

The Eugeniusz Geppert Academy of Art and Design in Wrocław
Doctoral School

**Inner and Outer Relations from the Book of Changes (I Ching):
Contemporary Sculpture with Elements Derived from
Traditional Chinese Culture**

DOCTORAL THESIS

in the Field of Art

in the Discipline of Fine Arts and Art Conservation

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Abstract

The content of the doctoral thesis *Inner and Outer Relations from the Book of Changes (I Ching): Contemporary Sculpture with Elements Derived from Traditional Chinese Culture* is an artistic research based on experimental studio practice and the resulting artworks. This studio based artistic research contains artistic experiments accompanied with research on related literal and visual sources as well as artists and their works.

The artistic experiment developed from the concept of the inner and outer relations revolves around the Yin-Yang. This includes the interrelation formed by opposing figures, animals, objects, symbols and abstract forms or concepts. This artistic study is to continuously explore such interrelationships as the key points of sculptures and try to reveal their inner ideological and spiritual connotations.

Drawing on the idea of the Five Elements, a variety of materials were used in the creative process, a wide range of content and diverse art forms were represented. As a result, artworks encompass five art forms, predominantly sculpture, but also photography, drawing, collage and video. The sculptures were divided into the following five series: *Confronting, Powers, Directions, Waving, Shadow and Light*. These five series have their own independent characteristics, and at the same time, They have a lot in common.

Among the five series of sculptures, I chose the *Shadow and Light* series as the PhD work. The exploration of this series of works is to add an element of shadow and light, an important element in the concept of the Yin-Yang to the works. This series embodies the inner and outer relations in the *Book of Changes*, while also covering the different features of the other series.

The artistic research has interdisciplinary and cross-cultural perspectives. The elements of traditional Chinese culture were applied to contemporary art that made a link between eastern and western cultures, contemporary art and traditional culture, as well as the external physical forms of artwork and the knowledge of inner thoughts and feelings.

Key Words:

**Contemporary Sculpture, Inner and Outer Relations, Book of Changes,
Traditional Chinese Culture**

Introduction

The main research and artistic purpose of this PhD project is to discover more possibilities of creating sculptures through artistic research on sculptural practice with the elements derived from traditional Chinese culture. When conducting the research, I discovered artistic ideas with inner and outer relations from the *Book of Changes (I Ching)*, which is the most important original Chinese thought. By doing so, I sought to create artworks by drawing traditional Chinese cultural elements into contemporary art discourse, exploring conceptual ideas as well as material and technical practice.

This research was based on artistic practice combined with the study of related sources. The experimental practice was focused on sculpture with the concept of the inner and outer relations taken from the *Book of Changes*. A question accompanying the research is: how can the traditional Chinese cultural elements contribute to contemporary artistic practice?

The inner and outer relations refer to the relations between the issues in mental world as well as matters in the physical world. It improved the artistic research to explore not only the physical forms of art works but also emotional, psychological and spiritual issues in the mind. Shirley S. Y. Ma discussed the relationship between the inner mental and psychological world of a person and the physical outer world of the body in the publication of “*The I Ching and the Psych-body Connection*”¹ in 2005. This article drew my attention to the relation between the inner world and the outer world. Under the concept of inner and outer relations from Yin-Yang, I conducted technical and material practice with the idea of the Five Elements from the *Book of Changes* and created material sculptures to expose the mental, philosophical and/or social concepts.

In this research, the inner and outer relations can be understood not only as the mental and physical world, but also as inside and outside of a culture or an area. It is particularly interesting for me as I am a Chinese artist researching in Europe. This

¹ Shirley S. Y. Ma, “The I Ching and the Psyche-body Connection,” *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, 50, (2005): 237-250.

double perspective helped me to combine the traditional Chinese culture and contemporary European art in my research. I grew up in Chinese culture and now I am doing artistic research outside of China, I am doing research in Poland but I am bringing in foreign cultures, I am doing research on art issues but I am looking outside of art for inspirations. These internal and external relationships are also the background of my research.

To explore ideas for the studio experiments with the relational elements, I initiated research projects which comprised the studying of related artists and artworks, idea developments, studio practice, as well as workshops for Polish students and Chinese students.

In this research, the *Book of Changes* is the most important inspirational research source. It influenced a wide range of ancient Chinese arts. It is popular in Asian area but it is still unfamiliar for people in the western countries and there are only a few western contemporary artists who used elements from it for their works. John Cage is an important example of them.

John Cage learned Zen and the *Book of Changes* from Suzuki. This experience became central importance to his life, thought and work. From the traditional eastern thought, he got concepts of silence from Zen and chance from the *Book of Changes*, which were important concepts of his work.

Besides learning of Zen, Cage discovered the *Book of Changes (I Ching)* from about 1943. He appreciated its philosophy and found the practical need for it. Later he used the *Book of Changes* for his work from the beginning of 1951. He tried a chance operation to compose his music and intended to relate to the sixty-four diagrams of the *Book of Changes*. The chance operation gave him opportunities to avoid intentions in the course of composition. “With his study of Zen he had made a sudden leap in the adequacy of his thought. Now, with chance operations and the *I Ching*, he could make a similarly dramatic leap in the adequacy of his work.”²

² David Revill, *The roaring silence: John Cage: A Life* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2014), 306.

Cage's selection of chance operation prompted me to pick the *Book of Changes* as the main source and derived the inner and outer relations as the key point of my artistic research. Holding this key point, I got a clear direction to research contemporary sculpture with relational elements from the *Book of Changes*.

The Yin-Yang relation is the most important basic idea of the *Book of Changes*. According to the Yin-Yang relation, I focused on encountering issues to conduct artistic research from the visual and conceptual perspective. The Five Elements is an important concept that evolved from the *Book of Changes* to understand the world from the perspective of material properties. According to this concept, I started in the technical and material fields, and then extended to the content, and categorization of works.

For conducting the research, I applied methods such as reference collection, studio practice, technical and material experiment, case study, observation, analysis. Firstly, I collected the references about the artworks and artists related to my research, references about the *Book of Changes* and about the inner and outer relations, the visual elements from traditional Chinese culture. Secondly, I developed artistic ideas from the Yin-Yang relation, and conducted technological and material experiments according to the Five Elements. This was the most important part of my research through which creative concepts were realized and five series of art works followed. In addition, I organized relevant workshops for Polish students and Chinese students as a part of my research. The workshops offered young artists an opportunity to make sculptures with Chinese (or eastern) cultural elements. By conducting these workshops, I got different understanding about the area of my research from the perspective of different cultural backgrounds.

In the end, as you can see below, I arranged the collected data in a logical system and analyzed the materials, interpreted the process and the outcome of the developments, experiments, artistic practices, and the observation of the workshops.

This thesis consists of four chapters. In the first chapter, I will introduce the *Book of Changes* briefly, and discuss the inner and outer relations. In the second chapter, I will analyze my artistic research, including sculptural exploration according to the inner and outer relations of Yin-Yang, as well as technical and material experiments according to

the Five Elements. In the third chapter, I will describe five series of my artworks. In the fourth chapter, I will summarize my understanding of the research and the resulting works.

1. Chapter I: Inner and Outer Relations from the Book of Changes

1.1 Basic Introduction to the Book of Changes

The *Book of Changes* is the most important source of traditional Chinese culture. Although it was widely spread internationally, many western people are not familiar to it.

The *Book of Changes* is a book that can be traced to at least Oracles of the Shang Dynasty (1600-1046 BC). The book was developed through the long ancient times. It is believed to have been created successively by several authors including emperor Fuxi in early ancient times, King Wen of Zhou in middle ancient times and Confucius in late ancient times, although there are many different challenging opinions. The book contains diagrams and the scriptures used to interpret them. “Of far greater significance than the use of the *Book of Changes* as an oracle is its other use, namely, as

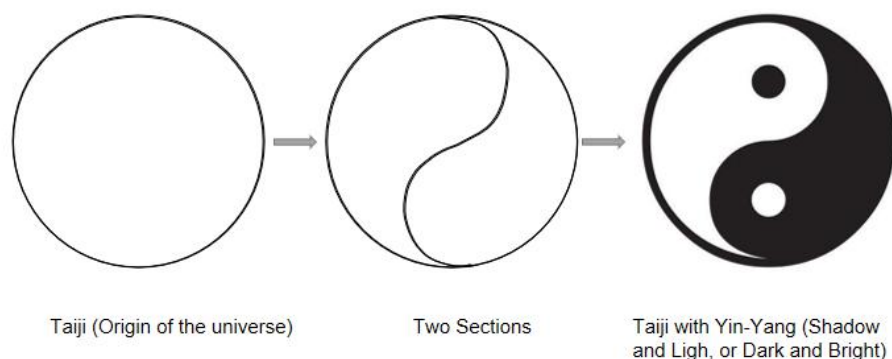


Figure 1. Generation of the Pattern of Taiji, Schematic drawing by Muchuan Wang, 2020

a book of wisdom.”³ It begins with the idea of the primitive state to reveal the order of the world. In this philosophy, the theories of Yin-Yang and the Five Elements analyze different aspects and levels of interdependent relations between positive and negative from to show how harmony can be maintained. Many traditional Chinese arts are developed from it and it can be found in different academic and scientific areas such as philosophy, astronomy, mathematics and so on. The culture of the *Book of Changes* has

³ Richard Wilhelm (Trans.). *I Ching or Book of Changes* (London: Gardners Books, 1989), liv.

been rooted in every area of Chinese life and has been introduced to other Asian countries and the West. I discovered the potential of sculptural development by discovering the Yin-Yang relation, which is the basic idea of the *Book of Changes*.

It includes *Lianshan*, *Guicang* and *Zhouyi*. *Lianshan* and *Guicang* disappeared a long time ago in the Chinese history. *Zhouyi* is the only book which can be seen today as the *Book of Changes* or the *I Ching*. In the *Book of Changes*, the origin of the world was thought as a whole. Then it was considered to be two opposite parts. The one is Yin (negative) and the other is Yang (positive). Yin-Yang relation is the basic relation of the *Book of Changes*. And it was developed to many kinds of dialectic relations between physical issues to mental matters. The Yin and Yang was symbolized as two kinds of lines. One is a solid line(—) and another is a broken line(- -). Then the two kinds of lines were constructed to

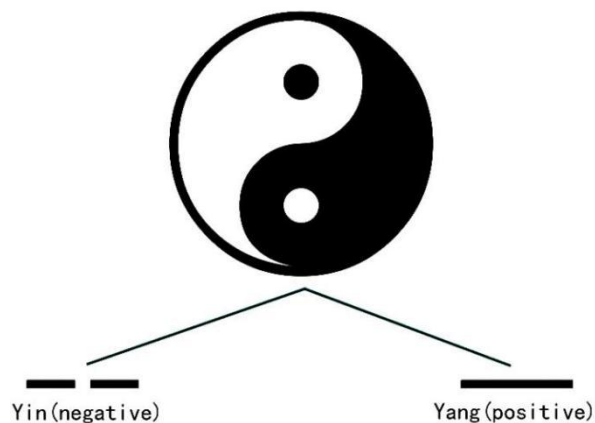


Figure 2. Signals of Yin and Yang, drawing by Muchuan Wang, 2020

trigrams(☰)and then hexagrams(☰). The different combinations of the lines are used to convey the understanding or perception of the world, to symbolize social, mental relations and/or potential situations or directions in which a person or an event is going to be. The Hexagrams were used broadly in ancient China, especially in which people did not have literal language and words or did not know how to use literal language and words to express feelings and meanings. Subsequently, as we can see in the *Book of Changes*, the philosophy of changes was developed from the hexagrams. It is deemed as the priority of the philosophies in ancient China not only because of its significance of Chinese civilization, but also because of the influence on other important Chinese philosophies.

In the *Book of Changes*, everything is generated from one. The one generates two sections, two sections generate four representations, four representations generate eight trigrams, then 64 hexagrams and 360. Many kinds of meanings have evolved from

these structures and relations. But the basic elements are the Yin (negative) which is represented by the broken line(---) and the Yang (positive) which is presented by the unbroken line (—) .

Trigrams and hexagrams in the *Book of Changes* represent various objects, animals, circumstances and materials in nature, as well as various relations in human society. They contain understandings of human beings and the outer world, concepts of orientation, time and body parts, etc.

The name of Five Elements was first put forward in the *Book of Documents*, not in the *Book of Changes*. But the Five Elements and the Yin-Yang relation are the concomitants of understanding the world from different angles. The concept of Yin-Yang focuses on the speculation of noumenon, while the concept of Five Elements pays more attention to the applicability in reality. The concept of Five Elements can be started with the number of five and then developed into

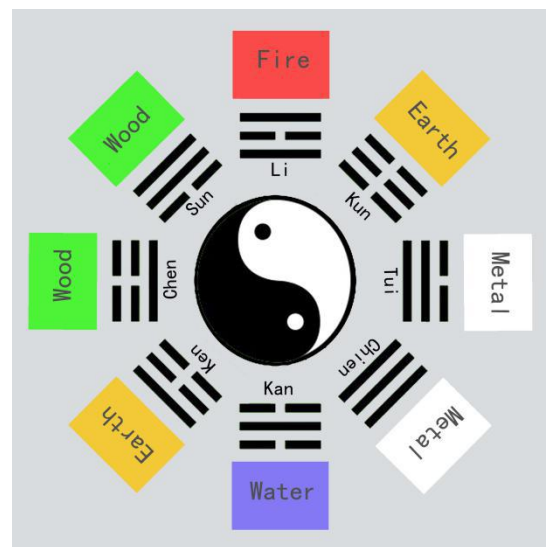


Figure 3. Eight Trigrams and Five Elements, drawing by Muchuan Wang, 2022

different fields including concepts of space, time, material from the physical aspect, as well as theories of ethics, politics, medicine from the mental perspective. In the *Book of Changes*, “The number of heaven is five, the number of earth is five, and each of the five has its proper position and own system.”⁴ Five is an important number and is applied to classifications in different fields. These areas include material properties, spatial orientations, time spans, family relationships, political systems, etc.

The *Book of Changes* developed from the visual diagrams to literal thoughts as philosophy, ethics, politics, etc. Later, it was continued in the thought of Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, military, traditional Chinese medicine and many other fields.

⁴ Yong Su. eds., *Book of Changes* (Beijing: Beijing University Press, 1989), 83. [苏勇点校, 《易经》, 北京: 北京大学出版社, 1989年, 83页。]

Particularly, it was deemed by both Confucians and Taoists to be their classics.

The *Book of Changes* gradually faded out of people's sight in the course of China's modernization. But some of its ideas are still alive in contemporary Asian life. The diagrams are even used as a symbol on the Korean national flag. In Contemporary China, the ideas are still used in concepts of business management, and unconsciously in the language of everyday life, although most people do not notice that it is from the most obscure ancient thought. In ancient China, it was widely used in the field of politics, ethics, calendar, urban planning, courtyard and interior design, craft, painting, etc. But it is rarely used in contemporary art.

1.2 Inner and Outer relations

My research on the inner and outer relations in the *Book of Changes* is centered on the relationship between Yin and Yang. The *Book of Changes* contains a variety of complex relationships. These complex and diverse relationships are based on the Yin-Yang relation. Therefore, this study also focuses on the internal and external relationship between Yin and Yang.

The internal and external relations of Yin-Yang mentioned here refer to the external expression and internal thoughts and laws of the relationship between Yin and Yang. The relationship between Yin and Yang is the dialectical and unified relationship between them, which is opposite, interdependent and will be transformed into each other according to different circumstances. This opposite relation can not only be seen between material objects and visible forms in the physical world, but can also be imagined in ideological issues and invisible thoughts in the mental world. It contains visual symbols such as the Taiji pattern and the Yin-Yang diagrams, as well as profound philosophical thoughts. The relationship between Yin and Yang is in the process of development and change. And this development and change also reflect the law of the endless movement of everything in the world.

The outward manifestation of Yin and Yang contains many aspects. The first is the visual image and symbol in the Taiji pattern and Yin-Yang diagrams. Secondly, these symbols represent various objects in nature and the human world. The external

expression of the relationship between Yin and Yang is the mutual relationship reflected in these visual images and symbols, as well as the mutual relationship between various objects in nature and the human world. These relationships can involve everything and are omnipresent. This research only selected and studied the representative parts or the parts that are beneficial to my artistic creation.

The Taiji pattern is an important image reflecting the relationship between Yin and Yang. Strictly speaking, the sequence or subordination between Taiji pattern and the *Book of Changes* is controversial. But it is commonly considered the best visual interpretation of the relationship between Yin and Yang. The black and white form a very sharp contrast. Because of the division method of the S-shaped curve, the two parts of sharp opposition are in a state of mutual restriction and transformation. The shape of the circle and the S-shaped curve make the black and white parts in a never-ending change. It is believed to be an image of life going on vigorously. From the beginning of the project, the elements of this image were used as a so-called visual element in the sculpture practice. The waves of black and white and S shape were gradually used in the process of creative exploration.

The trigrams and hexagrams symbolize the evolution of the relationship between Yin and Yang from simple to complex, which consists of solid and broken lines. The different combinations of lines representing Yin and Yang have mathematically rigorous logic. And this kind of logic also precisely reflects the inner law of the world. The combination of these lines can be used as the ancient resources of mathematics, physics, astronomy and Chinese traditional medicine, etc.

The diagrams can be used as the visual elements and expansion methods of artistic works. It can serve as a source of philosophical ideas or as an inspiration for artistic creation. This kind of combination can deduce the complex cultural connotation, but can also examine its basic form from the simple vision. Ancient Greek sculptures contain the concepts of classical mathematics and philosophy, and I can also integrate this combination and evolution into the creative practice of contemporary sculpture. A good example of this line arrangement was applied as a basic element in the *Directions* series. Some of the works in the *Waving* series were also related to this linear element.

The relationship between Yin and Yang of all things in the world in the *Book of Changes* is first indicated by various hexagrams and then discussed by writing. It includes the earth and heaven in nature and the mountains, rivers, plants, wind, thunder, lightning, and animals, as well as the relationships between men and women, old and young, kings and subjects, officials and subordinates, and various things in social life in the human world. In this artistic exploration, human, animal and man-made objects, as the typical representatives of the three aspects, were selected as the content of sculptures.

The relationship between Yin and Yang in the *Book of Changes* contains a profound and rich philosophy that all things in the universe complement each other. There is not only the internal law of nature which is independent of human will, but also the dialectical thought that human beings depend on each other and fight with each other in social life.

The dialectical thought of unity of opposites is the core thought of the relationship between Yin and Yang. This thought holds that there is an opposite and interdependent relationship between different things, while a thing itself may have two sides, which are both opposite and interdependent. This idea is embodied in the relationship between some opposing concepts, such as the humble and the sublime, feminine and masculine, evil and just, quiet and active, slow and fast, etc. Many of my sculptures are composed of contradictory images, objects or concepts based on the idea of the unity of opposites. The *Confronting* series, for example, is a direct example of confronting people or animals. The *Powers* series seeks to extend the idea of unity of opposites in both image and concept, external and internal.

The thought of the *Book of Changes* includes the philosophical concepts of Change, Unchangeability and Simplicity. Changeability and Unchangeability refer to the constant change in the relationship between all things in the universe, and this change is the eternal truth. Simplicity is the simplification of complex relations in order to discover the underlying laws. The idea of change is developed in my works as the external transformation between different images or materials, and the evolution of mental and ideas. The external transformation is intuitively reflected through physical sculptures, videos and dynamic installations, while the internal ideological transformation needs to be realized through the external transformation and its resonance with the spectators.

This is most directly reflected in the *Powers* series. The changing image between religious buildings symbolizing the power of faith and tanks symbolizing military power reflects the complex relationship between two opposing forces. In the heavy shadows, there is a transformation between the street stones, books, and abstract metal blocks, as well as between illusory shadows and solid metal sculptures. The transformation of these external forms and materials can reflect the rich ideological connotation, and may also touch on the thinking of the relationship between the eastern cultural perspective and the western context.

Trend and chance are also important thoughts reflected in the process of deducing the relations between Yin and Yang. The combination of different Yin-Yang relations in the trigrams and hexagrams indicate an underlying trend, which is precipitated by specific chances. The prediction and selection of this trend and chance will be reflected in the practice of deducing the kinds of relations between Yin and Yang. They have a certain guiding effect on life. My research process also has such factors. For example, due to some chances, I believed that the research on contemporary sculpture with Chinese traditional cultural elements could be a promising research trend, so I carried out research under the impetus of this trend. By chance, I chose the internal and external relations in artistic exploration with inner and outer relations from the *Book of Changes* as the main line of the study, so that this study has a more clear trend. However, in different creative practices, the choice of forms and materials as well as the burst of creative inspirations need certain chances to be achieved. Through the selection and grasp of such trends and the pursuit of chances, I carried out research along a main line and explored from various angles, levels and directions, gradually forming the basic structure of my research.

Of course, the external forms and ideological connotations of the Yin-Yang relation can be interpreted from many angles. However, in this project, I focused my research on the main aspects mentioned above so as to keep the scope of my research from being too broad.

There is an inseparable relationship between the Five Elements theory and the concept of Yin-Yang. The relations between the five elements can closely refer to the Yin-Yang relation. This thought holds that different things support and restrain each other. In this way, a

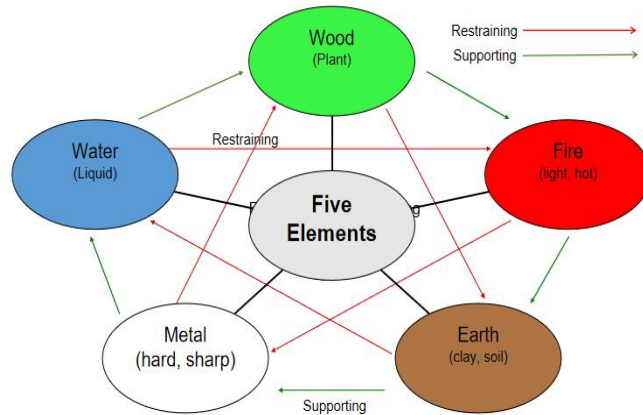


Figure 4, *Pattern of the Five Elements*, drawing by Muchuan Wang, 2020

balance can be kept to form an organic whole. Such a balance is the inherent law of the development of all things in the universe, and also an important condition conducive to the healthy development. The external expression of the Five Elements can be numbers, materials, locations, time, people, etc., as well as the relationship between them. And the inside are the ideas that these relationships embody. It is a very large system of thought. The Five Elements in this artistic research was focused on the selection and application of five materials as well as their thoughts and emotions reflected in the process of the creative experiments and resulting works.

2. Chapter II:: Artistic Exploration

Two aspects of my artistic exploration include conceptual development from the Yin-Yang relation as well as technical and material practice regarding the Five Elements.

At the beginning, the *Book of Changes* was just a variety of combinations of the broken line representing the Yin and the solid line representing the Yang, including the eight trigrams, sixty-four hexagrams and three hundred and sixty hexagrams. And evolved manifold meanings in the form of words and literature in the long history that followed. This development and transformation from vision to thought, symbol to text is very enlightening to explore the relationship between artistic works and their mental connotation. Therefore, I chose to explore the core concept of my artistic development based on the relationship between Yin and Yang, and explore the sculptures composed of two opposite objects, symbols and abstract forms, as well as the inner spiritual world of thoughts and emotions reflected behind them.

The concept of the Five Elements is to understand the world from the material perspective and to explore the relationship between the different nature of materials. Following the idea of the Five Elements, I conducted material and technical practice in five areas, including sculpture in clay, sculpture in metal, sculpture in paper, sculpture in light, sculpture in water and glass. Finally, five series of sculptures were created by exploring five aspects in five art forms.

I discovered the inner and outer relations between opposing objects in a sculpture workshop for human heads that I held in the first semester of my PhD project. I made some heads by modeling from the same model, and then I the two of them together. I found that the relationship between the two heads attracted me. It felt like two portraits of a man were looking at themselves while the two heads were facing each other.

The relation between the two physical portraits can be the reflection of mental and psychological inner world of a person. From this perspective, inner relations between

self and self, self and other which could be seen in the sculptures, are similar to these relations from the interaction in social life. “Every new insight into our soul how people really feel about us, what our motives are as we interact with a colleague or tell jokes at a party, how disappointed and angry we are with our parents or spouse or children - feels like one more nail in our coffin.”⁵

From the work in the sculpture workshop of human head, my attention was shed on the relation between material sculptures in the outer world and the inner world of human mind. In addition, the awareness from Chinese Buddhism was reflected in my mind. It is the interdependence between the outer physical relation and the inner mental relation. According to these considerations of inner and outer relations, I researched related issues in traditional Chinese culture. The research was traced back to early Chinese history and thought, Yin-Yang relation, was discovered from the *Book of Changes*. Consequently this artistic research was explored by discovering conceptions from the Yin-Yang relation and practice on technical and material experiments according to the Five Elements derived from the *Book of Changes*.

