



(Creative Work Article)

Relationship of Contrast: A Visual Exploration of Urban Transformation in Chinese Cities

Fangzhu Li

Student of Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.) Program in Visual Arts, Faculty of Fine-Applied Arts and Cultural Science, Mahasarakham University, Thailand

fangzhu448li@gmail.com

Boontan Chettasuret

Associate Professor, Faculty of Fine-Applied Arts and Cultural Science, Mahasarakham University, Thailand

boontan.c@msu.ac.th

Suchat Sukna

Associate Professor, Faculty of Fine-Applied Arts and Cultural Science, Mahasarakham University, Thailand

suchat.s@msu.ac.th

Received: December 29, 2023 **Revised:** May 29, 2024 **Accepted:** August 3, 2024 **Published:** December 28, 2024

Abstract

This paper explores the dynamic interplay between urban and rural environments through the lens of visual arts, specifically traditional Chinese painting. The study draws parallels between the celestial balance in the universe and the coexistence of contrast and harmony within human societal structures, focusing on the evolving urban landscapes of Qingdao, Shandong Province. The research intertwines extensive data collection, including field photography and literature review, with a creative process that employs Chinese brush and ink techniques. The artworks produced during the study articulate the contrasts between rural and urban settings using varied colors, lines, and forms, thereby bringing to life the thematic essence of urban-rural interplay. The journey of creation, documented through pre-thesis and thesis artwork, reveals a deepening understanding and nuanced expression of the contrasting dynamics in these environments. The study extends beyond mere artistic representation, delving into the socio-cultural implications of these contrasts and their resonance in contemporary society. The paper concludes with suggestions for artists and individuals interested in exploring urban and rural themes, emphasizing the importance of integrating art with daily life, experimenting with various artistic mediums, and engaging in cross-disciplinary collaboration. 'Relationship of Contrast' not only showcases artistic prowess but serves as a conduit for deeper societal reflection, underscoring the influential role of art in interpreting and influencing societal and cultural dynamics.

Keywords: artistic interpretation, Qingdao urban landscape, societal reflection, traditional Chinese painting, urban-rural contrast



Introduction

In our universe, a delicate equilibrium exists among the celestial bodies. This cosmic configuration, characterized by the Sun's brilliance juxtaposed with the relative dimness of planets such as Jupiter, serves as a metaphor for universal harmony. In this natural order, where not every celestial body emits light, an inherent balance prevails, illustrating a fundamental principle: the coexistence of contrast and harmony. Drawing a parallel to human civilization, this principle becomes pivotal in understanding societal structures and interactions (Sundararajan, 2020). Herein, we observe a similar balance, particularly evident in the evolving urban landscapes of Qingdao, Shandong Province, where the principal researcher has spent 35 years witnessing and contemplating societal and technological transformations.

In Qingdao's evolving cityscape, a vivid tableau of this transformation unfolds (Kunzmann, 2019). Quaint traditional houses, reminiscent of an older era, are gradually giving way to towering commercial buildings and residential skyscrapers (Yuxiang et al., 2011). This transition paints a striking picture of contrast: the old structures and their aging inhabitants, akin to fading stars, are set against the dynamic, sun-like energy of the younger generation thriving in the vibrant urban centers. Yet, within this juxtaposition, a unique form of harmony emerges, offering a peaceful coexistence amidst rapid change (Qiao et al., 2023).

This thesis seeks to delve deeper into these inherent contrasts and contradictions within human environments, which are accentuated by the rapid pace of societal and scientific progress. It aims to explore the dichotomies between old and young, rural and urban, examining how these disparate elements interact and influence one another. This exploration not only sheds light on the physical transformation of cityscapes but also reveals the underlying socio-cultural shifts, offering a nuanced understanding of urban evolution and its broader implications. Through this lens, the thesis endeavours to visually interpret and express the intricate dynamics of urban transformation in Chinese cities, with a particular focus on Qingdao. This exploration will not only capture the tangible architectural changes but also seek to artistically represent the broader narrative of urban-rural interplay and the evolving tapestry of societal structures, thus bridging the realms of urban development and visual artistry.



Purpose of Creation

This thesis examines the contrasting relationships in life, specifically focusing on the lifestyle and environmental differences between rural old houses and urban skyscrapers. Additionally, it seeks to create visual art that reflects these contrasts, utilizing traditional Chinese painting techniques to portray the rural-urban dichotomy and express the interplay of harmony and contradiction. This exploration through art highlights the physical disparities and delves into the deeper, symbolic meanings these contrasts represent in the context of societal and cultural evolution.

Scope of Creation

The scope of creation for this thesis encompasses a multifaceted artistic approach. It involves observing the decline of traditional housing and its replacement with modern urban structures, along with analyzing how these changes impact the lifestyles and environments of the people residing in these areas. In terms of form, the thesis employs a modern approach to Chinese painting, using geometric shapes to symbolize the architectural differences between rural and urban settings. The technique central to this study is using traditional Chinese brush and ink methods on rice paper. This process begins with sketching the distinct shapes of rural and urban structures, followed by the application of ink and color to vividly bring these environments to life, with special areas in the artwork accentuated through the use of glue.

