

Toona Sinensis 桃花心木

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Toona Sinensis 桃花心木

To my mother, who has told me many stories about things and feelings that are subtle, miraculous, disappearing and not being recorded.

致我的妈妈，她告诉我过我许多的故事，那些细微的，神奇的，不被记载并正在消失的，事物和感受。

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Preface

The young leaves of the toona sinensis are usually picked in the spring as a seasonal treasure in southern China. I am grateful that this habit of traveling through the millen- nia still exists in the era I grew up in, which is rare. Due to cultural and historical developments, differences in people’s perception of things have led to renewal, not least of which is the survival of vices and the disappearance of good qualities. I believe that the responsibility for connecting differences undoubtedly belongs to art and education, as both form or maintain the belief system and value system of human beings. From this perspective, I believe that art is educational; and that education is a unique form of art. In this, they are equally creative roles by using creativity, as influencers in decision making, as connectors, and as mediators between disci- plines. The power that stems from creativity has an impact on humanity that is innovative, dialectical and has infinite possibilities, rather than limited, closed-minded, ignorant, and submissive to ignorance.

桃花心木的嫩叶通常在春季被采摘，作为中国南方的季节性珍品。我很感激这种穿越千年的习惯在我成长的时代仍然存在，这是难得的，由于文化和历史的发展，人们对事物的认识差异导致更新换代，其中不乏有恶习存留而美好的品质消失的情况。我认为，连接差异的责任无疑是属于艺术的，和教育的，因为这两者形成或维持了人类的信仰体系和价值体系。从这个角度看，我认为艺术及是教育，而教育也是艺术的一种独特形式。在这一点上，他们同样是利用创造力进行创新的角色，是决策中的影响者，是连接者，是学科之间的调解者。源于创造力的力量对人类的影响是革新的、辩证的、有无限可能的，而不是局限的、闭塞的、愚昧的、顺从无知的。

Abstract

This thesis is my journey as an artist and art educator in search of creativity through the lens of sustainability, which may reveal the existence of questions one wonders about but does not provide a specific answer or solution to this within a limited time frame. Through this inquiry, questions are repeatedly asked: What is the definition of art? If art and education have a tremendous impact on human thought and perception, do they point people in the right direction when confronted with global issues such as cultural and natural sustainability? If so, what is the essential difference between art and education? As a way to explore these questions, this thesis analyzes the artworks of two artists, Maya Lin and Christian Boltanski, as case studies. It also offers an insight into interviews with people who have received or are enrolled in art classes in higher education about their definition of art and their understanding and review of creativity during their art education. It then responds to an analysis of the question of whether art should be educational. This thesis concludes that the common denominator and essence of art and education is the power of inclusion to set the human mind free and to grow the capacity for inquiry through practice in literature, poetry, and art without limitations. Understanding is not a process of seeking direct answers, but sought through the process of creative moments. Stimulating and encouraging alternative thinking is a creative approach.

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PART I:

Origin: Searching for Alternatives Through the Root

Preservation of both culture and nature can have an impact on one’s development and it is the root of things that promise life to be meaningful.

Mini memoir

I am sitting by the window at a coffee shop. Geographically, it’s located at latitude 41.827830 /longitude–71.412860 on earth. The name of this coffee shop is ‘Sydney’ which refers to a place that is 16,209.20 Kilometers away. I am sitting here to write about my past experiences. It is cold outside. The wind blows the clouds across the sky, forming a silky texture. The adults and children on the road are walking in the wind; this image reminds me of some special subtle feelings that are hard to describe in words. I think that childhood, youth, middle age, and old age are always intertwined between people, just as the different growth stages between countries or places. Time is interlaced, and so is space. My unfinished life is filled with cultural cognition, changes in the times, and the diversity of species. And out of that, art is my key to this forever foreign world.

My childhood is connected with my grandmother who was born during the period that the old rules were disintegrating and the new were established. She was nearly the first generation of women who were liberated from the bound feet. However, the solidification of feudal social thoughts and biases of female activities are deeply carved in her soul and this trauma had indirectly affected my childhood as well. My understanding of hunger and cultural revolution remains only in my grandmother’s stories. Nevertheless, those rigid dogmatic rules kept affecting my freedom of speech, suppressing my expression at the time. At a very young age, I learned how to act like an obedient child to avoid criticism or punishment and keep my rational thoughts in mind only.

Just like the calmness of the deep ocean, under the surface are all kinds of fishes. Although my childhood was under a strict discipline, I was full of daydreams, magical beliefs and truly an animism. Grandmother converted to Buddhism and she brought me with her to the temple on every religious holiday. This included all Buddha’s birthdays. It felt like it was everyday. The temple near where she lives is called BaoGuang Temple, one of the historical relics that was fortunate enough to survive from wars and escape the destruction by the Cultural Revolution. The temple was first built in the Tang dynasty, and after layers of reconstruction and redecorations it collected various architectural styles. I was fascinated by the endless details, the relives on the walls and under the tilted tower carved flying Apsaras. The hallway and courtyards complete with chromatic murals and statues of bizarre mascots and four heavenly kings, immortal mist-wrap-ping gods, dazzling tributes, and uncountable illustrations of immortals. They are so sacred and solemn, but at the same time very playful and illogical. For example, the wishing well, flooding wooden fish sculpture, the challenge of blindly touching the mark of ‘佛’ on the wall. Also, the speeches by Monks are abstract and unknown but somehow melodious. It appeals to me to wonder about things that are unknown.