2.1 Artistic Exploration in the Yin-Yang Relation

I developed my artistic practice from the concept of Yin-Yang relations, which could be developed to different aspects of the encounter relations. Firstly, it could be developed to physical aspects such as relations between dark and light, positive and negative, entity and space, front and back, outside and inside, white and black, etc. In addition, it could also be developed in a conceptual way to the relations between mind and body, peacefulness and violence, lowliness and sublime, being and nothing, fineness and roughness, softness and hardness, human and nature, self and others, artist and sculpture, subject and object, and so on. Focusing on these kinds of encountering relations, I mainly researched experimental artistic exploration by ideas of Yin-Yang relation from the *Book of Changes*. I focused on encountering images of figures, objects, forms and signals for my artistic practice.

Yin-Yang relation is the relationship between two encountering elements that are

⁵ Larry Crabb, *Insight Out* (Chicago: Tyndale House Publisher, Inc, 2013), 49.

opposite to each other on the one side while complementing each other on the other side. The relationship could be changed according to different situations.

I started with the pattern of Taiji, which is the basic symbol of Yin-Yang, and then also the diagrams. It was analyzed from the visual signs and theoretical concepts. From the visual point of view, it was explored by the composition of interdependent and correspondent forms and contradictory colors. First of all, I tried to put whiteness and darkness in my works. Secondly, I tried to make the composition by the way in which the Yin-Yang is displayed in the pattern of Taichi.

2.1.1 Visual Signs

Taiji pattern composed of black and white and Diagrams composed of solid and broken lines are important figures reflecting the relationship between Yin and Yang. They have also become important visual resources for my creative practice. Taiji pattern regards the world as two parts which are opposite to each other, interdependent and transformed by black and white figures, and also reflects the inner law of endless development and transformation of all things in the world. The line combination of Diagrams reflects the possibility of different combinations of Yin and Yang and the development tendency contained therein. I explored my artistic practice through the visual elements of these graphics and the concepts inherent in them.

Exploring formal elements of the Taiji pattern, *Waving Shadows* contains circles in a square and shadowy figures in the center of the circles. Instead of the two parts of the Taiji pattern, a female figure and a male figure, one head up and one head down, were shaped inverse to each other.



Figure 5. *The Pattern of Taiji* , Drawing by Muchuan Wang, 2020



Figure 6. Muchuan Wang, *Waving Shadows*, 35x35x4cm, 2019

The contrasting colors of the Taiji pattern, white and black, were also used in my sculptures, collages and photographs. In the works, white and black are pure and simple to prevent disturbance from natural colors. The contrast between white and black is powerful.



Figure 7. Muchuan Wang, *Black and White*, documented by stop-motion animation, 2021
Access for Video:
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1F1ROdbpnHYNUiAJ1eZdd1jUgUrVEELnq?usp=sharing>



Figure 8. Muchuan Wang, *Circle*, paper, 15x15x3cm, 2021

The ideas of the *Book of Changes* are generated from various combinations of the broken line -- -- and the solid line — — to display the relationship between Yin and Yang. My series of art works *Directions* were developed from the lines. In *Directions No. 1*, the cardboard was cut to create empty arrows and solid arrows pointing in different directions. The contradictory relations were generated from the physical arrows to mental problems or philosophical questions.

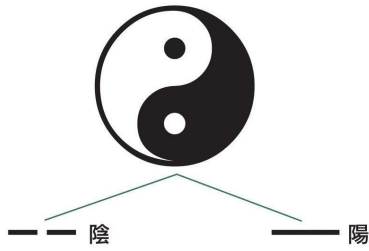


Figure 9. Signals of Yin and Yang, drawing by Muchuan Wang, 2020



Figure 10. The Eight Diagrams, drawing by Muchuan Wang, 2020



Figure 11. Muchuan Wang, *Directions I*, cardboard, 210x120x40cm, 2021

I extended the linear elements of the Yin-Yang diagrams and the S-shaped curve in the Taiji pattern to my creative practice. A series of abstract sculptures centered on curves led to the creation of the *Waving* series. The curve is consistent with the fluidity of water in the Five Elements. I chose glass to represent the waving form of water because both glass and water are transparent and reflective. I explored the swirling lines and spaces with toilet roll paper because of the undulating tension of paper rolls due to long periods of curling, while also combining the invisible elements of wood and water. Then light was added to explore the relationship between the contrast and balance of the three elements in the same work.



Figure 12. Muchuan Wang, *Swirl*, glass, 30 x 23x18 cm, 2021



Figure 13. Muchuan Wang, *White Swirl*, glass, 25 x 20 x 14 cm, 2021



Figure 14. Muchuan Wang, *Swirling Light*, paper, lamp, 35x33x25 cm, 2021

2.1.2 Concepts

The source of the Taichi pattern could be ascended to the measurement of the sunlight projection in ancient China. The graphic is patterned from the trace of changing lengths of shadows in the midday during a whole year. It contains many concepts such as balance of negative and positive, the interdependence of shadow and light, changes in the duration of time, etc.

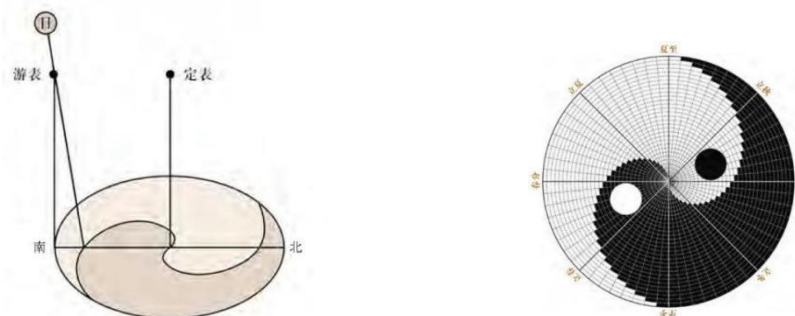


Figure 15. The line connecting shadow lengths of sunlight in midday in 365 days

Source: <https://yijing.5000yan.com/rumen/849.html>, entry: June 20, 2020

My artistic practice was inspired by the source of this symbolized pattern. Firstly, I explored compositions by opposite figures, animals, objects, and signs in a physical way and by encountering issues in the mental perspective. Secondly, I considered about the expression of shadow and light in my works. Thirdly, I discovered converting images from one object to another and changing situations during a period of time.

From the basic idea of the *Book of Changes*, the world is divided into Yin and Yang which are two opposed and interdependent parts. My artistic practice is based on the relations between these kinds of opposed and interdependent two parts.

I was also inspired by Constantin Brancusi and his sculptures from two aspects. On the one hand, his pursuit of the essence of things made me reflect on how I explored the essence of art and life in my artistic practice. On the other hand, the face to face compositions in his works *The Kiss* and *The Gate of Kiss* are so relevant to my *Confronting* series that I reflect on the similarities and differences between our works.



Figure 16. Constantin Brancusi, *The Kiss*, stone, 88x30x20cm, 1907-8
 Source: Jacquelynn Baas, *Smile of Buddha: Eastern Philosophy and Western Art From Monet to Today* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2005), 74.

The influence of Chinese culture can be seen in Constantin Brancusi's sculptures and his experience with Buddhism. This is reflected not only in the visual language but also in the creative concept. Of course, there are elements from Romanian art and African art in Brancusi's sculptures, but the influence of Chinese culture can also be seen from his experience with Buddhism. "Brancusi was fond of the Greek philosophers, but by all accounts his favorite book was *The Tibetan poet Milarepa: His Crimes, His Trails, His Nirvana*. Brancusi strongly identified with this Tibetan sorcerer-poet turned saint, detecting in his life parallels with his own."⁶

I was inspired by Brancusi to find a basic concept for artistic practice, as Jacquelynn Baas wrote in her book: "Perhaps more than the visual influence of Buddhist sculpture, the Buddhist concept of dissolving the boundaries of the self pushed the shape of Brancusi's heads back to the egg symbol of the potentiality of existence."⁷ Inspired by

Brancusi's idea of pursuing the essence of things in art, I pursued the essence of my own artistic research, discarding the complex presentation of various meanings in the *Book of Changes* and focusing on the basic idea of the relationship between Yin and Yang.

On the other hand, in the artistic practice, I found similarities between my works on encountering figures and Brancusi's *The Kiss* and *The Gate of Kiss*. "The purified form that Brancusi used to convey his concept owes more to African and Egyptian sculpture than to any Buddhist source. The specifics of that form, however — two bodies in complete embrace, including genital embrace — could have been inspired by Tibetan

⁶ Jacquelynn Baas, *Smile of Buddha: Eastern Philosophy and Western Art From Monet to Today* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2005), 75.

⁷ Baas, *Smile of Buddha*, 77.

yab-yum sculptures of copulating couples.”⁸ While Brancusi uses a very simplified form to express the relationship between men and women, this form of duality and male-female contrast is similar to the relationship between Yin and Yang. Yin and Yang contain binary opposites both men and women. The combination of solid and broken lines representing Yin and Yang can also be interpreted as the relationship between men and women.

This also prompted me to think about how to explore the inner and outer relations in my art works with binary figures and how to derive elements from the basic nature of the traditional Chinese culture for my artistic works. In order to find the essence of this research, I traced my research from the Buddhist consciousness to the Yin-Yang of the *Book of Changes*. Yin-Yang relation is the core and origin of the classic dialectical thought of mutual relations in China.

I started from contemplating the relationship between two opposing human heads facing to each other. The outer physical relation of the two heads evoked the inner relation of mental or spiritual imaginations. The different emotional relations could be found by comparing the works of *Intimacy* and *Distance* depending on the different distances between the two confronting heads. Besides human heads, human figures were also involved in my artworks. Specifically, I made figures by casting chicken wings with double heads. There are combinations of human and animal, one body and two heads, etc. It shows surrealistic imagination with the dreamlike images. By making this sculpture, I was seeking to stimulate considerations about social concepts or mental problems through the similarity of a human figure and a chicken wing, and the contradictory of one body with two heads.



Figure 17. Muchuan Wang, *Distance*, paper, 26cm high, 2020

⁸ Baas, *Smile of Buddha*, 74.



Figure 18. Muchuan Wang, *Intimacy*, bronze, 12x8x16cm, 2021



Figure 19. Muchuan Wang, *Twins*, paper, 18x50x3cm, 2020

In addition, I continued the Yin-Yang relation from opposed humans to encountering animals. I started with animals selected from the Chinese zodiac culture. In the culture of the Chinese zodiac, twelve animals symbolize the traditional Chinese lunar calendar every twelve years. The twelve animals are, in accordance with the proper sequence of the lunar calendar, mouse, bull, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, goat, monkey, rooster, dog and pig. I made a mouse, a bull and a tiger because the three years, from 2019 to 2020, during which my doctoral research was conducted, are the year of the mouse, the year of the bull, and the year of the tiger. The animals symbolize good wishes according to traditional culture. But in my art, they challenge social and mental problems and question the nature of humans and animals by creating fighting powers and splitting powers.



Figure 20. Muchuan Wang, *Tigers*, paper pulp, 18x20x3cm, 2021



Figure 21. Muchuan Wang, *Forward and Backward*, paper pulp, 50x18x14cm, 2021

The thought of the unity of opposites is the core thought of the Yin-Yang relation. This thought holds that things support and restrict each other. In this way, a balance can be kept to form an organic whole. Such a balance is the inherent law of the development of all things in the universe, and also an important condition conducive to the healthy development of things. Many of my sculptures are composed of contradictory images, objects or concepts based on the idea of the unity of opposites. *Confronting* series, for example, are a direct example of confronting people or animals. The *Powers* series seeks to extend the idea of unity of opposites in both image and concept, external and internal.

When I chose to develop my artistic practice by discovering ideas from the Taiji pattern, I found that Ju Ming's sculptures were quite important as a research source. The sculptures were created from his experience of Taichi boxing which involves philosophically of Taiji. Ju made the sculptures from simplified forms to spiritual balance.

“In his Taichi series, this conflict of forces is explicit, in the dualism of figures who thrust and retreat, give and



Figure 22. Ju Ming, *Taichi Series - Taichi Arch*, Bronze, 420x156x279cm, 2000
Source: Ming Ju . *Taichi Sculpture*. Ed. Juming Museum (Nanjing, Guangxi Fine Art Publication House, 2006). 136-137

take, in the dynamic relationship with each other. An invisible electric current seems to follow between them. What more natural that they should be joined in an arch, to give tangible, visible form to this powerful force?”⁹

I compared the strife of the dualism figures in my works and in Ju’s *Taichi* series and explored the series of *Confronting* with human figures and animal figures to discover the internal mental or spiritual communication from combinations of two figures or one figure with two opposite powers. These ideas both refer to the concept of unity of opposites from the *Book of Changes*.



Figure 23. Muchuan Wang, *Powers: Soft Tanks*, used cloths, 70x25x23cm, 2021



Figure 24. Muchuan Wang, *Powers: Aircraft*, aluminium and ceramic, 75x27x12cm, 2021

⁹ Michael Sullivan, “*The Joyous Struggle of Ju Ming*,” in *Ju Ming: Taichi Sculpture*. edited by Juming Museum, (Nanjing: Guangxi Fine Art Publication House, 2006), 9.



Figure 25. Muchuan Wang, *Powers No. 1*, toilet paper, variable size, documented by stop motion animation, 2020
 Access to Video: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1F1ROdbpnHYNUiAJ1eZdd1jUgUrVEELnq?usp=sharing>

An important source of the pattern of Taiji is the relationship between shadow and light. Inspired by this, I started researching shadow and light by photography and drawing. I gained a more personal understanding of shadow and light and their possibilities of creative practice. I began to realize that inner thoughts, emotions and spiritual as well as social and cultural connotations can be found in the visual forms of light and shadow in urban spaces and personal living spaces.

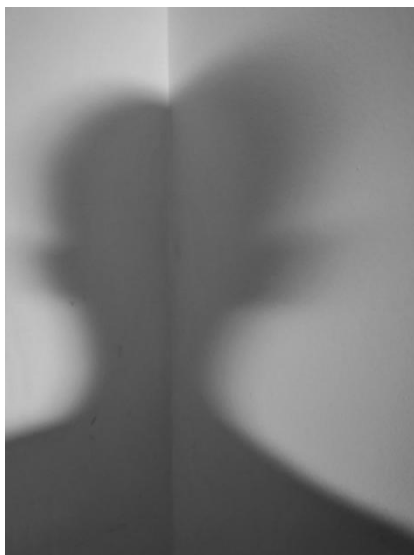


Figure 26. Muchuan Wang, *My Shadow in a Corner*, digital photography, 2020

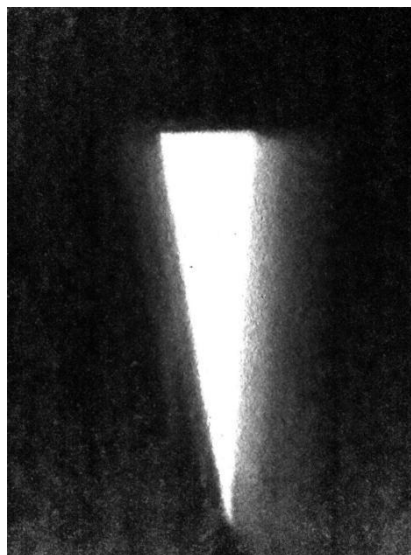


Figure 27. Muchuan Wang, *A Ray of Light in the Sleepless night*, digital photography,

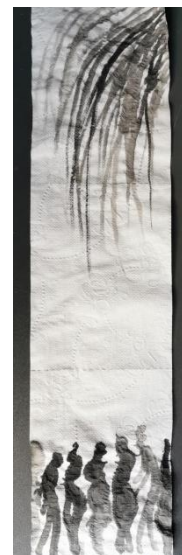


Figure 28. Muchuan Wang, *Shadowy Figures*, ink drawing on roll paper,

I put light into my sculptures of figures and heads to change the relationship between light and shadow. In a normal situation, light is shed on the surface of the sculpture to

improve forms, volumes and spaces. But when light was put into the inside of a sculpture, the relationship between light and shadow changed. The light became a main medium of the sculpture to enhance enlightening spiritual imaginations instead of improving forms, volumes and spaces. Another relation was generated between the visible light inside of sculptures and the invisible mental and spiritual lightening inside of human beings.

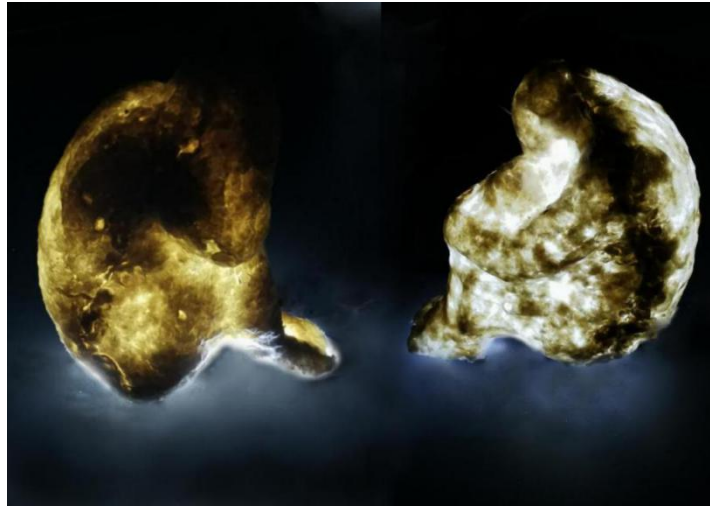
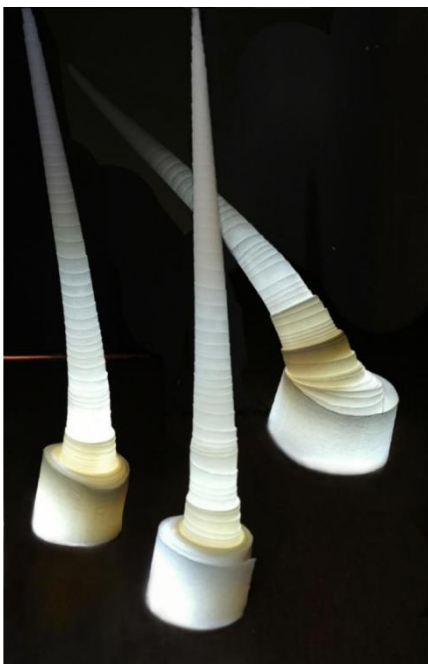


Figure 29. Muchuan Wang, *Silent Night*, recycling paper, light, 100 x 12 x 25cm, 2020

Subsequently, the forms and volumes were simplified to intensify the expression of light as shown in *Illuminate Objects*.



It was shown also in the *Flowing Light*. In the *Flowing Light*, I not only changed the form and volume of the sculpture, but also the light inside. The light created movement in three-dimensional space because of the different stretching directions of the paper tubes and the ripples formed by overlapping folds of paper. The waves of light in a dark space could create a sense of spiritual sublimation.

Figure 30. Muchuan Wang, *Illuminate Objects*, paper and electric lamp, 180 x 120 x 100 cm, 2020

I also practiced on artworks about shadow. On the one hand, I experimented to focus light on sculptures and objects to create shadows. *Powers: Tank and Its Shadow* is a good example for practice in this direction. I focused light closely on a sculptural tank and some books underneath. But its shadow on the wall became a tower or a church. On the other hand, I created artworks related to the subject or the form of shadows. The practice in this direction can be seen in the works of *Confronting: My Shadow in a Polish Book*, *Heavy Shadow*, etc.



Figure 31. Muchuan Wang, *Shadow of Powers*, flashlight, cardboard, variable size, 2022

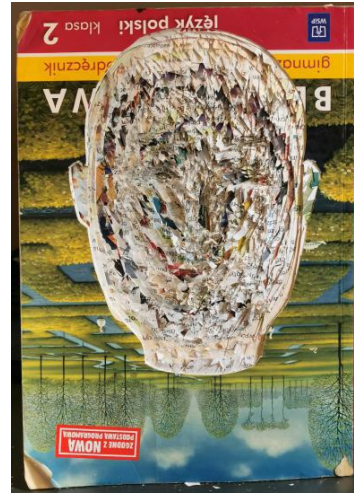


Figure 32. Muchuan Wang, *Confronting: My Shadow in a Polish Book*, textbook, 18x25x1.5, 2022

Change is an important concept in the *Book of Changes*. Through this concept, I think of the change of ideology during the changing of time and space. I created some variable sculptures and documented the duration of changing by video or animation. There are two important elements including duration and change which refer to both time concepts and space concepts.

The work *Powers of White and Black* represents the dynamic states between up and down and between images of a tank and a building which looks like a Buddhist tower or a Church. It was made of toilet paper, which is very soft and should normally be used in daily life. The work was an installation involving physical objects and was documented by photos and video, so it can also be seen as a work of stop motion animation.

The building represents religious belief while the tank symbolizes the power of the army. The physical movement of the changing images suggests mental or social problems by the contract images. It shows the relation between peace and violence,

holy and evil, etc.

The connection of serious subject and the soft, tiny, routine material also shows a contradiction between sublime and insignificance.

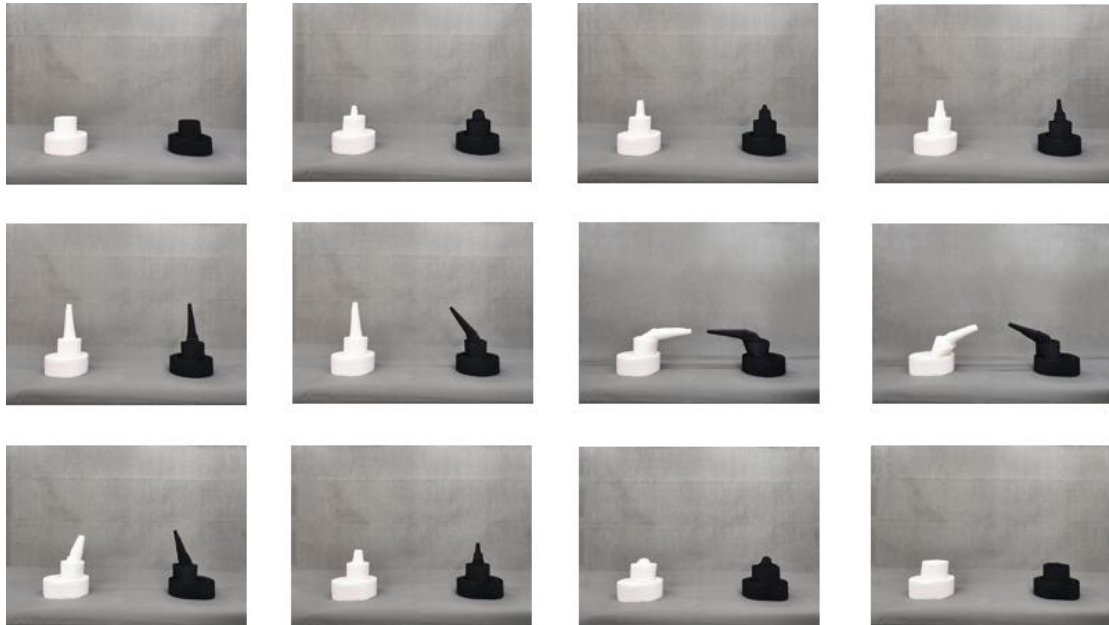


Figure 33. Muchuan Wang, *The Powers of White and Black*, toilet paper, variable size, documented by stop motion animation, 2021
Access to Video: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1F1ROdbpnHYNUiAJ1eZdd1jUgUrVEELnq?usp=sharing>

Comparing with my artistic exploration with the concept of change, John Cage's work *The Music of Changes* was also developed from the *Book of Changes*. "The primary tool that Cage utilised to derive chance relationships was the Chinese oracular book the *I Ching*, or *Book of Changes*. The title of the *Music of Changes* of course makes reference to this, and it is generally accepted in Cage's scholarship that his appropriation of the *I Ching* is based on a sincere, thorough modelling of the book's philosophy at some level. However, a closer examination of the *I Ching* – particularly in the edition available to Cage in 1951 – calls this into question, and Cage's compositional technique in the *Music of Changes* and subsequent chance-derived works appears to be as closely associated with serialism as it is with Chinese philosophy."¹⁰ The differences between our works are clear, because the change of music mainly exists in the sense of hearing and time, while the change of my work mainly exists in the vision and space.

