



The Untranslatable, a Poetic Place

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ABSTRACT

This research project is concerned with 'the untranslatable', which I identify as that which, in art, resists translation into everyday language yet touches me lovingly and truthfully. Through a manner of 'poetic translation' that is experiential and reflective as well as semantic and material, and by questioning how an artwork can embody the untranslatable, the project develops concepts to think about the untranslatable and to articulate its presence within an installation artwork that allows for new meanings to enter through audiences' engagement with the work. Informed by philosophical, theoretical and artistic works that share concerns with the oppositional and draw our awareness towards neutral, subtle and nuanced appearances and understandings of the world, the research investigates the poetic works of art that liberate and provoke our perception and sense of being in this life-world.

The research is undertaken through my experiencing and reflecting on these elements: my grandmother's poetic enunciation about Mt. Aso, shifting shadows of an acrylic cube (a remnant), and Jacques Derrida's interpretation of *chora* and *ma* as a place for translation/transference, which is untranslatable. This process, which in turn draws resonant voices from various disciplines, not limited to either Western or Eastern knowledge, to ancient or contemporary time, to one side or one sex, is manifested in my art-making and thesis writing; my artworks inspire *and* test my thesis, together investigating these five key concepts: 'Pure Language', the 'Poetic', 'Shadow', 'Transference' and 'Embodiment'.

Chapter One explores philosophies of translation with a focus on Walter Benjamin's concept of 'pure language' considered untranslatable. My first installation work *Understanding of misunderstanding*, joins images of different landscapes in a manner akin to literal translation of my grandmother's enunciation. Chapter Two discusses 'poetic use of language' as articulative of the ineffable (untranslatable), through elaboration on Friedrich Hölderlin's theory of poetry, Toshihiko Izutsu's philosophy of Zen articulation, and Luce Irigaray's philosophy of linguistic and psychoanalytic practice. My video work, *Topologies between the Three*, poetically translates conversations about Mt. Aso by opening silent and metaphoric spatiality between expression and perception. Informed by intersecting studies on elusive appearance and perceptual ambiguity in philosophies of translation and perception, Chapter Three examines shifting 'shadow' (image) as an artistic medium, exemplified and discussed in art, including works by Agnes Martin and Junichiro Tanizaki. In my installation works, *Distancing for Opening*, *Watakushi ame* and *Mokudoku*, 'shadow light/light shadow' visually and spatially transfers across images faintly printed or surfaces embossed with the acrylic (a remnant). Chapter Four articulates the 'transfer' process as the embodiment of the untranslatable, inspired by the Greek-Latin and the Japanese derivations, illustrating the 'transfer' (*utsuru*). In this process, the positive is engendered from the negative, which is aligned with art historical and philosophical views that images metamorphose and knowledges transform in 'distance' or

‘movement’ between the works and the spectators. In response to Derrida’s interpretation, my final exhibition, ここがどこなのか_ *where it is here*_ どうでもいいことさ_ *it does not matter*_ どうやって来たのか_ *how I have got here*_ 忘れられるかな_ *can I forget*, intends to open ‘a poetic place’, with my built walls and visual works, where images transfer (*utsuru*: reflect, project, trace, emerge) within rooms (*ma*) through audiences’ experience and reflection. This is captured in the film, *The Untranslatable, A Poetic Place*, shot through the gazes of others, in keeping with how my grandmother’s enunciation ‘transfers’ the life of Mt. Aso. The chapter further elaborates on this life as what conveys knowledge (sensitivity) of ‘love and longing for motherhood’, in the light of the *Mirokubosatsu* statue clad with nuance of shadow as in love, Rainer Maria Rilke’s articulation about life and longing, and philosophical claims that *chora* is both motherhood and untranslatable. Chapter Five articulates one’s experience of ‘embodiment’ of the untranslatable as temporal, receptive and generative, in reference to other bodies and words: my grandmother, *Mirokubosatsu*, *bokabi* (containing *utsu*: hollowness and emptiness) and the Chinese ideogram of poetry 詩 (word-temple, latently filled with chant or shadow), and through proximate examination of the female artist’s body (mine). My video work, *Gesture of Shadow*, externally captures metamorphosis of her shadow from a mountain to a butterfly. The excerpts of my journal writing, during the final research residency, witness a temporal transference of something external (*boka*) into her body, anticipating its emergence as a birth of art.

As anyone struggles with that which resists translation in art, *The Untranslatable, a Poetic Place*, is written for both artists and audiences. Within the context of this thesis, ‘the untranslatable’ can be best defined as the life that drifts as it metamorphoses and transforms our experience in and reflection on the world in a more rich and poetic manner. As it ‘transfers’ in variant ways, it can only be embodied temporarily by the poetic work of art; in a poetic language that contains ‘fertile silence’, an architectural *body* that internalises emptiness/hollowness, or an enduring form of love that longs for motherhood. This embodiment is perceived and experienced as ‘shadow light’ (as truthful, an aid to knowledge) that shifts; an ambiguous image that shimmers; a nuance of love that trembles; or a poetic place that opens.

DECLARATION

This is to certify that

- i. this thesis comprises only my original work toward the PhD except where indicated in the preface.
- ii. due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used.
- iii. the thesis is fewer than the maximum word limit in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices or that the thesis is 44,383 words as approved by the Research Higher Degrees Committee.

Mapo Shinde

PREFACE

I acknowledge that third party editorial assistance was provided in preparation of the thesis by Ms. Samantha Semmens. Assistance from Ms. Semmens was limited to editorial intervention in accordance with the Australian Standards of Editing Practice as follows: Standard D; Language and Illustrations, and Standard E; Completeness and Consistency.

I acknowledge that all figures and citations from material, including third party copyright material, are included in the thesis within insubstantial portions, and in accordance with the Fair Dealing Provisions for Research & Study, as all listed in Illustration and/or Bibliography sections.

I would also like to acknowledge the funding support to this research project as the research scholarship provided through Australian Postgraduate Award, and as the research grant provided by the Faculty of VCA & MCM at the University of Melbourne.

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My deepest appreciation *and* my dedication of this work to my grandmother, Hiroko Kai, for the *life* and the *poetry* that she has gifted to me.

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INTRODUCTION

What is it? The working definition of the untranslatable

As an artist and an audience member, I notice something in an artwork that resists translation into everyday language. I experience it as a shift, oscillation, drift or movement between the sensible (sensation) and the intelligible (cognition). My attention is held by this 'in-between' spatiality. Then, for a brief moment, it touches me lovingly and truthfully.

I call it 'the untranslatable', as I am inspired by the French philosopher, Jacques Derrida's discussion on the Greek concept of *chora* and the Japanese concept of *ma*. *Chora* and *ma* commonly indicate negative (in-between) spatiality, such as the void, blank, interval, gap and so forth, which Derrida recognises to be both untranslatable and a place for translation, transference and movement in both a semantic and material sense¹.

To be touched by the untranslatable, lovingly and truthfully, has a significant impact on me, as it transforms how I experience and reflect on the world. I feel liberated, and, at the same time, able to see what was previously unnoticeable.

Why investigation into the untranslatable matters to me as an artist/spectator?

Having worked as an artist, and sometimes as a curator and translator, in the globalised art and academic context for the last decade, I observe the demand imposed on an artwork to be translatable into verbal and written languages. This often comes from an attitude that conceives an artwork as a tool or an object to serve existing ideologies or/and marketable values.

This demand, however, paradoxically exposes the untranslatability of art. My experience of the untranslatable, which I have just described, moves me to argue against such a conception that ignores the autonomy of works of art. Does a work of art not liberate and provoke one's perception of the world by suggesting more nuanced understandings of the world, rather than by representing already defined translatable views?

However, I acknowledge that it is a difficult task to articulate how the untranslatable is important to the work of art in verbal and written language, precisely because of its untranslatability (into everyday language).

How have I set up this research project?

This difficulty has forced me to look around; I have found that my awareness of something in art which resists translation is shared by others. Indeed I identify that there are other thinkers and artists who have developed concepts about what I am calling the untranslatable. They include Derrida, as introduced earlier, Walter Benjamin, Antoine Berman, Friedrich Hölderlin, Toshihiko

¹ "Discussion A-1" in *Anyone*, ed. Cynthia C. Davidson,, (New York: Rizzoli International Publishing 1991), 90.

Izutsu, Luce Irigaray, John Sallis, Junichiro Tanizaki, Roberto Casati, Arata Isozaki, Takemi Azumaya, Agnes Martin, Seigo Matsuoka, Atsushi Shindo, and Rainer Maria Rilke.

Their voices have supported me to establish this research project not to translate the untranslatable but to develop a set of terms that can help us to think about the untranslatable, in turn deepening our understanding of works of art.

In carrying out this project as an artist researcher, I have addressed the following two questions, by which I have manifested the research processes and outcomes in my artworks as well as my thesis:

What is the untranslatable in art?

How can an artwork embody the untranslatable?

Prompts for the questions

These questions are inspired by the following elements, in which I identify something that is untranslatable. Hence, they are the direct prompts for this research project.

- (i) My grandmother's poetic enunciation about the view from the window, which we saw together.
- (ii) Shifting shadows and reflections of an acrylic cube (a remnant).
- (iii) Derrida's interpretation of *chora* and *ma* as a place for translation/transference that is untranslatable.

My previous art project, which I curated and attended to as an artist, was intended to be transcultural; however, it resulted in revealing 'what cannot be translated' between artworks and concepts, expressing this in the two-word title *Immanent Landscape*_内在の風景. Though factually wrong due to her dementia, it was my grandmother's enunciation about a landscape (i) that called my attention to the untranslatable; not as a struggle of translation but as a generative gap that can open an artistic scene/place. Around the same period, the shifting shadows and reflections of an acrylic cube (ii) also caught my eye. (I intuitively made a link between shifting shadows and the untranslatable.) Their nuance and subtlety struck me as more artistic than the kind of artwork that is easily translated into a prosaic language. I made the link between the opening of an artistic scene and the shifting appearance of shadows when I encountered Derrida's discussion on *chora* and *ma* (iii): a place of translation/transference/movement, considered to be untranslatable.

Approaches to the research questions

In response to the two research questions, these three elements have informed my approach to art making and have generated the sub-questions that frame the chapters of the thesis (see below). The last question was generated as the research progressed.

- *What is the untranslatable in art?*
 - _What does it mean to 'translate'? (Chapter One)
 - _How can the untranslatable be articulated? (Chapter Two)
- *How can an artwork embody the untranslatable?*
 - _How can 'shadow' be considered an artistic medium? (Chapter Three)
 - _How can 'transfer' be considered an artistic process? (Chapter Four)
- *How do I, as an artist, experience the embodiment of the untranslatable?* (Chapter Five)

Brief outline of the research process (reflected in the narrative of my thesis)

_How and what this research is set up to do?

Chapter One first frames this research project, in the way that I have just described, by discussing how, in which context and what this research is set up to do.

- What is the untranslatable in art?

The chapter elaborates on my struggle, as a Japanese artist researcher, to write this thesis in English, by pointing out that this struggle is not only mine: the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben says that the dominance of English is not innocent². The Japanese philosopher and translator, Tatsuya Nishiyama also expresses his concern with the invisibility of translation in the era of global translatability³. Yet, this globalised demand of translation is a tangential struggle in this research project. My primary concern is not with the untranslatability between languages (Italian and English, Japanese and English, and so forth); it is with the untranslatability that I identify in art. Interestingly, however, as the three elements indicate, I became attuned to the untranslatability of art through this tangential struggle, in the invisible act of translation. Hence, my investigation of the untranslatable in art begins with examining the very act of translation, in the latter half of Chapter One.

_What does it mean to 'translate'?

I refer to the modern and contemporary philosophers, translators and theorists who consider translation poetic. For Walter Benjamin, in his influential essay, 'The Translator's Task', to translate

² "Giorgio Agamben. Resistance in Art. 2014," Youtube video, 0:36, posted by "Saas-Fee: European Graduate School," March 2, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=one7mE-8y9c>

³ Trans. the author, T. Nishiyama, "Yakusha Kaisetsu: Honyaku Kono Sakusou suru Mono [Translator's note: Translation, this entanglement]," in *Honyaku ni Tsuite: On Translation*, John Sallis, (Tokyo: Getsuyousha Publishing, 2013), 310.

is not to exchange meanings between different languages but to intend pure language⁴, which is considered untranslatable. It is suggested that the distance between pure language and the subject (translator/language that translates) can be bridged through literal translation (as though joining fragments together lovingly).