Several key terms are defined to clarify the artistic framework. Chinese painting is identified as a unique art form that employs traditional Chinese brushes, ink, and paint. It is characterized by its distinct expression and artistic principles (Clunas, 2017; Li, 2019). The ‘Relationship of Contrast’ is defined as the juxtaposition of elements with stark differences, contradictions, and opposites for comparative analysis. Lastly, ‘Artistic Imagination’ is described as the ability to perceive various perspectives, explore innovative ideas, and create novel artistic expressions, underpinning the creative process of this thesis.

Literature Review

This preliminary field study saw the principal researcher gather a diverse collection of photographs capturing the evolving dynamics of urban and rural development in Qingdao (Wang & Bell, 2022). These images offered a vivid portrayal of the changing landscapes, from serene rural settings to bustling urban centers. Each photograph served as a testament to the contrasts and coexistence of different lifestyles, providing a visual narrative that underscores the central theme of this study: the interplay of harmony and contradiction in human environments (Li, 2006).



The theoretical framework of this study is rooted in an intricate mesh of philosophical and sociological perspectives that collectively illuminate the underlying dynamics shaping urban and rural environments. Central to this exploration are classical theories of societal development, which delve into the material and economic foundations of societal structures (Leaper, 2011; Newman & Newman, 2022). These theories are instrumental in deconstructing the complex interplay between economic conditions, technological advancements, and the evolving patterns of urbanization. They provide insights into how economic shifts, policy decisions, and technological progress drive the transformation of landscapes, influencing the migration patterns, lifestyle changes, and environmental impacts associated with urban and rural interactions (Grusec & Lytton, 2012). In particular, the study engages deeply with the sociological theories that examine the repercussions of urban sprawl and rural depopulation (Madani, 2019). These theories shed light on the socio-economic disparities and cultural shifts that occur as urban areas expand, often at the expense of rural landscapes (Liu & Liu, 2019). By understanding these dynamics, the study gains a nuanced perspective on the resultant changes in community structures, local economies, and cultural identities.

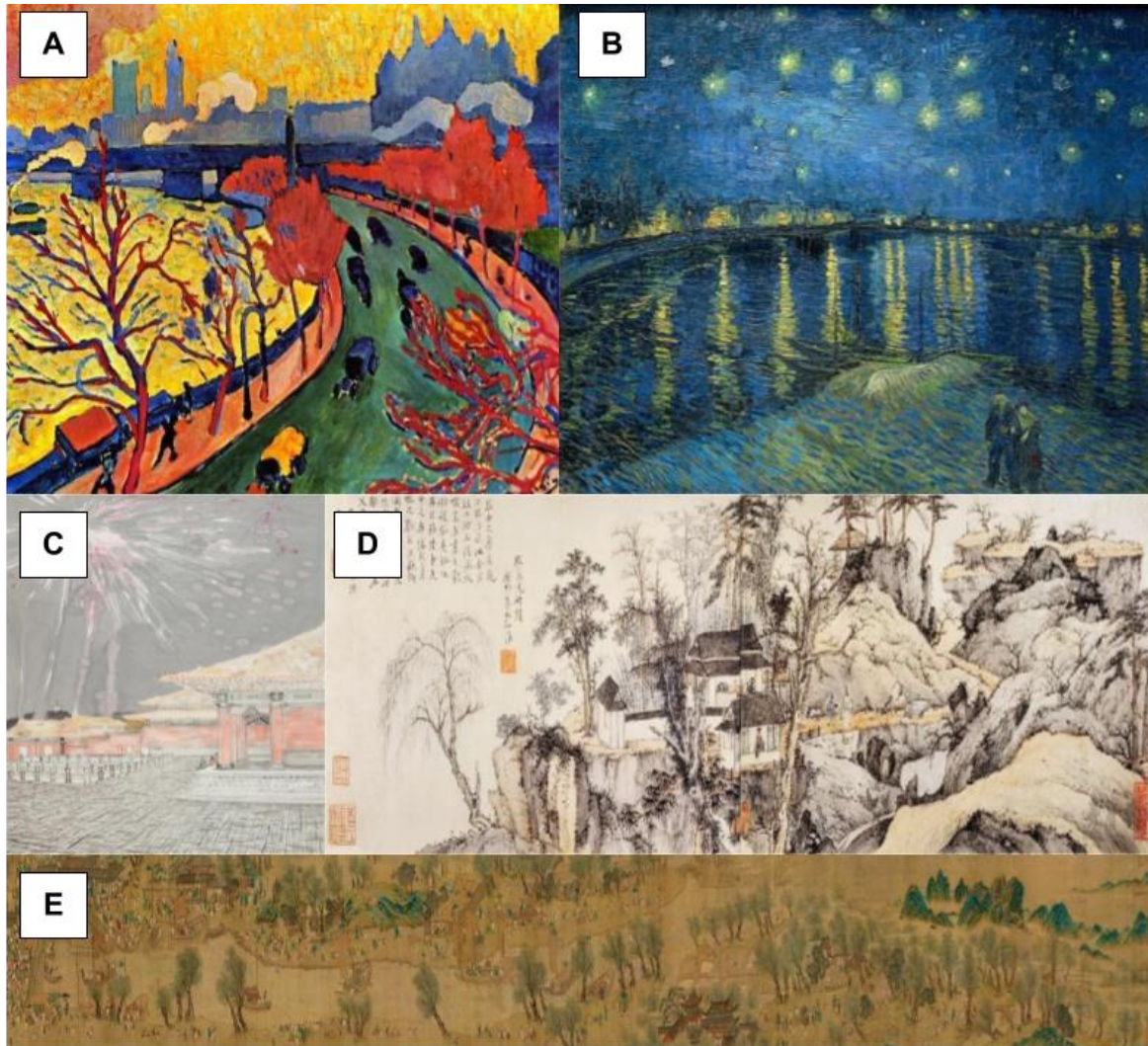
Complementing the sociological perspective, philosophical concepts of harmony and contradiction are also relevant to this study. This philosophical inquiry is vital for understanding the aesthetic and existential dimensions of urban-rural contrasts (Lomas, 2021). The ancient Chinese philosophy of Yin and Yang, with its focus on dualistic harmony, is particularly relevant (Huang, 2016). It offers a profound lens through which the study examines the dichotomies and interdependencies between urban and rural environments (Ma et al., 2020). This philosophical perspective reveals how opposing forces, such as modernity and tradition, development and conservation, expansion and sustainability, are not just conflicting but also interdependent, each contributing to a balanced and dynamic whole (Tian et al., 2017). Furthermore, semiotics theories within the context of visual arts explain how art serves as a potent medium of communication and expression, transcending the mere visual to convey complex societal narratives and ideas (Bochner & Ellis, 2003). Art, in this context, is seen as a mirror reflecting societal shifts and as a window offering insights into cultural and societal understandings (Luhmann, 2000). The exploration of semiotic theories in art, therefore, helps unravel how visual representations, through symbolism, metaphor, and juxtaposition, encode and decode the nuanced narratives of urban-rural interplay (Chandler, 2022; Crow, 2022). Moreover, artworks, especially those rooted in traditional Chinese techniques and aesthetics, can articulate the themes of urban and rural contrasts (Unsel, 2022). This includes an analysis of how color, form, and composition in the art can symbolize the varied aspects of urban and rural life, thus enabling a more profound interpretation of these environments (Thomas, 2011). This study explores the capability of art to encapsulate and convey the essence of societal transformations,