If a child's curiosity is too much, the overwhelmed schoolwork and authorial system can stop it immediately. I was not into school, due to all its requirements, rigid rules and dull pedagogies. Especially, by moving back and forth to live with my parents, grandmother, or other relatives, I have constantly changed schools and had to put in new teachers and strange classmates, and finally I ended up in boarding school. For a long period of time reciting knowledge remained the most important methodology. The lack of experimentation or truly understanding the theory behind the content, made study tedious. The school doesn't care about curiosity. For example, in the famous ancient math puzzle, 'In a cage housing some chicken and rabbits. There are a total of 35 heads, and 94 legs. Find how many chickens and rabbits?' I was not interested in using the equation to calculate the answer but wondering why they put these two animals together. However, mathematics classes were always the priority and other major classes remained competitive. I quickly found my preferred subject—Art, the only course where we do not have a final exam. In art we had the most freedom to do what we wanted to do. Also, in this class we did not have a single answer or formula; we didn't get criticized. I found myself truly happy that I didn't have to prove my understanding by reciting knowledge. I took afterschool art classes and took every chance to join art groups in school: make the stage props, create the classroom murals, and so on. At that time, I was called talented in art by my art teachers. I hardly understood art by that age and the only thing that kept me passionate was that it allowed alternative thinking.

Leaving China and studying art abroad was my first big decision. It is a result of my alternative thinking at that time. At the age of 19, I flew across the Pacific Ocean from Chengdu to San Francisco and studied at the Academy of Art University. From there, where my self-awareness began, not only did I become an adult and a college student, but also a foreigner in a foreign country. Art was the connection between me as an Asian young woman and the western civilization in history and contemporary circumstances. School was no longer a rigid place to force students but a support center where it allowed elective courses to help students gain techniques and criticism or praise from instructors or peers. After undergraduate study, I continued moving to a different foreign country—England. By the time I studied sculpture at the Slade School of Art in London, visiting museums was my obsession. Museums like the British Museum, Tate Britain, Tate Modern with all the artworks in different times became a more spontaneous learning space. Private or smaller museums and galleries like Newport Street, Freud Museum, were unique curatorial styles. I was no longer just a student but also a reviewer to these fresh visual conversations. Throughout each topic I learned a point of view through the curator's decisions. Compassion and social concerns were raised during my consistent visits to the museum

and it brought me back to the experience of having spacious time in the temple as a child, where people worshiped with their deepest thoughts, memories and secrets to symbolic or deliberate objects.

The strong connection between objects and human beings happened in the temple, the church, the monument but also the museum. I wonder if all the museums on earth could draw a map of Babel at 90°, with searching our history and roots of memories being the process of meeting creativity?

Introduction

This thesis is my journey of inquiry about the relationship between contemporary art and art education in a creative process. The thesis attempts to search for answers that already exist and create new ones to the questions such as: What is art? What is the intertwined relationship between contemporary art and art education? Should art and art education address the current challenges humans are facing, such as environmental and cultural sustainability? If so, how can art and education through creativity act realistically, meaningfully?

Through research and practice of art in a multicultural context, the theme of the thesis is related to sustainability as the analytical backdrop. I took an arts-based approach in this research through poetry, literature, installation and alternative space art formats. I engaged in interviews that are made visible through an artistic cartography project, and two case studies of contemporary/conceptual artists. I also share an innovative curriculum design for use in experimental art classrooms or community art education practices spaces, as well as a proposal for an exhibition and curatorial design with environmental education implications.

Broadly, I argue through the above experiments and analysis that art and art education evokes creativity and alternative thinkings: they may not provide concrete answers or solutions to the timely questions, but they raise awareness, bring greater selectivity, arouse curiosity, build bridges between disciplines, embrace multiculturalism, and provide choices that will advance the preferred futures of individuals and humanity as a whole. Following those concepts, I sought to address my main research question: What is the response of contemporary art and art education when confronted with the human crisis through the lens of cultural-natural sustainability? I also explored the following sub-questions: 1. How can contemporary art play an educational role in promoting environmental and cultural conservation while avoiding over-promotion or moral judgment? 2. If creativity is the force that resolves all these contradictions, how can we become more creative through art and art education in the present? 3. How is creativity stimulated? 4. How to discover the creative possibilities occurring in interdisciplinary. This thesis research was done in my limited time only and has many shortcomings. Interviews were conducted with students and one professor from RISD, as well as one of my friends who is a contemporary artist. This limited research may be a small beginning for me to continue to research and practice the methodologies mentioned in this article in the future.

PART II:

Literature in Conversation

Define and Redefine

Throughout history, artists, philosophers and people in general have defined and confined the definition of art. However, the matter of defining art has never stopped, nor will it stop in our generation, for the needs of society change in every period, and art is closely related to these changes. Redefining its significance is undeniable.

Art through history has been defined and redefined for different intentions, cultural backgrounds and individual’s perceptions. Joseph Kaosuth’s One and Three Chairs, (1965) representations of chairs from different perspectives, a dictionary definition of the word chair, images of a chair, a chair structure made of wood, etc.. So, what is art, if there is more than one definition? Searching for its meaning reveals value changes. The following excerpts are some of the understandings of art that I personally agree with, and are more in line with my current analysis.

“The art I call conceptual is such because it is based on an inquiry into the nature of art”(Joseph Kosuth, n.d.).

“This world is but a canvas to our imagination—Henry David Thoreau”(Hidalgo,2015, p.71).

“What do you think an artist is? ...he is a political being, constantly aware of the heart breaking, passionate, or delightful things that happen in the world, shaping himself completely in their image. Painting is not done to decorate apartments. It is an instrument of war”(Pablo Picasso, 1988).

“I do not seek, I find. It is a risk, a holy adventure. The uncertainty of such ventures can only be taken on by those, who feel safe in insecurity, who are lead in uncertainty, in guilelessness, who let themselves be drawn by the target and do not define the target themselves”(Pablo Picasso, n.d).

The power of art is that it brings a subtle light to those who are lost in the maze, and it can also remind those in the spotlight so that they do not easily forget the experiences they once lost. This realization of touching both the positive and negative ends of the spectrum lies in the true recording and expression in art, where the simultaneous existence of the critical and imaginational inspires individual and collective self-examination and reflection. Rather than defining or interpreting it, could this process of finding the answer be the answer itself?

Society, Art, Education

Education and art both influence the human mind in direct and indirect ways and therefore, there is a responsibility to be truthful to reflect contemporary society. Contemporary art as an educational imply which is using the power of creating though expression of art strongly connected by this discovering of the aesthetics. The study of taste and beauty. Raising awareness is part of study of taste which in reshaping one’s stader of understanding acknowledges.