I discuss how my installation artwork, *Understanding of Misunderstanding*, comprised of small pieces of paper and objects, links different images of landscapes in a similar way. I also reflect how the work simultaneously presents shadows and reflections, metaphorically suggesting the untranslatability of *Mt. Aso* in my grandmother's enunciation.

This process of experiencing and reflecting on her enunciation through making and seeing my artwork, resonates with Antoine Berman's definition of translation as to experience and reflect⁵. In this process, the object of the translation transforms and the subject metamorphoses, hence it is recognised as a poetic translation.

How can the untranslatable be articulated?

With an attempt to develop sets of terms to articulate the untranslatable, Chapter Two further extends investigation into Benjamin's notion of pure language, understood as untranslatable as well as 'expressionless and creative'. It originated in the idea of the 'pure word', elaborated by the 17th century German poet and translator, Friedrich Hölderlin, in his theory of poetry (art). This suggests that the concept of the untranslatable is observed in the connection between the theory of translation and the theory of poetry (art). This 'pure word' is called *Zäsur* (*Cäsur*) which means caesura: a counter-rhythmical interruption in a verse⁶. It is also interpreted as 'fertile silence/*ma* (*ma* meaning 'in-between space-time' in Japanese)' by the Japanese translator and theorist, Michio Mitsugi⁷. This suggests another useful perspective for my investigation into the untranslatable, in Eastern thought, namely Zen articulation.

According to Toshihiko Izutsu, Zen articulates the ineffable (untranslatable) by Zen's poetic language that is engendered from what he calls '*ba*/field'⁸, which is also understood to be fertile silence. This particular spatiality prompts transference between subject and object, and this fusion engenders a poetic language which embodies a semantic network of suggestive associations. A similar generative 'interval' is observed by the philosopher, Luce Irigaray, between a speaker and a listener in psychoanalytic practice. She recognises it as calm, opening and enigmatic⁹.

These shared views on fertile silence as generative in-between spatiality that engenders poetic languages, echo with my video work, *Topology Between the Three*, which is concerned with the untranslatability of my grandmother's poetic enunciation. I discuss how the work, which is comprised of footages of *Mt. Aso* and the subtitles of conversations, intends to open a space

⁴ "The Translator's Task, Walter Benjamin," trans. Steven Rendall, *TTR: traduction, terminologie, redaction* vol.10, n2 (1997): 152-156.

⁵ Trans. the author, Masaki Kishi, "Antoine Berman 'Honyaku no Jidai: Benjamin 'Honyakusha no Shimei' Chukai' wo Yomu ['Reading Antoine Berman's 'L'âge de la traduction: "La tâche du traducteur" de Walter Benjamin, un commentaire']," *Invitation to Translation Studies* no.6 (August 2011): 34.

⁶ Hölderlin's *Sophocles – Oedipus & Antigone*, trans. David Constantine, (Northumberland: Bloodaxe Books, 2001), 63.

⁷ Trans. the author, Michio Mitsugi, "Walter Benjamin's Theory of Translation", *Interpretation and Translation Studies* no.9 (2009): 189.

⁸ Trans. the author, T. Izutsu, "Zen ni okeru Gengoteki Imi no Mondai [The problem of meaning in Zen language]" in *Ishiki to Honshitsu: The consciousness and reality of existence*, (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1991), 370.

⁹ L. Irigaray, "The limits of transference" in *The Irigaray Reader*, ed. Margaret Whitford, (Massachusetts, Blackwell publishers, 1991), 115.

between the artwork and the audience, what is seen and what is shown, and what is said and what is heard.

- *How can an artwork embody the untranslatable?*

How can 'shadow' be considered an artistic medium?

The poetic use of language, which is considered articulative of the ineffable (untranslatable) in the Zen context, includes not only the semantic but the visual language, such as ink brush painting. Its various shades of gray between black and white are characterised as monochromatically reticent yet metaphorically rich. This resonates with my fascination with shifting shadow, with which I identify the untranslatable. Thus, in Chapter Three I discuss how shadow can be considered a poetic language or an artistic medium.

I first examine the concept of shadow (image) in the intersection between translation and perception (appearance). According to the philosopher, John Sallis, in the ancient Greek, 'the force of translated word (*dianoia*)'¹⁰ is measured by 'the possibilities for interpretation (*eikasía*)'. Interestingly, the word *eikasía* indicates both image and shadow, and translation is recognised as 'double seeing': 'to see through' (*eikasía*) and 'to think through (*dianoia*)'. This resonates with my experience of the untranslatable as shift, drift or oscillation between the sensible and the intelligible, which is also reminiscent of Irigaray's recognitions of in-between space as 'interval'. Similarly, philosophy of perception studies the appearance of ambiguous shadow and image, to question the traditional perceptual model that divides sensation from cognition.

A shadow (image) that appears to shift, drift or shimmer is unique in the sense that although it is immaterial and dependent on supporting materials (grounds), surroundings and viewers' perception, the strength of its impact on us belies this dependency. Its impact is akin to the power love has to alter the lover's perception. In fact, western art history tells that the contour of a lover's shadow originated painting¹¹. In the medieval East, there is an Islamic philosophical concept: 'shadowy imaginal', which is described as a shimmering and drifting thing with no substance, yet which is more real than any physical substance¹². As depicted in Junichiro Tanizaki's *In Praise of Shadows*, pre-modern Japanese aesthetics values shadow more than the actual objects or structures of architecture, where the shadow is oriented towards beauty and people are expected to differentiate subtle degrees of shades in order to complete the beauty¹³.

In this regard, the theory of multimodal perception (Gestalt Shift) informs us about how perception of subtle and elusive appearance is possible, and how we can cultivate such a perceptual ability through 'practice'. This supports my argument in the second part of Chapter Three that making and seeing an artwork can be a form of 'practice', as the work of art uniquely prompts dis-preferred or alternative perceptions. In reflecting on my installation artwork, *Distancing for Opening*, I

¹⁰ John Sallis, *On Translation*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 51.

¹¹ Victor I. Stoichita, *A Short History of the Shadow* (London: Reaction Books Ltd, 1997), 7.

¹² Trans. the author, Toshihiko Izutsu, *Ishiki to Honshitsu: The consciousness and reality of existence*, (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1991), 202-204.

¹³ J. Tanizaki, "Innei Raisan [In Praise of Shadows]", in *Innei Raisan [In Praise of Shadows]*, (Tokyo: Iwanami, 2005), 32.

discuss how the work manipulates what are called ‘contextual clues’¹⁴: spatial attention, instruction, semantic associations, visual imagery and so forth, in order to draw viewers’ attention to what is normally unnoticeable. The work utilises atmospheric conditions in the exhibition venue (a bookstore) to create ambiguous shadows and reflections of acrylic sheets upon a faintly printed image of a shadow.

In this way, shifting/ambiguous/subtle shadow contributes to philosophical, aesthetic and artistic knowledge of elusive existence (the untranslatable). However, the Platonic conception of shadow, which is still dominant today, positions shadow (as well as art and poetry) against light, truth, knowledge and philosophy. The contemporary philosopher, Roberto Casati, who claims shadow as a valuable aid to knowledge as well as vision¹⁵, provides my research with useful concepts of shadow that differ from Platonic shadow. One of them, ‘shadow light’, is both spatial and visual, which resonates with the contemporary architect, Arata Isozaki’s understanding of darkness as a ground of all phenomena where light only passes ephemerally¹⁶. It also relates to Izutsu’s description of articulation as a flash¹⁷ that emerges from the depth of *ba*/field only momentarily.

This leads the last part of this chapter to examine artworks in which I observe ‘shadow light’ as motif, material or medium. Takemi Azumaya’s lithograph, *Eclipse*, defines contours of an ice cube with shadowy darkness. The shimmering, subtle and neutral presence of Agnes Martin’s paintings confounds ‘oppositions’ such as image and material. My installation artworks: *Mokudoku* and *Watakushi ame* are both made out of embossing and color transferring processes. The surfaces of the works are receptive of ‘shadow light’/‘light shadow’ that moves across architectural and atmospheric surroundings, poetically reflecting, in turn, my experience of the untranslatable with the acrylic cube.

These works of art suggest that nuanced perception and expression of shadow (as shadow light) allow us to gain nuanced understanding of the world. In this sense, shadow can be considered a poetic language and an artistic medium, which articulates the untranslatable. It even *mediates* knowledge across different forms of art. One of the most beautiful examples is found in Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time*, where the novelist (a character in the story) expresses his perception of a small yellow patch on the wall—the shifting appearance of ‘light shadow’—in Vermeer’s painting in front of him¹⁸.

—How can ‘transfer’ be considered an artistic process?

‘Shadow light’ (shadow), as a poetic language that articulates the untranslatable, is observed in the process of transference—light transfers from/into darkness (fertile silence, *ba*/field, interval). This

¹⁴ J. O’Dea, “Art and Ambiguity: A Gestalt-Shift Approach to Elusive Appearances”, the DRAFT to be appear in *Phenomenal Presence*. eds. Fabian Dorsch, Fiona Macpherson, and Martine Nida-Rumelin (Oxford University Press, forthcoming), 15.

¹⁵ Roberto Casati, *Shadows* (the original Italian edition is entitled, *The Shadow Clubs*), (N.Y.: Vintage Books, 2004), 10.

¹⁶ A. Isozaki, “Yami no Kukan [Space of Darkness: spiritual structure of illusion]” trans. Hiroshi Watanabe, in *Arata Isozaki*, eds. Ken Tadashi Oshima and Arata Isozaki (London: Phaidon, 2008), 153.

¹⁷ Toshihiko Izutsu, *Toward a Philosophy of Zen Buddhism* (Massachusetts: the Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1982), 131.

¹⁸ Marcel Proust, *The Captive* (vol.5): *In Search of Lost Time*, Trans. C K Scott Moncrieff, (Project Gutenberg Australia, 2014), under “the captive,” accessed July 3, 2015, <http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks03/0300501.txt>.

observation mirrors Derrida's remark that *chora* and *ma* are untranslatable, as a place for translation and transference in both a semantic and material sense. Thus, Chapter Four is concerned with the idea of transfer, as that which processes the embodiment of the untranslatable in art.

With this enquiry, both Japanese and Greek-Latin terms show us an inspiring etymological sequence. The verb form of the noun *utsu*, meaning hollow or emptiness in Japanese, is *utsuru*, indicating variants on 'transfer': reflect, project, trace and emerge. As stated by the editor, Seigo Matsuoka¹⁹, and the curator, Atsushi Shinfuji²⁰, the subject of this 'transfer' is considered spirit, atmosphere or human psychology, and results in forming an image. We find the identical derivation from Greek to Latin: the Greek noun *psyche*, meaning pupa or spirit, originates the Latin term *anima*, meaning soul in movement, and *imago*, indicating butterfly or image.

This analogy, which shares a view that something emerges (transfers) from negative space-time, depicts transformation and metamorphosis of life into a new form (of art). The Roman poet, Ovid, in his *Metamorphoses*, articulates this as a survival of life through transference. This inspires the modern art historian, Aby Warburg, to conceive image as what remains/survives (*nachleben*) in motion²¹. His concept can be linked to Benjamin's idea that the life of the original work is prolonged through translation that aims towards pure language. This idea is further articulated in Berman's view that poetic translation enables this prolonging through forming new work and new understanding in the processes of transformation and metamorphosis.

These perspectives facilitate my reflection on my art-making, which is, in fact, always prompted by 'transfer' (a variant on *utsuru*) movements. These movements let images appear as reflection, projection or trace (embossment) to be grounded on materials (such as paper, perspex or wall), which then bear remainders of this 'transfer'. This is how my works maintain disciplinarily divergent forms across drawing, printing, photography and video projection. This is evident in the installation works I have created using these forms.

For instance, my work, *Nami no Ma ni Ma ni [In the Mercy of Waves]* is made out of repetitive color transfer processes between sheets of paper, whose surfaces are left with embossment and faint color, looking like cast-off skins or remainders of some life form. In my series of video works, *Topology Between the Three* and *Gesture of Shadows*, an image of Mt. Aso transforms from landscapes to atmospheric movements; and a silhouette of my hand metamorphoses from a mountain to a butterfly, as though it is the surviving life of Mt. Aso.

This unfolding of the transferred life, image or form, as described, cannot be fixed as it shall remain liberated. These works appear to my eyes only in reflections of *my* experiences, thus, must differ from those of others. The life of my work, thereby, perpetually transfers (prolongs/survives/remains) through audiences' poetic translations of the work. For further elaboration, I examine 'distance' between artworks and audiences, which the philosopher, Georges Didi-Huberman, positions in the movement of the spectator²², and Jacques Rancière regards as a path

¹⁹ Trans. the author, Seigo Matsuoka, *Nihon to iu Yarikata - omokage to utsuroi no bunka [Japan as methods: Culture of reminiscent-shadow and transferring]*, (Tokyo: NHK publishing, 2006), 91.