highlighting how artistic representations can bridge the gap between tangible reality and abstract conceptualization.

In addition to these theoretical foundations, the influence of visual artists was a crucial component of this study. One notable example is the photographer Zhang Kechun, whose work captures the rapid urbanization of Chinese cities while juxtaposing it with traditional rural elements, commenting on the significance of the landscape in modern Chinese national identity. His photography provides a compelling visual narrative that complements the themes of this thesis. Furthermore, the Bangkok Art Biennale, particularly the exhibitions from 3–4 years ago, featured a variety of artists whose works address themes of urban transformation and cultural shifts. The works of renowned artists who have explored themes of contrast and harmony also offered invaluable insights into artistic composition and expression. The influence of Fauvism, as seen in the works of André Derain and Vincent Van Gogh, with their bold use of color and expressive techniques, provided a vivid illustration of the power of visual expression (Amory & Dumas, 2023; Millard, 1976). Contemporary Chinese artists like Fang Xiang, Wang Jianjiang, and Zhang Zeduan also contributed to this discourse, showing how traditional Chinese painting techniques can be adapted to depict modern life, thus embodying the harmonious yet contrasting elements within different contexts (Figure 1) (Dongsong, 2010; Kindler, 2005; Peng, 2017). The works of these artists set the stage for a nuanced exploration of the themes of contrast and harmony through the lens of visual art, integrating diverse perspectives and methodologies, all converging to deepen the understanding of the interplay between urban and rural environments in the context of societal and cultural evolution.

Figure 1 Artistic inspiration for this investigation: A – ‘Westminster Bridge’, André Derain (60x90cm, oil painting); B – ‘Starry Night on the Rhone’, Vincent Van Gogh (57x70cm, oil painting on canvas); C – ‘The First Lunar Month’, Fang Xiang (68x68cm, Chinese painting); D – ‘Shuquan Wash Inkstone Map’, Wang Jianjiang (69.7x19.7cm, traditional Chinese painting); E – ‘Shuquan Wash Inkstone Map’, Zhang Zeduan (528.7x24.8cm, traditional Chinese painting).



Noted. From A Charing Cross Bridge also known as Westminster Bridge 1906. USEUM.

