

# **Painting Nostalgia: A Rhizomatic Exploration of Memory and Affect**

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## **Abstract**

This practice-led project aims to explore how painting can address nostalgia through a rhizomatic exploration of memory and affect. Instead of defining a static identity for nostalgia, this project explores its potential of creating new ideas and affective movements by making connections with other memories and objects.

By using nostalgia as the subject of painting, the painting can take initiative in directing the nostalgic experience by directly addressing it. In this way, the nostalgic experience is provided with a new direction led by painting's practical logic which cannot be totally controlled by the painter. This means, in Deleuze and Guattari's words, painting can deterritorialise a nostalgic experience and move it into other territories. The aim of painting is to find what Simon O'Sullivan defines as encounter in which it would be ruptured by the encountered territory first and then achieves new state through reterritorialisation.

Photographs can directly articulate with paint by being incorporated into the painted surface or replacing the canvas. Accordingly, painting nostalgia can be linked with the encounters between the photographer and the subjects, hence, new ideas can be generated. Painting becomes a channel through which nostalgic experiences are separated from the desire to go back to the past and transformed into unpredictable new ideas and affects.

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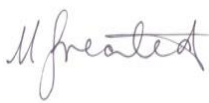


## Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the Glasgow School of Art or any other institution.

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## **Chapter One: Literature Review**

### **1.1 Introduction**

This practice-led research project explores how painting can address nostalgia through a rhizomatic exploration of memory and affect. I grew up in China and completed my Bachelor and Master's degree in Scotland majoring painting. Painting for me is a means of transformation that turns an invisible idea, concept, or emotion into a visible image. While viewers can find new affective experiences by viewing the image, the painter's original idea or emotion could be changed through handling paints and other relevant materials. Travelling between two cultural realms, my memory and painting practice are often ruptured by the rapid changes of environments. I have to juggle with heterogeneous elements from the two cultural realms such as different physical environments and different viewpoints on the relationships between painting practice and the painter's thoughts and ideas. This juggling can be difficult, and my previous emotional states or ideas often come into my present to haunt me. As a result, nostalgia has been my main research interest for a long time. However, I found it difficult to turn nostalgia into unforeseeable images, thoughts, and emotions with painting. Painting a nostalgic experience might easily fall into the path of reducing the nostalgic experience into a static scene and then use painting to visualise it. As will be further discussed in Chapter Two: Methodology, this is what Barbara Bolt defines as representationalism (2004) and it separates the painting and the nostalgic experience by making them into a strict binary in which the nostalgic experience is the content and the painting is its visual representation. Painting in this way can only be a means of depicting what is concluded from the nostalgic experience rather than participating in the nostalgic experience's development.

In order to transcend representationalism in painting nostalgia, the rhizome

philosophy established by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in their *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1972-1980) project is used as a main tactic. As the two philosophers point out, a rhizome has features such as connectability, heterogeneity, multiplicity and developing in unforeseen ways (1996: 7-10). Rhizomatic painting practice means that heterogeneous elements such as paints, intentions, memories and emotions are being connected in an unforeseeable way. As the result of the connections is unpredictable, the painting cannot be the representation of a predetermined image or idea. Therefore, with rhizome philosophy as the tactic, painting can be a means of manipulating the becoming of a nostalgic experience.

Nostalgia is a common psychological phenomenon that often carries negative implications. Professor Janelle Wilson of University of Minnesota Duluth points out, many pundits and scholars associate nostalgia with reactionary thought (2005: 7). Media artist and novelist Svetlana Boym also indicates,

Nostalgia is something of a bad word, an affectionate insult at best..... The word nostalgia is frequently used dismissively. "Nostalgia ..... is essentially history without guilt. Heritage is something that suffuses us with pride rather than with shame," writes Michael Kammen. Nostalgia in this sense is an abdication of personal responsibility, a guilt-free homecoming, an ethical and aesthetic failure. (Boym, 2001: xv)

However, leading psychological research argues that nostalgia has positive functions such as solidifying and augmenting identity, regenerating and sustaining a sense of meaning, and buttressing and invigorating social connectedness (Sedikides, Wildschut, Baden. 2004: 206-207). Instead of defining it as positive or negative, it might be more appropriate to say that nostalgia is an emotion that has the potential of causing both effects.

Apart from being a tactic for transcending representationalism in painting, rhizome philosophy can also be a basic perspective for looking at objects such as memory and nostalgia. As a painter who grew up in China and trained in the UK, my memory is comprised of heterogeneous elements from the two cultural realms that I have experienced. From a rhizomatic perspective, these elements are constantly forming new connections in an unforeseeable way. These connections change as I experience different environments and circumstances and some of these connections become my nostalgic experiences. From a rhizomatic perspective, nostalgia is the result of the connection between memory and present environments rather than a static image of the past.

Therefore, with rhizome philosophy, painting nostalgia becomes a practice of breaking binaries (e.g. the one between the present and the past and the one between facts and imaginations) and creating new objects. The act of painting, or handling paints, plays a leading role in this practice.

Based on the theories of philosophers and artists such as Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Barbara Bolt and Simon O'Sullivan, nostalgia in this project is conceptualised as a particular process in a person's nonstop affective and psychological movement rather than a static picture of the past that person longs for. Painting a nostalgic experience can be seen as a task of handling this process in affective and psychological movement through handling paints. The practice in this project is non-representational which means that the practice is not conducted to realise a predetermined blueprint or prototype. The aim of painting a nostalgic experience is what Simon O'Sullivan defines as an encounter (O'Sullivan, 2006: 1) which means the unexpected finding through the rupture and reaffirmation of an existing object.

From the material perspective, a key of practice in this project is the use of photographs in painting. Photographs have two main roles in this project. They can be used to trigger the painter's nostalgic experience and as the visual representations of some objects in the painter's nostalgic reverie. By making a painting directly on selected photographs, the trigger or representation of the nostalgic reverie is visually changed. The memories and affects triggered by perceiving the painted photographs would be shifted accordingly. The nostalgic experience that the painter is having could be ruptured by doing so, and the painting becomes the means of shifting the memory and affect triggering until the painter's mind encounters some new thoughts or affective states. By using photographs in painting, the questions: what can painting do to nostalgic experience; and what can nostalgic experience do to painting? are explored.

The thesis is divided into four chapters. Chapter One: Literature Review outlines the theoretical contexts that the practice is based on. It is comprised of three discussions. Firstly, the definition of nostalgia and the distinction between a nostalgic experience and a nostalgic reverie based on the analysis of the researches of neuroscientists and psychologists such as Sean Watson (1998), Constantine Sedikides (2008), Tim Wildschut (2004) and Zhao Jingrong (2005). Secondly, the philosophy of rhizome and de-and-reterritorialisation of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1987) is introduced and discussed. Together with the theory of encounter by Simon O'Sullivan (2006), these philosophies function as the tactics (Bolt, 2004) of achieving non-representational practice for painting in this project. Finally, by discussing the theories and works of practitioners and theorists such as Barbara Bolt (2004), James Elkins (2000), André Bazin (1960), Roland Barthes (1999) and Saul Leiter (1950), the understandings of painting and photography in this project are indicated.

Chapter Two: Methodology lays out this project's research methodology which is

non-representational rhizomatic practice. Based on some of the discussions in Chapter One: Literature Review, Chapter Two discusses the definition of representationalism and the tactic of using rhizomatic practice to transcend it. It also indicates the new knowledge that this project seeks to produce and analyses its relationships with painting in this project.

Chapter Three: Practice Analysis discusses three practical projects that I made during the PhD research. *The Barnes Series* is a series of paintings that started with material experiments. The analysis of it focuses on what can handling materials such as paints and photographs do to the painter's nostalgic experience. *Wish You Were Here 100* is a collection of one hundred paintings that were made with a set boundary in visual forms. It explored what a repeated form can do to a person's nostalgic experiences. *The Labyrinth* was a work made based on the experiences of the two previous projects. With non-representational rhizomatic practice, the painting took the painter's mind through a series of changes from a nostalgic reverie to several other affective states. The discussion of it focuses on how painting and nostalgia mutually change each other.

The thesis is accompanied by a portfolio which includes visual documentations of the works from these three projects. When certain work is discussed in Chapter Three, the corresponding page number in the portfolio would be indicated so that readers can find the images of the work in the portfolio. The portfolio also includes images of a proposed viva exhibition of my works. This proposed viva exhibition was due to take place in the Barnes Building of the Glasgow School of Art in March 2020, it did not restrict to the works from the three projects which are discussed in Chapter Three, some works from other projects were also included. By breaking the works' original arranging orders and rearranging the pieces into a new entity, the senses that the works were isolated pieces, made in a linear chronological order, were also broken. The new entity was created based on my

memory at the moment. This means that some different parts of my memories (i.e. the memories of making the works and the nostalgic experiences that generated the works) were reinterpreted and new connections between them were made at the same time. Because it is created by connecting multiple heterogeneous fragments, the new piece could be seen as a rhizome on its own. It exists as an individual temporarily because it could be broken into pieces again for new connections. For me as the maker of the work, predetermining a meaning nor visual centre for the new formed piece is unnecessary. Viewing the work is an articulation between the work and the viewers' memories, they find the elements that attract them and the viewing experience becomes a new channel of activating their memories.

## **1.2 Actualisation, Memory and Nostalgia**

The seventh edition of Oxford dictionary defines nostalgia as a 'wistful longing for a happier or better time in the past.' (OED, 2012: 489) In this project, based on the theories of neuroscientists and psychologists such as Sean Watson, Constantine Sedikides, and Zhao Jingrong, nostalgia is discussed from two perspectives, the nostalgic reverie and the nostalgic experience. When being referred to as *nostalgic reverie*, it means the image of the past that the person longs for. As will be further discussed below, this image is an assemblage of a person's actualisations from several aspects such as memory, affect and her/his present circumstances. By contrast, a nostalgic experience means the entire experiential process of a person dealing with a nostalgic reverie.

Having a nostalgic experience is seen as a process of the person's memory or duration and the nostalgic reverie assembled through de-and-reterritorialisation. This will be discussed in detail in Section 1.3 and 1.4 and is based on Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's philosophy of rhizome (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987)

which sees everything as an unstable and centreless assemblage that is always in motion of encountering other assemblages. Therefore, painting a nostalgic experience becomes a task of handling the process of assemblage from a visual and material perspective. As handling paints has a logic of its own which cannot be totally controlled by the painter (Bolt, 2004), painting a nostalgic experience means that the nostalgic experience is given a new perspective of becoming. Accordingly, the nostalgic experience, which is primarily a personal psychological development that concerns the person's memory and affect, can become something visually communicable that has the potential of forming connections between elements such as memory, affect, paints, photographs and other people. As Simon O'Sullivan points out that connections might be understood as a key modality of creativity (2006: 17), painting a nostalgic experience could be a channel of creating new thoughts and ideas.

Painting a nostalgic reverie and painting a nostalgic experience are two fundamentally different tasks. The former aims to depict, or represent an image in the person's mind whereas the latter does not have any predetermined direction and aim to follow and achieve. With the latter practice as the method, and what Simon O'Sullivan defines as encounter (2006: 1) as the objective of the practice, this project aims to answer the question of how painting can address nostalgia through a rhizomatic exploration of memory and affect.

The theory of actualisation pointed out by Sean Watson (1998) indicates how a person starts a nostalgic experience. In analysing the twin concepts of the virtual and actual, Watson stresses that we must guard against any kind of Kantianism and Cartesianism as they are both tightly linked with binaries which stymie our perception and connection with the world. He points out that in Kantianism the world in-itself is virtual therefore the actual is the phenomenological experience that takes place somewhere removed from the real world. In Cartesianism the



virtual is the material world outside, and the actual is a mysterious, immaterial, representation of that world for the 'eyes' of an equally mysterious, immaterial, 'cogito' within (Watson, 1998). Watson argues that, the virtual is the totality of the material universe in all its unfathomable complexity and analyses the relationship between the virtual and actual:

Both the 'virtual' and the 'actual' are as real and solid and material as one another. The latter is effectively a subset of the former; a subtraction from the total, the total which Deleuze sometimes refers to as 'the Absolute'. The world as 'actualised' in consciousness is that aspect of the world which is of enough interest to the organism for it to connect its sensory-motor circuits in such a way that a consciousness is actualised. (Watson, 1998)

Deleuze makes the similar argument in discussing how we perceive things and suggests that there is no distinction between phenomenon and thing-in-itself. He suggests 'we perceive things where they are, perception puts us at once into matter' (1991:25). Accordingly, even the distinction between 'I' and the outside world becomes questionable, because perceiving in this sense also means merging. However, that does not mean that all aspects and elements of the perceived entity can enter the person's consciousness during a perception, as Deleuze also points out that, 'by virtue of the cerebral interval, in effect, a being can retain from the material object and the actions issuing from it only those elements that interest him ... it is not the object *plus* something, but the object minus something, minus everything that does not interest us' (Deleuze, 1991:24-25). Based on this argument, Watson concludes that, it is a machine comprised of the brain and nervous system that actualises consciousness by selecting from the brain and nervous system comprise a machine which, amongst other things, actualises consciousness by selecting, from this totality, that which is of relevance for the conscious exercise of will. (Watson, 1998)

Memory plays a vital role in the selection which turns a totality into a

consciousness. According to the philosopher Henri Bergson philosophy, immediate conscious awareness of the present is always a contracted composite of sensation and memory. However, it should be stressed that to Bergson memory is not a storage in which the impressions of individual past events rest and wait to be triggered, rather, it is an entity formed by what the person has experienced. As Bergson himself puts it, 'the following moment always contains, over and above the preceding one, the memory the latter has left it' (Bergson, 2007: 176). He thinks of time and consciousness in terms of duration (*durée*), which is a succession without distinction, an interpenetration of elements so heterogeneous that former states can never recur (Bergson, 2001: vii). Memory can be defined as a duration, hence, from the perspective of Bergson, everything that a person has experienced functions as a whole to face her/his present. Cognitive neuroscientist Michael Gazzaniga also believes that memory functions as an undividable entity, as he discusses, 'Everything in life is memory, save for the thin edge of the present.' (Foster 2009:2) Therefore, memory could be seen as the particular state of the person. In Watson's words, 'We don't *have* memories, we *are* memories; or at least we *are* duration, and memory is a function of duration.' (Watson, 1998)

The past in a nostalgic experience should not be seen as the re-presentation of selected documentation of bygone facts that are safely preserved in the person's brain. Rather, as one's memory is an entity which is always in motion and change, 'the past' in nostalgia is an adjustment of this entity. In Bergson's words, it is,

a work of adjustment, something like the focusing of a camera. But our recollection still remains virtual; we simply prepare ourselves to receive it by adopting the appropriate attitude. Little by little it comes into view like a condensing cloud; from the virtual state it passes into the actual. (Bergson, 2002: 125)

In a nostalgic experience, as well as unconsciously influencing the person's

selection in actualising the virtual into her/his consciousness, memory itself functions as a totality of its own, which through selection can form a reverie and come into view.

Psychologists Constantine Sedikides, Tim Wildschut, and Denise Baden point out that the core of a nostalgic experience is always the juxtaposition or comparison between the past and the present (Sedikides *et al.*, 2004: 205-206). This idea implies a linear view of time as it sees the past and the present as separated moments. However, based on the idea that memory is a duration, I would argue that, as 'the past' (i.e. the nostalgic reverie) that the person longs for is actually the person's actualised present. Therefore, the core of a nostalgic experience is a confusion between an illusion of the past and the present. This implies that there is no strict distinction between the person and the outside world as apart from her/his memory, the person's present also includes her/his present circumstances. The virtual or totality from which a nostalgic reverie is the mixture of the person's memory, affect and the circumstances that she/he is in.

In discussing the negative effects of nostalgia, psychotherapist Roderick Peters indicates that, a nostalgic experience could be 'an overwhelming craving that persists and profoundly interferes with the individual's attempts to cope with his present circumstances.' (Peters, 1985: 135) From this perspective, a nostalgic experience could mean that a person creates a reverie which functions as an alternative situation which they would rather be in, compared to her/his present situation, enabling the desire of escaping the present. Wildschut *et al.*'s research offers an explanation to this desire, as they point out the most common triggers of nostalgia are negative emotional states such as loneliness and sadness, and nostalgia can be a redemption through which the person compensates the negative affect (i.e. the triggers of nostalgia) and regains an emotional satisfactory state (2006: 975-978). In fact, a large number of laboratory and

autobiographical memory studies have demonstrated that there is an unbreakable link between emotion and memory, with emotion playing vital roles in various aspects of memory such as encoding, storage, and reconstruction (Bradley, M. M.; Greenwald, M. K.; Petry, M. C.; Lang, P. J., 1992: 379-390; Hamann, S.B., 2001: 394-309; Christianson, S. A., 1992: 284-309). Therefore, as an actualised memory which acts on the person's emotion, nostalgia is, in Zhao Jingrong's word, more personal and emotional than reminiscence which primarily focuses on bygone facts, and the past in it is beautified and imagined rather than the reappearance of the bygone events (Zhao, 2005: 54-57).

Psychologists have been exploring the nature of affect and emotion of nostalgia. Although Sedikides *et al.* describe nostalgia as a bittersweet emotion, they also discuss whether nostalgia is a positive or negative emotion (Sedikides *et al.*, 2004: 204-205). However, the distinction between affect and emotion made by the Canadian philosopher Brian Massumi implies that defining nostalgic experience as generally as positive or negative might be too general. As Massumi points out affect is the totality of emotional movement within the body, which could perhaps be thought of as virtual emotion. Emotion proper occurs when selection has taken place and the certainty of those affective movements have been assimilated into consciousness, given a name, and placed within a narrative which makes them meaningful (I am angry because ... etc.) (Massumi, 1996: 226).

In this sense, the emergence of an emotion within a memory is another perspective of actualisation. Being a duration, no previous state in a memory can be recurred (Bergson, 2001: vii). As the person's memory is a main part of the virtual from which nostalgic reveries are actualised, it is indeed not likely for a person to have two exact same nostalgic experiences. It is due to this that psychologist Zhao Jongrong argues that nostalgic experiences are non-repeatable (Zhao, 2005: 57). Therefore, defining whether a nostalgic emotion is

positive or negative should be based on the specific experience. The cases in which the nostalgic emotions are positive and, as Harvey Kaplan puts it, 'producing an air of infatuation and a feeling of elation' (Kaplan, 1987: 465) and the opposite situations in which nostalgic experience are, as Joel Best, Edward Nelson, and Dan Hertz argue, immersed in sadness, as the nostalgic individual realises that the past is irredeemably lost (Best and Nelson, 1985: 221-233; Hertz, 1990: 189-198) are not in contradiction with each other. How the next nostalgic experience might affect the person is unpredictable. It might be enjoyable, through which the person gains emotionally satisfactory state, but it could also be 'an overwhelming craving that persists and profoundly interferes with the individual's attempts to cope with his present circumstances', therefore negative. (Peters, 1985: 135)

As discussed above, a nostalgic reverie is actualised from a virtual which includes the person's memory, affect and her/his circumstances. The process of dealing with it (i.e. the nostalgic experience) enriches the person's virtual repository by becoming her/his memories. Its status of being an individual process in the present only exists temporarily, for any recall of it in the future would be a selected and adjustment of the person's memory as a whole. It is non-repeatable, and its meaning can only be defined in actualisations in the future, as Eugene W. Holland says in discussing Deleuze's philosophy of time:

Not only is the present only one actualisation among many, but its relation to the past is not exhausted or determined in its actualisation alone: its relation to the past will have been determined by future actualisations, each of which successively alters the relations between the present and its relevant pass. (Holland, 2013: 20)

Therefore, the question of what a memory can become is more significant than what it is.

### 1.3 Rhizomatic Thinking

Based on the discussion of Section 1.2, exploring nostalgia with painting should guard against the binary opposition between an internal phenomenal experience and the external world. In *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987), Deleuze and Guattari point out that binary logic could lead to a static mode of thinking which stymies creativity, as they indicate, 'binary logic is the spiritual reality of the root-tree.' (1987: 5) The image of a tree is as a firm and static structure however it does imply several binary relationships including between the singular cause (i.e. the seed) and the effect (i.e. the tree), the tree as subject and other trees, and the tree's primary elements (e.g. the trunk) and the secondary aspects (e.g. the branches and leaves). When using the tree symbol as a mode of thinking, the subject, no matter what is it, is being broken into pieces and reconstructed into such a structure as it is predetermined. Therefore, examining nostalgia with tree-structured thinking requires constructing an explicit causal relationship between individual elements (e.g. memory, affect, consciousness, nostalgic reverie). With finding the single truth such as the cause or meaning of it as the aim, these elements might be organised into a static structure which can then be used to explain all nostalgic experiences. In other words, with tree-structured thinking, an analysis of nostalgia uncovers what the nostalgic experience is and what it means. Through predetermining that there is only one right answer to the question, it stymies, rather than fosters thoughts.

In order to supplant tree-structured thinking, Deleuze and Guattari established rhizomatic thinking. A rhizome is a plant stem that grows horizontally underground, sending out roots and shoots, it has 'neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (milieu) from which it grows and which it overflows.' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 21) However, this middle (milieu) should not be seen as a centre. Rather, it means that a rhizome is always in a phase of becoming rather than being a

static structure. In fact, Simon O'Sullivan indicates, within such a rhizome, there is no centre or any central organising motif, and through the non-hierarchical connections between individual nodal points, it fosters transversal connections and communications between heterogeneous locations and events (2006: 12). Therefore, a rhizome is a system that is constantly shifting, in which all 'truth' and identities, as well as the relationships between them are temporarily formed. Therefore, unlike tree-structured thinking which orders the subjects in a determined way, with rhizomatic thinking, there is always a sense of ambiguity as everything is shifting.

Deleuze and Guattari did not create a binary of right and wrong between tree-structured thinking and rhizomatic thinking, rather, the difference between the two approaches, as Damian Sutton and David Martin-Jones point out is through considering a tree in a forest. In their words:

In the forest there is no single truth, no singular cause and effect, no one 'true' tree. Rather, the forest is a single entity made up of numerous trees, or, numerous 'truths.' It is also impossible to posit one origin to a forest, and not simply because you cannot tell which tree came first. Any one tree is a product of an assemblage, of water, sunlight and soil, without which there would be no trees at all, regardless of whether a seed exists or not. (Sutton and Martin-Jones, 2008: 4)

Therefore, from a rhizomatic perspective, a person (or any other subject) can be defined from at least three perspectives. While being an entity on their own, she/he is also an assemblage of many others, therefore a person as a 'one' is always a part of another bigger assemblage. Even from a static viewpoint, nothing has a certain identity or definition and a slight change in perspective could lead to the emergence of new meanings and understandings of the subject. More importantly, multiplicity is only one of the features of a rhizome as it is also essentially heterogeneous with high connectability. As Deleuze and Guattari say, 'a rhizome ceaselessly establishes connection among semiotic chains,

organisations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 7).’ Based on these features, Eugene W. Holland points out that, there is no place for ontology in Deleuzoguattarian philosophy, as the fundamental question of their philosophy is not the definitive ‘What is it?’ but an open-ended ‘What can become of it?’ (Holland, 2013: 54)

As a nostalgic reverie is formed by the undividable connections between heterogeneous elements such as the person’s memory, affect, imagination and her/his present circumstances and none of these elements could be defined as the centre, the nostalgic reverie can be seen as a rhizome on its own. Hence, the nostalgic experience (i.e. the process of dealing with the nostalgic reverie) is rhizomatic. Accordingly, this research focuses on what this rhizomatic becoming can achieve, rather than turning this rhizomatic becoming into a tree structure. On a practical level, using a nostalgic experience as the subject of painting means that the painter is directly intervening or handling the nostalgic experience’s becoming from a visual and material perspective. Materials such as paints and photographs hence become new heterogeneous elements that join the rhizomatic connections of the nostalgic experience. In this way, while the painter’s memory and affect are shifted by handling painting and photographs, these physical materials and the thoughts about them could also be shifted by the triggered memory and affect. Simon O’Sullivan suggests that new ideas and thoughts can be created through rhizomatic connections (2006: 17), and this brings up the idea of de-and-reterritorialisation which will be discussed in the next section.

#### **1.4 De-and-Reterritorialisation and Encounter**

By illustrating how a wasp becomes a piece in the orchid’s reproductive



apparatus through deterritorialisation while the orchid is deterritorialised and formed an image by tracing a wasp (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 10), Deleuze and Guattari illustrate the movements of de-and-reterritorialisation. As they indicate, the two movements are inseparable which happen during the encounters between entities (or in other words, rhizomes). Every deterritorialisation is accompanied by a reterritorialisation. Through deterritorialisation, an entity's 'original territory' (i.e. the identity) is ruptured, and through the accompanying reterritorialisation, the ruptured entity consolidates with elements of the other entity (or entities) that it encounters and forms a developed new territory which achieves stability. There is an assemblage created in every encounter, and this means that a de-and-reterritorialisation leads to a double becoming for both sides of the encounter. As a result, heterogeneous entities could be assembled into a rhizome through this double becoming led by de-and-reterritorialisation. Therefore, these two coexisting movements sustain a sense of stability while fostering the chaotic becoming between entities.

As discussed in Section 1.3, the nodal points (i.e. the heterogeneous objects that form the rhizome) within a rhizome are constantly making new connections. These constantly changing connections make the rhizome a shifting pattern and create a 'line of flight' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 9) along which the rhizome can move into (and onto) new territories and achieve de-and-reterritorialisation. As a nostalgic experience is a phase of the person's becoming, and becoming can be seen as a duration which is an undividable process of developing in which the previous states cannot be recurred (Bergson, 2001: vii), the nostalgic experience's identity as an individual must be temporary as it will eventually become a psychological state that can never recur.

