

The Formula of My Art



THE FORMULA OF MY ART

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ABSTRACT

My paintings reflect my recent life experience and my thoughts about old Chinese wisdom such as Taoism and yin-yang. Yin and yang reflect the symbiotic polarity in my paintings—love and loneliness, movement and stillness, solitude and connection, or light and dark. I was born in China to a middle-class family and none of my family members connected to the arts. The route of my life was changed when I moved to America. After my girlfriend left me and my family suffered a financial loss, art enlightened me and gave direction to my life. Art came to reflect deeper meanings related to my life experience and emotions. I put all my sadness, loneliness, and loss during the period into my painting. Afterwards, my notions derived from Taoism and yin-yang seemed to apply to my paintings. A romantic realist, I seek my own artistic formula to express diverse emotions. Different tones of colors are the most important aspect of my formula. Blue is sad and cold. Red shows horror and excitement. Yellow tells the story of sunshine and peace. The placement of subjects intensifies their meaning in my paintings. The stories of my paintings are expressed by the objects I have chosen—falling leaves, gentle breezes, sunsets, apocalyptic landscapes, and vertiginous cityscapes. With my formula, my paintings have unlimited possibilities.

DEDICATION

To my family, my teachers, my ex-girlfriend, Tong Shen.

EPIGRAPH

He who works with his hand is a laborer.

*He who works with his hands and his head is a
craftsman.*

*He who works with his hands and his head and his heart
is an artist.*

-Louis Nizer

DESCRIPTION

Emotion, for me, expresses itself in a formula of movement, color tones, value, light logic and composition. Expressions like this in painting hold profound meaning, the truth of life and the meaning of experience. Humans are collections of emotion: happiness, sadness, joy, and fear. In suffering through different life experiences, we express our sense of the situation. I use my formula for expressing emotions in all my paintings. This formula for approaching my work enables me to reflect my own emotions, thoughts, and experience.

Beautiful, ugly, selfish, gracious, violent, lovely—all these words describe human characteristics.

However, the most important reality, negative or positive, is love between human beings. What would happen if today was your last day? Would you like to kill your enemy, sleep with your



Figure 1. Yiming Hong, *In The Last Day*, 2018, Oil on canvas, 36 in. x 24 in.

girlfriend, spend time with your family, or isolate yourself? What would you do on the last day of your life? This is the question I asked myself in the painting *The Last Day* (Fig.1). In *The Last Day*, I represent love through flowing hair, harmonious yellow and orange tones that contrast with green and gray, a soft backside light, and a central composition. I placed these two characters in the middle of the painting along a horizontal line that draws the

viewer's eye directly to them. The figures are side by side to emphasize the love between the man and woman.

In making this painting, I asked myself how I might represent love with different colors. Would it be through analogous color tone or contrasting color tone? By using the secondary colors, orange and green, around horizon line, I could emphasize the elements, characters, light, or fire, I want to amplify, making it easier to build a focal point. To increase the contrast, I decided to use yellow with orange colors for the sky and clouds, and to use a gray with dark green on the ruins of the city. This pairing enables me to show both harmony and contrast, which is analogous to the conflicting feelings surrounding a person in love. Yellow and orange represents hope, while the gray and dark green represent despair for me. Additionally, I try to build a high contrast between the values so that dark is very dark and the light is very light. This way I can bring attention to the figure and form of my subjects.

Composition and placement of characters are vital parts of my formula for building a narrative painting. In my mind, I see a picture of a boy hand-in-hand with a girl. A hopeful girl and boy stand on a mountain looking to the sky, as horrible threatening skeletons emerge below them. They stay on the summit of a mountain and witness the charming sunset. Below, the city is in ruins, dilapidated and dull. The boy and girl know that they cannot survive the apocalypse around them. So they enjoy their last minutes on earth with the peaceful and beautiful sunset. They are not afraid of skeletons, death, or any other adversities. They know that they have each other in these last minutes, which is such a great thing. In my painting, the key point is love. The boy and girl's gestures and pose are designed to capture their

