

Desmond Leung**ARTIST**

I think why I am an artist is kind of as a mission to ... for the society. And for me, an artist is like a messenger. A messenger to express the idea; to convey a message to people. Using our skills, our ability to generate visuals, sound, medias so that people can ... understand something that maybe is not in their life, you know. That's something that artists can contribute to them. To let them understand different kinds of layers of life and of different perspectives of reality.

Most of the time, I create the whole process by myself. But when we are looking at like ... technical productions, I work with different people like technicians and programmers as well. So, especially these days, [being an] artist is not a kind of a very lonely profession. You need to cooperate with different people to create new ideas. That's why I think it's good to collaborate with more different people from different fields.

ARTWORK

I can briefly describe my artwork first. It is kind of like a painting, but you look at it with time. So, that is more like "time arts": you look at it through time. It's a time-based artwork and it integrates painting, moving image and also it's with the new media. So, the whole artwork is a frame, with a monitor and with screens. So, the people look at it like an installation.

Basically, I am interested in metaphysics, interested in something that is invisible. Something that maybe is from the universe. Something that I cannot describe ... or maybe able to understand in my way to express to people. So, the whole artwork, the body of work that I am doing is just try to present something that I don't really understand yet.

Through the process, when a work is done, I think "ah, that's about it!". So, it's interesting that I keep exploring myself at the same time that I keep exploring the artwork – together. I cannot define myself as who I am yet because it is a journey for me. So, the whole artwork – the serious artwork – is also a kind of different milestones of me to present to people.

But I am interested in Buddhism. How they talk about the world and small philosophical aspects to describe what we are living now as the reality. So, this reality is something I am interested to explore in a different kind of way and process.

PRODUCTION

Well, of course, I have ... it is a kind of a basic tool with which I start the process – that is ink, very traditional water colour paintings. But instead I just paint on it, I really record the whole process when I am doing the painting.

So that it is connected with time. My work is never static. It is always moving. So, I am really interested to see how can it evolve as a film based on an artwork?

After I create, it is kind of like a video-film-based painting. And then, I use a kind of a film production method to make it into layers – many many layers with animations, with effects and to create something that is more presented like a film.

So, this is kind of a cinematic painting for me. People can ... especially these days, I feel that – especially the young audience, they are very adapted to the new media, such as moving image, song ... So, I want to present a work that can have something that they feel close to them.

The test and a sketch with the ink paintings and I have the film camera to record the whole process. All the process of this ink painting will be transformed into digital format that I can manipulate with the computer. So, with the computer I create it as a moving image before the film and all the animations and then at the end it will be a time-based artwork that is presented in a kind of a screen-based environment. Or projections around. So, basically this is the basic kind of process of the work.

It's very difficult to really say when is the time to stop because this thing will go forever. Because, why I am doing a process like the ink painting, I do the gesture, it's more like a meditation for me. I can repeat forever with these actions. But it is interesting that ... when I create artwork through the ink process and then into the computer and then finally, I check the results – if that result has a feedback to me – can talk to me – and I know that it's time to move forward to the next step. And so, it's an ongoing process. Even though that the artwork that I have done already but maybe they can be reproduced, they can become extended versions with a deeper meaning and then be presented, later on. So, for me, they are also ... it is also a process.

MATERIAL

The material, the most important one, is water. Water is the most essential medium in my artwork. And ink, paper, basic painting tools, a brush, ... of course, it is basic digital video production equipment, a laptop. That's basically what I need, but the most important thing is water and light. The electrical light, the studio light. That's something more natural in the process, in the productions, rather than just every-thing started from the digital side.

I want something more analogue, more primitive so that the people can understand, can feel more close to them. Yes that is my tools.

MEDIUM

My artwork can expand into different media. Of course, it is a moving image. At the same time, it could be a print. Also it could be a photography.

I think because of the technologies now, they help me to very easily generate the output. My content can be easily manipulated into different media. About the cultural contacts: It is interesting because I see my work is not about a particular nationality. It doesn't come from Hong Kong or Asia or ... What I would say, I try to transcend the boundary of cultural influence to be something more primitive, more abstract, that anyone from anywhere can experience. As many as possible.

PROCESS

The process of the media is interesting because normally, people look at the work as ... with different production stages like filming and post-productions and editing and stuff. But for me, I think also the process through here is from here. You know, from the soul to your heart.