Therefore, from the perspective of de-and-reterritorialisation, a nostalgic reverie can be seen as a territory or rhizome which is formed through actualising the

person's present virtual (i.e. the mixture of the person's memory, her/his affect and she/he present circumstances). Despite that it is largely generated from the person's own existing territory, as discussed in Section 1.2, a nostalgic reverie is always new to the person as it is fundamentally non-repeatable. In this sense, a person having a nostalgic experience is like the encounter between two rhizomes (i.e. her/his duration and the nostalgic reverie).

This means that the nostalgic reverie does not simply merge into the person's duration, it is an assemblage between these two rhizomes. De-and-reterritorialisation could happen during this process, as discussed in the research of Constantine Sedikides, Tim Wildschut, Jamie Arndt and Clay Routledge (2008: 304) which indicates that based on observations of Swiss mercenaries in the service of European monarchs, throughout most of the 19th century, nostalgia was regarded as a medical disease with symptoms such as bouts of weeping, irregular heartbeat, and anorexia, suggesting that nostalgic reveries could deterritorialise a person's stability on physical level. Therefore, a nostalgic experience can be concluded as a dynamic process: as a person perceives the moving world, a non-repeatable assemblage of multiple actualisations (i.e. the nostalgic reverie, which is a rhizome that formed by the person's actualised memories, her/his actualised affect and the actualised environment that she/he is in) is generated from the person's duration (another rhizome). Through mutually de-and-reterritorialising each other, the two rhizomes could assemble into a new rhizome which is a new state of the person's duration.

As will be discussed in Chapter Two: Methodology, manipulating paints has its own logic of forming what Deleuze and Guattari define as a line of flight (1987: 9) along which the painter's original ideas move into other areas. Therefore, painting a nostalgic experience means that the assemblage/double becoming between the nostalgic reverie and the person's duration is being added with a new

direction (the act of painting) therefore the which this double becoming, which is a personal development, can be extended into the communicable visual territory.

The question of what and how does the painting communicate is explored by this research. This is when the distinction between a nostalgic reverie and a nostalgic experience again becomes relevant. As stated in Section 1.1, a nostalgic reverie is considered as the assemblage of the person's several actualisations, in other words, the nostalgic reverie is an image of the 'past' that the person longs for at the moment. By contrast, a nostalgic experience is defined as a process in which the person's duration and the nostalgic reverie assemble through double becoming led by de-and-reterritorialisation. Therefore, from the painter's perspective, when the subject is a nostalgic reverie, what the practice aims for might be something known, as the nostalgic reverie as an image must exist prior to the intention of making a painting of it. By contrast, with a nostalgic experience as the subject, two processes (i.e. the assemblage between the nostalgic reverie and the person's duration and the process of handling paints) are interwoven together, and the painting does not have any concrete aim nor direction. However, this does not mean that painting would become an aimless wander. From the painter's perspective, what marks the completion of the practice could be what Simon O'Sullivan defined as an encounter (2006: 1).

In *Art Encounter Deleuze and Guattari: Thought Beyond Representation* (2006), Simon O'Sullivan makes the distinction between an object of encounter and an object of recognition. As he says, an object of recognition is precisely a representation of something always already in place, and our knowledges, beliefs and values are reconfirmed with such an object. Such an object does not trigger thought as 'representation precisely stymies thought' (O'Sullivan, 2006: 1). By contrary, with an object of encounter, our habitual way of being and acting in the world are challenged, our systems of knowledge disrupted and we are forced to

think. As O'Sullivan puts it,

The encounter then operates as a rupture in our habitual modes of being and thus in our habitual subjectivities. It produces a cut, a crack. However, this is not the end of the story, for the rupturing encounter also contains a moment of affirmation, the affirmation of a new world, in fact a way of seeing and thinking this world differently. This is the creative moment of the encounter that obliges us to think otherwise. Life, when it truly is lived, is a history of these encounters, which will always necessarily occur. (O'Sullivan, 2006: 1)

Similar to the inseparability between deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation, rupture and affirmation are then two moments of the same encounter. In a nostalgic experience, the confusion between the past and present (see section 1.2) implies that the painter's habitual subjectivity is in a ruptured status already and she/he is in the process of achieving the affirmation of a new way of seeing and thinking her/his memories.

Therefore, painting (i.e. handling paints) directs this process from a material and visual perspective. Barbara Bolt indicates that the painter cannot always have the control during the process of making a painting as handling paints has its own power to escape the painter's conscious control and take on a life on its own (2006: 1). This power of handling paints is defined as the practical logic in this project. Led by such a logic, the painting does not have to follow a path predetermined by the painter. The completion or success of the painting is when the painter feels that through making the painting, she/he has reached a new psychological state in which she/he no longer longs for the nostalgic reverie and can think of the entire nostalgic experience from a new perspective.

## **1.5 Painting**

In Chapter 11, 'The Painting Before Painting of Francis Bacon' from *The Logic of*

*Sensation*, Deleuze writes:

It is a mistake to think that the painting works on a white surface because now everything he (the painter) has in his head or around him is already in the canvas.....so that the painter does not have to cover a blank surface, but rather would have to empty it out, clear out, clean it (Deleuze, 2017: 61).

From this perspective, a painting can be seen as the result of an actualisation for it is also a product of selection and adjustment. For example, when a painter paints a tree, all images of trees, including the ones that she/he has seen before and the ones that she/he can search for and observe, become a virtual or totality. In order to complete the task, the painter puts herself/himself into this virtual and makes the selection and adjustment through manipulating paint. As a result, the completed image of a tree means that all other alternatives have been cleared out. This clearing out theory does not only apply to the selection of subject matter. Even when a painter is facing a life model, she/he still needs to experience this clearing out on a technical level, as the life model can be painted in countless ways while for the painter at the moment, she/he needs to find the one that can be 'right' or ideal.

However, this finding is not a linear task like to pick an existing one that fits the painter's predetermined intention out of all methods that she/he has. Both Barbara Bolt (2004) and James Elkins (2000) argue that the act of handling paints can shift the painter's thoughts and affect. Therefore, instead of a linear process of achieving the painter's predetermined intention through handling paints, making a painting should be seen as a process of handling the connections between elements the painter's intentions, the subject matters and the materials. In other words, making a painting is a rhizomatic process, and the 'right' or ideal way of making the painting is emerged through handling the connections between the relevant elements.

These examples indicate how it can be a struggle to make a painting, as from a material and visual perspective, the painted image is accomplished through the 'adding' of paints and yet aims to achieve a kind of 'subtraction'. However, the adding of paints in painting practice cannot be defined as an addition because the accumulation of marks and brushstrokes is  $1+1+1=1$  rather than  $1+1+1=3$ . Therefore, the adding, or accumulation of paints in painting practice is more of an extension. From the first brushstroke to the moment when the painter can stop with satisfactory, the image is always a 'one' rather than a collection of marks. Hence, in order to extend the image, the following brushstroke needs to make the 'right' form that merges with rather than ruptures the existing image.

Does the artist get to consciously decide what is the 'right' form for her/his next brushstroke? Mark Rothko's statement seems to believe that the painter could have such a power, as he points out, the word *subject* in art has two meanings in artworks, the first one is 'the recognisable elements in a picture, such as objects that we know, an anecdote we can recognise, a model that is familiar to us, or even some more remote association with our experience', and the second meaning is 'what the artist intends in the picture.' (Rothko, 2006: 76) In this sense, Rothko concludes that the word *subject* is quite close to the word *design*. Accordingly, the painter's conscious decision is being put in the leading position, as dealing with a subject means having a design, or blueprint to follow in this sense.

However, James Elkins' discussion on paint implies that, the painter's ideas, or intentions might be challenged through her/his manipulation of paint, as he says:

Paint incites motions, or the thought of motions, and through them it implies emotions and other wordless experiences. That is why painting is a fine art: not merely because it gives us trees and faces and lovely things to see, but because paint is a finely tuned antenna, reacting to every unnoticed

movement of the painter's hand, fixing the faintest shadow of a thought in colour and texture. (Elkins, 2000: 188)

Whatever the intention might be (e.g. depicting things, expressing emotions, exploring ideas), the painter must have some initiative in the painting. This intention, which is defined as the subject of the painting by Rothko, is realised through the manipulation of paint. What Elkins suggests is that manipulating paint as the means has a power, or logic of its own which reacts to the painter's intentions. These two logics (i.e. the painter's intention and the logic of practice) inseparably lead the process of a painting. In this sense, 'thinking in painting' must be practical, as Gerhard Richter says in his 1962 notes that:

Painting has nothing to do with thinking, because in painting thinking is painting. Thinking is language – record-keeping – and has to take place before and after. Einstein did not think when he was calculating: he calculated – producing the next equation in reaction to the one that went before – just as in painting one form is a response to another, and so on. (Elger and Ulrich Obrist, 2009: 14)

Therefore, as the following brushstroke is a response to the image formed by preceding marks, its 'right' form is decided by this existing image. From the perspective of actualisation, the existing image can therefore be seen as another layer of memory that influences the selection, or clearing out as Deleuze puts it, of the following brushstroke's form. In fact, the process of painting can indeed be considered as a duration (Bergson, 2001: vii) just like memory as it is also cannot be divided into pieces and it is difficult to recur a state during a painting process. This new duration is generated from the painter's intention and yet escapes from it with its own practical and material logics during its extension and starts to perform its own power. In discussing her own painting, Barbara Bolt describes this process as, 'the painting takes a life of its own life. It breathes, vibrates, pulsates, shimmers and generally runs away from me.' (Bolt, 2004: 1) Therefore, the process of painting naturally involves a kind of uncontrollability. Restricting

this uncontrollability and to lock the practice within the painter's intention, or design, would make the practice representational, as the painting could seem to be decided by a predetermined prototype, model or schema.

Therefore, the process of making a painting should not be seen as linear, as if it is a one-way journey from the painter's intention to the finished work. As manipulating paint incites motion and the thoughts of motions which imply emotions and other wordless experiences (Elkins, 2000: 188), the process inevitably involves forces that run away from the painter's conscious controls and head in their own direction. Therefore, the process is more like an expansion that goes off in many directions. The painter's intention is the start, yet her/his conscious control is only one of the forces that fuel this expansion.

James Elkins (2000) and Barbara Bolt (2004) imply that painting should not be divided into thinking and practice as the act of handling paints has its own logic and power which triggers or generates thinking. As a result, the centre of practice could become ambiguous as these thoughts and emotions generated from practice might function as 'line of flight' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 9) that shifts the painter's initial consciously made intentions with the painting into some unexpected directions. In other words, practice, or handling paint itself, has the potential to de-and-reterritorialise the painter's initial intentions. Therefore, even started with a clear aim, the practice could still be centreless and result in something that the painter cannot totally foresee and control.

In this sense, painting practice fundamentally has the feature of a rhizome. Seeing the relationship between the painter's intention and the painting as an arborescent structure in which the painter's intention being the singular cause and the finished work being the singular effect is a limited perspective, as it ignores all other 'trees' that grow from what practice sends out during the process.



Therefore, a finished painting can be seen as a rhizome that is made up of multiple mutual influencing arborescent structures such as the one started with the painter's intentions and the ones started with the emotions and thoughts incited by practice (i.e. handling paint).

Hence, although the artist's intention starts the painting, it cannot be regarded as the singular cause of a painting, as causes which provide other directions in the painting's expansion will be generated by the process. This means, the completion of a practice cannot and should not be pre-decided by the painter's intention, as if it did, the potential of what practice incites could be restricted. Finding the moment of completion of a painting should be an encounter (O'Sullivan, 2006: 1) which marks that the painter has found something new and expanded her/his original intentions or ideas. In this way, even the painter does not totally 'own' the finished work as it contains elements outside the painter. A finished painting is a totality of its own and viewing it becomes an actualisation in which viewers have to connect their own memories to the painting. As discussed in Section 1.2, this project explores what nostalgic experiences can become rather than what a nostalgic experience is, hence painting practice being rhizomatic is important. This will be further discussed in Chapter Two: Methodology.

## **1.6 Photography**

Due to its tight connection with time and memory, photography is used as a major material of painting in this project. As will be further discussed in Chapter Three, the two main roles of photographs in this project are the triggers of nostalgic experiences and the visual representations of the objects in the nostalgic reveries. In discussing the relationships between photography, painting and reality, Gerhard Richter says, 'Photographs were regarded as true, painting as artificial.

The painted picture was no longer credible; its representation froze into immobility, because it was not authentic but invented.’ (Elger and Ulrich Obrist, 2009: 30) Similarly, in *the Ontology of the Photographic Image*, André Bazin states that, in painting there is ‘a human hand intervened cast a shadow of doubt over the image’, and the main difference between photography and painting is this ‘inescapable subjectivity’ of painting (Bazin, 1960: 7). These observations define the character that differentiates painting and photography as painting’s subjectivity or its artificial nature. Indeed, as discussed in the section 1.6, since the process of actualisation, or ‘clearing-out’ (Deleuze, Deleuze, 2017:61) is throughout the entire process of painting, its inseparable relationship with the painter’s subjectivity is undeniable. By contrast, while also being an artificial static two-dimensional image, photography is fundamentally inseparable with something outside the photographer (i.e. the photograph’s subjects), as Roland Barthes says in *Camera Lucida*:

The Photograph always carries its referent with itself, both affected by the same amorous or funereal immobility, at the very heart of the moving world...The Photograph belongs to that class of laminated objects whose two leaves cannot be separated without destroying them both. (Barthes, 1999: 5-6)

Even so, we cannot neglect the fact that photography is a human activity. To a certain extent, a photograph and its photographer also cannot be separated, as the photograph exists because of the photographer’s intention and it only shows what its photographer chooses to show. Barthes also defines a photograph as the immobility at the heart of the moving world and this implies a fundamental difference between the world which is a totality in nonstop becoming and a photograph which is a static image that always shows certain fragments of the world at a certain state.

As discussed in Sections 1.2 and 1.3, the philosophies of Bergson, O’Sullivan,

Deleuze and Guattari imply that nothing is static and isolated, while being durations on their own, all entities are also 'nodal points' (O'Sullivan, 2006: 12) which form a rhizome (i.e. a chaotic, centerless connectivity in constant shifting and expanding) through connecting to each other. Therefore, an entity itself is in a process of non-stop becoming and no particular state during it can be defined as its true identity or nature. In discussing the connections between entities, Deleuze and Guattari use the concept of rhizome to indicate that all entities are inevitably in connections with others. These connections are not made according to some set structures and are constantly in unpredictable shifting. Accordingly, the identity of an entity becomes ambiguous within a rhizome, as while being an individual on its own, at the same time it is always also a rhizome connected by other entities, and a part which forms a larger rhizome. As a result, the distinction between entities becomes temporary and questionable, as from a different perspective, two individuals might become parts that form another entity. In this sense, as both the photographer and her/his subjects are nodal points within such a shifting rhizome, when they make a connection and produce a photograph, can a clear distinction between objectivity and subjectivity be found within the piece? and can a photograph really be regarded as the true or real?

In order to answer these questions, we need to understand how a photographer works. American photographer Saul Leiter's undramatic statement might conclude a major way of taking photographs, as he says, 'I go out to take a walk, I see something, I take a picture. I take photographs.' (Carroll, 2018: 32) This statement implies how personal and occasional it is to take a photograph. The photographer finds a moment in which several entities (including the photographer) intersect and form an image which is so significant for the photographer that she/he feels compelled to capture and document. For the photographer, these kinds of opportunities might seem precious, as within a moving world, they could only exist in seconds. However, this sense of

preciousness cannot be sensed by everybody. Due to the differences in their memories, even a person standing right next to the photographer at the moment could be attracted to other elements in the same environment. Therefore, taking a photograph does not seem less subjective than making a painting, as what is at the core of a photograph's production is also the maker's perception, selection, and adjustment of the environment that she/he is in. From this perspective, photography has at least two features, personal and occasional.

Sean Watson uses the term actualisation to describe the process of a person turns a totality, or virtual, into her/his consciousness through selection and adjustment (Watson, 1998). In this sense, taking a photograph can be seen as an act of visually documenting the photographer's actualisation, because for the photographer, finding the subjects that she/he wants to photograph is the result of how she/he actualises the virtual (i.e. the environment she/he is in). As discussed in Section 1.2, Bergson indicates in *Matter and Memory* that, in order to actualise a virtual experience, apart from making selection from it, the person also adjusts the selected elements (Bergson, 1991: 133-134). Photographers and scholars have been discussing how photography is inseparable with selection, for example, Barthes points out that a photograph 'suggests the gesture of the child pointing his finger at something and saying: that, there it is, lo!' (Barthes, 1999: 5) However, by associating photography with reality and objectivity, Richter and Bazin's arguments (Elger and Ulrich Obrist, 2009: 30; Bazin, 1960: 7) indicate that photography is commonly understood as a means that does not intervene or adjust its subjects. Accordingly, defining photography as an art of actualisation means that the question of how does a photographer adjust her/his subjects by photographing them needs to be answered.

Indeed, there are obvious ways that a photographer adjusts her/his works. For instance, with the help of special functions of the camera or some software on a

computer, the photographer can turn the original captured image into a scene that she/he has never personally experienced by, for example, adding elements that were not in the original moment or adjusting the look of elements in the scene. Digital possibilities do expand photography, but considering that photography had been performing its influences without the digital for over a century and I would argue would not be severely affected without it, this kind of digital adjustment should be seen as an external tool rather than an ontological function or feature of photography. Besides using digital means, in some cases, the photographer may make physical adjustments directly to the subjects before taking the photograph (e.g. a photographer prunes a potted plant before photographing it). In this way, the subjects' becoming would indeed be physically adjusted, but as these adjustments are made directly by the photographer's hands rather than the act of photographing, they cannot be regarded as the results of being photographed.

The problem is that, both means of external adjustment, digital and physical, happen outside the act of taking a photograph. It is worth noting at this point that taking a photograph does not equal the production of a photograph. In fact, while the act of taking a photograph (i.e. visually capturing the subject's state with a camera) only requires an instant, producing a photograph is a process (i.e. from the moment that the photographer finds the subjects that interest her/him to the moment that the photograph physically comes into being) which consumes a period of time. As discussed, both the photographer and her/his subjects are nonstop becoming. Therefore, by pointing the camera at something and pressing the shutter, what the photographer does is to take a cross section of the subjects' becoming. When the actual photograph comes into being, all relevant entities (the photographer and the subjects) would be in different states. Therefore, a photograph is unbreakably linked with multiple perspectives of differences including the differences in the states within the photographer and the subjects'

own becoming or duration, and the differences between how these entities connect and relate to each other in different moments. It is in this sense that the Japanese photographer Ryuji Miyamoto says, 'Photographs are only able to speak in the past tense.' (Carroll, 2018: 100)

Therefore, the photograph should not be seen as an image that record facts. As Graham Clarke argues in *the Photograph*, believing the photograph cannot lie is a deep but misplaced notion, because,

In many contexts the notion of a literal and objective record of 'history' is a limited illusion. It ignores the entire cultural and social background against which the image was taken, just as it renders the photographer a neutral, passive, and invisible recorder of the scene. (Clarke, 1997: 145-146)

Besides ignoring the subjects' cultural and social background, even the subjects' factual connections with what is outside the frame would be cut off by being photographed. As a result, the elements that go in the frame start to form new connections and this could make the viewers' interpretations subjective compositions rather than passive and objective receiving of facts, such as in a photograph taken by Saul Leiter in 1950 (Fig.1). The image captures several reflections on a window including a child looking at something outside the frame, a person climbing stairs, the facade of a building and some branches and leaves of a tree. Instead of forming a narrative, these elements are being directly merged together. As a result, the entities that did not have direct links between each other at the moment of photographing started to form a rhizome by making new connections to each other within the frame. For example, since they were facing opposite directions, the person climbing the stairs and the child might not have noticed each other at that moment. As viewers cannot know what the child was looking at and where (e.g. home, office) the person was going to, there was a room for viewers to imagine. Within the blurred and chaotic environment, the juxtaposition between the two

people starts to generate a dramatic sense as if something was going on between them. Viewing this photograph could become a task of composing a narrative between these two people. As the American photographer Jason Fulford says, 'When a person looks at a photograph you've taken, they will always think of themselves.' (Carroll, 2018: 56) In order to fulfil this task of composing the narrative, viewers from different times and places have to turn to their own memories. In other words, the photograph becomes the virtual for viewers to perceive, and the narrative composed becomes the viewer's actual. Therefore, whenever this photograph is viewed, a new actualisation is made. By being photographed, the child's original connection with what was outside the frame and the person at the stair's connection with her/his destination were cut off. However, at the same time, although themselves could not have known, new connections between themselves and with countless people and memories could be made when the photograph physically came into being. Therefore, from the perspective of connectivity, what photography adjusts are the connections of and between the subjects and viewers' interpretations of these connections.



Fig.1, *Untitled*, Saul Leiter, 1950, Gelatin silver print, 28 x 35cm.

To the subject of photography, being photographed means that there is an adjustment between two perspectives. From the perspective of becoming, the subject is given an immobile alternative face which shapes its interpretation despite its actual state in the unstoppable becoming. From the perspective of connectivity, by being photographed, the subjects' connections with others at that moment are being, in Deleuze and Guattari's words, de-and-reterritorialised. Original connections are cut off by the photographer's frame and new connections will be made every time the photograph is seen.

For both the photographer and viewers, photography is an art of actualisation with a person's subjectivity at its core. The objectivity or 'real' that an unedited photograph documents is the transitory encounter between the photographer and the subjects rather than the subjects in themselves. However, as the world is in nonstop becoming, when the documented transitory encounter physically comes into being as a static image, its subjects and the relationships between them would have been in different states to when the static image is viewed. If we define reality as the material world we are at in the present, then a photograph is like the ghost of a piece of bygone reality who wanders into the present. Whenever it is looked at, the photograph is being interpreted by a different memory (even by the same person) within a different environment (i.e. connectivity). Questions such as what are the subjects in the photograph and what are the relationships between them will be answered by a particular subjectivity within a particular connectivity. Therefore, instead of objectively restoring that piece of bygone reality, a photograph makes a connection between two moments of actualisations (i.e. the one in which the photographer takes the photograph, and the one in which the viewer interprets the photograph). By being the actual of the photographer and the virtual for viewers at the same time, photographs promote the connections between different memories, states, and



interpretations.

## **1.7 Summary**

Based on the research of Constantine Sedikides, Tim Wildschut and Denise Baden (2004), as well as Henri Bergson's philosophy of actualisation (1991) and duration (2001), nostalgia in this project is conceptualised as a process of dealing with an illusion of the past. This illusion of the past is defined as the nostalgic reverie. It is an imagined image of the past that actualised from the person's present that includes her/his memory, affect present circumstances. Because it is centreless and formed by the connections between heterogeneous elements, it can be defined as a rhizome (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). Accordingly, nostalgic experience, which is the process of dealing with a nostalgic reverie, is also rhizomatic. There is no predetermined structure or model that organises all nostalgic experiences. According to the researches of psychologists such as Roderick Peters (1985), Constantine Sedikides (2006), Tim Wildschut (2004) and Zhao Jingrong (2005), nostalgic experience is non-repeatable and has unpredictable effects.

Based on the theories of James Elkins (2000), Barbara Bolt (2004) and the philosophy of rhizome and de-and-reterritorialisation by Deleuze and Guattari (1987), painting can be defined as a rhizomatic process which progresses under the mutual influences between elements such as the painter's thoughts, emotions and the act of handling paint. Therefore, painting a nostalgic experience means that the non-repeatable and unpredictable nostalgic experience is handled by the logic of practice therefore it cannot be totally decided and controlled by the painter (Bolt, 2004: 4-5). While the memories and emotions of the nostalgic experience influence the painter's practice, handling paint in turn shifts the painter's nostalgic experience at the same time. Moreover, as photographs function as the triggers

of most of the nostalgic experiences within this study and the visual representations of some objects within the nostalgic reveries, they become another heterogeneous element that joins the rhizomatic practice of painting.

As discussed in Section 1.6, a photograph does not document or represent the truth or reality. Rather, it records the transitory encounter between the photographer and the subjects rather than the subjects in themselves. As a person's memory can be seen as a duration which constantly reaches new states, every experience of viewing a photograph should be seen as a new experience in terms of triggering one's memory. Therefore, photographs become a channel through which thoughts, memories and affect outside the nostalgic experience can be linked to the rhizome of painting a nostalgic experience. Accordingly, through creating connections between elements such as memories, affect, imaginations and visual documentations of some object's previous state, painting a nostalgic experience has the potential to create new ideas on the relationships between subjects such as changes to time, memory, painting or photography.

## Chapter Two: Methodology

### 2.1 Introduction

As discussed in Chapter One: Section 1.2, a nostalgic experience is a process of dealing with an image of the past that the person longs for. This image is defined as the nostalgic reverie and it is a non-repeatable assemblage of several simultaneous actualisations which at least include the person's selected memory, the actualised world of the moment and her/his affect. Memory is particularly significant in the formation of a nostalgic reverie, as while it influences how the person perceives the world (Watson, 1998), it is also the virtual (i.e. the totality) from which the nostalgic reverie is actualised through selection and adjustment. More importantly, as memory can be defined as a duration which is a succession without distinction, an interpenetration of elements so heterogeneous that former states can never recur' (Bergson, 2001: vii), a nostalgic experience is an inseparable extension of the person's memory rather than an isolated new entity generated from it.