²⁰ A. Shinfuji, "Katachi ha Utsuru [Form Transfer]", in *Iconomorphosis: Selected Graphics from the NMWA Collection*, eds. Atsushi Shinfuji and Naoko Sato (Tokyo: The National Museum of Western Art, Tokyo & The Western Art Foundation, 2009), 10.

²¹ Georges Didi-Huberman, "The Surviving Image: Aby Warburg and Tylorian Anthropology", in *Oxford Art Journal*, 25.1 (2002): 68.

²² G. Didi-Huberman, "Forward_Knowledge: Movement (The Man Who Spoke to Butterflies)" in *Aby Warburg and the image in motion*, by Philippe-Alain Michaud (N.Y: MIT Press, 2004), 16.

for new knowledge²³. Audiences of my installation artwork, *Mokudoku*, provide proximate accounts. In brief, one, who is a dancer, experiences ‘seeing’ the work bodily as well as visually, in literally moving between images in the installation context; another, a photographer, finds her gaze unfocused in drifting between what she has and has not yet intellectualised.

Insights into the idea of ‘transfer’—transference, translation and movement—in making, experiencing and reflecting on an artwork, correspond closely to Derrida’s recognition that this process is a place that is untranslatable, and his suggestion of a possible answer to his accompanying question: “What is the place for translation that is untranslatable?”. This leads me to demonstrate how my final solo exhibition for this PhD project intends to articulate the untranslatable as a poetic place.

In brief, the exhibition, an installation, *ここがどこなのか_ where it is here_ どうでもいいことさ_it does not matter_ どうやって来たのか_ how I have got here_ 忘れられるかな_ can I forget*, is framed by my built walls inside the existing architecture of the venue. Through this, I create in-between spaces (room or *ma*) where audiences navigate their way from one image to another grounded on multiple pieces of small works on the walls. The light coming through the windows as well as video projections from the back of the wall, allow images (nuanced shadows) to appear and disappear from/into darkness (fertile silence) behind the wall. These transfer processes in the embodiment of the untranslatable prompt the opening of a poetic place. This is captured in a film entitled *The Untranslatable, a Poetic Place*, through the gazes of the cinematographer and the filmmaker. This film reflects on *their* experiences of the work, yet something about this film evokes for me the way in which my grandmother’s enunciation opens a poetic scene and prolongs the life of Mt. Aso.

These poetic works of art are able to transfer this life of Mt. Aso, which I personally interpret as a sense or knowledge of ‘longing for love’. The final installation, indeed, intends to convey (*transfer*) this sense (knowledge), as implied in the title of the work, *ここがどこなのか_ where it is here_ どうでもいいことさ_it does not matter_ どうやって来たのか_ how I have got here_ 忘れられるかな_ can I forget*, after a line from the Japanese song, *Koi wa Momoiro* [*Love is Pink*], whose verse and music oscillate between atmospheric shifts and human emotions.

Artistically, I also absorb this sense (knowledge) of ‘longing for love’ from other recognised and inspiring works: the Berlin Jewish Museum, Judenplatz Holocaust Memorial in Vienna, Casa Luis Barragán in Mexico and the statue of *Mirokubotsu Hankashiyui* in *Chugu-ji* temple in Nara, Japan. Regardless of locational and contextual differences, the way ‘shadow light’ passes through these places provokes the sense of ‘longing for love’. The last destination is particularly unforgettable. As suggested by the art critique, Shinichiro Kamei, the statue literally embodies the transformation of life (future Buddha) who conceals its pain (it throws its body away to save us and sooth our pain and grief in this world) behind its balmy expression²⁴ (its ‘archaic smile’ propagated from ancient Greece through the Silk Road to Nara). Its gesture, clad with ‘shadow light’ and wind passing through the temple from/to the adjacent field, calmly embodies the nuance of love, which prompts our prayers.

²³ Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2009), 11.

²⁴ Trans. the author, Shinichiro Kamei, *Yamato-ji Junrei* [*A Pilgrimage to Yamato Temples*] (Tokyo: Shincho publishing, 1953), 84-85.

As regards ‘love and longing’, another informative image is depicted by the poet, Rainer Maria Rilke, which draws our attention again to subtlety and nuance: all beauty in nature that patiently transforms (grows, unites, increases) is love and longing in the form of quiet endurance; longing is for a kind of motherhood that contributes to the birth of life²⁵. Fascinatingly, as proposed by the philosopher, Louise Burchill²⁶, this motherhood (in other words, groundless ground) is also articulative of the ancient Greek concept of *chora*, which Derrida considers untranslatable. These linkages allow me to tie life and love—and characterise a place for translation that is untranslatable—to motherhood as well as fertile silence. From this place, both life and love transfer and temporarily gain an art form. This also leads me to speculate that we will be provoked and remained alive, as we absorb life and love, embodied in such an art form, through experiencing and reflecting on it.

◦ *How do I, as an artist, experience the embodiment of the untranslatable?*

Chapter Five provides more intimate accounts of my own being and body, through asking how ‘I’, the subject of poetic translation, experience the embodiment of the untranslatable. This important but difficult question was raised at my PhD completion seminar, extending this project and thesis beyond my final installation artwork. Yet my discussions in this chapter shed light on *who* executes the research and the installation.

The final question locates ‘me’ in a vulnerable position as an object of investigation but also connects my body to other bodies that are important to this research. Both the statue of *Mirokubosatsu* and the body of my grandmother (whose dementia has progressed throughout my candidature) are in the vulnerable state of transferring from/into somewhere ‘external’ to this world. In reference to Matsuoka’s discussion²⁷, I further elaborate on the idea of ‘external’, expressed as *hoka*, in Japanese, which originally indicates spirit/god/unknown information that drifts and temporarily transfers into *hoka-bi* (an empty container) or *hokabi-bito* (someone who is socially marginal, such as a bard or an orphan). Importantly, this temporal embodiment is considered a birth of art. What is more, *hoka*, also meaning ‘foreign’, includes me in these objects (*hoka-bi*, *hokabi-bito*), since I, as a Japanese artist, always remain external/foreign, to some degree, to the globally dominant culture. Besides, I keep moving from one location to another like a seasonal bird.

For it to be a receptor, the architecture (body) of *hoka-bi* or *hokabi-bito* must contain *utsu* (hollow, emptiness) inside. This understanding is coincidentally expressed in a part of my name (Utako): Uta, written in Chinese character as 詩, comprised of ‘word(言)’ and ‘temple(寺)’, together meaning ‘poetry (詩)’. In fact, as claimed by the composer, David Shea²⁸, the architecture of a temple is designed to be filled with vibration/resonance caused by chanting. This conceptualisation

²⁵ Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet*, trans. M.D. Herter Norton, (New York: Norton, 1954), 38.

²⁶ L. Burchill, “In-Between “Spacing” and the “Chora” in Derrida: A Pre-originary Medium?”, in *Intermedialities: Philosophy, Arts, Politics*, eds. Henk Oosterling and Ewa Plonowska Ziarek, (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011), 47.

²⁷ Trans. the author, S. Matsuoka, “Ma= shu to kyaku no kouzou [Ma=the structure of the object and the subject]”, in *Ma - 20 years on*, (Tokyo: Tokyo University of Arts, 2000)

²⁸ David Shea, “Architecture and Sound,” (a lecture) in seminar series *Poetics of Body*, the Center for Ideas, the University of Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, September, 5, 2016

of a temple as a receptor of these material and atmospheric shifts, can be linked to the term *yongou* (影向), which literally means ‘shadow coming’, illustrating a temporal embodiment of drifting spirit/god into various kinds of body. This understanding of a temple as a poetic place reminds me of my final exhibition; in particular, the way the *external* is transferred through sheets of paper hung in such a way as to generate shading, rustling and shivering through interaction with the outside world, like a membrane inside a body.

Close observation of my being and body occurred during my undertaking of the artist-in-residence program in the Victorian Alps on the Bogong High Plains. *Bogong* means a brown moth in the local Aboriginal language, thus implying transformation and metamorphoses. Beyond my intention and control, the ‘I’, as a subject and an object in this chapter, is immersed into rich plays of light-shadow in mountains that exhausted me with constant descent and ascent. My journal writings describe in detail the ‘I’, as a place or container, emptied and filled with something external. I directly excerpt some writings, as I conceive them as a flesh of my embodied experience. (These writing articulate the ‘I’ as a female artist).

As rediscovered, it is ‘she’ whose life is transferred via my grandmother, grounded by motherhood. Through experiencing nature’s cycle both in and outside of her body, this female artist’s body is emptied to receive something untranslatable, or love, which makes her patiently form an artwork. Through her difficult yet poetic task, as described previously, the untranslatable continues to transfer from the place (artwork) into another body (audience) who may experience it as shifts between appearance and perception, form and expression, sound and texture, or ‘shadow light’.

CHAPTER ONE: Experience and Reflection of/as Translation

This chapter establishes the context, background and importance for my research project to aim at investigating the notion of the untranslatable, and creating an artwork that can embody the untranslatable. I begin by introducing key concepts, *ma*, *utsu*, *chora*, *rhythmos* and *hoka*, through discussing a room where my thesis writing and art-making have been based. I, then, reflect on my past experiences previous to this research, to identify the untranslatable in the struggles of translation, to which contemporary philosophers and translators also pay attention. This leads me to discuss the works by modern and contemporary philosophers, Walter Benjamin, Jacques Derrida and Antoine Berman, who equally challenge the traditional definition of ‘translation’ yet articulate it differently. To conclude the chapter, I articulate that my PhD project has been a work of ‘poetic translation’, which is not a method but ‘experience and reflection’, listing the three objects for my ‘poetic translation’ in this research project.

1.1 Being Foreign in the Translatable World

a.

I am writing this thesis in a room that I would like to call *ma*, meaning blank, gap or room in Japanese. This *ma* is called the study lounge, located at the Southbank campus of Melbourne University, in which I have spent a lot of time as a research candidate—reading books, taking notes, writing papers or grant applications, talking to other candidates, or shooting photographs and videos when I am alone.

The contemporary Japanese architect, Arata Isozaki, speculates that “the oldest form of the concept of *ma* is *utsu*”¹ which “signifies the void inside a certain substance”. It was believed that the sacred—gods, old spirits, unknown information and so forth—come temporarily into this *utsu*. It is, in some sense, a paradoxical space-time where the positive is engendered from the void. And in this regard, it is reminiscent of the ancient Greek Democritus’s cosmology²: the principle of movement (*rhythmos*) was attributed not to the atoms but to the void—in which the former emerged.³ And the Platonic notion of *chora*, which “rhythmically vibrates between Void and Being”⁴ owes to the notion of *rhythmos*.

I would like to think that the hundreds of days and nights of hard work taking place, for instance, in this *ma*, are in some sense sacred. In this case, the room, *ma*, might become like *utsu* or *chora*, where the positive engenders from the negative. I say this because I have learnt that other researchers are, in one way or another, also working out ways to turn the negative into the positive, or give a presence to an absence, through shedding light on or giving forms to these things:

¹ A. Isozaki, “On Utsu, the Void,” trans. Ken Tadashi Oshima, in *Arata Isozaki*, eds. Arata Isozaki and Ken Tadashi Oshima (London: Phaidon, 2008), 162.

² Plato’s notion of *chora* which vibrates between void and forms, owes to Democritus’s understanding of void. And this *chora* is considered to resemble *ma*. There are discussions on shared perspectives between the Greek ancient tradition and the Japanese ancient tradition. This point is elaborated by the Japanese architect and thinker who preceded Derrida at the *Anyone* conference, which this paper will touch on later.

³ Burchill, “In-Between “Spacing” and the “Chora” in Derrida: A Pre-originary Medium?,” 46.

⁴ A. Isozaki and A. Asada, “A Fragmentary Portrait of Anyone,” in *Anyone*, ed. Cynthia C. Davidson, (N.Y.: Rizzoli International Publishing, 1991), 65.

forgotten memories, unheard voices, undervalued expressions, imperfect bodies, undrawn maps, incomprehensible zones, or ‘the untranslatable’, which is the subject of my research.

For the last three and a half years, I have been asking the question, “How can an artwork embody the untranslatable?”

b.

As a way to start my discussion, let me elaborate a little further on another aspect of *ma*, as a concept and as this room that physically exists.

