the studio, the concept of the studio has been stretched into the situation of practice. The notion and function of their studio is its unfixed location and its existence as a site with shifting functions: Jianwei Wang understands the studio as a spatial concept which is open and can be contextualized within other frames; Tan emphasizes the mobility of the site of production in terms of the methodological aspect. For both of these artists, the painting practice is one choice, among other methods and materials. In their practice, painting is not a pure medium and can no longer be linked with unique studio routines or models or settings. The site of the studio is not directly linked with the site of their practice. In other words, the condition of their practice is shifting, and not only involves the studio space but also considers the wider relationships during the process of practice that give a chance for their painting practice to 'breathe'.

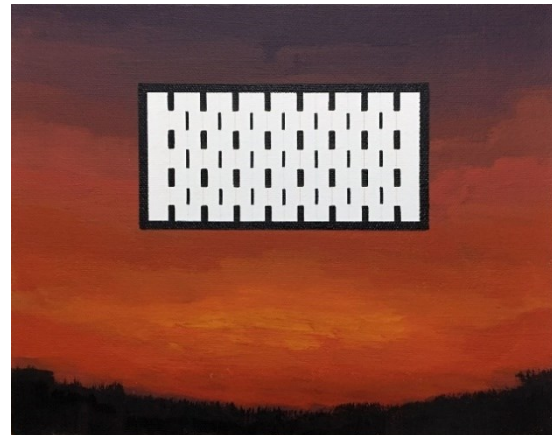
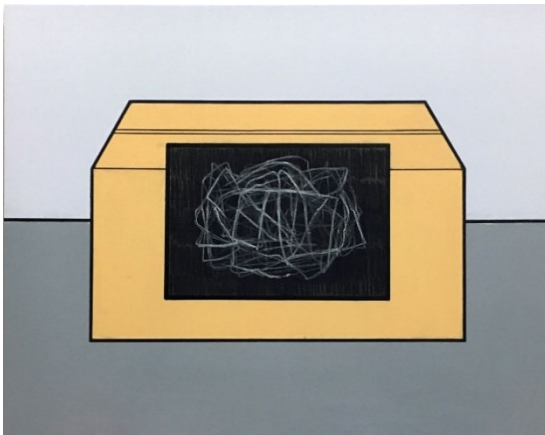
The third example in the group of artists interviewed is Xiaokang Sun (born in 1987, China), who studied in China and graduated from painting programme at École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris with a master's degree in 2015. Sun's studio is the smallest of those of the artists interviewed, while his practice crosses several practice models. On the one hand, some of his work still follows the academic painting

studio routines; he mentions that he has no interest in the elements beyond the canvas. He focuses more on thinking about what to do on his next canvas, rather than a response to the surroundings and context. On the other hand, Sun departs from traditional studio painting practice and uses painting as a kind of cognitive measure, attempting to test all aspects of production through an internalised sense of the thought processes that emerge from the making of a painting. As Xiaokang Sun explains:

I made a wooden structure of a cube in a field in China. I named the cube “painting”: I followed my knowledge of engagement with materials from painting practice to put the grass, the dust, the fabrics and other stuff into the box, so what is inside this frame is “painting”. (Appendix ii, p.150).

Thus, painting is a way of thinking which he can then apply to things that aren't painting. He says,

I can feel the painting is in some music and some texts: the practice is not necessarily as painting. I am borrowing the framework from my painting practice. (Appendix ii, p.150).



Left: Fig 2-12 Xiaokang Sun, 2016-N14-SC7, acrylic on canvas, 2016. Copyright to Xiaokang Sun.

Right: Fig 2-13 Xiaokang Sun, 2016-N13-SA3, acrylic on canvas, 2016. Copyright to Xiaokang Sun.

Sun is a typical example of the group of artists who apply the temporal framework; their practice methods are not fixed: some of their work can still be characterised by the mode dualistic condition of conventional studio painting practice, and some of it can be in the temporal condition. This trait can also be found in the practice of Xun Yang (b. 1981), a mid-career painter based in Beijing: his practice mainly involves applying oil paint to a large-scale canvas. Also, he thinks of painting in the transformed conditions of

exhibition. For example, in his solo show *Dream in the Deserted Garden* (2012)⁴⁰, his painting-related practice was settled with different conditions (transparent walls, designed routines, dark room, etc.) and materials (oil on canvas, fabrics, installations, iron wire with luminous colours, etc.), to explore the ‘metaphorical relationship between fiction and memory’. As Xun Yang noted,

For my show, in 2012, ‘Dream in the Deserted Garden’, I worked with the architect Wang Hui. [...] [This show] is also a metaphorical relationship between fiction and memory. The black colour in my paintings actually contains many details; the paintings are in process with the emergence of the light. The light is a sign as the ideal that the artist wants to chase. (Appendix ii, pp.148-149).



Left up: Fig 2-14 Detail from Xun Yang, *Dream in the deserted garden*, solo show, 2012. Xin Dong Cheng Space for Contemporary Art 1, Beijing. Copyright to Xun Yang.

Left down: Fig 2-15 Detail from Xun Yang, *Dream in the deserted garden*, solo show, 2012. Xin Dong Cheng Space for Contemporary Art 1, Beijing. Copyright to Xun Yang.

Right: Fig 2-16 Detail from Xun Yang, *Dream in the deserted garden*, solo show, 2012. Xin Dong Cheng Space for Contemporary Art 1, Beijing. Copyright to Xun Yang.

Yang is also an artist who lives in his studio of an artist-shared building as a self-sustaining community. For him, if the artist works and lives in the studio, all of his time

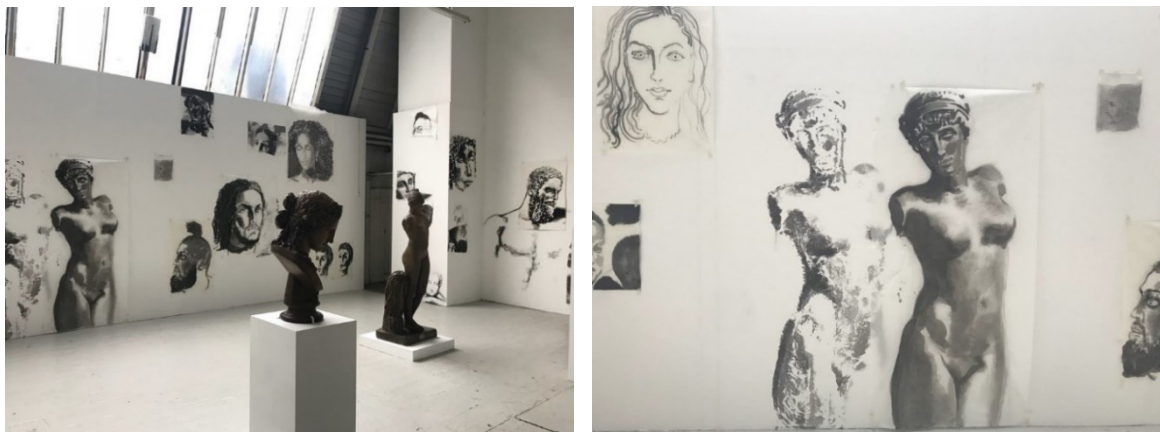
⁴⁰ This exhibition is employing the rhetoric of the classical tradition and therefore has decorative connotations. Some visual details from the Chinese landscape painting were reutilised in the contemporary context, but it is not a repetition of the Chinese ink painting practice.

becomes 'studio time'. Yang explains that there is no obvious beginning and end to his painting practice; for him, it is a continuous period. As he states,

[...] the studio is also the place I live now. Without the studio, I might be unable to continue my work and life in Beijing. (Appendix ii, p.146).

It [the practice time] is more like a continuous process; for me, it is from the second floor to the ground floor in the studio. (Appendix ii, p.148).

Another related example is the artist Jianjun Zhang's work,⁴¹ who was not in the group of artists I interviewed, but is included here as an example of how contemporary Chinese ink painting can relate to the temporal condition of painting practice. Zhang's work in the residency studio of the Royal Academy of Art is a relatively critical and bold experiment in the expanded understanding of the Chinese ink painting. Taking this residency exhibition as an example, the RA School studio was transformed into a display of casts with voice installation and paintings, sketches and traces on the wall. In this work, the ink painting's tradition and methods have been challenged: the position of the traditional Chinese ink painting where an artist holding a brush works on the table, with layers of blankets under the rice paper to avoid the leaking of the ink underneath, has been subverted. In this exhibition, it is obvious that the artist was working on the wall; the practice on the rice paper has seeped through directly onto the surface of the wall. The infiltrated ink wall marks functioned as the shadow of the Chinese ink painting itself, and the monumental tradition and rules of the Chinese ink painting were shifted, becoming nonfixed principles that critique the temporal condition.



Left: Fig 2-17 Jianjun Zhang, 'Zhang Jian-Jun: Artist in Residence', RA Schools Studio, London. 2019. Exhibition view. [Photo taken by Yifei He, 10 September 2019].

⁴¹ 'Zhang Jian-Jun was born in 1955 in Shanghai. He graduated from the Shanghai Theatre Academy's Department of Fine Arts in 1978 and moved to the United States in 1989. Currently, Zhang is a professor at New York University Shanghai. He lives and works in both Shanghai and New York City.' (RA Schools Studio, 2019. *Zhang Jian-Jun: Artist in Residence*. [online] Available at: <https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/exhibition/jian-jun-zhang-artist-in-residence>).

Right: Fig 2-18 Jianjun Zhang, 'Zhang Jian-Jun: Artist in Residence', RA Schools Studio, London. 2019. Exhibition view. [Photo taken by Yifei He, 10 September 2019].

This section discusses the temporal condition of painting practice in the Chinese context, which sites the activity of painting as embodied spatial and temporal unity around the painting and the studio, connected with outside networks. The temporal condition allows the artist to act, no matter where they are, either inside or outside the studio. Further, in the Chinese context, this temporal condition is also a transitional condition which can be seen as containing the Chinese collective memory⁴². This includes ideas of artistic communities and movements, different notions of public space and personal space, and artist's statements in relation to politics and life. Take, for example, Jianwei Wang; Jianjun Zhang and Tian Tan's practice: these Chinese contemporary artists who came to prominence across four decades (from the 1950s to 1980s) started to rethink the location of the Chinese art practice with a broader view of the global art system as well as a micro view of an individual artist's activity. Further, artists may follow the thinking of painting (for instance Jianwei Wang, Xiaokang Sun and Xun Yang), but sometimes the outcomes of their practice are not physical paintings (for example in Jianwei Wang, Xiaokang Sun; Tian Tan and Xun Yang). The studio functions as the temporary and changing site of their practice. As a result, the boundary between the space of production and the exhibition space is blurred; the network of the artist's studio practice with other models or the outside surroundings is in a generative process. The beginning of painting practice in this temporal condition is a moment which is difficult to define.

2.3. Networked condition

Jianwei Wang	1996,2011
Xiaokang Sun	2016
Z factory	2017

As may be now be clear, this research is interested in the expansion of the notion of painting and notion of the studio into the field of *painting practice*. A painting seeks a

⁴² Collective memory is the result of collectivism in the Cultural Revolution period in China. From 1966 to 1976, egalitarianism and collectivism were highlighted as primary strategies. The Chinese curator and academic Jiehong Jiang noted in his book *Collective Space* (2006) that 'With the world's largest population, China has become the biggest stage of displaying "collective" identity... In China, "collective" could be logically extended with a suffix such as "collectivism" which has been a sacred belief for many years. The Chinese dictionary defines "collectivism" as "the thought of selflessness towards collective interests of the proletarian world look"[...] Many people have understood life and fate within their collective on the basis of the belief.' (Jiang, 2006: pp.86-87).

medium, whether it is canvas, paper, a wall, or with any other materials. However, it could be said that contemporary painting practices do not necessarily operate with specific media; rather, they are places for *painting* to happen. A painting practice can thus be related to a structure or network. In this way, the methods of painting, such as the arrangements of gestures and strokes, can be utilised as methodologies alongside other materials. A painting practice can be seen as containing a 'workshop space'; a physical place for discovery; even before any image-based relationship develops. In other words, a painting practice provides a discursive site for combining different painting methods with other models.

In the Western context, David Joselit introduced the concept of 'transitive painting' in order to respond to the networked condition by questioning 'how does a painting belong to a network?' in his essay 'Painting Beside Itself' (2009). Joselit explains:

What defines transitive painting is its capacity to hold in suspension the passage internal to a canvas, and those external to it [...] Transitivity is a form of translation: when it enters into networks, the body of painting is submitted to infinite dislocation, fragmentations, and degradations. (Joselit, 2009: pp.129-134).

Joselit provides a view of inside the *studio*: the possibility that the question of how a painting practice is framed by the studio can be analysed both in the single unit of artwork and beyond, into the network. And Claire Doherty links 'behaviour within networks' with the situation of the studio; in her essay 'Situation', she states,

If we understand the studio as a space of imagination, rather than the locus of creative activity prior to the presentation of the work, then perhaps we should not be encouraging the artist to exit the studio, but rather that the studio is immersed in the situation of the place. (Doherty, C. 2008).

In China, there was a trend of experimental art around 2000. As Chinese critic Dong Bao notes, around 2000 'there was more support for the art industry on the part of the government and a firmer sensorial hand as Chinese contemporary art began to take more of a role in the international art world'. (Bao, 2014: p.93). The important issue then becomes how to practice within a conscious rethinking of this networked and updated situation, as Bao highlights, 'this conscious reconsideration inevitably becomes part of the spectacle'. (Bao, 2014: p.93).

As introduced at the beginning of this chapter, in the Chinese context, this networked condition is mobile and can cooperate with the other two conditions discussed. More importantly, the networked condition of painting practice is in the process of forming as a new and an ongoing situation. As for the Chinese artists, three artists who were interviewed will be discussed as examples of painting practice within this networked condition: Jianwei Wang (a network of different models); Xiaokang Sun (a network of painting-as-method); Z factory (a network of online and off-line practice). Both Jianwei

Wang and Xiaokang Sun also work through a different model of making, and have been mentioned as examples in the previous section discussing temporal condition.

Within contemporary Chinese painting practices, it is clear that networked relationships with the studio contrast with the traditional studio as an isolated zone. For example, we have already examined how Jianwei Wang's notion of 'local and independent production' tests the relationships between an individual network of studio practice and the functioning art system in the aforementioned example, the exhibition '*Wang Jianwei: Yellow Signal*', *Chapter One: Making do with Fakes* (2011).

For Jianwei Wang, painting practice operates as one of several potential methods in the studio's individual network. Still taking his solo show '*Wang Jianwei: Yellow Signal*' as an example, in this show, the artist's thinking on the overlapping of space and time in the everyday has been woven on this occasion with multiple media (paintings, found objects, performances, installations) and mixed materials (walls, constructed signs, stages, distorted everyday cabinets). In *Yellow Signal, Chapter Three: Internal Conflict* (Fig 2-8), the stripes of construction signs and the stripes in the painting on the half-wall are a sign for the context moving from one section to the next. The notion of Jianwei Wang's studio is as an open framework for his personal methods, involving relationships outside the studio. Jianwei Wang utilises the borrowed production model to build a network that links the studio practice with outside relationships.

Sun's statement about the sense of painting in music and writing discussed earlier, suggests how the notion of painting can function as a symbolic framework inscribed in other practices: the critical engagement emerging from painting practice is no longer within the canvas, but within the body of practice, which enables external factors to be included. The network in Sun's practice is generated from a knowledge of painting practice and departs from the original knowledge of painting practice, for instance, as previously noted, the wooden structure that Sun named as 'Painting' and his engagements originated from painting then into music, texts and other materials.

Sun is one of the artists I interviewed who can practice through several practical conditions: painting practice on canvas; *painting* as a series of visual habits through which the process of thinking is enacted; painting thus becomes a symbolic framework opening up other activities. As he says,

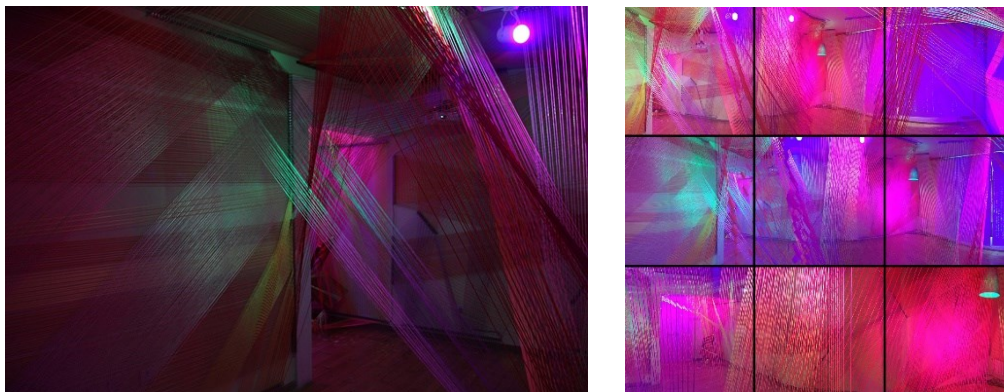
My thinking is that painting is the ideal framework for other facts. In this framework, no matter what I put in, it is painting as an ever-changing container, or something painterly. (Appendix ii, p.150).

Z factory is a group that includes six artists who graduated from the school of Fine Art at the Central Academy of Fine Art in 2017. This art group is young, and they choose to make works (prints, paintings, installations) that reflect the changing environments of their studio spaces. The network in their practice is a collective frame of working

together in online and offline conditions. Each member lives and works in their own studio, taking their living conditions as the subject of their painting. They do not share a physical studio space as a group. Their studio branches out into each members' studio spaces and their online group, as they work between the online environment and the physical space. For Z Factory, the studio is a mobile condition:

Each of our members has [their] own studio space. Only when a project needs us to work together will we get together for a while. After a group project, we return to our respective routines again. Some of our group discussions and meeting are online via Wechat, and we talk a lot [online] before we meet in person as a group. (Appendix ii, p.150).

Their project *Thread Morph* (2017) was a group show in 2017, which was held inside an apartment space in Beijing. The project is a visualised network of their daily experience of 'all forms of information, significantly the omnipresent advertising messages, spam and that forgotten and discarded data'. (Minority Space, 2017, *my translation*). This way allows them to work in different spaces (exhibition spaces, online virtual space, living space) productively. They said that all their ideas 'are generated when they are in different situations, and to work in different conditions is a core part of the team's practice'." (Appendix ii, p.150).



Left: Fig 2-19 Z Factory, Thread morph. Minority Space, Beijing, 2017. ©Z Factory.

Right: Fig 2-20 Details from Z Factory, Thread morph. Minority Space, Beijing, 2017. ©Z Factory.

In this chapter, the current situation of painting practice in China demonstrates an extension of the understanding of the painting studio from the perspective of time (duration) and space (expansion). From the perspective of time, my research attempts to question the definition of so-called 'studio time' to include a more expanded sense of practice time, in order to open up the notion of the studio. As many of the interviewed artists explained, their studio time is only a part of the time they spend on their practice. Their practice time is neither spatially nor temporally fixed or bounded within the physical confines of the studio. So, practice time includes time spent outside of the studio. Their practice time is a continuous period which is based not only on artistic engagement with different materials but also includes the immaterial aspects of the process, such as thought. The definition of practice time expands according to the individual artist's practical methods. The Chinese artists who apply the dualistic framework of conventional studio painting practice, such as Xingwei Wang and Ruozhe Xue, there is often no distinction between their practice time and time spent on other work. However, the notion of their studio and painting still remain within the dualistic condition: the studio functions as an ivory tower isolated from its outside conditions and the painting as a pure medium which begins and ends on the canvas. In the temporal condition, the studio has a changing function and painting is one choice among other practice for the artists. Artists' practice can start from reflections on individual studio practice (Jianwei Wang); from daily life (Tian Tan) etc.. In the networked condition, the notion of practice time in the practice becomes more fragmented. The starting point for these artists' painting practice could be a novel or a piece of music (Xiaokang Sun), or online dispersed time (Z factory).