¹⁰ Marc G. Jensen, John Cage, 'Chance Operations, and the Chaos Game: Cage and the I Ching', *The Musical Times*, (2009), 98.

2.2 Artistic Exploration in the Five Elements

The Five Elements can be interpreted from different levels. In the artistic research, I used the concept of the Five Elements mainly to choose materials. Besides, the five was also used to classify the contents, features and series of works.

In order to conduct artistic research, I chose five materials: clay, metal, paper, light, water and glass in the huge conceptual system of the Five Elements for creative practice. The reason why I chose paper was that I had artistic experience in the hand-making of paper, and paper is made of plant fibers such as grass and trees, while the wood in the basic concept of the Five Elements actually refers to plants. Light is a manifestation of the property of fire. At the same time, most artificial light sources in modern life are made by electric energy, which has similar energy characteristics with fire. Glass was chosen because its transparency is similar to water.

In addition to the selection of materials, the selection of content is also divided into five aspects: human, nature, man-made objects, signs and abstract forms. In the research process, five art forms including sculpture, photography, drawing, collage and animation are involved. The sculptures resulting from this artistic practice are also divided into five series.

In this part, I mainly explain my experimental practice on the five aspects according to techniques and materials as well as images of the five selected materials. Of course these practices still revolved the concept of inner and outer relations from Yin-Yang.

2.2.1 Clay

During the process of making sculptures with clay, sometimes the material could be neglected when the mind is focusing on the form, the volume, or details; sometimes the sculpture can emerge from hands under unconsciousness.

Clay is a good material for figurative sculpture. It is a soft material to be handled for

making portrait sculptures. I started to make portraits and put the portraits facing to each other as shown in the work *Facing to Face*. *Facing to Face* was made in a sculpture workshop of head modeling . The portraits in the *Distance* were made in a short time from one model. The portraits were made very quickly in different times expressing different expressions of the same person in different situations. In the work, soft clay was used to create forms, volumes and to keep traces left from the process of modelling, the emotions, expressions were depicted and the characters were represented.



Figure 34. Muchuan Wang,
Facing to Face, Clay,
28x50x25cm, 2019

The two portraits were modeled from the same person in different moments. On one side, it looks like the same two people looking at each other. On the other side, it looks like a person looking at another moment of himself. Thus, the work shows the relation between self and others, self and self.

When I created ceramic sculptures with clay, I not only gave full play to the plasticity of clay, but also made full use of the hollow character of ceramics, breaking the boundary between internal space



Figure 35. Muchuan Wang, *Church in Head*, 50cm high, ceramic, 2022

and external space, and combining internal space with external space. It can be seen in *My Church in Head*. This work was made in the sculpture workshop Part of the Body in which I was a cooperative instructor. I made heads as Part of the Body and opened up part of the ceramic heads to reveal the cross and the image of the church inside.

2.2.2 Metal

Metal casting is an important technique for developing my sculptural practice. In the process, several methods of mold making were used, such as a sodium silicate mold, a green sand mold, a resin mold, a ceramic shell mold, a plaster mold, and an ancient mold (a recyclable mold with the use of natural materials e.g. dung). I selected the techniques and materials of mold making according to the ideas, volumes, structures of sculptures, as well as the kind of metal which was to be used. The ideas, volumes and structures were also grown through the process of the practice.

The interaction between artists and materials is also a way to touch, feel, and meditate the relationship between human beings and the material world. Metal casting is a complex process that involves a lot of work. It brings to me a Chinese saying for the cultural connotation of the Four Treasures of Chinese study, when a man makes ink by grinding ink-stone: “It is not man who grinds ink-stone but ink-stone who grinds man.” The process of material practice contains a mutual relation between artists and material. Sometimes it can be promoted to a philosophical level.



Figure 36. Muchuan Wang, *Shadows in Wind*, 40 x 38 x 15 cm, iron, 2019

The relation between the model of the sculpture (pattern) and the mold reflects the Yin-Yang relation which comprises the relation between positive and negative. In China, the pattern and the mold are generally called a Yang mold and a Yin mold. Artistic understanding could be improved by dealing with changes between patterns and molds in the process of metal casting. The casting process can contain many steps,

from clay sculpture to a plaster mold, from a plaster mold to a wax sculpture, from a wax sculpture to a casting mold, from a casting mold to metal sculpture. Ideas could be generated during steps of making positives and negatives, and feelings of the physical world and mental world could be stimulated in the process of dealing with many kinds of materials. Different results could be selected according to experiences during the process of technical and material practice.

Differences could be seen between the cast metal sculpture *Shadows in Wind* and the *Silence*, which were both shaped in clay at the beginning and cast in iron at the end. First, the textures are different because of the different experiences of molding and treatment of the metal surface. The textures of *Shadows in Wind* were created by clay modeling and were clearly maintained by precise surface treatment, including cutting, grinding, chiseling, and sandblasting. But some textures of the *Silence* were caused by the problems of mold making. The shattered surface was caused by accidental mistakes in the process of mold making. I found the casual textures surprising and expressive. It looks corroded. The rough texture of the *Silence* caused by accidental mistakes is different from the undulating surface of the *Shadow in Wind* created by hand. They contain different expressions. It was cast in an ancient mold which was made with clay, graphite and horse manure. Secondly, their colors are different due to a different mold and post-treatment. The *Shadow in Wind* was cast by sodium silicate mold and its surface was precisely chiseled and carefully cleaned by a copper brush and a sand blaster. So its color is bright and shiny. But the *Silence* was cast in an ancient mold and its surface had not been polished and retained the deep color caused by the high proportion of graphite powder in the mold.



Figure37. Muchuan Wang, *Silence*, 20 x 35 x 25 cm, iron, 2019

Through experience, I found that the relationship between casting and sculpture could be contemplated in two directions. On the one hand, the casting method could be selected by the features of the sculpture. The texture and color could also depend on the volume, the concept and / or the way of expression. On the other hand, the way of casting can also lead to the making.



Figure 38. Muchuan Wang, *Groveling*, bronze, 20 x 6 x 6cm, 2021

My sculpture *Groveling* could be an example that was cast according to the already existing original sculpture mold. The smooth surface was treated delicately as the original sculpture was. The different colors were applied using the chemical stain method as designed. But the little sculpture *Flying* was led by the idea of a small metal sculpture workshop led by an American artist, Alison Ouellette-Kirby. Challenging the idea of casting small objects, I collected seeds of acer palmatum to make nonexistent insects, because the seeds of acer palmatum look like the wings of insects. The seeds are very thin with delicate veins to provide clear textures for the little sculpture. I had never thought about making such a small insect sculpture before. The idea of sculpting small insects from such a small and thin ready-existing natural objects was stimulated by the casting techniques. Sometimes technology and practice can also serve as motivation for thinking. Thinking and making are two interdependent aspects of artistic creation.



Figure 39. Muchuan Wang, *Flying*, iron, 8x5x4cm, 2019

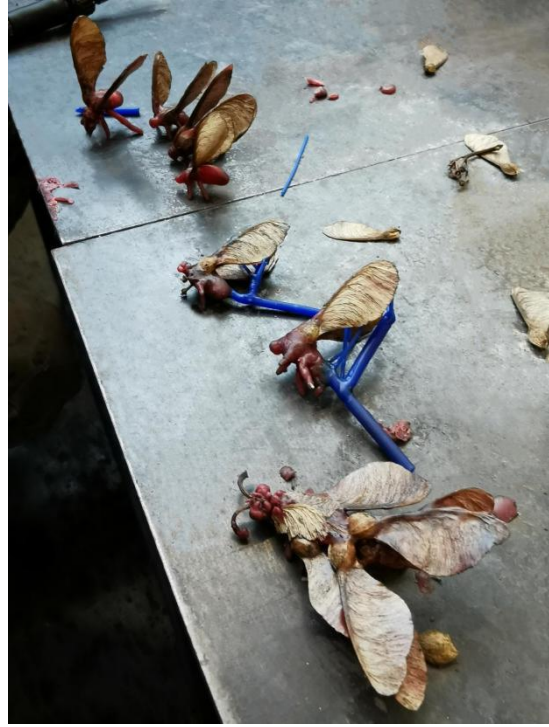


Figure 40. Muchuan Wang, *Making Sculptures with Seeds of Acer Nalmatum and Wax*, 2019

Casting from ready-made objects is a way of making cast metal sculpture in contemporary times. Now this method is not uncommon in the field of casting metal sculpture. I also developed my sculptural practice in this way. Following this, I made an iron bear from a fluffy toy. I put the hard iron bear and the soft fluffy bear facing each other to create mutual relations. Several encountering relations could be contemplated, such as the relations between the two bears, between the original one and the copy one (even the original one was an artificial bear rather than a real bear), between the hard material and the soft material, and even between serious art work and childish toy etc.



Figure 41. Muchuan Wang, *Bears*, iron, ready made object, 25x45x16cm, 2019

The *Mice* was built from selected fruits, nuts, headphones, computer cables and USB plugs. Then the sculptures were cast in iron and cement. One of them was entirely cast in iron, but the other one was built from the headphones, cable and a USB plug, and was partly cast in cement. Thus, the relations between different materials were shown in the sculpture of the confronting mice.



Figure 42. Muchuan Wang, *Mice*, iron, cement, ready made objects, 45x10x10cm, 2019

I made the *Mice* from Chinese zodiac art by casting objects of daily life. Michał Staszczak’s works were my inspiration.



Figure 43. Michał Staszczak, *Acari*, cast iron, 9x9x14 in, 2016
 Source: Annie Truuvert, “Creators - Michał Staszczak” , Polyfield Magazine, December 1, 2021.
https://artthescience.com/magazine/2021/12/01/creators-michal-staszczak/?fbclid=IwAR2Nv2hJWAoO917FnML3ei32EzAliLA-jpxEKYbvuOMbayB5QEV3_6tsfv0

This artist’s metal sculptures are mysterious because of the ambiguous images. He transforms ready-made objects to imaginative sculptures by casting them in metal. In an interview, he said: “The method of assemblage, which I use to create models of my sculptures, is much more complex than just gluing things together. I collect different objects and textures to have a kind of

‘library’. Then I choose the ones I like, make plaster moulds, and fill them with wax. Thus, I get the elements which I can freely multiply, modify, and join. It is a very

enjoyable and creative stage.”¹¹ I also used the method of casting ready-made objects in the process of making my sculptures of Zodiac Mice and the *Heavy Shadow*.

Following the method and technique of mold making, I experimented with making a sculpture of dragons, starting with carving into the mold to make negative space instead of positive volume. The block was made of green sand and I sculpted it from a drawing of dragons which was inspired by mythical creatures in the Dunhuang wall painting. The shape of dragons was drawn from imagination, and the negative space was carved partly from feeling and partly from accidental actions. It was unusual to create a sculpture by carving a negative space. So some parts of its form and details might be out of control. Making artworks through the pursuit of imagination and partly out of control was an important part of the spirit of traditional Chinese art. I developed it by shifting the way of making sculpture from creating positive (Yang) volume to carving negative (Yin) space. This could refer to



Figure 44. Muchuan Wang, Carved Mold , green sand, 8cm52x30cm, 2021

the idea of the changing relationship between Yin and Yang in the *Book of Changes*. In this changing way, I put myself between familiar circumstances and an unfamiliar atmosphere. The result of carving the mold and pouring liquid metal was also partly



out of my control and therefore produced different artistic effects.

Figure 45. Muchuan Wang, *Dragons*, bronze, 45x25x4cm, 2021

¹¹ Annie Truvert, “Creators - Michal Staszczak,” Polyfield Magazine, December 1, 2021. https://artthescience.com/magazine/2021/12/01/creators-michal-staszczak/?fbclid=IwAR2Nv2hJWAoO917FnML3ei32EzAilLA-jpxEKYbvUOMbayB5QEV3_6tsfv0

2.2.3 Paper

I chose paper as the sculpture material representing the element of wood. The Wood in the Five Elements is not only the material of wood but actually refers to plants. While paper is generally made of grass fiber and wood fiber, with the property of wood. There were also several other reasons why I chose paper as the material for the sculpture among the wood properties. One was that I had experience in the art of hand papermaking and I was more familiar with the use of paper in sculptural practice. Second, due to the outbreak of the epidemic, paper was relatively convenient to operate, and could be processed in a simple way without equipment. Thirdly, paper-making is an ancient Chinese invention, one of the four great inventions of China. It is regarded as a symbol of ancient Chinese civilization and a typical element of Chinese culture.

Finally, one more reason was that due to the policy of the pandemic of the COVID 19 I had to stay in my apartment at the beginning of 2020 because the Academy was closed. Some materials were difficult to use due to lack of facilities. I knew some methods to make it by hands from the experience at the Studio of Hand Papermaking in the Fiber Art Department of Concordia University and it was a good choice to use paper for sculpture in my little room, especially during that difficult time. The exhibition events organized by Eco-aware Gallery also stimulated my artistic development through paper.

For the artistic development of paper sculpture, I started casting paper pulp with plaster molds, which is a traditional way of making sculpture with paper. The figures in the *Relying on Each Other* were made by clay initially and then were transformed to paper by plaster molds which could absorb water sooner from the wet paper pulp. By this way of casting, the form, volume and texture of clay modelling were clearly preserved on the paper sculptures.

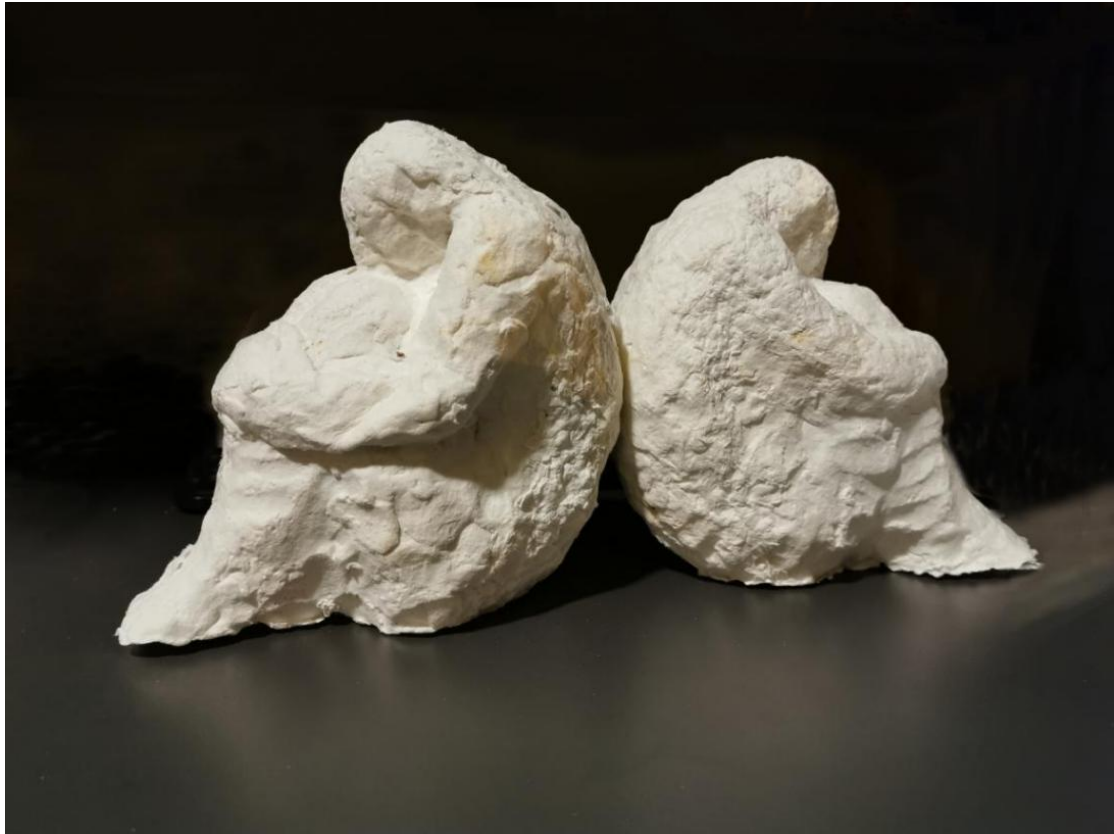


Figure 46. Muchuan Wang, *Relying on Each Other*, paper pulp, 15x26x 8cm, 2020

I was not satisfied with this traditional way of making paper sculpture, but tried to practice modelling directly from paper pulp. It was a challenge to build up volumes with paper pulp because it would be very soft and hard to control while it would be hard to attach together if it was not wet enough. So it took patience to experiment how wet it should be to build up the volume appropriately.

To start, the *Confrontation: A Running Bull* was fully built with paper pulp made from collected magazines. The volume was kept smaller and simple to be easy to build up. Later, I put a frame in it to be able to make complicated forms such as *Embracing*. In *Embracing*, the paper pulp was more difficult to build up because it was made from an egg carton which had already been recycled paper. In addition, the *Whispering* was made from paper pulp of better quality. So it could be built up by a thin wall to keep the inside empty. The effect could be changed by installing an electric lamp into the empty space.



Figure 47. Muchuan Wang, *Confronting: Running Bulls*, paper pulp, 27x6x5cm, 2020



Figure 48. Muchuan Wang, *Embracing*, paper pulp, carton, iron wire, 40x25x10cm, 2020

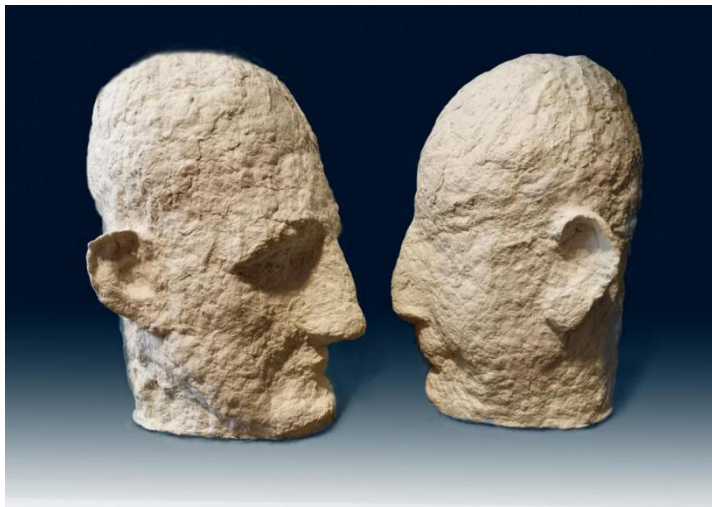


Figure 49. Muchuan Wang, *Confronting: Talking*, paper pulp, 28cm, high, 2020

The paper pulp I made from magazines and book fragments retained the scrambled text messages and images, so the text messages and images in the sculpture I made from this paper pulp also became the material of the sculpture. Therefore, the materials were not only physical, but also intellectual. The paper pulp in the sculpture *Conversation* was mixed with strips of cut magazines. Words, images and colors could be partially seen in the sculptures. The original meaning was deconstructed from the magazines and

reconstructed in the sculpture. So the materials seemed to be not only physical paper, but also intellectual results, which allowed the meaning of the work to transcend visual art and linguistic culture.



Figure 50. Muchuan Wang, *Conversating: Strangers*, sculpture, paper, 30cm high, 2020

Developed from cutting magazines and books, the paper strips with information of words and colors were also used for works of collage such as *Landscape No. 1*. The *Landscape* series consists of artworks combining drawing, printing and sculpture in between two dimensions and three dimensions. These works include elements of painting, sculpture, image and text, and break down the boundaries between various arts and cultures.

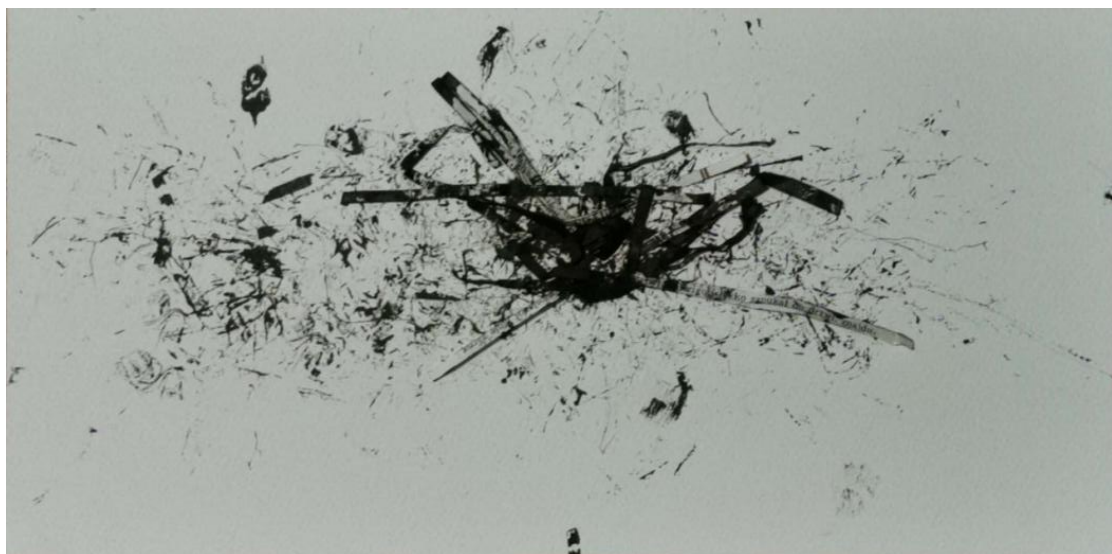


Figure 51. Muchuan Wang, *Landscape No. 1*, collage, paper, strips from a magazines, Chinese ink, 21x42cm, 2020

When I cut books to use them as the material for my works, I found that sculptures could be created directly by cutting books. I made sculptures from my own shadows to three-dimensional portraits in books. It reminded me of the story of Dharma facing the wall. For ten years, Dharma sat facing the wall, so that his image was on the smooth wall.

Besides, I started to make artworks directly from cardboard and toilet paper. In this way, the features and information of the ready-made objects were used and maintained directly in the works.

Using a cardboard box for the sculpture *Directions: No. 7*, I integrated the information kept on the box and the directional signs (the arrows). The basic structure of the box was retained, but the inner space was exposed by cutting off some parts of the cardboard. This creates a contrast between the solid arrows and the hollow arrows, which is also an expression of the Yin and Yang relationship.



Figure 52. Muchuan Wang, *Directions No. 7*, carton box, 150x75x15cm, 2021

In my artistic practice, toilet paper and tissue were applied directly for my artistic exploration. *A Lady* was made of wet paper tissue to express the major form of a human figure. The details were ignored just like Magdalena Abakanowicz did in her sculptures by textile.

I used toilet paper directly for my art work by shifting positions and rolling. Such as in the *White Waves*, I just released the rolls of paper on the floor. The artistic atmosphere was generated gradually by placing more and more rolls of paper in space. There were some visual elements in the feature of the ready-made material itself, and they were released in space.



Figure 53. Muchuan Wang, *A Lady*, paper, 18x6x3cm, 2020

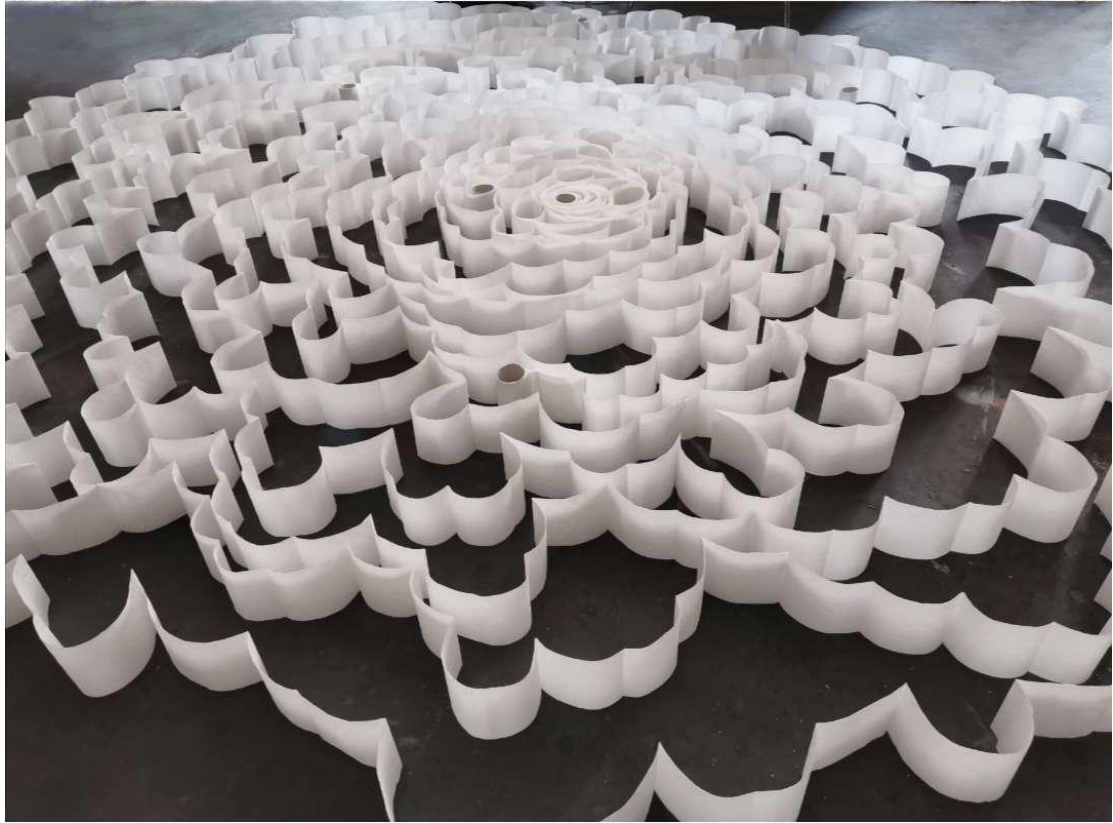


Figure 54. Muchuan Wang, *White Waves*, toilet paper, 500 x 480 x 10cm,

For the *White and Black*, I pulled the core of toilet paper up and down to shape it looking like different objects, from cake, to buildings such as a tower or a church, and to weapon such as a tank.