(<https://useum.org/artwork/Charing-Cross-Bridge-also-known-as-Westminster-Bridge-Andre-Derain-1906>)

B Starry Night over the Rhone Van Gogh reproduction, Van Gogh Studio

(<https://www.vangoghstudio.com/starry-night-over-the-rhone/>.)

C Ink artist shares his views in semi-abstract landscapes by Lin Qi, 2022. Chinadaily

(<https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202209/05/WS63156353a310fd2b29e75f3e.html>.)

D Sparse Spring Washing Inkstone by Hong Ren, 1663. Mutualart

(<https://www.mutualart.com/Artwork/Sparse-Spring-Washing-Inkstone/DD474226C5F89824>.)

E Landscape After Qingming Shanghe Tu by Zhang Zeduan, (n.d.) Mutualart

(<https://www.mutualart.com/Artwork/Landscape-After-Qingming-Shanghe-Tu/15A298F3FC41F919>.)



Research Methodology

The research methodology for this study was a comprehensive and multi-layered process that evolved in various stages, designed to capture the essence of urban and rural contrasts through the lens of traditional Chinese painting. The initial phase of the study was marked by extensive data collection, which involved a blend of online research, in-depth literature reviews, and personal on-site photography. This was a critical step in acquiring a diverse array of works from domestic and international artists. Simultaneously, a series of images that reflected a comparative relationship between different environments were captured. These images and works collectively formed the foundational elements that guided the subsequent artistic process. Following the data collection, the research progressed into a data analysis phase. This stage was primarily focused on examining thematic elements that highlighted nuances in personal life, as well as societal, cultural, and environmental differences. The analysis covered a broad spectrum, including the architectural nuances of rural and urban settings, the natural landscapes of mountains and rivers, local vegetation, and technological advancements in transportation. The objective was to conduct a comparative study across these diverse aspects, delving into their respective impacts and significances.

In the artistic creation phase, the study employed traditional Chinese painting techniques, adapting them to express the study's themes. This involved using a colour palette where grey hues represented the tranquility of rural landscapes, and vibrant colors depicted the energy of urban settings. The artistic expression was further enriched by incorporating geometric shapes, elements of nature, and symbols of transportation arranged in a variety of compositional forms. The interplay of artistic elements such as points, lines, and planes was intricately utilized to articulate the contrasting formal symbols. The principal researcher harnessed the principles of traditional Chinese painting, with a particular emphasis on the use of lines and ink. This approach enabled a nuanced portrayal of the central theme, utilizing variations in line work and ink application to highlight the juxtaposition of rural and urban elements. The creation process unfolded in stages, starting with the development of detailed sketches. These sketches (Figure 2) played a crucial role in conveying the interplay between contrast and harmony, using a spectrum of colors and lines to express the intended themes. Dots, lines, and surfaces were harmoniously blended to manifest the comparative formal symbols. A critical aspect of this process was the selection of materials and equipment, including traditional brushes, mineral pigments specifically chosen for Chinese painting, glue, rice paper, and ink. Each material was carefully chosen for its unique contribution to achieving the desired artistic effect. The final step in the creation process involved a systematic approach, beginning with preliminary sketches. After completing a sketch, the researcher mixed glue with ink to attain the appropriate consistency for application. This mixture was then meticulously applied using a brush to create lines and broader ink

areas on rice paper. The mineral pigments were adjusted and spread evenly, capturing the essence of the contrasting elements until each piece resonated with the intended artistic expression. This process not only captured the visual contrasts but also imbued the artworks with a deeper symbolic meaning, reflecting the complex interplay between urban and rural life.

Figure 2 *Design sketches in the creation stage*



Noted. by Fangzhu Li, 2023.

Results

The creative process was divided into two halves, the pre-thesis works and the thesis works. These are explained further below.

1. Pre-Thesis Works

In the initial phase of the research, the lead researcher embarked on a series of pre-thesis artworks, each serving as a critical exploration into the contrasting dynamics between rural and urban landscapes. These artworks, rooted in the tradition of Chinese painting, were not just creative expressions but also analytical investigations of the thematic subject.

Pre-Thesis Work 1 (Figure 3) sets the thematic groundwork, translating everyday observations into visual narratives. This artwork went beyond mere depiction, critically examining the divergence in architectural styles and transportation tools. The use of harmonious elements in the composition raised questions about the subtle coexistence of rural and urban entities. Mentor feedback highlighted the potential for exploring varied forms to deepen the contrast, suggesting an evolution towards a more complex artistic inquiry.

Figure 3 Pre-Thesis Work 1: Fangzhu Li, 2023 (140x70cm, ink on rice paper)



Noted. by Fangzhu Li, 2023.

In Pre-Thesis Work 2, geometric figures became symbols of the rural-urban dichotomy. The use of triangles and ellipses, representing rural and urban spaces respectively, was not only a stylistic choice but also an analytical tool to dissect the spatial and structural differences. The juxtaposition of rural houses against urban buildings, enhanced by colorful trees and a sailboat, offered a layered interpretation of environmental transitions. The mentor's feedback encouraged a departure from design-centric approaches, pushing for a more imaginative exploration of the theme.