From the perspective of space, the notion of the studio and the situation painting practice, on the one hand, was not tested in the dualistic condition; on the other hand, were criticized and expanded typically in the temporal and networked conditions as a set of social relations (Jianwei Wang); as a decentralised place in the practice process (Tian Tan); as a thinking and production space (Xiaokang Sun); as working and lived spaces (Xun Yang); as an online virtue space of co-working (Z Factory). Further, as the Chinese art critic Dong Bao has summarized, artists' practice since 2000 has featured four patterns: 'art communities, art groups, independent projects and autonomous institutions'. (Bao. 2014: p.83) Indeed, one might map the work of these artists onto these forms. Specifically, independent projects and practice can be located in the work of Xiaokang Sun, Tian Tan and Jianjun Zhang; the context of the art community in Xun Yang; the art group can be seen in Z Factory, whilst Jianwei Wang manages an old industrial factory space, which forms a sense of autonomous institutions.

In relation to Joselit's vision, as discussed earlier, the Chinese context and background with the three main traditions of painting practice, are fundamentally different from the Western situation that Joselit addressed, as the Chinese conditions must be considered in relation to the three traditions of painting. Each aim and function of the condition of painting practice in a specific period are fundamentally different from the Western context. The comparison of conditions of painting practice between the

Eastern and Western contexts, especially from the late 1980s onwards, needs to take account of each side's context, in order to be meaningful.

The next chapter will introduce examples of my practice, which applied the notion of apparatus and an idea of *loop* (which will be expanded at the beginning of Chapter 3). Meanwhile, a deeper understanding of Chinese painting practice and the Chinese context from the interviews in Chapter 2 were reflected upon and expanded in my own practice. Chapter 3 also demonstrates my thinking and practice develops between notions of the Chinese Classic traditions and contemporary context. More precisely, the *loop* is a notion which can be traced to Taoism, where it operates as an ontological notion of becoming. It was applied fundamentally in the Chinese ink painting practice and principles, and thus the idea of loop also provides an intrinsically Chinese approach to the non-dual process of learning (this point will be expanded at the beginning of Chapter 3). For me, painting and its related practice process, rules and models can be looped into an ongoing motion and forms an updated approach to painting. This can be seen in the examples of my practice in Chapter 3, the daily studio practice, Chinese academic painting practical methods and process, the notion of the studio are all revisited and relocated in my current practice.

Chapter 3 My painting practice: beginnings, ends and loops

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Chapter 3 Introduction

This chapter focuses on my own painting practice and allows me to reflect on my own work, in order to introduce another concept: the *loop* (in Taoism, it is an ontological notion of becoming). However, in order to explore this fully, I will need to outline the related principles of practice in Chinese ink painting, which provided the original Chinese approach to a non-dualistic relationship between human beings and nature, between the artist and his or her surroundings. Importantly, as I will suggest, this looped condition of apparatus provides a non-dualistic process of learning, in the Chinese ink painting practice and will be further discussed in this chapter.

Even though the aesthetic notions of Chinese ink painting have relatively little currency in the context of contemporary Chinese art, the ancient Chinese approach can, I believe, still, enlighten practice in the twenty-first century as an original and experimental source of thinking. Here, thoughts from Taoism and the related principles of Chinese ink painting offer continuously exchanging conditions such as the harmonious unity between the mountain, or the whole landscape, and the artist – between subject and object. By consensus, there are three main sources in Chinese culture, Confucianism,

from Confucius⁴³; Taoism from Laozi (Lao Tzu)⁴⁴, Zhuang Zi (Zhuang Zhou)⁴⁵ and Buddhism (which is not in the context of discussions in this research). These ancient Chinese philosophies function as cornerstones for traditional Chinese aesthetics, as well as for the methodological rules of Chinese ink painting. Confucian aesthetics established a unity of politics, ethics and a sense of beauty (at that time). Tao provides evidence of the Chinese radical non-dual relationship between mind and nature, which decentralised the role of human beings in the world. It is a thinking which does not focus on the human being, but rather on the universal being.⁴⁶ However, in the Western context, there is a long history of the tradition of dualism (between mind and nature; between subject and object; between mind and matter) originating and continuing from Descartes. The discussions on 'Tao' by Laozi and Zhuang Zhou highlighted the condition of exchange and unity between the object and the subject, intersubjective perspectives

⁴³ There are some notes on Confucius: "Confucius is, without doubt the most famous and the most influential, philosopher in the history of China.[...] He is also of the earliest, since he lived during that great century, the sixth B.C., when Gotama, the Buddha; Mahavira, the Jain; and Lao Tzu, the Taoist, also flourished. The ideas associated with his name have had a double significance in shaping the history of human civilization. First, they symbolize, better than any others, the ideas which have pervaded Chinese cultural throughout most of its history and have molded Chinese minds and the consequent course of social, political, economic, religious, scientific, and technological development in China. Secondly, and in the long run perhaps more importantly, these ideas have already contributed somewhat to philosophies in other cultures and promise to play a determining role in the world culture which is now emerging. (Bahm, 1969: p.13).

⁴⁴There are some notes on Lao Zi(Lao Tzu): "The authorship and date of Lao Zi (Lao Tzu) (also called The book of Tao and Teh, The book of Tao Teh Chin or The Book of Lao Zi) has been hitherto debatable. The earliest record of the statement believed by Sima Qian (145 BC-?BC), which contains a relatively object version of the statement believed by Sima Qian's contemporaries that "Lao Zi once lived in Qurenli of the town of Lixiang, the Ku County, the State of Chu. His family name is Li, his personal name is Er, with cognomen Dan. He was head of the imperial library of the Eastern Zhou Dynasty (770BC-256BC)." (Sima Qian, Recording of History, China Bookshop, Beijing, 1980, pp.2139=2143.) (Gu, 1995: p.23). Further, "The Tao Te Ching stems from the early formative period of Chinese thought (C.500-200 B.C.). It is one among a small number of books from this period that have a place in Chinese tradition roughly similar to that of the Greek classics, the Bible, and the Koran in the Judeo-Christian and Islamic traditions, and to the Upanishads and the Pali Canon in the Hindu and Buddhist tradition" (Lafargue, 1992: p.xv).

⁴⁵There are some notes on Zhuang Zi (Zhuang Zhou): "As a chief representative of the Taoist scholar before the Qin Dynasty, Zhuang Zhou (or Zhuang Zi) has been held in high esteem in the West since his work were translated into English and brought to the West at the end of the 19th century. [...] He was a scholar in the region of Meng in the state of Song (now somewhere near Shangqiu, Henan Province) during the period of Warring States." (Zhuang Zi, translated by translated by Peirong Wang and Huaxiu Ren. 1997: pp.24-25).

⁴⁶There are some related quotations from Laozi and Zhuangzi, for example: "Tao begets One; one begets two; two begets three; three begets all things. All things are backed by the Shade(yin) and faced by the Light (Yang), and harmonized by the immaterial Breath (ch'i)." (Laozi. Translated by Ch'u Ta-Kao. 1970:57). And "Tao is a reality which has its substance, inert and formless. It can be transmitted by the heart, but not taught by word of mouth; it can be acquired by the heart, but not taught by word of mouth; it can be transmitted by the heart, but not seen by the eyes. It is its own source and its own root, existing since time immemorial before the heaven and the earth came into existence. It gives birth to demons and gods; it begets the heaven and the earth. It is above the zenith but does not seem high; it is beneath the nadir but does not seem low; it came into existence before the heaven and the earth but does not seem long ago; it was there before time immemorial but not seem old." (Zhuangzi, translated by Peirong Wang and Huaxiu Ren. 1997: 113).

on right and wrong, life and death, on *self* and the outside world. Following this non-dualistic thinking, the sense of beauty in the ancient Chinese classical approach, including the theories of, and writings on, ink painting practice, were not separate from the artist's spiritual practice, and emphasised the harmonious relationship between the artist and nature, between different spaces and times.⁴⁷

When I turned my attention to Chinese classical aesthetic notions and the practice of painting, I discovered many elements that resonated with the present-day context. This is not necessarily associated with the way appearance was made manifest, but with how attention was recorded. As opposed to the predication on a perceiving subject and an intended object there is a much more complex relationship that I started to describe as 'a loop of attention to attention' that stretched through the subject (the artist), the tool (the brush), the object (the landscape), when the unity of mind and matter is realized. Thus, a landscape could be understood as a mindscape, a unity of particular and universal attributes and a meditation on the process of becoming. If we focus on a specific aesthetic object, Guo Xi's work *Early Spring* (one of the most famous Chinese ink paintings from the Song Dynasty period) as an example, from the bottom to the top of the image there is no fixed axis for the physical space and the spiritual space.



Fig 3-1 Guo Xi, *Early Spring*. Song Dynasty (960–1279). Hanging scroll, ink and light colour on silk, 158.3 x 108.1 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei, China. [Reproduced in Xun Jiang, 2015. *Chinese Art History For Everyone*. China: SDX Joint Publishing Company, page 202.]

It is a panoramic view both horizontally and vertically, which is not based on physical

⁴⁷ Till 1926, the notion of "Aesthetics", coined from Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1750), was separated as an independent subject and translated into Chinese as Meixue (美学 by Buddhist master Cheng Lü in the movement "Western learning spread to the East (late Ming Dynasty to the early modern period).

details. The three parts (bottom-middle-top) of the whole image contain three perspectives of seeing and viewing: deep distance (深遠), high distance (高遠), and level distance (平遠)⁴⁸ in other words, different levels of space and time. It is a journey from the visible natural landscape (at the bottom of the work) to the invisible or mind-saturated landscape (in the middle and the top) and back to the 'nature' again. Between these conditions, there are discursive relationships which I designate as *loops*, rather than the axis of distance. Following this method of practice, an object becomes unfixed, containing different processes of thinking that go beyond subject and object dualism. It is not an apparatus which discerns the right fact from the wrong fact; instead, it involves floating spatial notions. Rather than inviting a detached process of viewing that is informed by abstract criteria of judgment, there is instead a solicitation of being with the presentation beyond the threshold of representation.

If we take this into another context, Gregory Bateson, in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, develops the idea of 'deutero-learning' (Bateson, 2000: p.141): that is, not the providing of facts about the world, but rather being taught by it. So rather than a model of a world that is the object of calculative thinking, serving as the basis of growing knowledge whose end aim is to dominate it, we have instead a living unity of a world that manifests as a condition of becoming. Connected to this, the philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty evoked the idea of 'silent knowing' (Merleau-Ponty, 1969: p.178) to describe the complex relationship between the phenomenal body and the 'flesh of the world' (Merleau-Ponty, 1969: p.250)⁴⁹. As such, the body is co-extensive with the world, existing as a special form

⁴⁸ There are two famous early principles of Chinese ink practice (as examples of writing on Chinese ink painting), which informed behind landscape ink painting in its mature period in the Song dynasty and provided the fundamental aesthetic notions of Chinese ink painting. These are 'Six principles of Chinese painting' (Southern Qi dynasty) by Xie He (a Chinese write and art historian) and 'Three perspectives' (North Song Dynasty) by Guo Xi (a Chinese landscape painter):

Six principles of Chinese painting (Xie He): 1)'Spirit Resonance', or vitality, seems to translate to the nervous energy transmitted from the artist into the work. The overall energy of a work of art. 2)'Bone Method', or the way of using the brush. This refers not only to texture and brushstroke but to the close link between handwriting and personality. In Xie's time, the art of calligraphy was inseparable from painting. 3)'Correspondence to the Object', or the depicting of form, which could include shape and line. 4)'Suitability to Type', or the application of colour, including layers, value and tone. 5)'Division and Planning', or placing and arrangement, corresponding to composition, space and depth. 6)'Transmission by Copying', or the copying of models, not only from life but also the work of antiquity. (Translated from Xie He, Guo Xi. et al, 1991: p.3).

Three perspectives (Guo Xi): Deep distance(深遠): observe the object from the back to the front, as a bird's-eye view. High distance(高遠): is an upward view, looking at the mountain and details from the bottom to the top of the hill. Level distance(平遠) is the view of the whole image and landscape, including two typical landscapes with low hills and streams; and with towering and steep or big rivers. (Translated from Xie He, Guo Xi. et al, 1991: p.578).

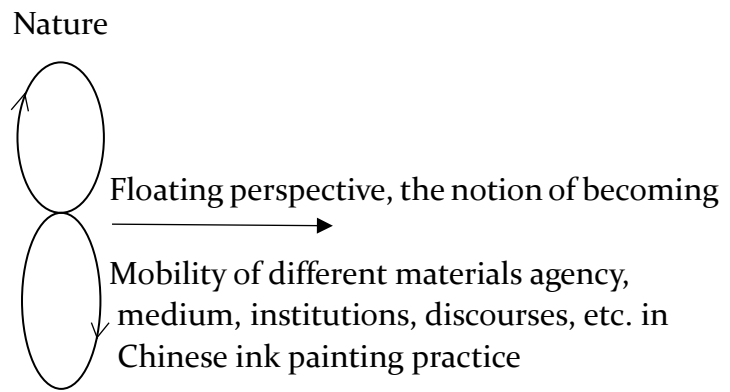
⁴⁹ In *The Visible and Invisible* Merleau-Ponty says: "the body is not simply a de facto visible among the visible, it is visible-seeing, or look. In other words, the fabric of possibilities that closes the exterior visible in upon the seeing body maintains between them a certain *divergence* (*écart*). But this divergence is not a void, it is filled precisely by the flesh as the place of emergence of a vision, a passivity that bears an activity- and so also the divergence between the exterior visible and the body which forms the upholstering (*capitonnage*) of the world." (Merleau-Ponty, 1969: p.272). There is a spacing within a single ontological element which later writings describe as flesh. "The flesh of the world is not self-sensing (*se sentir*) as is my flesh- It is sensible not

of flesh that touches and is touched, sees and is seen, within a movement of self-reflexivity. Rather than forming an opposition, there is instead a hinge between them that enables a correspondence to occur. And with this, there is a shift and a spread between them.

Not only did the thousand-year-old painting serve as an exemplary object of art-historical fascination, it also provided my project with figures of thought that are capable of opening into the present. In this way contemporary painting can utilise aesthetic notions from the Chinese classics such as; a mobile floating perspective⁵⁰; the aesthetics of becoming; loops of energy and matter and the free play of emptiness and appearance. These ancient ideas, which I will explore in this chapter can, in different ways, serve as a poetics or praxis within the present moment. Thus, the application of the concept of the apparatus needed to undergo a mutation to shift it away from either governability or technology into something much more akin to aesthetic construction and radical subjectivity. Loops within Bateson's schema occur simultaneously rather than sequentially; therefore, implicate a multi-level approach as opposed to a linear, progressive model. This is generative as opposed to logical or procedural, and implies a process of learning how to learn within appropriate modes of context. In the Chinese context, by learning from nature and the non-dualistic ongoing process of thinking the relationship of the human and nature, the individual to the cosmic and space and time, the Chinese painters formed a method of observing and figuring both visually and conceptually the agencies in their ink painting practice, as shown in Diagram 3. If the notion of the apparatus enables to revisit this looped mobility of agency, medium, materiality, institutions, discourses, memory, and spaces within a network of becoming, then this starts to assume a mobile accessing of all the various vectors that constitute a painting practice in the contemporary context, even the art world.

sentient... I call it flesh, nonetheless- in order to say that it is a pregnancy of possibles- that it is therefore absolutely not an object'. (Merleau-Ponty, 1969: p.250). Flesh is thus a mode of being that is neither mind nor matter, as it does not originate in substance. Rather flesh is understood as an intertwining of positive and negative, identity and difference and visible and invisible.

⁵⁰ Floating perspective' in the Chinese ink painting refers to the 'Three Perspectives' (by Guo Xi): see footnote 48, p.85.



Learning from nature
 Intersubjective thinking between human and nature
 (individual to the cosmic space and time)

Diagram 3 Looped apparatus in Chinese ink painting

For instance, if we examine one of the greatest Chinese classical paintings, *Travellers Among Mountains and Streams*, by Fan Kuan, from the early eleventh century BC, we are witnessing at a deep structural level a whole number of mobile loops that militate against it being viewed as a static representation. Black and white, empty and full, hard and soft, still and moving, visible and invisible, geological and human time, mind and nature, cosmic and local, far and near, are each figured as loops in continuous motion, as opposed to being binary opposites. In each of their rotations there exist formations of complex interplay; in this way, 'local-near-soft-full' might create a chain of resonance. This schema defines the code of representation that is closer to being a fixed framework through which a stable process of reading might be assumed. American scholar George Hartley, in his book *The Abyss of Representation*, describes the difference between representation and presentation as follows: 'the difference is that between a dwelling in things and the journey of becoming, between a setting before and a setting in motion'. (Hartley, 2003: p.61). Following on from this, representation is invariably aligned with presence. This, in turn, implies a structural division of reality into a series of binary or dualist oppositions that fixes an object before a perceiving subject. Merleau-Ponty's intellectual project can be seen as an attempt to overcome binary divisions that separate the object from the subject, introducing the concept of 'flesh' to stand for the mutuality of both. In his essay 'Cezanne's Doubt' (Merleau-Ponty, 1964: pp.9-26), he evokes the way that for Cezanne the 'landscape thinks in me and I am its consciousness' (Merleau-Ponty, 1964: p.17), which points to the reversibility between the artist and the visible world. For Merleau-Ponty, Cézanne's painting suspends the habits of thought in order that 'the base of inhuman nature upon which man has installed himself' (Merleau-Ponty, 1964: p.16) can be revealed. This act of suspension, though, comes at a price, for in attempting to touch meaning that 'does not exist anywhere' (Merleau-Ponty, 1964: p.19) (either in things which as yet are without meaning or in the artist, who is mute), so painting is torn between being both alien and intimate. Painting goes beyond, or rather precedes, the expression of ideas in that it creates the possibility of awakening 'the experience which

will make their idea take root in the consciousness of others'. (Merleau-Ponty, 1964: p.19).

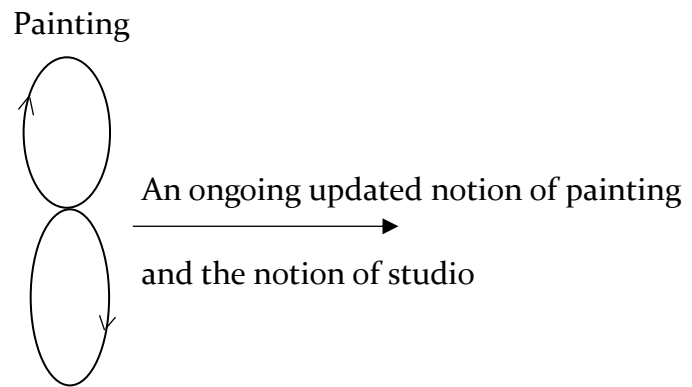


Left: Fig 3-2 Fan Guan, Travelers among Mountains and Streams. North Song Dynasty. Hanging scroll, ink and colour on silk 103.3cm x 206.3cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei, China. [Reproduced in Xun Jiang, 2015. *Chinese Art History For Everyone*. China: SDX Joint Publishing Company, page 196.]