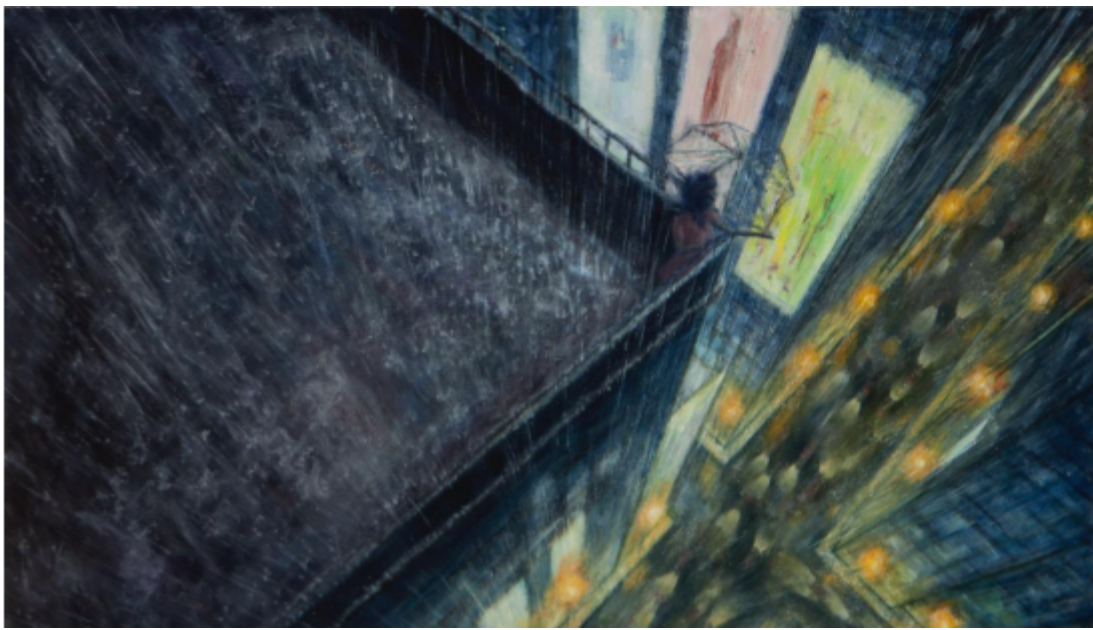
feeling of love. By contrasting them with the apocalyptic landscape, I show love gives them faith to survive. High value contrast creates this halo effect which encompasses the figures in a protective bubble.

In a formal sense, movement and contrasting tones of color navigate the viewer through the composition to build a peaceful and harmonious environment, despite the mayhem around the couple. There is a question about whether or not humans were born kind-hearted or not? As we know, by Darwinian evolution, natural selection and survival of the fittest govern all the species. Normally, animals are fighting and competing in order to survive, but in love, there is no competition. I tend to believe that humankind's nature is evil, and that it is humans' endeavor to better themselves through learning to love. By learning to love more, they start protecting animals, caring about the population, and building a harmonious society. Human beings need to learn principles of love so that in the end, they know peace. Love is all around us, but most of us ignore it. Only when we are in the moment of losing its life-giving force do we recall it. When people spend time with my painting, I want them to think about the love between these two people and make their own connections about the meaning of love. With love, you can face all adversities.

For love, I went abroad. However, finally I lost it. The loss of my love has directly impacted my painting style. Four years ago, I came to United States. My girlfriend went abroad to study so I came with her. My only goal was getting a master's degree. Because of language issues, math and art were the best subjects to choose. With a graphic design background, I planned to learn painting. At that movement, the reason for fine art was simply

to get a degree. When I broke up with my girlfriend, I felt that I lost everything. Because I fell out of love, I kept quiet and avoided communication. I closed the door to my heart and rejected all information. That opened another door for my art. At that time, art was the best way to express my inner emotion, which gave me the belief needed to face the hardship and survive. I started loving art and putting all my effort into it. I was speaking to my paintings and enjoying art in my personal world without a lot of thought about techniques, but the paintings were really strong and emotional. When people look at my paintings from that time, sometimes they can feel my loneliness and loss from the extreme composition and dark tones.

To show my depression and loss, I created the painting *Under the Dome* (Fig 2) from my imagination. My deepest depression becomes a dark blue color and an acute composition in my painting. Complementary colors, blue and orange, show two sides of my emotion, love and loss. For love, orange light appears. It is tiny, acute, and faraway from viewers' eyes, which is like my humble love. It still lives in my heart but is unreachable. A large area of



blue builds to show a sense of loss. It is heavy and very close to viewers, just as my deep and irremovable loss is close in my mind.

The article *Rule of Thirds* states, “The rule of thirds involves mentally dividing up your image using 2 horizontal lines and 2 vertical lines, as shown below [Fig.3]. You then



Figure 3. A rule of thirds grid. Important elements (the shed, and the border between the ground and the trees) are positioned along the lines and at the intersections. Image by Martin Gommel.

position the important elements in your scene along those lines, or at the points where they meet” (“Rule of Thirds”). Based on the rule of thirds, I placed the girl at the corner of the building to create a focal point, because she is so important for me. She holds two meanings. The exterior one is she is my girlfriend. I am missing her, so I put her into my painting. For the interior meaning is she is me. I believe that human beings have two sides, “Man” and “Woman.” For man, he does not only have the side of “Man” (bravery and firmness), but also has the side of “Woman” (vulnerability and sentimentality). I show my happiness to others, but I hide my sadness. The movement of the running cars and falling rain emphasize

my loss and depression. The city is there. The light is there. Cars are there, and buildings are there. But I am not there.