In the ancient time of Japan, this *ma* space-time was much briefer than it is considered to be now. According to the Japanese scholar, Seigo Matsuoka, this ‘brief *ma*’ was called *boka*. It is the “externality” which “casually and suddenly opens somewhere”⁵ in “a brief period of space-time”. Hence, *boka* can be understood to be “ephemeral virtuality”⁶. And I attempt to say that this *boka* opened last summer in this room where I write this thesis now.

A ray of light entered through the window, straight across the room, reaching the other side. The colour of pink on the wall was the deepest and strongest that I had ever seen. I was not intending this when I held my hand out, nor that the gesture would create the deeply translucent shades of gray in the pink. The colour and the image on the wall presented an extreme beauty, which even caused pain in my heart. Strangely, the shadow looked like it belonged to someone else. The strangeness and the weightlessness made me forget about everything, as though I was falling in love with someone, or possessed by something that I can never fully know, like spirits or gods. The sense of longing was so strong that all I could do was let my hand drift and try to touch something that was, perhaps, untranslatable. The shadows eventually began to fade as the sun set deeper. I prayed for the shadows to stay present, but I soon accepted that they would eventually have to vanish. The time was reaching *hakumei* 薄明,

literally meaning ‘pale light’, indicating space-time that is similar to dusk and dawn. According to the philosopher Kiyoshi Miki⁷, it belongs neither to day or night, and it is an ideal moment for one to contemplate one’s own aloneness. This particular instance shed light on my true aloneness that drifts ‘in-between’ places and languages, and is only to be witnessed afterwards, as a gesture of shadows [figure 1].

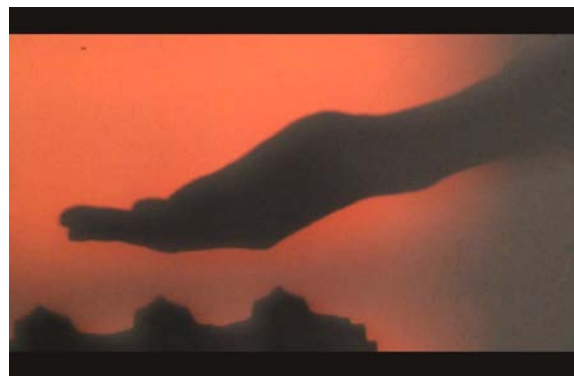


Fig. 1. Utako Shindo, *Gesture of Shadows*, (video still), 2016.
<http://www.utakoshindo.info/exhibition/gesture-of-shadows/>

⁵ Tran. the author, Matsuoka, “Ma= shu to kyaku no kouzou [Ma=the structure of the object and the subject],” in *Ma: Exhibition - 20 years on*, eds. Editorial Engineering Laboratory, Tokyo University of Arts and University Museum, Tokyo: Tokyo University of Arts, University Museum Cooperate, 2000.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Trans. the author, “Jinsei-ron Note [Notes for Theory of Life],” Kiyoshi Miki, Aozora Publishing, last modified February 24, 2014, accessed July 22, 2014, http://www.aozora.gr.jp/cards/000218/files/46845_29569.html. The modern Japanese philosopher, Kiyoshi Miki, studied Heideggerian philosophy in Germany and is known for his philosophy of the technique. He also writes books for the general public, one of which is this *Jinsei-ron Note*, originally published monthly in *Bungakukai* magazine from 1938 to 1941.

It is possible to say that from this opening of *boka* (brief period of *ma*), an artwork was born. According to Matsuoka, in the ancient time, the appearance of *boka* was captured and expressed in words, objects or human figures. And this was considered to be the “birth of art”.⁸

For instance, *boka* (brief period of *ma* space-time) is transferred in the famous *waka* (which is the classical Japanese verse)⁹ from the 10th century, sung by the poet and scholar, Sugawara no Michizane. Its latter phrases go, “*Momiji no nishiki Kami no Ma ni Ma ni*”¹⁰, meaning ‘a brocade of crimson leaves, here along with the gods’¹¹. The object, which waited for *hi* (spirits and gods) to enter, was called *boka-bi* (wooden container). If people did not have these means, they waited for *boka-bi-bito* (nomadic people such as bard, beggar and orphan) to come, as they were the signs of celebrating *hi* (spirits and gods) visiting their place.

I find these ancient connections of *utsu* and *boka* easier to associate with than the notion of *ma* that is highly formalised in the specific cultural context of Japan today. It is as though the greater distance between now and then leaves space open in which I can imagine these concepts in my own context, part of which is Australian. Hence, I am here less hesitant to express my understanding in a combination of English and Japanese words: “when the strong Australian summer light entered, the room functioned as *bokabi*, and I became *bokabi-bito* into which *hi* visited”.

c.

On reflection, this event showed me a condition that is necessary for the embodiment of the untranslatable. That is, to remain external, or foreign. I say so because, in the modern contemporary Japanese language, *boka*, which originally meant ‘outside/external’, written in Chinese characters as ‘外’ or ‘他’, or ‘else/others’, has also obtained a meaning of ‘foreign’, since the small volcanic islands were forced to reopen and confront the foreign nations at the time of modernisation.

And I express that I am foreign to you, the readers in Australia and other places. It is similar when I am in Japan; a part of the ‘I’ remains foreign to others. I spent most of my 20s in Melbourne, which had a profound impact on what I considered to be ‘I’. On reflection, it was not only because of the cultural and linguistic ‘foreignness’ of this young nation; but the experience of art that I was immersed in, through these very old lands and their nature, sometimes showed me a glimpse of somewhere ‘else’. I will discuss this further in the last Chapter.

Nevertheless, let me express that as an artist and now a researcher, who works in the globalised art and academic context, the English dominance (not as a local language but as a globalised language) has caused me difficulties. My ‘foreignness’ has been constantly pressured to become ‘translatable’ into the language. Not only from Japanese but also from my artworks. Artists are asked to translate their works into verbal and written languages (and if they are not English, then they should be translated into English), in order to be circulated and consumed by the globalised art and academic discourse (which may be referred to as ‘the market’). I observed this

⁸ Trans. the author, Matsuoka, “Ma= shu to kyaku no kousou [Ma=the structure of the object and the subject]”

⁹ A classical Japanese 31-syllable verse [short poem] written in a 5-7-5-7-7 meter [pattern].

¹⁰ A similar expression can be still found in Today in such a phrase as “*Nami no Ma ni Ma ni*”, meaning ‘drift at the mercy of waves’.

¹¹ Sourced from ‘Japanese-English Bilingual Corpus of Wikipedia’s Kyoto Articles’, whose content is translated by the National Institute of Information and Communications Technology (NICT) from Japanese sentences on Wikipedia.

over the last 10 years, as an artist and researcher, and also as someone who has worked as a translator and coordinator for international art projects and programs.

d.

Let me introduce one of these situations where I observed this difficulty of translation between the language of art and written and verbal languages. It was the time when I was working on an art project, entitled '*Immanent Landscape*', which I was planning as a 'transcultural' project. This idea was first born out of my Masters research, in which I had explored the idea of 'haptic aesthetic' and the Japanese spatial and temporal concept of '*ma*', both of which I employ to discuss an installation art practice that is visceral and experiential. The '*Immanent Landscape*' project proposed to generate space and time where this idea can be explored artistically beyond cultural borders. So, the project itself was in a sense expected to become a site (or place) for anyone to anticipate what 'immanent' could be. Therefore I undertook the project in Australia and Japan, so as to facilitate communication among participants and others who would be involved in the project, through activities including exchanging dialogues, both in public and private, and creating exhibitions together [figure 2, 3].

However, apart from art, the project did not have a common language for verbal and written communications. Thus I was constantly translating the ideas behind the titles, *Immanent Landscape*, in English, and *Naiẏai no Fubkei* (内在の風景) in Japanese [figure 4]. In this constant translation, I struggled as it felt impossible to translate the nuance and the complexity of the ideas expressed in the two titles. It was a painful feeling as this nuance and complexity had the potential to prompt an opening of a truly artistic place, where artists and audiences could explore the idea of *Immanent Landscape* - *Naiẏai no Fubkei* (内在の風景) itself. This impossibility of translation paradoxically highlighted 'what cannot be translated' as most meaningful for the project, which originally intended to serve art as a universal language and to create new expressions, new meanings in a transcultural (trans-lingual) manner.

Yet, over the course of the project, the difficulties kept increasing as I was caught up with the constant necessity of explaining the project to people through talking or writing in Japanese or English [figure 5]. I, as a curator and a participating artist, felt that I had failed to open and create such a place that could embody the idea of the project's title, as well as creating a truly artistic place. In fact, from the beginning to the end, the project was concept driven: 'landscape' and



Fig. 2. *Immanent Landscape*, (exhibition installation view), West Space, Melbourne, 2010.



Fig. 3. *Wherefore Art thou?*, (a public talk series), Japan foundation, Sydney, 2010.



Fig. 4. 内在の風景 *Immanent Landscape* logo, designed by Dion Tuckwell.

‘immanence’. And it is a contemporary convention to make an artwork or curate an exhibition. With this failure, what I learnt was that the defined contour of these concepts, became blurred, as soon as these words were to be transformed (translated) into another language: ‘landscape’ into ‘風景’, ‘immanence’ into ‘内在’.

That is to say, the incompleteness of a concept expressed in one language was revealed. This made me write in my note that “I have not had an entire grasp of these particular concepts of ‘landscape’ and ‘immanence’”. On reflection, I suggest that the problem lies in the general attitude of the art world today where that which is produced and exhibited, or opened as a place, all conforms to a ‘concept’, which has a limit, while an artwork on its own moves around more freely than the concept which defines and limits itself. What is more, a concept is often reduced to one language (English), hence one value system.



Fig. 5. *Cultivating a Field for artists and audiences*, (symposium), Youkobo Art Space, Tokyo, 2011.

e.

Here, I shall elaborate on how this situation in which the global art and academic world is dominated by English has been recently discussed by others.

The Italian philosopher, Giorgio Agamben talked about the English dominance, and about what it does and how it is not “innocent”, in a lecture given in English to his students at the European Graduate School in Switzerland in 2014. He started the lecture by stating that, “English is not my mother tongue, something relevant will certainly be lost”. And he continued,

...(t)oday general domination of English, in conferences, universities and other places of that kind, should not be considered so innocent... English is proper, let's to say, to a couple of nations.¹²

Agamben's speech, which was given in ‘plain’ English, made it visible that he had translated his thinking from Italian into English. By doing so, he made students realise that the act of translation is usually invisible therefore what is also hidden is how and for what it is executed.

Tatsuya Nishiyama, a Japanese scholar who also translates the texts of philosophers including Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Nancy, shares similar concerns about the invisibility of translational process in the globalised world. He elaborates on his concerns in one of his translator's notes, for the book entitled, *Honyaku ni tsuite* in Japanese, and *On Translation* in English, originally written in English by John Sallis, a North American Philosopher. Nishiyama claims in his translator's note,

It is an era of ‘global’ translatability, which appears to make the borders transparent yet actually hides the event of translation itself. Thus we are living in the era when the necessity is obvious for us to question the traditional definitions of ‘translation’ again.¹³

¹² “Giorgio Agamben. Resistance in Art. 2014”.

¹³ Trans. the author, Nishiyama, “Yakusha Kaisetsu: Honkyaku Kono Sakusou suru Mono [Translator's note: Translation, this entanglement,” 310.

As I quote his writing here by translating it from Japanese into English, there is no doubt that I live in “an era of ‘global’ translatability”. But, I should also point out that I became aware of something obscure regarding the borders, which distract the event of translation by revealing what disrupts.

f.

Let me come back to describe my observation further. Since completing my curated project, *Immanent Landscape -Naizai no Fuhkei* (内在の風景), I continued to feel unsettled about my art practice.

It had always been situated in-between Japan and Australia, forming a milieu of its own within the interrelationship among the language of art, and the Japanese and English languages. Hence, under the pressure of being translatable to one or another, the unsettled feeling remained and indeed increased (gathered momentum). But the moment when I encountered a particular visual phenomenon, it presented me with a hint, a perspective on ‘what cannot be translated’ as what is most important and truthful for the work of art.