When recalling a nostalgic experience from another time, the person is making a new assemblage by selecting, adjusting, and reconnecting her/his memory. Theoretical physicist Lee Smolin points out that human beings perceive time as change (Smolin, 2014: 38). In this sense, a recalled memory of a nostalgic experience is fundamentally different from the original one. As the person's memory as an entity would be in a different state when she/he recalls, the recalled memory of a former nostalgic experience would be a new interpretation rather than re-presentation. Psychological researches have pointed out that, nostalgia is fundamentally an affect (Constantine Sedikides *et al.*, 2004: 205), and it could cause both positive and negative effect to the person (Kaplan, 1987: 465; Best and Nelson, 1985: 221-233). This means, the effect of an ongoing nostalgic

experience is unpredictable whereas the recalled memory of a nostalgic experience is the re-interpretation of a former state.

Therefore, painting an ongoing nostalgic experience means to visually and materially handle the simultaneously happened articulations with paint, and painting a bygone nostalgic experience is to handle the process of re-interpretation with paint. As will be further discussed below, instead of being a pre-determined schema for painting to actualise, the theoretical researches discussed in Chapter One function as, in Barbara Bolt's words, a 'prior context of intelligibility' (Bolt, 2010: 97) which handling paint can dependent upon. Key elements in nostalgic experiences such as the person's actualised memory and affect, her/his nostalgic experience, and the actualised outside world are not organised according to a predetermined structure. In Simon O'Sullivan's words, they are 'nodal points that connected to one another in a non-hierarchical manner' (O'Sullivan, 2006: 12). By making new connections between them, new meanings and ideas can be created. However, these new ideas and understandings cannot be preconceived, as Bolt says:

By definition the new cannot be preconceived, and in the face of the seemingly limitless possibilities practice cannot know or preconceive its outcome. According to Heidegger, then, the new emerges through process as a shudder that presents itself to us. (Bolt, 2010: 95)

The task of creating new insight and knowledge through making different connection between these points and is led by handling paint. This requires the practice to go beyond representationalism (Bolt, 2004) in which theories would be used as a model that determines practice. As will be further discussed in Section 2.3, the aim of painting beyond representationalism could be achieved by praxis which means a two-way action or mutual reflection between practice and theory (Bolt, 2004: 65).

## 2.2 The Work and Knowledge

In *Research in Art and Design*, by asking the question, ‘How can I tell what I am till I see what I make and do?’, educationist Christopher Frayling indicates the fascinating dilemma in ‘autobiography and personal development being communicable knowledge’ (Frayling, 1993: 5) in artistic research. This dilemma is prominent in this project, as discussed in the introduction of this chapter, two main research subjects, memory and nostalgia, are closely linked to actualisation which is a process through which a person’s consciousness and affect develops. Therefore, personal development is a key subject of this project. In order to turn it into communicable knowledge with painting, the role of the work needs to be interrogated, as viewing it is the channel of communicating knowledge.

Frayling defines the work, or artefact as ‘the end product of the research where the thinking is embodied in’ (Frayling, 1993: 5). It is worth noting that, in this project, ‘the end’ should only refer to the physical and material process of making the work. If this ‘ending’ of practice also means that the artist’s thinking has turned into a set conclusion for viewer to understand, then accordingly, the ‘right’, or effective way of viewing of the work is predetermined. As the result, the work becomes representational to the viewer, as there is always a predetermined conclusion (i.e. the knowledge) which functions as the ‘right’ understanding that classified viewing experiences into the binary of right and wrong. Artistic research in this way would be bonded with singular truth and the room for new thoughts and imagination would be limited. Therefore, as Henk Borgdorff puts it, instead of making explicit the knowledge that it is said to produce, the work should ‘invite unfinished thinking’ (Borgdorff, 2012: 162).

Similarly, in *The Aesthetics of Affect: Thinking Art Beyond Representation*, Simon O’Sullivan makes the statement that ‘art is not an object of knowledge’ (or not

only an object of knowledge), and what it produces is affect rather than knowledge. He says:

Affect can be described as extra-discursive and extra-textual...affects are not to do with knowledge or meaning; indeed, they occur on a different, signifying register. In fact, this is what differentiates art from language...art is a bundle of affects or, as Deleuze and Guattari would say, a *bloc of sensations*, waiting to be reactivated by a spectator or participant. Indeed, you cannot read affects, you can only experience them (O'Sullivan, 2001: 26).

The question of whether affect can be a knowledge? and can it be communicable? then emerged. Knowledge is a wide concept, as O'Sullivan associates the word with language and reading, knowledge in his discussion might actually mean propositional knowledge which, as Borgdorff defines, is 'the knowledge of facts, knowledge about the world, knowing that such and such is the case' (Borgdorff, 2012: 162). Therefore, by viewing an artwork, viewers cannot gain the knowledge which can be explicitly testified like a mathematical formula. Viewing a work is to perceive and experience. What a viewer experiences from viewing a work is also a process of actualisation in which the work is the virtual or totality, and the viewer's memory influences her/his focus and interpretation of the work. The work becomes a starting point from which viewers can encounter new affective experiences and consciousness (i.e. the actual). In this way, due to the differences between individual's memories, what a viewer can get from viewing the work is unpredictable. The assertion that 'art cannot be an object of propositional knowledge' also becomes questionable because the example in Frayling's discussion of George Stubbs' researches on animal anatomy which involves portfolios of drawings of dissections being used by scientists (Frayling, 1993: 3) has indicated that art can communicate with science. O'Sullivan, although does not directly mention actualisation, also associates art with virtual, as he says:

In the realm of the virtual, art - art work - is no longer an object as such, or not only an object, but rather a space, a zone or what Alain Badiou might call an 'event site': 'a point of exile where it is possible that something, finally, might happen (84, n. 5). (O'Sullivan, 2001: 27)

Therefore, the artistic practice in this project is aiming to territorialise such a zone, or space, or the virtual. With painting as the means, the painter's memory or nostalgic reverie as the initial totality would be turned into an image. Deleuze indicates, in perceiving an object, only those elements that interest the viewer could go into her/his consciousness (Deleuze, 1991:24-25). When this image actualised from the painter's nostalgic reverie is being viewed, it does not enter the viewer's mind as an entity. As selection and adjustment might happen during the perceiving process, this image could be seen as a virtual for viewers to actualise.

As discussed above, painting a nostalgic experience means to materially and visually manipulate a non-repeatable assemblage of several actualisations that simultaneously happened. From a Deleuzoguattarian perspective, such a process can be understood as the forming of a rhizome in which the actualised elements as the nodal points that connect to one another in a non-hierarchical manner. This painting/rhizome does not tell viewers what the painter finds or concludes from the process of weaving it, rather, viewing the painting/rhizome is an act that triggers developments for both sides. For the viewer, perceiving the work is a process of actualisation through which she/he gains new affective experiences and consciousness; and for the painting/rhizome, being viewed by a viewer is an expansion, as the viewer's selection makes new connections between her/his memory and some nodal points within it.

Therefore, this project could produce a new role, or function of painting. With a nostalgic experience as the subject, painting practice can be the means through which the painter breaks several pairs of binaries (e.g. the one between the past

and present, and the one between the subject and the 'outside' world). It organises these elements into a rhizome which, instead of representing some set conclusion, produces new affective experiences, consciousness, and ideas to viewers. Viewing the work becomes a way of expanding the rhizome, and as Simon O'Sullivan says, the rhizome is 'a paradigmatic example of the invention of a concept' (O'Sullivan, 2006: 12). The expansion of a rhizome could enrich the potential of creating new concepts within the painting.

### **2.3 Beyond Representation**

As painting aims to create a rhizome in this project, the practice should have more than one logic that directs its progression, for Damian Sutton and David Martin-Jones point out that there is no singular cause in a rhizome (Sutton and Martin-Jones, 2008: 4). Barbara Bolt implies that singular cause is at the core of representation (Bolt, 2004: 18), as in a representational practice the subject is reduced into a fixed prototype, model or schema that decides how the practice should progress and what the work should be like. In other words, in representation, practice must be the result of the prototype or model (i.e. the singular cause). Representation hence restricts practice to a role of following and depriving its possibility of creating something new. According to the distinction between an object of recognition (with which our knowledges, beliefs and values are reconfirmed) and an object of encounter to the painter herself/himself (which ruptures and expands our typical ways of being in the world) made by Simon O'Sullivan (2006: 1), representational practice is a practice of recognition, as practice in this case always aims to actualise a model which is formed from the painter's existing knowledges, beliefs and values.

Therefore, understanding representational practice in painting as to copy something that exists out there does not reach the nub of representationalism. As



long as a painter practices to actualise a pre-determined prototype, model, or schema generated from her/his existing territory, she/he is practicing representationally. In order to practice beyond representationalism, it is vital not to pre-decide nostalgia as a blueprint or model. This means that the relationship between psychological research (as discussed in Chapter One) and artistic practice needs to be interrogated. In other words, the binary between practice and theory also needs to be guarded against. Gerhard Richter implies that this binary in painting might be artificial and not necessary, as he says, 'Painting has nothing to do with thinking, because in painting thinking is painting.' (Elger and Ulrich Obrist, 2009: 14).

As discussed above, painting a nostalgic experience means to visually and materially manipulate, or handle the simultaneously happened actualisations with paint. The understanding of nostalgic experience is based on some philosophical and psychological theories. However, as nostalgic experiences are non-repeatable (Zhao, 2005) with unpredictable effects (Kaplan, 1987: 465; Best and Nelson, 1985: 221-233), the theories cannot be seen as the model that organises all nostalgic experiences. Rather, theories offer a perspective of looking at the particular nostalgic experience that the painter is handling. They influence rather than determine painting. As handling paint has its own momentum, rhythm and intensity that could shift the painter's thoughts and affect (Bolt, 2004: 1), the painter's perspective of looking at the nostalgic experience might in turn be changed through painting.

This two-way action or mutual reflection between practice and theory defines the term praxis (Bolt, 2004: 65). The binary between theory and practice is abolished as the outcome of praxis is produced through their mutual influences. In this way, the relevant materials and elements in this project no longer have strict roles that they must play. Invisible elements such as memory and affect become materials

for handling, and physical materials such as paints and photographs become subjects to learn about. Insight and knowledge of materials in this sense is indeed fundamentally unpredictable as the connections between subjects and materials could be made from several different perspectives (e.g. insight about memory and nostalgia emerged from handling paints, insight about paints emerged from handling memory and nostalgia through paints).

In Martin Heidegger's words, the moment of finding the knowledge and insight of the material through dealing with it is when the material 'manifests itself in its own right' (Heidegger, 1962: 98). He defines this kind of knowledge, or in his words, the kind of being which equipment possesses, 'readiness-to-hand' (Heidegger, 1962: 98), and points out that,

Only because equipment has this 'Being-in-itself' and does not merely occur, is it manipulable in the broadest sense and at our disposal. No matter how sharply we just look at the 'outward appearance of Things in whatever form this takes, we cannot discover anything ready-to-hand. If we look at Things just 'theoretically', we can get along without understanding readiness-to-hand. But when we deal with them by using them and manipulating them, this activity is not a blind one; it has its own kind of sight, by which our manipulation is guided and from which it acquires its specific Thingly character. Dealings with equipment subordinate themselves to the manifold assignments of the 'in-order-to'. And the sight with which they thus accommodate themselves is circumspection. (Heidegger, 1962: 98)

This can be seen as a practical perception, or actualisation which particularly concerns with the material and practical aspects of the handler's memory (i.e. her/his habitual ways of practice). For the handler, how a material should be handled is largely decided by her/his habitual ways of practice. As a result, in Simon O'Sullivan's words, the handling could be a 'practice of recognition' (2006: 1) in which the handler repeats her/his habitual ways of practice; or a 'practice of encounter' (2006: 1) in which the handler's habitual ways of practice are ruptured and expanded through gaining new sights of the materials.

A series of my paintings can be the example of how a painter finds encounter during her/his habitual way of practice. In 2013, while making a landscape painting using ink and rice paper on top of a piece of wood panel, I accidentally discovered that through the rice paper, which is very thin and almost semi-transparent, the ink soaked in the wood panel beneath and created another layer of image making (Fig.2). Moreover, during this process, the rice paper functioned as a kind of filter that transformed the painted landscape into an abstract image that manifested a power of its own. Accordingly, the roles of the materials unexpectedly changed, the wood panel which initially supported the practice became a kind of 'canvas' which received the ink; whereas the rice paper, which was the initial 'canvas', was turned into a tool that shaped the image making.



Fig.2, *Untitled*, Rongwei Zhang, 2013, ink on wood panel, 90 x 90cm.

This is an example of encountering some familiar materials' new possibilities of being handled. In Heidegger's words, I found new readiness-to-hand (Heidegger, 1962: 98) of rice paper through these paintings. From the perspective of Deleuze and Guattari, finding this 'readiness-to-hand' through handling materials is also the creation of a 'line of flight' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 9) through which the original plan of making a landscape painting was shifted into a practice of making an abstract painting through de-and-reterritorialising the materials' functions. It also illustrates that non-representational practice (i.e. without a predetermined theoretical conclusion as the subject to shape and direct the practice) does not mean the practice has no aim and structure. In Simon O'Sullivan's words, finding

new insight, or 'readiness-to-hand' of the materials through handling is an encounter experience that ruptures and expands my habitual territory of practice, and from a Deleuzoguattarian perspective, 'line of flight' that enables de-and-reterritorialisation to happen (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 9) can be created through such a practice.

This special kind of sight, or looking at something through practice, is what Heidegger calls 'circumspection' (Heidegger, 1962: 98-99). He argues that circumspective interpretation is grounded in a prior context of intelligibility which he calls a fore-structure that includes fore-having which is 'something we have in advance'; fore-sight which is 'something we see in advance'; and fore-conception which is 'something we grasp in advance' (Heidegger, 1962: 191). Heidegger further indicates that,

Whenever something is interpreted as something, the interpretation will be founded essentially upon fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception. An interpretation is never a presuppositionless apprehending of something presented to us (Heidegger, 1962: 191-192).

As discussed above, elements such as memory, nostalgic experience, and affect are also materials which can be handled in this project. Therefore, what the theoretical analysis of nostalgia, memory, and affect do in chapter one is to form the prior context of intelligibility which painting can dependent upon. Instead of determining the painting practice, in Barbara Bolt's words, this context 'enables us to interpret and respond to the possibilities that things threw up.' (Bolt, 2010: 98)

## **2.4 Rhizomatic Practice**

A single painting practice has several perspectives of power or logic that function as its 'driving forces'. For example, a painting in this project might be directed by

the cognitive aim of depicting a memory and the logic of manipulating paint at the same time. The aim of transcending representation is achieved through this multiplicity (which is a key feature of rhizome) in the 'driving force' of the practice. Accordingly, instead of being a direct line from the subject to the finished work, the progression of practice is a horizontal expansion which does not follow any transcendental logic or structure. Practice in this sense is rhizomatic, as Simon O'Sullivan's discusses:

a system, or anti-system, without center or indeed any central organising motif. It is flat system in which the individual nodal points can, and are, connected to one another in a non-hierarchical manner. (O'Sullivan, 2006: 12)

The 'individual nodal points' are elements such as memory, nostalgia, paints and photograph, and their connections are made through practice i.e. being handled. However, as Damien Sutton and David Martin-Jones suggest, whenever we explore thought (or, indeed, anything else) rhizomatically, there is always a deep ambiguity involved (Sutton and Martin-Jones 2008:6). Seeing something rhizomatically causes ambiguity in defining its identities and this further influences its connections with others. For example, the identities of key elements in this project such as memory, nostalgia, paints and photograph are shifting between the subject and the materials. This means that, every element exists as more than one 'nodal point' at the same time. As a result, when being seen as identity A and connected to other things, the element's identity B might accordingly be made into some other unexpected connection. These connections between identities, which are also formed by the connections between other nodal points, form new identities, or nodal points which extend these multiple-layered connections. Identities formed from this chaotic mass only exist temporarily; their formation might unexpectedly participate other identities' formations; and there is no clear division between things. Deleuze and Guattari say in describing a multiplicity:

There is no unity to serve as a pivot in the object, or to divide in the subject. There is not even the unity to abort in the object or "return" in the subject. A multiplicity has neither subject nor object, only determinations, magnitudes, and dimensions. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 8)

However, with the theory of double articulation between the molar and the molecular (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 213-216), Deleuze and Guattari indicate that the rhizome's compound movement of connecting and becoming does not completely repel tree-structure thinking (causal, hierarchical, and structured by binaries). Molar and molecular are two different kinds of movements, as Bolt illustrates, the 'molar' can be exemplified by the great binary aggregates such as sex or class or representation. It is an arborescent structure that has a rigid linear segmentarity (Bolt, 2004:45). Hence, in describing a movement, a molar is the process of becoming a tree-like structure. Molecular movement, although escapes the binary organisation and is not ordered and classified in any formal way, cannot be defined as the total opposition of molar organisations, as the two processes coexist and cross over into each other. Molecular escapes always happen during the formation of a molar organisation, yet molecular escapes 'would be nothing if they did not return to molar organisations.' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:216-217) Deleuze and Guattari use the terms 'class' and 'mass' to analyse the two movements (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:213-214). As they point out, class is a tree-structured molar segmentarity; and by contrast, mass is a molecular motion with no fixed order. Classes are fashioned from masses through crystallisation or sedimentation, yet masses constantly flow from classes in this sedimentation. (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:216)

Therefore, representational practice might mean that the practice is caused and decided by a predetermined molar structure and hence lost the possibilities of making molecular escape. By contrast, rhizomatic practice, although fostering molecular movement, still results in molar structures. Compared to

representational practice, molar structures created by rhizomatic practice are not predetermined and unpredictable. As Simon O'Sullivan puts it, finding them is an encounter can be seen as a kind of new knowledge, although it is important to see the work as a rhizomatic multiplicity rather than a predetermined identity. Molar organisations, or tree-structured formations, could still play important parts, or even be the found new knowledge during the practical process as their 'fixity' could foster the transferability of the research outcomes.

## **2.5 Summary**

This research project utilises painting practice to visually and materially handle the becoming and actualisation of memory and nostalgic experiences. The practice turns a chaotic totality (i.e. memory and nostalgic experiences) into a static two-dimensional image. In order to transcend representation, practice is not given a predetermined schema to actualise. The aim of studying the literature on key concepts such as memory, nostalgia, painting, and photography is to create a prior context of intelligibility which practice can be dependent upon.

Without the dominance of a predetermined schema, practice is pushed forward by multiple perspectives of power or logic which include the cognitive aim of depicting a memory and the practical logic of manipulating materials. Therefore, in a sense, the start of a practice is the start of a molecular movement which, although is not ordered and classified in any formal way, still aims to form unexpected molar organisations which can be the 'nodal points' within a rhizome that forms new concepts through connectivity.

As the materials being handled in this project include memory, nostalgic experiences, paints, and photography, the formed molar organisations might be new insight, or 'ready-to-hand' of these elements. Accordingly, the finished



painting becomes the connectivity, or rhizome of these material insights. It can also be seen as a virtual, or a totality on its own, and for the viewer, viewing the work becomes a perception through which she/he gains new affective experiences and consciousness. In this way, making and viewing the painting are both processes of actualisation which include selection and adjustment, and through these actualisations, the viewers' memories and the artist's can form another rhizome from which new concepts and ideas can be created.

## **Chapter Three: Practice Analysis**

Chapter Three discusses three projects that I made in order to explore the research question. However, as most of the nostalgic reveries used in these projects were triggered by photographs, a discussion on how different photographs trigger the viewer's memory in various ways is made before the discussion on each project.

### **3.1 Different Photographs and Different Triggered Memories**

A nostalgic experience should not be confused with a nostalgic reverie. Nostalgic reverie means the image of the past that the person longs for. By contrast, a nostalgic experience means the entire process of a person dealing with a nostalgic reverie and the affective movements triggered by it. In other words, nostalgic reverie is the image that sits within a nostalgic experience. As discussed in Chapter One, Section 1.2, nostalgic reverie is a non-repeatably created beautified and imagined scene of the past rather than the reappearance of some bygone facts (Zhao, 2005), having a nostalgic experience means that the person is longing for an imagined scene.

In this project, nostalgic experiences are triggered by viewing photographs. Looking is a form of perceiving. Both Bergson and Deleuze argue that, when a person perceives an object, only the elements that interest the person could enter her/his consciousness (Bergson, 1991: 36; Deleuze, 1991: 24-25). According to Bergson, the person's memory plays a vital role when she/he perceives an object as immediate conscious awareness of the present is always a contracted mixture of sensation and memory (Bergson, 2007: 175-176). As discussed in Chapter One: Section 1.2, a person's memory is an undividable entity that constantly achieves new states (Bergson, 2001). Therefore, although a photograph is a

static image, every experience of looking at or perceiving it would be new and non-repeatable as the viewer's memory would be different in every perceiving.

By looking at a photograph, the person is using her/his present memory to interpret the past and this means that the interpretation must be a new construction rather than an explanation of what the scene is. Questions such as identifying the objects in the photograph and defining a meaning or theme for the photograph require some nodal points (i.e. the objects and plots) from the rhizome of memory to stand out and make certain connections between themselves and some aspects of the photograph. As Brian Massumi points out, similar to memory, affect is the totality of emotional movements within the body, then emotion occurs when selection happens and certain affective movements are assimilated into the person's consciousness (Massumi, 1996: 226). Therefore, apart from the cognitive aspects, looking at a photograph also triggers affective movements and the emergence of emotions.

Even perceiving a photograph taken by the viewer herself/himself could not be seen as an act of bringing the past back in the viewer's mind. In discussing the relationships between photographs and memory, clinical researcher Tim Fawns argues that, over time, photographs 'gain performativity that allows them to divert from the purposes, spaces and times for which they are created' (2014: 3). Therefore, even photographs 'act as cues that help us to mentally reconstruct related episodes' (Fawns, 2014: 7), the memories that are reconstructed by viewing a photograph should be seen as a new creation rather than the representation of the moment of photographing.

The act of viewing a photograph in general triggers new thoughts and imaginations rather than the re-presentation of the past. But different types of photographs might trigger the viewer's imagination in different ways. For example,

while analysing how we read a photograph, Graham Clarke argues that 'We must remember that the photograph is itself the product of a photographer. It is always the reflection of a specific point of view, be it aesthetic, political, or ideological' (1997: 29). Hence, viewing a photograph taken by the viewer herself/himself might be a different experience from viewing a found photograph. In the first case, as the 'specific point of view' that generated the photograph was a former state of the viewer, what is triggered might be a re-interpretation or re-creation of the state. By contrast, viewing a photograph of the latter case is a new perceiving experience.

This project particularly examines the three types of photographs. The first case is the photograph taken by me of a subject that I had encountered previously. The second case is the photograph taken by me of a subject that I encountered for the first time. The third case is the photograph taken by other people.

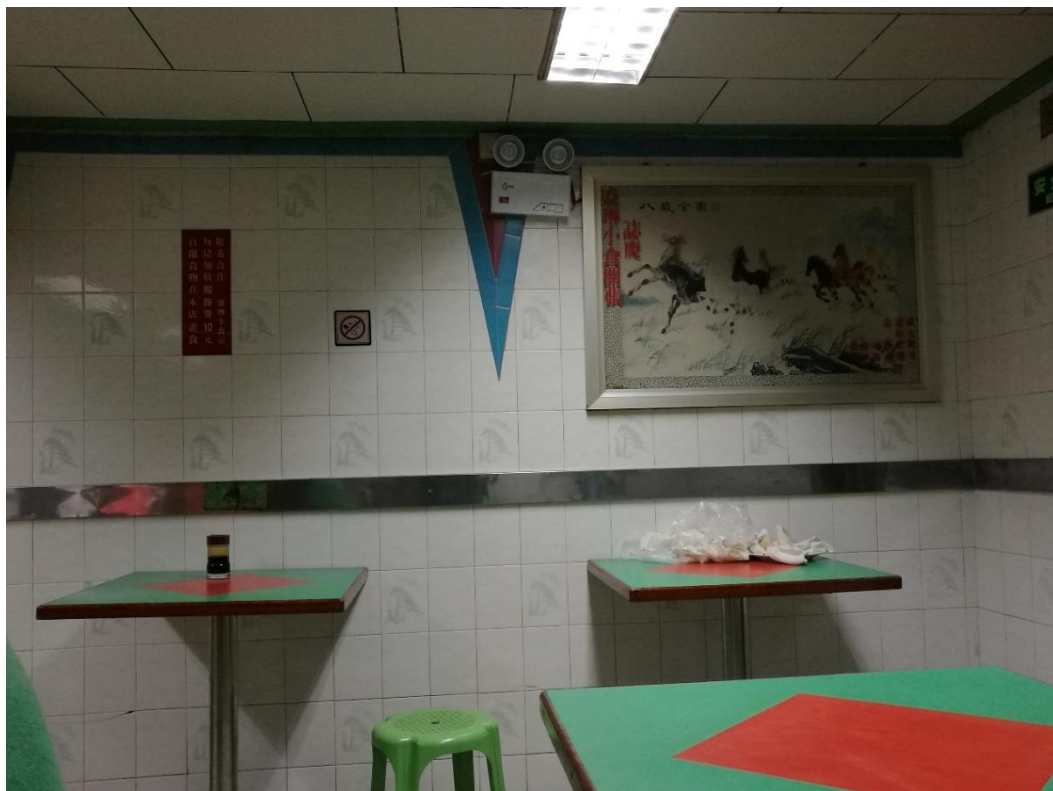


Fig.3 *Shenglin restaurant*, Rongwei Zhang, 2018, digital photography, 10 x 15cm.