As I keep exploring my own art, showing my emotions is not enough. I have started to put the lessons I have learned into my paintings. I am a thoughtful person who likes building arguments to understand apparent or presumed truths through philosophy. I ask questions like, *who am I or who are you?* Or I question being itself. Sometimes I focus on the reasons for some social phenomenon such as why the division of labour between men and women is different. Other times I consider old sayings or emotional quotations, such as that when you love someone, the world is gray, but she is colorful. However, I've come to see that when you start forgetting her, the world is still gray, and she starts losing color too. Also, Chinese old wisdom such as Taoism provides a lot of possibilities for my paintings. Chinese wisdom starts with Taoism, yin-yang, or Taiji (Chinese Pinyin). The old wisdom is that yin and yang stand against each other. But at the same time, they support each other, which tells the truth of the universe. Laozi said in his book, *Tao Te Ching*, "The Tao begot one. One begot two. Two begot three. And three begot the ten thousand things" (44). Taiji shows the process of the universe from the infinite and even the creation of all things.



To question gender, I started a painting called *Was Me, Is Me, Will Be Me?* (Fig. 4). I am a firm and brave man who faces adversities and difficulties with a positive mind and a smiling face. Nevertheless, in my mind, I feel helpless and really want someone to help me solve all the problems. I am crying many times during my dreams or when I am alone. Therefore, it seems I have both male and female sides. I paint myself as a girl with a thin body and long hair, but I keep a man's big hands. She faces her audience with an unhappy face, which shows my inner negative emotions which I never show to others during my daily life. The three boys in the painting are me too. People cannot see their faces to read their emotions. That reflects how a man always hides his real emotions to be sophisticated. However, there is no demarcation between man and woman. I was raised to believe that social division of labor dictates that man and woman play different roles in the society. In China, people have defined gender issues that last for thousands of years, but I can redefine those issues too. After all, it seems more important to be myself than to perform like a man or woman.

Who are you, and who I am? In the end, it does not matter. "Man" is me and "Woman" is me. Both "Man's" and "Woman's" characters breed me, and I produce them. They are contrasting but also balanced, which is the basic concept of Taoism philosophy.

RESEARCH

I seek to express emotion by constructing narratives that relate to old Chinese wisdom, as well as personal hardships and thoughts. My focus on life experiences and my subject matter related to yin and yang define me as a contemporary artist. My approach to painting is grounded in both romantic and realistic styles. My paintings have realistic characters with romantic colors and stories. Art, for me, is everything. Within my two years of study, I have totally fallen in love with art—especially, oil painting.

My whole life changed after I came to America from YanCheng, JiangSu, China. Attending art college, I am at the beginning of my road as an artist. Confusing is the best word to describe my art during the first year at Laguna College of Art and Design (LCAD). The variety of techniques in classical art, such as glacé in layers, attracts me. The subtle colors in realism inspire me, and the strong power in abstraction enlightens me. For example, abstract paintings can convey thoughts and deep meaning. They can have a beautiful combination of colors and forms, which hold so much energy. One year before entering LCAD, the loss of my girlfriend and hardships resulting from my family's financial situation helped me to open the door for real art. This pushed me to see that I could express my sadness through my art. My basic approach was formed: emotional expression. With my family's financial problems, I felt I should work harder and harder to be a great artist to achieve success, which also can earn a lot of money to support myself and family. As I kept

painting, I found expressing emotion was not enough. My art needed new energy. Therefore, I started adding elements to my art that reflected my understanding of hardships, Chinese old thinking, and accepted contemporary gender norms.

For Chinese wisdom, it starts with Taoism for me. Essentially, it is yin and yang or yin-yang, or Taiji. From my understanding of the old wisdom, yin and yang go against each other, but at the same time, they support each other in a cosmic duality, which tells the truth of the universe. 庄周 (ZhouZhuang) first pointed out the idea of Tao and Taiji in his book *ZhuangZi* around the third century BCE. He said, “Tao has reality and substance, but no action or form. It can be given but not received...It is above the zenith and yet not high. It is below the nadir and yet not low. It was born before heaven and earth but not long ago. It was there before the oldest antiquity but is not old” (125). There is no definition for Tao. Everything can become Tao, and Tao can be everything. Universe or truth comes from Tao or Taiji which gives birth to yin and yang. A yin-yang can be found in sun and moon, fire and water, cold and warm, day and night, positive and negative, or man and woman. From my point of view, everything in the world contains yin and yang. The moon perfects itself only to wane, and water fills only to overflow. Yin and yang always happen together, or one happens after another one, even though they may seem to be opposites. In my painting, I express such emotions as happiness and sadness, or the sensations of isolation and communication, which are opposites caught in a symbiotic duality that can be reflected by yin and yang. Likewise, I paint both cool and warm light at the same time, include the moon and fire, or show the contrast of black and white.