Pre-Thesis Work 3 (Figure 4) advanced the exploration of architectural contrasts. The top-down composition, linking rural and urban areas through roads, served as a metaphor for interconnectedness and transition. The contrasting use of grey and colorful elements further emphasized the disparities yet hinted at underlying connections. However, mentor feedback suggested that the piece fell short in capturing the full complexity of the intended concept, calling for a heightened focus on contrast and creativity.

Figure 4 Pre-Thesis Work 3 Fangzhu Li, 2023 (140x70cm, ink on rice paper)



Noted. by Fangzhu Li, 2023.

In Pre-Thesis Work 4, the inclusion of foreign architectural elements signalled a broadening of perspective. The three-part composition, separating the city with clouds and using grey blocks for the countryside, was a visual experiment in enhancing contrast while exploring the impact of external influences on traditional landscapes. The feedback recommended further strengthening these contrasts, adding depth to the composition.

Pre-Thesis Work 5 represented an attempt to integrate Western color schemes into Chinese painting techniques. The division of the composition into city and countryside, highlighted by green trees, was an effective tool in illustrating the color contrasts. However, it also revealed the need for more detailed and imaginative elements to fully capture the complexities of urban-rural interactions.

Pre-Thesis Work 6 focused on contrasting architectural forms and transportation modes, employing square graphics and color contrasts to depict rural and urban backgrounds. This approach not only highlighted the stark differences but also raised questions about the evolution of landscapes in response to technological advancements. The feedback from this phase encouraged a deeper exploration of expressive languages to further accentuate the contrasts.



Finally, Pre-Thesis Work 7, inspired by daily life observations, used an S-shaped composition to depict the contrast between rural tranquility and urban bustle. The richer colors in rural areas challenged the conventional portrayal of urban centers as more vibrant, suggesting a re-evaluation of perceived notions about rural and urban aesthetics.

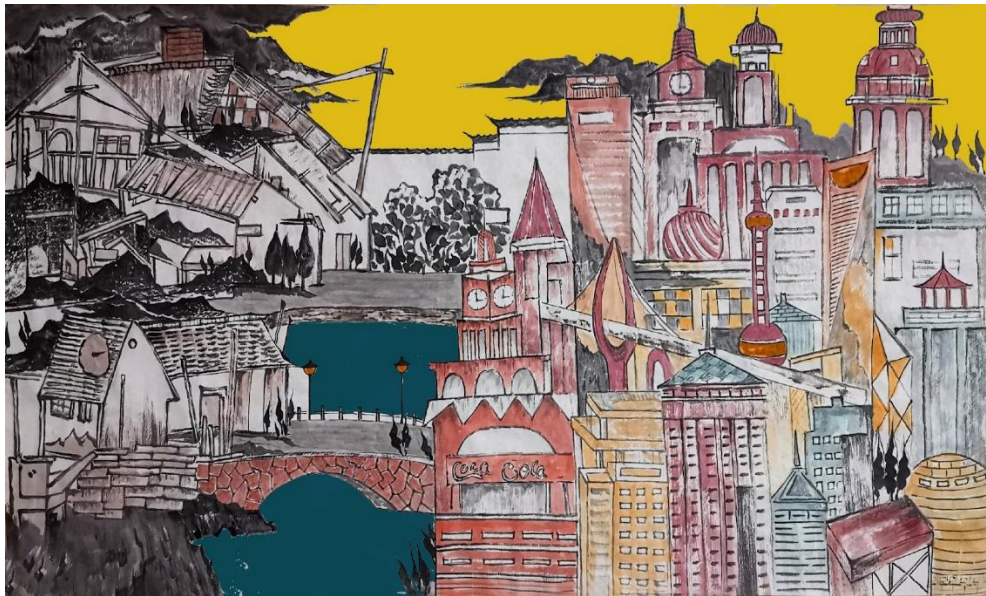
Each artwork in this pre-thesis phase represented not just a step in artistic development but also a deeper analytical engagement with the theme. The progression from simple representation to complex interpretations reflected an evolving understanding of the rural-urban dichotomy. This journey, marked by mentor feedback and self-reflection, laid the foundation for a richer, more nuanced exploration in the thesis works that followed.

2. Thesis Works

In the culmination of this thesis, a series of artworks were meticulously created, each embodying the evolving relationship between rural and urban areas. These works, building upon the insights gained from pre-thesis explorations, showcased a deepening understanding and increasingly nuanced expression of the rural-urban dichotomy through varied artistic compositions, color schemes, and techniques. Thesis Work 1 embarked on an exploration of contrasting architectural styles, setting rural monochromes against the vibrant reds of urbanity, punctuated by green foliage and geometric marble pavements. This piece was pivotal in its coloristic approach, but it underscored the necessity for a more robust contrast and creative depth, suggesting that mere color differentiation might not suffice to convey the complex interplay of rural and urban themes.