According to Deleuze (1992) In *Postscript on the Society of Control*, we are transforming from the disciplinary society and toward a society of control in a hundred years ago, the difference in places seems to bar the world into different time zones; a hundred years later there are still countries surviving in the model of disciplinary society, while most countries are experiencing a more inclined control society as Deleuze portrayed it. What we can see is the overwhelming influence of the Internet, the proliferation of social platforms, and more frighteningly, the solidification and uniformity our minds are undergoing. What does it mean to live in a society of control? While Deleuze’s reflections on this question are thought-provoking and important, art and education reflect on this question through creativity, cognitive, synesthesia.

It is not exceptional to associate freedom and restriction in art and education, Contemporary art expresses the essential concerns but sporadically under the sense of mysterious and irrational while education is undeviating, often revealing the ins and outs. And how has our complex, multifaceted and changing society and environment been shaped, and how does it constrain and influence the individual in the present?

Considering all the systems of discipline and control, it is hard not to think negatively about the diminishing and eroding of individual freedom to almost nothing. We live in a system of rapid monitoring and filtering of our every action. Thinking about alternatives may sound like a “hope”? Researching in contemporary art to understand how people’s internal processes are monitored and constantly exposed to the public. Some examples reflects this theme, such as Dragonfly Eyes by contemporary artist Xu Bing, Dragonfly Eyes.(2017)

As Philosophical ideas collide inadvertently, “无为而治”--庄子 and “Nothing seems to me the most potent thing in the world” (Robert Barry, 1968).

Poetry and Embodied Spiritual in Touch

Poetry as a form of expression, connects the human soul and spirit across time, region and politics. I think this is the power of poetry in its simplicity and simplicity. Like other art forms such as painting, performance, music, etc., they are precise in their expression but do not limit the imagination of the reader/viewer. Although there are bound to be misinterpretations, they do not affect the deepest connection between the expresser and the receiver. As Greek lyric poet Simonides says “‘ Painting is silent poetry, and poetry painting that speaks.” —Simonides of Ceos (c. 556 BC — 469 BC)

Sometimes, a certain melody intertwined with specific words has the magical power to touch our will.

Imagine there’s no heaven
Imagine there’s no countries
Imagine all the people
Livin’ life in peace
Imagine no possessions
‘You may say I’m a dreamer, But I’m not the only one, I hope some-
day you’ll join us. And the world will live as one’---John Winston
Lennon

Poetry can be a hissing voice and appeal, or a silent sense of urgency and intuition. Such as a Chinese poetry “大漠孤烟直 长河落日圆”—王维 This simple poem uses the most straightforward words and rhetorical techniques to paint a picture for the reader of a vast desert, a lonely vertical smoke with a strong sense of presence, a long river, a sunset. I can’t use any other words to retell such a strange and familiar scene. It is as if I can go to the author’s side whenever I read this poem and accompany him in his state of mind at that time. I think this is the power of poetry in its simplicity and excellence. Like other art forms such as painting, performance, music, etcThey are precise in their expression but do not limit the imagination of the audience, and although there are certainly misinterpretations or misunderstandings, it does not affect the deep connection perception and spirit of the expresser and the receiver.

Whatever the state of mind was, there is no need to explain more. The similar concept is found in Japanese aestheticsYūgen 幽玄. A profound reflection on the vastness of the universe and the misery and mysterious sense, deep and powerful while inexpressible by words.

“To watch the sun sink behind a flower clad hill. To wander on in a huge forest without thought of return. To stand upon the shore and gaze after a boat that disappears behind distant islands. To contemplate the flight of wild geese seen and lost among the clouds...”(Zeami Motokiyo,n.d.)

The deepest thoughts and sorrows of humanity as a whole and in the face of the earth we have and only have. The challenges we need to face and the need to act until then are the same, and it is the same throughout the past, present and future.

Humanity as a whole should hold the same concern: the one and only earth we have. The challenges we need to face and the necessity to act are the same, and they run through the past, present and future. As in the metaphor of the Tower of Babel, words are confusing, people’s hearts are united. In the poem, I see human observation, curiosity, and awareness that cannot be obstructed by space and time. Like both in Auguries of Innocence by Willam Blake and A heaven in a wildflower–Shurangama Sutra. Molecular structures inspire an infinite amount of possibilities.

‘大漠孤烟直 长河落日圆’ 一王维。这句简单至极的诗，用最直白的词语和通感的修辞手法为读者画了一幅画，画里有广阔的沙漠，一缕孤独而附有极强存在感的竖立的烟，有长长的河流与近乎符号化的园的夕阳... 我无法用任何其他语言来复述这样一个既陌生又熟悉的场景，好像自己每当在脑海中会想和读取这些组合的词语言，都可以随着声音去到了作者身边，陪伴他当时的心境。无论那是怎么的心境都无需多做解释。我想这就是诗歌至简至极的力量。如同其他艺术形式如，绘画，表演，音乐等一样，他们精确的表达但不限制读者的想象力，虽然其中必然会存在误读或误解，但毫不影响表达者和接受着心灵深处的相通。

In *The Art Museum as Ritual*, Duncan (1995) talks about the relation between museums and ceremonial monuments. Although it may not directly connect to my topic of creativity and art education, it explores the way we connect our thoughts and beliefs to a place. It also made me think about my own experience of growing up with a strong influence of the temple. Additionally, it also pushes me to think about art education in different locations, and the importance of what is included and what is excluded, and how each space is designed. Is a class room or a museum more of an educational or creative place than a theater, coffee shop, forest or any other place?

In *Creative Theories of (Just About) Everything*, Lutters (2020) notes that “Creativity has been hailed as the driving force and most important skill of the twenty-first century—a power to be taught, understood and deployed on all levels of society” Lutters, J. (2020). In this book Lutters talked about creativity in three categories: the origin, the nature, and the organism. Lutter, in this book, offers insight about the knowledge of creativity through old times and philosophers who inspired him: Spinoza, Parenides, Goethe, Freud, etc. This encouraged me to find my own knowledge sources to build up my understanding of creativity and art education through old master, political facts and ethical statements.