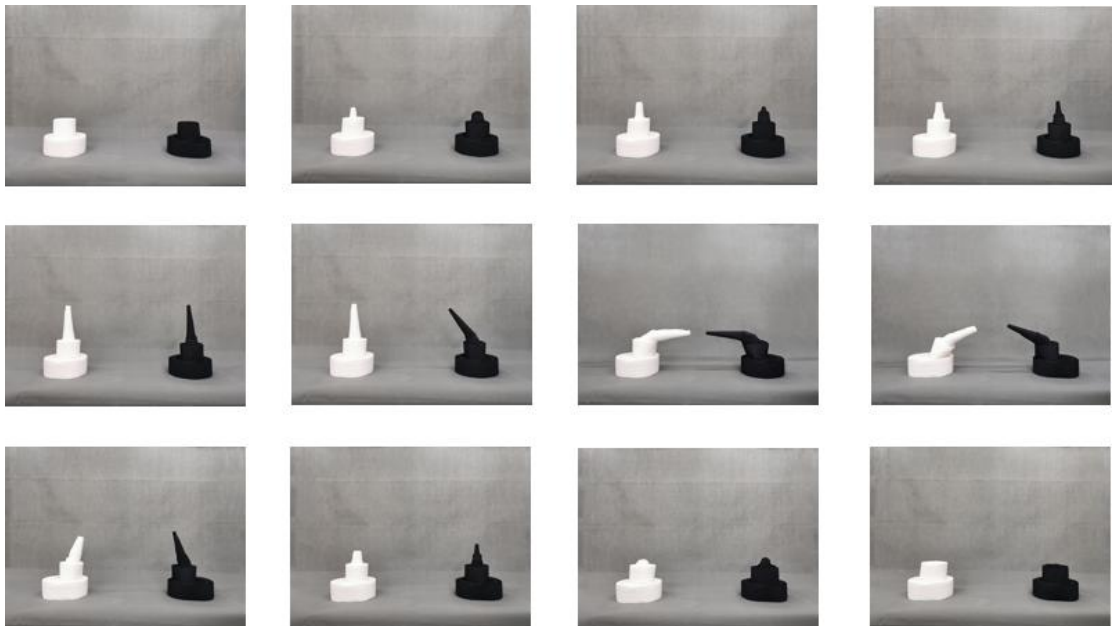


Figure 55. Muchuan Wang, *White and Black*, toilet paper, variable size, documented by stop motion animation, 2020
 Access to Video: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1F1ROdbpnHYNUIAJ1eZdd1jUgUrVEELnq?usp=sharing>

The way of utilizing paper and textile as soft materials for my sculptures was inspired by a Polish artist Magdalena Abakanowicz and a Chinese artist Han Lu.



Figure 56. Magdalena Abakanowicz, *Anonymous Portraits Series (4 pieces)*, jute fabric hardened with resin, wood, mixed media, 1988-1989, photo by Muchuan Wang at The Four Domes Pavilion, Museum of Contemporary Art, Branch of the National Museum in Wrocław

Abakanowicz used soft materials to create powerfully expressive figures. “Abakanowicz’s Head of 1973-75 can be seen as a ‘transitory’ piece. While the treatment of the material recalls the organic vitality of the Abakans, the work also points to a new thematic direction in Abakanowicz’s art.”¹² I was inspired by the way this artist uses the fiber and textile for casting sculptures. Some of the methods of making my sculptures of head and figure with paper could be related to the way in which Abakanowicz made her Heads of 1988-89 and Seated Figures of 1974-79. We both use the method of casting.



Figure 57. Han Lu, *Step Left - Step Right*, soft materials, 198x220x144cm, 2004, collected by Zhejiang Art Museum, Hangzhou, China

Abakanowicz's figures were made of soft materials and hardened in resin. In contrast, a Chinese artist, one of my colleagues, Han Lu's figures made of linen were stuffed with soft fluffy cotton. In addition, Abakanowicz's figure sculptures were made from molds, while Han Lu's works were sewn directly from linen. Of course, different methods

will produce different artistic effects of works. These different treatment methods for soft materials have also inspired the treatment of materials in the process of my creative experiments.

¹² Joanna Inglot, *The Figurative Sculpture of Magdalena Abakanowicz: Bodies, Environments, and Myths* (California: University of California Press, 2004), 72.

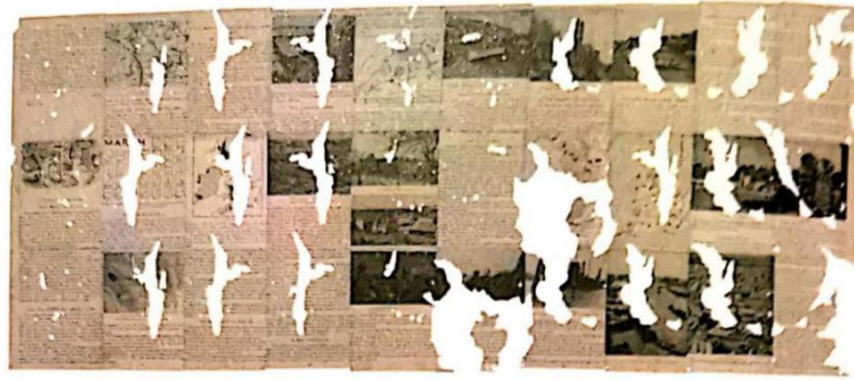


Figure 58. Wong Hoy Cheong, *The Colonies Bite Book*, books (partially eaten by termites), 18.3x26.2cm each, 2001
 Source: Alistair Hicks, *The Global Art Compass: New Directions in 21st Century Art*, (London, Thames & Hudson, 2014), 106

My artistic works made of paper could also be related to Wong Hoy Cheong and Huang Yong Ping’s work. “Wong has also created one of the hardest-hitting but funniest works of the century. To make *The Colonies Bite Book* (2001) he took a pile of British school textbooks with condescending old imperialist titles, such as *Great Men of the East*, and fed them to termites. He then used the pulp and shredded books in a series of intricate collages. Although Colonial ideas have provided him with one of his best targets, he is the first to admit that “traditional notions of the post-colonial and colonial legacy are crumbling.”¹³

I knew Huang Yong Ping’s art work of mixing two books many years ago when I was an undergraduate student. I was inspired by his works to think about words, sentences, images and colors as materials for conceptual expression when I used books and magazines to make pulp.

“Wong’s hard humour feeds on smouldering embers, which do not appear to exist in an earlier pile of pulp, made by Huang Yong Ping (b. 1954, China), with the title *The History of Chinese Painting and the History of Modern Western Art Washed in the Washing Machine for Two Minutes*



Figure 59. Huang Yong Ping, *The History of Chinese Painting and the History of Modern Western Art Washed in the Washing Machine for Two Minutes*, 1987/93, installation: Chinese tea box, paper pulp and glass, 76.8x48.3x69.9cm.
 Source: A. Hicks, *The Global Art Compass*, P 107.

¹³ Alistair Hicks, *The Global Art Compass: New Directions in 21st Century Art*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 2014), 105-106.

(1987 /93). The work emphatically underlines the impossibility of washing one's intellectual laundry, but also highlights our inability to stop trying."¹⁴

2.2.4 Light

Some of my paper sculptures were empty and had space inside. So I tried to put electric lamps in them. The light from the inside changed the effects of the heads and figures such as in the *Lightening* and the *Luminated Figures*. Due to the transfer of light from the outside to the inside, the concrete exterior forms of the sculptures were weakened, especially when the sculpture was being in a slightly dark environment, a sense of mystery came into being, and the sense of light emitted from the inside also improved the spirituality. Because the pulp used to shape the sculpture was uneven, the light from the inside became uneven as well. The thin or thick outer walls of the sculpture were illuminated or darkened by the internal light, which also obscured the sense of reality of the figures. This reminded me of some related words including light, lightening, enlightening, luminating, illuminating, luminous, consciousness, awakening, revelation, sublimation and so on. These words could refer to the spiritual state in humans by the Chinese Buddhist ideas. It also prompted these sculptures transforming the expression of the figures in the external real world into the revelation of the inner emotions, spirit and even the divinity of human beings.

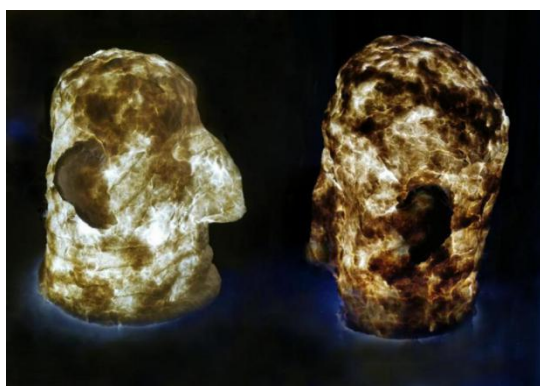


Figure 60. Muchuan Wang, *Lightening*, 28 x 42 x 18, paper and electric lamp, 2020

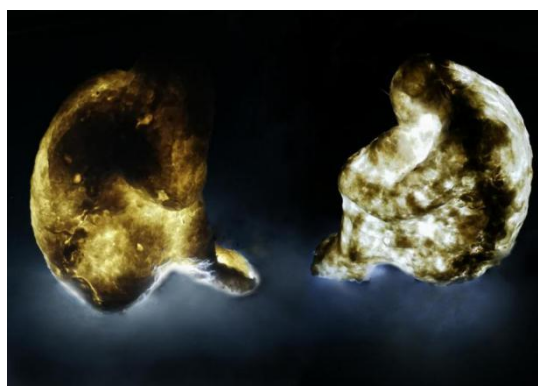


Figure 61. Muchuan Wang, *Luminated Figures*, 18 x 32 x 15, paper and electric lamp, 2020

After making sculptures with light from the inside, I discovered other possibilities for making sculptures based on the relationship between light and paper. I put electric

¹⁴ Hicks, *The Global Art Compass*, 106.

lamps behind or inside of objects and abstract sculptures made of toilet paper. Luminescence makes ordinary objects and shapes seem magical. Observing the practical experiment, I found that light could be a magician to make these sculptures more mystical, and light promoted ordinary objects and forms into a more spiritual existence.



Figure 62. Muchuan Wang, *Illuminate Objects*, 180 x 120 x 100 cm, paper and electric lamps, 2020

I was impressed by the Canadian artist Michael A. Robinson's works composed of electric lamps when I was a visiting artist at Concordia University in 2016. Before this, I only regarded light as an auxiliary material for the form and space of sculpture, but after viewing his lighting installations, I discovered to include light elements into the works and emphasize the artistic expression of light itself.

The relationship between objects and subjects are important in Robinson's works. He reveals the inner metaphor through the installation composed of ready-made lamps. "Arguments surrounding the nature of Being are perhaps the most urgent and enduring debates to line the records of documented history. Throughout time, treatment we have struggled to gain insight into the human condition; to find meaning and purpose in our existence; to make sense of our relations to one another and to the world



Figure 63. Michael A. Robinson, *The Origin of Ideas*, found lamps, LED lights, tripods, electrical cords, 6x6x9ft, 2013-2016
Source: <https://www.michaelarobinson.org/>

we inhabit. However tentative, these positions have revealed structures of knowing and becoming, casting light on the creative process itself and in turn on its formal, functional and dynamic possibilities. These preoccupations lie at the very heart of Michael A. Robinson's work, presented here in *The Origin of Ideas*.¹⁵

The ball of light formed by many lamps in *The Origin of Ideas* reminds me of the idea from the *Book of Changes* about the origin of the world. Light brings not only practical but also spiritual enlightenment to the world. This has also made light and shadow an important part of my artistic exploration.

2.2.5 Water and Glass

The element of water in the *Book of Changes* is not only the material, but also the existential state of the liquid. On the one hand, water and the state of liquid could be found in the process of my artistic practice and it could not be seen as the result of the artworks. On the other hand, water has also become the object of my sculpture works as an image or theme. Works in the *Melting* series were made directly from the material of water.

The ice volume of the *Melting Tank* was cast by filling a balloon with water and keeping it in a frozen area. After being moved into a room, the ice weapon gradually melted and the ice, the solid form of water, was transformed into liquid water again. Transitions between different states were shown during the process of freezing and melting. It can be imagined that some other materials can also be transformed from one existential state to another. Many materials can be changed from solid to liquid when the temperature is high enough and vice versa.

An important idea of the *Book of Changes*, that the world is always in a state of change, can be shown through the transformation in the *Melting Tank*. This kind of change can be a double change in the sense of time and space. Through melting in the work, the transformation of form showed the change of spatial concept, and the transformation

¹⁵ Deborah Kirk, "Close Encounters by Deborah Kirk", YYZ BOOKS, May 8, 2014. <https://www.yyzartistsoutlet.org/2014/05/close-encounters-by-deborah-kirk/>

process presented the change of time.

Water cannot support itself because of its fluidity, but it can be kept in objects that are carrying it. So it can be shaped by changing the volume of the container. And I can also use this feature to create sculptures by making objects to hold water. Water could be used to make forms and volumes by filling it into designed empty balloons.

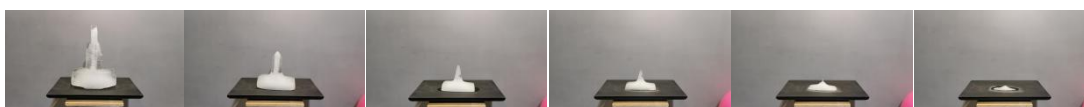


Figure 64. Muchuan Wang, Powers: *Melting Tower*, water, stone plate, changing size, documented by stop motion animation, 2021
Access to Video: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1F1ROdbpnHYNUiAJ1eZdd1jUgUrVEELnq?usp=sharing>

I would like to discuss my glass works together with the element of water because the transparency of glass is similar to that of water. It can be seen in my glass sculpture *Party*. In the work, the curving transparent glass rod feels like tracks of flowing streams.

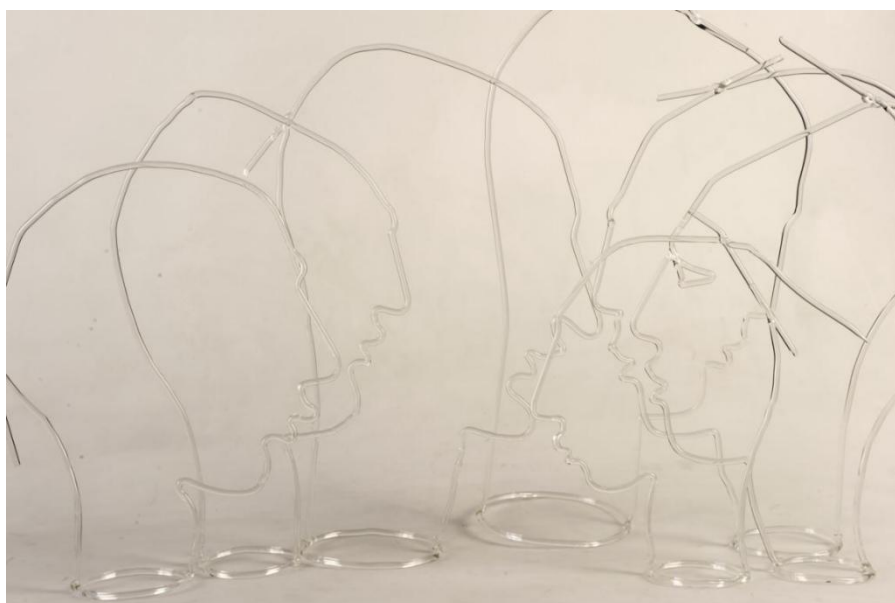


Figure 54. Muchuan Wang, *Party*, variable size, flaming glass, 2020. photo by Deyu Xu

Making glass is an important way of development in my artistic research. I tried several approaches to making glass, such as casting, flaming, fusing, and blowing. The specific features of glass are amazing. People are often attracted to glass because of the shining surface, the brilliant light and the wonderful color. In history, glass was mostly used for craft, containers and functional facilities. But now an increasing number of artists are using glass as a material for art.

By experiments I found that some encountered features of glass attracted my attention and could be involved in my research. The hardness of glass feels like even harder than stone when a block of glass is touched or scratched, but on the other hand, it could be very soft and even liquid when it is heated to a certain degree of temperature. It is very fragile and easy to be broken when it is collided, but the edge of it could be sharp and dangerous. It can be transparent but sometimes opaque. The surface could be very smooth and shining after polishing but it could be rough in an unpolished texture.

My artistic exploration focusing on the concept of inner and outer relations and experimenting on the material practice due to the Five Elements could be also related to Bill Viola's works. Revealing the inner emotional and spiritual feeling through the relationship between man and external natural matter is an important theme of Bill Viola's works. Viola mentioned inner knowledge, inner eye, deep place and outer space between body and materials when he was talking about the performance for his video. Joan G. Hanhardt remarked that Viola always "participates in the creation of his profound body of work", and asserted that, "the goal was to help bring Bill's inner visions into the world."¹⁶ I was inspired to think how I can find the link between inner spirituality and outer body, materials and space in my art works.

My research on internal and external relations and material development according to the Five Elements has a lot in common with Bill Viola's work. I visited Viola's exhibition for the first time in Montreal in 2016, and was deeply affected by the inner emotional and spiritual power formed between human body and the materials in his works. In his videos and installations, Bill Viola used human body and four kinds of materials, including earth, air, fire



Figure 66. Bill Viola, *Martyrs (Earth Air, Fire, Water)*, movie, 2004
Source: Joan G Hanhardt, Ed. Kira Perov, Bill Viola (New York, Thames & Hudson, 2015), 261.

¹⁶ Joan G Hanhardt, eds., Kira Perov, *Bill Viola* (New York, Thames & Hudson, 2015), 6.

and water, which bring to mind the Five Elements. He revealed human emotion and human energy through the interactive performances of bodies encountering the impact from the materials which belong to nature. I got a strong impression from the relationship between the body and the materials when I was watching his video in the Contemporary Art Gallery in Montreal. It touched my spirit at that moment and made me think how I could improve the spiritual attributes of art works when I was conducting this artistic research.

3. Chapter III: Five Series of Sculptures

The main content of this chapter is the resulting works of the artistic research revolving around the inner and outer relations from the *Book of Changes*. I will describe and discuss the creative ideas, forms, contents and the ideological connotations contained in the works.

My sculptures can be divided into five series by subjectively discovering the Yin-Yang relation in different directions. To some extent, this kind of classification of works is also in accordance with the concept of the Five Elements. I described artworks in the following five series: *Confronting*, *Powers*, *Directions*, *Waving* and *Shadow and Light*. Each series has its own content, form and characteristics, at the same time, each series is not completely different from the others, but overlapping or crossing with each other to different degrees. The first four can serve as a prelude to the final series (*Shadow and Light*).

First of all, *Confronting* is a series of works about human beings and animals in opposite directions. The second series, the *Powers*, represents artificial objects. The third one, *Directions*, contains works composed of a kind of indicator. The works in the *Waves* series are presented in abstract forms. The final one is the series of *Shadow and Light* based on the exploration of the theme of shadow and light or directly adding shadow and/or light to the works. This series of works covers the basic features of the previous four series. The factors of shadow and light are highlighted on the bases of the other four series. I will briefly introduce the previous four series, but focus on the *Shadow and Light* series selected as PhD works.

3.1 Confronting

The *Confronting* series are artworks with human heads, human figures or animal figures facing each other. This series was a starting point for my research on the relationship between me and myself, me and another, me and the world, etc.

I made my self-portrait and cast it in different materials. Then I had these self-portraits to face each other or to face different portraits of others or objects. For example, *Me and Myself* was cast in bronze and glass. Differences and similarities can be seen in the two self-portraits due to the different materials and the same mold. The two sculptures, made of the same mold and



Figure 67. Muchuan Wang, *Me and Myself*, 23cm high, bronze, glass, 2022

different materials, form a contrasting visual experience. On the one hand, the face-to-face self-examination of this couple of sculptures can lead to meditation on the inner world of the self. On the other hand, the contrasting visual effects of the two materials, such as substance and void, hardness and fragility, reality and illusory, integrity and incompleteness, will also arouse the spectator's feelings and reflections on different levels of human entity and spiritual existence. The correspondence between Yin and Yang and the relationship between external form and internal law of material properties in the concept of the Five Elements are also reflected in this work.



Figure 68. Muchuan Wang. *Me and Myself*. 23cm high. bronze. glass. 2022

The position of the two sculptures changes each time the work is displayed. Changing the physical distance between the two sculptures can also trigger a feeling of psychological distance, which may reflect a strong or weak awareness of self. The distance between the two sculptures in this work and their relationship with the surrounding environment will change, and the audience's feeling when watching this work will also change with the distance, spatial position and the surrounding environment. Of course, each viewer's mood may also cause a different resonance with the work. These changes also echo the concept of change in the *Book of Changes*.

Some confronting portraits such as *Confronting: Talking* and *Confronting: Strangers*

were made with paper pulp. I put characters of western people and eastern people, and even characters of animals into the sculptures so as to add cultural and mystical connotations. Some of them have words, colors and images in the materials from Polish books to create metaphors of human culture and civilization.

Confronting: Cutting in Books is a series of sculptures created by book carving. I carved portraits in some books which were collected at the academy, bookstore, street, and flea market in Wroclaw. These books are closely related to Polish culture. I carved them in order to establish a close relationship between my work and Polish culture. The portraits seemed like people hiding in books and communicating secretly.



Figure 69. Muchuan Wang, *Confronting: Encountering in Books*, carved in books, 24cm high,



Figure 70. Muchuan Wang, *Confronting: Dialog in Books*, carved in books, 21cm high,

The series of *Confronting* also contains sculptures, such as *Forward and Backward* and *Conflict*, depicting animals. In these sculptures, you can see either two animal figures facing each other, or an animal body with two heads pulling in opposite directions. Similar problems with human society can be seen in these animal sculptures. The relationship between two animals and the two faces of an animal in these sculptures also contains some kind of metaphor for human problems.



Figure 71. Muchuan Wang, *Confrontation*, paper, 25×36×8cm, 2021



Figure 72. Muchuan Wang, *Conflict*, paper pulp, 82x20x20cm, 2021

In order to show more of the connection between humans and animals, I combined some parts of the animal body with the human body in some of my works, such as *Twins*, so that these works have some characteristics of surrealism.

The motif of interrelation used by Marina Abramovic in her performance art was an inspiration for my works on binary relation of face-to-face. Abramovic was famous for her performance art in which the mutual relation between her and others was very important. During her performance titled *The Artist Is Present* in MOMA, Abramovic sat immobile while spectators were invited to take



Figure 73. Marina Abramovic, *The Artist Is Present*, performance, exhibition view, MOMA Gallery, 2010
Source: https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/marina-abramovic-marina-abramovic-the-artist-is-present-2010/

turns sitting opposite to her. The relation between the two people was experienced both by the artist and the audience. Jeannette Fisher remarked in her book that “This is what Marina Abramovic’s performance is about: searching for a relationship through re-enactment.”¹⁷ Her and Ulay's performance also shows the entanglement, confrontation and tearing between a man and a woman. Similar to Abramovic’s performance art, some of my sculptures were constructed by two opposite figures, heads or objects and I was seeking to explore this kind of relations for my artistic practice.