Right: Fig 3-3 Details from Fan Guan, Travelers among Mountains and Streams. North Song Dynasty. Hanging scroll, ink and colour on silk 103.3cm x 206.3cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei, China. [Reproduced in Xun Jiang, 2015. *Chinese Art History For Everyone*. China: SDX Joint Publishing Company, page 196.]

Applying this loop condition to the apparatus of painting in the contemporary context, then, the relationship between the subject (the artist), the tool (the brush), the object (the landscape) is not fixed (intersubjectivity); the conventional notions of painting are no longer fixed on the canvas (in the Western context) or on rice paper, or any other surface. Rather, the notion of painting can be renewed by the loop method of thinking. As a result, the spatial notion of the studio is unfixed; earlier painting models and knowledge can also be revisited, and function as raw materials for review; the definition of painting is freed from the canvas and the surface.

Thus, it is an idea of not only based upon the notion of apparatus but also the idea of loop. Importantly, the application of loop allows us to think around the Classic traditions, opening them up to new formulations, rather remaining in closed systems. Here I am not implying that everything can be painting, but to rethink 'what is painting?' 'what is a studio?' from the viewpoint of a practitioner and researcher, in order to think through a new definition of painting in relation to the Chinese context. As shown in the diagram:



Revisiting and learning from the notion of studio and exhibition space;
related artist's practical behaviours, processes and models

Diagram 4 Looped apparatus in the contemporary Chinese context

In this condition of *loop*, by revisiting and studying the notion of the studio, the site of production, the related practical models and behaviours in the process of the practice of painting, the notion of painting practice can begin to be reconceived. This chapter will introduce three examples of my painting-related practice to which I have applied the notion of the loop, and revisited different painting-related practical processes, methods and discourses, in order to rethink the painting practice within itself. The three practice examples are 1) *What Happens in the Studio Stays in the Studio* (performance, video, installation, 2017), 2) *Emotional Labour* (Solo show, painting installation, 2018), 3) and *You Ate my Exhibition, No.2* (temporary installation, 2020).

These three examples offer my reflections on the total apparatus of painting practice in the condition of a looped apparatus, in order to think: what can a painting practice and a studio mean in the contemporary Chinese context? Different aspects of the apparatus of the painting practice have been addressed in each example. In Example One, the process of studio painting practice and the materialised studio time has been tested. Example One is an attempt to pay attention to the process of studio painting practice in an artwork. In Example Two addressed and revisited the spatial relationships between the painting, the audience and the exhibition space, including the learning process of painting practice (in a particular Chinese context), in a group of painting-related installations. In effect, Example Two is responding to the questions: what can a painting practice and a studio mean in the exhibition space? And what can a contemporary understanding of painting practice be in the Chinese context? Example Three explores painterly knowledge in situations outside the studio. In Example Three, the notion of studio space is challenged, including the immaterial gesture and empirical methods from studio painting practice.

In these examples, the notion of painting is considered as gestures in different performances, installations and spaces, through the surface of the canvas, studio space, piles of sand, virtual space and park's benches. Meanwhile, by revisiting the notion of the

space of production, the exhibition space and the learning process (the training class in the Chinese academic entrance exam system, for instance) and artists' behaviour, the role of painting in space is decentralised: painting is no longer something at the centre of attention. Importantly, a new notion of painting practice emerged, in relation to the Chinese context.

3.1. *What Happens in the Studio Stays in the Studio* (performance, video, installation), 2017.

The work *What Happens in the Studio Stays in the Studio* is a video work showing me sweeping up the detritus in the RCA's painting studios⁵¹: the waste materials left over from the process of making, such as dust, coloured tissue, pigments and fabrics. These materials were collected and shown as evidence (alongside the video) in a group show at the Asylum Chapel, Peckham, in 2017.



Left: Fig 3-4 Yifei He, *What happens in the studio stays in the studio*, video, 2017. Screenshot. Copyright to Yifei He.

Right: Fig 3-5 Yifei He *Daybreak show*, Asylum Chapel, Peckham, London. 2017. [Photo taken by Yifei He, 2nd June 2017].

The title of this work, *What Happens in the Studio Stays in the Studio*, suggests several important questions, such as, 'what happens in the studio?' or 'what was happening in the painting studio on a *daily basis*?' Of course, it is hard to answer those questions, because studio time can easily be forgotten and 'disappear' if the artist does not pay close attention; the evidence and process of daily practice in the studio are discarded or folded into the layers of pigment on the canvas, during the day-to-day work inside the studio. However, the questions around studio time are crucial, as they are linked with the practical process and different considerations of how and when studio time becomes a subject in relation to material practice. Thus, in this work, the definition of an idea of the notion of studio time and notions of materiality in the process of studio painting practice

⁵¹ I was also walked and collected in the RCA sculpture studio, shown at the end of the video. This thesis will just focus on the part that I performed in the RCA painting studios.

are revisited, in this case in relation to the art students' practice in the RCA's painting studios of the College's Sackler Building.

The painting studio contains all the materials for the practice, whether used, unused, or waiting to be used. The evidence the work draws upon includes the situation of (others) being in the painting studio: the unselected materials, the coloured tissue, the dry pigment powder; the processes of painting have been traced, and these activities used as raw material for my practice. The unselected materials, in the artist's view, are constituted in matter and details which, although part of their practice, are not public or shared with others. From the audience's point of view, the outcomes of a painting practice are formed through the artist's choice is it is the artist who decides which parts of the studio information should be omitted or replaced. However, if one reviews the entire process of the practice of painting, the outcomes include both the work (canvases etc.) and also the rest of the used, abandoned or unselected materials.

However, does the studio site function as the only site for the practical process or materials? Brian O'Doherty, in *Studio and Cube*, mentions another possibility: to view the studio as a 'mobile cluster of tenses':

The studio is more or less crowded with artworks, periodically depleted as they migrate to the gallery.[...] As one work is worked on, the others, finished and unfinished, are detained in a waiting zone, one over the other, in what you might call a collage of compressed tenses. [...] They – and the studio itself – exist under the sign of process, which in turn defines the nature of studio time, very different from the even, white, present tense of the gallery. Studio time is defined by this mobile cluster of tenses, quotas of the past embodied in completed works, some abandoned, others waiting for resurrection, at least one in process occupying a nervous present, through which, as James Joyce said, future plunges into past, a future exerting on the present the pressure of unborn ideas. Time is reversed, revised, discarded, used up. (O'Doherty, 2008: pp.17-18).

In this work, the *studio* is a collective space which includes other students' studio spaces, full of their material evidence. When I walk through the RCA's MA Painting Programme studios, each studio unit is related to different periods of others' practice conditions. It is obvious that I cannot walk through the time of yesterday in my studio, but this work gives me the chance to walk through other people's studio time to identify the options of thinking inside or outside time or the practice or studio time in relation to the painting studio. Since others' studio time was the focus, the space of production in this work is a spatio-temporal notion which is defined by the moments in which I walk. In this way, the work unites the conditions in the studio, and others' studio time is materialised.

In effect, other people's studio time and site of their studio are fragments of their studio painting practice. In other words, the fragmented examples of the RCA painting students' studio practice have been materialised or *looped*. When others' painting practice has

finished or paused, their practice process and materials constitutes the beginning of my practice: when the 'studio time' and its related practice evidence is represented outside the studio's frame, as in the Asylum Chapel exhibition, this time is stretched.

In this example, painting practice is not just a historical or antiquated activity on the canvas. Instead of practising painting on the canvas, this work began to test the process and the materiality of painting practice. By paying attention to the process of others' painting studio practice, I am able to observe others' studio practice time. My walks across the different studio spaces are re-enactments of a painting practice as a medium trapped inside the studio.

In this work, the revisiting of other people's practical processes allows a new beginning for practice and facilitate a diffusion of artistic authorship, which 'floats' inside and outside of the studio. In this context, and in counterpoint to the work's title, what happens in the studio does not remain in the studio.

3.2. Emotional Labour (Solo show, painting installation).

2018.

The second example I want to discuss is my solo exhibition *Emotional Labour* (2018), held at J: Gallery in Shanghai, 2018. I understood this solo show as an experiment within my research project to test the question 'what can a painting practice and studio mean in an exhibition space?' In this show, the exhibition space was transformed into three installations, with three spatial relationships. Installation One focused on the relationship between the audience and the painting. Paintings were installed in two blue cages, to create a restricted and inconvenient distancing of looking; the exhibition space was transformed into 'traps', and the paintings in the space functioned as bait to draw the viewer into a closer viewing and relationship. Meanwhile, in this work, the painting is no longer just something finished and hanging on the wall; rather, the audience is included in the relationship with the painting as a whole work. In Installation Two, the conventional role of painting was decentralised and was no longer the focus for viewing within the gallery space. Painting was utilised as raw material and participated in the spatial installations, along with the piles of sand and carpets; the gallery space was made into a 'construction site'. In Installation Three, the typical model of training for Chinese painting within the academy was challenged. In this exhibition, paintings functioned as indications of experiences and behaviours in different practice models; the exhibition space was transformed into a range of performative, studio and virtual spaces.

To go into further detail, in Installation One, the metal mesh 'cages' and heaps of sand on the floor separated the large gallery space 'softly'. The formal condition of viewing a painting on the wall, as described by French philosopher Henri Lefebvre – 'Our amateur

is also aware that the picture is framed [as oil painting in classic style], and that the internal relations between colours and forms are governed by the work as a whole'. (Lefebvre, 1991: pp.113-117) – is expanded through this work as the audience feels invited into a demarcated space, albeit one with some uncomfortable restrictions. The wireframes, which function like open cages, materialise the relationships in the action of looking. They highlight the starting point of the relationship between the viewer and the painting, which is when visitors step into the 'cage'. The painting is still the centre of attention, functioning as the 'bait' for the viewer to enter into this relationship. In this space, the audience, the paintings, the cages and chairs, as well as the relationship between the painting and the viewer together form the work.



Fig 3-6 Yifei He, Emotional Labour, solo show. J: Gallery, China. 26th May- 1st July 2018. View of Installation One. Copyright to Yifei He.

Fig 3-7 Yifei He, Emotional Labour, solo show. J: Gallery, China. 26th May- 1st July 2018. View of Installation One. [Source: Photo taken by Yifei He, 27th May 2018].

Installation Two was shown in a post-industrial-style space with three pillars in the middle of the space that were normally ignored and left unused in exhibitions. My initial impulse was to attempt to form a spatial relationship using flexible materials to separate the space, so that the paintings would activate the whole spatial context, including the pillars. This exhibition contained three pairs of installations. Each pair consisted of one painting hanging on a pillar: below the painting was a viewing point which incorporated a red carpet and red velvet ropes; two piles of sand were positioned close to the gallery's walls on the left and right sides of the viewing points, as shown in the image. In this installation the paintings were hanging on the pillars rather than walls so that they functioned rather like large billboards; thus the painting was no longer at the centre of viewer's attention: rather, the role of painting was de-centralised, as one element among other materials in the space. More precisely, in this installation, the painting is no longer an image with solid material limits, or a frame. Rather, the painting practice has a new starting point, which is not coterminous with the canvas. The painted canvas function as the raw material, contributing to, but not dominating, each installation. In this way, the real work, in effect, is embodied in this spatial context among different materials: paintings, pillars, carpets, piles of sand and the viewer.





Fig 3-8 Yifei He, Emotional Labour, solo show. J: Gallery, China. 26th May- 1st July 2018. View of Installation Two. Copyright to Yifei He.

Fig 3-9 Detailed from Yifei He, Emotional Labour, solo show. J: Gallery, China. 26th May- 1st July 2018. View of Installation Two. Copyright to Yifei He.

The boundaries of the metal frames (in Installation One) and the shape of the piles of sand (in Installation Two) refer to the invisible frames around the site of production (studio) and the viewing (exhibition) site. The installation asks whether the action of watching and people's behaviour will change when the walls of the gallery become transparent. It speculates on the difference between the air inside the blue metal frames and the air outside them, and asks whether the 'indoor' relationships in viewing an image change when the spatial boundaries become visible.

Further, in Installation One and Two, some of the paintings emphasise the context of the Chinese painting training model that was critiqued further in the performance in the third installation. Chinese academic painting studio learning and practice is, to some extent, a typical and problematic dualistic process of learning. For around three decades, this doctrinal application of the Soviet tradition of painting methods and principles which continues to impact on artists' practice after graduation, has not received much attention or experienced fundamental change. (I will return to this point later.) The example paintings used in teaching and the instructional images were used as visual material and references in the canvases in Installations One and Two (as shown below) as well as in the performance in Installation Three.



Fig 3-10 Online Model painting of still life in the training course for the Chinese entrance exam of the institutions of Fine arts. Gouache colour on paper. [Source: <http://www.yszzyz.com/2009/0802/34482.html>].



Fig 3-11 Yifei He, Emotional Labour, solo show. J: Gallery, China. 26th May- 1st July 2018. Oil on canvas details. 120cmx190cm. Copyright to Yifei He.



笔触围绕高光旋转（这样用笔，形体比较结实）

Fig 3-12 Online examples of official steps of painting an apple in the training course for the Chinese entrance exam of the institutions of Fine arts. Gouache colour on paper. (The Chinese characters mean the directions of the brushes should be around the highlight of the apple, in order to make the shape more solid.) [Source: <http://www.4000600021.com/2017/12/14/shuiguohuafa/>].



Fig 3-13 Yifei He, Emotional Labour, solo show. J: Gallery, China. 26th May- 1st July 2018. Oil on canvas details. 60cmx120cm. Copyright to Yifei He.

This third installation in this exhibition included a performance of a live drawing. During the exhibition opening, I performed a drawing from a reflection of an apple placed on a plinth in a mirror next to me (as shown in the picture); the recording of my activities was simultaneously streamed online. The drawing revolved around the reproduction of an ‘ideal apple’ within the ‘academic’ painting system in China. Importantly, three kinds of time – the original studio time of such activity, the performative time in the gallery space and the online streamed time – were thus combined in this element of the show. The physical condition of the studio remained the primary point of departure, whether for the performative space and time or the virtual space and time online.



Fig 3-14 Yifei He, Emotional Labour, solo show. J: Gallery, China. 26th May- 1st July 2018. View of Installation Three. [Source: Copyright to Yifei He].



Fig 3-15 Yifei He, Emotional Labour, solo show. J: Gallery, China. 26th May- 1st July 2018. View of Installation Three. [Source: Copyright to Yifei He].

During the performance, I followed the method of drawing an apple that is required in the entrance exam system of the fine art institutions in China: that is, the official way of drawing an apple. I attended the training courses before the entrance exam, which are intended to enable the applicant to achieve higher scores in the undergraduate entrance

exam and later academic study.⁵² The ‘formula’ for creating the painting involves several steps relating to composition and colour use. Following these steps, almost anyone can paint an apple ‘efficiently’, even someone with no drawing experience. The stages of painting an ‘official’ apple are illustrated here:



Fig 3-16 Samples of how to paint an apple in the Chinese entrance exam for fine art’ institutions [Reproduced in Lei Wang, 2015. *Introduction to gouache painting*. China: China Textile Press, page 8].

Fig 3-17 Samples of how to paint an apple in the Chinese entrance exam for fine art’ institutions [Reproduced in Jiayou Li, 2018. *Crash Course of Painting Still life*. China: Chongqin Press, page 4].

Fig 3-18 Samples of how to paint an apple in the Chinese entrance exam for fine art’ institutions [Reproduced in Lei Wang, 2015. *The way to paint still life*. China: China Textile Press, page 10].

In effect, this method of painting an apple is typical of the academic framework of studio painting practice in China. As introduced at the beginning of Chapter 2, the basic framework of Chinese academic painting studio is influenced by the Soviet tradition, and is applied widely to most of the Chinese fine art institutions’ painting programmes. As a result, the teaching content of undergraduate studies in most of the painting programmes at Chinese art academies mainly consists of, as the contemporary Chinese painter and art educator Guanzhong Wu noted in his essay ‘Formalist Aesthetics in Painting’ (1979), ‘pure technique’ (Wu, G., (1979), in Wu, H., ed, 2010: p.14). As can be seen, the entrance exam training courses for these institutions teach the techniques of

⁵² There are also other official ways of drawing a model, a head, a half-length portrait. There are different functional patterns and frameworks in a particular system. And due to the large number of students who take the entrance exam for fine art instruction in China, this functional pattern becomes something of an ingrained experience/process of drawing and painting in the art student’s painting practice.

painting an apple that are required to get a high score, and the students are forced to follow them. Even today, as a person who has experienced this painting training and entrance exam system in its entirety, although I have moved far away from this approach professionally, these painting methods are deep in my heart. Speaking as a student with both Western and Chinese study experience, I believe early drawing skills training in the pre-exam course form approaches to both BA and MA study and impact on students' behaviour and artistic practice. Similarly, Guanzhong Wu describes his concerns about this system as:

The teaching content becomes no more than pure techniques that entail sketching while staring at a subject, and this is grandly called “realism”! [...] But I don't know if there is a bridge that links the “realistic” copying of an object to the artistic beauty in the expression of emotions! (Wu, G., (1979), in Wu, H., ed, 2010: p.17).

In the West, the art critic Edward Sanderson (2015) also expressed his worries about the Chinese art education system in appraising the work of graduate art students in China. Sanderson highlighted the risks of inflexibility in China's academic system, and warned of the consequences of such a situation for the art world that these graduates are entering; he also notes that,

The level of skill on display was of a consistently high standard, but the author found the level of creativity to be lacking. The author attributes this to a lack of criticality in the practices of the artists, apparently in part due to the educational environment itself. (Sanderson, 2015: p. 119).

The method of painting an apple discussed above is an example of a distinct approach to *painting* in the Chinese context. Within this scheme of the work, the questionable painting-related praxis and framework can be critiqued and utilised as a material for further reflection. Using this performance as an example, I took the steps suggested to paint the reflection of the apple in the mirror. Each time I moved slightly, the details of the reflection changed. I performed this drawing at the opening night of the exhibition, following the ‘official steps’ suggested to paint an apple, after one night's work, while, the results were distinctly variable⁵³(as in Fig 3-12). Further, the online live stream enabled the performance of this typical practical approach to drawing an apple into different on-screen time-spaces. The ideal apple thus becomes a mirror-image transferring from the space of the painting studio to virtual space.

In this second example, different layers between the painting's processes and forms can be traced in these three installations and performances. In Installations One and Two, the relationships between the painting, exhibition space and viewers are revisited and looped as spatial relationships and gestures, and become the artwork itself. In

⁵³ The academic exercise is predicated on be able to realise the ideal representation of an apple, but this represses the foundation of art toward production of difference as a foundation of creativity.

Installation Three, the framework of painting practice within the Chinese art education system, which is revisited and utilised as the beginning of another form of artwork. The painting practice is not finished on the canvas; instead, painting-related methods; notions and practice are ongoing, looped into a continuously updated understanding of itself. In other words, a looped relationship is formed where *paintings* are not at the centre of the audience's attention; rather, painting operates across performative, exhibition and online spaces, and in the resulting network of different spatio-temporal relationships, discourses, methods, materials and loops.

3.3. *You Ate my Exhibition, No.2* (temporary installation, 2020)

2020



Fig 3-19 Yifei He. *You ate my exhibition No.2*, installation, London, 2020. Copyright to Yifei He.

Fig 3-20 Yifei He. *You ate my exhibition No.2*, installation, London, 2020. Copyright to Yifei He.

Fig 3-21 Yifei He. *You ate my exhibition No.2*, installation, London, 2020. Copyright to Yifei He.

Fig 3-22 Yifei He. *You ate my exhibition No.2*, installation, London, 2020. Copyright to Yifei He.