Lutter’s (2020) description of creativity is strongly influenced by Spinoza and his monistic and Freud’s concept of id. “‘Creativity is an attempt to resolve a conflict generated by unexpressed biological impulses, such that unfulfilled desires are the driving force of the imagination, and they fuel our dreams and daydreams’—Sigmund Freud” (Lutter,2020, pp. 114–120).

In order for an idea to be considered creative, it must satisfy two criteria According to,(Amabile, 1983b; Stein, 1974). creativity requires the innovation of usefulness and novelty. Does all creativity require the same criteria? Is there a difference between creativity and artistic creation? Inspired by this concept, I began to think more deeply about reframing creativity in art and general life.

As an artist newly in research, I hope this thesis is a starting point to guide myself to become a critical and more organized thinker. Doing this literature review helped me not be afraid of making notes on philosophical ideas and taking the knowledge as my starting point also my memory mark. I do not have to understand everything to start. This clearing of my own mind is also an inspiration map for myself as future research on creativity and art education and beyond. art education and beyond.

PART III:

Finding Answers

This chapter addresses my research question through one art-based research interview and two case studies of artists: one on Maya Lin and one on Christian Boltanski.

The interview is inspired by the broad thesis theme (creativity) and both artists are shaping epitaphs in a very poetic way, commemorating what we have lost or are about to lose, and confronting the loss of humanity with real monuments or abstract records (i.e.: thinking about how art and creativity can address real and serious issues). Poetic expression is the most basic and honest way to discover and express deep feelings because I believe that people are connected to nature deep down when talking about the core concerns of human beings and their deep connection to individuals. Nature is important to everyone, and to protect it is to protect the most vulnerable and soft innermost part of each person. We are so busy with so many things that we ignore or intentionally disregard this important part of our lives that is so close to our hearts. Both ‘What is Missing’ and ‘The Heart Archive’ respectively by Maya Lin and Christian Boltanski, utilized data collection and inquired about the world as their creative process. I think these works are examples of a kind of research based art.

What is missing? Project Study

Claimed by What is missing? On its site (n.d.). It is a project designed by Maya Lin as her “last memorial”, It is a multi-sited memorial created through science-based artworks about the present sixth mass extinction of species, connect this loss of species to habitat degradation and loss, and emphasize that by protecting and restoring habitat, we can both reduce carbon emissions and protect species.

If we divide Maya Lin’s work into three categories: architecture, fine art, and memorial. The first work we know of by MayaLin would probably be the Vietnam War memorial, which represented a scar embedded in the earth’s surface, deep and powerful. It is black, hard, reflective material inscribed on the tombstone with the names of every single man who lost their life in the war. It is recorded in this scar that belongs to the land and also the scars of their families.

A memory belonging to the collective is deepened in an individual memorial by Maya Lin’s design. A period of chaos and restlessness that dare not look back seems serene here with a deep sadness. According to the interview (Academy of Achievement, 2016)

What is missing? Gives a unique experience, and since it is multi-sited, the audience can explore the sound installation. It interacts with individuals’ memories of lost species and adds ecological history personally. Experience this work as an individual. I feel empowered by the potential that action on this global issue of biodiversity dim could be. The power of Individuals to change the world is limited, but it is essential and authentic, and it can be connected. As the world’s diverse, every kind of creature meets together to create the world, the absence is an Inconvenient Truth. In this sense, the participation in this work can feel the responsibility and trust the power of an individual’s action.

I appreciate that this work is largely involved with people and interactive in its methods of information collection. Also, it includes solutions and suggestions for people to be active in changing the world for the better. However, the downside is that the site is sometimes delayed when opening or interacting. People in a zone of relative information isolation do not enjoy such a privilege of interacting with this work. Nevertheless, this work has a highly educational and aesthetic value. When I see the drawings by young children who share their stories about lost on the, What is missing? Site. It recalled my memories in Tibet in the summer of 2021 as a temporary art teacher and curriculum designer. I hope that such a way of interaction can be expanded in creative ways. I believe that everyone deserves the opportunity to renew their knowledge of the environment surrounding them, love and learn more about protecting the planet in a serendipity.

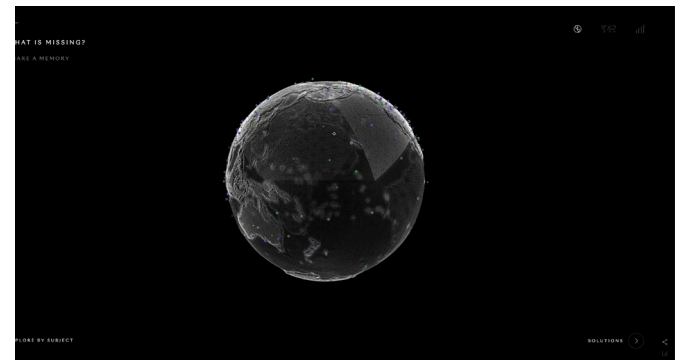
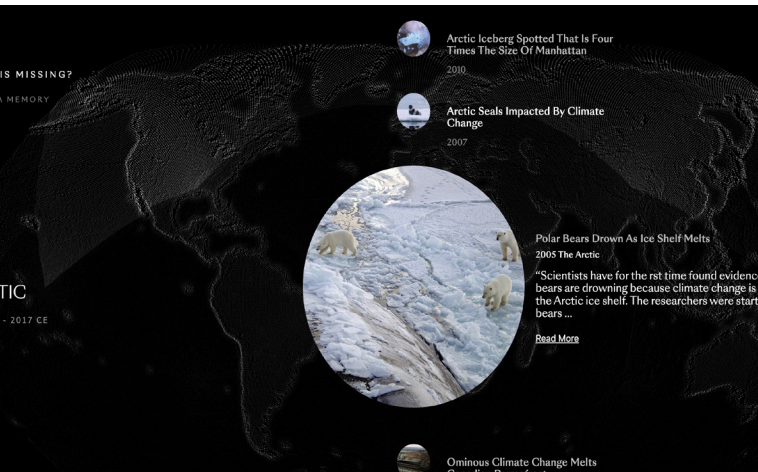


Figure 1. Screenshots from Maya Lin, *What Is Missing?*, www.whatismissing.org, May 2022.