That is the first process which is using the hand and ink as a gesture to get out, to do it, from the soul, from the heart.

And then, this process is done and visually I can see it. And then I can put it into the computer. But the whole process is actually from here, to here and to the hand. So, this is a looping process of the mind, the heart, mind and the body together. The cycle of the so-called productions. So, this is the most important process for me.

How much time I need to look at ... we do work, how much do I need to go painting work, you know. So, this is how I generate the artwork through this process of circle. My own ... with my body and mind.

PRESENTATION

My work ... I publish this kind of video work actually ... I start with internet. Vimeo. I find that it's actually a powerful platform to expose the artwork. Because all my ... the people from galleries, they all go to my vimeo page and then contact me to connect with me.

For so far, I had different exhibitions in different places like of course Hong Kong, Australia, the U.S., Japan. And the range of the presentation is quite different. Some of them is gallery-based, basic

exhibitions, and others are more big-scale, large-scale like media-facade kind of presentations, to put my work in a building, facade/building.

So, that is very powerful and everyone actually can look at the work without going to a gallery. So, for me it is a very good way to expose my work in different kinds of situations.

When I am doing the process, the productions, I would never think about what kind of artwork they want to see because at the end of the day it's about my explorations of myself in a work. And so I would try to do it my way first, my own way to create a work and present it and then try to persuade this idea or convey this idea to the outside world.

INTENTION

What needs to be artwork? A fundamental requirement is something that can transform into a phenomenon that can really touch people's soul, connect ... it's a connection with the soul. It's not about visual spectacle or entertainment. I think we need to look at this in a more deeper level, to look at our work. How our work can really present as a tool. As a function to connect all peoples together. That's what I think that needs to be the artwork. To have this power to convey the message.

Each artwork has a healing kind of function that can really help people to release their stress. Because I feel that the whole world now is just full of so much negative energy and stress. And maybe with my work they can connect with peace, connect to healing, to something that can help people. Of course, we are not talking about a medical kind of aspect. But visually there is something that can also help them to relax, to enjoy at the same time. Without too much thinking about "what is the conceptual idea?". But actually, maybe subliminally, they receive the message from ... in their own way.

Something to inspire. Like something that they understand about the reality a bit more instead of just to worry about the pay rents or to feed the dogs, or feed the family. Maybe in their life there is something more than just to work. So, I would like to try to look at it in different ways or different dimensions, through my research, to present another idea. To let them understand or enjoy.

METHOD

How my art works? (laughs). I have a collection of the sketches and concepts and research about something that I feel that I should explore in a certain period of time.

And the next day, I look at books about Buddhism, Zen and about the universe. And then somehow, I can connect them together. It's not a very concrete kind of idea on the first day, like "oh yes, I want to do this!". I can see the outputs that will be great.

The whole process is: I will never know what is the final idea. So, for what I am doing now is I ... define the process, define the ideas. For me, it is interesting to keep checking these ideas and to refine it to be more solid, and then at the same time I start to create the productions.

ART

I think art has fundamental functions to connect people's souls. It does not only connect to your own soul, it connects with other people, together. It is kind of a connective consciousness. The idea of connective consciousness is something that is interesting, that I want to explore. Art has a function to deliver the message. And also to help to get people together. To understand the reality of this world.

What is reality? What is time? And what is this 3-dimensional world? What is outside this world? What else? So, it is something that is invisible that we should explore as artists or as an artwork can deliver this message to people.

BIO

* 1976, Leung is a media artist and creative director who devoted to explore the contemporary aesthetic and meaning by merging the medium of painting, ink art, moving image and new media into a time-based art form. His works have been exhibited in the U.S., Japan, Hong Kong, China, Australia, Poland, Korea and Singapore, various international art exhibitions and film festivals. Recent solo and group exhibitions are being held in PMQ and Hong Kong Cultural Centre in 2014. Leung's main research is inspired and surrounded by the collective ideas of metaphysics, nature, universe, human body, spirituality, healing, art therapy and oriental philosophy; examining the universal view and delivering the message through art practice is his life work. His style could be linked with landscape painting, shan shui, lyrical abstraction with a new media approach.

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Credits

The interview was conducted on 27 November 2014 in the artist's studio in Sai Kung Hong Kong.

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