

An Artist Statement on *A Moment of Truth*

The perfect edge of the paper is an unreachable dream shore. When the pen marking the first line in *Lightwave Memory* sails alongside this ideal homeland, it stretches a wish of extending a sense of belonging to an undefined distant space, and also realizes the conceived ambivalence about this futile act. Though the lines bend and curve, the essence of the perfect edge is imitated and applied: one continuous line from one end to another. This does not mean that mutual recognition of existence must be established between the perfect edge and the drawn lines. It suggests that all subsequent lines following the first constitutive line conform to one distorted reflection of the perfect edge. During the drawing process, each line turns from a present hope for its future to a memory of the past at present. The resulting dimension is itself a new perfection in an extended present.

The spacetime continuity itself has both a seductive and a disciplined nature. Its vastness and unfathomable possibilities lure tangible objects and living beings into unavoidable contact. Simultaneously it oppresses and denies the insertion of disparate things and spacetime singularities if the act were to violate its laws of continuity. If a line in *Lightwave Memory* is a projection of spacetime, could a drawing reflect the liberation of tangible objects and living things from the omnipresent spacetime continuity? Would they have intuitions recognizing their own release?

For if there is 'such cognition independent of all experience and even of all impressions of the sense',¹ could it mean that such cognition might have taken place before the beginning of spacetime, might not depend on the continuity of spacetime in order to recognize itself, and is not restricted by sensibilities and intuitions so that it can always convert all objects to intuitions?

When objects and living things become fragments in *A Moment of Truth* drawings, the images are no longer defined as they were once perceived. Fragmentation separates them from coherence with matter, minimizes the effect of subjective conditions of sensibility towards them, and reflects a sense of liberation from their corresponding spacetime constraints. Visually this helps lower the barriers of integration between disparate forms in a drawing. What defines these fragmented images and the completed drawing does not depend on the composition or the form of these images. It is the focused, homogenous act of drawing which defines them. Once a pen is picked up, there is a continuous flow from the mind to the pen, then to the paper where transformation takes place. This flow does not reflect spacetime continuity. It is an indispensable single act which conflates various processes: fragmentation, extraction of intuitions, and amalgamation of different fragments. No draft and no sketch is used. Spontaneity is an act of innocence which provides access to unconstrained thoughts and subconsciousness. In this labyrinth of shadowy ideas, photo references guide the mind to remain on the path towards the intuitions. The ink marks could be manifestation of intuition, travelled routes of the mind, incantations to release intuitions, and agitation for subversion of spacetime continuity, if all tiny individual marks gather to form a clustered whole. The connections between them rely on the supposition that each mark might act as an independent intuition. In light of Kant's observation in 'The Transcendental Aesthetic First Section On Space':

All things, as outer intuitions, are next to one another in space.²

¹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 136.

² *Ibid.*, 177.

The synthesis of fragments might also rely on retaining dissonance among disparate and diverse components of matter before fragmentation. Tensions could bind them as a whole. Giacomo Leopardi wrote:

Nature has many qualities and principles that are at once harmonious and dissonant, rather, that harmonize and that mutually sustain one another by virtue of their contrariety. And one contrary not only does not destroy the theory of another but in fact proves it (Zibaldone, 2046).³

The selection of nature images and their arrangement as fragment-objects accord with many different feelings: awe and contempt; confusion and admiration; sadness and joy. This may in turn lead to bizarre and antagonistic compositions, unappealing to the conventional visual appetite. But fulfilling a visual temptation is not an objective. The contradictions of these feelings are not revealed, as the drawings are executed under the same attitude throughout the process.

Yet, harmony would not imply a predetermined destination for this series of drawing. The distinctive nature of the individual parts plays an important role in reflecting the tensions which separate and connect them as a whole. In our world, this amalgamation might not be permanent, or may only last for a short moment. This instability could suggest that it might take place at the boundary of existence and non-existence. Italian theoretical physicist Carlo Rovelli speaks of his view on the world:

So, for the moment we have to stay with the Standard Model. It may not be very elegant, but it works remarkably well at describing the world around us. And who knows? Perhaps on closer inspection it is not the model that lacks elegance. Perhaps it is we who have not yet learnt to look at it from just the right point of view; one which would reveal its hidden simplicity. For now, this is what we know of matter:

A handful of types of elementary particles, which vibrate and fluctuate constantly between existence and non-existence and swarm in space even when it seems that there is nothing there, combine together to infinity like the letters of a cosmic alphabet to tell the immense history of galaxies, of the innumerable starts of sunlight, of mountains, woods and fields of grain, of the smiling faces of the young at parties, and of the night sky studded with stars.⁴

This transient state could have encompassed the cycle of the universe in one inclusive glance. Each drawing in this series can be viewed as an independent transient domain, or as the next transient state after its antecedent. Thus there can be an infinite set of different possible drawings in this series.

³ Giacomo Leopardi, *Zibaldone*, trans. Kathleen Baldwin, Richard Dixon, David Gibbons, Ann Goldstein, Gerard Slowey, Martin Thom, and Pamela Williams (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015), 896.

⁴ Carlo Rovelli, *Seven Brief Lessons on Physics*, trans. Simon Carnell and Erica Segre (U.K.: Penguin Books, 2016), 35-36.

The 18th century painter Shen Zongqian (沈宗騫) adopts a concept, 'opening-closing' (kaihe 開合)⁵, which relies on a pictorial scheme to reflect the progression of time, and thus the cycle of the universe. The lower part, or the foreground is considered as the 'opening' where landscape objects are placed 'to produce inexhaustible sensations' (*ibid.*). This corresponds to Spring, when ten thousand beings are born and develop. 'Closing' refers to the upper part, which should 'make the painting concrete by forming a whole without excess' (*ibid.*). It is comparable with Winter, 'showing the myriad things in contemplation and repose' (*ibid.*). Through the contemplation on the continuing cycle of the universe, literati painted nature to express their sentiments via brush and ink. There is a contented adaptation of the progression of spacetime. To the contrary, *A Moment of Truth* is not created under a methodical approach to pictorial organisation. Objects are not placed to match their attributes and spatial meanings. Contemplation of this clustered whole might perhaps embrace a special moment in the cycle of the universe. The pen has long gone away from the drawing paper. The clustered whole remains in its prescribed dwelling, a two-dimensional space, unable to adapt, blackening with its insistent blackness the authoritarian continuity.

⁵ Frank Vigneron, *Shen Zongqian, porte-parole de la tradition lettrée au dix-huitième siècle* (Lille: A.N.R.T., 1999), 167. The text is from the chapter 'Capturing the Impetus' (取勢) of the treatise *The Study on Painting by Mustard Seed-Boat* (芥舟學畫編).