The phenomenon occurred during my visit to my grandmother in the hospital where she stayed during the summer of 2012. She was 99 years old then and starting to lose her ability to remember and memorise things correctly, which was due to her being on the threshold of dementia. It was in the early afternoon of a clear sunny day. We were looking out the window from the 8th floor of the hospital. Underneath, the vast Western Tokyo landscape was expanding towards the horizon demarcated by mountains and clouds [figure 6]. We were at the end of the corridor, where there was no one around. It was almost two pm on this summer day, so the sun was almost above us, shining down on the world strongly. Everything looked so bright and clear. Though the air temperature inside the hospital was kept nice and comfortable, I could feel the sun’s heat through the window. There was almost complete silence, except for the sound of a train passing far below on the ground, slowly reaching the station nearby. “... We can see Mt. Aso over there... so beautiful, isn’t it...”, she enunciated, originally in Japanese, after a time of silence.

Her translation of the view was factually wrong, as Mt. Aso is located not in Tokyo but in southern Japan. Yet, her expression was so tranquil and beautiful, and sounded so artistic and poetic that it felt more articulate than anything else. It felt as if her enunciation embodied what cannot be translated. It changed both how I saw the view and how I understood the place where I was. This transformation felt overwhelming but so truthful that it convinced me to pay attention to what is untranslatable, not as a struggle but as a prompt for an artistic embodiment of the untranslatable.



Fig. 6. The window view. Tokyo, August, 2012. Photo: the author.

I argue that the difficulty of translation has made me aware of something that remains untranslatable in art, something that possesses truthfulness and touches me lovingly. While I have been under pressure to translate everything into English, what matters to me is to notice the untranslatable, which then requires me to open a border for this disruptive stranger to pass

through. This could be seen as space of possibility, not in a sense translatable but enabling the acceptance of the untranslatable. So, there is an opportunity in the very act of translation that can turn its difficulty into possibility. Or it may be said that it can extract something positive from the English dominance and the invisibility of translation. In my context, I attempt to do so by making artworks that can embody the untranslatable.

I express that my research tries to stay optimistic about the status of being immersed in a curious yet relentless difficulty through the act of translation. It is because I can be both alarmed by and attuned to the untranslatable that I am called to work through the many struggles of art. This understanding resonates with how the notion of *boka* suggests its unique capacity of being ‘foreign’, which paradoxically gives birth to art, allowing one to experience and reflect on the world in a more rich and poetic way. Therefore, I intend my PhD research, which investigates the notion of ‘the untranslatable’, to provide deeper understandings of a relationship between the artist, the artwork and the audience, and beyond.

1.2 Translation and the Untranslatable

In order to start investigating the notions of ‘the untranslatable’, I ask a simple question, “what is really happening in the act of translation?”, and to be simpler, “what is it to translate?” This is where Nishiyama’s claim on the necessity to “question the traditional definitions of ‘translation’”¹⁴ becomes relevant. It relates to Walter Benjamin, Jacques Derrida and Antoine Berman, as these modern and post-modern philosophers and theorists have also questioned the traditional definition of translation. And it is these philosophers who have actually informed the basic understandings of ‘translation’ and the ‘untranslatable’ that have provided the ground for my PhD research project.

a.

I first encountered the notion of the ‘untranslatable’ expressed by Derrida in his dialogue with other participating thinkers and architects at the International Architecture Conference, called *Anyone*, which was held in 1991. In the conference, other participants were struggling when trying to translate the Greek term *chora* and the Japanese concept of *ma* into English as what similarly indicates a particular place. However, Derrida drew their attention to their very act of translation. He said,

I think this is what architecture is about: translating while not translating, resisting translation and translating nevertheless. Why is that? What is the place, and I come back to the question of *ma* and *chora* and so on, what is the place for translation? The place itself is absolutely untranslatable. The place for translation is ‘untranslatable’.¹⁵

¹⁴ Trans. the author, Nishiyama, “Yakusha Kaisetsu: Honyaku Kono Sakusou suru Mono [Translator’s note: Translation, this entanglement],” 310.

¹⁵ “Discussion A-1,” 90.

I now understand his statement as follows: opening “the place” by naming it untranslatable is the very struggle of translation that precisely occurs in “the place”. And in so far as “the place for translation is untranslatable”, it should always remain a struggle.

His observation also reminds me of the difficulty that I had experienced in translating ‘Immanent Landscape’ in English and ‘*Naiẓai no Fubkei* (内在の風景)’ in Japanese. It is perhaps related to the fact that the idea of exhibition was actually born out of my Master’s research that investigated the notions of ‘*ma*’ and ‘haptic aesthetic’, both of which I understood as highly experiential rather than merely visual.

Derrida’s discussion of the ‘untranslatable’ can be traced back to an earlier essay entitled *Passe-Partout*, an introductory text for his book *La Vérité En Peinture (The Truth in Painting)* published in 1978. The title of the book, *The Truth in Painting*, is derived from Paul Cézanne’s letter to Emile Bernard, in which there is a line that says, “I owe you the truth in painting and I will tell it to you”. Derrida, who finds this line a “strange utterance”¹⁶, considers “the truth in painting” as Cézanne’s sign and “trait”, as in “a characteristic mark”¹⁷. This strange utterance of truth also reminds me of how I felt about my grandmother’s enunciation which expresses what is significant to her. Hence, it fascinates me when Derrida states he “ventured this book... for the interest - or the grace - of these remainders”. This “remains-the untranslatable”¹⁸. He further explains,

But untranslatable, it remains in its economic performance, in the ellipsis of its trait, the word by word, the word for word, or the trait for trait in which it contracts.¹⁹

I shall point out that the above articulations of the ‘untranslatable’, for which ‘translation’ plays an important part, are derived from Walter Benjamin’s classic essay, *The Translator’s Task*, published in 1923²⁰. In his essay, Benjamin claims, “translation must in large measure turn its attention away from trying to communicate something, away from meaning”²¹. It is necessary for translation “to follow its own path...in the freedom of linguistic development”²². This “freedom” also requires our attention as it serves “pure language”²³, which is central to Benjamin’s translation theory. He defines “pure language” as what “no longer signifies or expresses anything but rather, as the expressionless and creative word that is the intended object of every language”²⁴. (I will further elaborate on this key to his theory in the next chapter.) He then gives us a visual metaphor for how this “expressionless and creative word”²⁵ can be attained through a literal translation, a word-to-word translation. At this point, it becomes clear that Derrida’s articulation of how the

¹⁶ J. Derrida, “Passe-partout,” in *The truth in painting*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 2.

¹⁷ I am referring to the translator’s footnote for the expression of ‘trait’. Koji Abe trans. *Kaiga no Shinri* [The truth in Painting], (Tokyo: Hosei University Press, 1998), 6.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

²⁰ Derrida interpreted Benjamin’s theory of translation, in relation to his concept of ‘deconstruction’, in his lecture, *Des tours de Babel* [The Tower of Babel], given at Tokyo Nichi-Futsu Kaikan (Institut français du Japon - Tokyo) in 1983. This originated his essay ‘Des Tours de Babel’, published with English translation, in *Difference in Translation* (ed. Joseph E. Graham) in 1985.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 161.

²² “The Translator’s Task, Walter Benjamin,” 163.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

untranslatable remains in a particular performance follows Benjamin's understanding of pure language that requires a literal translation. He further presents this image,

Just as fragments of a vessel, in order to be fitted together, must correspond to each other in the tiniest details but need not resemble each other, so translation, instead of making itself remember the meaning of the original, must lovingly, and in detail, fashion in its own language a counterpart to the original's mode of intention, in order to make both of them recognizable as fragments of a vessel, as fragments of a greater language.²⁶

This image of creatively joining "fragments of a vessel" as in "fragments of a greater language" can be linked to Derrida's discussion during the *Anyone* conference, where he thinks of "architectural buildings". These buildings are considered to be "places of translations, for translations which are not translatable"²⁷. In this manner of joining or building, translators or architects are positioned to anticipate a gap in-between each fragment through the very act of translating a word or designing an architecture, as their actions give a presence to a gap as a joint that is made visible.

When Benjamin, in the beginning of his essay, does question "the translatability of linguistic construction", he asks, "mustn't they actually be untranslatable to a certain degree, if a rigorous concept of translation is applied?"²⁸ If we are to consider 'joining' or 'building' as a form or act of translation in the art context, I would then ask, can art-making be also considered as rigorous translation? (Cannot art embody the untranslatable?)

I acknowledge that there are, indeed, criticisms towards these philosophers that their interpretations ignore the practicality of translation²⁹. And also, when I translate, I have, in practice, usually worked at making sense to everyone. However, my experience also suggests that to make sense for everyone in one natural language is impossible in the strict sense, in both reality and theory. Here, I shall pay attention to why Benjamin and Derrida have redefined 'what it is to translate'.

It is understood that Benjamin wrote the essay, *The Translator's Task*, as an expression against the dominance of the German language, which went hand in hand with the Germanization that was occurring in Europe during his time³⁰. Derrida, at the *Anyone* conference, was also constantly calling attention to the dominance of the English language in the conference, a dominance in virtue of which he "remain[ed] foreign"³¹. Hence he draws attention to the paradox of the name of the conference, *Anyone*, as "Anyone is not just anyone"³². In this context, we can see that there is a strong need to shed light on a risk that translators take to serve the homogenising force of a particular language.

As I have stated earlier in this chapter, the quests of these philosophers are still very much relevant and significant to the current world. While there are criticisms among translators of these

²⁶ Ibid., 161.

²⁷ "Discussion A-1", 90.

²⁸ Ibid., 152.

²⁹ Trans. the author, Nishiyama, "Yakusha Kaisetsu: Honyaku Kono Sakusou suru Mono [Translator's note: Translation, this entanglement]", 294-295.

³⁰ Trans. the author, Mitsugi, "Walter Benjamin's Theory of Translation," 181.

³¹ "Discussion A-1", 40.

³² Ibid., 41.

philosophers, there are, indeed, supportive voices from other translators who critique and also practice translation. Among these voices, the French translator and theorist on translation, Antoine Berman, is the most inspiring voice for my research.

b.

In his book, *L'âge de la traduction. "La tâche du traducteur" de Walter Benjamin, un commentaire*, he interprets and develops Benjamin's theory on translation. The Japanese translator of this book (which is only translated into Japanese so far), Masaki Miki, describes in his interpretive article that Berman's development of Benjamin's theory was done through "intended misinterpretation".

Berman's argument makes us aware of what can happen to the subject (the translator) in the process of translation. Kishi indicates another visual metaphor with which Berman attempts to conceive "the intention towards the pure language" as "metamorphoses" of the language. It is said that translation "transfers the language to the other through a succession of metamorphoses". This 'succession of metamorphoses' appealed to me as similar to what Derrida discusses on 'transfers' and 'movements' that take place in/as *ma* or *chora*.

Berman also puts the Platonic tradition of translation into question and focuses on the notion of 'reflection', which Benjamin discusses in *On the language of man*. Indeed, the idea of 'reflection' inspires Berman to propose 'traductology'. According to Kishi, 'traductology' conceives 'translation' to be not only methodological but hermeneutic³³. This perspective is unique as it sheds light not only on the original work, but on the translator, who has to 'experience' and 'reflect' on him/herself in the process of translation. And this is why Berman employs 'experience and reflection' as a preferred definition for 'translation', to 'theory and practice'. He claims that "translation is about 'experience', being opened..."³⁴ What actually happens in translation, in this opening, is well summarised in Kishi's article.

Translation should 'métamorphose (Verwandlung)' the original, which then becomes different and new work - 'what is poetic' (this 'poetic' means not limited to poetry but art and what a human produces). In other words, by translation, something immanent in the original language emerges. Translation reveals something that is hiding inside of the original.³⁵

This 'something immanent' or 'hiding' shall be considered to be what Benjamin calls 'pure language', which is recognised as 'untranslatable' by Benjamin and Derrida. But, in the case of Berman, it is not considered to be something transcendental, as it is in the struggle of translation according to Benjamin. For Berman, the untranslatable is immanent but about to emerge itself, not as it is but as what it metamorphoses into, a poetic work. (I will properly discuss the idea of poetry and the poetic in the next chapter).

c.

³³ Trans. the author, Kishi, "Antoine Berman 'Honyaku no Jidai: Benjamin 'Honyakusha no Shimei' Chukai' wo Yomu ['Reading Antoine Berman's *L'âge de la traduction: "La tâche du traducteur" de Walter Benjamin, un commentaire*]," 42.

³⁴ Ibid., 34.

³⁵ Ibid.

The above discussions on translation, as it is understood by Benjamin, Derrida and Berman, have guided the language I use to describe my research project. Instead of calling my research method ‘translation’, I describe my PhD project as a work of ‘poetic translation’, which is not a method but ‘an experience and reflection’ in which the object transforms and the subject metamorphoses.