With Taoist concepts, I produced the painting *Whispering* (Fig. 5). To explore yin-yang's contrast and balance, I used complementary colors, blue and orange. As painters know, complementary colors can build contrast, divide edges, or emphasize key objects. The orange fire gives a sense of heat; blue sky and white moon show the feeling of cold. Heat and cold are opposite and cannot happen at the same time, and yet they cannot be understood without each other. That is the basic idea of Yin and Yang for me. In my painting, the fire cannot stay without sky and moon. If they break up, the harmony of the painting will break up. This is yin and yang.

Bo Wang and Deyuan Huang mentioned in their article, *The Flexibility of Gua and Yao—Based on an Interpretation of Yizhuan*, “‘Yi embraces Taiji 太极, which accordingly generates two yi 仪 (modes), the two modes produce four images, and the four images beget



Figure 5. Yiming Hong, *Whispering*, 2019, Oil on canvas, 60 in. x 48 in.

eight diagrams” (73) The beginning of the universe has been called Taiji. Taiji gives birth to yin-yang (the two modes) which creates the four seasons. Then the seasons produce destiny which has also called Bagua (“eight diagrams”). Each of these concepts corresponds a number: Taiji is singular. Yin-yang represents two modes. There are four seasons, and Bagua is eight because the word “Ba” means eight. According to Laozi’s concept about Tao (“three begot the ten thousand things” [44] on *Tao Te Ching*), as species gain experience and knowledge, they go through different lives. Human life starts at one birth and ends at one death. Therefore, one is eight and eight returns to one. In *Whispering*, the circular placement of eight stones makes a natural Bagua to question who I am and who you are. Where were you born, and where do you go? Under the universe, humans are just a piece of dust. From a macroscopic view, humans cannot change the trajectory of a star. From a microcosmic view, they are hardly changing others’ lives. In this composition, the large area of sky and lower horizon line emphasize how small humans are when they face nature and the universe. They are tiny like the fire in the painting, but the fire illumines the area around itself. Even though the fire is weak, it still does its best to bloom. Who knows whether it will change the universe or not, but the fire and cool blue sky reinforce the idea of yin-yang in the painting.

My painting *Staying* (2019) is another example of how I balance and contrast yin-yang in my work (Fig. 6). The two sides of light, warm and cool, and a large area of darkness create a heavy sense of depression in this painting. Depression and loss are expressed by the darkness, as well as the texture, falling rain with thick brush strokes around lights, of the lines and background. Nevertheless, the yellow and white light give me hope

when I suffer in a depressed state. The contrast between thick and thin, warm and cool, and dark and light create a sense of balance.

Yin and yang have three main qualities for me: unity, opposition, and mutual transformation. As for unity, they come from the same origin and survive together. They cannot exist without the other. Yet they always oppose each other. For mutual transformation, yin and yang can bring each other into existence and be transferred to each other. Putting them together can create new elements.

Even though my approach to painting blends romanticism and realism, the subjects of my paintings



Figure 7. Yiming Hong, *In The Rain*, 2018, Oil on panel, 12 in. x 24 in.



Figure 6. Yiming Hong, *Staying*, 2019, Oil on canvas, 24 in. x 48 in.

are contemporary. In my opinion, contemporary art is not limited by the form or media. It is a liberating way to produce art. It is more about the idea or concept behind the art, than it is about traditional notions of beauty. Julian Stallabrass mentioned in his book, *Contemporary Art: A Very Short Introduction*, “It is a basic art-world orthodoxy, echoed just about everywhere, that contemporary art is ungraspably complex and diverse. The variety of contemporary forms, techniques, and subject-matter in art is indeed bewildering... Art’s concerns are also various, touching upon feminism, identity politics, mass culture, shopping, and trauma” (101). In my painting, *Whispering* (2019), the ideas and concepts relate to yin-yang, personal traumas, and my life experience and philosophy, which are all contemporary thoughts according to Stallabrass. Another painting, *In The Rain* (2018), represents a contemporary experience—my emotions at the moment when I lost my love (Fig. 7). My loss is visually expressed by the rain and how it hits the girl’s face. She tries to protect herself with her hand, but she cannot. The rain passes through her hand and hits her. It is just like me. I am trying to protect myself, but depression and sadness rush through my umbrella to hurt me. I agree with Stallabrass that contemporary art is open to everything. It can express a personal story. It can rise up to protest social phenomenon. It can address a philosophical issue.