In the first case, the photograph was taken by me of a place that I had encountered before. In other words, certain aspects or former states of the place were already in my memory as a part of a narrative, meaning, or emotion. Photographing the place could be an act of documenting a moment in which a particular part of my memory is triggered and activated. However, as my memory as a bloc at the time of photographing the place must be different from it was when the place was perceived previously, encountering the place was a new experience of perceiving. Perceiving the familiar place might, in Deleuze and Guattari's words, deterritorialise the original memory and affect that involve the subject, and as every deterritorialisation is accompanied by a reterritorialisation (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 10), what this deterritorialisation leads to is a changed or expanded memory and affect concerning the subject. In other words, this triggered, or in Sean Watson's words, actualised memory and emotion may change an existing piece of the person's memory and affect.

What the act of taking a photograph captures and documents in this case is a moment in which the photographer/viewer's memory experiences a de-and-reterritorialisation. However, as there must be a period of time consumed between the moment of photographing and the moment that the photograph physically comes into being, when she/he has the photograph to look at, all relevant elements would be in different states. The act of looking at the photograph becomes a task of perceiving the visual documentation of bygone states of the subject, and this means that the subject being perceived is different from the one (i.e. the subject in themselves) at the moment of photographing. Combined with the facts that the person's memory would be in a different state, and the physical environment that she/he is in could be different, the memory and emotion triggered by looking at the photograph would again not be the same as the ones in the moment of photographing. Moreover, apart from shifting the becoming of the person's memory on the subject which seem linear, looking at

the photograph could also trigger other elements of the moment of photographing such as the photographer's thoughts and concerns at the time.

Looking at a photograph taken by the viewer her/himself of place that she/he had encountered triggers multiple-layered movements in both the viewer's memory and affect, as her/his initial memory and affect would experience at least two times of de-and-reterritorialisation (i.e. once at the moment of photographing, the other one in viewing the photograph). Therefore, instead of re-present the person's memory and affect of the past, viewing a photograph creates a sense of the past that is revived and keeps being rewritten. The linear time view is hence ruptured because different points of the past would be de-and-reterritorialised at the same time when looking at the photograph. With the photographer/viewer's familiar subject as the pivot, elements from different time and experiences could be triggered and connected into a rhizome from which new interpretations of the photograph and new movements in memory and affect within the person can be created.

A photograph taken by me can be the example of this case. On 8<sup>th</sup> March 2018 in Zhuhai, China, I took a photograph (Fig.3) in a restaurant that I often went to many years ago. At that moment, my attention was caught by the painting of horses on the wall as I suddenly realised that it had been there since 1996. It then triggered many memories of my childhood and started a nostalgic experience for me. I then took this photograph, hoping that it could recreate a scene of 1996 in my memory in future viewings. However, when this photograph was printed out in Glasgow several months later, looking at it became a complicated experience, as although the memories and affective state about 1996 were triggered again, they did not feel as strong as when I took the photograph in the restaurant. Together with my focus and concerns in Glasgow at the time, the triggered memories and affective movements formed an assemblage that did not have a

clear centre. The proportion between these three main elements and the connections between the nodal points (i.e. the objects and affect within them) change every time the photograph is being viewed. In some cases, looking at the photograph mainly triggered the memories of the 1990s whereas in other cases it primarily triggered the memory of the evening in 2018 when it was taken. Because my memory as a totality is different every time I look at the photograph, every viewing experience is a process of creating a new centre (i.e. the focus and interpretation) for the chaotic assemblage of memory and affect. It does not always create a scene that I longed for, and the later viewing experience somehow always contains the shadows of previous experiences.



Fig.4 *Street in Zhuhai*, Rongwei Zhang, 2018, digital photography, 10 x 15cm.

In the second case, the photograph is also taken by the viewer. Its main difference with the first case is that the photographer did not have any connections with the place before taking the photograph. This means, instead of being parts of a

narrative, meaning, or emotion that already exists in her/his mind, the subjects in this case are at the beginning of forming one as it is the first time that the photographer encounters and perceives them. Therefore, as she/he is directly selecting from and adjusting the subject, taking a photograph can be seen as an act of visually actualising the subject. Therefore, unlike the first case in which the photographer/viewer already has an existing 'territory' (i.e. memory and affect about the subjects) for the act of taking and viewing the photograph to de-and-reterritorialise, taking and viewing a photograph in the second case is the start and process of creating a territory for her/him.

Indeed, deciding to take a photograph might mean that the photographer has found something that interested her/him in the unfamiliar environment. By locating certain subjects with a frame and cutting them off from the whole picture, taking the photograph creates a squared image which, despite the relevant elements' changing in states over time, always represents the encounter with the bygone states of several selected elements. As there must be a period of time consumed between the moment of photographing and the moment that the photograph physically comes into being, having a photograph to look at means that all subjects would have reached new states in their becoming. Even in a person's mind, the chance of re-organising the memories into the exact states of the moment of encounter and find out the exact elements that triggered her/him to take the photograph is unlikely, if not impossible.

Because the photographer/viewer's memory would be expanded at the moment of viewing the photograph compared with it at the moment of taking it, and no subject can be the predominant centre through bonding with previous memories, every single experience of viewing the photograph should be seen as a task of perceiving the photographic image with a different memory. When in the act of viewing, the photograph, which is a centreless image that documents the static,



bygone, and isolated states of the subjects, assembles with the person's memory and creates connections leading to the emergence of unexpected new foci of the photograph. New interpretations or meanings that centred around these new foci could then be composed. Although these new focuses, composed interpretations and meanings have the potential of triggering a nostalgic experience for the person by inciting her/his memory and affective movements, they might not actually have close connection with what really happened and how the person really felt at the moment. The photograph in this case is about the present rather than the past.

This case of photographs can be represented by a piece that I took on 19<sup>th</sup> February 2018 (Fig.4). Although the photograph was taken in my home city of Zhuhai, it was the one and only time that I wandered into that community. In other words, the subjects were not pre-bonded with any part of my memory and taking the photograph was the one and only experience that I had with them. Therefore, unlike the first case in which the act of taking the photograph happens during an ongoing process of my existing memory's de-and-reterritorialisation, the photograph in this case was taken at the moment when the entities (i.e. me as the photographer and the subjects) just started to encounter. From my perspective, the photograph was the result of the selection and adjustment that I made in perceiving the environment. However, when the photograph is printed out, all relevant subjects have reached different states. As a result, the photograph cannot represent anything in the present physical world, it is the shadow that remains while the body has gone. Instead of a representation, the photograph should be seen as an entity, or totality on its own, and this means, even for myself as the photographer, viewing a photograph is a new task of perceiving.

Answering the questions triggered by viewing a photograph that seem

retrospective such as why did I decide to take this photograph is actually a task of composing an interpretation for the present. And in this way, answering these questions could create 'line of flight' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 9) along which memory and affect could reach new states through achieving de-and-reterritorialisation. For example, while writing about Fig.4 *Photograph of a street in Zhuhai, China, 2018*, I started to feel that what attracted me the most in the photograph was the old building at the centre, and the metal structure and the two cars on the two sides started to seem redundant. Accordingly, I started to wonder why did I choose to take the photograph at that location rather than a few steps forward, and what was the initial trigger and focus of the photograph? While finding the answer to the first question, I noticed that the beautiful shadow of the trees between the two cars was intact and excluding the structure and cars would have ruptured the shadow. This led to the emergence of another question of, did I deliberately include the entire tree shadow in the frame? The focus spontaneously shifted from the buildings to the tree shadow, which led to new questions around the new focus of the image.

This endless wandering between questions gradually took my memory away from the moment of photographing into other moments and plots that involved similar old buildings and tree shadows. From a Deleuzoguattarian perspective, this viewing experience was a process of de-and-reterritorialisation, or the coexisting movements of molar and molecular. Different from the first case in which the existing territory being ruptured and reformed was my memory of certain subject(s), the aspect that being reterritorialised in this case was the memory of the moment of photographing. As the initial moment of photographing included binaries such as cause/effect and subjectivity/objectivity, recalling it can be seen as a movement of becoming a molar which is, as Deleuze and Guattari define (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 213-216), an arborescent structure which features binaries. During this process, molecular movement, or the thing 'that flows or

flees, that escapes the binary organisation, the resonance apparatus, and the overcoding machine' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 216) happened, and how it escaped from the movement of recalling the moment and reaching other parts of the memory can be seen as a process of deterritorialising the memory of the initial moment of photographing. However, as every deterritorialisation is accompanied by a reterritorialisation (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 10), then a molecular movement would be nothing if it did not return to a molar organisation (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 216-7). The new elements in memory must form a new molar structure which functions as the interpretation of the moment of photographing.

Instead of finding out what exactly happened and what was the reason for taking the photograph, answering the questions triggered by viewing a photograph in the second case is to make fabrications by selecting elements from the person's memory and make connections between them. In this way, the movements in memory and affect triggered by viewing the photograph cannot be regarded as a reconstruction as they fundamentally do not aim to revive the original movement. In fact, looking at a photograph in the second case might trigger scenes that have never happened. Accordingly, in the cases which the viewer is nostalgic about these scenes, she/he is actually longing for an imagination rather than for a past.

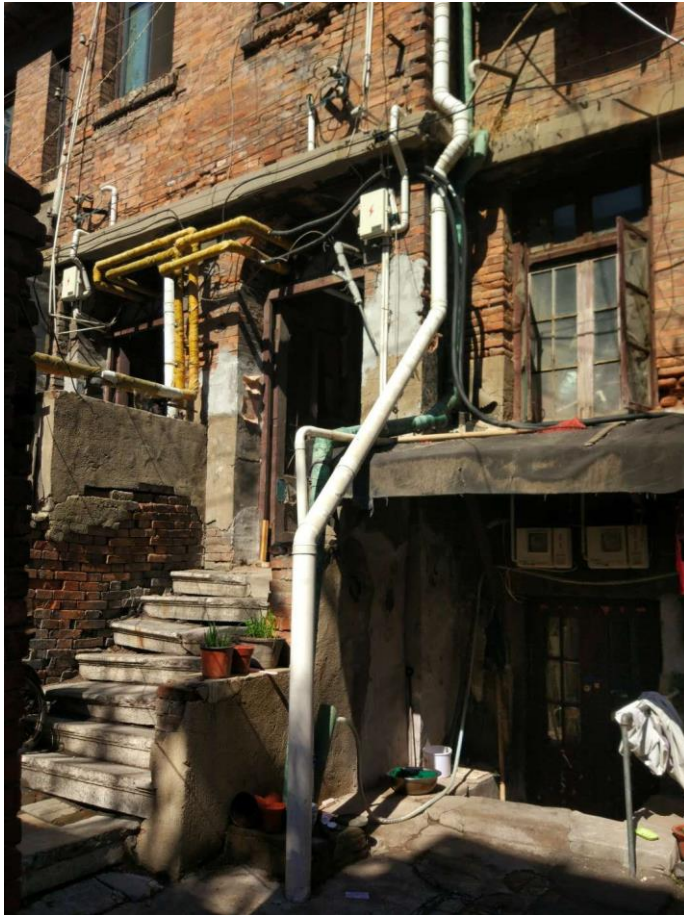


Fig.5 Old building in Tianjin, unknown photographer, acquired from Shuyu Fang, 2018, digital photography, 10 x 15cm.

In the first two cases, because the viewer is looking at a photograph that was directly generated from her/his own duration, viewing experiences in both cases unavoidably include a process of de-and-reterritorialisation although the elements being de-and-reterritorialised are different (in the first case it is the mixture of the memory of the familiar place and the moment of photographing, whereas it is solely the moment of photographing in the second case). As the image or reverie in the photographer/viewer's mind that was triggered by viewing the photograph is, woven by the nodal points (i.e. the objects and plots in the photographer's memory) which the photographer already has, it might create an illusion of re-presenting the facts of the past. Therefore, the distinctions between the past and the present, facts and imagination, subjectivity and objectivity in these two cases of viewing photographs seem blurred and ambiguous even

though the triggered image is always a new and non-repeatable construction.

In the third case, the viewer is looking at a photograph of strange subject(s) taken by a stranger. This means, what she/he is looking at is a documented fragment of a bygone encounter between several unknown objects. Moreover, similar to the previous two cases, the physical existence of a photograph means that the photographer and subject(s) have all reached different states already. Therefore, for the viewer, the moment of photographing (i.e. the bygone encounter) cannot directly influence how she/he perceives the photograph as she/he did not take part in the encounter and it is impossible to retrieve it. This makes the photograph she/he perceives an entity on its own rather than the representation of something else.

This case of photograph can be represented by Fig.5, which is a photograph that I acquired from another person. I did not know when and where the photographer took this photograph, but still, by viewing it, an impression that there must be a busy street in front of the building's door was immediately triggered. This could be because the old brick building triggered my memory of living in a similar building by a busy street in the early 1990s. However, just as the triggered memory was about to develop further, I noticed the edge of a brick wall on the left side of the photograph. This directly cut off the newly formed connection between the old building in the photograph and my memory of the early 1990s by implying that it was another building rather than a street that the door was facing. Therefore, perceiving the photograph generated a rational recognition that the photograph was taken in a narrow alley between two old brick buildings.

This rational recognition was not enough to trigger affective movements as it lacked the connections with my personal memory which, as discussed in Chapter one: section 1.2, has an unbreakable link with emotion. Therefore, in order to

trigger affective movements, the viewing experience after the rational identification became a browse of my memory with the intention of searching for elements that could directly connect to the identification. And gradually, fragments of memories of different events and times were triggered and organised into an affect-laden reverie which never happened in the physical world.

Damian Sutton and David Martin-Jones use the image of a forest (i.e. the assemblage of trees) to illustrate how a rhizome includes rather than repels arborescent structures (Sutton and Martin-Jones, 2008: 4). From this perspective, being a rhizome on its own, my memory can be seen as an assemblage of the individual memories of my bygone experiences. Using Sutton and Martin-Jones' metaphor, my memory as an entity is like a forest that contains the individual memories of bygone experiences. These memories are like the trees within the forest as they can be shaped into individual narratives yet none of them can be the absolute centre of the memory.

Therefore, unlike the previous two cases in which viewing the photograph is bonded with certain 'trees' (e.g. my memory of taking the photograph and my memories of previous encounters with the subjects), in viewing a photograph of the third case, no particular 'tree' from the 'forest' can be seen as more relevant than the others through having a direct connection with the photograph's production. As a result, what would be triggered is unpredictable, and the triggered elements have the potential of forming 'line of flight' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 9) along which the viewer's memory enters the realm of imagination. Therefore, even if the triggered scene is nostalgic, it might not be about a period of time in the viewer's past. Because instead of identifying an existing memory and adjust it into a scene, the viewer might need to use her/his imagination to create a scene that she/he has never experienced.

## 3.2 The Three Projects

### 3.2.1 The Barnes Series

*The Barnes Series* was a selection of works made during the four months between May and September in 2018 at the Barnes Building of the Glasgow School of Art. Works in this series were mainly directed by material experiments, and one of the main findings was bringing encounters to my memory and affective state by articulating paints, in particular gesso paint, with photographs. Paintings in this series were started by finding the photographs that could trigger my nostalgic experiences. The painting was then directly made on the selected photographs. As they were visually changed, the nostalgic reverie that was triggered by the photographs were de-and-reterritorialised into other thoughts and affective states. In this way, I explored what a nostalgic reverie can become through painting.

Gesso could play a vital role in this process. In what will be referred to as the *gesso scraping method*, the selected photograph that could trigger my nostalgic reverie was covered with a thin layer of gesso first, and after it was dry, a painting incited by the nostalgic reverie (using water-based paints such as acrylic and watercolours) was directly made on top of the gesso. Through being soaked by the paints, some parts of the gesso would become wrinkled and removable. By scraping these parts off with a palette knife, the photographic images beneath would be revealed and merged with the remaining painting into a new image. Also, as I could not predetermine which parts of the gesso would become removable, how his memory and affect would be shaped by perceiving the new image was unpredictable. Accordingly, practice found a non-representative way that could shift the nostalgic experience into new thoughts and affective states.

In the paintings using this method, nostalgic reveries were deliberately triggered by attempting to find the 'right' photographs. Looking at a photograph required my memory as an entity to go through a selection and adjustment in order to form an interpretation or understanding of the photograph. Based on Henri Bergson's duration theory which sees a person's memory as a succession without distinction, an interpenetration of elements so heterogeneous that former states can never recur (Bergson, 2001: vii), my memory at the moment of being triggered by the selected photograph must be in a state that had never occurred before. Therefore, the nostalgic reverie triggered by looking at a photograph must be a new construction that cannot be repeated even though it seems to be the reappearance of something that happened in the past.

Based on Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy of rhizome, the nostalgic reverie triggered by looking at a photograph could be seen as a rhizome (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987), because although some objects could be clearly identified within the triggered reverie, there is no predetermined structure that organises these objects into one and only truth or right answer. In other words, the triggered nostalgic reverie does not represent a pre-existent image or understanding. Every viewing is a new articulation between the viewer's memory, affect, and the photograph. Through selection and adjustment, pieces of these elements can be made into a complex patchwork from which different meanings and understandings can be made from different perspectives. It is indeed like Sutton and Martin-Jones have pointed out, whenever we explore thought (or, indeed, anything else) rhizomatically, there is always a deep ambiguity involved because as a shifting pattern, the rhizome is constantly creating lines of flight along which it can move into (and onto) new territories (Sutton and Martin-Jones, 2008: 6; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 9). Therefore, handling the materials such as paints, gesso and the photograph in this project was a way of shifting the triggered rhizome away from its unique visual and material perspective.



Accordingly, from a rhizomatic perspective, the aim of painting was to form a line of flight for the nostalgic reverie. Just as the nostalgic reverie was created through the articulation between my memory, affect, and the photograph, turning it into a static two-dimensional image requires me to make another articulation between the reverie and the paint itself. As discussed in Chapter One, the person's memory plays a vital role in perceiving the world (Watson, 1998: 9). It could be argued that, whatever I painted was nostalgic because my memory was triggered into a nostalgic state by the photograph. Therefore, when facing the gesso covered photograph, I did not have to start the painting with a clear aim. The painting was directed by the nostalgic psychological state that I was in until the line of flight emerged.

However, finishing the painting does not mark the end of the work, as it still needed to be scraped in order to merge, or articulate with the photographic images. This was the point where what Simon O'Sullivan defines as *encounter* (O'Sullivan, 2006: 1) happens. Because I could not decide which parts of the painted gesso would become removable and which parts of the photograph will be revealed by doing so, both the painting and the photograph were unexpectedly ruptured by the other through the scraping. While destroying each other's integrity as an image, this mutual rupturing also created a new image by merging the remaining pieces. The new image, which was the mixture of the painting and the photograph, could move away from solely being the trigger, expression, or representation of the nostalgic reverie and trigger new thoughts and affective movements.

Working in this way involves Deleuze and Guattari's theory of the double articulation between molar and molecular movements. In their philosophy, a molar structure is an aborescent structure which is featured by binaries such as

cause and effect, and molecular movements are the flows that 'escape the binary organisation, the resonance apparatus, and the overcoding machine' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 216). Before scraping off the paint, both the painting and photograph can be seen as molar structures as they both are the results of linear aborescent movements in which the work (i.e. the tree) is caused by my idea or intention (i.e. the seeds). Through the application and removal of gesso, these two structures were ruptured and their outcomes were broken into pieces and set in molecular movements which 'has no aims other than unleash' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 275). However, Deleuze and Guattari also point out, a molecular movement would be nothing if it did not return to molar organisations (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 216-217). These pieces were bound to come together again to form a new static image which functioned as the 'seed' of other molar movements such as interpretations of the piece and new triggered memories.

Also from the perspective of Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy, both images are linked with the process of de-and-reterritorialisation. In taking a photograph, the photographer must make a selection from the environment that she/he is in (e.g. selecting the subjects) and adjust her/his relationships with the selected elements (e.g. finding the angle). As cognitive neuroscientist Michael Gazzaniga says, 'Everything in life is memory, save for the thin edge of the present' (Foster, 2009: 2), thus selection and adjustment during photographing are largely based on the photographer's memory at the moment. The photograph can be seen as generated through the connections between the photographer's memory and the environment that she/he is in.

These connections then form a memory of taking the photograph. A memory that the photographer would turn to when she/he is trying to answer the question of why did I take the photograph? However, if seeing the photographer's memory as a whole as a rhizome, then this particular memory of taking a photograph

becomes one of the countless temporal nubs within it. It is formed through the connections between nodal points (e.g. the photographed objects and what they triggered in the photographer's memory) while being a nodal point on its own can then be used to form other connections. Moreover, these connections do not form a stable territory within the photographer's memory, as the connections within her/his memory are always changing in order to respond the things that she/he encounters.

Although the photograph documents a static scene, as the viewer would be in different psychological and affective states in each viewing experience, the thoughts and affects triggered by each viewing the photograph would always be different. Instead of being the visual representation of a stable narrative, a photograph is like an entrance to an unknown territory. Whenever the photographer looks at a photograph taken by herself/himself, some pieces within her/his memory would be triggered into her/his's mind and start to make connections. But as her/his memory as a whole must be different from the moment of photographing, and the photograph cannot be regarded as the actual things that were photographed, every experience of viewing a photograph will be new and non-repeatable. What will be triggered and how these triggered things will be connected together are unpredictable to the photographer/viewer. Hence, looking at a photograph starts a de-and-reterritorialisation within the person's memory. Certain objects are cut off from their original connections with others by doing so and form a new territory through making connections between themselves.

In the works of *The Barnes Series*, the territories that formed by viewing photographs were nostalgic reveries. As looking at the selected photograph was a new perceiving experience, I could not foresee what elements would be triggered into my mind and what connections would be made by those triggered

elements. In most cases, the triggered reverie was an affect-laden chaotic patchwork formed by unexpectedly triggered objects. While inciting the painting, the triggered nostalgic reverie was difficult to be directly represented by a painting, as it always needed to be organised into a scene first so that the painting could have a clear model to depict. Even with this representational method, another layer of de-and-reterritorialisation would happen to the nostalgic reverie, because in order to become a clear scene for me to depict, the nostalgic reverie which is a chaotic bloc needs to be shifted or reterritorialised.

In order to avoid using painting in a representational way, I directly started the painting without any predetermined aim. As I was in a nostalgic experience, every mark I painted was influenced by the nostalgic reverie. Even so, the painted marks still created their own material and visual effects such as the thickness of the paint, the shade of the colour, and the texture of the brushstroke. These material and visual effects gradually formed a line of flight along which the nostalgic reverie moved into the territory of painting. In this way, another layer of de-and-reterritorialisation was achieved through handling paint. The nostalgic reverie, which was the territory previously formed by looking at a static, two-dimensional image (i.e. the selected photograph) was turned into another static, two-dimensional image (i.e. the painting).

In the practices that involved the use of gesso, these two tasks of de-and-reterritorialisation, the one triggered by viewing the selected photograph and the one achieved by painting, were cleanly separated by the layer of gesso. Through blocking the photograph, I did not have to face the change of the nostalgic reverie's trigger. Therefore, both viewing the photograph and making a painting from what was triggered by the viewing could be conducted in a relatively stable state. However, the clean separation also created a linear structure in which the photograph, the nostalgic reverie, and the painting were organised in a strict order.

Rupturing this linear structure and organising the elements together into a new territory was achieved by the scraping. As the photograph was the nostalgic reverie's trigger and the painting was the nostalgic reverie's effect, and both the processes of having the nostalgic reverie and making the painting from it involved the de-and-reterritorialisation of my memory and affective state, there was an indirect connection between the two images centred around the nostalgic reverie within the linear structure. Through the merge caused by scraping, this indirect relationship between the two images was ruptured and the linear structure became a horizontal rhizome. In this way, new thinkings and affective movements were generated by rethinking the relationship between the nostalgic reverie and the new formed image.

The gesso scraping method neither solely emphasise medium's specificity as Clement Greenberg (Fracina, Harrison and Paul, 1987, 308-314) promotes nor offers a new way of representing a predetermined blueprint. What it creates is connectivity that could horizontally merge painting, photograph, my memory and affect into a rhizome. The original identities or roles of these elements (e.g. the photograph being the trigger of a nostalgic experience) could be deterritorialised through this method and reterritorialised as a new hybrid entity. Although photography plays a vital role in it, the main contribution that the gesso scraping method makes is still to the field of painting. In discussing the definition of painting, James Elkins argues that painting 'is a kind of immersion in substances, a wonder and a delight in their unexpected shapes and feels' (2000: 188). The gesso scraping method was formed based on the new possibilities in handling paints, photographs and gesso that were found as I experimented with my materials. These new possibilities, in Elkins' words, create a new way of beginning a painting (2000: 188).



Fig.6 Triptych using gesso scraping method, Rongwei Zhang, 2018, acrylic and gesso on photo paper, 42 x 60cm, pp.10-12 of the portfolio.





Fig.7 *No Person of the Name at the Address*, Rongwei Zhang, 2018, acrylic and gesso on photo paper, 21 x 30cm, pp.10 of the portfolio.