Unlike the two examples of practice discussed above, which include elements of physical *painting (on canvas)*, the third example of my work is painting (that is a painting-related practice), but without any *paintings*. Indeed, there is no physical trace of any component of painting. *You Ate my Exhibition No.2 (2020)* was a temporary installation that lasted for one day. In this work, I placed several strawberries and bananas on the grass and a bench in Battersea Park. The installation was recorded with photographs. The fruits were utilised as coloured objects to make a circle and a line on the ground and on the bench. The ‘exhibition’ was completed by the activities of passers-by, animals in the park (birds, dogs or squirrels, etc.). It is also worth mentioning that, not all the stages of change in the fruit could be recorded, due to the opening hours of the park. On the following day, the fruit was eaten and disturbed by the cleaner or undocumented anonymous people or animals in the park, or disappeared, as shown below:



Fig 3-23 Yifei He. *You ate my exhibition No.2*, installation, London, 2020. Copyright to Yifei He.

Fig 3-24 Yifei He. *You ate my exhibition No.2*, installation, London, 2020. Copyright to Yifei He.

Fig 3-25 Yifei He. *You ate my exhibition No.2*, installation, London, 2020. Copyright to Yifei He.

First, this ‘exhibition’, initially performed on the platform of a London train station in

2018⁵⁴ and in the Battersea Park in 2020, was an opportunity to rediscover the legacy (both the empirical knowledge and habits) of my earlier studio painting practice and to absorb this into my actions outside the studio. Two notions are core to this work's enquiry into painting: the notion of the painterly gesture and the notion of the studio. In this installation, painting operates both materially and immaterially, but not on the canvas. The gestures, events, and anonymous performances function as the legacy of behaviour in the painting studio. Inside this 'exhibition' the site and the placement of the fruit were decided by several gestures: about choosing the conditions and locations; the gesture and decision about the order of the strawberries or bananas, and the ability to practice and play with a 'material': thus the gestures outside the studio reproduce the whole framework of studio painting practice where the gestures of, and decisions about, composition and colour were combined in each brushstroke on the canvas in the studio. If the method behind these two gestures is the same, the gestures of me putting the fruit on the grass and park bench can be seen as equivalents for my gestures on or decisions about the canvas. In other words, these painterly gestures are embodied in the site and the bodily memories of the activities moving between the realms of inside and outside the studio.

Secondly, in this work, the site of the studio becomes non-specific. The site of the desk in the park was secretly transformed, an exhibition opens without any events or announcements, only a silent display. The fruits are objects from daily life; the site could be a waiting room, a chair in the office, a display case in a museum, a dining table or a table in a studio. The site of the studio thus becomes fleeting, and the painting practice is not shaped by the studio space, as Phillip Zarrilli points out:

The studio... a place of hypothesis, and therefore a place of possibility...where something can come of nothing. Sound from silence. Light from darkness. Therefore, a liminal place, between. [...] As a place between, a location without coordinates or answers. A place to map, temporality, space-time along some continuum, but only momentarily, in that moment of performance. (Zarrilli, 2002: pp.159-165)⁵⁵.

Thirdly, the 'exhibition' not only offers frameworks for transferring studio practice to other sites: the gestures of putting fruits on the bench stand for the repeated revisiting of the gestures of painting practice, but also extend the stay of the artistic work. Here painting is not a solid material fact, like pigments on canvas or on any other surface. The result is a series of unconscious collaborations and ends up as the diary of social life. It does not matter whether the 'exhibition' (or the fruits) have been eaten or not, the

⁵⁴ You Ate My Exhibition No.1 took place in one of the underground stations in London. I put some fruit on the station's desk in the morning of one day in November 2018. Some people talked about the fruits, and some took them and jumped into the train. The 'exhibition' was held less than 30-min and collected by the cleaner with her dust bag. This research focuses on the later iteration of You ate my exhibition, No.2. 2020.

⁵⁵ This is in the context of theatre, but it contains inside which relates to the artist studio as well.

invitation to others stands. The core of the 'exhibition' is that it provides a continuation of the reactions to painting – staring, thoughts, doubts, practice, grasping – around the fruits. This 'exhibition' points to the nature of the production of painting, and labour relations are no longer bound to the realm of a studio site but defined in relation to the reproduction of existing knowledge of painting practice. In other words, the legacy of my painting studio-related practice has been looped into my current practice. Further, the authorship of a gesture of painting is blurred by the invisible artist, the anonymous exhibition and the unconscious interactions of the participants. This aligns with Kwon's notion of artistic authority and the site which she articulated in 2004:

On the one hand, this “return of the author” results from the thematization of discursive sites, which engenders a misrecognition of them as natural extensions of the artist's identity, and the legitimacy of the work's critique is measured by the proximity of the artist's personal association with a particular place, history, discourse, identity, etc. On the other hand, because the signifying chain of site-oriented art is constructed foremost by the movements and decisions of the artist, the (critical) elaboration of the project inevitably unfolds around the artist. (Kwon, 2004: p.51).

In this way, the experience of studio practice and the physical studio space are introduced to the exterior (studio) condition, without warning, through the 'anonymous actions'. The studio site does not have to be in the studio. The materiality of the studio site is transformed by gestures that follow the studio painting practice experience. Additionally, it is worth noting that, this work does not fall within the trajectory of site-oriented art (which is based outside the studio); rather, it is situated within studio painting production.

In this chapter, a looped model of thinking, which is rooted in the ancient Chinese classical approach, has been introduced and applied in my painting-related practice and the contemporary Chinese context. My analysis and practice examples suggest that revisiting traditional Chinese aesthetics and the related discourses of painting practice can lead to new methods and applications, which can be woven, continuously, into contemporary painting conditions. For example, in my practice, *What Happens in the Studio Stays in the Studio*, the focus was on the process of the studio painting practice. By revisiting (others') time and practice inside the studio, the unique studio time and its related practical evidence were recycled and extended in this work. In *Emotional Labour*, two aspects of painting's history and apparatus – that is, the networked condition from the contemporary art context and Chinese academic painting studio models – are recalled throughout those three installations. Even though some methods of painting practice or training in the Chinese context may seem outdated or questionable, they can still be revisited as typical apparatuses of painting practice methods and revised in the contemporary. *You Ate my Exhibition* offers a chance to dematerialise the studio and relocate the empirical knowledge of the process of painting outside the studio. All the discourses around the daily studio practice are resources to be reanalysed in relation to current painting practice. In this way, by re-evaluating the notion of studio time and the practical processes and stages of painting practice, painting can be updated within itself, as a looped apparatus, and it becomes possible for Chinese aesthetics to find a new continuity in painting. The next chapter will consider the historical apparatus of painting and its context in China, including the potential for further pedagogic application from this thesis, where learning situations and teaching processes have been experimented with in a mobile understanding of spatiality; temporality and materiality.

Chapter 4 Applying practice: histories and pedagogies

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Chapter 4 Introduction

Traits of the Chinese Modernity and Postmodernity has been introduced in the introduction and in Chapter 2. In order to have a whole picture of the Chinese context, this chapter will continue and expand reflections on the apparatus of art and painting in the Chinese Modernity and Postmodernity in a broader background- Chinese historical apparatus and the Western context (especially in the 1970s and 1980s). By revisiting the underlying traces in the development of painting in the Chinese context and its tradition, through the lens of apparatus, may provide some revised understanding of the apparatus of contemporary Chinese art and offer hints for a further application and developments, for example, the pedagogical application from this research- the RCA summer school 2019.

4.1. Chinese historical apparatus and Chinese apparatus of art

4.1.1. The historical apparatus and the art apparatus in the Chinese context

We need to consider the term ‘painting’ again, in order to understand the condition of the apparatus of contemporary Chinese painting. To help with this, I will summarise a short timeline of the development of painting practice in China, in relation to the changes in the historical apparatus in China. The first Chinese ink painting is recorded as having been made during the Warring States period (475 BC – 221 BC)⁵⁶; the earliest

⁵⁶ The earliest known Chinese ink painting is a silk painting depicting a man riding a dragon (人物御龙帛画), created in 221 BC.

aesthetic principles of Chinese ink painting practice were established in Southqi Dynasty (479-502); Chinese ink painting matured in the Tang Dynasty (618-907)⁵⁷ and peaked during the Song Dynasty (960-1279) then declined in the Qing Dynasty (1644 to 1912).⁵⁸ Around 1600, the Jesuit priest Matteo Ricci presented the first oil painting as a gift from the West to Emperor Wan Li.⁵⁹ Oil painting practice started from that point, and gradually began to function as the major painting practice in China, alongside the painting style influenced by Social Realism from the Soviet Union in the 1950s; this was also part of Mao Zedong's strategy of democratization, and later became a large-scale painting style, utilised as poster art and propaganda in the mid-twentieth century in China.

Let us consider the apparatus of art from a historical viewpoint. In China, almost every shift in the art apparatus happened along with changes in cultural and economic structures, as art historian Thomas J. Berghuis states that 'The development of art in China is linked to a strong indigenous discursive connection between art, politics and life [...]'. (Berghuis, 2014: p. 9). Thus, rather than considering the apparatus of art separately, it is crucial to observe shifts in the art apparatus (Appendix i) in relation to changes in the national apparatus (Appendix i) and cultural or economic strategies in China. For example, in the late 1970s, during the period of Chinese Economic Reform (Appendix i, p. 122). This prompted an important article by the art educator and artist Wu Guanzhong, published in the prominent art journal *Meishu* (Art), entitled 'Formalist Aesthetics in Painting' (1979), which reflected on Western and Chinese art systems and educational frameworks. Later, the 1990s, Deng Xiaoping's continuing programme of Opening-up and Reform in China (Appendix i) was reflected in the art system, evidenced in the 'China/Avant-Garde Exhibition' held at the National Art Museum of China in 1989 (widely acknowledged as the first contemporary art exhibition within China). A third shift can be identified a decade later, in 2000, when a sense of an artists' community – an 'inner circle' (Wu, H., 2010: p.351) – emerged in the apparatus of Chinese contemporary art, including the Third Shanghai Biennale(2000), launched as 'China's first public, legitimately organized exhibition of modern art' (Wu, H., 2010: p.351). During the period from 2004 to 2008, there was a national emphasis on the importance of 'economic and cultural diplomacy to the PRC's future development'(Gladston, 2014), as scholar Paul Gladston noted, as well as that of 'putting the CCP's strategy of cultural diplomacy into

⁵⁷ The Tang Dynasty is famous for its blue-and-green landscape ink painting and figurative ink painting. The best-known Chinese ink painters in the Tang Dynasty were Daozi Wu, Liben Yan, Xuan Zhang, Fang Zhou and others.

⁵⁸ The best-known Chinese ink painters in Song Dynasty were Guan Fan, Kui Xia, Gonglin Li, Xi Guo and others. The Chinese ink paintings of the Chinese Emperors in the Qing Dynasty are well known in the Western context; many of these can be found in Western museums: for example, the British Museum; the Victoria and Albert Museum; The Metropolitan Museum of Art and so on.

⁵⁹ The book *Mon Van Genechten (1903-1974): Flemish Missionary and Chinese Painter: Inculturation of Chinese Christian Art* records the details of the gift of the first oil painting for Emperor Wang Li as follows: 'During his first meeting with the Emperor Wan Li (1573-1620) in 1601, Matteo Ricci, S.J. (1552-1610) presented the latter with an oil painting of the Virgin and Child with St. John, and other devotional paintings, sent from Rome and the Philippines'. (Swerts and Ridder, 2002: p.16).

practice' (Gladston, 2014), alongside the Olympic Games in Beijing (2008).

4.1.2 The Chinese relationship to Modernity and Post-modernity

As discussed earlier, in contrast with modernity in the West with a clear sense of a timeline, the condition of modernity in the Chinese context shifts between culture, politics and everyday life, and such is extremely uneven. It may be helpful to recall the Minglu Gao's term 'total modernity', which was introduced in Chapter 2. Gao noted that the beginning of the emergence of Chinese modernity, art was regarded as a part of the whole social modernity of China. It tried to integrate aesthetics, religion and politics as one organism. In connection with this, art historian Berghuis also describes an aesthetic unity between art and politics in the Chinese context:

As the 'aesthetic revolution' becomes envisioned as inherently 'concerned with the totality of humanity' and the 'aesthetic unity of art and politics', this may allow for a conceptual redefining of the 'aesthetic revolution'. This would also allow the definition of the 'aesthetic revolution' and the 'aesthetic regime' to be extended to the context of China, whereby the legacy of the 'aesthetic revolution' might be traced from the Cultural Revolution to examples of recent art in China – both of which are linked to envisioning the emergence of a radical avant-garde movement that to some also connects the 'postmodernist and postsocialist condition'. (Berghuis, 2014: p. 16).

However, if we consider the Chinese context in relation to that of the West during the late 1970s and the 1980s, it is easy to see that China was trapped in its historical and strategical situation in its post-modern condition. Historically, the year 1978 was when China opened up to the West and to Western modes of economic development and a liberal economy (including post-modern Western culture), and formed a market economy: it became open to the global economy and simultaneously became subject to Western cultural codes.⁶⁰ The stance taken was to become open to economic liberalism whilst retaining centralised political control. For the West, the year 1979 became conjunction of the neoclassical economics⁶¹ that emerged and broke with a Keynesian economic approach (Keynes, 1936), and moved from modernity to post-modernity with neoliberal economics; it was also in 1979 that Jean-François Lyotard's book *The*

⁶⁰ For example, the first joint venture, which was signed in 1979, was with Coca Cola.

⁶¹ There are some reflections of *neoclassical economics*: 'Mainstream economics in the twentieth century has been primarily neoclassical economics.' (Henry, 2012, p.vii); and, 'What emerged[in the 1870s] had its roots in the work of Smith and Ricardo but was different enough to merit a new name, neoclassical economics. [...] Neoclassical economics after the 1870s went to produce a remarkable theoretical tradition whose central concerns grew from the analyses of consumer choice and behaviour of firms to encompass topics like income distribution, business cycles, market structures, general equilibrium, foreign trade, growth and economic development'. (Wolff and Resnick, 2012: p.54).

Postmodern Condition was published. The Western postmodern and Chinese postmodern period was not simultaneous. After the Close-door Diplomatic Policies Of China (from 1949 to 1976), including the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), for the Chinese context, it is a catch-up period. In relation to art discourse, for China, the Avant-Garde movement did not have the same function as the Modernist avant-garde in the West. In China, conceptual art (starting from 1985), took on the role of the avant-garde in the Western context, and post-modernity (starting from the 1980s) was a kind of recycling of earlier codes. In the Chinese context, Pop art is closer to the Political Pop (for instance the propaganda paintings) or Cynical Realism which prevailed in the 1990s in China. Strategically, with strict government supervision, the Chinese condition of post-modernity was an uneven one. The 1989 'China/Avant-Garde Exhibition' at the National Art Museum in Beijing was a typical example: it was viewed as the beginning of the Chinese Avant-Garde movement and the Post-modernist period in China, but the exhibition was shut down several times by the Chinese police because of the risks to political security it posed.

However, this difference in the original context might provide a new understanding of the apparatus within contemporary art and art practice, instead of viewing it through a Western lens. In contemporary Chinese context, it is important to make a distinction between the practical strategies of the Chinese artists who mainly rely on Western funding or critical reception – for example, the earlier work of Jianwei Wang. Jianwei Wang was accepted as an important figure in Chinese experimental art and the first Chinese artist, along with Mengbo Feng, to exhibit, at the important European exhibition Documenta X, and that of Chinese artists who mostly rely on the Chinese context, such as Xingwei Wang and Liu Xiaodong. I will return to this later.

4.1.3 The Chinese context and traditions: a trend of forgetting (amnesia)

Within this original context, what is the Chinese relationship to modernity, or post-modernity, in its art history? As demonstrated above, it is impossible to separate the developments of the art system from the shifts of national cultural and political strategies in the Chinese context. But what has been forgotten in this Chinese context? Can anything of the original trajectory of ink painting practice in relation to the Chinese thoughts on humanity and nature, be salvaged for contemporary Chinese reflections on painting practice? This question is essential because it questions the definition of Chinese contemporary painting, and will impact on the acknowledgement of the Chinese contribution to the apparatus of contemporary art in the future. It is a question not only for art critics but also for contemporary art practitioners.

In terms of contemporary art practice and practitioners, there is a trend in the development of contemporary art cannot be ignored, especially among the current younger generation of Chinese artists, for the need to be visible in China. Some Chinese

artists seem uninterested in, or even forgetful of, Chinese tradition and instead choose to practice and utilise fragmented notions from Western philosophy, contributing what could be seen as a 'short-termism', or utilitarian practice, to contemporary Chinese art. Chinese art theorist Gao Minglu, at the University of Pittsburgh, expressed his concern about this trend that he detected in the work of certain Chinese artists in the 1980s, thus:

I think it [this trend of disregarding the traditional] affects the ability an artist has when creating and figuring out an individual methodology. They may be familiar with what they read in books, but sometimes it's a kind of copying, or they just used some kind of philosophy as a theme and inspiration in painting. For certain periods it's okay to do this, but for the long-term, it's hard to sustain. [...] Interestingly, I have a feeling that artists who are not interested in combining traditional Chinese culture and Western philosophy will not be able to establish something and to finish these cultural tasks. [...] I think it's important for artists to have a very broad knowledge and view about our cultural history, but unfortunately, in the 1980s, I found that there are some artists who disregard the traditional. (Materials of the Future. Minglu Gao's interview, 2009).

Meanwhile, more recently, curator Pauline J. Yao has critiqued some contemporary Chinese artists' approach of re-enacting Western movements, styles or tropes in the local context, citing work shown in exhibitions in China:

The current discourse surrounding these spaces is largely illustrative – using the presence or existence of alternative spaces as evidence of new critical perspectives or new spheres of artistic activity happening today – but [this] comes with little consideration or deeper dynamics that inform what they do and the types of spaces they inhabit. (Yao, 2018).

Importantly, this trend of applying new models whilst forgetting the historical context in contemporary practice is not confined to the current moment. Historically, there have been two other periods of forgetting the original Chinese context. The first moment is in the period of early Modernism, in the Chinese context. To some degree, it can be argued that China's introduction to the Western market was the first moment of forgetting the original Chinese traditions. The fact that Western oil painting developed in China and replaced the role of ink painting can be seen as an indication of this. The compositional use of 'floating perspective' within traditional Chinese ink painting, as well as the idea of learning from nature and freedom (spirit) so crucial to ancient Chinese classical traditions, were not taken forward as oil painting developed in 20th Century China. Chinese artists adopted Western methods of representation through observation and other practical methods of oil painting in the early twentieth century.⁶² The second

⁶² As the Chinese art critic Fangzhou Jia notes: 'In the course of nearly a century, Chinese oil painting has experienced three major periods of development. The first period of development was in the 1930s when a group of young oil painters studying abroad returned to China after the May 4th movement. This formed Chinese oil painting's first development upsurge. The second boom

moment of forgetting was the later 1990s and the year 2000, as discussed earlier in Chapter 2, Hung Wu noted a ‘pattern of rupture’ in the artist’s practice after 1989, which was a ‘deep ruptures as a general historical/psychological condition for artistic and intellectual creativity’ caused by a series of political events. (Wu, H., 2008, in Condee, et al., eds, 2008: p.293).

For the Chinese artists, I suggest revisiting the practice of painting in relation to the notion of the studio, through the lens of apparatus of painting, rather than attempting to overturn it. In doing this, it may be possible to divest the question ‘what is painting’ of any preconditions. This approach can also be fruitfully extended into the pedagogy of painting. For me, as an art student who has studied in both the traditional Chinese art training system and the educational context of the Western studio and cross-disciplinary academic environment, I consider this point particularly important. Indeed, the ramifications of such an approach in the Chinese context, where the process of the art training in the academic art studio practice is quite rigid could be immense. This critical view, of an unfixed or expansive understanding of *painting*, which forms the core of my practice, became the driver for the workshop I organized at the RCA summer school course in 2019.