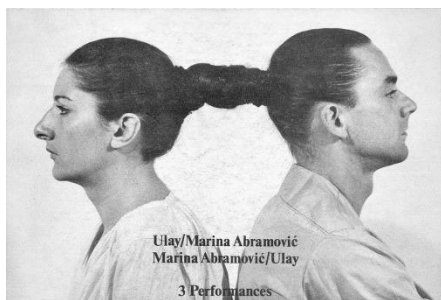


Figure 74. Marina Abramovic, Ulay, *Marina Abramovic and Uwe Laysiepen*, 1978
Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marina_Abramovic%C4%87#Works_with_Ulay_\(Uwe_Laysiepen\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marina_Abramovic%C4%87#Works_with_Ulay_(Uwe_Laysiepen))

However, the figures, heads, and objects in my sculptures were made by physical materials and were realized from my imagination. The multiple use of materials in the physical works extend mental and intellectual metaphors. The similarity and the difference made me think more about the mutual relations in my physical sculptures and in the performances.

¹⁷Jeannette Fischer, *Psychoanalyst Meets Marina Abramovic: Artist meets Jeannette Fischer* (Zürich: Scheidegger and Spiess, 2018), 37.

3.2 Powers

The *Powers* is a series of works representing tanks and buildings resembling churches or pagodas. The physical objects contain symbols of the power of faith and the power of violence. The works were built up by juxtapositions, contrasts or mutual transformations between two kinds of symbolic objects and images. Through the relations between these physical objects and visual images, relations between opposed issues could be reflected, such as relations between peace and violence, desire and dedication, harmony and conflict, punishment and salvation, damage and protection, attack and defence, etc.

To create these artworks, I also expected to draw people's attention and scrutiny to the religious contradictions, military conflicts, cultural differences, political prejudices and social problems that are arising in the world.



Figure 75. Church at Katedra Sw. Jana Chrzciciela, Wrocław, Photo by Muchuan Wang



Figure 76. Tathagata Eight pagodas in Tar Temple, Lushaer Town Huangzhong County, Xining, China
Source: 华瑞、索南才让, 《中国佛塔》, 宁夏, 青海人民出版社, 2002。(Hu, Rui and Suonan Cairang, *Buddhist Tower in China*, Ningxia: Qinghai Peoples Publication, 2002.)



Figure 77. St. Paraskevi Church, Kwiatoń
Source: http://en.volupedia.org/wiki/St._Paraskevi_Church_Kwiato%C5%84

I researched the images of churches in Poland and pagodas in China. I found some similar features in the shapes of these churches and pagodas, and compared them with those of tanks to see if they could be relevant.

The similarities of these forms and the differences between the symbols behind them complicate the connotations of the work. The differences can build up a reminder of the constructive power of faith and the destructive power of military force. Military violence, however, can be used for attack as well as defence. The power of faith is generally regarded as noble and peaceful, enhancing the spiritual power, but there may be violence to destroy the spiritual system of people. The similarity between these two

images also reminds people of the violence of the external reality and the violence of the inner spirit. Thus the relations and transformations can be found between constructive power and destructive power, peaceful power and violent power, positive power and negative power.



Figure 78. Muchuan Wang: *Iron Powers and Paper Powers*, iron, paper, variable size, 2022

For this series of works, I tried different kinds of materials and techniques, practiced in different ways of expression, and different methods of presentation. I made the sculptures with clay, paper and textile, as well as casting them in metal, ice and glass. I created installations about shadow and light with sculptures, objects and electric lamps. In addition, I also edited some stop-motion animations and videos to record the changes in time and space in the works.

I made the tanks and the building with toilet paper rolls and then changed the forms from the tank to the building or from the building to the tank. The changes were documented by photos, which were then edited to stop-motion animations. In this way, serious religious and political issues can be seen in the sculptures made of very light daily materials.

The *Metal Powers and Paper Powers* can be discussed as a typical example of this series because the concept of Yin-Yang contained in it can be analyzed from different perspectives. First of all, tanks symbolizing the power of violence and churches and towers symbolizing the power of faith were interlaced in the work. One is inner spiritual strength and the other is outer armed strength. These two forces, positive and negative, are intertwined. The sculptures were arranged in a long line, like a long solid line representing Yang. While the line was divided into black and white, like the broken line for Yin. The black line was made of cast iron sculptures, and the white line was

made of papier-mache sculptures. Due to the different materials, the following strong correlations were formed: black and white, heavy and light, hard and soft. The contrast between the hard, heavy iron and the soft, light paper with words and images can also be extended to the power of knowledge and wisdom versus the power of iron. These contrast relations also echo the relationship between Yin and Yang at different directions, and resonate with different spectators at different levels.

I also made the sculptures with ice and then documented the process of melting to see the changes of generating and vanishing. This is also consistent with the idea of the *Book of Changes*.

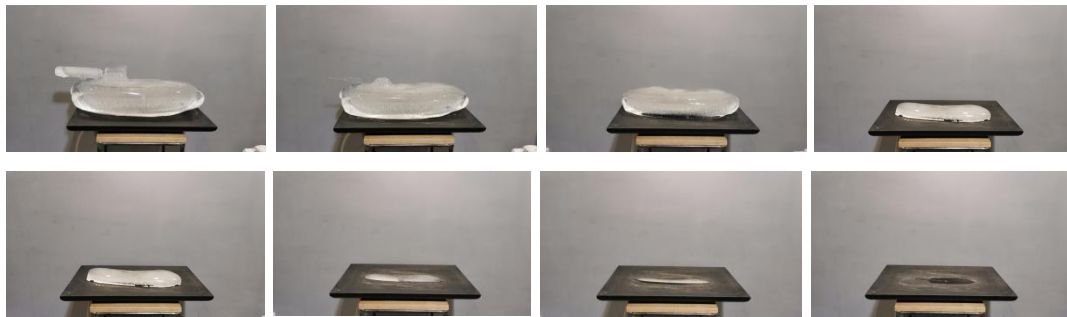


Figure 79. Muchuan Wang, *Powers: Melting Tank*, ice, tea plate, 60x25x30cm, documented by stop motion animation, 2021

Access to Video: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1F1ROdbpnHYNUiAJ1eZdd1jUgUrVEELnq?usp=sharing>



Figure 80. Muchuan Wang, *Powers: Melting Church*, ice, tea plate, 60x35x30cm, documented by stop motion animation, 2021

Access to Video: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1F1ROdbpnHYNUiAJ1eZdd1jUgUrVEELnq?usp=sharing>

And this kind of change has different metaphors in the *Melting Tank* and the *Melting Church*. In the animations, you can see the changes in the sculpture image caused by the melting of ice.

These two ice works were cast of ready-made products. They represented a church, a symbol of faith, and a tank, a symbol of violence taking on different shapes as they change. Animation editing makes them form a circular process from nothing to existence, from existence to growth, from growth to a specific image, and then to the disappearance of the image.

I made sculptures of tanks with clothes and toys. It can be seen in the *Soft Power*. This work was representing a tank encountering a toy. A tank is a strong weapon of war and also a symbol of war. But this tank is a sculpture built with used clothes and a toy of a child. In the work, toys and/or tanks are encountered. It looks like a childish game of war. Some contradictory elements could be recalled, such as strong and weak, violence and peace, hard and soft, serious problems and childish play, etc.



Figure 81. Muchuan Wang, *Soft Powers No.5*, 100x27x20cm, used clothes and toy, variable size, 2021

3.3 Directions

Directions series is the result of exploring the use of visual symbols to convey inner thoughts and emotions such as desire, conflict, and balance. It is a series of works developed from the eight diagrams of Yin-Yang which were generated by the solid lines and the broken lines. In the beginning, the *Book of Changes* had no words but consisted of solid lines and broken lines. I replaced these lines with the combination of arrows, giving the symbols an added element of directions.

Arrows have a wide range of uses as symbols, such as charts and life indicators. One of their important functions is an indication of direction or trend. I turned this functional feature into an artistic language to express the tension caused by the arrows in different directions and trends.

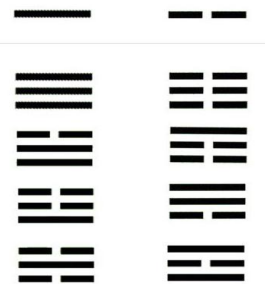


Figure 82. Solid line, broken line and eight trigrams

I made some sculptures by cutting cardboard and metal sheets. The arrows were solid and/or empty in different directions. Inner emotions, spirits can be created by the relations between the contrasting directions and the interdependent solid arrows and empty arrows.

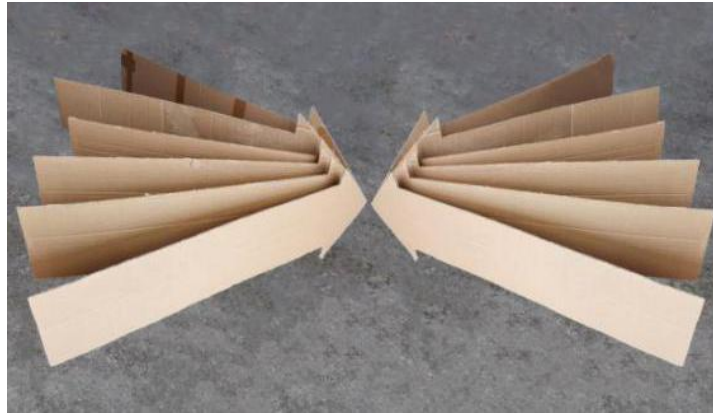


Figure 83. Muchuan Wang, *Directions No. 3*, cardboard, 210x120x40cm, 2021

I designed it in photos to show the effects of a big size in natural space or public space. Sometimes these works can be connected with the spectators or the environment space to further expand the connotation of the works.

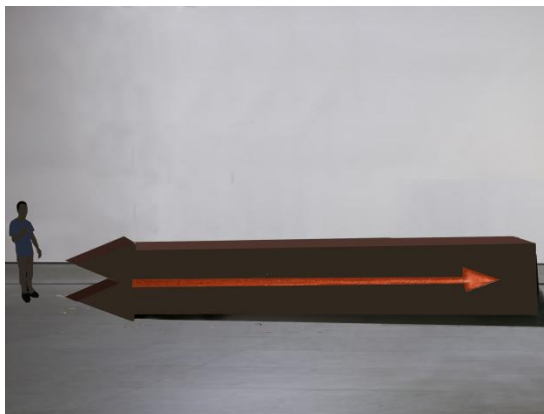


Figure 85. Muchuan Wang, *Directions 9* (unrealized design), Iron, electric lamp, 500x120x50cm, 2022



Figure 81. Muchuan Wang, *Directions: No. 9* (unrealized design), Metal, 6000x300x50cm, 2022

3.4 Waving

Waving is a series of artworks with visual abstract waving forms, lines or movements to convey an invisible cognitive mood. The idea of waving was inspired by the S-shaped curve and the lines form the diagram of Yin-Yang combined with the movement of

water. Some of these works were made of paper and electric lamps. The curling paper shows brilliant rings under the internal light. In these works, I created transformations between images of the flow of water, the flow of light, and the flow of psychological feeling.



Figure 86, Muchuan Wang, *Lighting Swirl*, roll paper, and electric lamp, variable size, 2020

Following the experiment with water, I conducted a similar one with glass. I experimented with fusing glass to make stripes of glass. I intended to make the stripes very thin but it was very difficult because of the technical limits.

Nevertheless, I found some approaches to work on these experimental glass works. For example, I processed the two sides of the glass strip with different textures to show a great expressive potential in the contrast between the fire polished shiny surface and the sand blasted rough surface.



Figure 87, Muchuan Wang, *Glistening of Waves*, glass, 90 x 30 x 6 cm, 2020

3.5 Shadow and Light: Selected PhD Works

The fifth series of works is titled *Shadow and Light*. This is the final series which I selected as my PhD work. As I mentioned before, it results from the previous four series and is a kind of summing up of my research. The original idea of Yin-Yang could be

traced to the relation between shadow and light, which is contradictory, interdependent and dialectic. The name of the *Book of Changes* in Chinese 易 is thought to be composed of the sun(日) and the moon(月). It is used to represent moonlight and sunshine, night and day, darkness and light and other things related to shadow and light, and extended to the concepts of weak and strong, empty and solid, humble and noble, as well as death and life. *Shadow and Light* is a series of sculptures created by exploring the external expression and internal thought of these issues in artistic experiments. Shadow and light can also be connected with Plato's cave theory, thinking about the relationship between virtuality and reality, living reality and artistic reality, material reality and mental reality, etc.

With shadow and light as the theme or material, I created a series of sculptures to reflect the relationship between inner and outer on different levels, such as the physical sculpture and immaterial shadow, the objects and transmissions of light or shadow, which reflect the spiritual and cultural meanings. These works also contain a lot of binary relations related to light and shadow, such as the relationship between shadow and reality, shadow and space, shadow and time, shadow and experience, shadow and soul, light and form, light and emotion, light and space, light and sublime, etc.

Some of the works in this series also intersect with other series. For instance, *The Illuminating Man and Invading Man* could belong to the series of *Confronting* and the *Directions of Desire* could belong to the series of *Directions*. However, light and shadow have been added to these works and become important elements of the works.

For the description of this series of works, I will focus on the *Heavy Shadow* and *Lightening Body* because this work is representative. I will also give a brief introduction to other works.

3.5.1 Heavy Shadow and Lightening Body

Heavy Shadow is a metal sculpture transposed from my own shadow on the stone street in Wroclaw and cast from books. The work contains rich meanings developed from the Yin-Yang relation and the Five Elements to reflect the experience and phenomenon in

the outer world and the intellectual thought in the inner mental world. Encountering relations can be observed in the work. On the one hand, it may include relations between shadow and light, between the body of substantial existence and the shadow of immaterial nature, between the self and the world in which it exists, between the street stone and the collected books, between abstract forms and ready-made objects, between readable messages and visible art works, between the eastern culture and the western culture, civilization and the forces that can destroy it. On the other hand, it may involve five forms or states of matter in the process of making the sculpture. The creation of the heavy shadow has undergone many changes of substance or material state. These include paper of books (wood), sand for molding (earth), coke for melting iron (fire), liquid iron during pouring (water), and iron of the sculpture (metal). These materials and the liquid state fit perfectly with the concept of the Five Elements.



Figure 88. Muchuan Wang, building up a shape of the shadow by books, 2022

This sculpture was transformed from one of my own shadows in the street of Wroclaw. The street lamps cast my shadow on the stone path, but nothing was left on the hard flagstone after my passing though. When I saw my own shadows cast on a street, a wall

or an object, I seemed to find a reflection of myself and the relation between me and the world.

My shadow on the street was caused by my body blocking the sunlight from reaching the street. The absence of sunshine due to the existence of my body, formed the existence of my shadow. The shadow is not the real material existence, but the existence of the street stone. This also forms multiple relationships of confirmation, interdependence and contradiction between existence and nothingness, and between me and the external world.

A photo of my shadow was converted into a sculpture of my silhouette by casting from small books instead of stones. The books were randomly selected from different sections of a bookstore in the center of the old town of Wroclaw. A small number of the books were in English and a large number in Polish. Although I did not understand the



Figure 89. Muchuan Wang, sodium silicate mold for the *Heavy Shadow*, 2022

actual content of most of the books, I knew that they contained different aspects of Polish culture.

I substituted stones with books to reveal intellectual symbolization from the physical existence. Although the stone path in the photo had been replaced with books, the structure of the stone road was still maintained. It makes the form of the work shift between material culture and spiritual culture. By using the book as a material, I was experimenting with the relation between physical reality and mental imagination as well as the relation between outer material culture and the inner spiritual culture in the work.



Figure 90, Muchuan Wang, *Heavy Shadow*, Iron, 185x80x80cm, 2022

It was an experiment to transpose my shadow to a metal figure by casting books. I hope that through such experiments, I can establish a connection between my artistic experience and my personal living experience, and promote the mutual understanding between my artistic practice and my real life. Antony Gormley said, “What is an experiment? To see if experience can produce understanding. Understanding is not necessarily knowledge. Understanding comes from tuning into our body, rather than the hermeneutics that human beings have got so good at – the translation of experience into language.”¹⁸

Energy was spent in the process of selecting materials, mold making, iron melting and pouring. The work is heavy not only because of the physical material but also the experience and knowledge of art and life.

The transformation in the shadow could be equaled to the idea of changes in the *Book of Changes*. Firstly, the sculptural figure was transformed from my own shadow. Shadow is a kind of nihilistic existence. I changed the way of existence by transforming this nihilistic existence into a tangible and materialized sculpture.

Secondly, the silhouette was changed from the street stones to books. It also transforms the relationship between personal experience and urban space into the relationship between human and intellectual civilization. Thirdly, it was changed from the ready-made objects, the books, to abstract iron forms. The shapes in the figure are hardly to be seen as books after being cast in iron, but more like abstract squares. In addition, iron, changes from a solid state to a liquid state and then back to a solid state according to the changing temperatures during the process of pouring. Through the changing in this process, scrap iron is transformed into a work of art.

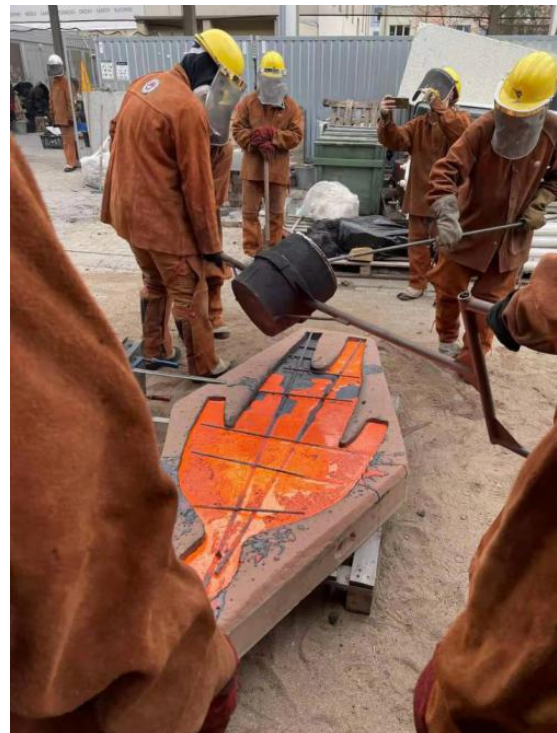


Figure 91. Muchuan Wang, process of pouring iron sculpture *Heavy Shadow*, 2022, photo by Kurt Dyrhaug

¹⁸ Antony Gormley, Mark Holborn, eds., *Antony Gormley on Sculpture*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 2015), 22

The *Heavy Shadow* also has something in common with the Chinese Terracotta Warriors in the tomb of The First Emperor of the Qin dynasty. The square shapes formed by casting books look just like the armor of soldiers, and the transformation between books and armor is thought-provoking. Western culture and eastern culture could both be seen in this sculpture due to the use of western books to form the shadow of a Chinese person (myself), and the connection of street stones in Polish city and the armor of ancient Chinese warriors.



Figure 92. *Warrior Figures Wearing Chinese Turban*
 Source: Weixing Zhang, Tianzhu Zhang, Sihong Zhu, Xuewen Zhu, Archaeological Team of Terracotta Warriors and Horses of Qin Shihuang's Mausoleum. *A Great Wonder: Emperor Qin Shihuang's Mausoleum & Its Terra-cotta Warriors and Horses*, (Xi An, Shaanxi People's Publishing House, 2002), 98.



Figure 93. *Official Figure*
 Source: Weixing Zhang, Tianzhu Zhang, Sihong Zhu, Xuewen Zhu, Archaeological Team of Terracotta Warriors and Horses of Qin Shihuang's Mausoleum. *A Great Wonder: Emperor Qin Shihuang's Mausoleum & Its Terra-cotta Warriors and Horses*, (Xi An, Shaanxi People's Publishing House, 2002), 96.

In the *Heavy Shadow*, there are similarities to iron sculptures by Michał Staszczak and Antony Gormley.

Antony Gormley had iron figures constructed by abstract blocks which can be compared to my *Heavy Shadow*. Gormley's iron sculpture *Still Standing* could be a good example for the abstract forms in the figurative sculptures. Gormley placed the figurative sculptures consisting of abstract cubes in contrast to the classical collections



Figure 94. Antony Gormley, *Still Standing*, Iron, human size, Exhibition view, The State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg, Russia, September 2011–January 2012.

Source: Antony Gormley, ed., Mark Holborn, *Antony Gormley on Sculpture* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2015), 21

in the museum. “*Still Standing* is an experiment. It is an experiment in which about 6½ tonnes of iron is transposed into a voided classical gallery, displacing space and inviting bodies to interact.”¹⁹

I made the *Heavy Shadow* by casting from books which were everyday objects but look like abstract blocks after being cast

in iron. This is different to the way of Gormley’s casting directly from abstract square volumes. I transformed my artworks from the shadow of myself while Gormley shaped his sculptures from his own body. The similarity is that we both refer to self but in different ways.

Michał Staszczak makes metal sculptures by casting them from everyday objects. He said that the point of his sculptures is to transform. He transforms familiar daily objects into unfamiliar creatures or objects, while the familiar daily objects become unfamiliar. But I have different artistic concepts. I cast the shape of my shadow from ready-made books instead of street stones and change my phantom shadow to a still sculpture and show my experiences in the city space of Wrocław under the Polish or European cultural background.

Works by these two artists showed me different aspects of using forms and ready-made objects.

Lightening Body is a sculpture that contrasts to the *Heavy Shadow*. *Heavy Shadow* is very heavy, hard, dark and flat. Contrasted to these features, I made the *Lightening Body* light, soft, bright, and plump. Instead of shadow, this sculpture sheds red light from inside to outside, making it seem to be sacrificed by burning herself/himself.

¹⁹ Antony Gormley, Mark Holborn, eds., *Antony Gormley on Sculpture* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2015), 21

The *Lightening Body's* dazzling external visual effect under the irradiation of internal red light reveals internal metaphors of darkness and light, death and rebirth, sacrifice and sublimation, destruction and survival. This is also a reflection of the external relations and internal thoughts of Yin and Yang.



Figure 95. Muchuan Wang, *Lightening Body*, paper, iron wire, LED lamps, 210x120x41cm,

Lightening is a pun. Relative to shadow it means to illuminate the body or the body is illuminating and relative to heaviness it has the meaning of losing weight. This opposite relation echoes the Yin-Yang relation.

In the process of making it, I used different materials, including LED lamps, paper, iron wire and water. But as a result, the water evaporated and the iron wire hid inside of the paper volume. The lamps can hardly be seen but the light from it can shed on the paper volume and go further on the surroundings from the inside.

The materials are both very light. Using lightweight materials, paper, to represent the

forms and volumes of the body can weaken the physical existence of the body so that it increases its mental and spiritual meaning. The internal light weakened the physical structure of the body and altered its usual visual effects.

I chose the red light to increase energy and desire for the body. Such a physical image may indicate inner mental, emotional or spiritual energy. There could be metaphors for hope, desire, sacrifice, strength, effort, struggle, and so on.

The body seems like being on fire or being burned with the red light in the volume. In the dark space, the sculpture is like a burning man, glowing with a dazzling red light, and when I get close to him, I seem to feel the heat of baking and burning. It is as if the whole body was filled with molten lava. And it feels like a volcano is about to explode. He looks both like a man burned by the fire of desire and like a man about to be reborn.

Kinds of meanings of the Yin-Yang relation could be seen in the contrast between the *Lightening Body* and the *Heavy Shadow*. The color of the light is bright and suggests high temperatures. On the other hand, the *Heavy Shadow* is dark and cold even though it had a bright and red color at the moment of pouring. The materials of the *Lightening Body*, paper, iron wire and LED lamps, are light and soft, but the materials of the *Heavy Shadow* are heavy and hard.

The red light can also create atmosphere. Therefore, the work is not only the figure but also together with the space where the figure is located.

3.5.2 Luminous Man and Vanishing Man

Luminous Man and Vanishing Man contain two big human heads which are facing each other. One of them was made of iron wire covered by paper pulp and with light in it. The other head was made only with iron wire but no paper cover and light.

The sculptures have modern but mysterious characters. The basic form of the two heads was geometrically simplified. The positions of the eyes only form hollow points. The ears of the luminous one were changed to have animal features while the opposite one even had no ears. These characters can be found similar to some of the relics of

Sanxingdui Culture and Hongshan Culture which were found in western China. These relics are a symbol of the ancestors' worship of the mysterious forces of nature. These characters make the sculptures mysterious and involve a kind of spirituality.



Figure 96. Muchaun Wang, *Illuminous Man and Vanishing Man*, paper, iron wire, electric lamp, 100cm high, 2022

3.5.3 Meeting

The work consists of eight head sculptures arranged in a circle according to the directions of eight diagrams. Some of these heads had electric lights inside and some did not. This creates an atmosphere in which light and darkness set off each other. The various figures, either bright or dim, clear or vague, also added to the mystery of the work.

