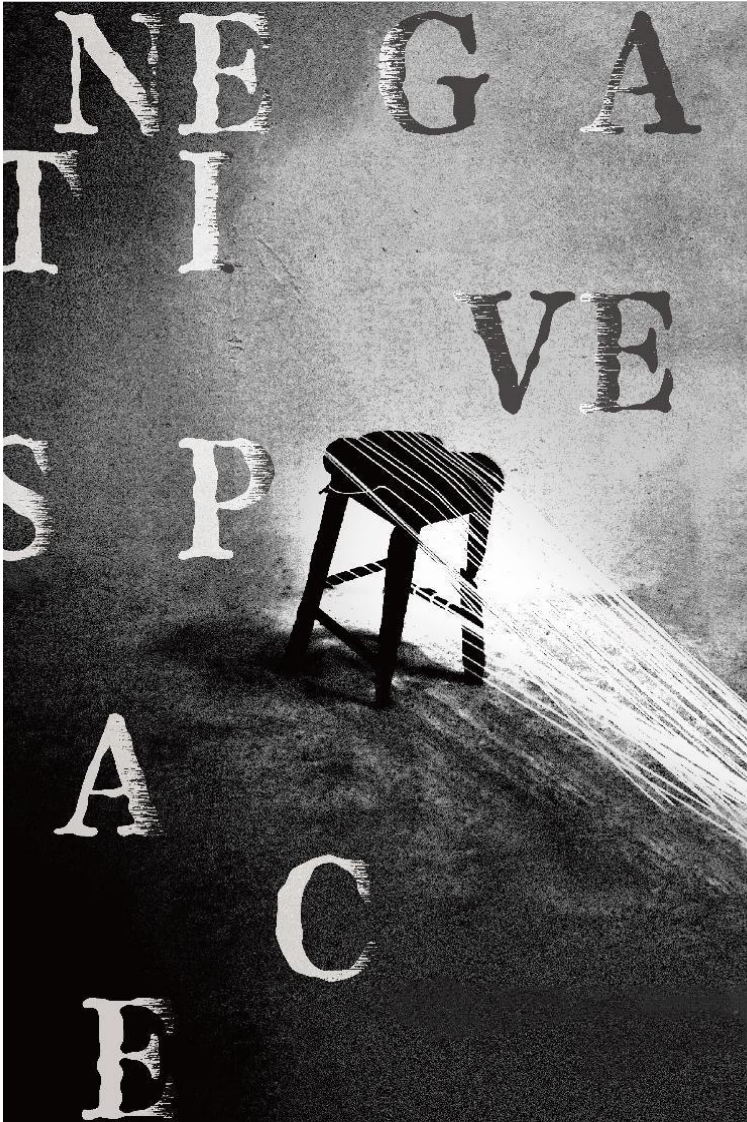


HIGHER DEGREE BY RESEARCH

ART EXHIBITION

EXHIBITION SIX/SEASON 2024



Reimagining Negative Space in Chinese Literati Painting through Installation Art Practice: A Philosophical Enquiry



Xu QingXiang

School Of The Arts, Universiti Sains Malaysia.
Higher Degree by Research Art Exhibition
Exhibition Six/Season 2024

Venue: Muzium & Galeri Tuanku Fauziah (MGTF), USM
Date: From 2nd September 2024 to 13th September 2024

Pameran Seni Ijazah Tinggi melalui Penyelidikan
Higher Degree by Research Art Exhibition

Pameran Enam/Musim 2024
Exhibition Six/Season 2024

*Reimagining Negative Space in Chinese Literati Painting
through Installation Art Practice: A Philosophical Enquiry*

Oleh/by: Xu QingXiang

Dari 2 September 2024 sehingga 13 September 2024

From 2nd September 2024 to 13th September 2024

Muzium & Galeri Tuanku Fauziah (MGTF),USM

School of The Arts, Universiti Sains Malaysia.

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Profile

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Xu Qingxiang is an artist currently pursuing a master's degree at Universiti Sains Malaysia. Her interests lie in exploring traditional culture and transforming objects to alter their meanings. Her master's research focuses on the integration of the theoretical background of Chinese literati painting with installation art through philosophical inquiry.