Christian Boltanski

Conceptual art is artwork about ideas, so what is the idea and who is the idea for? How does it affect society? Through this case study on Christian Boltanski and his work “The Heart Beat Archive,” I hope to explore my research questions: What is the response of contemporary art and art education when confronted with the human crisis through the lens of cultural and natural sustainability? How can contemporary art play an educational role in promoting environmental and cultural conservation while avoiding over-promotion or moral judgment?

Christian Boltanski was a French artist active in the late twentieth century and who died on 14 July 2021. He is a poetic, productive, conceptual, and also critical artist. His mixed-media works with photography, found objects, and projections question memory and individuality. He raises an awareness of mortality, and of the history of human existence. His installation works with sound sculpture give the miraculous experience which is a question and connection to religion. Boltanski considered himself a painter in many of his interviews. “It’s the idea that’s important” (Christian Boltanski, 2017)

Thinking about the purpose of creating anything, I found it touching to read Boltanski’s (Kynaston Mcshine & New, 1999) statement on the Museum as Muse. It is also mentioned in his interview with the Tate Museum(Tate, 2019) when he recalled about his process of making artworks and how he spontaneously shopped around and bought things that have their own histories. He told a story about a jacket he found which had a pair of tickets in its pocket. When he says ‘it’s a pair of tickets’ instead of two tickets, it feels like a story behind it and where it is there or that, objects pass stories down. Whether the jacket has an identity and it will have a new identity after. It depends on who brought it and how they reuse it; the relationship with its owner. The previous owner made half a story with its identity. If we think about that, our own body is just like that jacket, we eventually are going to detach it and it will be recycled. From this cycle of life what we have created is our concept, and the concept comes from the experience no matter the idea or purpose there yet.

‘When I made the Inventories, and in the pieces titled Ré-serves or Vitrines de référence, I was recalling the ethnological and historical museums that I visited as a child. Preventing forgetfulness, stopping the disappearance of things and beings, seemed to me a noble goal, but I quickly realized that this ambition was bound to fail, for as soon as we try to preserve something we fix it. We can preserve things only by stopping life’s course. If I put my glasses in a vitrine, they will never break, but will they still be considered glasses? This object helps me to see better; it is useful to me. Once

glasses are part of a museum’s collection, they forget their function, they are then only an image of glasses. In a vitrine, my glasses will have lost their reason for being, but they also will have lost their identity, their history. These glasses: I like them, I know them, I know where I bought them, how the saleswoman praised them, the time when I forgot them in a restaurant, and my concern not to have them with me anymore. All this constitutes some kind of friendship, and this relationship, these shared memories, the museum cannot convey. This object will have lost its identity with hundreds of photographic portraits piled up in the small space of the Archives. None of these superimposed faces tells us anything about the destiny of these beings, the different lives of each of them remain unknown to us. They are here, next to each other, they who had no reason to meet, waiting, until someone can name them again.’ –Christian Boltanski (ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2022.)

Viewing Boltanski’s artworks through printed images in books, magazines or the internet, I may see the symbols of history, but when I get through all these documentations, it is actually all about time, the time that passed by through individuals and it’s all in the details. But it’s not only an abstraction of time, it is also all about the relationships between people. Boltanski is trying so hard to catch every detail that it shows the sense of existence; the proof of human’s existence in history. Sometimes it’s a symbol, sometimes hidden in materials, and its details require effort to be discovered.

I did not strongly have an emotional attachment with these documents but it pushed me to want to discover more. When I go to the museum to see the works I get the feeling immediately; it is much harder to get the message from documents and reviews by the third person’s documentation—the written review or photo copy of it’s work. And by this time, I have to rely on my research and documents of work in a two-dimensional picture or video. This led me to question what Boltanski is really trying to express. If we see the archive of one thing does it actually mean the same? If we see the artworks in the archive, it is the same or it actually changes the meaning of the art works or how we consider an artwork’s border. Do we consider the whole concept to be included in an artworks? Or is it only displayed in the museum or galleries can be considered as an artwork? How about in the future, If an artwork is intangible, conceptual and undocumentable, how can we prove its existence?

If there is no border line of documentation there can not be a limitation of it either. The work of constructed situations artist Tino Sehgal serves as an example of this idea. When his artworks happen in museums, he requires no camera documentation or monitoring. The only archive can be people’s memory.In contrast, the artist and social activist Aiweiwei takes the most tangible object/ documents

to express his concept.

Derrida(1998) writes not only about the archive as a site of power and authority but also about the ambiguous and fragmentary nature of its contents (Carson & Miller, 2014) Rethinking of the use of archives in daily life, since phone cameras are widely used in general, people take photos casually and the photos are classified sometimes automatically by the phone applications. It could be categorized by time, location, the lens even by portraits of people in the picture. The increase of memory on our phone gives people a backup on their own memories, but it may or may not also take away from the special moments when they are supposed to be experienced purely instead of documenting the transience.

Creativity in art has constantly shifted its purpose, from the beginning of images’ existence to contemporary art. The purpose of creating art changes though the process never stays the same. However, the purpose of expressing an idea behind all results is what drives creativity for thousands of years from cave paintings to digital artworks.

Free up by materials, conceptual art is creating an atmosphere that potentially creates a connection in the soul. In Boltanski’s sound installation, his use of the bell and also the point light or the mixed media projection gives a strong sense of sacredness. They are visually aesthetic, mysterious, and full of religious imaginations. It seems that such a feeling is a psychological baptism. And in the exhibition, it is written that the audience will participate to complete the artworks. Such inscriptions are difficult for viewers to separate the viewing experience from the ritual ceremony, and more than one Boltanski work was completed in the church. The sacredness of the church itself is integrated with the work.



Figure 2. Christian Boltanski, *Animitas (Chili)*, 2014. Courtesy Marian Goodman Gallery.