Fig.8 *You Think It's That Easy?*, Rongwei Zhang, 2018, acrylic and gesso on photo paper, 21 x 30cm, pp.11 of the portfolio.



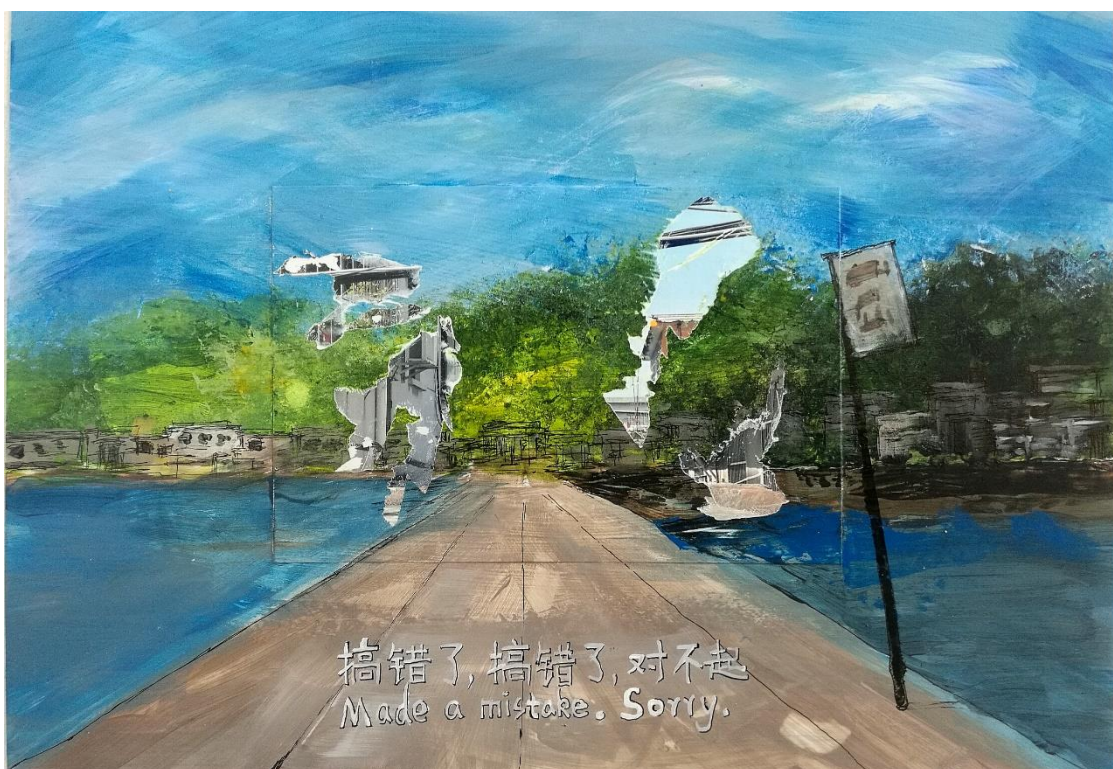


Fig.9 *Made a Mistake, Sorry*, Rongwei Zhang, 2018, acrylic and gesso on photo paper, 21 x 30cm, pp.12 of the portfolio.

The gesso scraping method was firstly used in three 30cm x 21cm paintings (Fig.6-9). All three practices followed the same procedures. A photograph that could trigger a nostalgic reverie for me was selected and attached to a larger piece of blank photo paper first. The photograph was then covered by a thin layer of gesso before a painting incited by the nostalgic reverie triggered by it was made on top of the dried gesso. The last step was to reveal some parts of the photograph by scraping off the removable painted gesso. By doing so, the fragments of the photographs and the painting merged into an unforeseeable new image.

All three selected photographs were taken by me, and the moments of taking them were the only encounters that I had with the subjects. At the moments they were taken, the decisions of taking the photographs were made based on my



memory and affective state at the moment. However, as my memory as a whole was in a different state and the photographs were entities on their own rather than the actual photographed objects, looking at the photographs were different experiences of perceiving. As a result, by looking at the photographs, the triggered memories did not strictly bond with the moments of taking the photographs. Memories outside the moments of photographing and even some imaginations were triggered during all three viewing experiences.

Therefore, although under the triggered affects, the triggered objects indeed formed reveries that made me long for, as the connections between the objects were incoherent and in chaotic shifting, none of them could be represented by a single bygone event that I remembered. In order to avoid representational practice, I directly started to paint onto the gesso covered surface without a predetermined image or model. The painting was started by testing the colours that I felt right to express the affects at the moment. As handling paint might incite emotional movements and other wordless experiences for the painter (Elkins, 2000: 188), the process of painting was also a process of shifting the nostalgic reverie triggered by viewing the photograph. While the painting was incited by my nostalgic reverie, my memory was in turn shifted by perceiving the painting. Accordingly, the painting gradually formed its own initiative and took me out of the nostalgic state and went in the direction of making a landscape painting.

As making a landscape painting was not a predetermined plan, it was through the mutual shifting between the initial nostalgic reverie and handling paints that I encountered the images of recognisable objects (e.g. the buildings, the trees and the clouds) in the landscape painting. As these recognisable objects were heterogeneous and not connected in a predetermined way, the process of making the landscape painting was rhizomatic although the finished painting is a static image.

A linear structure of a photograph triggered a nostalgic reverie which then generated a landscape painting was created. In order to rupture this linear structure and create new relationships between the nostalgic reverie and the two images, I scraped off the removable painted parts and revealed the photographic images beneath them. By doing so, the linear procedures of the practice were pressed into a flat image. The photograph, the nostalgic reverie, and the painting were all torn into pieces and merged into a new image, or a rhizome. The unexpectedly made juxtaposition between the painting and revealed photographic images created several coexisting binaries such as between the past and the present, between existed facts and imagination, and between mechanically printed and handmade images. Hence, viewing the work became a rhizomatic experience as what it triggered was both one and many, and finding an interpretation or meaning for the work required the viewer to mediate the chaotic binaries.

As both the painted and photographic images were figurative, the juxtaposition between them made by the scraping created a sense of montage which means a sequence of shots that have been edited to follow each other in rapid succession in film and television. As this effect was not planned, the work cannot be regarded as to imitate movie stills. Rather, the scraping formed a line of flight along which the image entered the territory of film. Instead of retrieving the initial nostalgic reverie triggered by viewing the photograph, perceiving the new image created by scraping triggered a different memory of watching a 1986 film directed by Hou Xiaoxian called *Dust in the Wind*. By adding a line from the film in the format of subtitle to the painting, I finally felt that the work had included enough layers of memories. At this stage, the role of the nostalgic reverie triggered by the photograph was no longer the pivot that was caused by the photograph and triggered the painting, rather it had become part of a horizontally expanding

rhizome which through being viewed could shift and be shifted by other memories.

As the three pieces were made within one day, the process of making the first painting set a basic tone in memory and affect for the next two. Along with the nostalgic reverie triggered by the photograph, the memory of watching the old film had also become a starting point for the painting. Although being another work physically, the later practice to a certain degree could be seen as a de-and-reterritorialisation of my memory and affective state shifted by the previous practice. The three works can be seen as an entity for this continuity, and juxtaposing them became another channel of expanding the rhizome.



Fig.10 *Untitled*, Rongwei Zhang, 2018, acrylic and gesso on photographs, 20 x 45cm, pp.3-9 of the portfolio.

Unlike the triptych in which each practice dealt with one nostalgic experience. In another painting (Fig.10), the gesso scraping method was used to de-and-reterritorialise a compound nostalgic experience. Six photographs that could trigger my nostalgic experiences were selected before the painting. In order to limit the influence of the nostalgic affect that was triggered by the previous selected photograph, I only made one selection per day. Every nostalgic experience triggered by the selected photographs was based on what was

triggered by the previous selected one. In other words, the later selection shifted rather than replaced the effects of the previous selection. Therefore, before viewing the six photographs as an entity, I was in a compound nostalgic experience.

Viewing the six photographs as an entity created ambiguity in the distinction between the present and the past. Although all six photographs were in my memory already, as discussed in Chapter One: Section 1.6, even viewing a selected photograph again could not retrieve the nostalgic reverie that was triggered during the initial perceiving because my memory was in a different state. Also, because the six photographs were arranged together one by one rather than being cut and then made into a collage, their integrities as individual photographs were not ruptured by their combination, and their clean and rigid edges prevented them from merging into a coherent scene. Hence, although the new image was comprised of six familiar photographs, looking at it was a new experience of perceiving in which I simultaneously perceived six triggers that were mutually interfering with each other.

This new viewing experience simultaneously triggered objects from the memories of all six selections into my mind. As these heterogeneous objects were centreless, my memory was shifted into a rhizomatic state by viewing the six photographs together. A rupture to the idea of time is linear was created by this new perceiving experience as my present, which was this new rhizomatic state in memory, to a certain extent was my past. In discussing Bergson's philosophy of duration, Deleuze questions the distinction between the present and the past, as he says:

We believe that the present is only past when it is replaced by another present. Nevertheless, let us stop and reflect for a moment: how would a new present come about if the old present did not pass at the same time that is present? How would any present whatsoever pass, if it were not past

at the same time as present? (1991: 58)

My mind reached a new present by looking at the selected photographs as an entity. However, instead of making my previous states 'the past' by replacing them, this new present itself was comprised of some fragments from the previous states. From Bergson's perspective, this viewing experience was an actualisation (Deleuze, 1991). My past was a virtual which means a totality that generated the actual, which in this case was the new state in memory. By invalidating the distinction between the present and the past, this experience of selecting, arranging and viewing photographs illustrated Eugene O'Neill's luminous insight, 'the past is the present, isn't it? It's the future, too' (1956). The desire of 'going back to the past' of the nostalgic experience was ruptured as I understood that the image of the past that I longed for was my present.

As the nostalgic experience was ruptured by viewing the six photographs together, I started to paint on the gesso covered photographs based on the new rhizomatic state in memory. While the painting was generated from this new state, making the painting also shifted the state of my memory and affect. In Barbara Bolt's words, handling paint as a process has the potential of taking on a life of its own that breathes, vibrates, pulsates, shimmers and generally runs away from the painter and makes her/him no longer have the awareness of time, of pain or of making decisions (Bolt, 2004: 1). This means, how would the act of handling paint shift my rhizomatic state in memory and affect triggered by viewing the photographs became unpredictable.

In discussing the logic of handling paint, Bolt points out that because we are constantly in the process of making it for exhibition, promoting it, analysing it and writing about it, the work of art tends to be reduced to its equipmental-being. (2004: 188). In order to escape such instrumentalism, I did not set any clear aim for the painting. The painting progressed in its own logic and finished at a point

of being a smooth blue abstract image on the gesso covered photographs. Unlike the previous arrangement which combined the six photographs into one from the perspective of shape and size, the abstract painting visually merged the six photographs into one piece.

By scraping off the removable parts of the painted gesso, parts of the covered photographic images were revealed and merged with the painting. However, the scraping unexpectedly cut off the connections between the revealed parts and the rest of the original photographs. Hence, as Fig.11 shows, even two revealed parts within the same photograph may have seemed incoherent. The gaps between the original framed territories of the photographs were nullified and all revealed parts became photographic images of their own.

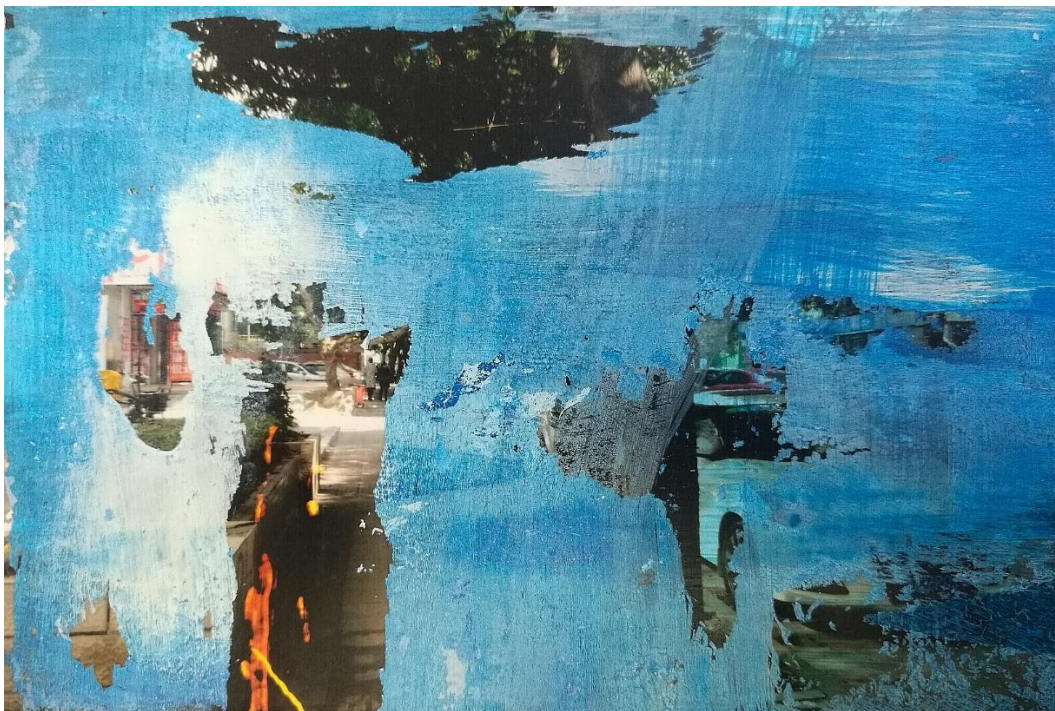


Fig.11 Detail of *Untitled*, Rongwei Zhang, 2018, acrylic and gesso on photograph, 10 x 15cm, pp.9 of the portfolio.

Through the scraping, both the painting and the photographs were de-and-reterritorialised. Similar to Deleuze and Guattari's example of the becoming-wasp



of an orchid and the becoming-orchid of a wasp in the act of pollination (1987: 10), the ruptured painting became a bond that unified the revealed photographic images while the revealed photographic images became the hints of the painting's interpretation. The new image formed by the two images can be seen as a new rhizome. Viewing it became a channel through which connections between memories, interpretations, imaginations and affect can be made.



Fig.12 *Her Writings*, Rongwei Zhang, 2018, acrylic and writings on photographs, 34 x 87cm, pp.28-30 of the portfolio.



Fig.13 Detail of *Her Writings*, Rongwei Zhang, 2018, acrylic and writings on photographs, 34 x 87cm, pp.28-30 of the portfolio.

In some other cases of the Barnes Series, the nostalgic experiences as the subjects of the paintings were unexpectedly encountered rather than deliberately sought. Compared with the works discussed previously which were made without any predetermined plan, these paintings were made with a clear tactic. The paintings were started off by visualising the encountered nostalgic experiences. These tasks could be defined as molar structured as they were featured by binary aggregates such as representation (Bolt, 2004: 45). Based on Deleuze and Guattari's theory of double articulation between the molar and the molecular (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 216-217), the aims of handling paint in these cases were to find the aimless molecular flows that runs away from the nostalgic experiences until they moved into new molar structures which could be new states of my memory or new thoughts and understandings of the nostalgic experiences.



These pieces could be represented by *Her Writings* (Fig.12). Unlike the practices discussed previously, the objects and plots of the nostalgic reverie that this piece started with were particularly clear although how they would be triggered was unknown. As I could clearly identify the objects in this nostalgic reverie were my high school, the community that I had lived in during that time, and some sentences from the works of an amateur writer that I enjoyed reading back then, the original plan of the practice was to visualise this reverie. Accordingly, the aim of selecting and arranging photographs was to visually represent the objects, and the aim of painting was to change the photographs into the states in the nostalgic reverie.

The original plan was typically representational; however, it was immediately ruptured after I tried to represent my high school and the community that I had lived in with photographs. I acquired three photographs of the exact classroom of my high school from another person and found several photographs of the community through browsing my photo album. However, as the photographs of the classroom were taken in 2018, and the ones of the community were taken in 2016, none of them documented the objects' states in 2006 which was the time that the nostalgic reverie was about. In this way, looking at the photographs became a task of making articulations between my memory at the moment of making this piece and the relevant objects in states other than they were in 2006. As a result, instead of visualising the nostalgic reverie as I expected, looking at the photographs triggered thoughts and affective movements that had never occurred before which unexpectedly shifted the direction of practice.

Theoretical physicist Lee Smolin points out that, human beings perceive time as change (Smolin, 2014: 28). Even from the perspective of facts, there would be changes between an object's state in 2018 than it was in 2006. As discussed in

Chapter One: Section 1.1, because a nostalgic reverie is beautified and imagined rather than the reappearance of bygone facts, it should be seen as a new creation. The task of using photographs taken in 2016 and 2018 to represent a nostalgic reverie based on a memory of 2006 unavoidably involved several layers of differences such as the one between the objects' actual states in the two times and the one between the objects in the nostalgic reverie and the objects in the photographs. As a result, when viewing the arranged photographs as a whole, along with the images, I was also perceiving these differences. The articulation between my memory and the photographs results in thoughts, imaginations, and affective movements outside the nostalgic reverie. The nostalgic reverie was ruptured in this way and the practice was no longer heading to represent a predetermined model.

Based on Deleuze and Guattari's theory of the molar and molecular movement, if seeing the plan of visualising the nostalgic reverie with photographs as a task of building a molar structure, then it was through these differences that the molecular escapes started to flow (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:216-217). In this way, the nostalgic reverie formed by several selected objects was deterritorialised by finding the photographs that document the objects' different states. By extending my thoughts and affective movements into other territories, the differences in triggered outcomes turned the stably formed nostalgic reverie into a centreless rhizome.

Painting became the means of achieving the reterritorialisation or another molar structure. Unlike the previously discussed practices in which the nostalgic reveries were deliberately triggered by finding the right photographs, the nostalgic reverie in this case was unexpectedly encountered. Instead of being the trigger of nostalgic reveries which incited the painting, the photographs in this practice incited painting by directly making articulations with my memory and created new

thoughts and ideas about the nostalgic reverie through painting to handle.

Instead of using the gesso scraping method again, the painting in this case was directly made on the photographs. This means, while forming a painted image, the brushstrokes were also in the process of creating juxtapositions with the photographic images beneath. There were struggles in this process as some brushstrokes might create juxtapositions that needed to be adjusted, and these adjustments might become the starting point of unplanned directions for the painting. Therefore, unlike the previously discussed works in which the painting was finished on a white surface (i.e. the dry gesso that covered the photographs) first before it was merged into a rhizome along with the photographic image revealed by scraping off the gesso, painting in this case was a process of creating a rhizome with the photographs, and the struggle with the photographs became part of the practical logic that incited its progression.

Every brushstroke was a shift to the connections between the nodal points within the rhizome. However, by exemplifying how the native culture of the New World was forcefully reterritorialised by the European settlers, Damian Sutton and David Martin-Jones argue that de-and-reterritorialisation might not happen when the powers of the two sides are unequal (2008: 7). When a strong rhizome encounters a weaker rhizome, the weaker one is often absorbed, or forcefully reterritorialised by the strong one's culture (Sutton and Martin-Jones, 2008: 7-8). As it was an obvious imbalance between the two images at the beginning of the practice, the first few brushstrokes were difficult to provide great change to the rhizome woven by the photographs. Accordingly, while incited by my intention, the painting also progressed under the influences, or even deterritorialisations of the photographs. It completed at a point where the painted marks had found the way to escape from the deterritorialisation of the photographs and formed a new territory of its own. But the finishing point was a fine line, as crossing it too much

might result in the photographs in turn being dominated by the painting. It was at this point that the two images merged into one piece through mutually rupturing and reaffirming. As a result, the rhizome that was created by the articulation between the nostalgic reverie and the photographs was hence moved onto other territories by viewing this new piece.

Starting with a representational aim of visualising the nostalgic reverie, by selecting the photographs of its objects taken in other times the practice encountered its first de-and-reterritorialisation when the nostalgic reverie was shifted into a centreless rhizome. The paintings then started to change and be changed by this rhizome until a point where the powers between the two images became balanced and a new rhizome was formed through the mutual de-and-reterritorialisation between them. Because the work of an amateur writer that I enjoyed reading was a main object of the initial nostalgic reverie, some sentences from them were written on the newly merged image. By doing so, the trigger of the initial nostalgic reverie was put in a new visual context. New emotions and thoughts about the memories of that period of time were triggered by perceiving the work.



In early September 2018, I gathered all pieces that I made between May and August, broke their chronological orders of making and re-arranged the fragments into a new piece on a wall (Fig.14). To me, every individual work contained the memory of the process of de-and-reterritorialising a nostalgic reverie (i.e. a state of my memory). Therefore, merging them into one piece meant that while both the original pieces and the memories of making them were deprived of their individual identities, the linear order of their happening was also ruptured and reaffirmed. Similar to the function of scraping the gesso, the linear order of making one piece after another during the four months were pressed into a rhizome in which no memory nor work could be predetermined as the centre. As a result, the ruptured parts and the several layers of memories that triggered by them such as the original nostalgic reveries and the memories of the practice all became nodal points for making new connections. Therefore, when viewing the work, viewers need to construct their own focuses of the piece. By being articulated with the work (i.e. making selection, adjustment, and connections within this chaotic image), viewers' memory and affect could reach new states. In this way, the works that started with the aim of exploring my nostalgic experiences formed into an image that, instead of illustrating the scenes in the reverie or telling conclusions that were formed by me, triggers more experiences that the viewers can be experience.

### **3.2.2 Wish You Were Here 100**

The project *Wish You Were Here 100* was an exhibition held at the PhD project space in Tontine Building of the Glasgow School of Art from 15<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> January 2019 (Fig.16-17). The exhibited works were one hundred postcard format paintings made within a week in December 2018. Unlike *The Barnes Series* in which the works were mainly started with material experiments, works in the *Wish*



*You Were Here 100* project had a strict form to observe. All one hundred works were 11.7 x 17cm in size, with an acrylic painted photograph in the middle and a line of text describing the nostalgic reverie written below the painting. The works, which explored the becoming of my nostalgic reveries, were associated with experience sharing and adopted some features of mass production. Therefore, the task of exploring personal memory and emotions were conducted within the connections between personal emotions, standardised products and souvenirs that people use to share feelings and experiences.



Fig.16 *Wish You Were Here 100*, Rongwei Zhang, 2019, acrylic and writings on photographs, variable size, pp.44-60 of the portfolio.

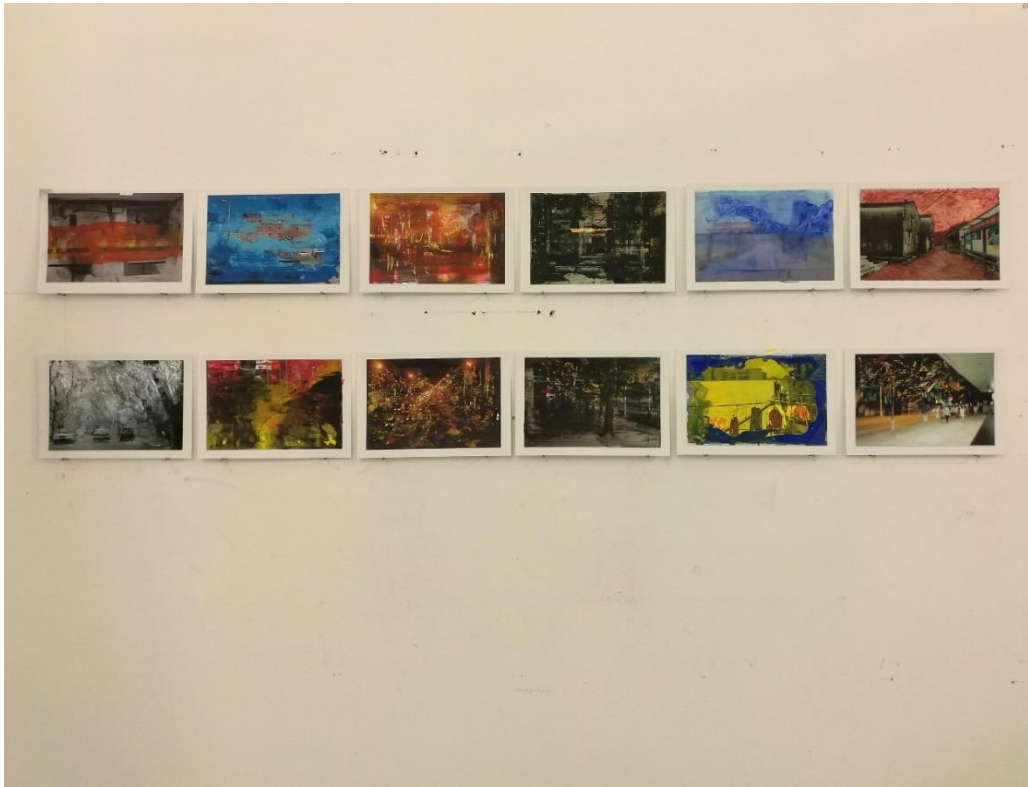


Fig.17 Detail of *Wish You Were Here 100*, Rongwei Zhang, 2019, acrylic and writings on photographs, variable size, pp.44-60 of the portfolio.

