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From 'Stillness Becoming' to 'Making Time'
Digital Surface within My New Media-Art Practice

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Abstract

This digital-art review is centred on the development of a body of stills and moving images in relation to my concept, experiment and experience of studio-based practice. In my creative methodologies, the digital technology helps to extend my experimentations of 'stillness becoming' and 'making time' in image. The images in fictional motion present a 'continuous surface', having a sense of 'time', for painting and photography. This paper also focuses on the conceptual investigations of the uncanny, ambiguous, and sublime, associated with my recent solo show entitled – *Fictional Painting* (2012). The concept of these works has morphed from painting to digital photography and animation. These works stem from my continuing exploration between fiction and reality. The meaning of 'digital surface' here comes from pictorial/photographic sublimes and my aesthetic experiences. This defines the still 'beauty' and the moving 'romance' in my own view.

Following the practice-based studies, I refer to the simplicity of cursive calligraphy with a void and concrete correlation, which conceptualises the thinking: 'stillness' and 'movement'. The space-time is to articulate the type of thinking to the relationship between photography and animation. I study the Surrealistic thought that is extended in the cyberspace, which involves 'cinematic' structure – a process of visual unification of psychological space and physical dimension. Furthermore, my concerns have grown and changed by debate relating to the montage in contemporary cinema. The cinematic image around me is constantly translated into my own visual sense through the 'digital montage'. The fictive impression in this case turns the lights, colours and shadows into something like a 'sculpture'. In addition, I believe that the appeal of works lies not only in their sense of aura but also in their perception as a phenomenon of 'other nature' and/or 'second nature'. The images of my work have their own significance as 'signs', which infer the meanings of psychic object and place. They become a sort of cosmic configuration, almost like a 'psychological landscape'. Finally, the practice of my work involves the use of improvisation and liberal play that makes a 'new' sense of formal 'automatism'; its significance relates to a personal identity that is 'mutative' within a 'surreal' structure.

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1. Introduction

My digital art practice is a research and creation of abstract surrealism. The practice is influenced by Eastern aesthetics and particular values in Western contemporary art. The use of East and West in ideas is productive in that my creative perceptions are extended through the combinations. 'Seeing, thinking and exploring' is the principle reference to context in my concept of the new media-art practice. I believe that painting, photography, and animation share a strange yet rich relationship. My experimental still/moving images are shaped profoundly by contemporary ideas in painting and photography. In my recent digital-image practice, I use aesthetic principles to produce a new approach to visual data, and have considered photography and painting to have fundamental relations to the 'artist animation'[*]. These contain aspects and adoptions of thematic representations and styles of thinking and working similar to my own concerns. The concept of the electronic space can be extended as a virtual landscape. For me, it is 'mentally supernatural', and has a sense from illusion to immersion; the digital technology helps to extend my experimentations of 'stillness becoming' and 'making time' in image.

The images in fictional motion present a continuous surface, having a sense of 'time', for painting and photography. 'Digital imaging, on the other hand, offers new ways in which the three-dimensional world can be rendered on the two-dimensional surface of a picture plane'[†]. The digital-media form presents a pictorial spectacle and cinematography that lends credibility to my creation on the grounds of a 'seeming' reality. As Char Davies[‡] said that it is not about the technology; it is about using a particular media to explore the ideas and communicate the ideas I want to express. 'It is now possible to create almost any image you can imagine with startling fidelity. As a tool for subconscious imagery it is ideal'[§]. This inspires me to create a mixture of image, part photography and part painting, which established a formal construction of fantastic photo-grammar through a combination of chance, logic and personal state of mind. As a form of experiment, I tried to re-invent the computer-generated marks/shapes in developing my imagination and interpretation from the motifs of illusional landscapes and memories.

This paper aims to explore some of the issues emerging from a fascination with fictional space, colour, and time, which are often experienced as a feeling of a 'spectacle'. I have been working with 'surreal' and 'fictitious' landscapes for many years and have produced some major works in my exhibitions. In this review, I extend these conceptual investigations of the uncanny[**], ambiguous, and sublime to my work by focusing on the 'time-based' and 'still' images from my recent solo exhibition[††] (Fig. 1.) and an invited group show[‡‡]. These project works present my fictional ideas on romance, beauty, mystery, fantasy, episode, and lyric etc. What makes the core visual meaning even more interesting is that across the two shows, the notions, stillness, slow motion, and soundlessness, have remained significant for each other in the works, not only technically but also aesthetically. Ostensibly, the concept of these works has morphed from painting to digital photography and animation.

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[*] The term 'artist animation' seeks to differentiate between fine artists working in animation and traditional animators, p.84, *Re-imagining Animation: The Changing Face of the Moving Image* (2008).
[†] p.43, Wolf, *The Digital Eye: Photographic Art in the Electronic Age* (2010).
[‡] Char Davies (b.1954, Toronto) is an artist who creates artworks using the immersive virtual reality technology.
[§] p.86, Wells & Hardstaff, *Re-imagining Animation: The Changing Face of the Moving Image* (2008).
[**] Freud's essay 'Das Unheimliche' (1919).
[††] This solo exhibition entitled *Fictional Painting* was held at the madL Contemporary Art Space, Taipei, Taiwan (2012).
[‡‡] *The Taoyuan Artists' Invitational Exhibition* was held at the Art Galleries for Taoyuan County Government, Taoyuan, Taiwan (2011).