At the same time, I am attracted to baroque technique. Mainly, Rembrandt van Rijn influenced my under-painting, glazing, and brush strokes. Rembrandt’s subjects and style belong to the Dutch baroque era. One of Rembrandt’s paintings, *Self-Portrait with Velvet Beret* (1634), gives me ideas about how to use brush strokes, light logic, and how to allow

my under-painting to show through upper layers (Fig. 8). In Rembrandt's painting, a lot of beautiful things happen. The strong warm light provides a great value contrast for the painting such as the sitter's dark beret contrasts with woolen coat and fur collar. The thick paint on his skin and clothes builds the form and emphasizes the focus. The under-painting shows through from the dark side of his face and his hat is rendered with a variety of techniques. Like Rembrandt, I do under-painting or glazing to control the value, tone and color. In Michael Greenhalgh's book *The Classical Tradition in Art*, he said, "Classicism has certain basic features in art as in literature. Its concern is always with the ideal, in form as well as in content... but classical artists looked back to the ideal of Antiquity as well as to its varied styles... Beauty, which is one form of truth, must depend on some system of measurement and proportion" (11). I agree that classical works are more about antiquity and



Figure 8. Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn, *Self-Portrait with Velvet Beret*, 1634, Oil on oak wood, w47.5 x h58.3 cm, Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

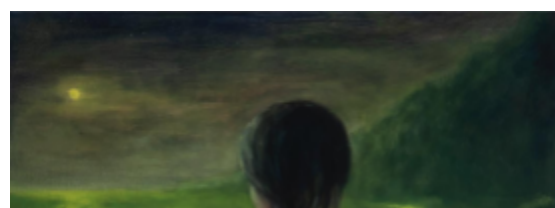


Figure 9. Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn, *An Old Man in Military Costume*, about 1630 - 1631, Oil on panel, w50.8 x h66 cm, the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles

seek the truth of beauty. I never try to find a topic about antiquity or look for beauty in my paintings. Instead I use color, composition, tones, contrast, and movement to approach feeling in my paintings. For example, my painting *Under the Dome* (2017) is not necessarily beautiful. Instead it shows depression and loss in a busy, wet, contemporary urban environment. Although I use underpainting and sometimes glaze my surfaces, I am not a classical artist in totality.

Rembrandt is an inspiration. All of his portraits such as *An Old Man in Military Costume* (c. 1630-1631) (Fig.9) look realistic but in fact rely on unrealistic color for their effect. The skin color is more yellow and green than a natural skin color, but the perfect form of the face makes it realistic looking. In his paintings, the structure of the figure is realistic down to each part of the human body. I try to emulate these qualities. For instance, my painting *Hoping* has unnaturally saturated colors for the female figure and background (Fig. 10). However, because the form and value of her figure are correct, the girl looks realistic. The green color shows mystery, and the yellowish firelight represents hope. The dual light sources create a sad and hopeful painting reflecting my own internal dialogue, as well as yin-yang.

For me, it does not matter whether I am realistic or classical or romantic. More importantly, learning from old masters like Rembrandt pushed me to challenge myself by working hard and setting ambitious goals. To make my paintings meaningful, I add elements of Taiji and yin-yang to vignettes focused on my daily thoughts. It matters most to me that I



paint with enthusiasm and that my technical formula defines how I express emotion through movement, color, value, light, or composition.

METHODOLOGY

Painting with hand, heart, and head makes my art succeed. Hand directly touches and connects to paintings. Heart brings up enthusiasm for painting. Mind provides methodology for how to paint. For me, I have my own five-part formula to make art: creating movement, developing sets of color tones, pushing darkness and brightness of value, building light logic and making interesting compositions.

Movement in my art is vivid, vibrant, and vivacious.

My painting *Leaving* (Fig. 11) captures my point of view on movement. The audiences can feel the wind in this composition through the way I paint hair flowing or falling leaves. In *Leaving*, the central



Figure 11. Yiming Hong, *Leaving*, 2018, Oil on panel, 24 in. x 16 in.

figure's long, flowing hair and the placement of leaves around her show the movement of the wind is delicate and light. The painting basically came from a photograph. I captured the

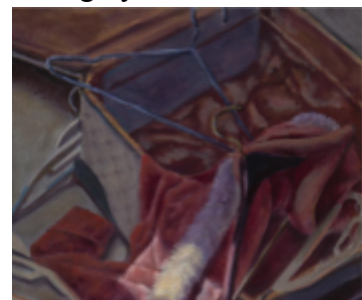
movement when my girlfriend walked in front of me three years ago. With sunshine and a breeze, looking at her back was the happiest moment of my life. When I started this painting, I hoped it would be dynamic, so I brought in wind as an element. On her left ear, a few hairs flow to the left to indicate the breeze. The three falling leaves make a tangent to draw the viewers' attention to the wind. By playing with hair and leaves, my painting starts moving.

