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Introduction

I titled this body of my work *Meditation*. The works, from the media point of view, include two series - printmaking and installation. I have been working on both series for about 30 years. In addition, I have just started the video creation of the *Meditation* series of works, which is the third part.

After many years of creating, especially in these recent two years of studying at SUNY New Paltz, I gradually figured out that my artistic creation is a deeply meditative act. During years of evolving, the printmaking and installations that I have created, as well as the new video works, are my meditation on life.

Printmaking

My *Meditation* series of printmaking works probably started in 1989, which was my senior year at Harbin Normal University about thirty years ago. The printing tools I used constantly were: printing plates that are idle or discarded by printing factories, wooden characters and
various graphic symbols; wooden boards, rubber; traditional Chinese
seals that are carved on stones; engravings of old woodblock prints
made hundreds of years ago; and many other ready-made products
such as plastics, metals, glass, cotton fabrics, etc.

In terms of my creation technique, it can be roughly divided into two parts.
The first part is hand stamping. This idea comes from movable type printing in ancient China thousands of years ago. The characters or pottery characters are hand-printed onto clay pottery and handmade paper. My works also employ some techniques of utilizing copperplate presses, lithography presses, and gold foil silver stamping printing. During the past two years of graduate study, I have also used a lot of silkscreen printing. All these techniques have enriched the expression of my works.

Compared to many traditional multicolor prints that have fixed different color plates and relatively fixed numbers of prints, my printmaking works feature high-density image aggregation with infinitely various colors. Due to the nature of the infinitely repeated hand stamping in many pieces, and the application of hand painted elements, each piece of my work is a unique piece, a monoprint.

The second part of creating these works is hand-painting, mainly using traditional Chinese painting tools and materials: brushes, ink, and
mineral pigments, along-with the final addition of watercolor paints and acrylic paints.

Compared with the traditional printmaking works, my printmaking is mixed with scattered handprints and multiple printing methods. I print the text and images first, then draw the color part, then print the texts and images before adding the final layer of color, often with a brush. Such techniques enable the complexity of multiple overlaps of image and color. I think this process and technique are unique because it breaks the definition of traditional printmaking concepts and many specific norms, which enables a new look of printmaking. Most of my printmaking works are composed of countless small components of texts: letterforms, characters, small graphic symbols, and other forms of media carrying information. The content of the picture is complicated and rich in color, and the works intentionally show no clear main image: overall they have a very simple abstract style. The presentation of a mixed abstract and figurative, simple and complex composition, came from my aesthetic concept, my personal thinking, and my pursuit of world peace.
Installation

The installation part of the Meditation started in 2005, and the project has continued for 15 years. The materials I use are handmade paper, newspapers, Bibles, and Buddhist books from different countries around the world. The creative methods I use are rubbing, rolling, knitting, twisting, kneading, hand-pressing, all by hand. In the last two years, pottery materials have also been added.

Religious books are used by believers to carry out religious activities such as prayer and study, but as an artist I use it for artistic creation. These texts inform various human societies, philosophical thought, and religious beliefs that are different from each other.

At present, the form of my works can be divided into five different styles:
The first form primarily uses newspaper as the main material. By rubbing, rolling, and knitting into the style of ancient Chinese bamboo scroll "book", I have thus far created a total of 1,500 scrolls. This ongoing body of work is titled Century Text. Bamboo "books" were the earliest books in Chinese history and have been in use for about three thousand years. Before the early printing technology was invented in China, people carved the characters on bamboo sticks to record history and culture. Today, ancient bamboo roll "books" can be seen in the National Museum of China, and their beauty has aroused my great interest.

The second form is a small paper "flowers" that are hand-rolled, using religious books such as the Bible, and Buddhism classics. My idea came from the monks chanting, counting the beads of their malas made of wood one by one; they made each bead by
hand, one by one. Because it is easy to make, I make it whenever I have time, such as in the studio, at home, on the trains and airplanes, at restaurants and cafes. I made a huge number of these small paper "flowers". It is almost impossible to count how many have been created.

The third form is to use the pages of religious books such as the Bible and Buddhist texts to soak in water for a few days and make paper pulp. Then I use my fingers to form a small triangle or rub into a small ball. Again, I made a huge number of these small objects. It is almost impossible to count how many have been created, but they number in the thousands. I read every page of the book before I use it to make works, and then let the paper with religious content and my hand complete the creation with touching and making.

The fourth form is using Bibles and plant fiber together to make paper cube. First, I mixed the bible book and plants fiber into paper pulp;
then I made a wooden mold of small cubes; and finally, I placed the pulp into the mold and hand-press to form a small cube. I made a total of 245 cubes and waited for each cube dry completely. Then I used a hammer to print typefaces onto the paper cubes, leaving traces of the text. The cubes, which are visually simple in color, look much more interesting with the embossed printed text. My inspiration came from the bricks of the famous Great Wall of ancient China, as each of the blocks comprising the wall is printed with a text logo. All the bricks of ancient buildings also have such printed logos to record the name of the craftsman or owners' information.

At the same time, I also pinched the Bible pulp into small triangles with my fingers. My idea came from an ancient Chinese legend; people who have meditated for a long time and die are then cremated by tradition and their ashes will remain after the fire. In this legend it is said that if you do
not meditate enough, then there will be no ashes after the fire is extinguished. The Bible is a cultural carrier that can be read and an important book of religious belief. After being made into pulp, the visible text is no longer evident. I think several things are meaningful: this challenges people's sacred religious beliefs; it questions the cognitive concept of a book or an object as a printed matter; and also I change what I can touch and see into something that is tactile but no longer legible by transforming a figurative (by virtue of the text on the page) presence, rending the written word into a blank paper based object.