The eight heads were molded or cast from different textures of paper pulp. Thus, different light transmittance and surface effect were formed. The work is still evolving, and in the future it will be possible to swap or add different head sculptures, as well as change the brightness and color of the lights inside.



Figure 97. Muchuan Wang, *Meeting*, paper, electric lamps, 90x90x30cm, 2022

3.5.4 Lightening Powers

The *Lightening Powers* is a variable sculpture made with toilet paper and electric lamps. It was developed from and also belonged to the series of *Powers*. The light from the inside changed the visual effects and enriched the metaphor of the mental, spiritual and/or social world.



Figure 98. Muchuan Wang, *Lightening Powers*, paper and electric lamps, documented as stop-motion animation, variable size, 2022
 Access to Video: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1F1ROdbpnHYNUiAJ1eZdd1jUgUrVEELnq?usp=sharing>

To put red and yellow lights in the sculpture, I was inspired by my photographs taken from a church under the setting sun in a late afternoon when I was sitting at the edge of a square. The site gave me a great shock. There seemed to be a sense of sacredness. I felt that the radiant facet of the church had become particularly sublime.

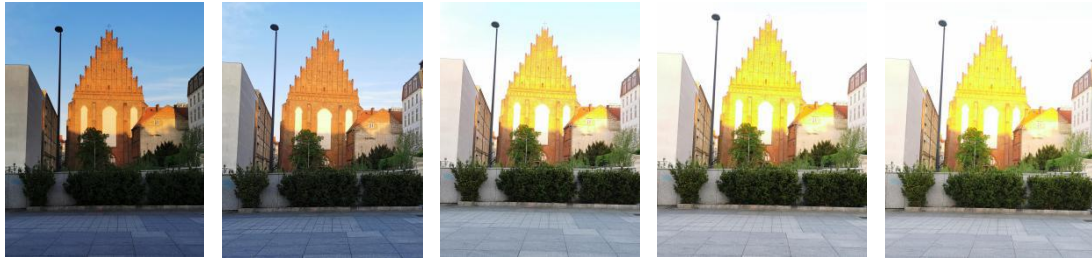


Figure 99. Muchuan Wang, *Lightening Church*, Digital photography, 2022

“The ‘inner light’ experience is the end product of a chain of transduction processes that originates beyond space-time in the archetype level. The coupling that connects the physical aspects of the body to its non-physical counterparts involves the magnetic vector potential, a contention supported by experimental findings.”²⁰

The light projected from the interior could enhance both visual and spiritual powers to the work. Light, combined with the ever-changing forms in time and space, alternates the glory and destruction contained in the work.

3.5.5 Power and Its Shadow

The work was made up of a sculpture of a tank placed on books and the shadow it creates on the opposite side. Due to the angle of the light, the shadow created by the tank turned into a building. It looks like a church or a pagoda.

It shows the inner ideology hidden in the external form. This sacred architecture stands in stark contrast to the violence and destruction of tanks. But the sacred building in front of the tank is just a shadow, and a shadow made by the tank. There seems to be an absurd contradiction. The tank is made of paper pulp with text and images, and underneath the tank are books, an accidental combination that seems metaphorical. The objects and their shadows in the work are realistic, but the relationship between the objects and their shadows were changed to the opposite. This change gives rise to a bewildering reverie about truth and illusion.

²⁰ William C. Gough and Robert L. Shacklett, “Outer and Inner Light,” *The Journal of Religion and Psychological Research*, (2002): 64-83. 72.



Figure 100. Muchuan Wang, *Tank and Its Shadow*, sculpture of tank, books, flashlight, variable size, 2022

The tank is confronting its shadow. It seems hostile to its own shadow and wants to fire at it. Does this absurdity show up in human behavior? Does this problem arise when individuals struggle for their desires? Is it hidden in the entanglement of the inner soul? Is it hidden in the history of a nation or a country? Does it exist in relationships between different peoples, religions or countries? Does it exist in the process of social, political and cultural development?

3.5.6 Invader

This is an installation composed of light and a motion device. In this piece, light shines from the hole I cut in the cardboard box onto the surrounding objects or walls. This hole was originally planned to be carved into the shape of a tank, but the shape of the tank was not very clear because the cardboard was thick and the space was very small, especially after the light magnified it would be more blurred. Sometimes it feels like a hand pointing straight ahead. Sometimes it feels like a knife with a thin handle and a wide body. Although this situation does not perfectly reflect the original intention of

design, it adds multiple meanings to the work.

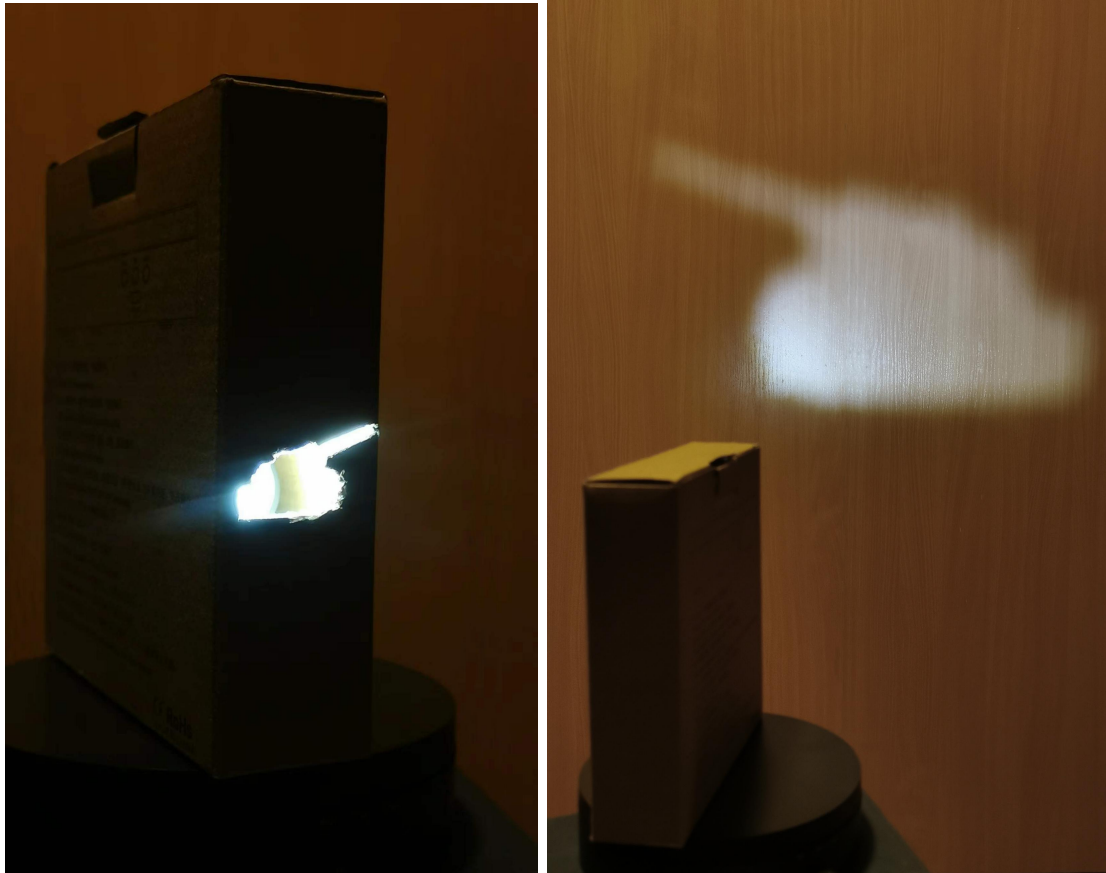


Figure 101. Muchuan Wang, *Invader*, carton box, flash light, rotating display stand, variable size, 2022

Access to Video: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1F1ROdbpnHYNUiAJ1eZdd1jUgUrVEELnq?usp=sharing>

The surrounding site, objects and spectators may become part of the work due to the light and its rotation. The tank-shaped light projected from the hole reveals the features of the objects or walls, and what is not illuminated recesses into darkness. As the light is constantly moved by the dynamic device, objects around it are constantly appearing and receding. Of course, the spectators in the venue may also be illuminated by this moving light. If a viewer is close to the light source, a tank-shaped light will appear on the viewer. If far away, the person will be illuminated as a whole without tank-shaped lights.

3.5.7 Directions of Desire

This work could be a part of the *Directions* series . However, I decided to put light into

it and made it belong to the series of *Light and Shadow*.



Figure 103. Muchuan Wang, *Directions of Desire*, iron and electric lamps, 220x36x20cm, 2022

The solid arrows and empty arrows in this work are formed by the iron plate and the gaps in the plate. The solid arrow of iron points outward and the empty arrow points inward.



Figure 102. Trigram Li in the *Book of Changes*

I put electric lamps into the empty space of the iron arrows. The addition of internal light gives the arrows a strong contrast of dark arrows and bright arrows. The balance between the solid arrows and the empty arrows could be changed by turning on or off the light. The metal arrows are stronger than the empty arrows in the natural light. While the empty arrows will stand out even more when the light from the inside is turned on.

It could be closely related to the trigrams Li in the *Book of Changes*. Li symbols “clinging, light-giving, fire, and second daughter”²¹. The structure of this work is similar to the combination of the lines. The interior red light also gives the work a fire-like energy.

It contains contradictory relations between dark and light, substance and void, existence and nothingness, exterior and interior, etc. These relations could cause associations and resonances at different levels according to their different living experiences.

²¹ Richard Wilhelm (Trans), *I Ching or Book of Changes* (London: Gardners Books, 1989), li.

3.5.8 Flowing Light

Flowing Light is an abstract sculpture made with iron wire, toilet paper and LED lamps with a solar system. The abstract volume of the sculpture was developed from the lines in the *Book of Changes*. The overall shape is a curve in which a solid line evolved into a wave. The evolution of this shape should also conform to the concept of change in the *Book of Changes*.

The lamps with a solar system were inside of the empty volume. The lamps would be turned on in the evenings and be turned off in the mornings. So it would be changed between the natural light from the outside in the daytime and the artificial light from the inside at night.

The sculpture was actually composed of two parts, and it can be divided into two short lines by a long line in the next presentation. This is on equivalent to changing the solid line representing the Yang (positive) into the broken line representing the Yin (negative). In addition to the change from long to short lines, the toilet paper covering the volume formed by the barbed wire and the lighting inside can also be replaced. This change will also open up more possibilities for artistic exploration.



Figure 104. Muchuan Wang, *Flowing Light* (photo in the evening), 400 x 70 x 35 cm, paper and light with solar energy system, 2020



Figure 105. Muchuan Wang, *Flowing Light* (image in the daytime), 400 x 70 x 35 cm, paper and light with solar energy system, 2020

3.5.9 Firing River

In China, there is an old saying that fire and water are incompatible. In this work, however, I combined the two incompatible elements of fire and water. These were created by flowing curves and fiery red lights.

The flowing lines and fiery red colors can form a beautiful picture like flowers, may composite a moving melody like music, will also arouse the surging emotions in the human body. When I got close to it, I felt its passion and energy like magma about to erupt.

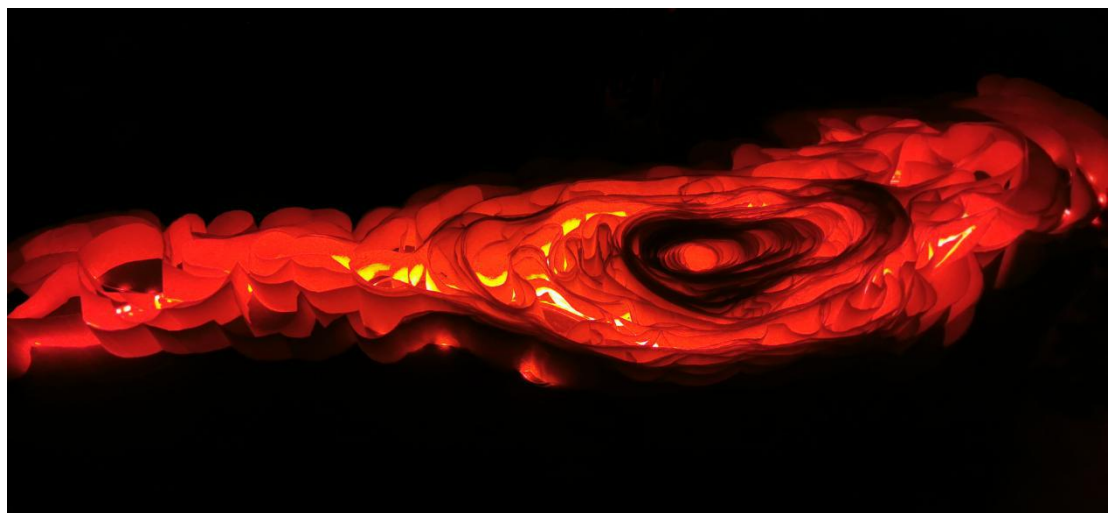


Figure 106. Muchuan Wang, *Firing River*, paper, LED lamps, variable size, 2022

3.5.10 Mysterious Mirrors - Mysterious Light

The work is a sculptural installation of mirrors and light. These mirrors are not ordinary mirrors, but flexible ones made of soft materials. Because of this feature, these mirrors reflect different images on the surrounding objects, walls or ceilings under different lights, and distorting mirrors reflect the blurred and distorted environment and maybe also the spectators.

Under the interaction of mirrors and light, the images reflected on the surroundings and the virtual scene of the surroundings reflected by the mirror make the works entangled with the environment and the spectators. The works and reality penetrate into each other to form an indistinguishable relationship of mutual transformation. This is similar to how the Yin-Yang relation changes under different circumstances.

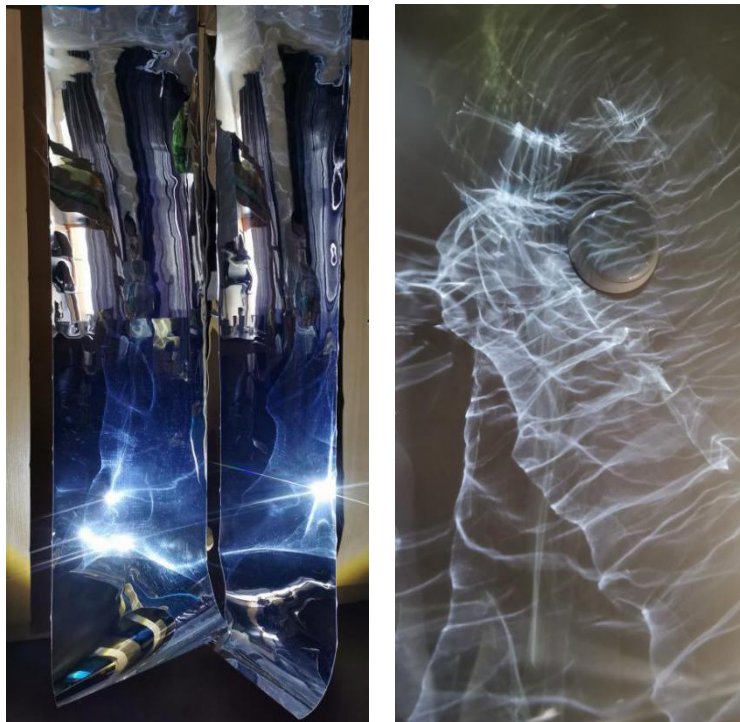


Figure 107. Muchuan Wang, *Mysterious Mirrors - Mysterious Light*, soft mirrors, flash light, variable size in specific site, 2022

3.5.11 Power of Changes

Power of Changes is a dynamic sculpture that shows the contrast and transformation between tanks and religious buildings. In the *Power of Changes*, the silhouettes of

tanks and religious buildings form a contrast between up and down, solid and void, dynamic and static.

There is no clear distinction between what religion these buildings belong to, which can be a church, a bell tower or a pagoda. The point is the similarity between the slender spire at the top of the building and the steel tube at the front of the tank. The top of the solid silhouette can swing regularly between the three positions of left, middle and right through the motion of a mechanical system rotated by hand with the rear handle. This swing seems to be a simple repetition, but it creates a cycle between the two types of powers, thus creating metaphors with philosophical and social connotations.

This work was supported by professor Piotr Jedrzejewski from the Department of Industrial Design. With the help of professors, technicians and students from the Department of Industrial Design, this kinetic sculpture was experimented in the Machine and Shape Processing Studio. The methods of kinetic devices from industrial design, such as mechanical design, component production, and combination, are of great help to my exploration of kinetic sculpture.



Figure 108. Muchuan Wang, *Power of Changes*, wood, plastic sheet, elastic strip, 95x40x20cm, 2022 (mechanical system designed by Piotr Jedrzejewski)

4. Chapter IV: Conclusion

In this chapter, a conclusion of the research and the resulting works will be presented. Focusing on experimental studio work in sculpture with inner and outer relations of Yin-Yang and the Five Elements, five series of sculptural works were realized.

This PhD research project is an interdisciplinary study. First of all, it crosses two fields of contemporary art and traditional culture. Second, although this research focuses on sculpture, different art forms were involved in the research process. Third, due to the choice and application of different materials and techniques, the exploration and practice of sculpture has also reached some other areas of art.

The original plan was to introduce elements of traditional Chinese culture into the creation of contemporary sculpture. However, the Chinese traditional culture is a huge field. There was a big question about what kind of elements and what perspective should be chosen. Through the exploration of relevant literature, related artists and their works as well as artistic practice, the *Book of Changes* was gradually determined as the source, and the inner and outer relations are the key points for conceptual and practical exploration. In this way, the problems of the two fields are interwoven at a key point, so that the research has a specific and clear direction and area.

The practice of sculpture exploration was deepened and expanded around the internal and external relations in the *Book of Changes*. Under the guidance of this direction, artistic development was deeply explored along with the internal thought and external demonstration of the relationship between Yin and Yang. The concept of five elements was applied to the choice of sculpture materials. Thus, a research structure was established to be the central concept and multi-dimensional explorations.

The first chapter, includes a brief introduction to the *Book of Changes*, and the analysis of the inner and outer relations from this book.

There are many kinds of understanding of the *Book of Changes*. This introduction provides only a basic idea of its history, content, features, formal and intellectual elements.

In this chapter, the internal and external relations in the *Book of Changes* were analyzed. The relations between visual objects, images, symbols and abstract forms were discussed as external relations, while the invisible internal laws and ideological relations were discussed as internal relations. The relationship between Yin and Yang is the basis of all the relations in the *Book of Changes*. The external relation of Yin-Yang is mainly manifested as Taiji pattern, trigrams, hexagrams to reflect the relations between kinds of things in the real world. Its internal laws mainly include unity of opposites, change, simplification, trend and chance.

The second chapter is about artistic exploration under the concept of inner and outer relations from the *Book of Changes*. There are two sections that include artistic practice focusing on the Yin-Yang relation and the creative experiment following the Five Elements.

There are some elements from the external aspect of the Yin-Yang relationship that were selected for artistic exploration. Human figures and portraits from the human domain, animals, mountains and rivers from the natural world were selected as contents or subjects to apply to the figurative sculptures. For example, figures of human and animal were sculpted and formed the *Confronting* series with face-to-face or back-to-back relations. The elements from the Taiji pattern and the Yin-Yang diagram were introduced to explore the *Waving* series and the *Directions* series. The inner relations from the concepts of the unity of opposites and changes were used for even wider than the external relations for exploring creative practice and the connotation reflected from the works.

In this project, the Five Elements were mainly used to select materials for experimental practice. The Five Elements are the five aspects divided according to the material properties of things, which are usually called Earth, Metal, Wood, Fire and Water. In addition to metal, clay was selected for the element of the Earth, paper for the element of Wood, light for the element of Fire, ice and glass for the element of Water.

According to the selection of materials under the concept of the Five Elements, sculptural practice also involved techniques and art forms of ceramics, metal, hand-made paper, light art, water and glass. Because of this, some difficulties and problems have arisen. However at the same time, new possibilities were discovered by learning new creative methods. The final works were also diversified due to the combination of techniques, materials and knowledge from different professional fields. This is part of the appeal of cross-disciplinary research.

I chose clay from the Earth for sculpture. This is the material I have been using since I started studying sculpture. It is often used as a transit material to shape volumes that are then turned into other materials. In this project, it was also used as the final material. For example, I left the clay model on and let it dry. Clay sculptures were also fired into ceramics. The clay has been baptized by water and fire. In this process, it can be seen that water, fire and earth complement each other and permeate each other. In terms of modeling, the hollow character of ceramic is extended to show the intertransformation relationship between internal space and external space.

According to the element of Metal, metal casting and metal welding were applied to make sculptures. In the artistic practice, iron, bronze and aluminum cast works present different material characteristics. The process of metal casting is complex. In the process of modelling, mold making, wax losing, metal pouring and surface treatment, in addition to metal, clay, plaster, wax, green sand, silica sand, ceramic particles, horse manure, graphite, talc, coke, gas, borax and other materials were also used. The mixing and transformation of various materials can also be seen in the process.

Paper was selected from the element of Wood because paper is generally made from wood fibers and paper fibers. In this study, paper as a sculptural material began with pulp molding and hand shaping. From the production of recycled pulp made of toilet paper, cardboard and books to directly using toilet paper, cardboard and books to create works. Five series were explored with paper products.

From creating hollow sculptures with paper, I gradually discovered the possibility of creating sculptures by combining light and paper. From then on, I also decided to

choose light as a material for sculpture from the element of Fire. It gradually contributed to the formation of *Shadow and Light* series of works, which I selected as my PhD works.

From the element of Water, ice and glass were chosen for this exploration of artistic practice. The process of water being frozen into ice and then melted into water in the *Powers* series also shows the transformation of tanks and architectural images from nothing to being and from being to nothing. This corresponds to the idea of change in the *Book of Changes*. Glass and ice have similar characteristics in transparency and reflectance. It was used to express the visual effect and psychological feeling of sculpture, which is ethereal and changeable. It was also used to represent lines or forms that flow like water.

The third chapter presents the works which are the outcome of my research. The resulting sculptures were divided into five series according to the subjects and contents. The five series, including *Confronting*, *Powers*, *Directions*, *Waving*, *Shadow and Light*, have different characters and also have a lot of similarities. These five series of works not only have the relationship between Yin and Yang, but also are made of materials selected according to the principle of the five elements.

The series of *Confronting* and *Powers* contain images of humans, animals and artifacts. In the form of figurative sculptures, these two series show the relations between opposite figures of humans, between confronting images of animals, and between binary man-made objects and their ideological connotations.

In the *Confronting* series, two opposing figures or animals face to face or back to back directly confront each other. On the one hand, the figures are mainly face-to-face portraits. Through the different distances between the two sculptures, the viewer can see the interactive relationship between them, such as gaze, conversation, interdependence, intimacy and alienation. On the other hand, there is confrontation, conflict, separation and tearing between animal images. These external relationships between figures and animal sculptures contain the internal psychological and spiritual relations between the subject and the self, the subject and the other, and the two. There is no detailed depiction or emphasis on facial expressions in the portrait sculptures. A

weakened phenotype can help shift the focus to a purely binary relationship between the two. Animal sculptures emphasize a force that pushes inward or pulls outward. The visual effects and psychological feelings brought to the viewers by this tension may make this tension of conflict symbolic. Because of the different materials used, it also reflects the various conflicts in human society and the anguish and struggle of the human inner world.

The *Powers* series consists of two types of objects or a single object that can be transformed into two forms. Both of these objects are man-made. One is tanks and the other is buildings. The buildings are religious buildings, which can be churches or pagodas, or architectural images that look both like churches and pagodas. The relationship between the power of faith and violence symbolized by these two images is thought-provoking. Tanks symbolize violence. Of course, it can be a force for aggression or for self-protection. In this sense, the power may be either positive or negative. But this is the opposite of the power of faith symbolized by religious architecture. In the interweaving and transformation of these two forces, the series reflects the cultural differences, political contradictions, religious conflicts and other ongoing social problems in today's world behind them.

The visual elements of Taiji pattern and Yin-Yang diagrams have been applied to the series of *Waving* and *Directions*. The *Waving* series is more similar to the Taiji pattern in a curved form. The *Directions* series is more like the lines of the trigrams and the hexagrams. The structures of the visual signs also contain the inner thought of changes and trends in the *Book of Changes*.