Therefore, the following Chapters Two, Three and Four will focus on my poetic translation of the following three elements. The first and the third elements were touched on in this chapter as what prompted and informed this research since its beginning. The importance of the second element, which I will describe further in Chapter Three, increased as the research proceeded. Over the course of my candidature, I have repeatedly listened to, carried and unfolded these things in order to relate to something in/about them that is untranslatable.

- 1) My grandmother’s poetic enunciation about Mt. Aso, as she looked out the window at the view of western Tokyo from the hospital where she temporarily stayed during the summer of 2012. Observation of emotional truth³⁶ in her poetic enunciation, “There, Mt. Aso. So beautiful, isn’t it?”
- 2) The ‘pure’ and ‘abstract’ acrylic cube (as a remnant) found in the shop for display materials near the nursing home where my grandmother stayed in 2013 and 2014. A simple, familiar material, which captures a flash of light as shadow and reflection.
- 3) The transcript of Jacques Derrida’s remarks that he made at the architecture conference, *Anyone* in 1991, in response to the Japanese presenters’ (the architect, Arata Isozaki and the thinker, Akira Asada’s) discussions on *ma* and *chora*³⁷. “What is the place, and I come back to the question of *ma* and *chora* and so on, what is the place for translation? The place itself is absolutely untranslatable. The place for translation is untranslatable. And if we define *ma* as a place for translation, it’s a place for translation, not only translation in the semantic, linguistic sense, but translation as transfer from, for movements, transference of objects from others, and so forth. *Ma* as the place for translation is untranslatable. *Chora* as a place for translation is untranslatable.”³⁸

While I trace my experience of and reflection on these elements in Chapters Two, Three and Four, I will discuss the key notions of the untranslatable: pure language, silence, the poetic, nuanced shadow, and transference. This will lead to the final chapter, in which I elaborate on the notion and act of ‘embodiment’ in my research context.

³⁶ The Japanese philosopher, Kiyoshi Miki, discusses that “‘emotion’ is actually objective, and ‘intelligence’ is subjective” in his book *Jinsei-ron Note (Notes for Theory of Life)*.

³⁷ In his co-presentation, Asada argues that “The *chora* is said to function like a sieve, vibrated by the various elements within it and vibrating them in turn. (“Does the *chora*, which rhythmically vibrates between Void and Being, not share properties with what is called *Ma* in Japan?” (Isozaki and Asada, “A Fragmentary Portrait of Anyone,” 65.)

³⁸ “Discussion A-1,” 90.

CHAPTER TWO: The Untranslatable; Fertile Silence and the Poetic

This chapter is concerned with theoretical and philosophical notions of the untranslatable. I begin by discussing the first object (my grandmother's poetic enunciation) of my poetic translation in relation to Walter Benjamin's short text entitled 'The Translator's Task'. I, then, continue discussing the notions of the untranslatable as a particular place, as recognised in Benjamin's theory of translation (pure language) and Holderlin's philosophy of art (pure word, caesura). I, then, make a link between German Romantic Thought and Japanese Thought, namely Zen articulation, guided by Izutsumi Toshihiko's philosophy of Zen and his idea of *ba*/field, understood as a particular place where the object and the subject are interchangeable or transferrable. This leads me to reflect on my grandmother's poetic enunciation of Mt. Aso in relation to Luce Irigaray's study on dementia patients' sentence structure, and her discussion of the 'interval' in psychoanalytical practice. Lastly I examine the idea of the 'poetic', in discussing the last stage of Zen experience: articulation of non-articulation, in which language is used poetically, in taking both verbal and visual forms of expression, including Zen dialogue, poetry, philosophy and visual languages such as painting. These examinations, which connect Western thought and the Eastern thought, also identify the limit of the former, which can be challenged and liberated by the latter. To conclude this chapter, I reflect on my video work, *Topology Between the Three*, and articulate how notions of the untranslatable can help the language of art to articulate the untranslatable (the ineffable) poetically.

2.1 The Untranslatable: Unforgettable, Pure, Silent, Poetic

a.

In the early 1920s, my grandmother visited for the first time the volcanic Mt. Aso in Kyushu, the southern island of Japan. In 2012, when I visited her in hospital in western Tokyo, she was on the threshold of entering into her dementia. While she was beginning to forget many things, the unforgettable—what truly matters to her—seemed to remain with her. It was also in the early 1920s that Benjamin wrote 'The Translator's Task' as an introductory text for his own translation of Charles Baudelaire's poem "Oarisian Landscapes" from *The Flowers of Evil*. This text, which is now referred to as a classic, has provided the foundation for philosophical and theoretical discussions on/around the notions of translation, developed by those who have informed my research, including Jacques Derrida, Antoine Berman, Jacques Rancière, John Sallis, Michio Mitsugi, Masaki Kishi and Tatsuya Nishiyama.

In the introductory section of *The Translator's Task*, the idea of the unforgettable is elaborated as a way for Benjamin to acrobatically turn over the traditional definition of translation. He writes,

... we could still speak of an unforgettable life or moment, even if all human beings had forgotten it. If the essence of such lives or moments required that they not be forgotten, this predicate would not be false, it would merely be a demand to which human beings had

failed to respond, and at the same time, no doubt, a reference to a place where this demand would find a response, that is, a reference to a thought in the mind of God.¹

Though his God would differ from the gods and spirits of ancient Japan, the kind of ‘place’ discussed here could be comparable to the Japanese term *boka* (a brief *ma* space-time) or *utsu*, where the ghosts and spirits transfer. I imagine that in my grandmother’s thought there was a place opening temporarily, where she responded to ‘an unforgettable life or moment’ that she translated (enunciated) poetically. For Benjamin, the above elaboration supports his argument that “(T)he translatability of linguistic constructions would accordingly have to be taken into consideration even if they were untranslatable by human beings”. He suggests, “mustn’t they actually be untranslatable to a certain degree, if a rigorous concept of translation is applied?”² And from this stand point, it is proposed that the task of the translator is “(T)o set free in his own language the pure language spellbound in the foreign language”³.

This idea of ‘pure language’ is central to his theory of translation. As described in the previous chapter, it “no longer signifies or expresses anything but rather, [is] the expressionless and creative word that is the intended object of every language...”⁴, and it can be attained through a literal translation, a word-to-word translation. This image leads me to reflect on the first work that I produced for this PhD project, entitled *Understanding of misunderstanding*.

b.

The work, *Understanding of misunderstanding*, is my first attempt to translate something untranslatable about my grandmother’s poetic enunciation. It is an installation artwork, exhibited at an exhibition space inside a cafe called *Slope*, in Tokyo, 2013. The work consists of two kinds of images: one kind, those that were made or collected in different locations as I sensed some strong presence around them, and the other, those that show actual places that my grandmother has associations to [figure, 1, 2]. I laid them out in such a way that these two kinds of images resonated with each other, but did not correspond exactly, nor were they identical. So, an image was placed next to another according to the lines, colors or shapes which related in both obvious and obscure ways. Hence it was, in a sense, done in a similar manner to a literal translation, which Benjamin and Derrida would describe as: a word to word, a word for word, or a trait for trait⁵.



Fig. 1-2. Utako Shindo, *Understanding of misunderstanding*. (detail), Slope, Tokyo, 2013.

¹ “The Translator’s Task, Walter Benjamin”, 152.

² Ibid., 153.

³ Ibid., 163.

⁴ Ibid., 162-163.

⁵ J. Derrida, *The truth in painting*, 2.

The connection between images, which, at the same time, shows the disconnection, also made the trial and error visible. This trial and error can be found in my drawings and photographs; in other words, my tracing and interpreting places on those pieces of paper. And there are all different things, as well as images. On reflection, I was perhaps trying to construct a place from these differences, as I anticipated another ‘understanding of misunderstanding’ for someone who sees the work.

(I will continue discussing other aspects of this work later in this chapter.)

c.

Let us now turn back to discussing the idea of ‘pure language’: about how it is understood to stem from two streams of thought: Jewish-Christian theological thought, and the German Romantic mode of thought.

About the former, Jacques Derrida elaborates in great detail in his interpretive text of Benjamin’s *The Translator’s Task*, entitled *Des Tours de Babel*. In response to how Benjamin maintains that the ideal of all translations is “(T)he interlinear version of the Holy Scriptures”⁶, Derrida recognises “religious code” as “essential”. This point is further articulated by the claim that “(T)he sacred text marks the limit”, which is “the pure event if inaccessible model, of pure transferability”⁷. This understanding leads him to argue that the limit which the sacred text marks is “the ideal starting from which one could think, evaluate, measure the essential”. I suggest that this “pure event” or “pure transferability” indicates the existence of ‘pure language’, discussed in Benjamin’s text. This rather religious stream of thought, can be connected to another stream in which this series of acts (“think, evaluate, measure the essential”) is characterised as “poetic, translation”⁸.

The latter stream articulates that the term ‘pure language’ originated in the notion of ‘Zäsur (Cäsur)’, meaning “the pure word, the counter rhythmical interruption”. It comes from the idea of the 17th century German poet and translator, Friedrich Hölderlin’s philosophy of art, which is elaborated in his translator’s note for Sophocles’ tragedy, *Oedipus & Antigone*, (for which he translated Greek into German):

... in the rhythmical succession of scenes in which the transport is made manifest, it becomes necessary to have what in prosody is known as a caesura; the pure word, the counter-rhythmical interruption, is needed, so as to confront the pull of the succession of scenes at its height and in such a fashion that instead of facets of a manifestation there comes manifestation itself.⁹

With regards to his idea of the pure word, expressed above, the contemporary Japanese translator and scholar, Michio Mitsuki, articulates that, “a language with no meaning and no content can be ‘creative word’”¹⁰, indicating the link between Hölderlin’s idea of ‘pure word’ and Benjamin’s idea

⁶ J. Derrida, “De tours de babel - The Tower of Babel”, in *Difference in Translation*, ed. Joseph F. Graham, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985), 201.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., 202.

⁹ Hölderlin’s *Sophocles – Oedipus & Antigone*, 63.

¹⁰ Trans. the author, Mitsugi, “Walter Benjamin’s Theory of translation”, 189.

of 'pure language'. The link is also suggested by Mitsugi's claim that "'pure language' makes all the languages anticipate the existence of 'greater language'". In addition, I discuss that Cäsar (the pure word), which is both a temporal and spatial term as it indicates silence (gap) between sounds (words) in a poem, resonates with Benjamin's observation of 'pure language', which he considers to be true and greater: "...there is nevertheless a language of truth, in which the ultimate secrets towards which all thinking strives are stored up, at peace and even silent..."¹¹

In this way, these two streams of thought are related by the idea of the 'poetic', 'creative' and 'poetry'. This connection between the philosophy of translation and art (poetry) is important for me, as an artist researcher.

d.

Michio Mitsugi's discussion¹² on the idea of 'Zäsur (Cäsar)', which I introduced in the previous section, is originally expressed in Japanese, in his article *Walter Benjamin's Theory of translation*. His Japanese interpretation has shown me another possible connection that I can make between the German Romantic mode of thought and Japanese thought, namely Zen articulation, as ideas of silence and the poetic are equally essential to both.

When Mitsugi paraphrases Hölderlin's term Cäsar, he calls it "*ma* positioned after a unit of rhyme"¹³. I understand that this expression is based on the common knowledge that *ma* "refers to the blank part, such as the distance between two points or the pause between two sounds"¹⁴. The following remark also suggests the shared significance of *ma* and Cäsar as that which grounds everyday living and its language. Mitsugi writes,

The language we use in the everyday, is based on such a base, which is realised as neither sound or meaning, in other words, a fertile silence that connotes various sounds or meanings. However, we only notice it when we understand that Cäsar has such a function that Hölderlin points out.¹⁵

As pointed out in the above remark, these characteristics of Cäsar and *ma*—silently generative and creative ; poetic and pertaining to everyday language—entirely resonate with the idea of silence that is considered to be "pregnant with words". This idea is discussed by the Japanese scholar, Izutsu Toshihiko¹⁶, in his philosophical investigation of Zen¹⁷ experience.

According to Izutsu, Zen experience is primarily "an experience of the articulation of both human awareness and metaphysical reality"¹⁸, and this articulation progresses in three stages:

¹¹ "The Translator's Task, Walter Benjamin", 159.

¹² Mitsugi discusses Benjamin's text in his book, *Shisou to shitenno Honyaku (Translated as a Theory - from Goethe, Benjamin and Bloch)*, as well as in his article 'Walter Benjamin's Theory of Translation'.

¹³ Trans. the author, Mitsugi, "Walter Benjamin's Theory of translation", 189.

¹⁴ Isozaki and Asada, "A Fragmentary Portrait of Anyone," 61.