The fifth form I implement in my work is the use of pottery clay to manually knead a small triangular shape; this method is the same as
kneading the handmade paper. I chose white, black, and brown for sintering without glazing, so that the ceramic surface is not shiny. When exhibited together with paper works, the paper and clay components complement each other. Clay, with thousands of years of history, is the earliest material used by mankind to fight against nature and survive. Ceramic as a material quickly became a carrier of culture and art separated from people's practical tools. I often appreciate and study the ethnic, historical, and aesthetic information ceramic objects carry. All these have become the reasons why I chose clay as media to the creation of my *Meditation* series of works.

**Video**

My video work of the *Meditation* series only began in January of 2020. The idea of the video works comes from a way of practice of Eastern Buddhists, called "meditating while facing a wall". The ancient monks often meditate alone in a cave in a mountain in order to achieve a state of transcendence and talk to their souls. The process often took at least six months, and some even lasted for several years. During that time, the only company with them was the sound of dripping
water in the cave. In my work, I use the Chinese character for "Zen" as the only content, letting it fall and pressing it into the paper one by one like a water drop, accompanied by the sound of "Ding Dong", Little by little, in the end, the word "Zen" fills the whole picture. My video Meditation consists of three pieces, which will be displayed side by side. The middle is a black background and white text. The text falls from the top in the middle and goes to the two sides to fill the screen; on both sides of this middle video, the two videos are white background and black text. The video on the left side with the "Zen" character drops and moves from left to right to fill the screen. The video on the right side with the "Zen" character drops and moves from right to left to fill the screen (Please check video at: www.zhengxuewuart.com/video). This method is similar to the method of making my monoprints. It repeats a graphic symbol countless times, and finally fills the entire picture, becoming a complex visual presentation when looking at a distance.

As laypeople people who eat normal food and live in the modern world, we cannot meditate endlessly like ancient monks. However, meditation is accepted by many modern people as a way of thinking in a pure
state of mind and as an act to hone one's will. As an artist, I put my artistic creation under the state of meditation. I work on art by accumulating repeated labor every day, every week, every month, every year.

Breaking the boundary of the disciplines in the years of the creation of the Meditation series of works, I frequently merge printmaking and installation.

For example, the second form in my installation Meditation, uses a group of small paper flowers that are rolled by hand from abandoned printmaking works. In an exhibition, these newspaper flower Meditation installation works were displayed with silkscreened prints of the very same flowers, creating a dialogue between the three-dimensional objects and the two-dimensional depiction of the sculptural prints. Together they became a new kind of artwork, an installation print, or to use another common contemporary print
term, a print - Installation.

As another example, whenever I have the opportunity to go to a different country, I bring my installation work *Century Text* to national art museums, historical monuments, or war memorials, and put my works with the objects I find interesting. I put my works in front of Western artworks and antiquities with historical significance. This practice began first while traveling in China and Korea, as a means to create a conversation between my work and historical works of art, but thereafter the dialogue continued at museums in Europe and the US, thereby encompassing a juxtaposition of East/West as well. During these interactive performances, I also meditate for about 30 minutes.
This performance art is about a dialogue between "East and West", "Ancient and Modern" in my mind, with the works, and in my actions. It further expands the connotation of the concept of installation works, so that installation works have a new life, this is meaningful to me, to artists who use meditation to create, and to anyone who uses meditation as a way of life.

As a final example, during the years of the creation of the Meditation series of works, I frequently exhibited at the museums, galleries, and universities, where I invite visitors to participate in my live art-making activities. We used local and same-day newspapers for on-site creation. Because the making method was very simple, many people who visited the exhibition participated and used their own style to make art. By participating in the creation and exchanging ideas and feelings, the audience and I as the artist can quickly know each other and learn each other's perspectives. In this way, my Meditation art concept has relationships with the general public, and even further reaching, with society.

Conclusion
To summarize my artistic creation and my artworks:

As an international artist, I naturally have the characteristics of thinking beyond the cultures of the East and the West when studying art issues and performing my art practice. My Meditation printmaking works are large in scale, represent a huge amount of labor, a long process of silent meditation, my pious worship of traditional culture and the revolutionary spirit of creating new art forms.

Each of my Meditation installation series works is site specific and each group of work can be displayed in various ways. The number of components and the volume of each group of work can be very large. For example, Century Text can occupy a museum exhibition gallery of 2000 square feet, which has a great visual impact in visual presentation. Or it can be viewed in a more intimate setting as the scale is easily adjusted.

A set of three pieces of Meditation video works have been created. They will appear side by side at the same time during the exhibition.
The contrasting black and white backgrounds and text balance the pieces, creating a sense of harmony. With movements and sounds, these videos are an important, integrated part of the exhibition. Printmaking, the installations, and the three videos allow me to present my Zen philosophy in three unique ways: through hand-stamping and paint, as sculpture and installation, and by audio-visual means.

I examine both history and the present in a very personal way; think about the cultural issues between the East and the West; and integrate philosophy, religion, and a simple outlook on life into art. In my artistic practice I bridge the language gap between the Eastern and Western cultures with visual artworks and pay attention to the relationship among human, nature, and modern civilization.

For me, the process of artistic practice is ordinary labor, a simple and natural creation, and a consciousness of action. When I create artworks and think about art, it is also a process of my own meditation and self-development. This creative process is more important than the final works. The practice of art is endless. The inner experience
during difficult exploration is always otherworldly and wonderful for me. Meditation is the content of my life and the state of my life.