Color tones directly reflect the different kinds of emotions I am expressing in a painting. They are the most important part of my art formula. An effective use of color tone, for me, matches the expression of an emotion, provides harmony in color, and navigates the viewer's eye around the painting. "Emotional Expression" is the term I use to refer to the way in which I fill color with a corresponding emotion. Each color I choose has its own feeling. Yellow tones, for example, embody warmth and happiness, while red tones express a rush of rage, horror, fear or excitement. In my painting *Under the Dome*, the blue tones that I glaze over the building and street evoke a strong sense of loss and helplessness. Sometimes, blue colors can show depression or mystery in my painting. This is because the placement and combinations of colors and subjects in the paintings shift their meanings. For instance, both *Under the Dome* and *Whispering* have blue tones, but the meaning of blue in these two paintings is totally different. First, the placement is different. In *Under the Dome*, every object such as the buildings, rain, or lights points in the direction of the vanishing point to create a sense of movement and dropping. Whereas objects are placed in a circular fashion in *Whispering*. The objects are more round such as the moon, the stones and the fire ring. All these subjects produce a feeling of mysteriousness. I try to build an emotional bridge

between my art and my viewers' experiences. I consider the painting finished and successful if I feel the intended emotion, and if I believe that others can derive the same feeling from seeing the different color tones I have selected.

Further, I add emotion by contrasting colors. Conflicting emotions often exist in the same moment. I intentionally seek the harmony that can exist in conflicting emotions by contrasting different colors. For example, I may lay down red paint and green paint together to vividly express the combination of excitement and fear one may feel in the face of change. In my painting *Leaving*, I reduce the brightness of red with grayer green in the background to create a sense of harmony with contrasting colors. The fear and excitement I associate with red contrasts with the steadiness of nature that I associate with green. I particularly like to contrast warm and cool colors to distinguish the background from the foreground, as well as objects from shadows, and one object from another. It also pulls the central point of the painting out of the surrounding environment, strategically distinguishing various figures and objects to facilitate and support the conflicting emotions I am seeking to evoke.

Light logic, or what I call "Color Navigation," is the fourth part of my formula. Pure and bright colors dominate my eyes first. Desaturated and gray colors are second. By placing these colors in different combinations, I use color to direct the viewer's eye around the painting. A successful use of "Color Navigation" tells the viewer what to look at and where to look next. For instance, I use red to build a focal point centered on the main pieces of clothing in my painting, *Missing* (Fig. 12), then painting loosely with grayer color for the hangers and rug in the background to navigate eyes from pure



color to gray color. In the painting *Leaving*, when the landscape recedes further in the distance, the main character with bright color stands out. Pure and bright colors attract attention, and by playing with these, I can navigate the viewer through an emotional journey. For example, in my painting *Whispering*, the bright yellowish fire dominates in the foreground, then my eye shifts to the cool white moon. My eyes move from that lightness to the relative heaviness of the sky and clouds. Finally, my eyes drop down to the extremely dark stones in order to build a circular path.

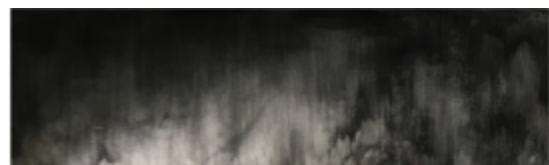
Finally, I consider the composition of the painting itself. For me, a great composition is like the golden ratio, a special number found by dividing a line into two parts so that the longer part divided by the smaller part is also equal to the whole length divided by the longer part. Jennifer Newell and Jo Hargreaves stated in their book *Art Fundamentals: Color, Light, Composition, Anatomy, Perspective, and Depth*, “Our brains work in such a way that we ‘measure’ or gage the existence of an object by its similarity to other objects in our memory. We first mathematically scan the scene, and then apply feeling. The brain does this instantly and unconsciously” (39). This most natural formula for beauty can feel cannily familiar to people. In my painting *Under the Dome*, I emphasize the main character by placing her in the golden point which nearly fits the golden ratio and rule of thirds. The ratio roughly covers four buildings and gives the most natural and comfortable feeling to the painting.

I believe my painting *Leaving* succeeds in all the aspects of my art formula. The flowing hair and the placement of leaves show movement in the painting, which elicits a feeling of loss and helplessness. The green and gray tones provide a sensitive environment

and emotional space to tell a story about loneliness and quiet. Soft and warm sunshine blends with dark and cool shadows to build a peaceful, but disquieting scene. However, the lights, the shadow, the character, and the background themselves do not have special meaning. By putting them together, they create a sense of elegance in the painting and evoke the feeling of my girlfriend leaving. The girl stands near the middle of the painting but not exactly in the middle to give viewers a sense of comfort. The road, the railroad, the trees, and the leaves create harmony in the environment.

My technical formula supports my paintings. With it, I can express happiness or sadness, use color to denote depression, convey mystery with a composition, and use colors to navigate within the scene. In my still life painting *Missing*, the reddish color shows excitement, while a lonely yellowish light stands in for my confusion and longing for my girlfriend. The chaotic placement of the clothes hangers contributes to these feelings. With all these objects, the circular navigation has been built. My eyes focus on the main pieces of clothing first, then move in a circular path with the hangers from right to left, and from down below to the upper part of the composition.