The rotating curves in the linear combinations of the diagrams and hexagrams are shown in the *Waving* series. The combinations of the rhythm formed by the S-shaped curve in the Taiji pattern and the linear combinations of the diagrams make the static sculptures have dynamic visual effects. Although these are only abstract linear combinations, they form the feature of the flowing of water. This also makes the series of works have the characteristics of the element of Water in form of the Five Elements. Therefore, the works have abstract forms and figurative atmospheres. The flowing forms also refine the idea of changing and the ever-growing of the world in the *Book of Changes*. Several materials, including paper, glass and light, were applied to make the

sculptures. Different combinations of forms and materials bring different psychological feelings to the audience.

The *Directions* series cites different ways of combining lines in diagrams and adds arrows that are often used in life and charts to indicate direction or trend. This makes the contrast between the solid line and the broken line, which originally represent related concepts such as Yin and Yang, even more strikingly. These arrows are originally just simple symbols, but can the trend or contradiction formed by the combination of these arrows form some kind of metaphor, can it stimulate the viewer to some kind of emotion, can it cause inner thought on related issues? The diagrams in the *Book of Changes* also reflect the relationship between various things in nature and human society through visual symbols, thus triggering the judgment and thinking of the situation.

The *Shadow and Light* series is based on the original concept of Yin-Yang. The original meaning of Yin-Yang is shadow and light, which is also the division of black and white of the Taiji pattern. This series takes shadow and light as the theme or includes shadow or light elements. In the *Book of Changes*, shadow and light are seen as observing the world from two angles. It is also extended to many opposite relations, including night and day, earth and heaven, female and male, negative and positive, weak and strong, subordinate and superior, and even developed from dark and light into evil and justice, humble and noble, backward and forward, obedience and confrontation.

The works in this series have a variety of forms. Shadow and light appear in the works as content and theme, as materials or means. For example, the shadow in the *Heavy Shadow* is the content represented by the sculpture. It is also because of the conversion relationship between the content, form and material that this work contains profound ideological connotations. In many works, light and shadow are directly used as forms of expression. *Lightening Body*, for example, directly adds light to sculptures to form a glowing image of human Body. The relationship between the color of light and the human volume, forms a bright visual effect to convey profound ideological connotation. This will give the viewer(s) both visual and psychological experiences. In addition, the *Power and Its Shadow* shows the relationship between objects and their shadows, while the *Invader* highlights the light that shines from the hole.

The *Shadow and Light* series of works were selected as the PhD work firstly because these works can embody the original meaning of the relationship between Yin and Yang, and also because the works contain various factors and contents of other series of works, and reflect the basic concepts and forms of other series of works.

In the research process, in addition to sculpture, there were also other kinds of art forms, including photography, drawing and collage in the field of fine arts as well as animation, which combine fine arts and film, as avenues of the research. Photography was used to research light and shadow. In this project, photography was regarded as a way to study light and shadow, which was of great help to the birth of the *Shadow and Light* series. As a result, it also produced a series of photographs of light and shadow. Making drawings was to discover the possibility of the fusion of figures and the flowing curves from calligraphy. While collage works were made to explore the boundaries between painting, printmaking and sculpture, as well as the possibility of mutual transformation and integration. In addition, stop-motion animation and video were used to record the transformation process of the changeable or dynamic sculptures. In other words, a method of making stop motion animation and videos was developed during this process. These art forms were implemented for study and eventually resulted in several series of works of art. Artistic research can take several different forms, including art as research, research as art, research for art and art for research. This project includes research for artistic creation, artistic creation for research, art as a result of research and art as a way of research. Thus different relations can be seen in this interdisciplinary study.

Starting from the inner and outer relations of the *Book of Changes*, through the artistic exploration of the Yin-Yang relation in terms of concept, form and content, as well as the material experiment under the guidance of the concept of the Five Elements, five series of sculptures were finally obtained, and an effective research method was also formed. This is very helpful for future research and exploration. The generating structure of research with the resulting works could be determined by the way of the developing structure of the Yin-Yang diagrams. The deductive method of the *Book of Changes* from symbols to things and then to internal laws and thoughts can greatly inspire the way of art exploration. In the *Book of Changes*, first of all, abstract symbols

represent various objects to generate the relations between various things, and then through the changes of various relations to think about the internal relations between things. This generation method can even be used as methodology for artistic research. This model can form a large space for exploration. This study is just the beginning of an ongoing exploration in this direction. It may be a stepping stone for my future artistic career.

5. Documentation of Works Selected as PhD Projects



Figure 109. Muchuan Wang, *Heavy Shadow*, Iron, 185x80x80cm, 2022



Figure 110. Muchuan Wang, *Heavy Shadow (details)*, iron, 185x80x80cm, 2022



Figure 111. Muchuan Wang, *Lightening Body*, paper, iron wire, LED lamps, 210x120x41 cm, 2022

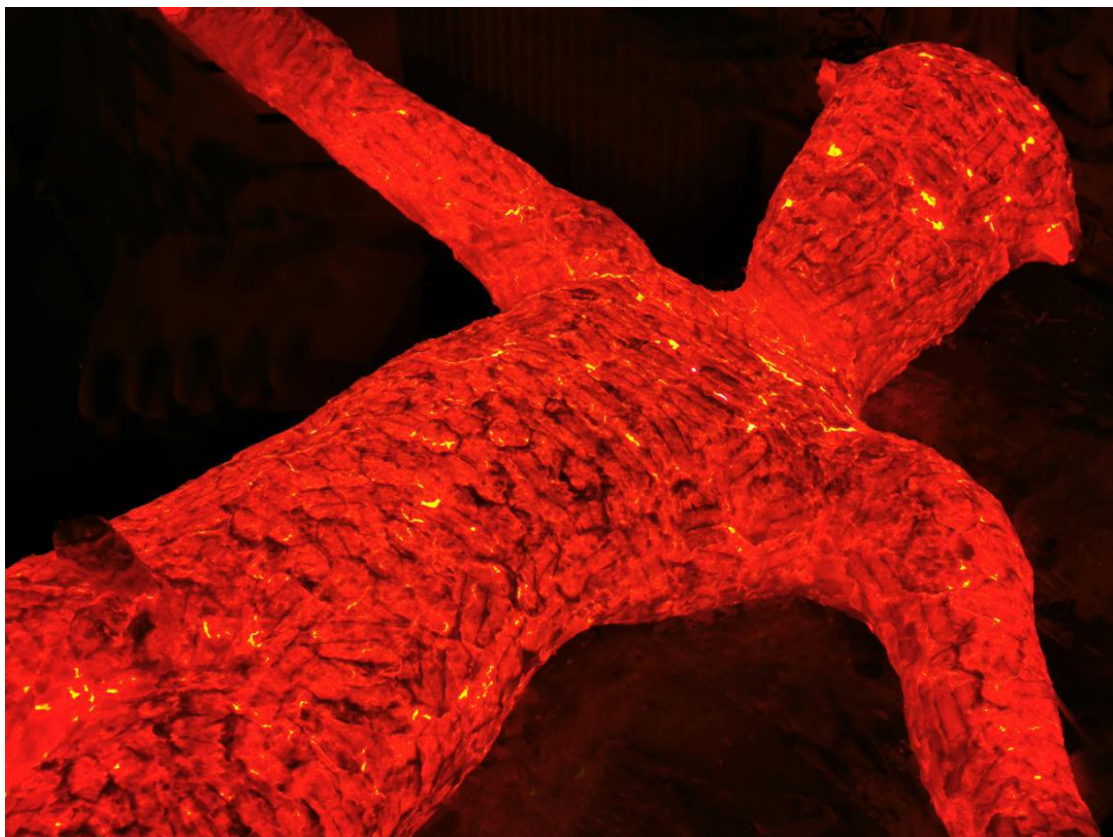


Figure 112. Muchuan Wang, *Lightening Body (part)*, paper, iron wire, LED lamps, 210x120x41 cm, 2022



Figure 113. Muchuan Wang, *Luminous Man and Vanishing Man*, paper, iron wire and electric lamp, 100cm high, 2022



Figure 114. Muchuan Wang, *Meeting*, paper and electric lamps, variable size, 2020-2022

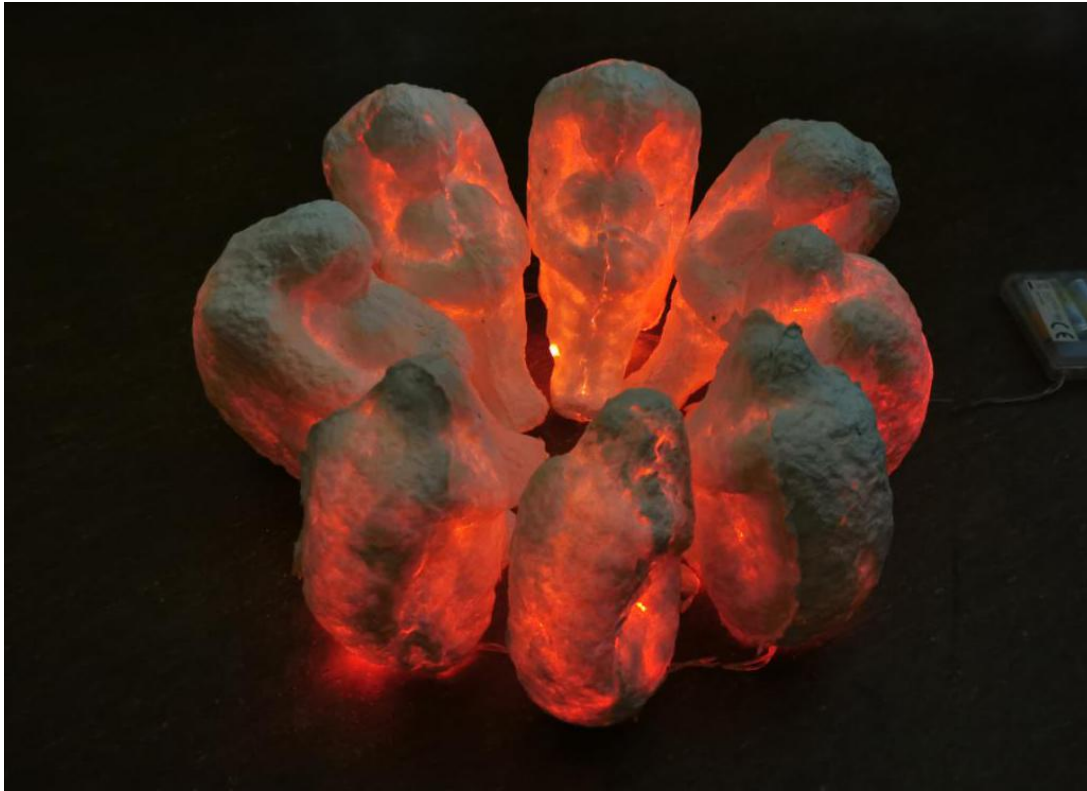


Figure 115. Muchuan Wang, *Luminous Figures*, paper and electric lamps, 40x40x17cm, 2020-2022



Figure 116, 117. Muchuan Wang, *Luminous Figures*, paper and electric lamps, 64x17x17cm, 2020-2022



Figure 118. Muchuan Wang, *Lightening Powers*, paper and electric lamps, variable size, documented as stop-motion animation, 2022
 Access to Video: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1F1ROdbpnHYNUiAJ1eZdd1jUgUrVEELnq?usp=sharing>



Figure 119. Muchuan Wang, *Lightening Powers*, paper and electric lamps, variable size, documented as stop-motion animation, 2022
 Access to Video: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1F1ROdbpnHYNUiAJ1eZdd1jUgUrVEELnq?usp=sharing>



Figure 120. Muchuan Wang, *Lightening Powers*, paper and electric lamps, variable size, documented as stop-motion animation, 2022
 Access to Video: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1F1ROdbpnHYNUiAJ1eZdd1jUgUrVEELnq?usp=sharing>



Figure 121. Muchuan Wang, *Lightening Powers*, paper and electric lamps, variable size, documented as stop-motion animation, 2022
Access to Video: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1F1ROdbpnHYNUiAJ1eZdd1jUgUrVEELnq?usp=sharing>



Figure 122. Muchuan Wang, *Tank and Its Shadow*, sculpture of tank, books, flashlight, variable size, 2022

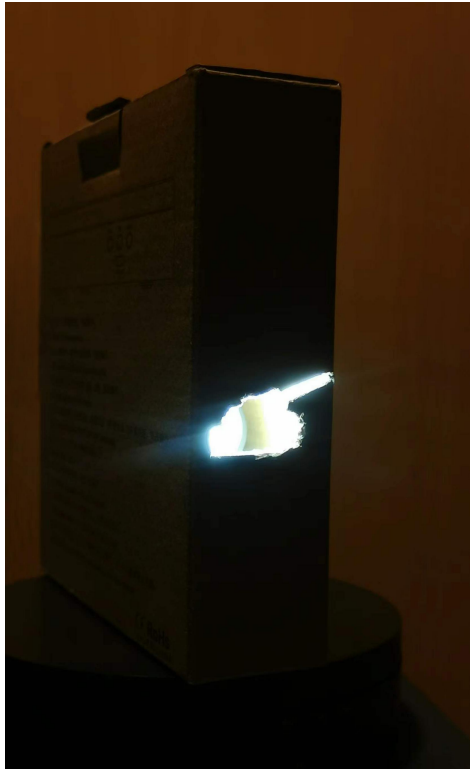


Figure 123. Muchuan Wang, *Intruder*, carton box, flash light, rotating display stand, variable size, 2022
Access to Video: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1F1ROdbpnHYNUiAJ1eZdd1jUgUrVEELnq?usp=sharing>

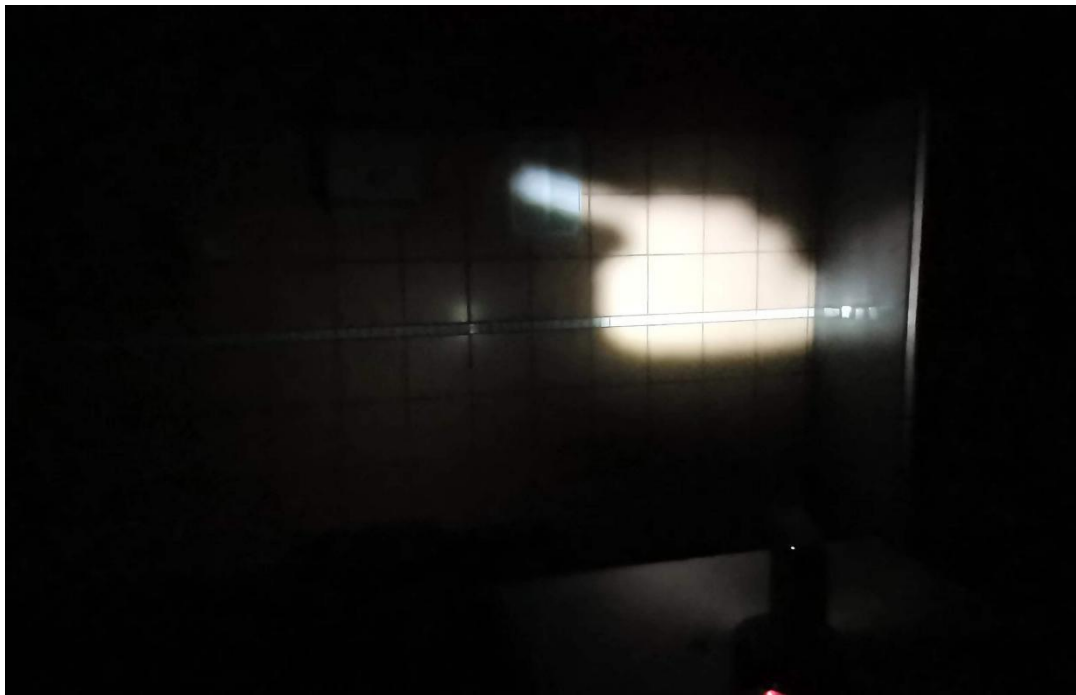


Figure 124. Muchuan Wang, *Intruder*, carton box, flash light, rotating display stand, variable size, 2022
Access to Video: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1F1ROdbpnHYNUiAJ1eZdd1jUgUrVEELnq?usp=sharing>

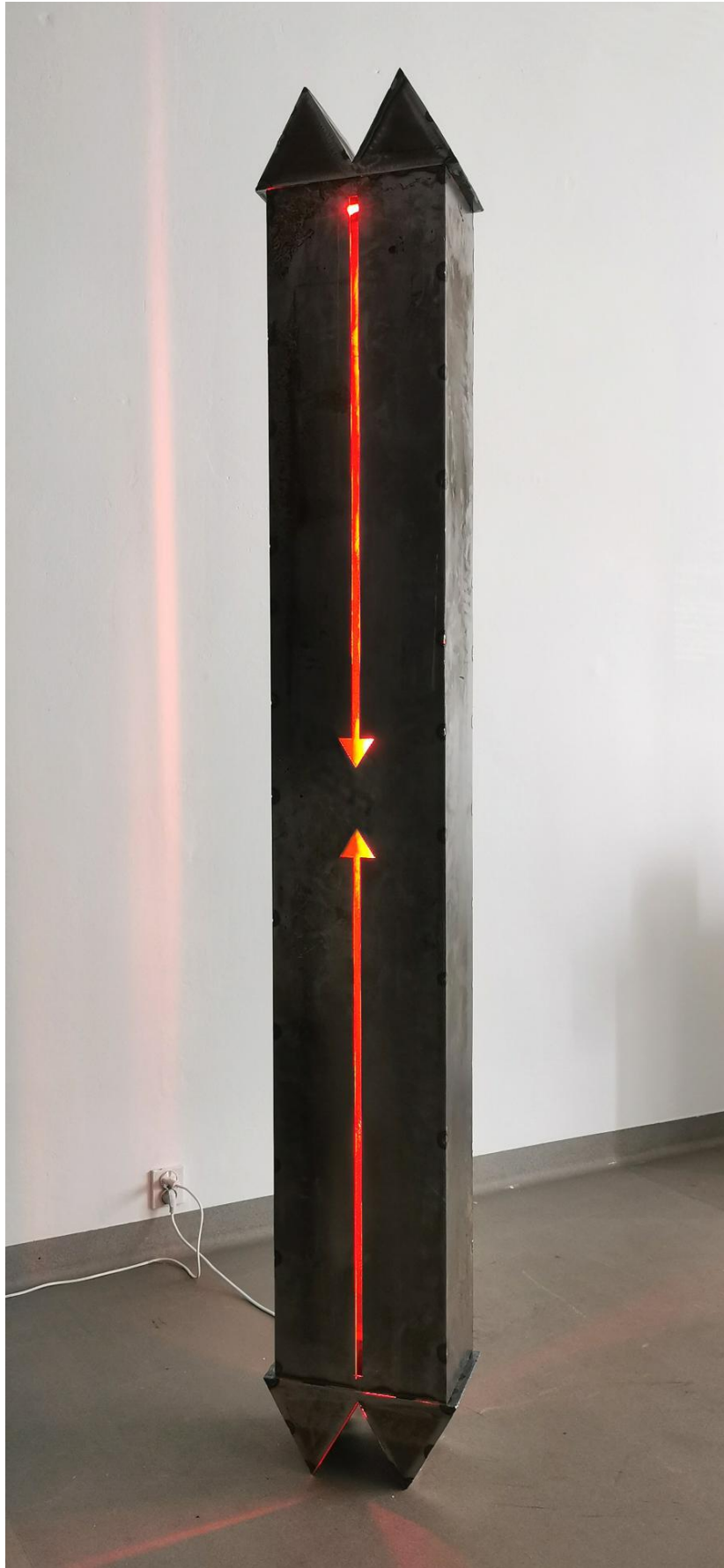


Figure 125 Muchuan Wang, *Directions of Desire*, iron and electric lamps, 220x36x20cm, 2022



Figure 126. Muchuan Wang, *Directions of Blue Light*, found-object, LED lamps, plastic film, 210x30x10cm, 2022

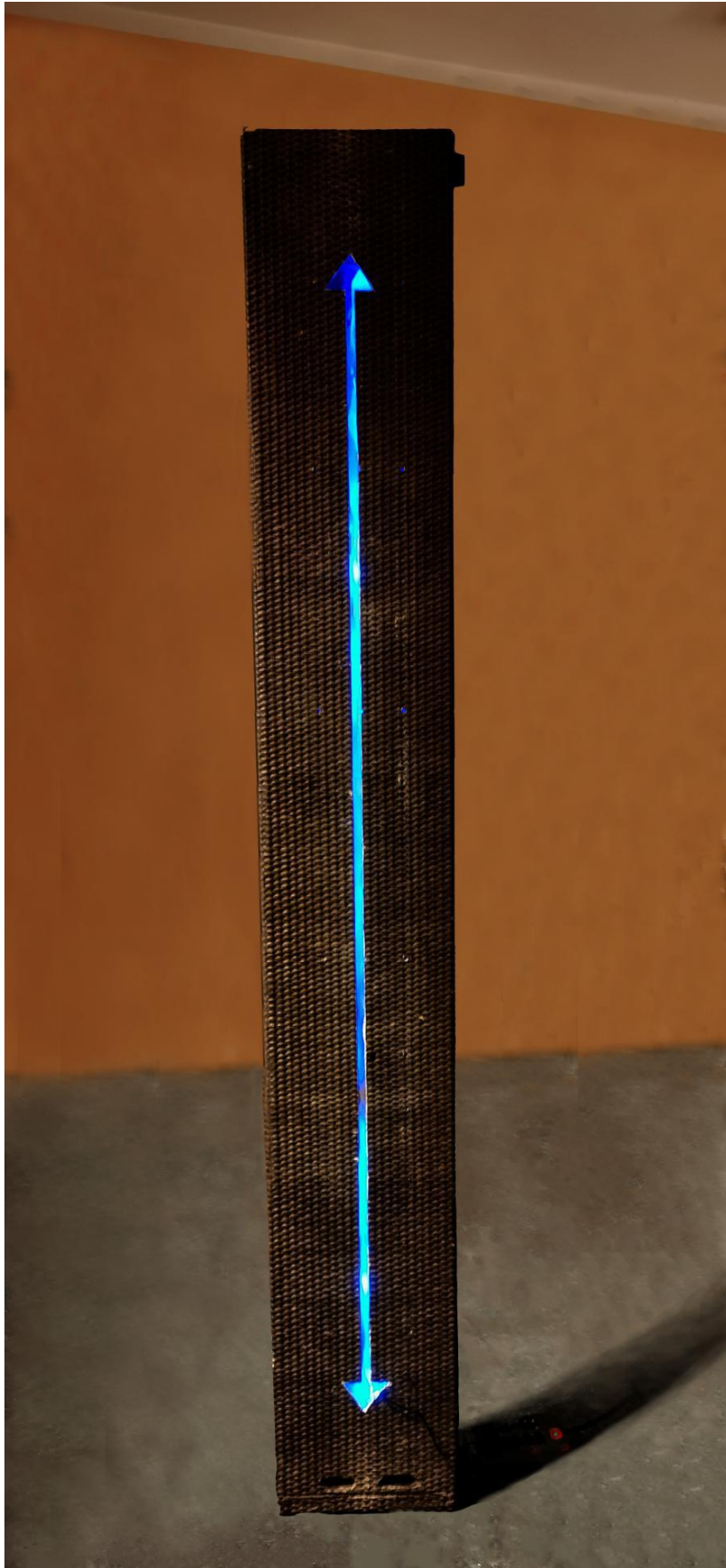


Figure 127. Muchuan Wang, *Directions of Blue Light*, found-object, LED lamps, plastic film, 210x30x10cm, 2022



Figure 128. Muchuan Wang, *Flowing Light* (image in the daytime), 400 x 70 x 35 cm, paper and light with solar energy system, 2020



Figure 129. Muchuan Wang, *Flowing Light* (photo in the evening, 400 x 70 x 35 cm, paper and light with solar energy system, 2020)

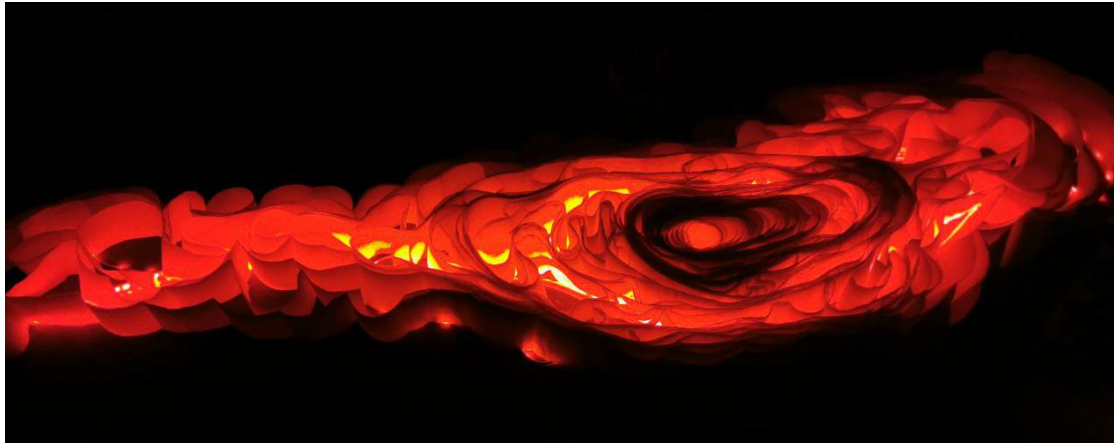


Figure 130. Muchuan Wang, *Firing River*, paper and LED lamps, variable size, 2022