4.2 The pedagogical application: RCA summer school workshop, 2019

4.2.1 On the summer school

In order to test the ideas that that emerged in this research, particularly the idea of the ‘loop’ detected in my own art practice, I sought an opportunity to apply these ideas within a pedagogical context. This came between 22 July and 3 August 2019 when I developed and co-led a two-week short course, ‘ArtFocus Pushing Boundaries: Explorative Art Practices’, an RCA Short Course, with a group of 20 open-minded Chinese students⁶³ from the China Academy of Art, in the painting studios at the RCA Battersea campus.⁶⁴ I

in the development of oil painting was in the 1950s and 1960s, after the founding of the People's Republic of China. During the 1950s and 1960s, the system of realism in Chinese oil painting was greatly developed from the Soviet tradition. The past two decades since the late 1970s have been the third and most important period for the development of Chinese oil painting. [Many famous movements and exhibitions emerged, for example the 1985 New Wave movement, and 1989 the ‘China/Avant-Garde Exhibition’]. (Jia, n.d., *my translation*).

⁶³ The Chinese artist students were selected by a Chinese agency from the BA and MA students in the Oil Painting programme and Ink Painting programme at China Academy of Arts in Hangzhou. They have a deep interest in the visual arts and painting-related practice. A group presentation of their earlier work was held at the first day of the summer school, in the afternoon of 22nd July 2019.

⁶⁴ I was selected for this employed by the Dean of the School of Arts and Humanities on the basis of my work as an artist and teacher, as well as my understanding and knowledge of the Chinese art and education system. The workshops I devised were developed in relation to the educational aims and objectives and agreed with both with the co-workshop lead (Sharon Young) as well as the course’s academic mentor (Professor Rebecca Fortnum) and the Executive Education team (led by Dr Arantxa Echarte)

outlined the approach in the course handbook:

The concept of ‘pushing boundaries’ in artistic practice implies the adoption by artists of methods to change existing disciplines and find ways to approach the unknown. The boundaries in relation to contemporary art practice are many and varied; for example, they can be around the use of the studio; established empirical knowledge; Eastern or Western cultural traditions and understanding, or even the boundary between life and art. In the contemporary art context, the method of working or practising through various boundaries of cultural backgrounds and contexts is crucial within an environment where information and images travel around the globe at high speed. This two-week intensive summer school sought to engage in explorative and innovative practices of making and thinking, from both Eastern and Western perspectives.⁶⁵

Devising and teaching a one-day workshop during the two-week summer school allowed me to test some of the thinking developed in this thesis in relation to painting studio practice. The structure of the short course built on and was inspired by the idea of the role of empirical knowledge in the process of painting studio practice, using key texts from the book of essays *On Not Knowing: How Artists Think* (2013) that explores the role of not knowing in the artist's process, within a Western context. The point of my workshop was to test and practice different practical models from both Chinese and Western contexts to allow reflection on the art students' own methodologies. This workshop also allowed the students to reflect on their own studio painting practice ‘baggage’, brought with them from their Chinese background into the Western context of the RCA studios in London.

4.2.2 On my workshop

My workshop ‘Studio as Workshop: Three strategies from late 20th-century studio practice till now’⁶⁶ was a practical and experimental chance to test the relationships between the student and the studio space, approaches to making and studio practice methods. I conceived of the workshop as a proposal to involve the student in the pedagogic process. In particular, the workshop aimed to rethink the question related to the notion of *loop*: how to practice in the studio when the studio functions as part of the work rather than just as a site of production. Three key questions are tested in this

and subject to their ethical processes. Documenting and photographing along the course and workshop were with the permission of the students. Documenting and photographing the course and workshops was with the permission of the students involved.

⁶⁵ I participated in the development of a handbook for the workshop: ‘ArtFocus Pushing Boundaries: Explorative Art Practices, School of Arts and Humanities RCA Short Courses’. This content is on Page 5 of this handbook.

⁶⁶ My workshop was held in the Sackler Painting studio at the RCA's Battersea campus, 26th July 2019.

workshop:

- i) How to start thinking about different practice methods in the contemporary context, and how to locate them into your practice
- ii) What are the possibilities of different methods of practice in both the Western and Chinese contexts?
- iii) What are the methodologies that Western artists apply in their studio practice and actions?

In this workshop, I started by introducing three approaches to artistic practice from China and the West as examples of strategies employed by artists from late-twentieth-century studio practice to the present. I gave a short introduction to each approach, which I characterised as ‘Limits’, ‘Endurance’ and ‘Duration’. In effect, these approaches are examples that derive from various models of artistic practice. In the course of the workshop, I relied on students utilising their previous training in painting and drawing (for example, the skill of drawing a straight line by hand is one of the basic skills that a student needs to practice at the beginning of their training class, before the entrance exam for fine art institutions in China). This meant that students were unconsciously reflecting on their previous painting and the practical skills intrinsic to the Chinese educational system. More precisely, the information is summarised in the table below:

Workshop Methods	Literature review (reading group ⁶⁷ on Wednesday 24th July); introduction ⁶⁸ to related Western artists’ practice in three contemporary practical approaches (Approach one: Limits; Approach Two: Endurance; Approach Three: Duration); hands-on group practice; collaborations, group crits.
Practical Workshop Approaches	Three practical approaches were introduced in the workshop. The methodology in each approach relates the group practice to different elements from the daily studio practice, in order to let the students observe their own activities/movements inside the studio space, which can be utilised as a thinking method. Each approach had an introduction and a presentation of related

⁶⁷ Based on the reading group on Wednesday 24th July that Sharon Young and I led, which functioned as a literature review in relation to the painting students’ previous practice and provided context for my workshop on Friday 26 July. The reading materials were four texts from the following book” E. Fisher, R. Fortnum, (eds.), 2013. *On Not Knowing: How Artists Think*, London: Black Dog Publishing. The four texts are: 1) Rachel Jones: On the value of not knowing: wonder, beginning again and letting; 2) Rebecca Fortnum: Creative accounting: not knowing in talking and making; 3) Phyllida Barlow in conversation with Elizabeth Fisher: Unidentified foreign objects; 4.) Emma Cocker: Tactics for not knowing: preparing for the unexpected.

⁶⁸ For each approach, the related artist examples are: Approach One: Limits (related artist examples: Bruce Nauman, Richard Long, Alison Wilding, Iza Genzken, Zhijie Qiu, Sunyuan and Pengyu); Approach Two: Endurance (related artist examples: Robert Smithson, Vito Acconci, Dryden Goodwin, Mike Nelson. Xu Bing, Jianwei Wang); Approach Three: Duration (related artist examples: Richard Serra, Antony Gormley, Michael Majerus, Neil Raitt, Friedrich Kunath. Yuyang Wang, Dong Song, Guoqiang Cai).

	<p>artists’ practices – group practice – group discussion – clean up.</p> <p>The related group practices in each approach unit were:</p> <p><u>Approach one: Limits</u> Related group practice: How to mark 2-3 metres from one point in the space? Students use black/red/blue ropes and ropes to “sketch” in the space of the studio (only black/red/blue ropes offered as material). Several points and hooks on the wall and floor were provided.</p> <p><u>Approach Two: Endurance</u> Related group practice: practice to draw a straight line continuously on the wall and the ground. A long roll of paper was hung on the three walls of the group studio and the ground of the corridor continuously. Students drew a straight line together by hand with charcoal, as a relay action (once one person finished, the next student continue based on the last person’s work).</p> <p><u>Approach Three: Duration</u> Related group practice: 1) Make a 10-second video by phone of a tree and share in Wechat group⁶⁹ 2) draw or paint a tree from another’s video or photo and describe “my tree” and “other’s tree”.</p>
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This workshop could be described as a classroom containing a community of people, some of whom might be competitive and others of whom might be confused at the beginning. What I offered was a chance to learn from each other as well as to learn from the situation, and to reflect on their earlier studio practice and training experiences. My hope was that the student might find a new meaning or application of what they learnt in China through experiments with a new environment, city, cultural context and methods. Through doing the workshop, the excitement of experimenting together helps the participants open up to unanticipated possibilities.

Most importantly, this workshop aimed to challenge preconceptions about ‘what painting is’ that the Chinese students had formed in their earlier academic studio practice in China, especially the fixed and limited definitions of oil or ink painting in their limited conception of painting in the Chinese academic painting studios.⁷⁰ As with my own practice, I am interested in the reality that occurs in the process of painting, which includes everything that occurs in the making of a painting that is not necessarily present in the end product. I am particularly interested in events and materials that emerge through group collaborations as group practice is not common in Chinese art

⁶⁹ ‘WeChat is a Chinese multi-purpose messaging, social media and mobile payment app developed by Tencent. It was first released in 2011 and became one of the world’s largest standalone mobile apps in 2018, with over 1 billion monthly active users.’ (Kharpal, 2019).

⁷⁰ More details on the basic framework of the Chinese academic Fine Art Programme are given in Footnote 27, p. 53-54.

education. This workshop was a space, a material and de-materialized practice, an apparatus configured around playing, and not a repetition of a formula.



Fig 4-1 Approach one: Limits. Images of the workshop, 26th July 2019. [Photo taken by Yifei He, 26th July 2019]. Group practice: How to mark 2-3 meters from one point in the space.



Fig 4-2 Details from Approach one. [Photo taken by Yifei He, 26th July 2019].

Further, the art students and the artwork are in a dynamic or *temporal* relationship in the process of their studio practice in this workshop. There is no longer a stable relationship between the artist and the canvas, or between the painter and the studio. By taking the principles of the academic Chinese studio painting practice framework, they could refocus and reapply them creatively to the new process. In this way, the present moment is able to respond to the principles from the framework of traditional practice. In other words, the approach becomes what I have termed a *looped apparatus*. By making the

students conscious of the questions implicit in studio activity, such as *how do I start my practice in space? Or how do I relate to the person next to me?* They developed an awareness of their own processes of practice. For example, in Approach Two: Endurance (see images below), the related group activity involved the students in drawing a straight line on the wall and on the ground continuously, which allowed them to apply their previous skill of drawing a straight line by hand (from their training class for the entrance exam for fine art institutions in China) and observe their activities/movements inside the studio space, which could be utilised as a thinking method.

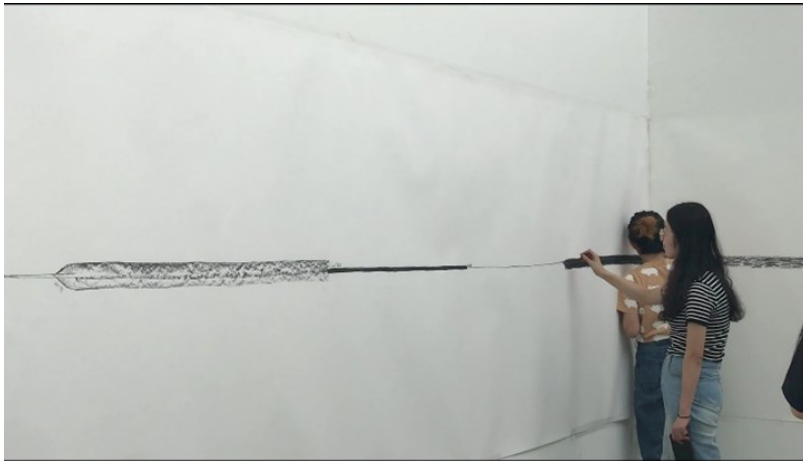


Fig 4-3 Approach Two: Endurance. Images of the workshop, 26th July 2019. (Three images continue in the next page.) [Photo taken by Kaijia Zheng, 26th July 2019]. Group practice: practice drawing a straight line continuously on the wall and the ground.



Fig 4-4 Details from Approach Two. [Photo taken by Kaijia Zheng, 26th July 2019].



Left: Fig 4-5 Details from Approach Two. [Photo taken by Yifei He, 26th July 2019].

Right: Fig 4-6 Details from Approach Two. [Photo taken by Yifei He, 26th July 2019].

One aspect of this workshop, I was interested in observing that the Chinese students from the traditional Ink Painting and Oil Painting programmes had an open attitude to new approaches outside of their original context. Because of the strict conventions of their practice, one might expect that these students not to have been open to experimentation. However, this workshop aimed to encourage the questioning of the definition of painting and painting practice, rather than preserving it within a rigid framework. If the students' attitude had been closed, the whole workshop would have been much more problematic and not so successful.

Another issue that I came to understand was the power of institutions and skill-based memories and habits; the students had to learn to do something different from what they learnt before – a process of 'learning from unlearning'. The studio's space gives a framework or a pattern of behaviour. In the painting studio, what the students encountered were two realms of studio practice: the realm of the internalised Chinese institutional painting practice that they brought with them and the new context of the Western studio practice which was the current site they encountered. They do not lose their previous skills - they challenge, use and transform them.

Furthermore, this workshop was a process of teaching *non-techniques*, which fundamentally reverses the Chinese students' practice habits. In this workshop, the students' previous painting practice was a living content that they could play with, rather than mechanically perform. The workshop offered different operations, different approaches to viewing an apparatus in painting and different ways of thinking about

practical skills acquired previously. For example, Approach Three asked them to make a 10-second smartphone video of a tree to share in a WeChat group, and then paint a tree from another's video or photo and describe 'my tree' and 'someone else's tree'. In this group practice, the activities of drawing or painting were extended through social media information exchange. The tree was chosen for its place within the iconography of Chinese painting, a symbol of the perfection of nature that has endured. A student who took part in this workshop would be encountering different approaches to, and methods of representation of, *the tree*, social media, group activities, images, choice, archives, texts, installations. The works produced were shown as a collage, taking up a whole wall of drawings and texts, with projections of their original videos and images on the other side of the wall. Surprisingly, when we came to share the work as a group, some students had already explored an intersubjective view: that is, a view between the artist (*subject*) and the object (*the tree*).



Fig 4-7 Approach Three: Duration. Images of the workshop, 26th July 2019. [Photo taken by Kaijia Zheng, 26th July 2019]. Group practice: 1) Make a 10-second video by phone of a tree and share in Wechat group, 2) draw or paint a tree from another's video or photo and describe "my tree" and "another's tree".



Left: Fig 4-8 Details from Approach Three. [Photo taken by Kaijia Zheng, 26th July 2019].

Right: Fig 4-9 Details from Approach Three. [Photo taken by Kaijia Zheng, 26th July 2019].

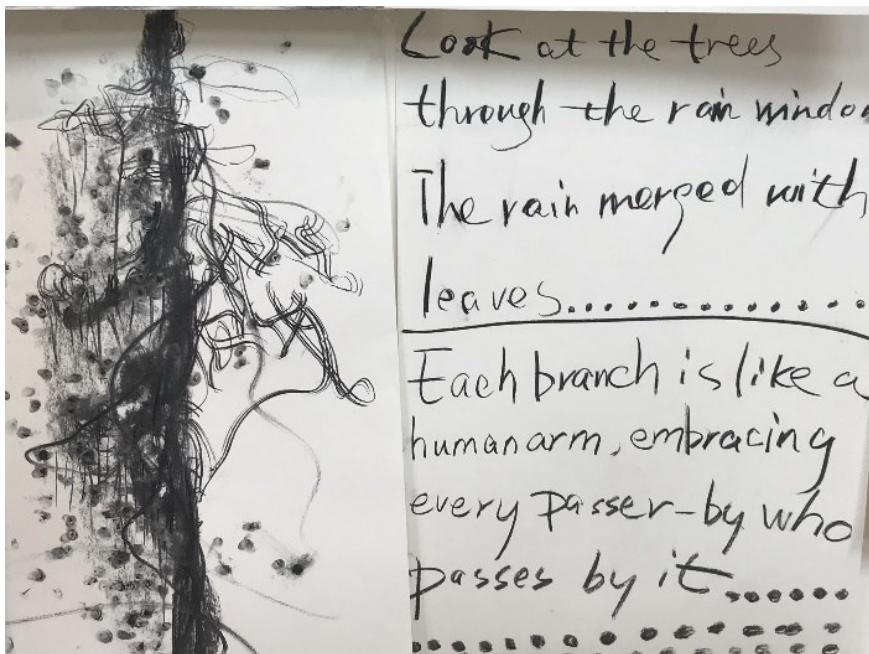


Fig 4-10 Details from Approach Three. [Photo taken by Yifei He, 26th July 2019].

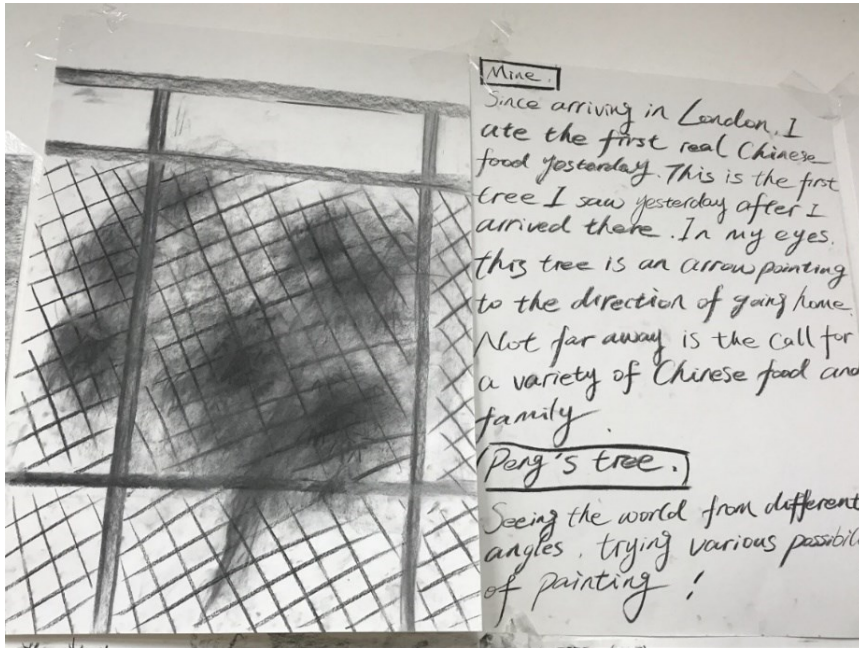


Fig 4-11 Details from Approach Three. [Photo taken by Yifei He, 26th July 2019].

The goal of this workshop was developed by activating and reutilising the empirical knowledge and experiences of skills training from the framework of Chinese academic painting. Meanwhile, this workshop gave a second life to the inflexible studio painting practice in the Chinese context. More specifically, the usual rhetoric of progress is to say that the skills acquired from an earlier period are past and finished – but in this workshop, the notion of time was suspended. Rather than ignoring or rejecting the traditional painting skills acquired during their Chinese education, those experiences were reimagined and repurposed within the creative process, allowing the understanding of studio painting practice to be revisited in the process of group activities.

The feedback from my workshop was positive, and the students were deeply engaged during the whole process. Although the approaches can be adjusted according to different students, several key points should be retained if this workshop is replicated with other students from different levels and backgrounds:

- i) The opening up and questioning the understanding of existing notions or models
- ii) The method of reviewing the relationship between the work and its surroundings (studio space, exhibition space or the outside environment).
- iii) The ability and courage to review or reverse existing models, and the desire to work across different cultural contexts (in this case, the Chinese and Western contexts, etc.).

The outcomes of this pedagogical experiment prompted the following realisations.