In Thesis Work 2, the artwork ventured into the realms of harmony and contrast, utilizing shapes of similar dimensions but differing forms to represent the two worlds. The inclusion of high-speed rail elements was a thoughtful addition, symbolizing the rapid pace of urbanization. This piece achieved a balance in shape and colour contrasts, yet it sparked a dialogue about pushing the boundaries of artistic technique and colour used to enhance the thematic expression further. Thesis Works 3 and 4 (Figure 5) continued this exploration, presenting contrasts in size and shape between rural and urban landscapes, employing strong color differentiations and varied line weights. The compositions, transitioning from proximate to distant perspectives, were aligned with the intended themes. However, feedback from these works indicated a need for more comprehensive and imaginative approaches, suggesting that the exploration of spatial contrasts could be enriched with deeper artistic interpretations. Thesis Work 5, in continuity with its predecessors, delved into spatial contrasts with an emphasis on color differentiation. While the feedback remained consistent, urging further exploration in color adjustments, it also encouraged the integration of more imaginative elements, hinting at the potential for a more layered and symbolic portrayal of rural-urban dynamics.

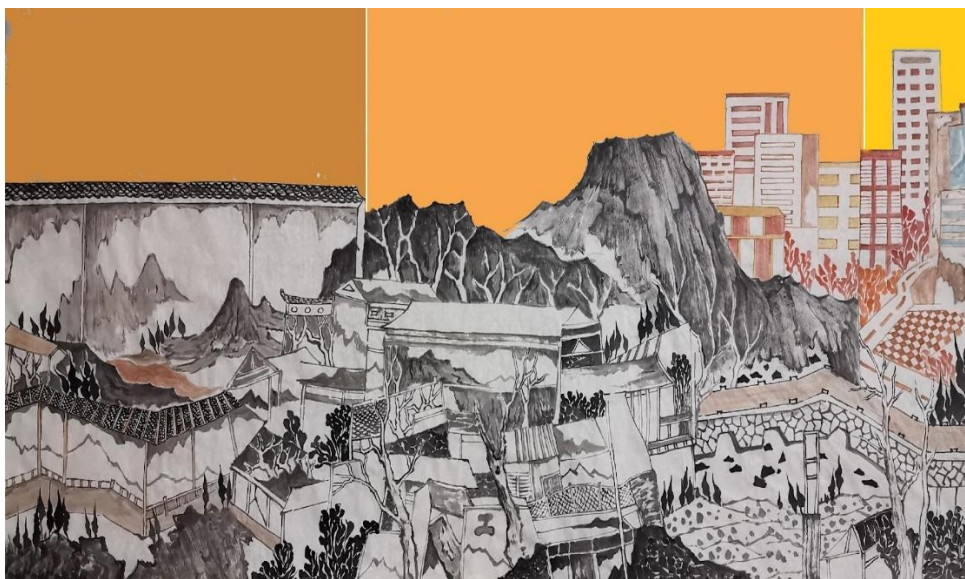
Figure 5 Thesis Work 4 Fangzhu Li, 2023 (140x70cm, ink on rice paper)



Noted. by Fangzhu Li, 2023.

Thesis Work 6 (Figure 6) employed size as a tool to accentuate the urban-rural dichotomy, creating stark contrasts in shape and color. This piece effectively aligned with the conceptual framework, demonstrating the effectiveness of using a scale to communicate the vast differences between rural simplicity and urban complexity. In Thesis Work 7, a similar thematic thread was followed, focusing on contrasting rural and urban spaces through varied shapes and sizes. The effective use of color contrasts was noted, yet the continued suggestions for imaginative and holistic development indicated a journey still in progress, seeking to capture the essence of rural-urban interplay in its entirety.

Figure 6 Thesis Work 6 Fangzhu Li, 2023 (140x70cm, ink on rice paper)



Noted. by Fangzhu Li, 2023.



Thesis Work 8 introduced grey walls and geometric shapes, enhancing the contrast between rural and urban areas. This approach marked a progression in form, with recommendations pointing towards further imaginative development in composition and color, suggesting a need for more dynamic and expressive articulations. Thesis Work 9, aiming to alter colour and composition, incorporated a large stone element, achieving a harmonious yet contradictory relationship between black, white, and grey, enriched with touches of red and green. This work strove to more accurately reflect the dual nature of harmony and contradiction inherent in rural and urban coexistence. Thesis Work 10 sought further changes in color and composition, positioning rural areas centrally, flanked by urban spaces. The introduction of a stone element between these areas created a space ripe for imaginative interpretation, echoing the real-life complexities observed in rural-urban interactions.

Thesis Work 11 focused on enhancing contrasts using a monochromatic palette, with a segmented composition employing circular elements to add dynamism. This artwork achieved a transitional character, symbolically navigating the space between rural and urban realms, merging conflict with harmony. Finally, Thesis Work 12 aimed to widen the conceptual gap between ancient rural life and the modern city, employing a horizontal three-stage composition and diagonal forces. This artwork succeeded in creating a day-and-night contrast, amplifying both the visual impact and the depth of imaginative elements.