A good painting not only demonstrates its superb technique, it offers profound meaning. Yin-yang is expressed in three ways in my paintings: with contrasting hues, color temperature, and contrary objects. Complementary colors such as blue and orange or green and red are fighting with each other, but they cannot leave each other alone. Color temperature is another point for yin-yang. Cool colors stand beside warm colors, or warm colors are found in the lit areas and colors rest in shadows. In my paintings, cool colors



represents yin and warm ones expresses yang. They bring so much energy in my paintings, warm light creates cool shadow and cool light produces warm shadow when they stand against each other and mix. Depression and loss exist in the cool colors in my painting *Staying*, but warm color gives hope to the painting. From yin, I can see yang. From yang, I can see yin. I can see both of them. Hope is always there. It looks attainable but never belongs to me. In the painting *Whispering*, moon light contrasts with fire light. As people know, moon does not radiate light, but merely reflects the light from the sun. However, moon lights up the earth. The fire is bright and heated, but it just lights up the area around itself. This concept fits the painting: humans are pieces of dusts when they face the universe, but who knows, they might contain the power to change the universe in the future.

In my painting, *Tong* (2020), I have tried to find a balance between western oil paintings and eastern ink paintings (Fig. 13). I have painted the character in detail, blending each color carefully and building the form correctly. In the background, I only paint with black in the style of Chinese ink painting. Western approaches conflict with eastern ones in this painting. At the same time, they have combined to create a new style of painting. This is the concept of yin-yang. When yin meets yang, they breed new elements that have infinite possibilities.

Yin-yang is the most important aspect of my art, which enlightens my personal artistic road. My technical formula is my best weapon, which helps me approach my goal. For me, concept and technique also fit yin-yang. Technique is yang because it is vivid and

dramatic. Concept is yin because of its implication. Yang tastes like coffee, savory and mellow, and yin tastes like tea, less flavorful, but with an endless aftertaste.

CONCLUSION

My painting formula gives my paintings technical support. Chinese wisdom or yin-yang adds value and concepts to my paintings. My experience and adversities explain why I paint. In certain ways, they overwhelm my mind, overshadowing my weakness during my recent years. At the beginning, painting was the way that I escaped from reality. However, in the end, painting gave value to my life and helped me become firm and strong as an individual. Staying alone, working alone, laughing alone, crying alone, thinking alone, and playing alone have taught me how to be alive and how to live better. I have put all my emotion into my painting to give each painting meaning. By combining yin-yang with my painting formula, my painting has become more mysterious and my sadness and loss have decreased. Despite my setbacks, I am alive and well, and my paintings are more powerful.