Chinese students in the Chinese higher education system have the potential to understand other teaching and practice models, including an expanded and opened-up framework for practice. My experience has been that most Chinese art students are open-minded. The 'looped' condition of thinking painting practice can be applied as the theoretical underpinning for this experimental workshop, and could be extended indefinitely over a course within the Chinese (or Western) educational systems. The form of this experimental workshop can be adapted to all kinds of educational set-ups. The form of the workshop works well in the context of academic institutions, becoming a platform, an exhibition with documents, a participatory event and a round-table seminar based on abstract and concrete happenings in the process of artistic practice. A developed understanding of how thinking painting practice through the lens of the apparatus has the potential for new pedagogical practice and thinking.

Conclusion

My initial research was based on the relationship of the studio, painting practice and the exhibition space. At the outset, I developed a question central to my own practice, 'When and where does a painting begin and end?', as a way of speculating about the current conditions of Chinese painting practice, which I saw as largely unresponsive to Western discourses around the studio. My belief was that historically, and particularly in the Chinese context, discourse around painting studio space and its processes has been underdeveloped theoretically, because it has been mainly viewed as being both private and thus largely invisible, whereas the exhibition site is highly charged through both its visibility and public scrutiny. This creates a measure for art, its value system and its aesthetic reflection. Structurally, as Buren establishes, the relationship between the studio and gallery has been largely defined along the lines of a binary separation. What I was starting to investigate was the limits of this structure, which began to occur when painting as a pure medium was in dialogue with notions related to the extended field of art practice. Yet these notions appeared as binary conditions: that of being medium-specific (in the Western context: 1.1; in the Chinese context: 2.1). Binary conditions invariably introduce gaps in the level of discourse. What appeared to be necessary for me to advance on the level of both theory and practice was a mobile and heterogeneous conceptual frame, and this was provided by Foucault's notion of the apparatus, or *dispositif*. Within the Chinese context, there are three schemas of painting practice related to the discrete traditions embedded within history. More precisely, the three schemas are the dualistic condition of the formal studio painting practice; the temporal condition of painting practice within the specific Chinese context and the emerging networked condition. The proposition of the networked condition is in the process of forming and even beyond contemporary, derives in part from this understanding of this play of the other two conditions within this framework. In relation to contemporary Chinese painting practice, taking the interviewed artists as examples, some artists continue to work according to the dualistic painting studio condition (Xingwei Wang, Ruozhe Xue, etc.); several artists can work across all three conditions (Jianwei Wang, Xiaokang Sun, Tian Tan, etc.) and some of them practice within networked conditions (Jianwei Wang, Z Factory, etc.).

My question from the start was not only how to give an account through which various ideas about studio practice might arise, but also how I might move across these traditions in order to draw upon the possibility of creating different frameworks from them. In effect, it was the relationship of forces at play that attracted me within this analysis. From an artist's perspective, given the proposed mobility of such a shift, this would imply that spaces, gestures, material practices, institutions, discourses, memory and voices can all be ordered in quite different ways and for different ends. By researching the question of when and where a painting begins and ends, I propose rethinking painting as a continuous system of both history and the social relations which govern it, including a variable value system which has been generated from these relationships, thus embodying the potential of what art is.

Importantly, the primary research question in my research should be considered in relation to three conditions. First, it is revealed to be thinking beyond the binary condition of the understanding of the studio's function in relation to public spaces, gallery or museum spaces. The function of the studio in relation to painting practice depends on the moment at which the artist chooses which condition or conditions of apparatus they apply in relation to the specific context. The studio can be a productive space, an archival space, research space, as well as a mobile or virtual space. Second, definitions of the beginnings or endings of a painting practice are embodied in its related contexts. More precisely as discussed, in the contemporary Chinese context, there are three conditions of the painting practice that imply various beginnings and endings in painting practice: in the dualistic condition, painting starts when the artist's brush or pen hits the surface of the medium, and ends as finished statements on the medium's surface; in the temporal condition, the painting is in a more flexible situation that enables painting happens on canvas, and in the context of space, or in conceptual space and so forth; in the networked condition, painting practice is frequently considered as part of a networked relationship between materials, contexts, discourses and thinking modes, which fundamentally frees painting practice from the canvas and studio. In the contemporary Western context, the networked condition is more common: it enables the artist to utilise their formal painting-related experiences and knowledge among various materials, frameworks and institutions. Third, the answer to this research question suggests the possibility of adopting different ways of learning and a more embodied relationship to teaching in the future, especially in the Chinese context. In this way, the answer to this question is opened up and expanded, as painting's future issue new demands to painters, particularly contemporary Chinese painters.

My art practice, here principally discussed in Chapter 3, has led my research towards a reflection on the notion of apparatus, including the idea of the loop. More precisely, my practice has applied the looped condition of thinking and learning that emerged both from the Chinese classical context and Gregory Bateson's notion of "deutero-learning", which enabled me to experiment with different aspects of the painting apparatus and reflect back to fundamental thinking about what a painting practice is. For instance, the practice of paying attention to the practical process as an artwork, exemplified by my work *What Happens in the Studio Stays in the Studio*; or the work, *Emotional Labour*, an exhibition as research on what a painting practice and a studio can mean in a gallery space; or *You Ate My Exhibition*, the formal painting practice as a gesture in outdoor conditions; and further applications in the pedagogical context, such as the summer school short course and workshop.

Apart from the contribution of my own practice to the field of contemporary Chinese painting, there are three primary outcomes from this research. One is a philosophical ramification (the application of Foucault's concept of the apparatus in analysing painting practice). It provides an alternative approach (through the lens of apparatus, for instance) to review or understand the painting practice in the current Chinese

context. Secondly, this research offers a positive reflection on the traditions of painting practice in the Chinese context and comes up with an updated understanding of the notion of painting and notion of the studio. More precisely, by developing an understanding of the apparatus of Chinese Classical painting practice (focused on the non-dual process of thinking and learning in nature), a revised version of painting practice that is responsive to the contemporary Chinese context emerges, which also develops a new approach to the restoration of the Chinese traditions and concepts. Thirdly, the other has critical and practical implications in terms of thinking about painting's teaching and learning models, and which speculate on a potential contribution to fine art teaching in higher education in China. The future plan, formed as a result of the discoveries made during this workshop, would be to create a research team to study different teaching patterns through the lens of apparatus, in the painting programmes in the Chinese institutions of Fine Art, and, in doing so, develop an experimental curriculum in the academic painting programme in China, that would be based on this research's findings and reflections. It is a new way of thinking about painting practice, and a new way of trying to teach, within the (post-) contemporary context. By revisiting the notions of painting and studio and unfixing them, I believe I have been able to develop further applications and greater potential for contemporary Chinese painting, particularly in relation to the revisiting of its cultural heritage.

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Appendix i

A brief timeline of changes in art apparatus and historical apparatus in China

Changes in art apparatus in China	Changes in historical apparatus in China
<p>1950 Central Academy of Fine Art (CAFA) founded in Beijing; Beihong Xu was the first Chairman of CAFA. The foundation of the framework of the oil painting programme in the Fine Art School was established by Xu.</p> <p>1966-1976 Chinese Cultural Revolution.</p> <p>Late- 1970s Scar Art period</p> <p>1979 The artist and art educator Guanzhong Wu published his essay 'Formalist Aesthetics in Painting' in the prominent journal <i>Meishu</i> (Art).</p> <p>1979 The Stars Art Group exhibition. The Stars Art Group was the first group to establish their 'unofficial' position in post-Cultural Revolution Art by holding an exhibition on the street outside the National Art Gallery in 1979. The tradition of political art the Stars Group established was adopted by many experimental artists in 1985 New Art Wave Movement and finally culminated in the 1989 'China/Avant-Garde Exhibition'. (Wu, H., 2001: p.14).</p> <p>1985 New Wave Movement 'The 85 New Wave Movement was a group movement because in only two years (1985 and 1986), seventy-nine</p>	<p>1966-1976 Chinese Cultural Revolution.</p> <p>1972 Mao Zedong. Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art 'The two main points were that (1) all art should reflect the life of the working class and consider them as an audience, and (2) that art should serve politics, and specifically, the advancement of socialism.'(Chang, L.S., 1983: 87-93).</p> <p>1978 Chinese Economic Reform The Chinese Economic Reform features the 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' and 'socialist market economy" in China, highlighted by Deng Xiaoping on 'The Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh CPC Central Committee', 18 December 1978.</p>

self-organized avant-garde art groups, including more than 2,250 of the nation's young artists, emerged to organize exhibitions, hold conferences and write manifestos and articles about their art. Related artists: Wang Guangyi, Huang Yong Ping, Zhang Xiaogang, Zhang Peili, Wang Du and many others.' (Wu, H., 2010: p.51).

1989

'China/Avant-Garde Exhibition' at the National Art Museum of China

Curated by Minglu Gao, Xianting Li, Dian Fan, Dawei Fei, Hanru Hou. Related artists: Gu Wenda, Xiao Lu, Xiamen Dada group, Huang Yongping, Wei Guanqin, Xia xiaowan, Pang Maoyuan and so on.

'The *China/Avant-Garde* Exhibition in February 1989 is remembered as one of the most important events in the history of contemporary Chinese art, not only because of its unprecedented size and comprehensiveness in showcasing avant-garde art, but also for its enormous social impact. In spite of the museum's preconditions, several artists staged challenging performances in the gallery, including a shooting event, which instantly caused the exhibition to be suspended.[...] The National Art Gallery was transformed into a solemn installation: long black banners, extending from the street to the exhibition hall, bore the emblem of the exhibition- a "No U-Turn" traffic sign- signalling "no turning back".'(Wu, H., 2010: p.113).

1992 Chinese Critic Li Xianting's essay 'Apathy and Deconstruction in Post-'89 Art: Analyzing the Trends of "Cynical Realism" and "Political Pop"'

The 1990s

'Deng Xiaoping's continuing programme of Opening up and Reform.' (Gladston, 2014).

published.

During the 1990s, especially from 1994 onwards, many of the artists preferred the term ‘contemporary art’ (*dangdai yishu*) or ‘experimental art’ (*shiyan yishu*) instead. (Wu, H., 2010: p.184).

The mid-1990s artists’ community – or ‘inner circle’ – emerged.

A prerequisite for being identified as an ‘artist’ has a notable presence at various events, including exhibition openings and gatherings where one can meet different types of people. If mentored by a senior person from ‘within the inner circle’ then one can get twice the results for half the effort. (Wu, 2010: p.309). With art marketization, the distance between individual artists is increasingly wide. This has resulted in the continuous formation of ‘inner circles’ and individualization among artists. (Wu, H., 2010: p.309).

2000 and after: artists’ districts appeared.

The discourse of contemporary Chinese art around the year 2000 and afterwards is closely related to the trend of commercialization: the emergence of a new type of urban art district. Unlike previous ‘artists’ villages’ which are often located in cheap, semi-rural areas, this type of district is geographically and culturally connected to the expanding downtown of a major city and integrates previously separate art and entertainment spaces into a single, highly concentrated area. (Wu, H., 2010: p.400).

2000 There is a so-called “exhibition

2001

China became a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) on 11 December 2001. (China. Member information. WTO)

2001

Seventh National Congress of The China Federation of Literary and Art Circles

‘President Jiang Zemin gave a brief summary of the CCP’s emerging view of culture as part of the PRC’s involvement in international competition, and emphasising the strategic significance of culture as part of a competitive global environment.’ (Gladston, 2014).

2002

16th National Congress

The official report states that ‘In the current market economy, developing cultural industries are a very important way to achieve socialist cultural prosperity and to meet the spiritual and cultural needs of the people.’ (Gladston, 2014).

<p>fever” for experimental art (Wu, 2001:9).</p> <p>The Third Shanghai Biennale. One of the projects of the ‘China Shanghai International Arts Festival’ hosted by the Ministry of Culture of the People’s Republic of China and the Shanghai Municipal People’s Government. Curated by Hanru Hou, Toshio Shimizu, Qing Zhang, Xun Li.</p> <p>2005 The Second Guangzhou Triennial: BEYOND: an extraordinary space of experimentation for modernization. Curated by Hou Hanru, Hans Ulrich Obrist, Guo Xiaoyan, at Guangdong Museum of Contemporary Guangzhou (China).</p> <p>2006-2008 Rapid expansion and slow-down Before 2000, Beijing had only five galleries specializing in contemporary art; by 2008 (the Beijing Olympic Games) there were more than 300. At least 100 new galleries also opened their doors in Shanghai during the same period. (Wu, H., 2010: p.399). The whole system of contemporary art in China slowed down following the global financial crisis.</p>	<p>2004 ‘Hu Jintao, the then General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee, stressed the importance of economic and cultural diplomacy to the PRC’s future development, as well as that of putting the CCP’s strategy of cultural diplomacy into practice.’ (Gladston, 2014).</p> <p>2007 ‘Hu further asserted the importance of the PRC’s international diplomacy by calling for improvements in the country’s use of soft power.’ (Gladston, 2014).</p> <p>2008 Beijing Olympic Games</p> <p>2011 Hu went still further by arguing that the PRC’s cultural industries had been greatly beneficial to the process of social and economic reform and that they were a crucial aspect of the PRC’s projection of soft power on the international stage. (Gladston, 2014).</p>
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Appendix ii Examples of transcripts of interviews with Chinese artists (undertaken in 2018, translation by the author).

Short Biographies (sources indicated)

Wang Jianwei is an artist who has been active in Chinese contemporary art since the 1970s. Wang received a B.F.A. from Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts in Hangzhou (later known as the China Academy of Art), China, in 1988, where he trained as a painter. Wang's work is experimental in medium and form. He creates large video and installation works, often incorporating sculpture and performance. These works attempt to examine the relationship between art and social reality, often working from the notion that the production of artwork is a performance and a rehearsal. He aspires to integrate history, philosophy, literature, and Modernist criticism, as well as the dramas of daily life into his work. His work was shown in solo exhibitions at Hong Kong Arts Centre (1992), the Walker Art Center (2002), and Chambers Fine Art in New York (2005). Additionally, his work has been shown in group exhibitions at venues across China, as well as the Gwanju Biennale (1995), Documenta X (1997), the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Denmark (1998), MoMA PS1 (1998), Queens Museum of Art (2001), the São Paulo Biennale (2002), Pompidou Centre, Paris (2003), the Walker Art Center (2003), the Venice Biennale (2003), and Hebbel am Ufer, Berlin (2007). Wang's work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at Today Art Museum, Beijing (2009); Kaserne Basel, Switzerland (2010); Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing (2011); and Long March Space, Beijing (2013). Wang's work was also exhibited at the Sharjah Biennale (2013). His installation and performance at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 'Wang Jianwei: Time Temple' (2014-2015), explored conceptions and experiences of time in a contemporary context. (Jianwei Wang, *Foundation for Contemporary Arts*. Available at: <https://www.foundationforcontemporaryarts.org/recipients/wang-jianwei>)

Xingwei Wang is a Beijing-based artist. He was born in Shenyang, China, 1969. He studied at Shenyang Normal University, and now lives and works in Beijing. Selected Solo show: 2019: The Code of Physiognomy, Galerie Urs Meile, 798 space, Beijing, China. Shenyang Night, Galerie Urs Meile, Caochangdi space, Beijing, China. 2016: Honor and Disgrace, Organised by Galerie Urs Meile, Supported by Platform China; Exhibition Venue: Platform China, Beijing, China. Selected group show: 2019: Chinese Whispers 中国私语 - Recent Art from the Sigg Collection, MAK Museum für Angewandte Kunst, Vienna, Austria. 2018: Force as Fulcrum - Selected works from the collection of Wang Bing & Xue Bing, New Century Art Foundation, Beijing, China. The Orientation and Taste of New Painting, B131, Zhi Art Space, Huxi Commune, Sichuan Fine Arts Institute, Chongqing, China Art and China after 1989: Theater of the World, Museum Guggenheim, Bilbao. (Galerie Ursmeile. n.d. *Xingwei Wang Biography*. [Online]. Available at: <https://galerieursmeile.com/en/artists/artists/wang-xingwei//biography.html>).

Xun Yang is an artist; he was born in Chongqing, Sichuan Province, in Southern China. 1981. He obtained his Bachelor's degree (oil painting department) from the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute, and now lives and works in Beijing. He is the Member of the China Artists Association and a Member of the Sichuan Artists Association. His work presented at Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, the Iberia Center for Contemporary Art, the Rockbund Gallery, the Moscow Museum of Modern Art, and the National Art Museum of China. (Xun Yang, Biography. Artand. [Online]. Available at: <http://artand.cn/yangxun/about>)

Tian Tan is an artist (b. 1988, Beijing). He graduated from the Department of Fine Arts at Kingston University, London, and is studying for his MFA at Hunter College. He has a solo exhibition presented at White Space Beijing, Beijing, China, and a group show at Yuz Museum, Shanghai, China, Minsheng Art Museum, Shanghai, China and UCCA, Beijing, China. (Tian Tan, About. Available at: <http://www.tan-tian.com/contact/>).

Ruozhe Xue is a painter, born in 1987, Xuzhou, China. He graduated from MA Painting, Royal College of Art, London, in 2015. He has had a solo show at Beijing Art Now Gallery, Beijing and Rosenfeld Porcini, London, and a group show at Galleria Mazzoli, Modena, West Bund Art & Design Fair, Shanghai and Art Basel, Hong Kong. He won the Runners-up Prize of Gordon Luton Award for Fine Art and the 2015 Neville Burston Prize. (Ruozhe Xue, About. Available at: <http://www.xueruozhe.com/about/about/>)

Xiaokang Sun is an artist born in 1987, Jinan, China. He graduated in the Djamel TATAH studio of the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris with a master's degree, in 2015. He has solo shows at Paris Skyline Gallery and École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, and group show at Anonai Contemporary Art Space, Arnaud, France and Saint-Gray 29 Painting Awards Exhibition, Saint-Gray, France. He won the first prize for painting at the Prix Art School, Paris in 2012. (Hiart, n.d. *Xiaokang Sun*, [Online]. Available at: <http://hiart.cn/exhibition/detail/7f6cxwso.html>).

Z Factory is a group of artists who graduated from the Central Academy of Fine Art in 2017. The members in the interview are two of the founders of the group; they are from the Fine Art Department.

Liu Xiaodong is a painter of modern life whose large-scale works serve as a kind of history painting of the emerging world. Liu locates the human dimension in such global issues as population displacement, the environmental crisis and economic upheaval, but through carefully orchestrated compositions he walks the line between artifice and reality. A leading figure among the Chinese Neo-Realist painters to emerge in the 1990s, his adherence to

figurative painting amounts to a conceptual stance within a contemporary art context where photographic media dominate. His undertaking 'to see people as they really are' was galvanised in the aftermath of the events of 1989 and, alert to the legacy of Chinese Social Realism, his compositions are painted with loose, casual brushstrokes and layered with meaning. While he works from life and often *en plein air*, he chooses sitters to supply ancillary narratives to landscapes or situations. From recent location-specific series, such as 'Transgender/Gay in Berlin', featuring portraits of the transgender woman Sasha Maria, which were featured in Liu's first comprehensive retrospective 'Slow Homecoming' in Düsseldorf, to his London series 'Half Street' (2013), as well as 'The Hotan Project' (2012-13) in the Xinjiang province of China, Liu has also created an automated painting machine entitled 'Weight of Insomnia' (2016), which translates a digital video feed of traffic streams and human movement in real time into a new body of paintings tracing time, memory and behaviour. In so doing, Liu re-assesses painting in the age of the internet and algorithms and implicitly invokes the present condition, in which humans and other objects reciprocally co-create the world as we know it. (Lisson Gallery, n.d. *Liu Xiaodong*. [Online]. Available at : <https://www.lissongallery.com/artists/liu-xiaodong>).