Figure 3. Christian Boltanski, *L'Album de la famille D*, 1971, detail. Courtesy Marian Goodman Gallery.

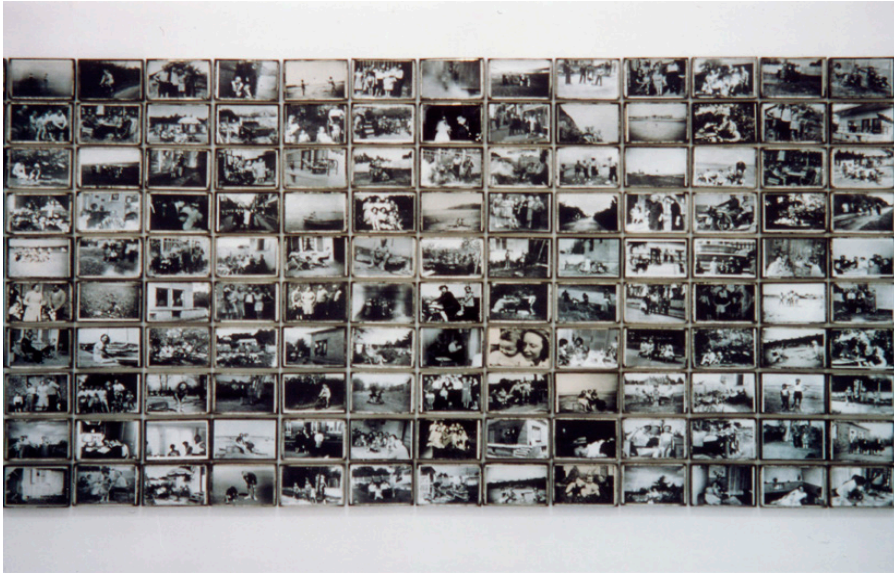


Figure 4. photo by Didier Plowy, Christian Boltanski, *'Personnes'*, 2010, Monumenta Grand Palais, Paris. Courtesy Marian Goodman Gallery.

Figure 5. Christian Boltanski, *The HeartbeatArchive*, 2014. Courtesy Benesse Art Site Naoshima.



Interview

The following interview is about the views of people who have experienced or are enrolled in advanced art degrees in art and design, and the differences in perceptions about art and education brought about by their cultural backgrounds. I decided to use art-based research to record this interview. I wanted these conversations to be intimate and focused on a stream of consciousness form of documentation. I deliberately steered away from critical questions involved in politics, instead inquiring for relevant experiences. There are no recordings by audio or video, rather the answers to my initial questions are shared through drawings of maps. So this interview was more about finding the direction and depth that needed to be explored for this study. I was most interested in the art educational experiences of people from different cultural backgrounds and how it may have affected their abilities to be creative or their ideas about what it means to be creative. This interview hoped to address how art education forms the creativity of individuals and how the way art is taught in schools or public space in different countries and cultural background affect ideas about art, creativity, and aesthetics in its society broadly.

The interview explores creativity through art in practice, addressing the memories of international students from RISD in art classes or art education experience from their own countries. I did ask for permission if these memories from interviews agree to transfer this information to a cartographer.

I used the interview process as a tool for mapping data collection. The interview questions were based on people’s perception of creativity, and how art education contributes to or damages human creativity through their own experience and cultural background.

The questions I posted to each participant were:

What led you to RISD?

Tell me about your prior art study experience?

Tell me about the most memorable art class you have ever taken?

What is the best/worst thing you have received from art deduction?

What is the positive side of art education in your cultural background?

What would you like to change from art education nationally and internationally?

What makes you want to be an artist, designer or educator, etc?

How do you define creativity?

List of the most creative person, country, or period in human history and why?

What is the connection between art deduction and creativity?

About the context cartography book:

There are 4 interviewee’s feedback that has been drawn to cartography shown in the picture.

PART IV: Proposals

Site-Specific Curriculum as Art-Based Research

A workplace that values diversity of thought is one that makes it possible for people with a variety of ways of thinking to contribute to projects together. That includes people who are analytical as well as imaginative, and organized as well as highly creative—“cognitive diversity.” (Titus Talent, 2020)

The following is a curriculum design utilizing contemporary art observation method and creation method that focuses on the theme of cultural and environmental sustainability for local children, ages 6–12. It is designed to use the work of contemporary art as an inspiration to practice with found material and a method of observation rather than a reproduction of technique. The class is eager to encourage students’ imagination and hands-on skills as well as their ability to communicate with their peers through the practices of looking, listening, and expressing their inner ideas. One of the goals of this curriculum is to ask students to find connections between their local culture and the natural world as a way of exploring their own identity.

Ideally, this curriculum design should be a week-long, hands-on art-led program interspersed with nature study and the study of local culture. It would require the participation of natural science and history knowledge. It would also be considered a theme-based curriculum. Students would be exposed to artistic methods of observation, explore crafts and design skills as well as knowledge of other disciplines and the possibility to practice in nature and the surrounding environment.

The design inspiration came from my past traveling and teaching experience in the Tibetan area and also the What is missing? The project, as Part II mentioned. It was originally designed to give students living around the sacred mountain of Mo Er Duo 墨尔多 in Danba County, a forest area where its vegetation communities are divided into six types, with a total of 342 species of herbaceous plants.(example of drawing showing in below). and Biodiversity conservation and awareness desperately needed. This curriculum is designed for the local young people to know more about the landscape

and culture of their hometown through art and other disciplines. Due to the physical distance constraints, this course design has not been explicitly implemented since the update. Hopefully, this is a good start, and in the future, teachers and students can practice and iterate on this curriculum design.

Icebreaker session

Ask students to share their dreams or special memories, including what kind of scenes and space it happened in.

Introducing
As the teacher listens to these stories, he/she needs to point out that these descriptions reflect the relationship between the environment and daily life. To begin with, a walk from the classroom to the forest.

Artist’s observations and presentation
Arriving at the base location, the teacher asks the students questions about what they have observed on the way.