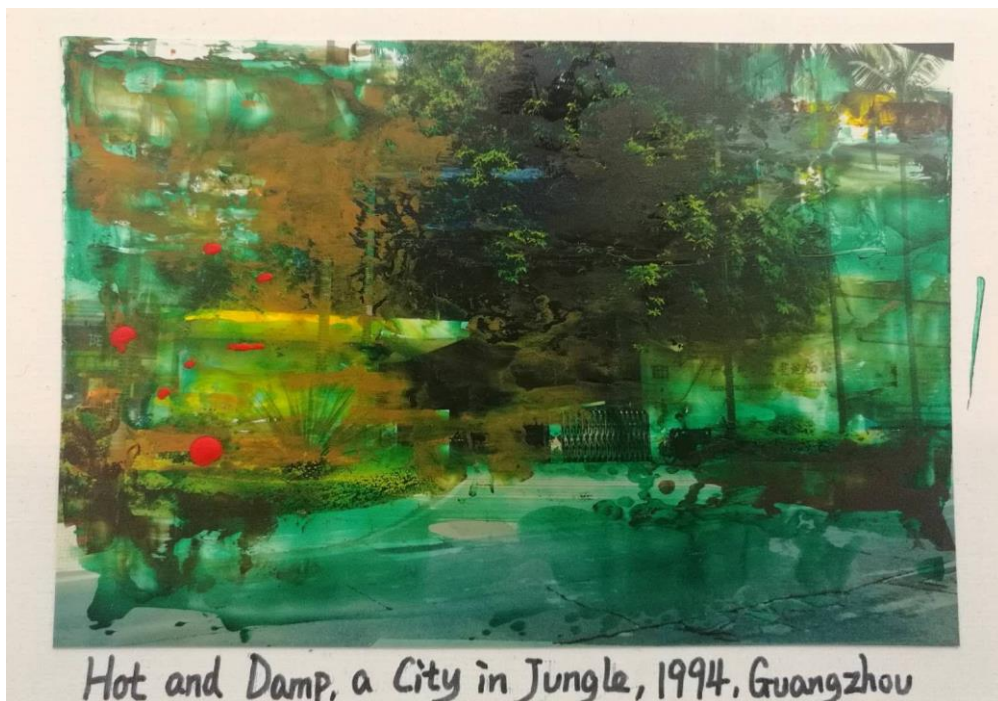


Fig.18 *Hot and Damp, a City in Jungle, 1994, Guangzhou*, Rongwei Zhang, 2018, acrylic and writing on photograph, 11.7 x 17cm, pp.59 of the portfolio.



### ***Hot and Damp, a City in Jungle, 1994, Guangzhou***

In the most common cases of this project, the painting started with the aim of shifting the photograph into an image that visualised the triggered nostalgic reverie. These cases could be represented by *Hot and Damp, a City in Jungle, 1994, Guangzhou* (Fig.18). The photograph in this practice was taken by me in 2016 in Guangzhou of a community that I had lived in for two years in early 1990s. Looking at the photograph triggered a compound affect for me, as elements from both the memories of the early 1990s and the moment of taking it in 2016 were triggered in my mind at the same time. The memories of the two years of living in Guangzhou in the early 1990s had often been the materials that I used to create my nostalgic reveries. However, the visit in 2016 during which I took the photograph ruptured the nostalgic reveries about the place as during the visit I personally confirmed that many elements in the nostalgic reveries were purely imagined. As a result, the connections between the triggered elements from the conflict experiences formed a chaotic and irrelevant entity. What was triggered should not be seen as a juxtaposition formed by the reappearances of two individual pieces of my memory, as according to Henri Bergson, a person's memory is an undividable succession without distinction (Bergson, 2001: vii). Although it was unstable and centreless, the triggered reminiscences and imaginations were still an undividable entity.

The triggered state of my memory had the four features of the rhizome (i.e. connectivity, heterogeneous, multiplicity, developed in unforeseen direction) theorised by Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 7-10). Firstly, the triggered entity was heterogeneous. The coexistence between the nostalgic reveries and the memory of disappointment means that the triggered entity included the reappearances of bygone facts, imaginations, and both positive and negative affects. Secondly,

these triggered elements were not simply being set out in my mind, they were making all sorts of connections which incited my thoughts and affective movements. Thirdly, the triggered entity was not a stable state as there was no structure that ordered the connections between the elements. Hence, there was no pre-determined centre in the triggered entity. Just as Eugene Holland says, 'there are no pre-determined positions or points within a rhizomatic multiplicity, only lines along with random nodes arising at the haphazard intersection of them' (Holland, 2013: 39). Finally, the lack of the ordering of a pre-determined structure means that the development of the triggered entity could not be foreseen.

Painting became the means of territorialisation or coding through which the triggered entity, which was an indeterminate number of metastable states reached a temporary and derivative stable state. The aim of painting in this practice was to change the photograph into an image that visualised the nostalgic reverie. However, as the nostalgic reverie was mixed with the memory of disappointment, the painting did not have a set model to visualise therefore this plan could not be considered as representational. As painting directly on the photograph means that the progression of painting would be influenced by the photograph and what it triggered, and these elements would in turn be changed by the following painted images, painting in this case was the means that directly led the direction of the triggered rhizome's development into an image that could trigger only my nostalgic reverie.

Simon O'Sullivan points out that the rhizome names a principle of connectivity (O'Sullivan, 2006: 17). From this perspective, making painting on the photograph could also be seen as a process of expanding the triggered rhizome because in this way, pigments as nodal points were connected to the photograph, and the triggered rhizome was given another perspective of components. This enriched the heterogeneity and multiplicity of the rhizome, and created more possibilities

in making connections between the nodal points.

But this expansion created by painting was not all rhizomatic, as the paints were added to the photograph under my intentions, they did not develop, or expand the triggered rhizome in a purely random way. Directed by my intention, painting in this practice could be seen as a molar movement (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 216-21) as it aimed to turn a centreless rhizome into a 'seed' that could cause a set effect (i.e. a nostalgic reverie). However, as I had to directly perceive the changes of the image during the painting process, my intentions were constantly ruptured by the changes of the image. For example, from the material perspective, the strong juxtaposition between the smooth surface of the photograph and a textured painted mark could incite me to temporarily shift away from the original intention and make a mark solely for the aim of mediating the juxtaposition. In this way, painting found a way of escaping the original molar movement of achieving a predetermined plan and joined the molecular movement (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 216-21) which had no particular aim until it reached a point where I could find a new direction for it.

As a result, in Barbara Bolt's words, the painting gradually shifted away from the original plan of becoming a trigger of nostalgic reverie, took on a life of its own (Bolt, 2004: 1) and reached a point where I felt that the image was finished. This was the point that painting had accomplished the task of 'making consolidation out of the amorphous soup of becomings' (Holland, 2013: 56). Instead of solely triggering my nostalgic reverie or the memory of disappointment, the finished image took my memory and affect to a new stable state, and it was in this state that I started the next practice.



Fig.19 *I Walked Past an Entire District, 2009, Beijing*, Rongwei Zhang, 2018, acrylic and writing on photograph, 11.7 x 17cm, pp.53 of the portfolio.

### ***I Walked Past an Entire District, 2009, Beijing***

My memory and the photographed community in *Hot and Damp, a City in Jungle, 1994, Guangzhou* (Fig.18) can be seen as two individual rhizomes as they are both expanding and shifting in a nonstop and unpredictable way. Therefore, *Hot and Damp, a City in Jungle, 1994, Guangzhou* (Fig.18) can be seen as generated from the multiple articulations between these two rhizomes. Through the repetition of going back to the community, the becoming of both the rhizome and the community became prominent, and my initial memory and understanding of the community were ruptured into an unstable state. Instead of documenting a moment in which a piece of memory was triggered into my mind, the photograph was generated from the conflict between recognising the objects in the initial memory and the ruptures to the initial memory created by encountering the objects' new states. With the initial memory as the pivot, these conflicting

connections formed a chaotic, unstable, and centreless patchwork which needed further territorialisation to achieve a new stable state. By being a channel through which I could continue this unfinished becoming, the photograph was naturally connected to certain objects and the connections between them.

In the cases where the selected photographs were taken during the only encounter between the subjects and I, the thoughts and memory triggered by looking at the photograph did not necessarily have a strong connection with the moment of taking it. For example, as the moment of photographing was the only encounter between the photographed buildings and I, from the perspective of bygone facts, the photograph used in *I Walked Past an Entire District, 2009, Beijing* (Fig.19) had nothing to trigger apart from the moment of photographing. Unlike *Hot and Damp, a City in Jungle, 1994, Guangzhou* (Fig.18) in which the photograph was generated from a chaotic and centreless patchwork woven by multiple connections between relevant objects formed from multiple times of visiting, the photograph in this case was the product of a one-time articulation between my memory at the moment and the photographed buildings.

From a rhizomatic perspective, the results of this articulation, no matter what they were (e.g. thoughts, imaginations, and affects), must be temporary as the rhizome (i.e. my memory) was, and still is, constantly making new connections within itself in response to encounters with other objects. Based on Henri Bergson's duration theory, the results of this articulation could not be recurred precisely as no former state of a duration can be recurred (Bergson, 1964: 48). As my memory had been becoming for nine years when the photograph was used in a painting in 2018, the result of the articulation at the moment of photographing had already changed during the becoming and could not be recurred. Hence, there was nothing in my memory to retrieve by looking at the photograph in this case.

Although the photograph was taken by me, it had become an object on its own, and looking at it should be seen as the start of a brand-new articulation rather than the continuation of an unfinished becoming like the case in the previously discussed piece. The articulation between my memory and the photograph resulted in a reverie that I longed for, therefore the triggered objects that formed the reverie were from different events that did not have a direct link with the photographed buildings. Instead of entering an existing rhizome, looking at the photograph created a new rhizome in which the photographed buildings were not more predominant than other triggered objects. The connections between these triggered objects mainly resulted in comforting affects, but as they were irrelevant, the reverie that they formed was heterogeneous and unstable.

The intention of painting on the photograph in this practice was to direct the becoming of the newly triggered rhizome into a stable state by making changes to one of its nodal points. By being painted on, the photograph's original identities such as a digital printed image and documentation of some buildings' state in 2009 were ruptured and the new image created an opening for new thoughts, imagination, and affects to emerge. Through replacing some of the initially triggered objects with unexpected ones and changing the connections between them, these newly emerged ideas and emotions shifted the initial rhizome triggered by looking at the photograph.

As there was no model as the predetermined aim for painting to realise, the destination of the painting was unknown and the process was struggling. It finished at a point when the image triggered my memory of a particular event in which I walked through an entire district in Beijing to find a train station. This was the moment in which the photograph, which had lost its original connection with my memory, had found a way of articulating with my memory again and

generated a stable connection. This connection provided new perspectives of looking at both the photograph and the memory of walking through the district, forming a territory with the two elements. In *the Aesthetics of Affect, Thinking Art Beyond Representation*, Simon O'Sullivan argues that,

Art is less involved in making sense of the world and more involved in exploring the possibilities of being, of becoming, in the world. Less involved in knowledge and more involved in experience, in pushing forward the boundaries of what can be experienced. (O'Sullivan, 2001: 130)

Indeed, the new territory formed by the painting could not be seen as a discovered fact or concrete knowledge, but the process of creating it did expand my affective experiences and provide possibilities of manipulating memory's becoming with photographs and painting.

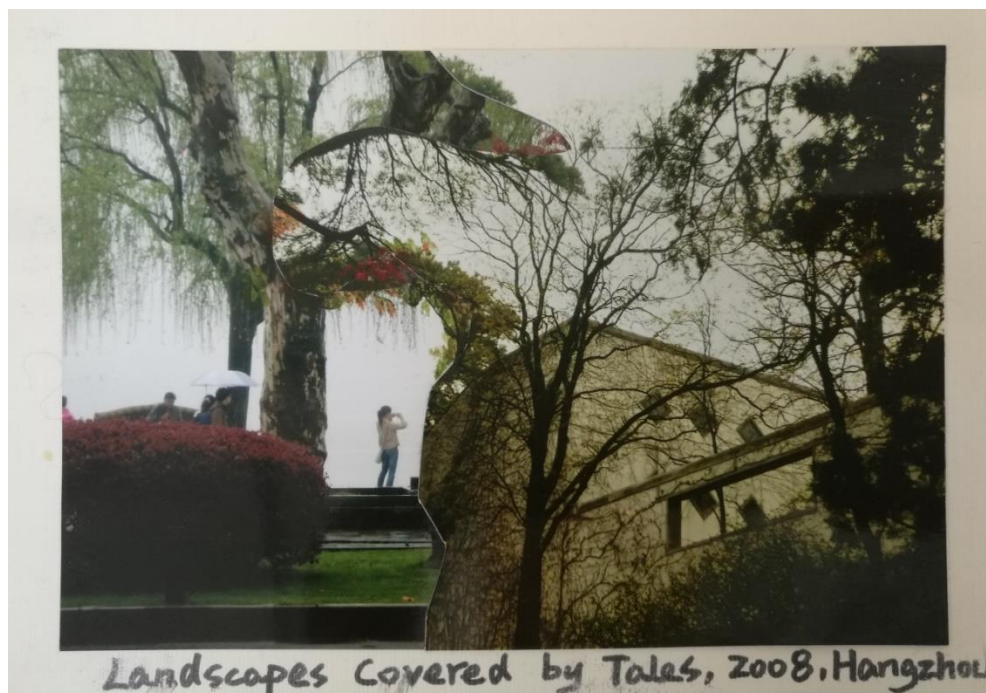


Fig.20 *Landscapes Covered by Tales, 2008-2009, Hangzhou/Beijing*, Rongwei Zhang, 2018, acrylic and writing on photograph collage, 11.7 x 17cm, pp.57 of the portfolio.

### ***Landscapes Covered by Tales, 2008-2009, Hangzhou/Beijing***

In some cases, the work was started by deliberately collaging two photographs taken from different places at different times. These cases could be represented by *Landscapes Covered by Tales, 2008-2009, Hangzhou/Beijing* (Fig.20) which was a piece started by making a collage with a photograph taken in Beijing in 2009 and a photograph taken in Hangzhou in 2008.

Both selected photographs could trigger my nostalgic reverie. In other words, to me, both articulations between my memory and the photographs resulted in beautiful and comforting thoughts and affects. However, from the perspective of bygone facts, there were big differences between the two periods of time in which the two photographs were taken such as the places, the seasons, and my focus in life. If seeing my memory as a rhizome, then the memories of the two periods of times were like two relatively stable yet indirectly related connections, that were formed by the objects within the rhizome.

Under the coherent and linear structure of my experiences, the objects within a connection like this can be seen as homogeneous. As the two triggered nostalgic reveries were generated from these two indirectly related connections, each reverie had its own uniqueness. When the two photographs were being looked at side by side at the same time, the heterogeneity between the triggered objects created ruptures to both nostalgic reveries. As a result, similar to *Hot and Damp, a City in Jungle, 1994, Guangzhou* in which the selected photograph triggered a reverie mixed from two pieces from my memory, the two reveries in this case lost their original uniqueness and identities and merged into one centreless rhizome.

Both making collage with the two photographs and painting directly on them became means of directing the development of this rhizome, and the initial aim



of this directing was to create a new centre, or a molar structure within it. As I put a boundary on myself that the work must be in the format of a postcard, the collage and painting needed to be made strictly within a squared territory. Because the two triggered nostalgic reveries were equally important in this practice, the powers between the two photographs on this territory of collage needed to be balanced. This means, the new centre would be created through the mutual de-and-reterritorialisations between the two photographs rather than one being absorbed by the other. Making the collage became a task of creating a 'line of flight' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 9) through which the two photographs could move into each other.

This line emerged as the trees from the two photographs started to merge. While the juxtaposition on the lower part between the grass and the building still clearly ruptured the visual coherence, the merging of the trees created a channel through which the image of Hangzhou in 2008 merged with the image of Beijing in 2009. Through balancing the coherence and incoherence between the two photographs, the collage created an ambiguity between being one work or two. This further provided new perspectives of looking at the relationships between the memories and nostalgic reveries triggered by them, as while the upper part of the image could trigger a coherent memory as it seemed intact, the lower part would rupture that triggered memory by creating questions or imaginations with its incoherence. Therefore, what was triggered by looking at the collage also became ambiguous and needed new thoughts in order to achieve stability.

The juxtaposition between the merged trees and the clean cut between the grass and building became, in Barbara Bolt's words, an opening in which new thoughts for the relationship between the two memories could emerge (Bolt, 2004: 91). At this point, the initial aim of achieving a centre, or molar structure through making collage and painting was abandoned, because there was no right or wrong in

interpreting the connections between the two memories, having a channel for connecting them and inciting new thoughts was more important than defining an answer. As a result, painting unexpectedly lost the leading position in the initial plan, it was only used limitedly to strengthen the merging of the trees. Through handling the two nostalgic reveries triggered by photographs taken from different places at different time, a direct link between the two formerly unrelated memories was created, new thoughts and affective movements could be incited by it.

### **Arranging the Works and Expanding the Rhizome**

Every practice in this project was a change to my memory and affect. As the one hundred pieces were made within a week, the pace of these changes was fast. Accordingly, a later painting was often started from the memory and affect changed by the previous painting. In this sense, although physically the works were individuals, there was a sense of continuity that ran through the entire one hundred practices and wove them into an entity. However, this continuity should not be seen as linear. The discussions on the selected pieces have indicated that the direction of the practices did not always follow my intentions. By creating 'lines of flight' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 9), a practice often escaped from my original intentions and moved into other territories.

The nostalgic reverie that incited the practice was de-and-reterritorialised, and my memory as a whole reached a new state in an unexpected way. It was based on this unexpected new state of memory that I started the next practice, and it was this unpredictability that prevented two contiguous practices from becoming the cause and effect. Every practice was an articulation between the selected photograph and my memory and affect as a whole rather than with the piece of making the previous work only, and there were always unexpected connections

emerging during this process. Although there might be connections between two contiguous practices in painting methods and visual effects, the paintings were not led by rational causality which determined the direction of practice.

As the process of making the second work might generate its own new 'seed' which could incite the third practice by creating molecular escapes which ended in unexpected territories, even the first work should not be regarded as the project's fundamental 'seed' which caused effects directly in the final piece of work. None of the one hundred pieces could be seen as the centre of this entity, and the direction of the project's development was unforeseeable.

Based on these features (i.e. connectability, heterogeneous, multiplicity, and developing in unforeseen directions), the week of practice could be seen as a process of creating a rhizome, and the works were the intersections between the connections between memories, affect, photographs, and paint. Simon O'Sullivan points out that the rhizome names a principle of connectivity, and the making of connections might be understood as a key modality of creativity in general (O'Sullivan, 2006: 17).

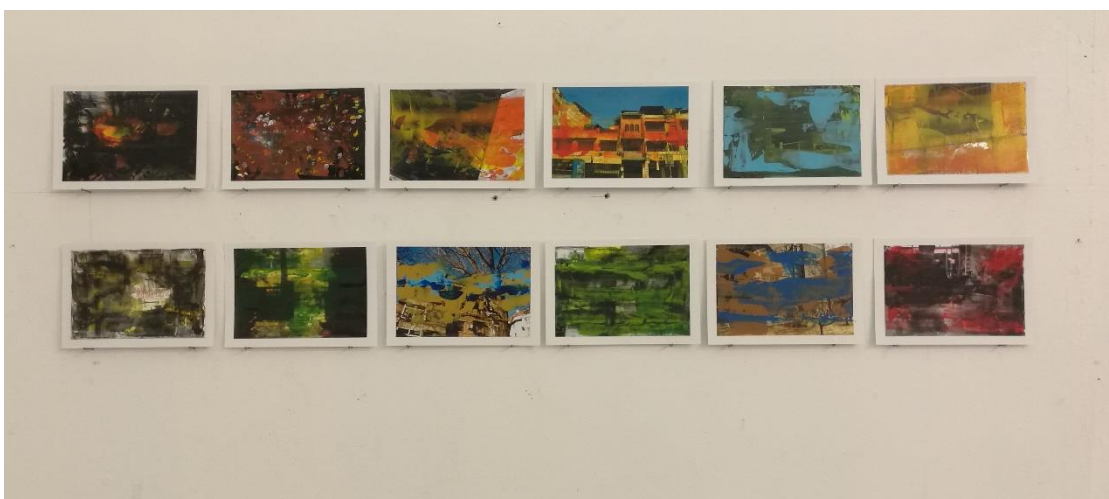


Fig.21 The arrangement of the pieces from *Wish You Were Here 100*, Rongwei Zhang, 2019, acrylic and writings on photographs, variable size, pp.44-60 of the portfolio.

Selecting the works and arranging them into different orders (Fig.21) became another channel of making multi-layered connections between the handmade quality of the images and the format of mass-produced postcard, between different visual effects, different memories and affects, different writings, and most importantly, between these heterogeneous elements. Also indicated by O'Sullivan, 'although 'art' can name an object, we might also use it as a name for these pragmatic processes of connectivity and interpenetration.' (O'Sullivan, 2006: 17) While being a process of perceiving, looking at the arrangement of the works could also be another endeavour of making art because by looking at the arranged works, the viewer's memory and affect, which is another rhizome, would join the connections and interpenetrations between the works.

Similar to the articulation between my memory and affect and a select photograph in the initial triggering of a practice, the new formed connections created by viewing the arranged works are not explicit knowledge as they are based on personal experiences and subject to attitudes and feelings. Through expanding the viewer's anamnestic and affective experiences, viewing the works would incite the becoming of the viewers' memory and affect and take them into new states. Although the new formed connections do not necessarily have a physical body, they still possess the qualities that define art pointed out by O'Sullivan such as exploring the possibilities of being, of becoming, and pushing forward the boundaries of what can be experienced (O'Sullivan, 2001: 130).

### **Finding the Body without Organs**

Contemporary psychologists and researchers such as Constantine Sedikides, Tim Wildschut, and Clay Routledge analyse nostalgia separately from its history, trigger, content, and functions (Sedikides et al. 2008: 304-307; 2006: 197-215).

In this way, a sense of identity, or 'self', is given to nostalgia and a certain relationship between the past and present is decided according to this identity. By contrast, through deterritorialising rather than creating identities for the nostalgic reveries, the one week of practice as an entity achieved what Deleuze and Guattari called a 'Body without Organs (BwO)' (1987: 149).

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari indicate that,

A body without organs is not an empty body stripped of organs, but a body upon which that which serves as organs is distributed according to crowd phenomena, in Brownian motion, in the form of molecular multiplicities. Thus, the body without organs is opposed less to organs as such than to the organisation of the organs insofar as it composes an organism. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 30)

As the practice was centred around, or pushed forward by several elements such as the triggered nostalgic reveries, the interpretations of these reveries, and the affects triggered alongside them, these elements could be considered as the organs of the project. Just as Deleuze indicates, instead of stripping these organs off the initial body, handling paint and photographs was a process of setting these organs into molecular movements from their original states and the connections between them. Through creating lines of flight along which these organs could interpenetrate, they lost their original identities and functions and merged into a state which Deleuze illustrated with the image of an egg and describes, "No mouth. No tongue. No teeth. No larynx. No esophagus. No belly. No anus." It is a whole nonorganic life, for the organism is not life, it is what imprisons life' (Deleuze, 2017: 33).

Instead of simply being a positive or negative emotion that functioned as the 'seed' that caused the specific painting, the nostalgic reveries triggered by the selected photographs and started the paintings formed a continuity that connected the one

hundred works and turned them into a body without organs by tracing levels or thresholds in it according to the variations of its amplitude (Deleuze, 2017: 33). Accordingly, instead of representing some predetermined images or conclusions, the works became an 'affective athleticism' on which viewers can find new affective experiences, as Deleuze says, a sensation will be produced when the wave encounters the forces acting on the body (Deleuze, 2017: 34).

### 3.2.3 The Labyrinth

*The Barnes Series* explored the potential of directing the painter's nostalgic reveries by manipulating materials and *Wish you were here 100* found a way of achieving the Body without Organ in dealing with multiple nostalgic experiences. With the intention of combining these two experiences in one practice, I started a project called *The Labyrinth* (Fig.22-23) which comprised of three main parts of practices.

Unlike *Wish You Were Here 100*, I did not put any boundary on the form of the work of *The Labyrinth*. Painting and my nostalgic reveries mutually de-and-reterritorialised each other during the process. While the nostalgic reverie was changed by being painted, the methods and procedures of painting was also changed by the shifting of nostalgic reveries. Instead of finishing at the point where the initial nostalgic reverie was de-and-reterritorialised into another psychological state, painting continued to de-and-reterritorialise the next encountered affective state. Similar to a rhizome which is always in a process of becoming and sending out roots and shoots (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 21), the work does not have an end nor a set size and shape. It did not visualise the map of a labyrinth of memory and affect that pre-existed in my mind. Rather, the labyrinth was created by the painting and can always be continued.



Fig.22 *The Labyrinth*, Rongwei Zhang, 2019, acrylic and writings on photograph collage, variable size, pp.61-78 of the portfolio.