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Introduction

Negative space, both an emptiness and more than mere emptiness. In Chinese literati painting, negative space guides the rhythm and individuality of the composition. Rooted in Taoist and Zen Buddhist cultures, it emerges as a synthesis of their influences. This research provides a thorough analysis of negative space in Chinese literati painting, comparing it with installation art theory, forming the theoretical foundation for this practice. The primary aim of this practice is to reimagine the negative space in Chinese literati painting through the medium of installation art and to explore the underlying philosophical theories. This involves transforming the “plane” into space, utilizing ready-made furniture, string, text, and other media.

In the theoretical analysis phase, it was found that Taoist philosophy’s concepts of natural cycles and the flow of Yin & Yang (being and non-being), along with Zen’s interpretation of void and attitude toward language and text, imbue negative space in literati painting with a tranquil aura and a sense of fluidity. Thus, this practice divides negative space into two parts. The first part explores the underlying reasons for the interaction between negative space and ink in literati painting. The second part investigates the source of the serenity that negative space brings to literati painting, creating contemplative scenes.

This practice, guided by the theoretical framework of negative space, incorporates studio research, personal experience, and self-reflection. Two pieces reinterpret and recreate negative space from different perspectives, further exploring these philosophical theories through the creation of art installations. The results reveal a shared characteristic—conceptuality—between the two art forms, demonstrating that the integration of negative space with installation art can inject new vitality into Chinese literati painting, offering it greater possibilities through spatial presentation.

Part 1

Negative Space: Qi

This work showcases the underlying reasons for the flow of Qi in negative space through a combination of furniture, string, and plants—emphasizing the natural cycles and the Yin & Yang energy present in all things as highlighted in Taoist philosophy.

Clay is fashioned into vessels; but it is on their empty hollowness, that their use depends. The door and windows are cut out (from the walls) to form an apartment; but it is on the empty space (within), that its use depends. Therefore, what has a (positive) existence serves for profitable adaptation, and what has not that for (actual) usefulness (Laozi, Legge trans, 2008, p.24).

Qi Yun is the representation of dynamic interaction, which is similar to “life-motion” rather than “engender le movement” (Hu, 2016).

Nature serves as the wellspring of all existence, and the Taoist reverence for nature directly influenced the development of literati art (Shaw, 1988). Taoist philosophers advocated for humans to immerse themselves in nature and strive for harmony and unity (Law, 2011). This approach profoundly influenced ancient literati, who regarded nature as an integral part of themselves rather than merely a superficial visual impression (Turner, 2009).



Negative Space: Qi
Furniture, string, stone, plants
Size adjustable
2023



Negative Space: Qi
(Detail)
Furniture, string,
stone, plants
Size adjustable
2023



Negative Space: Qi
(Detail)
Furniture, string, stone, plants
Size adjustable
2023



Negative Space: Qi
(Detail)
Furniture, string, stone, plants
Size adjustable
2023



**Negative
Space: Qi**
(Detail)
Furniture, string,
stone, plants
Size adjustable
2023

Part 2

Negative Space: Enlightenment

The work covers the surface of the cabinet with text, nullifying the cabinet's original significance and creating a sense of mistrust. The sense of doubt is then synthesised using the natural and substantial qualities of the stone, resulting in a field for quiet contemplation.

The utilization of negative space and ink in the painting contributes to an overall effect of calmness, precisely embodying the placid state of mind pursued by the literati (Jullien, 2004).

Hui Neng's poems accentuate "non-mind, non-Buddha," highlighting the notion of void. Zen underscores the importance of attaining enlightenment through natural living and actions to experience epiphanies. To experience an epiphany is to achieve enlightenment and unity with the Tao (Feng, 1948).

Influenced by Taoist and Zen philosophies, literati believed that emptiness held more profound significance beyond mere absence, which makes the painting more placid (Wang, 2015).



Negative Space: Enlightenment

Cabinet, stone
Size adjustable
2023



Negative Space: Enlightenment

(Detail)

Cabinet, stone

Size adjustable

2023



Negative Space: Enlightenment

(Detail)

Cabinet, stone

Size adjustable

2023



**Negative Space:
Enlightenment**
(Detail)
Cabinet, stone
Size adjustable
2023



**Negative Space:
Enlightenment**
(Detail)
Cabinet, stone
Size adjustable
2023



Terima kasih kepada;

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