Introducing Andy Goldsworthy’s artwork, take the gradation of color, the texture, and pattern as references. Then, express themselves by finding materials from the forest to create the stories they mentioned earlier in the classroom. The process reveals possibilities of found color and texture or shapes in surroundings. By observing and appreciating the beauty of the natural world, students may develop a way to connect their inner world to nature.

Keywords: inner world, spiritual, imagination, observation, discovery, communication, connection

Assignment: (the assignment would be not a requirement but a suggestion of creating work, through the process meeting the chance of problem resolve. The moment of class creates the sense of scene play without rehearsals learning from each other spontaneously. Experiencing + learning simultaneously.)

1. Discover and Collect ten or more colors in the forest.
2. Create artworks with the found objects in thinking of transforming detentions. For example leaves can be a cube, twigs can be a line.
3. The created artwork requires three or more textures. (this is an unfailable assignment, because everything no matter the scale of it is, it’s full of texture)
4. Find the connection between the visual presentation to the story or memories of oneself.

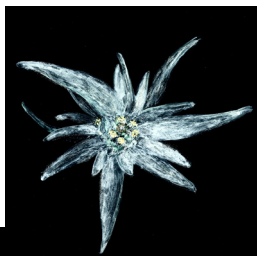
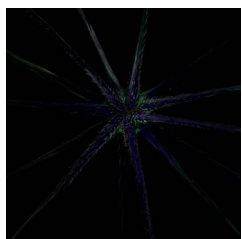


Figure 7.
Andy Gold-
sworthy Digi-
tal Catalogue:
*Woodpigeon
wing feathers
partly buried
laid aroun-
hole Leeds,
Yorkshire
August 1977*

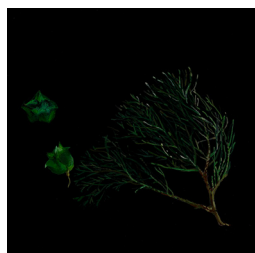
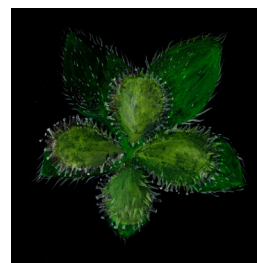
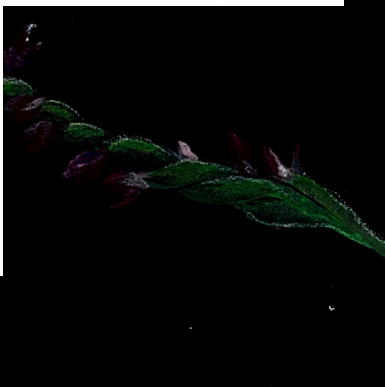
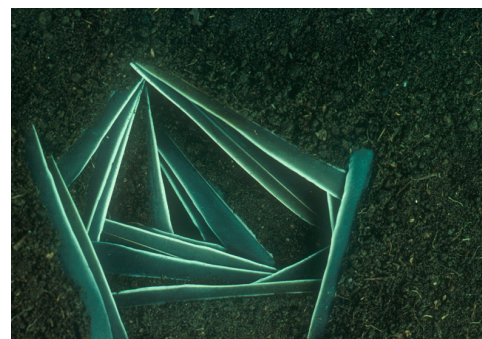


Figure 7+. by Li Yang, drawings herbaceous plants and
lichens, around the sacred mountain of Mo Er Duo, 森林学
校 2021

Floristics Diet Exhibition

The following is a proposal for an exhibition connected to one of my main thesis questions: how can art and education engage with the big questions facing the world. I believe the only way to avoid a dogmatic or didactic attitude is to be creative, which means offering more options and opening up possibilities, and questioning the system. Utilizing a systematic thinking approach to find core problems and hypothetical solutions could be used to formulate an alternative solution.

This proposal is deeply inspired by Maya Lin’s working method as an artist, which I understand to be grounded in creating artworks that involve a scientific method of interacting with and collecting data from people for people in the present and future. “Innovation could be everything from pure invention to getting us to look at materials that we think we know and getting people to rethink [them]” (Academy of Achievement, 2016) “I start with writing, with all my work. That’s something that has been a part of my work from day one. I tease out some underlying goals before I ever try to imagine what the shape or the form is going to be. And I study and I research and I research and I study, and then I try to consciously forget all that I have learned. Then I start making.” (Maya Lin, Academy of Achievement, 2016)

I question that when we humans as a whole face various environmental issues that in general, require a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. I decided to find a solution in a plant-based diet that would effectively reduce the food footprint, which would be highly effective since about one-fifth of the world’s carbon emissions come from farms that raise meat.

The promotion of vegetarianism has never been lacking, but there are still more people in this world who prefer meat. There are many reasons for this, such as:

- 1. Does the government intervene effectively in the price ratio of meat and vegetables.
- 2. Do people passively accept a meat-based diet because they lack choices?
- 3. Is the popular culture of meat the most profitable with intermediaries and profit-makers?
- 4. Why are we overpacking our fresh vegetables?

I am more concerned with the point that everyone can reflect more actively on this system of our diet and whether it is reliable, sustainable, and enhances the abundance of options. The entire exhibition is designed to connect the relationship between human and plant-based diets and the history of their development.

The relationship between humans and vegetarianism has been created and documented as far back as 3300 BC, and the relationship between humans and vegetarianism has never been broken, although it has existed in varying degrees of popularity in different places and at different times. People pick, grow, prepare, and sell vegetarian food for reasons that basically boil down to traditional practices, religious beliefs, and healing. This exhibition is also planned to show the vegetarian menu invented by cultures without the restriction of geography as well as religious cultures’ influence in a timeline.

Experience is the keyword to this exhibition. The experience of taste, visualization, conversation and tech cultivation. Such a multifaceted experience will come to the top timeline and focus most on the relationship between humans and plants as a food supply in the midst of historic change.

This conceptual exhibition was conceived with replicability and be able to fit in different cultural backgrounds. The relevant collaborative artist components are local artists and international artists. The local artists mainly work with edible food as artworks. In contrast, international artists have no requirements for art formats, as long as the subject matter is about the aforementioned aspects.