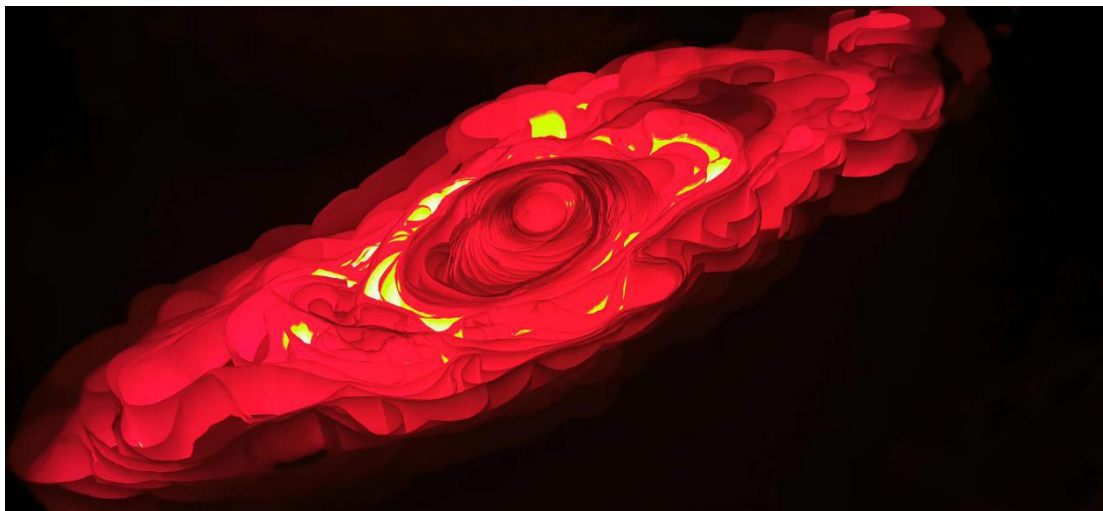


Figure 131. Muchuan Wang, *Firing River*, paper and LED lamps, variable size, 2022

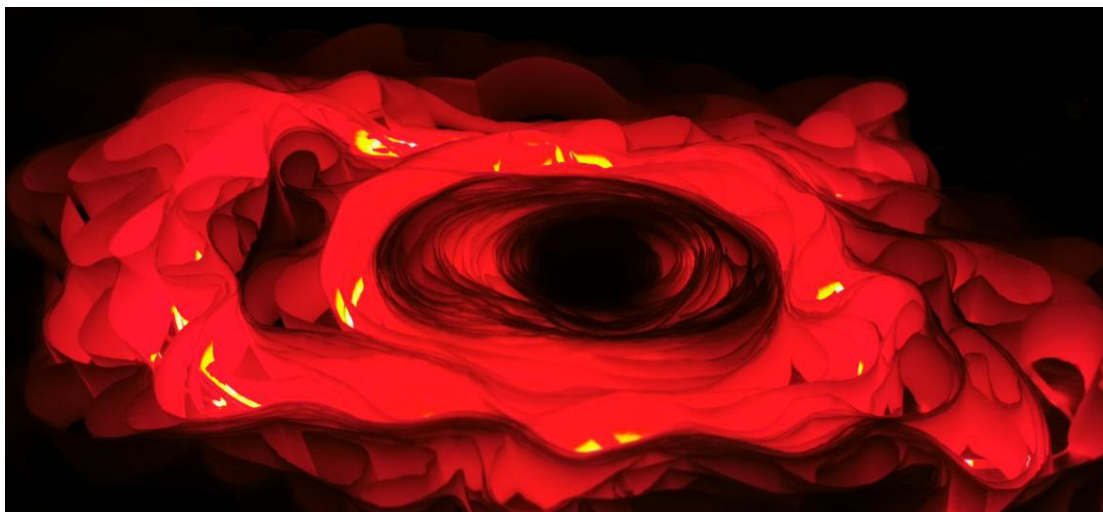


Figure 132. Muchuan Wang, *Firing River*, paper and LED lamps, variable size, 2022

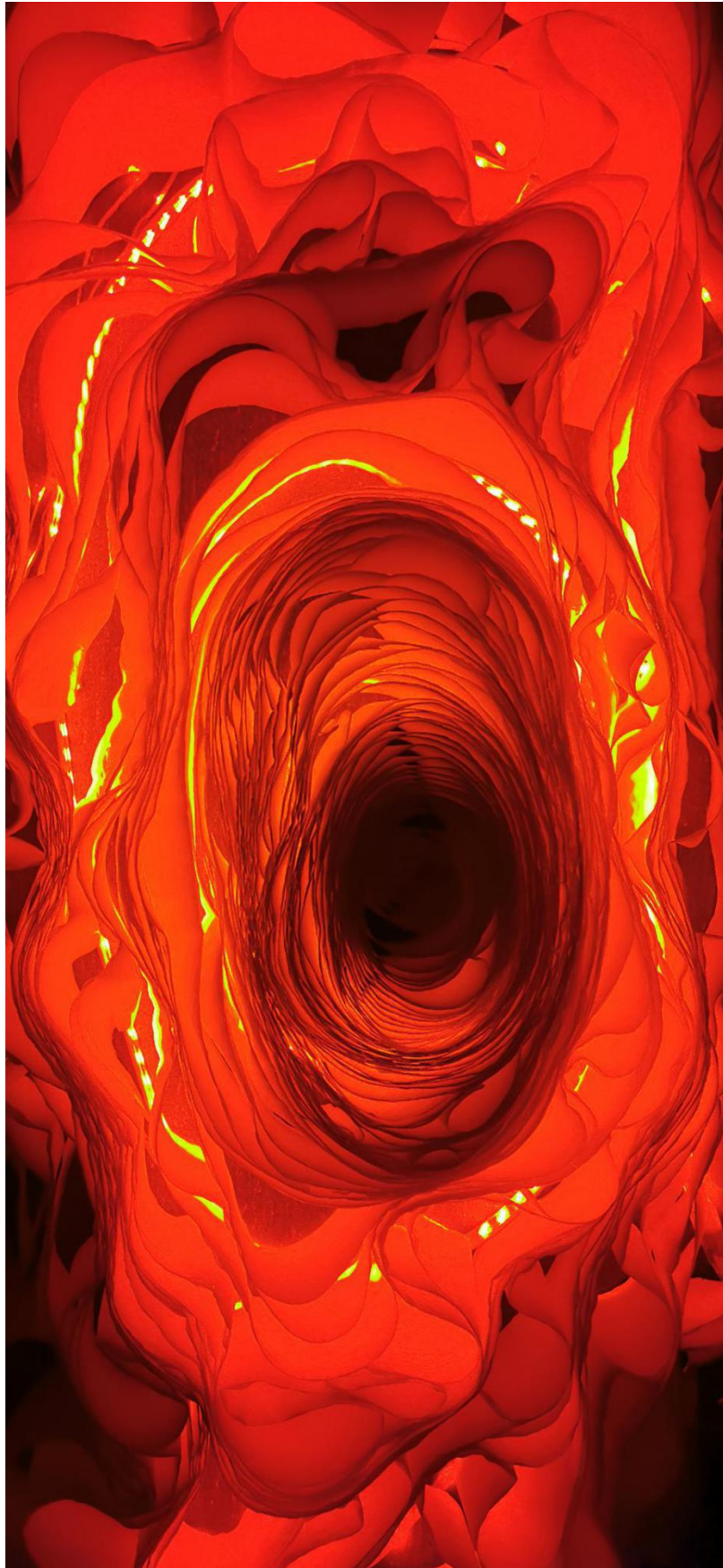


Figure 133. Muchuan Wang, *Firing River*, paper and LED lamps, variable size, 2022

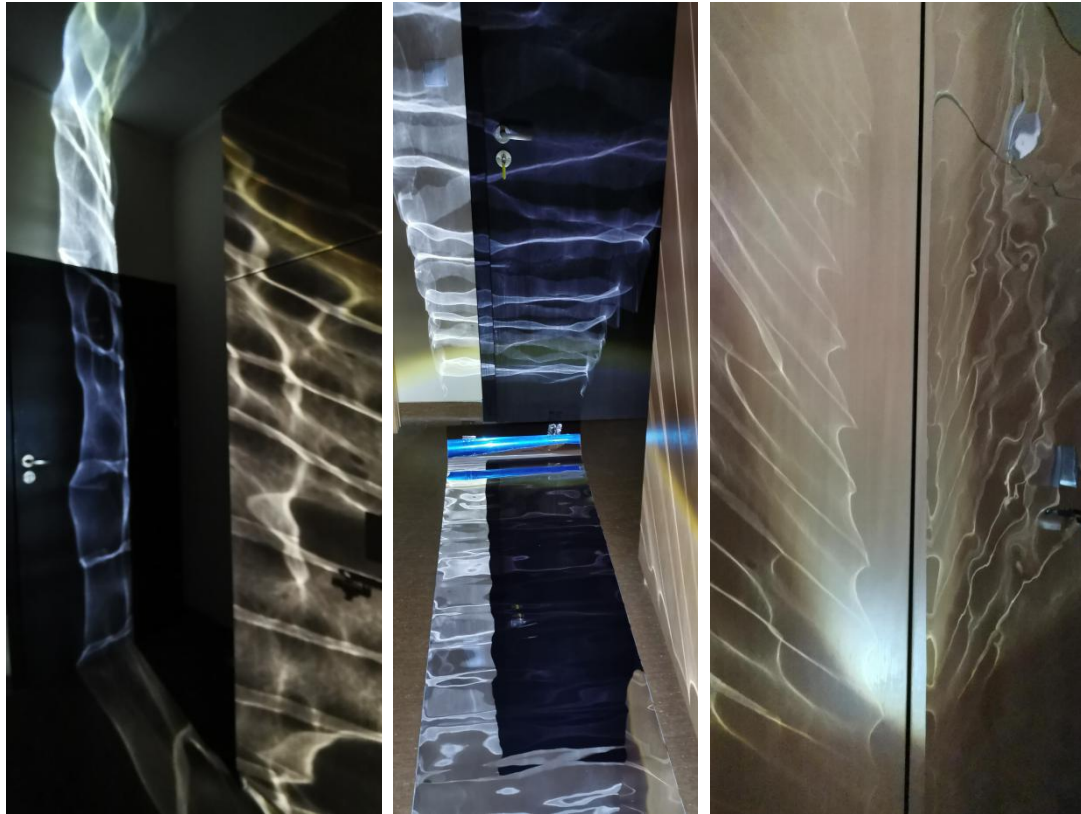


Figure 134. Muchuan Wang, *Mysterious Mirrors - Mysterious Light*, soft mirrors, flash light, variable size in specific site, 2022

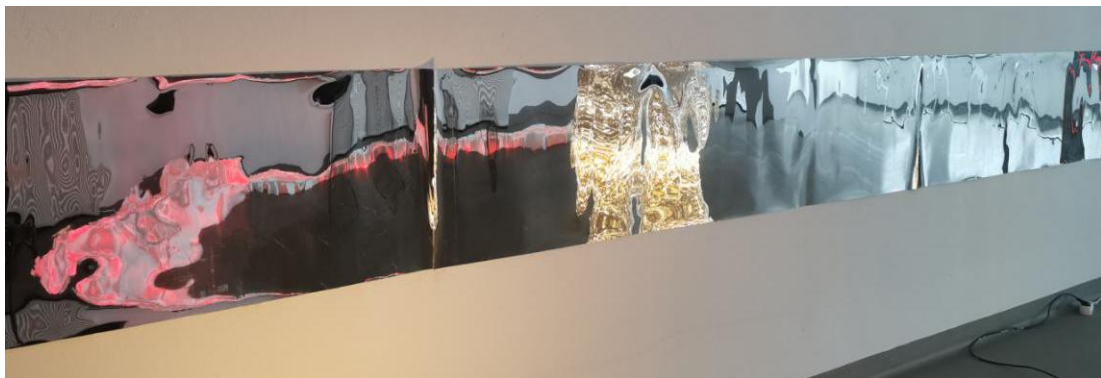


Figure 135. Muchuan Wang, *Mysterious Mirrors - Mysterious Light*, soft mirrors, flash light, variable size in specific site, 2022

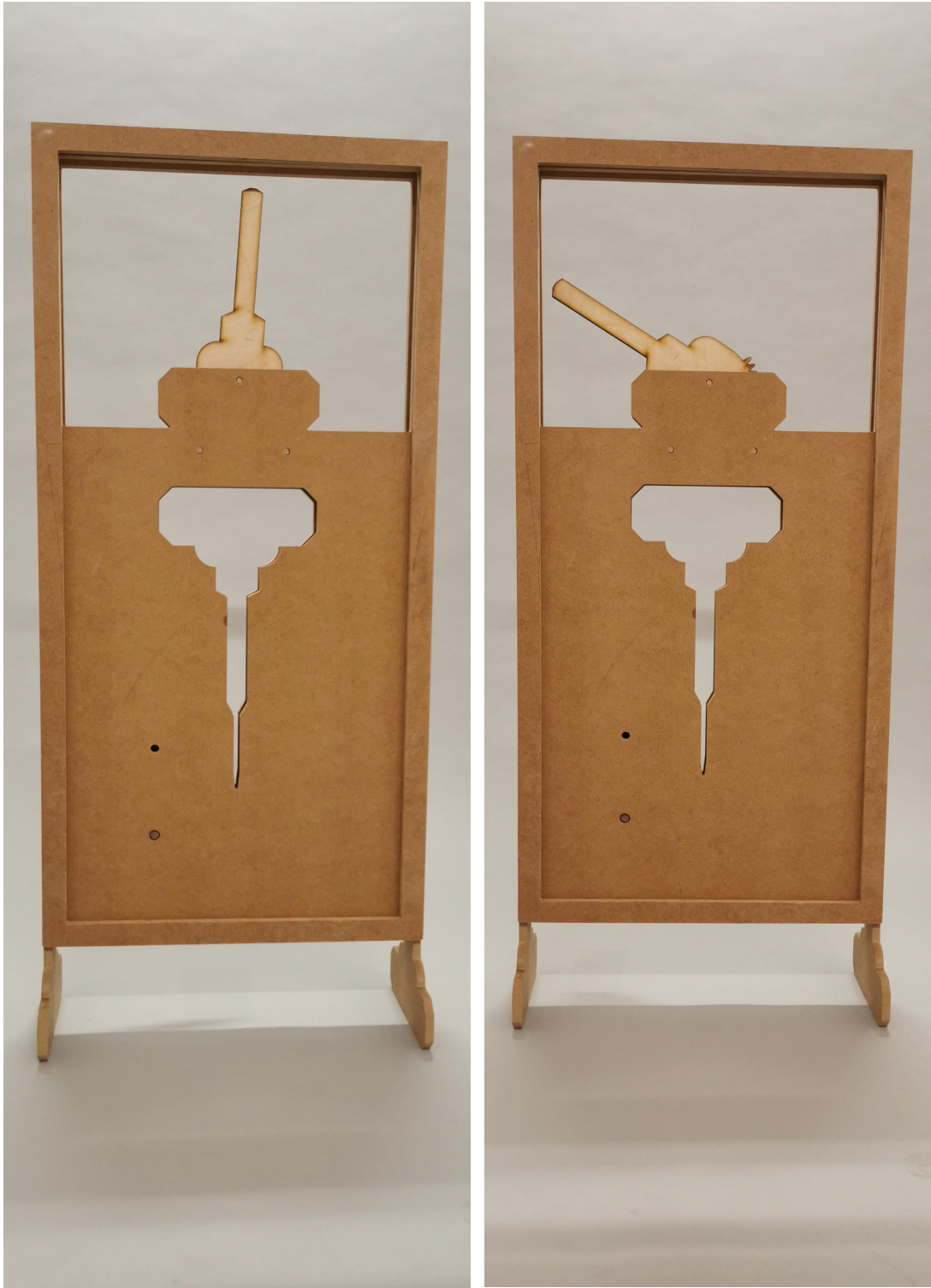


Figure 136. Muchuan Wang, *Power of Changes*, wood, plastic sheet, elastic strip, 95x40x20cm, 2022
(mechanical system designed by Piotr Jedrzejewski)

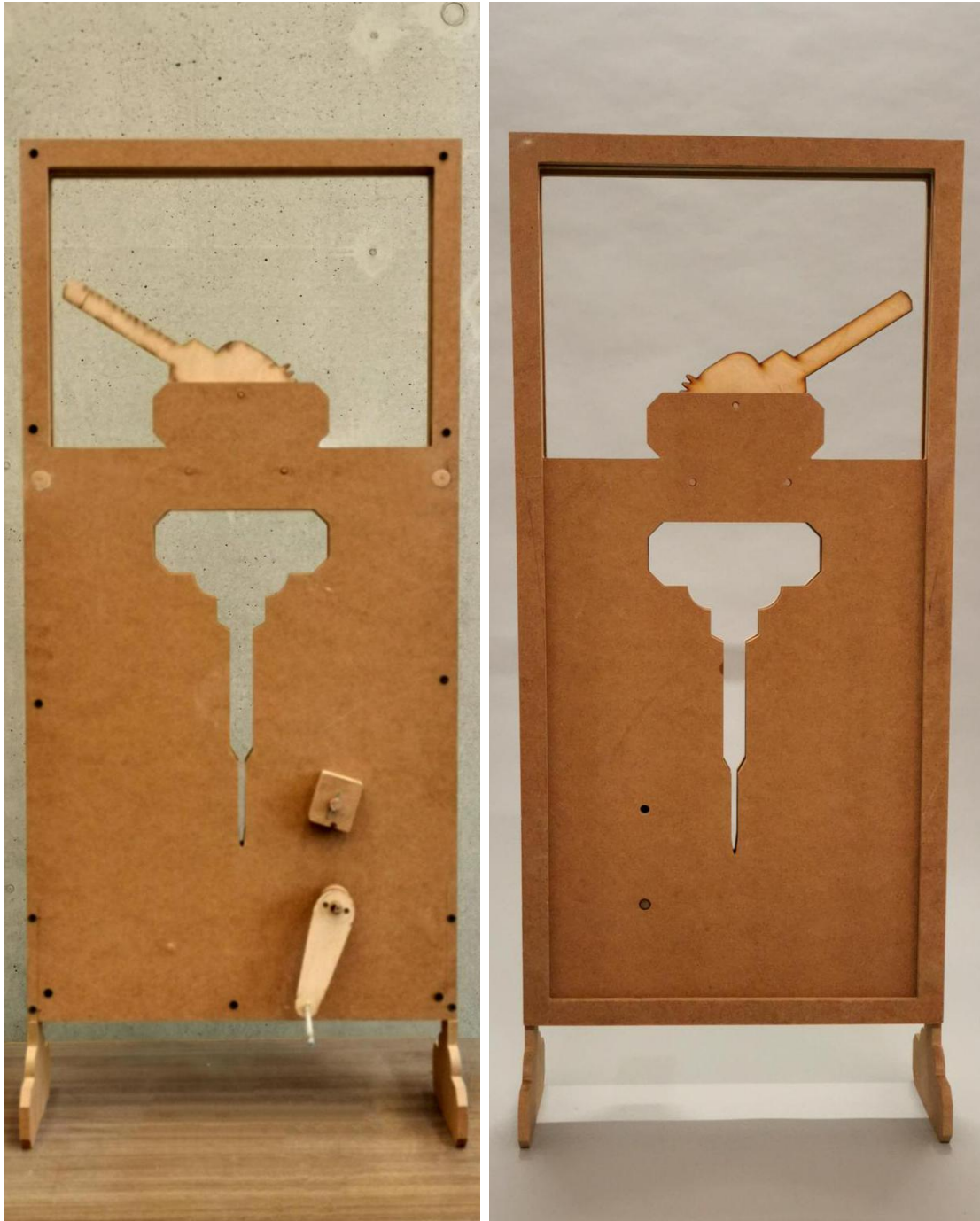


Figure 137. Muchuan Wang, *Power of Changes*, wood, plastic sheet, elastic strip, 95x40x20cm, 2022
(mechanical system designed by Piotr Jedrzejewski)

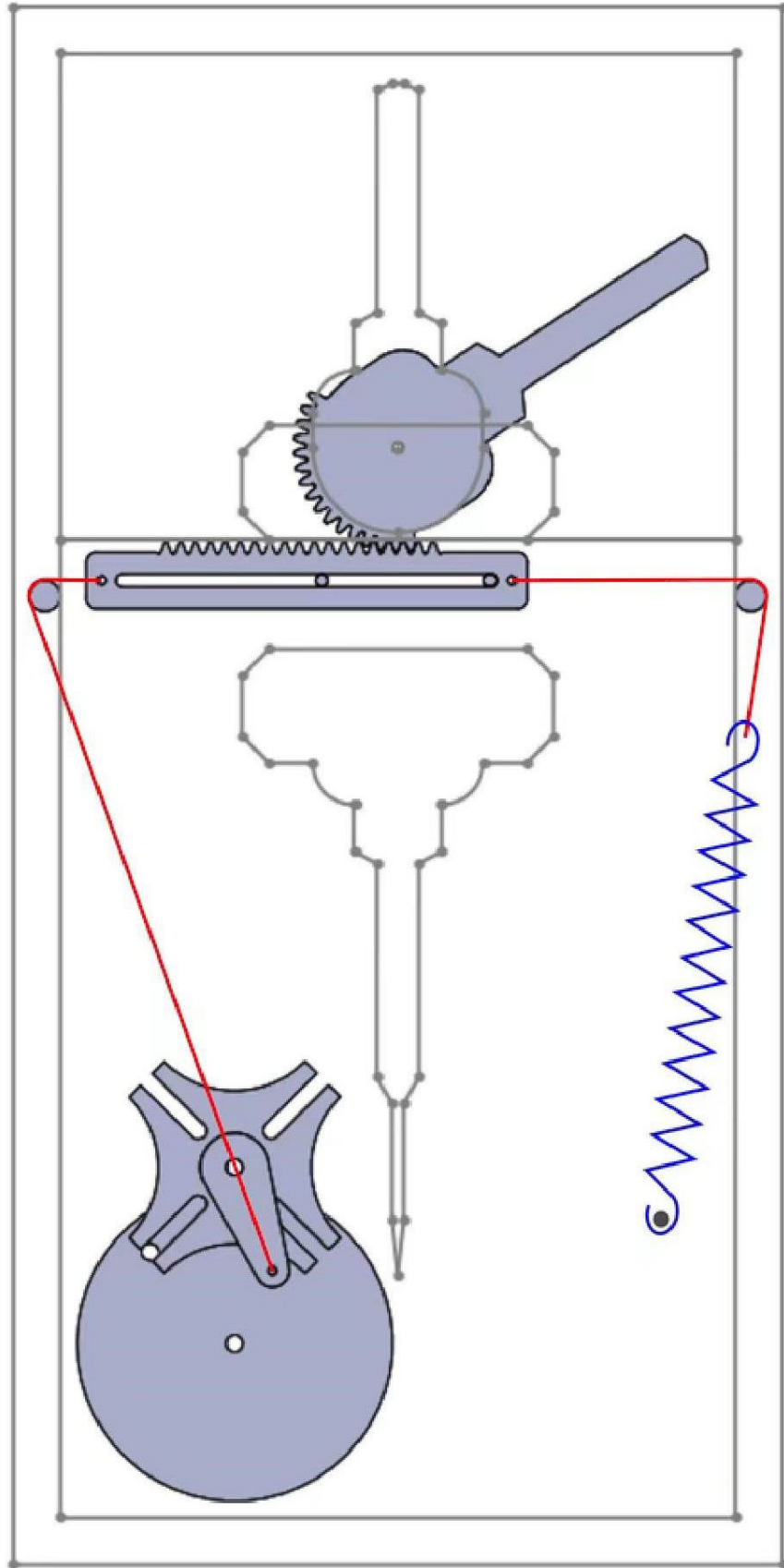


Figure 138, Muchuan Wang, machanical system of the *Power of Changes*, designed by Piotr Jedrzejewski, 2022

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