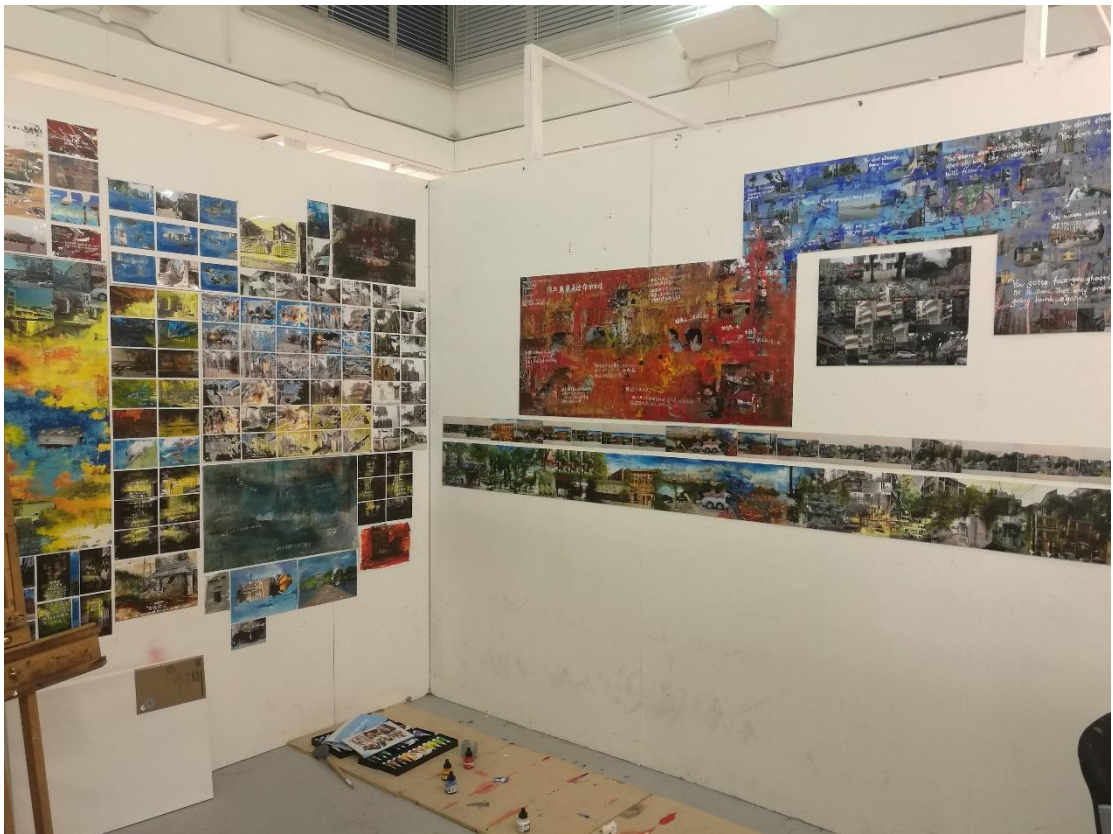


Fig.23 *The Labyrinth* in studio, Rongwei Zhang, 2019, acrylic and writings on photograph collage, variable size, pp.63 of the portfolio.

The practice started with an encountered rather than deliberately sought nostalgic reverie. Based on the experiences of the previous two projects, the nostalgic reverie was seen as an undividable bloc in becoming rather than a collection of the static images of some concrete objects. Instead of picking out

the specific element from a collection, every attempt of identifying an object from the nostalgic reverie was a process of consolidating a being from the becoming through coding and territorialisation. The consolidated being, or identified object was a temporary created image rather than the representation of a pre-existing object, and the patchwork that formed by these created images could not represent the nostalgic reverie as the connections between them must be newly created.

The attempt of identifying an object from the nostalgic reverie was a process of de-and-reterritorialisation through which the nostalgic reverie as an entity was shifted into a different image. The objects consolidated from this nostalgic reverie were a computer game, a community, and a history storybook. Although these images of objects were all formed by other elements, they should be defined as molar structures rather than rhizomes because the elements in them were organised centred around one and only core. Visualising and merging these heterogeneous objects into one static image using painting and photographic collage became a task of dismantling several molar structures and create a new one by making new connections between the fragments.

The first step in creating this body of work was to set the molar structures into aimless molecular escapes. Instead of following my deliberately made plan, the molecular escapes happened unexpectedly when two of the molar structures formed a connection by being thought about at the same time. From Simon O'Sullivan's perspective (2006: 1), this connection could be seen as an encounter between the two molar structures as both parts were ruptured by the other and unexpected new thoughts and ideas were generated during the re-affirmation. For example, as a battle happened in 260 BC during which, according to Sima Qian's *Record of the Grand Historian*, over 400,000 captives were executed was the mutual subject of both the computer game and the story book, it was



generated and became another key element of the practice when the game and book were being connected. The initial beautiful and personal nostalgic reverie reached the territory of history and archaeology and was added with a sense of brutality and horror.

Through making connections between each other, the nodal points consolidated from the initial nostalgic reverie further created unexpected new nodal points. As these heterogeneous nodal points were constantly making new connections yet none of them could be defined as the core or centre, a rhizome was gradually formed by them. Through being connected into one piece, several molar structures were set into aimless molecular escapes which, in Deleuze and Guattari's words, 'escaped the binary organisation, the resonance apparatus, and the overcoding machine.' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 216) However, Deleuze and Guattari also point out that, 'molecular escapes and movements would be nothing if they did not return to molar organisations.' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 216-217). The aim of making the work was to direct the molecular movements into a new molar structure. Through directing the chaotic and unpredictable connection made between the nodal points by handling paint and photographs, the rhizome would be turned into a new stable state.

However, similar to the practices discussed above, as the initial intentions were constantly shifted by the lines of flight created by handling paint and photographs, I did not have the total control in directing the connections. For example, as the first step of the initial plan was to visually connect the new entered territory of brutality and horror with the initial objects generated from the nostalgic reverie such as the game and the community, photographs of the battle's archaeological site, which was a burial ground of masses of human bones, were collected and made into a collage at the beginning of the practice (Fig.24). According to the initial plan, this collage would then be de-and-reterritorialised by another layer of

collage using the photographs of the computer game and the community. However, as I had never been to that archaeological site, the photographs that I collected were all taken by different people at different times. Although the collected photographs shared the same subject, combining them together unexpectedly became a process of making connections between individual objects, incoherent images and past moments which had the potential of creating new paths for my mind to leave the nostalgic reverie and focus on other thoughts and ideas.

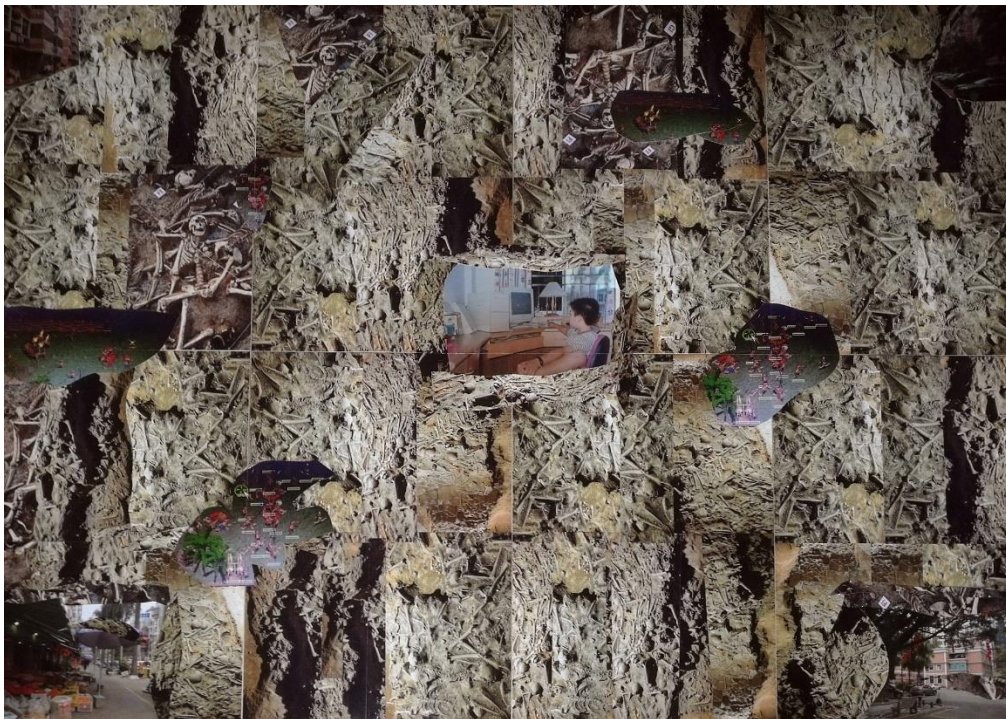


Fig.24 The collage of photographs of the archaeological site, Rongwei Zhang, 2019, photographic collage, 60 x 105cm, pp.65-66 of the portfolio.

Instead of pursuing one of these approaches, the practice was consciously turned back to the initial plan. By collaging a selection of cut photographs of the computer game and the community on top of the image of human bones, direct visual connections between several objects generated from the nostalgic reverie were made. Since both layers of the photographs were not organised by a

predetermined centre and were comprised of heterogeneous elements, the second layer of collage could be seen as an encounter between two rhizomes. As the cut photographs were associated with personal, beautiful memories whereas the collage of the human bones expressed a sense of strangeness, brutality and horror, this encounter between the two rhizomes created multiple layers of differences through handling which the painting and nostalgic reverie could enter unexpected territories.

From another perspective, the cut photographs of the game and community were like settlers from other cultures that tried to impose their warm personal memories to the brutal 'new land'. However, when discussing the encounter between rhizomes, Damian Sutton and David Martin-Jones use the metaphor of colonial relationship to indicate that,

'This process of mapping contained a mutual process of becoming, as the colonisers adapted to their new lands, and the new land to their colonisers...while a dominant colonial power will often change as its rhizome comes into contact with another, the other, weaker rhizome is often absorbed, or forcefully reterritorialised by its culture.' (Sutton and Martin-Jones, 2008: 7)

Although the two sets of photographs were mutually influencing each other in general, as the photographic collage of human bones were in dominant position, the fragments of the computer game and the community's photographs that scattered on top of it were indeed 'absorbed, or forcefully reterritorialised' by the strange and serious sense of brutality and horror.

The initial nostalgic reverie and the memories related to it that could be triggered by looking at the cut photographs were hence ruptured and the collage did not create a centre within the rhizome. However, as the practice was aiming for new molar structures such as new interpretations of other memories rather than

visualising or representing the nostalgic reverie, I did not try to revive the nostalgic reverie by adding more cut photographs of the game and community to the unbalanced juxtaposition. By making a painting directly on the collage, the two rhizomes were merged into a new entity (Fig.25). The two layers of photographs and the painting, while could be seen as three rhizomes on their own, could also be seen as three nodal points from a different perspective. Through making these nodal points into new connections, the rhizome could achieve a new state in which the unbalanced juxtaposition between the two sets of photographs could be dismantled or shifted.



Fig.25 Part One of *The Labyrinth*, Rongwei Zhang, 2019, acrylic and writings on photographic collage, 60 x 105cm, pp.64-69 of the portfolio.





Fig.26 Detail of Part One of *The Labyrinth*, Rongwei Zhang, 2019, acrylic and writings on photographic collage, 60 x 105cm, pp.64-69 of the portfolio.

However, as Barbara Bolt says, handling paint has its own momentum, its own rhythm, and intensity that could lead the painter into a state in which she/he no longer have any awareness of making decisions (Bolt, 2006: 1). Although the new connections between the two sets of photographs and painting were largely

formed by the painting which was made under my intention, because handling paint had its own logic of becoming, I could not totally decide and control how the formations of these connections. For example, although I consciously made the decision of using red and yellow to start the painting, as the photographic collage was an uneven surface and the first layer of paint was pressed on the collage by a roller, the visual outcomes were uncontrollable and unforeseeable. Under the coherent painted image, some parts of the photographic images were completely covered, some parts of the photographic images could still be seen through the colours, and some parts of the photographic images were completely untouched. The image as an entity was unexpectedly shifted into a patchwork woven by the painting, the painted photographic images, and the untouched photographic images. The juxtapositions and connections between these images in turn influenced my next step of practice. The connections between the painted and the different photographic images were enriched and adjusted through the mutual influences between my intention and the practical logic of handling materials. Although it was under my conscious direction, the practice could still be seen as rhizomatic as the nodal points (i.e. paint and the different photographs) could always find ways to make connections outside my intentions.

However, as Simon O'Sullivan points out when discussing the relationships between connectivity and creativity that, 'It is important to remark that not all connections will be as equally relevant, or as strategically useful' (O'Sullivan, 2006: 17), not all brushstrokes and collages could be an effective step in finding the new molar structure that the practice was aiming for. Being incited by the practice, my memory and affect were also put in molecular movements which ran away from the initial nostalgic reverie and constantly reaching other memories and thoughts. These encountered elements became another layer of nodal points that could join the development of the work's rhizome. But as they were not equally relevant in promoting the development of the work's rhizome, only two of

these newly found, or created elements were added to the works. One was some sentences from a story book called *Fables of the Warring States* written by an author whose pen name was Rhetor and the other was a 1997 Japanese cartoon produced by Toei Animation and directed by Daisuke Nishio called *The Kindaichi Case Files*. Neither element had a logical connection with the work at that moment because while the first layer of the work was an image of a mass of human skeletons from a brutal massacre, the triggered sentences from the story book were all amusing ones. Unlike the sentences which could be argued as having some connections with the skeletons because the book that they were from was about that battle and massacre, the cartoon had no obvious connection with the work at all.

Out of all the objects triggered into my mind during painting, these two, although illogical, possessed something that particularly incited me to connect them to the work. I did not try to find or create a rational explanation for these illogical triggering and connections, as O'Sullivan argues that, compared with making sense of the world, art is 'more involved in experience, in pushing forward the boundaries of what can be experienced' (O'Sullivan, 2001: 130). Rather, the connections between the work, the sentences and cartoons were seen as an encounter as the illogicality ruptured my habitual ways of thinking about these objects and created the possibilities of merging them into one piece. By writing the sentences and collaging cut stills from the cartoon on the work, several new sets of mutual rupturing were created, and the rhizome of the work was deterritorialised for another time.

At this point, the initial nostalgic reverie had experienced three main layers of de- and-reterritorialisation. The first layer was the attempts of consolidating the objects from it; the second layer was to visualise and merge these objects into one piece through manipulating paint and photographs; and the final layer was

the encounter with the sentences and cartoon. While the nostalgic reverie, which was a molar structure, had been turned into a centreless rhizome which could develop into other thoughts and ideas; the state of my memory and affect had also been shifted from a bittersweet or sentimental longing for a beautified and imagined image of a period of his past into thinking about the relationships between several unexpectedly triggered elements. As a result, neither the work nor the practice could be defined as representational as they were not ordered by a predetermined model or image.

From the viewers' perspective, viewing the work at any stage of the process could be an effective viewing because the viewing was to create thoughts and affective movements by articulating their own memory and affect with the work rather than finding a predetermined conclusion. But from my perspective, the practice needed to continue as it would be a pointless material experiment if a new centre did not emerge in the work, or the rhizome. However, the practice did not continue to be the process of expanding the rhizome of the work and taking in new heterogeneous elements. Instead, the focus of the following practice was consciously turned into exploring the connections between the existing elements.





Fig.27 Photographs with the blue sky, Rongwei Zhang, 2019, acrylic on photographic collage, 10 x 13cm, pp.71 of the portfolio.



Fig.28 Detail of *The Labyrinth*, Rongwei Zhang, 2019, acrylic and writings on photographic collage, variable size, pp.61-78 of the portfolio.

Even with a conscious direction like this, handling paint, photographs, and writing still found their ways of escaping from my intention and reached unexpected results. For example, during another layer of collaging, several new photographs

of the community which included blue sky were selected. Different from the previous photographs of the community which were cut and only the parts of buildings were used in the collage, the new ones were being collaged integrally on the work. What I did not (and could not have) foreseen was that the repeated images of the blue sky (Fig.27-28) formed a line of flight which led my mind out of the chaotic and aimless connections of the rhizome and entered a new territory. Unlike the previous encounters in which certain objects such as the sentences and cartoon were triggered into my mind and joined the work's rhizome as nodal points for the connections to expand, what was shifted by the photographs of blue sky was my affective state. The anxious and constrained affective state of the initial nostalgic reverie was shifted into a peaceful and easy emotion. With this new triggered emotion as a starting point, objects from memories of other periods of times were triggered into my mind and formed a different nostalgic reverie.

Similar to Marcel Proust's description of how he suddenly encountered the memory and emotion of a period of his past by tasting a madeleine cake (1992: 60-64), this shifting was sudden and thorough. Finding and collaging the photographs with blue sky on the work was like an act that unexpectedly created an exit for the nostalgic reverie which was like a moving labyrinth at that moment. However, as this act was based on the practice of Part One which was a process of territorialisation through which my initial nostalgic reverie was transformed into several images of objects which were then being connected into a new image, the 'door' was not directly created on the initial nostalgic reverie. If it was before the practice that I had looked at the photographs with blue sky, my affective state might not have shifted in the same way. From a physical and practical viewpoint, collaging the photographs with blue sky was another connection made during the process of de-and-reterritorialising the initial nostalgic reverie just like collaging another photograph or making another brushstroke on the work. In Simon O'Sullivan's words, this connection between the painting and the photographs of

blue sky was more 'relevant, or strategically useful than the others' (O'Sullivan, 2006: 17) in shifting the initial nostalgic reverie.

From Sean Watson's perspective, this relevant connection was achieved by a process of actualisation (Watson, 1998: 7) through which the parts of the photographs that interested me (i.e. the blue sky) were selected and made into a temporary articulation (i.e. the new affective state) with my memory and affect at that moment. From a neuroscientific perspective, Watson points out that actualisation is the channel through which people create conscious experiences in general, as he says, 'The brain and nervous system comprise a machine which, amongst other things, actualises consciousness by selecting, from this totality, that which is of relevance for the conscious exercise of will' (Watson, 1998: 7). Furthermore, by citing the works of Henri Bergson and Gerald M. Edelman, Watson indicates that memory plays a vital role in the creation of conscious experience (Watson, 1998: 9). If seeing the image during a painting practice as a totality, then in order to make the next brushstroke, the painter needs to actualise the image that she/he has painted and find out the parts of the image that need to be adjusted. The sudden change in my state of memory and affect in this case resulted in a rupture in how I perceived the painting that I was making. As the new state had different focuses and interests, the painting would be perceived from a different perspective. As a result, the previous practice which progressed under the struggle between a rational continuity of my intention and the uncontrollable practical logic was cut off by the shifting in states.

Instead of the developments of the Part One, the new actualised thoughts and emotions by perceiving the painting under the new state in memory and affect would be the start of a piece that did not directly connect to it. Therefore, continuing to paint on Part One would be to cover it with a new piece rather than to extend the rhizome of the work. Although based on O'Sullivan's theory of



encounter, rupture could also be argued as a kind of development for it leads to new modes of seeing and thinking the subjects (O'Sullivan, 2006: 1), as the painting of Part One needed to stay as an entity so that it could be made into connections with paintings of other parts, it was kept visible and intact. This means, by encountering the photographs of blue sky, the practice generated by the initial nostalgic reverie unexpectedly came to an end. Therefore, instead of creating an understanding or interpretation for the initial nostalgic reverie, painting practice in Part One developed it into a new state.

Although it was started from a newly encountered affective state, the practice of Part Two was not fundamentally different from the practice of Part One. Collaging the photographs of blue sky on the work was an act that unexpectedly created an exit for a moving labyrinth, but what this exit led to was another labyrinth in becoming in which no object was static nor could be cleanly separated from the others. Similar to the initial nostalgic reverie which went through several phases of consolidation in order to generate the concrete images of objects, the new affective state was also an undividable bloc rather than the collection of some individual objects, and its identifying objects also required further coding and territorialisation.

From Henri Bergson's viewpoint, it might not be correct to divide elements such as affect, memory and painting practice into different parts as they could be seen as duration (*durée*) which is a succession without distinction in which no former states can be recurred (Bergson, 2001: vii). As discussed previously, encountering the photographs of blue sky divided the practice into two parts, or two phases by creating a gap within it. In order to create connections between the two works from the two practices, the relationships between the practices before and after the encounter need to be interrogated, especially the question of whether the practice of Part Two should be seen as directly generated from

Part One or a separated new practice.

As the new affective state was actualised from the nostalgic reverie, the two were indeed inseparable although the nostalgic reverie could not be revived. In terms of the painting methods, there was no obvious developing relationship between the two parts. The two paintings went through the exact same serial of de-and-reterritorialisation for I used the same methods and procedures of Part One in the practice of Part Two. In both cases in the first step, the affective state was consolidated into several images of objects; by finding the photographs and collaging them into one piece, these images were then merged into a new centreless rhizome; and through making a painting on the collage, I tried to direct the unforeseeable development of the rhizome into an unknown molar structure.

There were differences between the two works, but they were mainly in the contents and visual effects of the two images. For example, in the practice of Part Two, with the new affective state as the 'amorphous soup of becomings' (Holland, 2013: 56), images of several objects such as a fishing harbour, palm trees, and a walk by the sea were generated. Following the same methods and procedures (i.e. finding and collaging photographs), these newly consolidated objects were made into a centreless collage that could be seen as a visual access to my memory and affect at the moment. Through being painted, this collage, or rhizome was then directed towards a molar structure. The paints were also mainly being pressed on the collage by a roller, only in Part Two the colours were different degrees of blue rather than red and yellow as they were in Part One. Finally, and most importantly, because the painting in Part One included writing, in order to maintain the visual continuity, I deliberately thought of some lyrics from a song called *Peaceful Easy Feeling* (1972) by the American band The Eagles that particularly stood out in my mind under that affective state and wrote them on the painting (Fig.29).



Fig.29 Part Two of *The Labyrinth*, Rongwei Zhang, 2019, acrylic and writings on photographic collage, 30 x 84cm, pp.70-72 of the portfolio.



Fig.30 Detail of Part Two of *The Labyrinth*, Rongwei Zhang, 2019, acrylic and writings on photographic collage, variable size, pp.70-72 of the portfolio.

In this way, while visually speaking, the works of the two practices each has its own uniqueness and could even be exhibited separately, the repeated methods and procedures seemed to have ignored or even erased the unique potential of the two very different affective states in becoming images and directed them into a homogeneous territory. The question of what the practices did to the affective states emerged. With the same methods and procedures, did they succeed in 'pushing forward the boundaries of what can be experienced' (O'Sullivan, 2001: 130) in each practice of painting a nostalgic experience or did they only create a structure that shaped all practices of painting a nostalgic experience into the same form? Both practices were non-representational as neither aimed to visualise a predetermined prototype that represented the nostalgic reverie. What this question really aims to find out is, did the same methods and procedures create a new model that would bring the later non-representational practices of shifting nostalgic experiences back in a representational track by predetermining how the non-representational practices should be conducted.

Based on Deleuze's distinction between generality and repetition, the question is about whether the repeated methods and procedures were generality or repetition. In *Difference and Repetition* (1994), Deleuze points out that generality belongs to the order of laws which determines only the resemblance of the subjects ruled by it. By contrast, repetition 'can always be 'represented' as extreme resemblance, or perfect equivalence, but the fact that one can pass by degrees from one thing to another does not prevent their being different in kind' (1994: 1-2). As generality 'expresses a point of view according to which one term may be exchanged or substituted for another' while 'repetition is a necessary and justified conduct only in relation to that which cannot be replaced' (1994: 1), the key to this question was whether the created relationships between the objects in the two parts were exchangeable with the other.



The works of the two parts shared certain similarities in visual form, but through examining the relationships between the elements within the two works, it is easy to see that the relationship between the elements in each work, such as the one between the selected photographs, the one between the photographs and paint, and the one between the writings and the images, were different and could not be exchanged for another. In other words, the resemblance in visual form did not function as a 'law' which erased the particularities of the elements generated from the different affective states and organise them into the same structure. Although I deliberately repeated the form of the work in Part One in Part Two, as both works were not made to realise a predetermined model, the connections between the photographs, paint, and writings in each work created different effects. As the sentences and the photographs had the same subject in the work of Part One, they created a kind of illustrative relationship. By contrast, while the photographs used in Part Two were taken in China in late 2010s, the lyrics written within the painting were from an American band's work from the early 1970s. As a result, the combination between the two elements seemed irrational. In O'Sullivan's words (2006: 1), the combination between writing and photographs in Part One was a recognition, whereas the combination in Part Two was an encounter.

Another example was the combination of photographs. In Part One, the used photographs were of the site of an ancient battlefield which included a mass of human bones, a community that I lived in, a computer game that I played, and stills of a cartoon. As there was an obvious irrelevance between these elements, collaging them together directly created chaos and confusion. However, in Part Two, although I knew that the photographs of the fishing harbour, the palm trees, and the walk by the sea were taken in different places at different times, as they could naturally form a scene of seaside landscape, even they were being deliberately made into an irrational and centreless image, the sense that the image was one piece was still stronger than the collage in Part One. Opposite

from the cases of combinations between photographs and writings, making the photographic collage in Part One could be seen as a process of encounter whereas the process in Part Two was more of a recognition. While creating a visual continuity that merged the works of two parts into one piece, the repeated methods and procedures also created the room for differences to generate.

I deliberately kept the form of the work from Part One by repeating the same methods and procedures, the work of Part Two still found a way of creating its own particularity. As the practice of the first part was a series of de-and-reterritorialisation that led my memory and affect to an unexpected new state rather than the visualisation of a prototype of the nostalgic reverie, it should be seen as a test, or exploration. Accordingly, in Deleuze's words, repeating the same methods and procedures indeed repeated an 'unrepeatable' (Deleuze, 1994: 1), as even the first time of practice was not conducted according to a predetermined plan.



Fig.31 Part Three of *The Labyrinth*, Rongwei Zhang, 2019, acrylic and writings on photographic collage, 90 x 105cm, pp.73-78 of the portfolio.