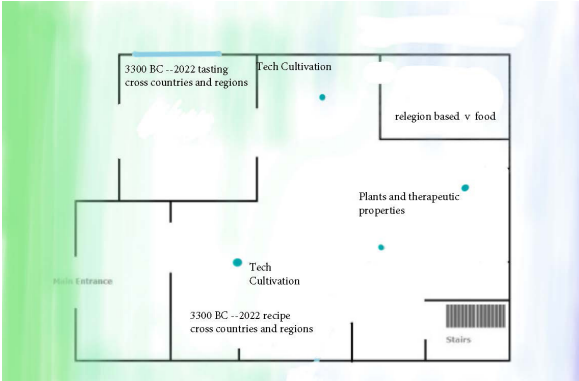


Figure 8. by Li Yang, *Floristics diet Exhibition, "INNOVATION STUDIO" as part of MA elective-course, RISD Spring 2022, professor Charlie Cannon 2022.*

Part IV:

Conclusion and future

Self Reflection

A/R/Tography is understood as a balance of (a)rtmaking, (r)esearch, and (t)eaching and requires layers of progression and moreover an open mind to draw inspiration and experience across disciplines. An art teacher who can bring inspiration and strength to students and classrooms needs to be an artist themselves foremost as well as a conscientious researcher – one who is courageous in questioning traditional methods, criticizing authority and being innovative in the educational process.

Theory as a/r/t/ography creates imaginative turns by theorizing or explaining phenomena through aesthetic experiences that integrate knowing, doing, and making experiences that simultaneously value technique and content through acts of inquiry; experiences that value complexity and difference within a third space. Art is the visual reorganization of experience that renders complex the apparently simple or simplifies the apparently complex. Research is the enhancement of meaning revealed through ongoing interpretations of complex relationships that are continually created, recreated and transformed (Irwin & de Cosson, 2004, p.31)

Here I would like to show or, I should say, humbly record how I did my work under such a learning method. This work of becoming an a/r/tography is one part of many works in my wandering in art and education explorations. They are controversial, and a paradox in both the concept and materials combinations, yet it appears in a visually aesthetically appealing and often tranquil atmosphere. As a child brought up with a Buddhism grandma, I was a true animist full of imaginations. Under the influence of Chinese education and literature. I was fascinated by rhetorical techniques, of which metaphor is the one I fascinated the most; it gives the reader unlimited freedom to think while bringing uncertain meanings. Gradually, I was influenced and accepted the vage of ambiguity in communication which caused me to overthink. I believe that it is impossible to communicate between people without misunderstanding. Language, words, and Art are all subject to misinterpretation. There is always a gap between understanding and expression in religious rituals such as Shaman that use objects to communicate or on special occasions where people give gifts to express themselves.

I am obsessed with this non-demand present throughout Art and

personal beliefs. There is a paradox, both in nature and in the humanities, that we are always looking for patterns in seeming irregularities, and yet we are looking for differences in patterns. It is as if a leaf first takes on its natural shape in our observation. Then, with the rules of taxonomy, we find their regular veins, jagged edges, and infinite geometric shapes in the cells and complete details back to organic shapes.

This artwork of becoming in Blue pigments ice sphere is a part of my life-long expanding work in my wandering in art, learning, and education explorations. They are controversial and a paradox in both the concept and materials combinations, yet it appears in a visually aesthetically appealing and often tranquil atmosphere. It connects the wonder of Micro and optical observation patterns and forms and scientific research on natural phenomena. The pattern, the order of space, melts into organic forms which link to tales, myths, dreams, and unpromised memories. In a way creates the systematic mind that meets humans’ subconsciousness and sparkling collective memories. magnifying sensations through the line, color, texture, and forms in dimensions, connecting concrete elements to irrational thoughts or spiritual abstractions. We are finding irregularities in the division while simultaneously regrouping elements alternatively.

Concerning ice, sphere, and blue pigments, artist such as Lita Albuquerque (2014), Xavier Cortado (2007), and David Hammons (1983) but the element can be represented and translated in multiple ways. The courage to recreate dims if one is always thinking of avoiding imitation or repetition, but from another perspective, to learn and recognize explanations that already exist, approach, and we do not stop seeking it broader and more profound. Of course, there are different ways of giving answers from science, phycology, and religions; art answers by keeping questioning and being aware of observations, perceptions, and intuitions. The process of creation can be about asking new questions and getting infinitely closer to the answers.



Figure 9. by Li Yang, *Untitled*, (Ice sphere blue pigmented ice sphere), "A Visual Lexicon for Becoming" as part of MA Colloquium course, RISD Spring 2022, Instructor Dr. Blake Smith.

Final Thoughts

This thesis has been a significant journey for me, exploring art and art education’s connections to issues humanity is facing. Within this thesis, these topics were explored through a discussion of literature in conversation, an analysis of contemporary artists and artworks, and conversations around how Art and artmaking have the power to reveal and decode societies’ needs. Through this process, I learned the importance of art-based research, the purpose and possibility of research-based Art, and the benefits and limitations of a/r/tography. Therefore it is worth mentioning that this thesis and the whole process of this research is itself an a/r/tographic inquiry that addresses my research question about the role of art and art education and its significance to sustainability in nature and culture.

For the limited time, I would like to enclose this question with a positive answer that art and art education can and should be involved in sustainable development by utilizing the power of creativity in art learning, artmaking, and art teaching. I offer two examples (site-specific curriculum design and exhibition design/curation) of what this work could look like in Part IV. by the end of this writing session.

Reflecting back on the last 9monthoth, as a graduate student, I learned to work with different subjects, new techniques, and, most importantly, cooperate with others. Requesting, receiving, offering, and contributing efforts make me a better communicator and responsible person. I am even more convinced that the foundation of who we are as human beings is the search for language, a familiar and foreign skill to acquire throughout one’s lifetime. We need not only to learn but to acquire through experiencing the ordinary or unexpected themes, thus embracing the difficulties that occur and can better understand ourselves, express ourselves, and actively embrace the world. The world is only limited if we forget innovation, creation, and observation; it is unlimited with Art, inquiry, and love.

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