¹⁵ Trans. the author, Mitsugi, "Walter Benjamin's Theory of translation", 189

¹⁶ Izutsu's scholarly investigation, which traverses Western, Islamic, Chinese, Indian and Japanese traditions, is extraordinary. He is, indeed, the addressee of Derrida's *Letter to a Japanese Friend*. The letter begins by saying, "Dear Professor Izutsu, At our last meeting I promised you some schematic and preliminary reflections on the word "deconstruction". What we discussed were prolegomena to a possible translation of this word into Japanese, one which would at least try to avoid, if possible, a negative determination of its significations or connotations." (J. Derrida, "Letter to a Japanese Friend," in *Derrida and Différance*, eds. David Wood and Robert Bernasconi, [Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1985] 1.)

¹⁷ As stated in the previous chapter, I point out that *ma* is, indeed, a key concept of Zen tradition.

¹⁸ Trans. the author, Izutsu, "Zen ni okeru Gengoteki Imi no Mondai [The problem of meaning in Zen language]," 360.

“(1) articulation ➤ (2) non-articulation ➤ (3) articulation”¹⁹.

Zen silence signifies the non-articulated stage of Zen articulation, and “the metaphysical depth of the Nothing”²⁰. Yet, it is pointed out that the transition from (1: articulation) to (2: non-articulation) does not mean “that one goes to vague another world, transcends the horizon far away”, but stands for “the emergence of *ba/field*”²¹. This idea of *ba/field* is unique to Izutsu, who expresses that “there emerge languages”²² from “the depth of *ba/field*”, which is thereby pregnant with words. This process from the non-articulated stage (2) to the articulated stage (3), also articulates that Zen uses language “poetically”.

In this way, the link between Zen thought and German Romantic thought can be made through their key ideas of silence and the poetic.

2.2 The untranslatable_ a Place, Ba/field, Interval

a.

Before proceeding to examine these links and connections in order to define the untranslatable in my research context, it is important to point out that Izutsu’s philosophical investigation into Zen was born out of his “effort to create a new philosophy in the world-wide context”²³.

Izutsu, born in Tokyo in 1914 (contemporaneously with my grandmother), is recognised as “the best Japanese contemporary philosopher, an international authority on Islamic thought and an exceptional philologist conversant in more than thirty languages”²⁴. This recognition suggests that he dealt with the problem of translating and bringing eastern thought into the globalised academic context. His effort to generate new philosophies is also indicated when he discusses the “worldwide context” as based on such a Eastern philosophical ‘field’ that is consisted “if we make our consciousness internalise various traditions of Eastern thought ...”²⁵.

This ‘transition of eastern thought’ aligns with Izutsu’s own life as an academic and a person. He reflects this in the Afterword of his book, *Ishiki to Honshitsu: The consciousness and reality of existence*. In his youth, he was “fascinated by Western literature and philosophy” like many other modern Japanese scholars, yet he could not forget the seductive ‘east’²⁶. This made him “oscillate between the west and the east” from the 50s through to the 80s, until he came to realise that “his easts’ inside of him” and “does not have a clear shape”. His extensive knowledge makes him modestly express that “(I)t is too easy to say ‘Eastern philosophy’, yet it is so vast and does not have even a rough shape like how one can manage to demarcate Western philosophy.” In this regard, he continues to write,

¹⁹ Izutsu, *Toward a Philosophy of Zen Buddhism*, 125.

²⁰ Ibid., 131.

²¹ Trans. the author, Izutsu, “Zen ni okeru Gengoteki Imi no Mondai [The problem of meaning in Zen language],” 370.

²² Izutsu, *Toward a Philosophy of Zen Buddhism*, xi.

²³ Trans. the author, T. Izutsu, “Kouki [The Afterword]” in *Ishiki to Honshitsu: The consciousness and reality of existence*, (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1991), 411.

²⁴ Shigemi Inaga, “Philosophy, Ethics and Aesthetics in the Far-Eastern Cultural Sphere/ Receptions of the Western Ideas and Reactions to the Western Cultural Hegemony,” in *Questioning Oriental Aesthetics and Thinking: Conflicting Visions of “Asia” under the Colonial Empires* 38 (2011), 43

²⁵ Trans. the author, Izutsu, “Kouki [The Afterword]”, 412.

I needed to strategically and artificially unite multiple philosophical streams in the east so that it can be the creative starting point for philosophical thinking... Then once I can extract the fundamental pattern of Eastern philosophy, I take it on inside of me, actively and independently. Based on this I built 'my' perspective in an Eastern philosophical way... This step does not mean mere academic research which would investigate various philosophical traditions in the East through text. It is, of course, important, but I think that it is time for us to go one step forward: to make an effort to create a new philosophy in the world-wide context...²⁶

Since my research is also based on my art practice, as well as my academic investigation by crossing various traditions, it is highly inspiring how Izutsu transfers 'his' east through his lived experience and practice (he learnt to practice Zen dialogue through his father, in his childhood), to form a new philosophy in the global context. It is also informative how he articulates the way Western philosophy comes into this process, as follows:

...Some may feel suspicious of this book, which says 'Eastern philosophy' but uses concepts that are characteristic of Western philosophy and also interrupted by Western philosophical problems. However, this is the manner in which Eastern philosophy needs to appear. The contemporary world is, whether you like or not, growing towards a cosmopolitan society, whose culture is governed by the Western cultural paradigm based on science and technology. It is nonsense and almost impossible to discuss the East in isolation from the West. As long as one intends to think things from a perspective which is open to the world, to the contemporary world of human beings, Western philosophy cannot help but intervene in 'Eastern' philosophy.²⁷

His above claim, originally expressed in Japanese, has attracted negative criticism among the non-Western readers, who question whether he is "a prisoner of the Western logic of philosophy"²⁸. This question is, indeed, what I always ask myself when I notice myself serving the need to be translatable in a globalised academic discourse. However, I discuss that his philosophical effort is not only aimed at defining and explaining the East to Western readers but also at creating a new philosophy. In fact, I observe two ways of intervening in his philosophical investigation: Eastern philosophy intervening in Western philosophy, and Western philosophy intervening in Eastern philosophy.

²⁶ Trans. the author, Izutsu, "Kouki [The Afterword]," 411.

²⁷ Though this is a rather long footnote, I include the following section as this kind of voice informs non-Japanese readers about contemporary Japanese knowledge.

...What's more, especially for Japanese, who have dashed for the westernization single-mindedly since the Meiji regime, our consciousness - at least its surface- is so westernized that it is almost impossible to move backwards. We are so accustomed to think things in a western way without even being aware of doing so... Yet on the other hand, the Japanese put the world into order in the Japanese language, according to the language's unique way of articulation and meaning. Hence, it is also impossible for the Japanese, who recognise the world as his/her 'reality' which is structured by the shapes and symbols of Japanese meaning, to be deeply westernized. Inside the contemporary Japanese, west and east, as a surface and deep layers of consciousness, are already mixed and merged in a delicate balance... Historically the Japanese were always constructing their culture in this pattern. There is a word *wa kon kan sai* (to utilize Chinese (kan) scholarship without losing Japanese spirit). Kan may be west in this context, but the Japanese shall value again 'the eastern thinking' by having this mentality of western-eastern axes. This shall allow 'eastern' philosophy to be meaningful and suggestive for the contemporary world. .. Hence there is no need to 'compare' east and west to find the 'link' for a contemporary Japanese person. As long as she/he who lives in our time investigates eastern philosophical issues from the perspective of the contemporary field, east and west shall meet in the ontological and empirical field and create a kind of philosophy of its own." (Trans. the author, Izutsu, "the Afterword", 414.)

²⁸ Inaga, "Philosophy, Ethics and Aesthetics in the Far-Eastern Cultural Sphere," 43.

My observation is derived from how Izutsu elaborates on the possibility of philosophising Zen, in his book, *Towards the philosophy of Zen Buddhism*. He clearly states that Zen experience is grounded in “a logic other than the traditional Western logic”, and that “Zen does not like to be associated with philosophy”. Yet, he strategically and artificially shifts this rather negative explanation to the positive, by stating that “... it is more positively anti-philosophical²⁹” and “purport (s) to elucidate the nature of the ‘articulation’ of reality by discussing it specifically as a semantic and metaphysical-ontological problem”³⁰.

Therefore, I am inclined to listen to positive criticism, which expresses that Izutsu's philosophical work is an endeavour “to point out the way to liberate it [western metaphysic] from its ontological limit of knowledge”³¹. And this limit is determined by the idea of the ‘ineffable’, in other words, the untranslatable. The ‘ineffable’ will be discussed later in this chapter.

b.

Let us now consider how ‘*ba*/field’ emerges in the ‘non-articulation’ stage of Zen experience, and how ‘poetic use of language’ is employed by Zen to ‘articulate the non-articulated’ in this stage. I do so through reflecting on my grandmother’s enunciation of Mt. Aso, and by relating this to the French philosopher and linguist, Luce Irigaray’s study on dementia patients’ sentence structure, and her discussion on the idea of the ‘interval’ in psychoanalytical practice.

In the chapter entitled ‘The problem of the Linguistic Meaning’, in *Towards the Philosophy of Zen Buddhism*, the ‘non-articulated stage’, where *ba*/field discloses itself, is exemplified in Izutsu’s statement that what was ‘Mountain is Mountain’ becomes ‘Mountain is not Mountain’³². This example signifies an aspect of Zen as positively anti-philosophical, as Izutsu writes,

Buddhists think that such ontology: mountain is solidly fixed by mountain-ness, and mountain is no other than mountain or cannot be anything else, makes people blind philosophically and pre-philosophically to what is mountain ‘as such’.³³

This view of “what is mountain ‘as such’” interests me in thinking how I experienced Mt. Aso when I listened to my grandmother speaking about it. I recall that we both shared something untranslatable about Mt. Aso while what Mt. Aso means to her cannot be the same as what it means to me. If it was ‘Mt. Aso as such’ that we shared, I question, “Would that have been prompted by *ba*/field emerging through a gap between my listening and her speech?”

From the metaphysical point of view, *Ba*/field is described as that which itself is “neither subject nor object”, as it is a kind of place that is in between “the subject and the object, I and thing as the possible extreme limits”³⁴. From the cognitive point of view, it is experienced as a place “where the subject and the object are interchangeable or indefinable (transferable)”, and where “at an extreme point, no such things as the object and the subject are recognised”³⁵.

²⁹ Izutsu, *Toward a Philosophy of Zen Buddhism*, x.

³⁰ Ibid., 122.

³¹ Inaga, “Philosophy, Ethics and Aesthetics in the Far-Eastern Cultural Sphere,” 43.

³² Trans. the author, Izutsu, “Zen ni okeru Gengoteki Imi no Mondai [The problem of meaning in Zen language]”, 370.

³³ Ibid., 361.

³⁴ Ibid., 370.

³⁵ Ibid.

I want to make a link between this highly unique place of *ba/field* in Zen experience, where the relationship between the subject and the object is transferable, and the ideas of ‘interval’ and transference discussed in Luce Irigaray’s philosophy.

c.

In Irigaray's early research on the verbal production of senile dementia patients, the relationship between the subject and the object is considered to be interchangeable. In her essay, entitled *Sentence Production among Schizophrenics and Senile Dementia Patients*, she analyses clinical studies on dementia patients, and discusses how “there is minimal distance from linguistic knowledge in the sentences produced by the senile dementia patient”. In this particular situation, the sentences are considered to be “only material for idiolectal messages already transmitted in the past”. It is caused by the fact that “(T)he adherence to experience, to the content of the utterance, determines the functioning of discourse.”³⁶ According to Irigaray, in the verbal production of dementia patients, the strategy to master and play language as an “object, a set of rules to manipulate” is lost. It is reasoned that “the model of subjectivity” is lacking due to “a dysfunctional relationship between the speaking subject and the addressee, or the world”³⁷.

In the case of my grandmother, it is also not difficult to imagine that she is very much attached to Mt. Aso, which frequently appeared in her stories that she told me in my childhood. Her memory of her visit to the mountain must have been rewritten every time she recalled it over the decades. The object, Mt. Aso, is deeply engraved in her, to the degree to which it is now part of her subjectivity. Hence, it is possible that, since her crossing into the threshold of dementia, she was “spoken by language” when she saw and spoke about Mt. Aso as she viewed it through the hospital window.

Yet, my impression of her speech is that it is not all regressive. Though I notice her confusion with her mastery of language, it is progressive in a sense that her speech can open a particular place (or *ba/field*) that can liberate Mt. Aso as such from being trapped in the name of Mt. Aso. Hence, I am inclined to think that the “relationship between the speaking subject and the addressee, or the world” was *functional* as her poetic enunciation successfully prompted something untranslatable yet truthful about Mt. Aso. That is to say, Mt. Aso as such emerged in the space between her speech and my listening.