Collectively, these thesis works (Figures 5–6) represent a critical journey in exploring and expressing the intricate relationship between rural and urban environments. They showcase the evolution of artistic expression, technique, and conceptual understanding, capturing the essence of contrast and harmony in a visually striking and thematically profound context.

Discussion and Conclusions

This creative exploration successfully harnessed traditional brush and ink techniques of Chinese painting to vividly articulate the contrasts between rural and urban areas (Li, 2019). This was achieved through the utilization of varied colors and lines, where bright hues and artistic elements such as dots, lines, and planes became the formal symbols of contrast (Clunas, 2017). The artistic intent behind the paintings was to integrate traditional elements within a contemporary framework. However, some traditional techniques, such as the axe-cut line technique commonly used to represent rocks and cliffs in traditional Chinese painting, were deliberately subdued to explore new expressions of urban and rural contrasts. While these works may not exhibit certain conventional techniques prominently, they incorporate other traditional methods, such as the careful modulation of ink tones and the use of fine line work to evoke the essence of the landscape. Future iterations will aim to make traditional techniques more explicit, ensuring a balanced representation of both traditional and contemporary artistic languages.



The journey of creation itself was extensive and multifaceted, involving meticulous sketching, comprehensive data collection, and the capturing of realistic urban and rural scenes (Wang & Bell, 2022). The study drew inspiration from a wide range of reference works, spanning both Western and Eastern artistic traditions, allowing for a deeper understanding and comparison of urban and rural areas across different cultures and regions. For instance, the vibrant and bold color techniques seen in Western Fauvism, as exemplified by artists like André Derain and Vincent Van Gogh, were juxtaposed with the subtle and delicate brushwork of traditional Chinese painting. This contrast highlights the unique ways in which different cultures approach the depiction of urban and rural landscapes, with Western techniques often emphasizing vivid, expressive color palettes, while Chinese techniques focus on the harmony and balance achieved through ink and brushwork. This interplay of styles enriches the visual narrative and offers a more comprehensive portrayal of the evolving urban landscapes of Qingdao (Kunzmann, 2019; Yuxiang et al., 2011). This approach culminated in the development of a unique artistic language that eloquently expressed comparative relationships, focusing on harmonious and aesthetically pleasing aspects (Qiao, et al., 2023).

Prior to this investigation, the complex connection between urban and rural environments, though omnipresent in daily life, has not been deeply explored or artistically represented. The process of creating these artworks thus became a journey of discovery, frequently influenced by poignant scenes, the works of other artists, and continuous mentorship (Sundararajan, 2020). This journey led to profound insights, revealing new avenues of thought and innovation for future creative endeavors. The experience enriched the authors' understanding, enabling the creation of works that are not only impactful but also imbued with deeper meaning.

The potential impact of this creative process and the resulting artworks on social and technical fields is significant. By highlighting the contrasts and interrelationships between urban and rural areas, the thesis encourages viewers to engage with and reflect upon these themes (Leaper, 2011; Newman & Newman, 2022). It presents different perspectives on urban-rural dynamics, which can inspire varied interpretations and discussions, potentially influencing how people perceive and interact with their environments. This aspect of the work encourages other artists to delve into urban and rural themes, contributing to a richer and more diverse artistic discourse. Such exploration can foster a greater appreciation for the nuances of our surroundings, promoting more mindful and informed interactions with both urban and rural landscapes.

In summary, 'Relationship of Contrast' serves not only as a display of artistic skill but also as a medium for deeper societal reflection and understanding. It emphasizes the significance of observing and representing the world around us, highlighting the powerful role of art in interpreting and influencing societal and cultural dynamics. The thesis, therefore, stands as a testament to the interplay



between artistic creation and societal commentary, offering a unique perspective on the ever-evolving relationship between rural tranquility and urban vibrancy.

Suggestions

The researchers wish to make suggestions for artists and individuals keen on exploring the rich tapestry of urban and rural landscapes in their creative work. Recognizing the vast potential in these themes is paramount; the interplay between urban and rural settings offers many stories, contrasts, and dynamics that can be vividly depicted through various art forms. Such themes present many perspectives and narratives that resonate with a broad audience. Integrating art with daily life is another key aspect. Artists and observers are encouraged to draw inspiration from their everyday experiences in both urban and rural settings. These environments, replete with cultural, social, and personal significance, offer inspiration for artistic creations. Art that emerges from these daily observations can forge profound connections and significantly impact due to its relatability.

Experimentation with various artistic mediums is also essential. Artists are encouraged to explore a range of methods and techniques, from traditional practices like painting and sculpture to more contemporary forms such as digital media, installation art, or mixed media. Each medium provides unique avenues to capture and articulate the essence of the contrasting environments found in urban and rural landscapes. Developing a keen eye for detail is crucial in this endeavor. Artists should cultivate the ability to observe urban and rural landscapes. Such detailed observation can lead to deeper insights and more nuanced representations in art. Attention to architecture, people, natural elements, and the overall atmosphere of these spaces can enrich the artistic portrayal.