Zhang Jian-Jun (b. 1955, Shanghai, China) Zhang Jian-Jun was born in 1955 in Shanghai. He graduated from the Shanghai Theatre Academy's Department of Fine Arts in 1978 and moved to the United States in 1989. Currently, Zhang is a professor at New York University Shanghai. He lives and works in both Shanghai and New York City. Zhang began to pursue abstract painting in the 1980s. He expresses his personal perspective on humankind and the universe through the integrity of language and constantly explores the existence of the ontological status. His work displays a great sense of belief and understanding of Oriental style. (RA Schools Studio, 2019. *Zhang Jian-Jun: Artist in Residence*. [online] Available at: <https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/exhibition/jian-jun-zhang-artist-in-residence>)

Question list in the interview:

There are nine fixed questions for each artist, including another 4-5 questions for each artist.⁷¹

1. Is the weather hot today? If it is raining outside, 300 metres away from the studio, will it affect your movement or practice in the studio?
(This question is designed to get the artist talking about their daily behaviour in the studio and a sense of how they inhabit the studio.)
2. Is the space of the studio important to you? What is the role of the studio space in your practice?
(This question is designed to identify the function of the studio in each artist practice.)
3. How do you choose the environment/situation around the studio?
What if there was no studio or the enforced one-day-eviction, what would you do?
(This question is designed to let the artist talk about their work surroundings in relation to the external studio conditions.)
4. Describe your previous studio practice in different institutional academic frameworks?
(This question is designed to let the artists talk about the development of their previous practice.)
5. Is your route to the studio the same every day?
Will different ways of getting to the studio change what happens in the studio?
(This question is designed to let the artist think the daily life/time in relation to the studio life/time)
6. Is your practice in the studio defined by the gate/door of the studio; for example, does inside the door signal one mode of practice, and outside the studio space another?
(This question is designed to conceptualise the function of studio space, in order to identify the artists' methods of practice in different studio conditions.)
7. What is the relationship between the space of the work and the daily lived experience?
Or the relation of canvas to the space outside of the canvas?
(This question is designed to let the artists talk about their studio time and practice time)

⁷¹ In the interviews, I feel the questions of the nine fixed questions are already answered by the artist's other replies.

8. What is the most satisfactory studio space so far?

What is the ideal condition of your studio?

(This question is designed to let the artist talk about the ideal mode of practice.)

9. What is the position of painting in your practice?

(This question is designed to find out the artists' methods of practising painting in different networks.)

Interview Jianwei Wang
Beijing, Wangjianwei Studio.

W=Jianwei Wang
H=Yifei He

I selected Jianwei Wang because of his use of the studio in relation to his practice. He develops his studio practice by introducing the notion of the ‘production’ model from the system of mass-production and the concept of ‘rehearsal’ from theatre into his own studio practice.

Wang Jianwei (B. 1958, Sichuan Province, China)

Born in 1958 in Suining village in southwestern China, Wang Jianwei studied at the Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts (1985–87, now China Academy of Art), Hangzhou, China. Known for his investigations into the structures of time, Wang experiments with a range of mediums, including painting, sculpture, video, film, installation, and multimedia theater. Well-versed in philosophy, he draws from mathematics, data-collection methods, scientific experimentation, and neurology to illuminate a social and mental space he calls the “yellow signal,” an intermediary zone where possibilities for a time-lapsed reality can flourish. Wang has had solo exhibitions at the Zendai Museum of Modern Art, Shanghai (2008); OCT Contemporary Art Terminal, Shenzhen, China (2008); 46 Fangjia Hutong Theater, Beijing (which traveled to the Kaserne Basel; Zürcher Theater Spektakel, Zurich; and La Bâtie—Festival de Genève, Geneva [all 2010]); Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing (2011), and Long March Space, Beijing (2013 and 2015). Wang has participated in the Gwangju Biennial, South Korea (1995); Shanghai Biennial (2000–01); São Paulo Biennial (2002); Venice Biennale (2003); Guanzhou Triennial (2005 and 2012); and Sharjah Biennial, United Arab Emirates (2013). He was the inaugural selection of The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Chinese Art Initiative at the Guggenheim, and his solo exhibition, *Wang Jianwei: Time Temple* (2014), featured newly commissioned paintings, sculptures, film, and a performance, all of which entered the museum’s holdings as part of The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Collection. His work was also included in the major Guggenheim exhibition *Art and China after 1989: Theater of the World* (2017–18, which traveled to the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao [2018] and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art [2018–19]). Wang lives and works in Beijing. (Jianwei Wang, *Foundation for Contemporary Arts*. Available at: <https://www.foundationforcontemporaryarts.org/recipients/wang-jianwei>)

(Introducing myself)

W: The question of how to evaluate the position of the artist’s practice is important for the artist today. Not all artists have a sense of the situation around their practice. If the artist does not address this question of his or her own identity during their

practice; as a result, the artist's (his or her) practice will be more likely to fall into a well-worn path. For me, the experimental part of the artist's practice should be the most significant concern. Your interview questions are interesting. The changing position of the studio turns out to be one part of the reality, and how to react to this realm has been my practice for the past five or six years. As I mentioned in my previous interview, my studio is my society. Some people take it as a statement. I consider it as the normal condition of my everyday practice, which is the same as saying 'I will have my lunch today'.

H: The reason that I mentioned the experimental studio practice is because of my previous experiences in both Eastern and Western academic painting studios in Hubei Institution of Fine Art (BA Study) in China and at the Royal College of art (MA study) in the UK, and as an exchange student at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris. If one takes the experience of studio practice under different academic painting studio frameworks, as a practitioner, my feeling is that some problems exist in the Chinese painting studio frameworks. In the framework of the Chinese academic painting studio, there are four to five painting studio specialisms (e.g. Realistic painting studio; Expressionistic painting studio; Figurative painting studio; Abstract painting studio) that students can choose to join.

W: Did you study at CAFA or...?

H: Hubei Institute of Fine Arts (One of the eight leading institutions of fine art).

W: I was almost to be one of the tutors in the Hubei Institution of Fine Arts, in the early 80s, but Shengtian Zhen invited me to the China Academy of Art earlier. In my practice, I pay more attention to the unreasonable part of practice. If the limit of an artwork is related to the artist's conception or idea, then let's think about the artist's motivation and the result first. The relationship between the artist's original motivation and the result is either the result is bigger than the motivation, or the original idea is larger than the outcomes.

The concept is not directly linked with the outcome, the bond between artist's original idea and its outcome has been produced by the artist or audience, which is vital to me; and it is also what I understand from Relational Aesthetics. What I want to explore is the irrational link between the rational concept and the result of my practice. Most specifically, for the past five or six years. My work has focused on this link. Secondly, the process of the practice or production is meaningless [to present in the outcome]. Take the glasses that we wear as an example, when you are wearing glasses; you may not pay attention to their production process; for example, how

many technical difficulties must have been overcome [during the process of making them]. Only when the original concept is not strong enough, then the process of production is recalled and shown as one part of the artwork. For the artwork, the unrecalled part of the work is the core part of my practice.

H: I have some prepared questions for you, based on your previous interview and talks. Some of them might be a little bit strange, but they are all about the studio.

W: No problem.

H: Is the weather hot today? If it rains outside, 300 metres away from your studio, will it affect your activities or movements in the studio?

W: Well, this is not a question for me. I cannot talk about a place if I am not there. What I know is just the physical feelings around my studio, while the question of the weather in general or in the broader area is an invalid question for me.

H: Is the studio space important to you? What is the role of the studio space in your practice?

W: For me, the studio means not only a spatial concept but also a mode of making. The fundamental function of the studio is a site of doing. Of course, you can consider yourself a nomad. But nomads still need space. Like farmers, how do they work without the land? For the artist, the studio allows possibilities to open up the practice that might exist before the methodology emerges.

H: Is your everyday routine in the studio the same? Is the movement of practice in the studio initiated by the gate/door of the studio?

W: Your questions always contain distinctions, such as thinking and practice, the body and mind, the individual and society. My work and my studio practice are trying to blur these hierarchies. In your questions, there exists a sense that life is not included in work, or working experience is not contained in daily life. But who decides which part is life and which part is work? My approach does not distinguish between these two. For an artist, it is quite a waste of time to think like this...I don't think about this question. Are these questions also posed to the other artists?

H: Part of the questions are for all; the rest of the questions are specific for each artist.

W: Yes, please go on.

H: How would you choose the environment/situation around the studio? And if there was no studio or an enforced one-day-eviction, what would you do?

W: The site of this studio is not decided only by me. The development of the urban area determines the location of my studio. Social and political reasons influence the change of my studio site.

H: You have used the term 'local production' in relation to the process of your practice, could you talk more about this?

W: Well, 'local and independent production' is a mode of making; this model does not presume that the practice can function immediately in the art system. For example, we always talk about globalisation, but what is the relation between globalisation trends and you? The facts of my neighbourhood, the old lady who is selling water, is more important than globalisation trends for me. The point is not to predicate the location and the function of my practice before I begin. In the process of practice, the 'local production' strategy makes a distance between me and the art system, which creates the chance for me to consider how to work with this distance. The 'independent production' strategy is to find how to contribute to the whole system at a distance that this local practice has generated, to think about how to interact with the issues that are not trendy in the art system.⁷²

H: When you finish the process of local production, will you resituate the outcome of your 'local practice' into the art system? And if so, how can it be understood outside its context?

W: The cultural background [in general] or context is always there. No matter it is reflected in my artworks or one concept of functioning outside of one particular context.

H: As you mentioned before in your previous interview, you think of the practice as a 'rehearsal' taking place in the museums, in galleries or theatres. I want to ask your strategy relative to the concept of time in your practice, is it in the link 'event, process and form', or it is something else?

W: The answer to this question is in the book that I wrote in 2015, *Wang Jianwei: A*

⁷² Local and independent production for Jianwei Wang means work made locally, without influence or interference in the art world. Independent production means his work in relation to the system of art.

Moment of Weakness. At the beginning of the chapter 'Rehearsal', there are some discussions about how one takes action on something that is yet to come? And in the first paragraph, I mentioned that latent time and its corresponding work could be understood as a rehearsal. Rehearsal is also the movement of form in its authentic resistance to interpretation.

H: Also, you said the methodology itself could be considered before the artwork or beyond the artwork. How does one understand this notion of 'beyond the work itself'?

W: The answer is also in the book that I mentioned. It talks about this form in the second paragraph that I mentioned. The 3000 to 4000 words in this book are chosen from the 10,000 words that I wrote, which includes my practice in recent years. The answers to your previous two questions can be found in the book; you can have it as your writing reference.

H: Thanks, I appreciate that. And do you prefer to call yourself an artist or a painter?

W: Artist. It is a historical identity that names the group of people who want to go beyond the given truth.

H: What is the responsibility of the artist?

W: There are a thousand kinds of responsibilities; for the artist, the most important is to challenge the given truth or concepts. Your questions are political and ideological. This perception might be your contribution to understanding the studio.

H: Really...? The last question... for you what is the ideal condition of the studio?

W: For me, I want to rid myself of imagination about my practice. What I am facing in the studio every day are questions and hypothesising about practice. For me, it is wasting time to think about this question.

H: Does it imagine about the methodological side or the practical side?

W: Both of them.

H: The real last question... what is the relationship between your artworks and the audience?

W: First of all, it is crucial to know: Who is the audience? When three of us are sitting here together, who is the audience? Most of the time, the audience is a virtual concept. I prefer to locate the 'audience' in the specific group or individual, for example, with three of us sitting here, I will ask 'what is Yifei's opinion?', or 'what is Boxin Xu's (the assistant who is present) opinion'? If you see that three of us are all the audience, then there is no question about who the audience is. Secondly, from an artist's view, what does the artist imagine about the audience? To think about the third man beside you and me, what is the education of that person? I mean, it is impossible to make an artwork that matches another person's imagination or the broader group of the so-called 'audience'. You can write ten pages about how you imagine and define your audience. You would be very lucky if one of these unknown audiences agreed with one page of your description. That might be the best result. More specifically, I refer to the concept of the audience in China. The audience, historically, has been called 'the general public', 'the people'; it is a collective noun.

Xingwei Wang
Beijing, Galerie Urs Meile Gallery's residency studio
W=Xingwei Wang
H=Yifei He

I selected Xingwei Wang because his practice uses the studio, and because his practice is the example of traditional painting practice inside the studio, Xingwei Wang's studio functions as the site of production.

Xingwei Wang is a Beijing-based artist. He was born in Shenyang, China, 1969. He studied at Shenyang Normal University, and now lives and works in Beijing. Selected Solo show: 2019: *The Code of Physiognomy*, Galerie Urs Meile, 798 space, Beijing, China. Shenyang Night, Galerie Urs Meile, Caochangdi space, Beijing, China. 2016: *Honor and Disgrace*, Organised by Galerie Urs Meile, Supported by Platform China; Exhibition Venue: Platform China, Beijing, China. Selected group show: 2019: *Chinese Whispers 中国私语 - Recent Art from the Sigg Collection*, MAK Museum für Angewandte Kunst, Vienna, Austria. 2018: *Force as Fulcrum - Selected works from the collection of Wang Bing & Xue Bing*, New Century Art Foundation, Beijing, China. *The Orientation and Taste of New Painting*, B131, Zhi Art Space, Huxi Commune, Sichuan Fine Arts Institute, Chongqing, China. *Art and China after 1989: Theater of the World*, Museum Guggenheim, Bilbao. (Xingwei Wang Biography. *Galerie Ursmeile*. Available at : <https://galerieursmeile.com/en/artists/artists/wang-xingwei//biography.html>).

Introduce myself first.

H: What do you think of the weather today (in Beijing)?

W: A little cold, but it's all right for me.

H: If it rains outside, 300 metres from your studio, will it affect your movement or practice in the studio?

W: I might be happier because the rain in Beijing is rare. And it will be more fun if I am in a studio with a steel roof, because a little rain can make a sound like a storm.

H: Is the space of the studio vital to you? What is the role of the studio space in your practice?

W: Very important, I have changed studios many times in the past ten years. I can give

you a brief timeline of my changing studio. At the very beginning, before I got married in Shenyang, I taught in a middle school and shared a small office space with two other colleagues. At that time, I painted in the office space, which was around 10 square metres. In the school's summer and winter vacations, I was able to complete some more significant paintings and occupy more space in the office. During that time, I also had a separate room in my parents' house as a studio space, and at that time, my brothers were my models. When I got married in 1994, the north-facing room in my own house was my studio. After that, I rented a bigger room from my neighbour. Then I moved into a room in a greenhouse. Around 1998, I changed my studio to a factory warehouse for a year. Then my studio moved to an upstairs room in a hotel for just under a year. I moved to Shanghai's Moganshan Road in the following years and settled into a studio there. Later my studio was in the Caochangdi Art District in Beijing; after that, my studio moved to Huantie District (Beijing). Because of the forced eviction of the Huantie District in November 2017, my studio is here [Galerie Urs Meile Gallery's residency studio] until the November (2018).

H: Have the changing conditions of the studio influenced your painting practice?

W: It is not clear, for me, whether it is a different period or the studio space that influences my practice. Compared with my previous studios, the environment of the studio in Shanghai is very different. It was more like a collective space – the walls of the studio were not completely closed, and even a slight sound from the next door's studio can be heard.

H: What about this studio; will you move again?

W: Yes, this is a temporary studio. I might move to a house of my own in Beijing. A stable condition of the studio is a problem for any artist who works in Beijing. And in the future, it will be more difficult to live in an apartment and rent a studio in a warehouse nearby, Wangjing District for example.

H: I have some questions about painting practice. In your previous interview, you mentioned the meaning that is produced in the painting practice. When is the birth of the meaning in painting practice? And in what context? Could you talk more about that, please?

W: Well, for me, expectations always exist before my action of painting; just as Duchamp said, the given meaning comes later. The meaning of my practice is not only produced by myself but also redefined by others. Take Giorgio Morandi for

example, the meaning of his practice is produced by the fact that nobody painted in his method at that time. It might take a long time for the appearance of the meaning of one artist's practice. The artist's practice is just linking the visual elements and concepts.

H: What is the relationship between you and the given meaning of your work?

W: The painting techniques are something that I can control. The meaning of my practice is becoming and is waiting to be produced. And the produced meaning should at least be in the same direction as my concept,

H: Will the meaning of the paintings change in different contexts?

W: Paintings for me do not change with the walls. Even without a physical frame outside of the canvas, there is still a psychological frame around my paintings. My painting is a finished statement on canvas, which is not changed by its surroundings, with no exchange with the areas outside of the canvas. There was a show by a young Chinese artist who finished his study in Germany and came back. In his exhibition, his paintings changed with the different colours of the walls. Compared with my practice, that way of working is an entirely different approach.

H: The frame of classical paintings adds to the value of the painting itself or adds to the value of the painting. Also, the frame can be seen as a sign, asking for the audience's attention or focus.

W: Yes, I agree. And without the frame, the objective nature of painting is apparent, opening up painting as an object facilitates other approaches to painting.

H: In the conversation with Ling Xiao (Galerie Urs Meile, 2011), you mentioned that the fundamental technical issues of the painting are a core question in your practice; could you expand upon it more?

W: The artist does not face the meaning of his actions directly. What the painter encounters are the visual fragments and the technical issues within a studio. As a painter, what happens on canvas is the most crucial thing in front of him or her.

H: What about the relationship between the work and the audience or between you and the image?

W: I am more focused on the relationship between me and the painting.

- H: The concept of your work is not too hard for the general public to understand; for example, the titles and the figures are linked with local culture in China.
- W: Yes, in my painting, this shared experience from everyday life is important to me.
- H: Some of the titles of the works are quite impressive, like 'The brother-in-law will not forget about you, no matter how busy he is'. My question is: what is the everyday experience in relation to your work? Is the movement of practice in the studio initiated by the gate/door of the studio?
- W: There are some distinctions in my behaviours. For example, in the workplace, someone is in one motion, while he/she might be in another position outside of the office. Similarly, I behave differently inside and outside the studio.
- H: Yes, but some painters work in their flats, and some artists live on the second floor of their studio.
- W: I prefer to separate the conditions of inside and outside the studio. They have been two separate sites in my life for a long time.
- H: Do you prefer to call yourself a painter or an artist?
- W: A painter. The value and the rules of painting are slightly different from the other mediums, I think.
- H: What about the changes in the studio in relation to your reflections?
- W: I cannot quantify the influences, actually, because I am still in the situation of changing studios.
- H: Also, it is worth mentioning that in China, artists keep moving around due to the unstable situation, which is mainly caused by political reasons, like forced evictions.
- W: Most of the artists in Beijing are professional artists, and it is impossible for them to move back to a standard apartment with their growing numbers of paintings.
- H: Well... do you live near here?
- W: In Wangjing District, not far away, like a 20-minute drive.

H: Is the everyday route to the studio the same?

W: Yes, almost the same, this studio is closer than my previous one, actually.

H: Are you planning to work in the morning?

W: Yes.

H: Thanks for sharing your thoughts and your time.

Xun Yang
Beijing, Shunyi, Luomahu Art District No.5

Y= Xun Yang
H=Yifei He

I selected XunYang because of his use of the studio in relation to his painting practice which is carried out in mixed conditions of space, such as a curated space, sample kitchen room, studio as a living place.