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APPENDIX



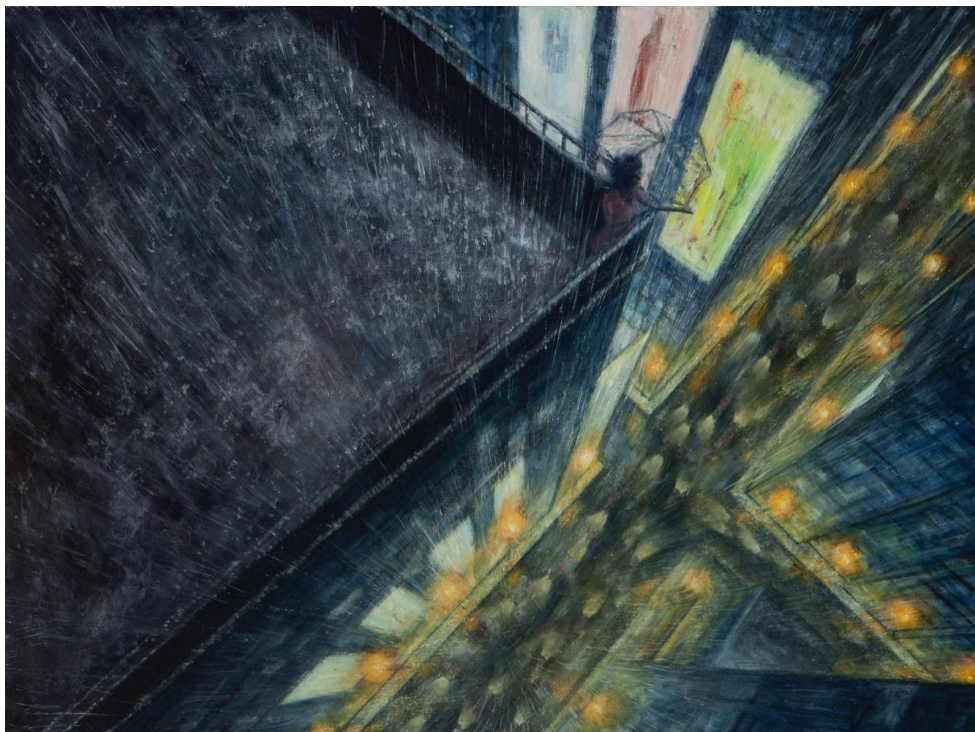
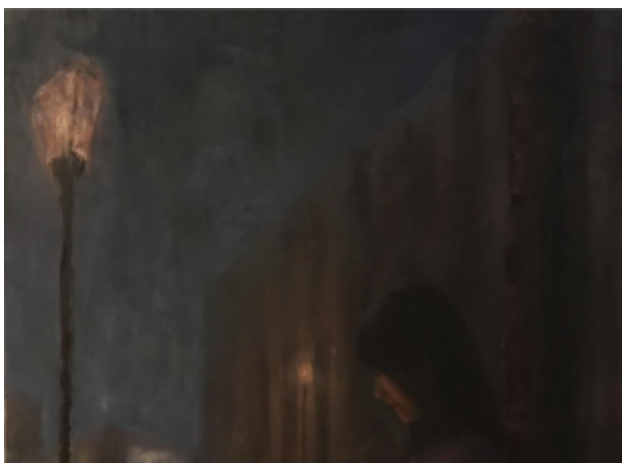
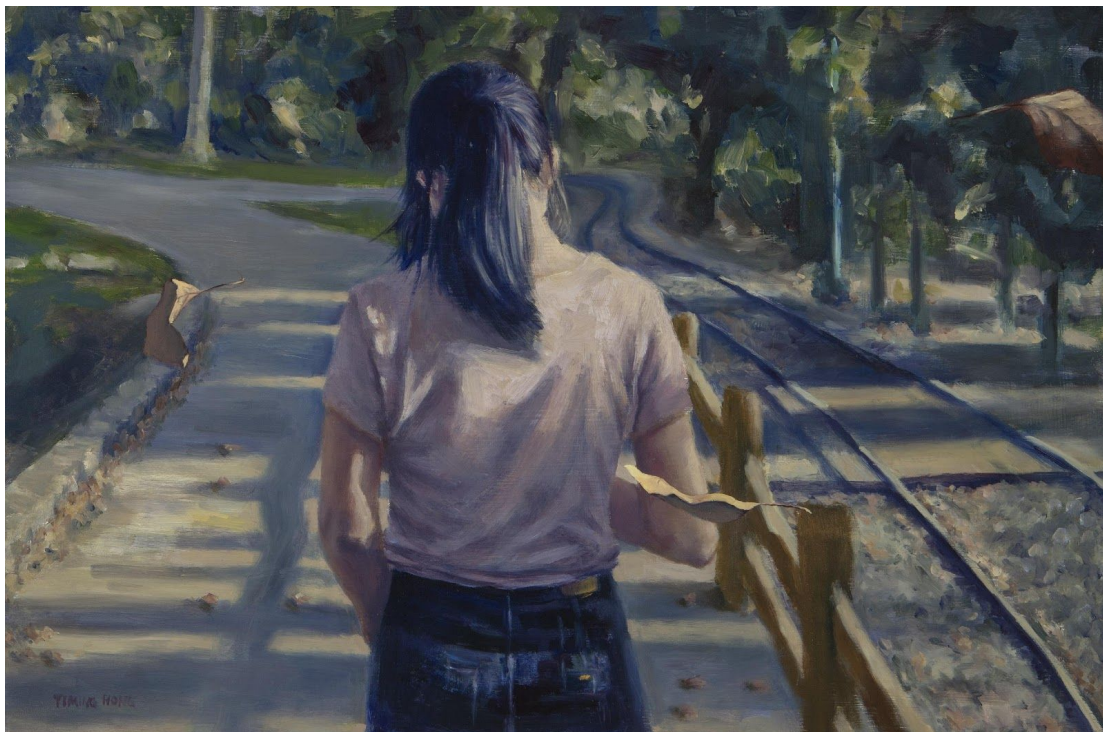




Plate 3. Yiming Hong, *Missing*, 2018, Oil on panel, 16 in. x 24 in.





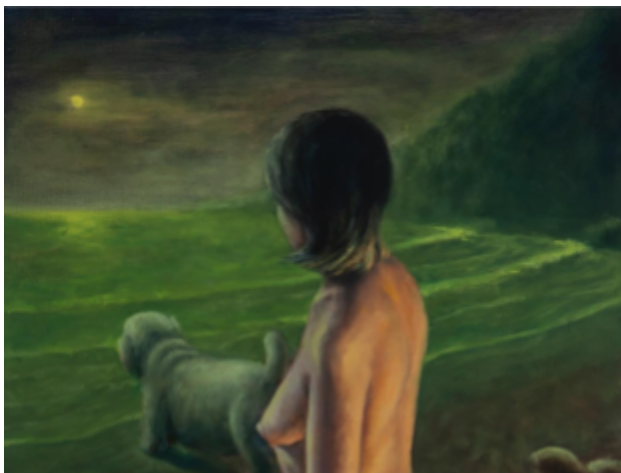




Plate 9. Yiming Hong, *Tong*, 2020, Oil on panel, 48 in. x 60 in. (it in)