Cross-disciplinary collaboration is another significant recommendation. By collaborating with professionals from fields like urban planning, environmental science, sociology, and history, artists can gain new perspectives and deeper insights. These collaborations can greatly enhance the artistic interpretation and representation of urban and rural landscapes, providing a more holistic understanding of these environments.

Finally, engaging with community and cultural narratives is imperative. By connecting with the stories and narratives that emerge from both urban and rural communities, artists not only enrich their own understanding but also ensure that their art is deeply rooted in real-life contexts and experiences. This engagement fosters a profound connection between the artwork and the audience, bridging the gap between artistic expression and lived realities.



References

- Amory, D., & Dumas, A. (2023). *Vertigo of Color: Matisse, Derain, and the Origins of Fauvism*. Metropolitan Museum of Art.
- Bochner, A. P., & Ellis, C. (2003). An introduction to the arts and narrative research: Art as inquiry. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 9(4), 506–514.
- Chandler, D. (2022). *Semiotics: The Basics*. Routledge.
- Clunas, C. (2017). *Chinese painting and its audiences*, Vol. 61. Princeton. Princeton University Press.
- Crow, D. (2022). *Visible Signs: An Introduction to Semiotics in the Visual Arts*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Dongsong, W. (2010). A reexamination of regionalism in Chinese painting in the context of globalization. In Crouch, C. (Ed.) *Contemporary Chinese Visual Culture*. Cambria Press.
- Grusec, J. E., & Lytton, H. (2012). *Social Development: History, Theory, and Research*. Springer Science & Business Media.
- Huang, L. L. (2016). Interpersonal harmony and conflict for Chinese people: A yin–yang perspective. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 7, 847.
- Kindler, A. M. (2005). Creativity and education: A discourse informed by perspectives of three contemporary Asian artists. *International Journal of Arts Education*, 3(2), 88–105.
- Kunzmann, K. R. (2019). Illustrations: Discovering Qingdao. *Planning Theory & Practice*, 20(1), 148–155.
- Leaper, C. (2011). More similarities than differences in contemporary theories of social development? A plea for theory bridging. *Advances in Child Development and Behavior*, 40, 337–378.
- Li, C. (2006). The Confucian ideal of harmony. *Philosophy East and West*, 54(4), 583–603.
- Li, Y. (2019). The philosophy of five elements and the idea of Chinese painting. *5th International Conference on Arts, Design and Contemporary Education (ICADCE 2019)*. Atlantis Press.
- Liu, F., & Liu, C. (2019). Regional disparity, spatial spillover effects of urbanisation and carbon emissions in China. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 241, 118226.
- Lomas, T. (2021). Life balance and harmony. *International Journal of Wellbeing*, 11(1).
- Luhmann, N. (2000). *Art as a Social System*. Stanford University Press.
- Ma, L., Liu, S., Fang, F., Che, X., & Chen, M. (2020). Evaluation of urban–rural difference and integration based on quality of life. *Sustainable Cities and Society*, 54, 101877.
- Madani, M. (2019). Social Conurbation as a Justifiable Urban–Sprawl Repercussion. *International Journal of the Constructed Environment*, 10(1), 29.
- Millard, C. W. (1976). Fauvism. *The Hudson Review*, 29(4), 576–580.
- Newman, B. M., & Newman, P. R. (2022). *Theories of Human Development*. Taylor & Francis.



- Peng, P. (2017). On the Space-depiction techniques of Chinese traditional architectural drawings. *3rd International Conference on Arts, Design and Contemporary Education (ICADCE 2017)*. Atlantis Press.
- Qiao, G., Wang, L., & Du, P. (2023). Contradiction or harmony? Spatial and temporal relationships between new urbanization and rural revitalization in the Yellow River Basin from a coupling perspective. *PloS One*, 18(7), e0288600.
- Sundararajan, L. (2020, 28 February). *A history of the concepts of harmony in Chinese culture*. In Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Psychology.
<https://oxfordre.com/psychology/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190236557.001.0001/acrefore-9780190236557-e-679>
- Thomas, E. (2011). Primary colors. *Journal of Art Historiography*, 5, 1.
- Tian, L., Guo, X., & Yin, W. (2017). From urban sprawl to land consolidation in suburban Shanghai under the backdrop of increasing versus decreasing balance policy: A perspective of property rights transfer. *Urban Studies*, 54(4), 878–896.
- Unsel, F. (2022). *Making Art Work: Articulating Art and Urban Marginality in Kisumu, Kenya* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Basel). Basel, Switzerland.
- Wang, P., & Bell, D. A. (2022). Qingdao: the city of ideals. *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 25(5), 667–682.
- Yuxiang, Z., Xilai, Z., Chun, L., Feng, Y., & Hongyu, W. (2011). The development strategy for industrial clusters in Qingdao. *Energy Procedia*, 5, 1355–1359.