

Chapter 13

Digital Media and the Quest for the Spiritual in Art

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ABSTRACT

'On earth, painters, sculptors, musicians, dream dreams of exquisite beauty, creating their visions by the powers of the mind, but when they seek to embody them in the coarse materials of earth they fall short of the mental creation. The marble is too resistant for perfect form, the pigments too muddy for perfect color. In heaven all they think is at once reproduced in form, for the rare and subtle matter of the heaven- world is mind stuff, the medium in which the mind normally works when free from passion and it takes shape with every mental impulse. Each man, therefore, in a very real sense, makes his own heaven, and the beauty of his surroundings is indefinitely increased, according to the wealth and energy of his mind' (Besant) (Ringbom, 1986).

INTRODUCTION

Although the artist cannot recover the richness of inner visions in the coarse materials of the everyday world, digital art of today is given challenging role to continue the quest of the spiritual. Today's generative algorithm based painting offers limitless freedom in the choice of line, shape, and color as long as artist sees to it that representational forms are excluded. Algorithm provides artists with wealth of artistically exploitable ideas and

images, representing the almost ephemeral forces and manifestations that could emerge spontaneously and involuntarily.

The intent of the following is to present a series of art works, my own artist practice pursued through the process of research and discovery, the outcomes of the work done at the School of Art Design and Media, Nanyang Technological University titled: *Digital Imaging in Singapore: The Integration of digital imagery with traditional art media and techniques for site specific architectural, urban and landscape settings of Singapore*. The work delves into an exploration

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of an innovative approach toward image creation methodologies, researching and integrating emotive and subjective abstract imagery in digital, traditional and non-traditional forms.

Made at the School of Art, Design and Media at Nanyang Technological University where part of the educational mission is to provide opportunities for faculty and students to pursue art as research, the art-work is created with the financial support from Academic Research Fund (AcRF). With a focus on exploring digitally generative systems and techniques for integrated image generation, painting methods with digital technologies and integrating traditional art methods and materials, the emphasis of art practice is on exploring the limitations of the digital medium, abstract painting and other forms of visual imagery, striving to achieve greater creative levels. With it artist's creative nature is manifested in a way and to an extend that before would be hardly realized.

WORKS: REASSESSING THE PAINTING

On Meaning of Abstraction in Art

'There is no aspect of life that does not reveal to us an infinity of the new and unexpected if

we approach it with the knowledge that it is not exhausted by its visible aspect, that behind the visible there lies a whole world of the invisible, a world of comprehensible forces and relations beyond our present comprehension. The knowledge of the existence of the invisible world is the first key to it.' (Ouspensky, 1912)

In the following study of the main concern is the profound experience of abstract visual phenomenon in which the imagery has emotive impact rather than narrative meaning. Usually wordless and silent invisible experiences provoke a wide range of emotional responses that cannot always be put into words and are only possible to be expressed in art. (Zegher, 2005)

Abstract art is often misunderstood by the viewing public as being without meaning.

'Non-associative and abstract art challenges the viewers in a particular way: They are required to look with fresh eyes at pictures that are different. They have to discard old habits, such as the desire to recognize something. Abstract art does not imitate, it represents in a different way. Viewers are denied the satisfaction of re-encountering a known reality. One of abstract art's great discoveries is undoubtedly to have made reality's energetic side visible again. It helps us to comprehend that nature

Figure 1. Natural Systems: Decomposition of Blue', Detail, Digital Painting, 118 x 84cm (©Ina Conradi)



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