In this way, with the repeated methods and procedures, the practice in Part Two encountered its own line of flight (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 9) and entered Part Three (Fig.31). Unlike Part One in which the line of flight emerged during the selection and collage of photographs, the line of flight in Part Two was generated from the words. While writing the selected lyrics on the painting, other songs such as Suede's *Beautiful Ones* (1996), Shin Band's *One Night in Beijing* (2002) and Bon Jovi's *Santa Fe* (1990) and *Make a Memory* (2007) were unexpectedly triggered into my mind and some of them became the pivots centred around which a nostalgic reverie of the period of time when I often listened to them was triggered. This was another encounter which shifted both the state of my memory and affect and the repeated methods and procedures. Because the nostalgic

experience in Part Three was triggered by the writings which in the previous two practices were the last step, to a certain degree, practice in Part Three reversed the procedures of the previous two parts. Instead of repeating the procedure of starting the work with selecting and collaging photographs, the practice in Part Three started with selecting and collaging lyrics.

As the writings in both previous two parts were the last step of the practice, they did not extend the rhizome they belonged to by taking new elements in through making connections with them. Therefore, without being de-and-reterritorialised by the elements triggered by them, they were able to remain the identity of one written work such as sentences from a storybook and lyrics from one song. However, as the nostalgic experience in Part Three was triggered by the lyrics, painting in this part was led by the writing. Therefore, while triggering other objects such as places and events, the initial lyrics were also being de-and-reterritorialised by the objects that they triggered. Along with the images of places and events, words from other written works such as lyrics of songs such as Radiohead's *Creep* (1992) and *Street Spirit* (1996) and some lines from a 2010 documentary film directed by Zhang Neixian called *No Country For Young Man* were also triggered into my mind and joined the rhizome as new nodal points. The rhizome of paint, photographs, and words in Part Three was enriched as the writings boosted the potentials of creating encounters by bringing in another level of heterogeneity.

This expansion in rhizome then created new techniques in handling paint. Unlike the previous two practices in which the paint was mainly pressed on the photographs, painting in Part Three involved covering the photograph collage with an equally thin layer of paint (Fig.32) and dripping paint on the photographic collage (Fig.33). In this way, the methods and procedures set by the practice in Part One gradually found their way of generating new methods through repetition.

Although I handled paint, photographs, and writings in all three parts of practices, instead of organising them in a set structure, the repeated practice set them in random motion in the form of molecular multiplicities (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 30).

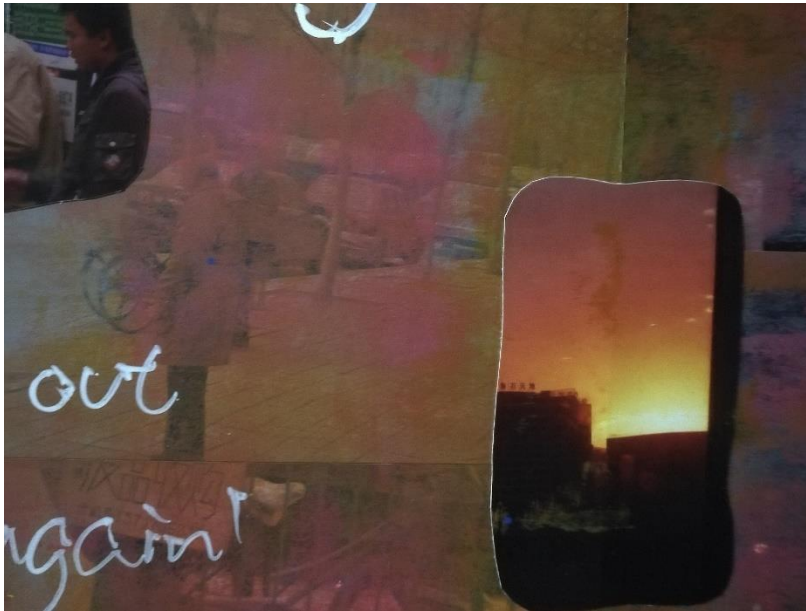


Fig.32 The equally thin layer of paints covering the photographic collage in *The Labyrinth*, Rongwei Zhang, 2019, acrylic and writings on photographic collage, variable size, pp.78 of the portfolio.



Fig.33 Detail of paint dripped onto photographic collage in *The Labyrinth*, Rongwei Zhang, 2019, acrylic and writings on photographic collage, variable size, pp.78 of the portfolio.

None of these materials nor any one of the nostalgic reveries could be an ‘organ’ that perform a set function within this practice. Through perceiving the images during the process, the becoming of my memory and affect was directed by this rhizomatic handling of materials. As a task of exploring the question of how painting can address nostalgia through a rhizomatic exploration of memory and affect, *The Labyrinth* was a project that combined the material led exploration of *The Barnes Series* and finding the Body without Organ in dealing with multiple nostalgic reveries in *Wish You Were Here 100*. The work does not visually present a patchwork made within my memory. Instead, it sees my memory and affect as an entity and functions as both the trigger and the effect of the becoming of the becoming. Therefore, as long as I am in becoming, the work could be continued. It directs and transforms a person’s becoming in memory and affect into a static, centreless, two-dimensional image by viewing which other people can find new experiences by connecting their own memories to it.

## **Chapter Four: Conclusion**

### **4.1 What is Painting a Nostalgic Experience**

As concluded in Chapter One: Section 1.7, nostalgic reverie in this project is conceptualised as an image of the past that the person longs for. Because nostalgic reverie is centreless and formed by the connections between heterogeneous elements such as memory, affect and the person's present circumstances, it can be seen as a rhizome (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). Psychological research has indicated that nostalgic experience, which is the process of dealing with a nostalgic reverie, is non-repeatable (Zhao, 2005) and its effects are unpredictable (Kaplan, 1987: 465; Best and Nelson, 1985: 221-233). Hence, nostalgic experience is also rhizomatic, as it is not organised by any predetermined structure.

Based on Henri Bergson's philosophy of actualisation (1991) and duration (2001), nostalgic reverie is seen as an actualised present of the person rather than the re-presentation of her/his past. Bergson points out that when we perceive an object, only the elements that interest us could go into our consciousness (1991: 36). The thing or totality that we perceive is defined as the virtual, and the consciousness we create by adjusting the selected elements is defined as the actual (Watson, 1998). This process of perceiving through selecting and adjusting is actualisation. The person's memory is a main part of the virtual from which the nostalgic reverie (i.e. the actual) is actualised. However, as a person's memory can be seen as a succession without distinction that only has the present state (Bergson, 2001: vii), the actualised nostalgic reverie should not be regarded as 'the past' as it is created by actualising the present.

Constantine Sedikides, Tim Wildschut and Denise Baden's research points out



that the juxtaposition or comparison between the present and the past is the defining feature of nostalgia (Sedikides *et al.*, 2004: 205-206). I argue that, as 'the past' in nostalgia is actualised from the person's present state in memory, affect and circumstances, it is also a part of the person's present. Moreover, as it is beautified, imagined and non-repeatable (Zhao, 2005), 'the past' in a nostalgic experience is a new state of the person's present. Therefore, the juxtaposition between the present and the past can also be seen as a confusion between the present and an illusion of the past.

As the nostalgic reverie is a rhizome formed by the connections between the person's actualised present circumstances, her/his actualised memories, imagination and affect, the process of dealing with a nostalgic experience (i.e. a nostalgic experience) can be seen as a process of shifting the connections between these heterogeneous elements. During such a process, new elements might join the rhizome and the connections between the involved elements might be reorganised.

Painting a nostalgic experience should be considered rhizomatic rather than representational. It is not a linear process of directing the nostalgic experience by handling paint or using the nostalgic reverie as the predetermined image for painting to depict. Barbara Bolt defines representationalism as a strict structure in which some predetermined theoretical models provide a blueprint for practice to realise (2004: 8). Painting a nostalgic experience in a representational way requires the painter to turn the nostalgic experience, which is a dynamic process of becoming, into a static image first and then use painting to visualise it. By predetermining the result of the painting, representationalism stymies rather than fosters creativity.

Therefore, instead of being a blueprint for the practice to achieve, the painter's



initial aim of the painting (e.g. visualising the nostalgic reverie) can be seen as a perspective of entering the rhizome of nostalgic experience. It starts the process of making connections between the physical materials and invisible elements but should not determine or control the following direction of these connections and influences.

In discussing the material of painting, James Elkins points out that 'paint incites motions, or the thought of motions, and through them it implies emotions and other wordless experiences' (2000: 188). Barbara Bolt argues that handling paint has its own logic that cannot be totally controlled by the painter (2004: 4-5). Based on these viewpoints, painting a nostalgic experience is defined as a process of handling the becoming of the nostalgic experience through handling paint. The painting is created through the mutual influences between handling paint and the nostalgic experience. While the memories and emotions of the nostalgic experience influence the painter's practice, the painter's nostalgic experience is shifted by the act of handling paint. In this way, painting a nostalgic experience becomes a practice that does not solely aim to explore memory and affect. Apart from triggering different memories and affective movements, painting a nostalgic experience also has the potential of generating new thoughts, ideas, methods and techniques for painting.

#### **4.2 Finding One: The Painter's Aim in Rhizomatic Painting Practice**

This project explored the question of how painting can address nostalgia through a rhizomatic exploration of memory and affect. The first main finding from the practice is how the painter should use her/his aims in rhizomatic painting practice.

As a rhizome is centreless and always shifting (Sutton and Martin-Jones, 2008: 6) and both nostalgia and painting practice in this project are defined as a rhizome,

practice with a single clear aim might be difficult to reach the nub of the research question. However, this does not mean that the painter should not have any clear aim in the task of painting nostalgia rhizomatically. The key of fitting the painter's aim in the rhizomatic painting practice is in the transcendence of representationalism, because in representationalism, the painter's aim is the blueprint, or the sole centre that orders the practice. Hence, a representational practice would make it difficult to create a line of flight (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 9) that shifts the nostalgic experience as it is restricted in a known territory.

The discussion of the three projects in Chapter Three has indicated that, in exploring a nostalgic experience, the painter's aims that trigger the painting yet do not predetermine a result for it could be the starting points from which the painter participates yet does not control the becoming of the nostalgic experiences through handling paint. This type of aim could be represented by the initial aim of *The Labyrinth* (Fig.22). The aim was to visualise the object of the nostalgic reverie through making a painting on selected photographs. As I did not predetermine what the work should be like, handling the materials gradually took my mind into a different nostalgic reverie. Instead of being a blueprint that determined how the becoming of the nostalgic reverie should be, the initial aim of *The Labyrinth* was like an entrance through which I entered the nostalgic reverie and manipulated its becoming with painting.

Practices started by this type of aim shift the nostalgic reverie's becoming by enriching its heterogeneity and potential of connectivity yet do not predetermine where the shifting is heading. Accordingly, through these aims, the painter's rational thoughts and the rhizome's aimless becoming could reach a balancing point in which the two parts mutually influence each other. In this way, the nostalgic experience could be de-and-reterritorialised into new states.

Nostalgic experience in this project is seen as a process in which the person deals with an imagined image of the past. According to Constantine Sedikides *et al.*'s research, the image of the past cannot be the reappearance of some bygone facts, as it is 'centred around personally relevant events, is dipped in affect' whereas reminiscence and autobiographical memory are acts of remembering specific events in one's life that do not have to be, and typically are not, important or affect-laden, including the order of their occurrence. (Constantine Sedikides *et al.*, 2004: 205).

Therefore, nostalgia is a state in which the person uses their memory and affect as raw material to create a scene to fulfil their present psychological needs. This beautified and imagined past that the person longs for is defined as the nostalgic reverie in this project and the process of re-achieving stability in memory and affect through dealing with the juxtaposition or comparison is defined as the nostalgic experience. As a nostalgic experience involves the becoming and connections between several heterogeneous elements such as memory, affect, imagination, and present environment that the person is in, it can be seen as a rhizome based on Deleuze and Guattari's definition (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 7-10).

As a rhizome is centreless and in constant shifting (Sutton and Martin-Jones, 2008: 6), exploring a nostalgic experience with painting could be seen as a task of participating the shifting of this rhizome by deliberately making connections between physical materials such as paint and photographs and the rhizome. By enriching the heterogeneity of the rhizome, handling paint and photographs could foster the rhizome's potential in creating connections. These new connections between physical materials and objects in the nostalgic reverie create lines of flight along which the rhizome of nostalgic experience enters other territories

However, this shifting might be difficult to achieve if the practice was conducted in a representational way. Based on Barbara Bolt's discussion, the word *representation* has two main meanings. It can be understood as *re-presentation* which 'stands in the place of an absent object' (Bolt, 2004: 16), and *representationalism* which is a model of thinking and practice in which a picture is predetermined as the prototype, model or schema that orders the person's thinking and behaviours (Bolt, 2004: 18). It is the representationalism that this project aims to transcend. With representationalism, the nostalgic reverie which is centreless and always shifting would be transformed into a static picture with clear centres that narrates the beautified and imagined past that the painter is longing for before they start to paint. The destination of the practice is predetermined hence the initiatives of the practice in directing the becoming of the nostalgic experience were largely reduced as which objects could be selected in the painting and what these objects are like is predetermined by the transformed picture. In other words, there is a gap that cleanly separates the subject (i.e. nostalgia) and practice in representational practice therefore the practice is restricted in the role of following rather than exploring. As the practice is heading to a known destination, finding encounters (O'Sullivan, 2006: 1) that would rupture the nostalgic experience might be difficult during the process.

In order to transcend representationalism, painting in this project should be seen as a way of participating the nostalgic experience's becoming rather than the means of visualising a predetermined picture. Therefore, the painter's aim needs to be interrogated. Practicing rhizomatically does not mean that the painter should deliberately practice without any clear aim. When discussing the co-existence of molar and molecular movement (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 216-217), Deleuze and Guattari indicate that even during the process of realising a predetermined structure, the elements could still start an aimless escape that ends in a different and unexpected structure. Even in the cases of practicing with a clear rational

aim such as the first step of *Her Writings* (Fig.12) in which I deliberately used photographs to visualise certain objects from the nostalgic reverie, unexpected movements in thoughts and affect triggering could still happen and create new possibilities for the becoming of the nostalgic experience.

Therefore, rhizomatic practice does not reject rational aims in general. The ones that trigger practice (e.g. I will try to visualise the selected objects from the nostalgic reverie by making a photograph collage) yet do not function as the blueprint for practice to realise (e.g. the work should only include object A, B, and C, and they should be painted realistically) are important in rhizomatic painting practice as it is through them that the painter achieves a point where her/his rational thinking and the aimless becoming of the rhizome could be balanced. In this way, as the two forces that direct the becoming of the nostalgic experience are mutually influencing each other, what the nostalgic experience would become is a question that cannot be answered simply by thinking. Also, answering it with painting becomes a way of 'pushing forward the boundaries of what can be experienced' (O'Sullivan, 2001: 130).

As Damian Sutton says, Deleuze and Guattari did not establish the rhizome to replace the arborescent structure which has a clear centre. Instead, the rhizome should be seen as a forest that includes many individual trees (Sutton and Martin-Jones, 2008: 4). If the process of creating a visual outcome (i.e. the effect) from a clear aim (i.e. the seed) is seen as a process of creating a 'tree', then what rhizomatic practice creates is indeed a 'forest' as the 'seed' (i.e. the painter's initial aim) does not aim at any predetermined effect, hence what it creates could always be seen by the painter as a new 'seed' that leads to another effect. In this way, the painter's rational thought is constantly in and out of the process of practice. As a result, the work could have multiple unplanned centres as *The Labyrinth* (Fig.22) and none of them could be defined as more fundamental than

the others.

Instead of being the model for the painter to visualise, nostalgia becomes the starting materials used by the painter to create an image on its own that involves many centres or nodal points formed by heterogeneous elements. Accordingly, in viewing the work, viewers need to connect their own memory and affect to the work and create cognitive and affective movements of their own.

#### **4.3 Finding Two: Achieving New Affective States and New Connections between Memories**

From the painter's perspective, exploring a nostalgic experience with rhizomatic painting has two functions. By articulating the nostalgic reverie with paint and photographs, rhizomatic painting practice can end the painter's nostalgic experience and lead her/him to a new affective state. Also, through the handling, new connections between different parts of the painter's memory could be made.

Although Sedikides *et al.*'s research points out that nostalgia has positive functions such as solidifying and augmenting the person's identity, helping the person to regenerate and sustain a sense of meaning of her/his life, and buttressing the person's social connectedness (2004: 206-207), psychoanalytic theorist Roderick Peters argues that a person's attempts to cope with her/his present circumstances might be seriously interfered by nostalgia (1985: 135). Therefore, in some cases, ending the nostalgic reverie might be necessary and this can be achieved by the rhizomatic practice of painting the nostalgic reverie.

In Deleuze and Guattari's words, the shift from a nostalgic reverie to a new psychological state is achieved through the line of flight (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 9). Hence, the aim of the rhizomatic practice of handling paint and

photographs could be seen as to create a line of flight. One of the main points where line of flight could emerge was using photographs to re-present the objects in the nostalgic reverie. As discussed in Chapter One, Section 1.6, a photograph can re-present neither the photographed subjects nor the objects in the painter's nostalgic reverie because while the photograph is a static documentation of a specific state of the subjects from a particular perspective, the actual subjects are in non-stopped becoming and the objects in the nostalgic reverie are newly constructed rather than the re-presentation of some facts that the person remembers. As the painter's memory as an entity must be in a different state than it was at the moment of taking the photograph, even perceiving a photograph taken by the person herself/himself of the actual objects during the actual period of time that she/he is longing for might cause the emergence of unexpected thoughts and affects that have the potential of shifting the person's nostalgic psychological state.

James Elkins indicates that, 'Paint incites motions, or the thought of motions, and through them it implies emotions and other wordless experiences' (2000: 188). Handling paint based on the thoughts and emotions encountered by selecting photographs can be seen as a deliberately made articulation between the nostalgic reverie, the encountered thoughts and emotions, paint, and photographs. In this way, the initial nostalgic reverie becomes a nodal point based on which a bigger rhizome is made. By enriching the heterogeneity of this new rhizome, the articulations between memory, affects, paint and photographs boost this rhizome's potential of creating connectivity.

It is through the connections between these heterogeneous elements that the initial nostalgic reverie could be shifted into other states such as a conflict between facts and the nostalgic reverie as it happened in *Hot and Damp, a City in Jungle, 1994, Guangzhou* (Fig.18) and the memory of another period of time

as the case of finding the photographs with blue sky in *The Labyrinth* (Fig.22). In this way, in Bergson's words, the initial nostalgic experience becomes a former state of the person's memory (i.e. a duration) that cannot be recurred (2001: vii). With this rhizomatic tactic, painting can transcend the representational role of depicting a scene transformed from the nostalgic reverie and become an exploration that bring encounters to the painter.

The achieved new affective state might involve new connections between different parts of the painter's memory. For example, by encountering the photographs with blue sky, I entered the second part of practice in *The Labyrinth* (Fig.22). This shifting directly connected my memory that I dealt with in Part One (i.e. the ones that involved the computer game and the storybook) with my memory that functioned as the subject of Part Two (i.e. the ones that involved the palm trees and the sea). These two memories and the one of making the work formed a new territory in which the interpretation of any one of them would be influenced by the other two. Therefore, by taking the painter to a new affective state, exploring a nostalgic experience with rhizomatic painting also enriches the potential of the future becoming of the painter's memory by creating new interpretations for the relative memories.

#### **4.4 Finding Three: A Body without Organ on its own**

As the painter's memory is an undividable duration, and every nostalgic experience is a non-repeatable state of it, paintings that are generated from nostalgic experiences are naturally connected by a link. However, unlike the different states in memory which, according to Bergson, could not be separated into different individuals as they are different phases of a person's duration (Bergson, 2001: vii), the paintings that generated from them are physically independent from each other. Therefore, arranging paintings of different nostalgic



experiences together can be seen as a way of creating new perspectives of looking at the painter's memory by creating connections between the different phases of it.

As discussed previously, with the rhizomatic tactic, every practice of painting a nostalgic experience would take the painter to a new state in memory and affect. Although the painting started from a nostalgic reverie, it must involve more than one memory or imagination and none of them could be defined as the real centre of the painting. If seeing the arranged paintings as an entity, then no matter how the paintings are selected and arranged, there would be multiple centres, or focuses within this arrangement. Arranging the paintings could be seen as a way of turning the linear development of the painter's memory into a flat, heterogeneous, and centreless patchwork.

Moreover, as the painter's memory would be in a different state when she/he finishes several paintings, perceiving the early pieces would generate new thoughts and emotions. Even for the painter herself/himself, perceiving the patchwork made with paintings generated from her/his previous nostalgic experiences would create something new rather than revive some of the previous states in memory and affect. The memories and affects that generated works are all from the painter, however she/he has no privilege in reading the work as she/he has to construct meanings or narratives from the connections between the images based on her/his memory at the moment of viewing.

Although the image is static, because each viewing experience would be shaped by the viewer's state in memory and affect at the moment, the painter would find unique centres from the patchwork and make non-repeatable connections between them. If seeing a painting as a body and the memories and imaginations as its organs, then instead of stripping the organs, arranging the paintings

together sets the organs into aimless Brownian motion. The patchwork hence becomes a body without organ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 30), and the viewing of the patchwork becomes a channel of creating new experiences rather than finding a predetermined conclusion. Therefore, the nostalgic experience can transcend the role of being a beautiful scene from the painter's past that she/he desires for she/he to depict and become a force that incites the painter to create a body without organ by connecting pieces of her/his memory, affect, imagination, and visual materials such as paint and photographs.

In this way, painting enters an area of ambiguity as the certainty in all its aspects is lowered by the rhizomatic practice. For example, while being an individual work, any one of the paintings of a nostalgic experience can be seen as a part of a bigger, ever changing rhizome, or body without organ. As nostalgia is a beautified and imagined past (Zhao, 2005), exploring it with rhizomatic painting practice involves both reminiscence and imagination, re-presentation and creation. Viewing the work for both the painter and other viewers means to perceive the work with a different state in memory and affect than the one that generated the work, as whether the work should be defined as 'about the painter's personal memory' is debatable. By achieving these ambiguities, rhizomatic painting practice dissolves the original centres of the nostalgic experiences. As a result, nostalgia, which is often considered as sentimental or melancholic, can be turned into an unpredictable image by viewing which new cognitive and affective experiences can be created.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

Painting a nostalgic experience means that the painter's process of dealing with a nostalgic reverie is merged with a process of handling paint. With non-representational practice which does not aim to visualise any predetermined

image, the merge of these two processes could lead to what Simon O'Sullivan defines as an encounter which means the consolidation of new thoughts, understandings or ideas after the rupture of an existing object (O'Sullivan, 2006: 1). Through mutual interference, the two processes form a new rhizome with richer heterogeneity. This means, through the connections between the heterogeneous elements such as the paint, the painter's aims of handling them and the objects in the nostalgic reverie, the potential in creating new thoughts and ideas is boosted.

These connections might result in an image that neither visualises the nostalgic reverie nor realises other aims of the painter. The work could be a new entity on its own and perceiving it becomes another channel of gaining new thoughts, memories and affective movements. These new triggered elements could be or form lines of flight (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 9) along which the initial nostalgic experience enters new territories.

If seeing a nostalgic experience as a rhizome, then painting it is a way of expanding and shifting it or merging it with other rhizomes. O'Sullivan indicates that the rhizome names a principle of connectivity and the making of connections could be understood as a key modality of creativity in general (O'Sullivan, 2006: 17). Painting a nostalgic experience is an act of making connections between heterogeneous elements and its result is unpredictable. It might be the painter's new memories and affect as it happened in *The Labyrinth* (Fig.22), new connections between different thoughts and memories as it happened in *Untitled*, 2018 (Fig.10), or new methods and techniques for painting such as the gesso scraping method created by *The Barnes Series* (Fig.14). There might even be cases in which several of these results are created by one practice. Hence, instead of being bonded with certain subjects such as time and memory, painting a nostalgic experience is a process of encountering unexpected subjects or

directions.

In discussing the situation of the work of art in the contemporary world, Barbara Bolt indicates that, since we are constantly in the process of making it for exhibition, promoting it, analysing it and writing about it, all these multifarious activities, the work of art tends to be reduced to its equipmental-being (2004: 188). By indicating that both the process and result of painting a nostalgic experience can be surprising, this project shows that painting a nostalgic experience can be a way for painting to escape the instrumentalism pointed out by Bolt. In other words, through exploring a psychological phenomenon that focuses an illusion of the past, painting can embrace the endless possibilities of the future. Nostalgia has a long history of being conceptualised as a medical disease and a psychiatric disorder (Sedikides, 2008: 304-305). By being the subject of painting, it can become a repository of possibilities that foster creativity.

Painting a nostalgic experience explores what the nostalgic experience can become rather than defining what the nostalgic experience is. Instead of seeing the nostalgic experience as a static object and analysing it from the perspective of an outsider, painting in this project merges into the nostalgic experience's process of becoming. Painting and the nostalgic experience do not progress in parallel. They mutually shift each other through making connections between their elements. As a result, the gap between them becomes blurred, and defining whether the finished work is generated from painting or the nostalgic experience becomes difficult.

Painting a nostalgic experience creates a new compound process of becoming. This points out a new role for painting, which is a process of creating new becoming through merging with an object's becoming. By merging with the becoming of other objects, this new role of painting has the potential of creating

new connections between different thoughts and objects. The future of this role is exciting. It might create a larger context in which nostalgia can be further explored.

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