Xun Yang is an artist; he was born in Chongqing, Sichuan Province, in Southern China. 1981. He obtained his Bachelor's degree (oil painting department) from the Sichuan Fine Arts Institute, and now lives and works in Beijing. He is the Member of the China Artists Association and a Member of the Sichuan Artists Association. His work presented at Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, the Iberia Center for Contemporary Art, the Rockbund Gallery, the Moscow Museum of Modern Art, and the National Art Museum of China. (Xun Yang, Biography. *Artand*. [Online]. Available at: <http://artand.cn/yangxun/about>)

(Introduce myself first)

H: Is the weather hot today?

Y: Oh, super, but much better than yesterday.

H: If it is raining outside, 300 metres from your studio, will it affect your movement or practice in the studio?

Y: I might open the studio's door and enjoy the fresh air.

H: Is the space of the studio important to you? And what is the role of the studio space in your practice?

Y: Yes, the studio is also the place I live now. Without the studio, I might be unable to continue my work and life in Beijing.

H: So, your working and living area is the same site at present.

Y: Yes. My last studio at Heiqiao District was also occupied in this way. But I bought a small loft last year; I will try to separate the workplace and the living area later.

H: Are you concerned about the environment/situation around the studio? Take this studio, for example?

Y: My friend recommended this place. I received short notice of the demolition of the Heiqiao Art District in mid-December last year (2016), and I was in Hainan province, out of Beijing, at that time. To have a nice landlord is so important, especially in Beijing. I am lucky to have a friendly landlord [of the studio] who gave me enough time to find an alternative space. Thus, I started to plan to move at the end of December (2016). Heiqiao District is more like an urban-rural border area. Here, Luogezhuang District is more like a tiny town.

After this, I wanted to escape from this mixed working and living situation and bought the loft on the 31 December 2016. And on the 1st of January, I rented this studio. This studio area belongs to an artist who studied at the Sichuan Institution of Art in 1986. He wants to keep doing painting and have a sense of a community of artists, so he bought this area and built several studios for his artist friends and other artists. The surroundings of this yard are similar to college accommodation. Upstairs is an artist who is younger than me: he graduated from the Luxun Institute of Art oil painting programme. There are more young artists in the upstairs studios.

H: Including the shared canteen for all the resident artists.

Y: Yep, the canteen mainly serves the artists in this yard.

H: What is your previous studio practice in the Sichuan institutional academic painting studio framework? There is also a group show at the National Art Museum of China, called 'The Sense of the Time' which reviews the work of your generation, 1980s painting practice in China.

Y: Well, first, I want to talk about the beginning of my study at the middle school affiliated to Sichuan Institute of Art (in 1997), which has been abolished now. In high school, most of my classmates had been keen on painting since they were young. The high school period was a kind of enlightenment period for my painting practice and knowledge. From the late 1970s, Scar art movement to the blossoming of Chinese contemporary art in 2005, almost half of the 'art market stars (painters)' are from the Sichuan Institute of Fine Art. For our generation, the graduation show was a turning point in the art students' careers. After graduating, from 2005 to 2011, I rented a studio near the institute in Huangjuepin District, in Chongqing. Chongqing is a heavily industrial city in a mountainous area. My studio was next to a hillside.

Usually, the foundations of a house by a hill consist of a number of pillars, which form a storage level. The landlords often let out the storage level as studio spaces to the artists at that time. After 2011, I moved to Beijing as a professional artist.

H: During your BA study, there were four painting studio directions?

Y: As I remembered, three: the realistic Painting studio, the figurative and expressionist painting studio, and the abstract painting studio. Now, they merge as one fine art department with other departments (such as printmaking, sculpture and so on). This trend is more convenient for the student who can gain techniques from other departments.

H: Back to your studio practice – are your activities in the studio defined by the gate/door of the studio?

Y: It is more like a continuous process; for me, it is from the second floor to the ground floor in the studio.

H: You had a show in collaboration with the German brand Miele, in their sample kitchen: could you talk more about the exhibition?

Y: It was an experiment of exhibiting in a sample space in which I introduced my paintings to a kitchen's settings and arrangements.

H: What is the relationship between your painting and the gallery space?

Y: For my show, in 2012, 'Dream in the Deserted Garden', I worked with the architect Wang Hui. The walls in the show were transparent, and the audience had to follow the walls' routes that I designed. The end of the exhibition was a dark room, with a mountain landscape installation, which was made of iron wire with luminous colours.

H: The first feeling of the lights in the painting is like someone seeking something in the dark with a flashlight.

Y: Exactly, it is also a metaphorical relationship between fiction and memory. The black colour in my paintings actually contains many details; the paintings are in process with the emergence of the light. The light is a sign as the ideal that the artist wants to chase. My practice is between an appearance and a representation of the light. For my next show, there might be three rooms: the first one is in the standard gallery

space with white light; the second space has a lighting system that can change the light from the brightest to darkest gradually, which forces the viewers to adjust their distance with the paintings with the changing light. The third room is in the dark. The changing light is the materialistic relationship in the space.

H: Is the condition of this studio better than the last one in Huantie district, or not?

Y: The previous one in Huantie district was almost 500 square metres, but I prefer this one; this space makes me concentrate more.

H: Thanks – and the last question, what is the role of painting practice for you?

Y: Painting is a process for me. Painting was the approach between me and the outside world during my study at college. After that, painting became a part of my life and a mode of thinking for me.

Interview Tian Tan
Beijing, Tian Tan Studio,

Interview Xiaokang Sun
Beijing, Nanjianzi Xiang, No.79

Interview Ruozhe Xue, Feijia Cun, Shunyi District , Beijing

Interview Z Factory (Artist Group, 2 members attended)
Feijia Cun, Shunyi District, Beijing.

Appendix iii My works

1. What happens in the studio stays in the studio (performance, video, installation), 2017. (5'35")

Vimeo link: <https://vimeo.com/418347860> Password: 512625



What happens in the studio stays in the studio, video screen cut 1.



What happens in the studio stays in the studio, video screen cut 2



What happens in the studio stays in the studio, video screen cut 3



What happens in the studio stays in the studio, video screen cut 4



What happens in the studio stays in the studio

*The rest / painting
The rest / sculpture*

What happens in the studio stays in the studio, video screen cut 5



What happens in the studio stays in the studio

*The rest / painting
The rest / sculpture*

What happens in the studio stays in the studio, video screen cut 6



What happens in the studio stays in the studio.
Daybreak show, Asylum Chapel, Peckham, London. 2017. Exhibition View.



What happens in the studio stays in the studio.
Daybreak show, Asylum Chapel, Peckham, London. 2017. Exhibition View.

2. Emotional Labour (Solo show, painting installations), 2018.



Yifei He, Solo show, Emotional Labour, J: Gallery, Shanghai, 2018. (installation 1, view 1)



Yifei He, Solo show, Emotional Labour, J: Gallery, Shanghai, 2018. (installation 1, view 2)



Yifei He, Solo show, Emotional Labour, J: Gallery, Shanghai, 2018. (installation 1, view 2)



Yifei He, Solo show, Emotional Labour, J: Gallery, Shanghai, 2018. (installation 2, view 1)



Yifei He, Solo show, Emotional Labour, J: Gallery, Shanghai, 2018. (installation 2, view 2).



Yifei He, Solo show, Emotional Labour, J: Gallery, Shanghai, 2018. (installation 2, view 3)



Yifei He, Solo show, Emotional Labour, J: Gallery, Shanghai, 2018. (installation 2, view 4)



Yifei He, Solo show, Emotional Labour, J: Gallery, Shanghai, 2018. (installation 2, view 5)



Yifei He, Solo show, Emotional Labour, J: Gallery, Shanghai, 2018. (installation 3, view 1)



Yifei He, Solo show, Emotional Labour, J: Gallery, Shanghai, 2018. (installation 3, view 2)

3. You ate my exhibition, No.2 (performance, installation), 2020.



Yifei He. You ate my exhibition No.2, installation, London, 2020. (view 1).



Yifei He. You ate my exhibition No.2, installation, London, 2020. (view 2).



Yifei He. You ate my exhibition No.2, installation, London, 2020. (view 3).



Yifei He. You ate my exhibition No.2, installation, London, 2020. (view 4).



Yifei He. You ate my exhibition No.2, installation, London, 2020. (view 5).



Yifei He. You ate my exhibition No.2, installation, London, 2020. (view 6).



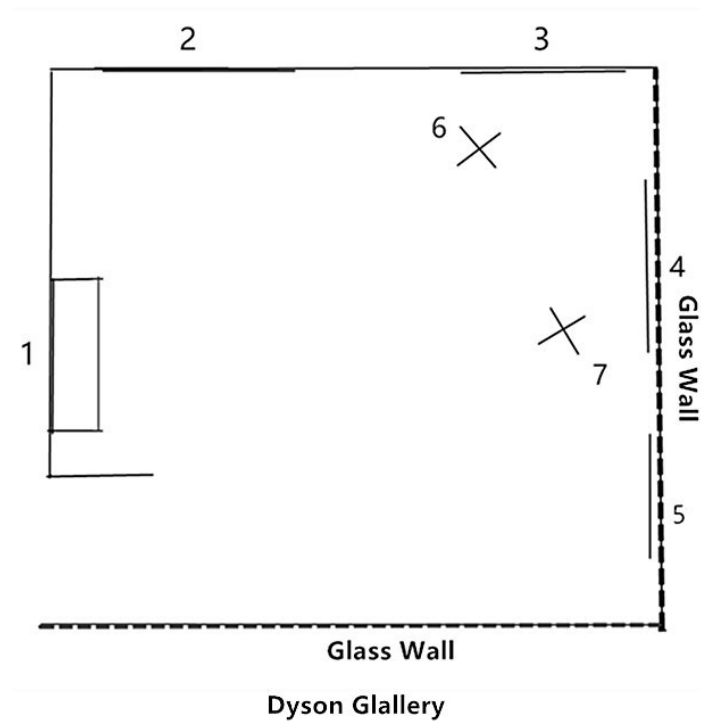
Yifei He. You ate my exhibition No.2, installation, London, 2020. (view 7).

Appendix iv

Proposal for exhibition space in Dyson Gallery, RCA Battersea campus, July 2020
(unrealized due to coronavirus restrictions)

1. Exhibition Floor Plan
2. Space view
3. List of works

1.Exhibition Floor Plan:



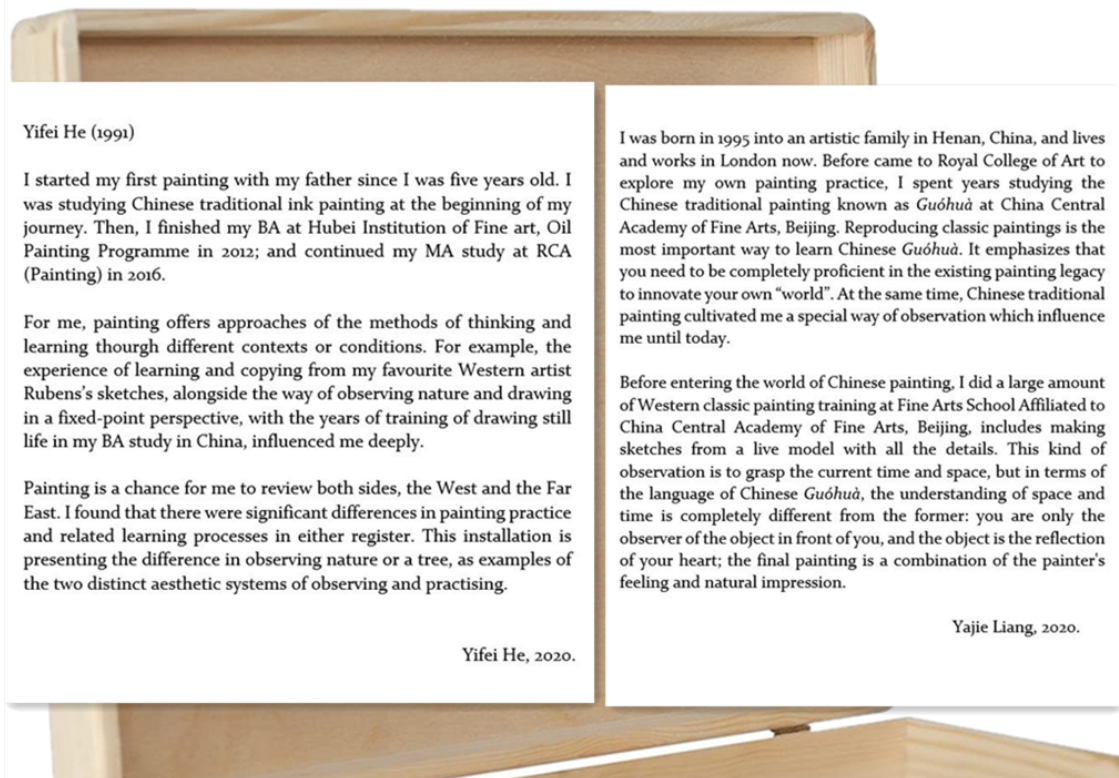
1. Table for printed files.
2. Inductions:
3. Emotional Labour, i.
4. Emotional Labour, ii.
5. Screen (For 'what happens in the studio stays in the studio'; images of Summer short Course)
6. Emotional Labour iii.
7. Emotional Labour iv .

2.Space view:





(Details of installation *Inductions* :)



Yifei He (1991)

I started my first painting with my father since I was five years old. I was studying Chinese traditional ink painting at the beginning of my journey. Then, I finished my BA at Hubei Institution of Fine art, Oil Painting Programme in 2012; and continued my MA study at RCA (Painting) in 2016.

For me, painting offers approaches of the methods of thinking and learning through different contexts or conditions. For example, the experience of learning and copying from my favourite Western artist Rubens's sketches, alongside the way of observing nature and drawing in a fixed-point perspective, with the years of training of drawing still life in my BA study in China, influenced me deeply.

Painting is a chance for me to review both sides, the West and the Far East. I found that there were significant differences in painting practice and related learning processes in either register. This installation is presenting the difference in observing nature or a tree, as examples of the two distinct aesthetic systems of observing and practising.

Yifei He, 2020.

I was born in 1995 into an artistic family in Henan, China, and lives and works in London now. Before came to Royal College of Art to explore my own painting practice, I spent years studying the Chinese traditional painting known as *Guóhuà* at China Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing. Reproducing classic paintings is the most important way to learn Chinese *Guóhuà*. It emphasizes that you need to be completely proficient in the existing painting legacy to innovate your own "world". At the same time, Chinese traditional painting cultivated me a special way of observation which influence me until today.

Before entering the world of Chinese painting, I did a large amount of Western classic painting training at Fine Arts School Affiliated to China Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing, includes making sketches from a live model with all the details. This kind of observation is to grasp the current time and space, but in terms of the language of Chinese *Guóhuà*, the understanding of space and time is completely different from the former: you are only the observer of the object in front of you, and the object is the reflection of your heart; the final painting is a combination of the painter's feeling and natural impression.

Yajie Liang, 2020.

(Details of installation *Inductions* :) Inside the wood box, are two short texts, from me and Yajie Liang, describing our painting-related studies and practice.

3.List of works:

1) Inductions: /.

This installation is a collaboration work with the year 2 MA student Yajie Liang from Painting Programme, RCA. She also finished her BA at The Central Academy of Fine Arts, Ink Painting Programme. This work includes 14 sketches and drawings, and two short texts (shown as above) with some painting tools in the wood box on the wall. As listed in the following pages, I made the sketch 1-7, Liang made the ink painting 1-7. The 7 ink paintings are coping the *Manual of the Mustard Seed Garden* (芥子園畫傳, Jieziyuan Huazhuan) in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912), which is book of different paths and examples of the details of natural mountains, plants and inserts, by the master ink painters in the Qing Dynasty. This book still functions as a classic example for the ink painters till present.

The 7 sketches as ink paintings are:

Sketch 1 :

Yifei He, (Pencil & Charcoal on paper, 24cmx32.5cm),2020.



Sketch 2:

Yifei He, (Pencil & Charcoal on paper, 22.5cmx32.5cm), 2020.



Sketch 3:
Yifei He, (Pencil on paper, 48.5cmx 32.5cm),2020



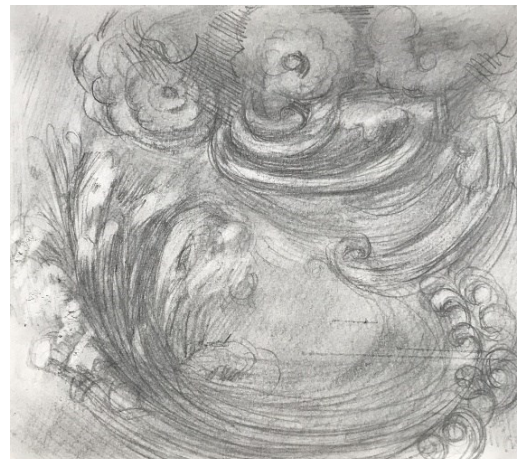
Sketch 4:
Yifei He, (Pencil on paper, 24cmx 32.5cm) , 2020.



Sketch 5:
Yifei He, (Pencil on paper, 24cmx 33cm)
21cm), 2020.



Sketch 6:
Yifei He, (Pencil on paper, 18.5cmx 2020.



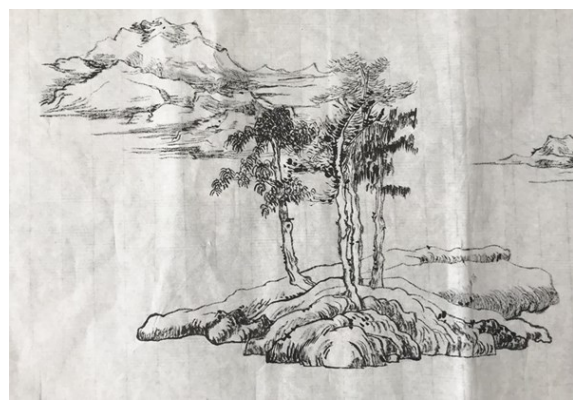
Sketch 7:
Yifei He, (Pencil on paper, 12cmx 26cm),2020.



Ink painting 1
Yajie Liang, Ink on rice paper(25cmx 42cm),
2020.



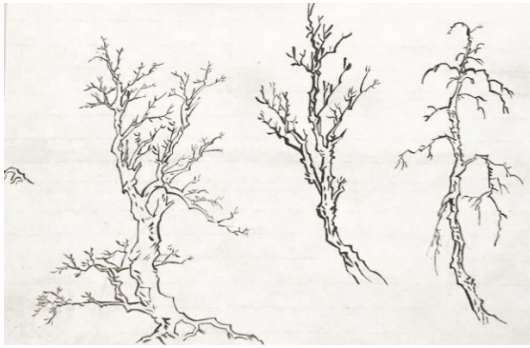
Ink painting 2
Yajie Liang, Ink on rice paper(26cmx 41cm),
2020.



Ink painting 3

Ink painting 4

Yajie Liang, Ink on rice paper(25cmx 42cm)
2020.



Yajie Liang, Ink on rice paper(25cmx 42cm)
2020.



Ink painting 5
Yajie Liang, Ink on rice paper
(29cmx 32cm), 2020.



Ink painting 6
Yajie Liang, Ink on rice paper(26cmx 32cm). 2020.



Ink painting 7

Yajie Liang, Ink on rice paper(25cmx 42cm), 2020.



2) Emotional Labour, i.



Yifei He, Emotional Labour. Oil on canvas. 80cmx160cm, 2018.

3) Emotional Labour, ii.



Yifei He, Emotional Labour. Oil on canvas. 75cmx90cm, 2018.

4) Screen (For 'what happens in the studio stays in the studio' (Vimeo link: <https://vimeo.com/418347860> Password: 512625) and images of Summer short Course.

5) Emotional Labour iii



6) Emotional Labour iv



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