In this emergence, hence, there was another subject and object at each limit: my grandmother and myself. While her lips were opening, mine were kept closed or sounding a sign of listening, as it felt important to keep the silence so as to keep ‘Mt. Aso as such’ present.

In another early essay, entitled ‘The limits of transference’, Irigaray examines the similar space between two bodies: a patient and a psychoanalyst; in other words, a speaker and a listener. With regards to the listener (analyst), she writes that “the basis on which he or she listens and gives space-time, the basis on which he or she gives himself or herself in the space-time in which he or she listens.”³⁸ This basis is the ‘interval’, articulated as “a release from quantitative estimates, to allow the opening on to an encounter of a different, peaceful quality.” It is a key concept in her psychoanalytical philosophy as it “constitutes the horizon of the possible unfolding of an analysis

³⁶ L. Irigaray, “Sentence Production among Schizophrenics and Senile Dementia Patients” in *To speak is Never Neutral*, tran. Gail Schwab, (London: Continuum, 2002), 94.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 93.

³⁸ Irigaray, “The limits of transference,” 112.

as an opening or an enigma” and “contrives a space or site of liberty between two bodies, two flesh”³⁹.

This observation of an opening or an enigma and a space or site of liberty between two bodies helped me to understand why it felt important for me to keep the space between my grandmother and myself silent. The opening between her and myself indeed felt enigmatic and liberating, as it presented me such a beautiful place, Mt. Aso as such.

Hence, I also relate to how Irigaray considers the interval “a gift moving from inside to outside, offering itself or putting itself forward as the site in which the analytic scene takes place”⁴⁰. Here I am made to translate it, the place of Mt. Aso as such, poetically through this research. And I shall apply her expression, “the analytic scene takes place”, to describe my perception in the hospital: ‘a poetic scene took place’, which I recall as follows; with the backdrop of the eternally blue sky and the endless Tokyo urban-scape, ‘Mt Aso as such’ enigmatically appeared between her speech and my listening, into which my being was liberated and transferred from my body.

d.

The connection between the ideas of *ba*/field and interval is plausible in the light of the influence of Eastern philosophy upon Irigaray’s later philosophical works. In her essay, ‘To paint the invisible’, which critically responds to Merleau-Ponty’s discussion of perception in art, she writes,

We co-belong to this world and we exchange, indeed sometimes reverse, the roles between us. That a tree looks at us is not at all strange... The same applies for believing that I could become a thing amongst the others, that I could transform the things into spectacles and myself into an other or an other into me through a specular power only. This implies that the imaginary has already been substituted for the real, and to some extent death for life.⁴¹

This saying, which certainly reflects Irigaray’s earlier psychoanalytical research on ‘seeing’ in the art context, is reminiscent of the perception that Izutsu expresses as the Zen experience in the non-articulated stage or *ba*/field (place): “(H)uman, seeing Mountain. Mountain, seeing human⁴²”.

The above perceptions expressed by Irigaray and Izutsu, both resonate with how I experienced Mt. Aso as such. It transferred and transformed into another mountain in Tokyo in my grandmother’s perception, and into my artwork.

On reflection, my artwork entitled *Understanding of misunderstanding* anticipated such a transference and transformation of ‘Mt. Aso’, into other places or objects through viewers looking at visual languages that I constructed.

The small pieces of objects are placed on the acrylic sheet, which sits on the wooden frame and covers the images on paper, mentioned earlier in this chapter. The objects reflect themselves on the sheet and also cast shadows on a blank paper which is placed in the middle of other images. This installation of objects is similar to the ‘Mt Aso’, my grandmother saw through the window,

³⁹ Ibid., 115.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 116.

⁴¹ Luce Irigaray, “To paint the invisible”, *Continental Philosophy Review* 37 (2004), 401.

⁴² Trans. the author, Izutsu, “Zen ni okeru Gengoteki Imi no Mondai [The problem of the Linguistic Meaning in Zen]”, 373.

hence, it is aligned with the photographic image underneath that shows the window view as well as the back of my grandmother [figure 3].

These objects [figure 4] also have ‘generic’ mountain shapes, more or less universal. And for the cultural region that uses Chinese characters, the shape of the mountain would indicate the character of the mountain_ 山. Like this letter, the size of the object conveys a particular presence in my eyes. The smaller it is the more it is like a letter, the less sculptural, more a thing in itself is—a small mountain. Strangely enough, the installation of objects presents an essence of ‘mountain’ or what Izutsu would call ‘mountain as such’, free from an actual, physical or factual place.

Further, I observe that this sense of the mountain’s ‘presence’ is articulated most accurately in the shadows and reflections [figure 5], though it might sound contradictory as those illusory visual phenomena are usually associated with ‘absence’. The space between these objects, their shadows and reflections, functions as a join that can mediate different images of mountains and places captured within and provoked beyond this installation artwork. It can be also considered to be *bal*/field, an interval, or an enigmatic opening, which invites viewers to enter and transform ‘Mt. Aso as such’ through their listening to the silence and seeing the shadows and reflections.



Fig. 3-5. Utako Shindo, *Understanding of misunderstanding*, (installation view), Slope, Tokyo, 2013.

2.3 The Untranslatable, Articulated through a ‘Poetic’ Use of Language

a.

This last section considers the idea of the ‘poetic’, in discussing the last stage of Zen experience: articulation of non-articulation, in which language is used poetically. According to Izutsu, Zen language takes both verbal and visual forms of expression, including Zen dialogue, poetry, philosophy and visual languages such as painting.

As stated earlier in this chapter, the idea of the ‘poetic’ is essential for my research as it connects the philosophy of translation and art, as well as Western philosophical thought and Eastern thought, (Zen articulation). However, Zen articulation differs from Western thought which is limited by the idea of the ineffable that is associated with the transcendental. It is understood

that “Zen, throughout its long history, has certainly articulated an experience which one often lightly disposes of by referring to it as something ‘ineffable’”⁴³.

This claim struck me, as I struggle to discuss the possibility of articulating the untranslatable through the language of art, in the global academic context that is predominantly based on the Western philosophical tradition. When I say ‘embodying the untranslatable through a poetic translation’, this is based on my perception and experience of art, which is not entirely Western. However, my project is criticised as being contrary to the Western logic of the untranslatable as ineffable. In this regard, Izutsu’s philosophical effort is informative and encouraging for my research to cultivate ways to articulate the untranslatable through a poetic work in my thesis writing and art-making.

b.

I discuss that a seemingly illogical and contradictory way of perceiving and expressing the world is, indeed, the very characteristic of Eastern thought, as well as of artistic languages. The great example for this can be found in Izutsu’s saying: ‘articulation of non-articulation’, which is the ultimate goal for one to experience the world. And I suggest that this claim might have inspired Jacques Derrida to write to Izutsu in *Letter to a Japanese Friend* (1983).

I observe that the letter shows the shared interest between these philosophers, for whom the ineffable (the untranslatable) is something that can be attained through a poetic work of language. At the opening of this letter, Derrida asks Izutsu for “a possible translation of this word (deconstruction) into Japanese, one which would at least try to avoid, if possible, a negative determination of its significations or connotations”. It can be read as a request to articulate what is considered non-articulative. And the letter is ended by drawing attention to both a risk and a chance, which are involved in both translation and poetry. He writes,

I do not believe that translation is a secondary and derived event in relation to an original language or text. And as "deconstruction" is a word, as I have just said, that is essentially replaceable in a chain of substitution, then that can also be done from one language to another. The chance, first of all the chance of (the) "deconstruction", would be that another word (the same word and an other) can be found in Japanese to say the same thing (the same and an other), to speak of deconstruction, and to lead elsewhere to its being written and transcribed, in a word which will also be more beautiful. When I speak of this writing of the other which will be more beautiful, I clearly understand translation as involving the same risk and chance as the poem. How to translate "poem"? A "poem"?... ⁴⁴

This passage indicates the link between the process of ‘deconstruction’ and translation, and the stage of ‘non-articulation’, which all prompt ‘transference’ (replacement) from one word to another. I understand that such a translation, thought to “lead elsewhere itself when written and transcribed” is a form of embodiment, in which language operates materially as well as poetically. Hence, “the other word which will be more beautiful” embodies the ineffable (the untranslatable),

⁴³ Izutsu, *Toward a Philosophy of Zen*, 123.

⁴⁴ J. Derrida, “Letter to a Japanese Friend,” in *Derrida and Différance*, eds. David Wood and Robert Bernasconi, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1985), 5

through the language of elsewhere (=foreign (else, *bokka*) language) such as a Japanese person in the context of this letter. And it is precisely demonstrated when Izutsu describes Zen articulation of non-articulation.

c.

Let us now turn to Izutsu's philosophical investigation, which demonstrates how 'poetic use of language' enables Zen language to articulate non-articulation, in other words, "an experience which one often lightly disposes of by referring to it as something 'ineffable'"⁴⁵. According to Izutsu, it is done "by virtue of the 'fusing' function of poetic language", by which "articulation turns immediately into non-articulation"⁴⁶.

This 'fusing' function is prominent in Zen poetry, in which a single word can function to contain "all other words by dint of a semantic network of suggestive associations". In discussing this, Izutsu refers to a famous *koan*, meaning Zen dialogue, between the Chinese Master and a monk.

Once, a monk asked Master Fuketsu: Speech spoils the transcendence (of Reality), while silence spoils the manifestation. How could one combine speech and silence without spoiling Reality? The Master replied: I always remember the spring scenery I once saw in Konan; partridges were chirping there among fragrant flowers in full bloom.⁴⁷

Izutsu suggests that the monk's question stands in the domain of reasoning, in which "language is semantically an instrument of articulation" hence not able to indicate "the ultimate reality in its suchness"⁴⁸. This becomes an obstacle, as without using language "the non-articulated will be presented as sheer 'nothing' in the negative sense of the word"⁴⁹. In contrast, Izutsu considers that the Master's response "directly presents reality as articulated *and* non-articulated by utilising a very special function of human language"⁵⁰. His answer, seemingly not corresponding to the question, makes this point. It presents "the articulating function exercised by poetic language", which is "of a completely different nature from the articulating function exercised by prosaic language." Master Fuketsu's answer, which is indeed a beautiful piece of poetry, "conjures up the beautiful scenery of the spring", in other words, "an eternal or timeless, metaphysical scenery". How so? It is clarified when Izutsu elaborates on the fusing function of poetic language in the Master's answer (or poetry), as follows:

The interpretation of all things through the 'flower' and 'bird' is the emergence of the spring. And the emergence of the spring is nothing other than the very emergence of reality in its suchness, the articulation itself into this particular form, yet eternally remaining in the state of non-articulation.⁵¹

⁴⁵ Izutsu, *Toward a Philosophy of Zen*, 123.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 132.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 130.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 130.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 131.

⁵⁰ Trans. the author, Izutsu, "Zen ni okeru Gengoteki Imi no Mondai [The problem of the Linguistic Meaning in Zen]", 368.

⁵¹ Izutsu, *Toward a Philosophy of Zen Buddhism*, 132.

In the Master's poetry, it is, remarkably, in the single word 'spring', that the non-articulated is articulated. That is to say that the untranslatable is embodied.

This poetic function is alive in the everyday life of contemporary Japan. In this regard, I refer to the observation made by the French film maker, Chris Marker, in his essay-film, *Sans Soleil* [*Sunless*] from 1984. In the film, the narrator introduces a story in the newspaper about a man who, having lost his lover, kills himself in May. The reason is that "he could not stand hearing the word 'spring'"⁵². The narrator expresses Marker's observation that "Japanese poetry never modifies. There is a way of saying boat, rock, moist, frog, crow, hail, heron, chrysanthemum that includes them all". This is also considered "a discrete melancholy—resembling Sei Shonagon [the 11c female poet and writer in Japan]—that the Japanese express in a single untranslatable word"⁵³.

To me, spring, which is written, 春 /はる, and pronounced, *haru* in Japanese, comes all at once overwhelmingly. In turn, it emphasises the silence that waited the moment. The silence is fertile; a plenitude of being, and is filled with metaphors: 'a semantic network of suggestive associations', amongst which I shall include 'death'. As Izutsu puts it, "it is to be noticed that speech and silence are combined with each other, and through this combination the intrinsic limitations of each have been overcome"⁵⁴.

Regarding *Waka*, it is the origin of *haiku* poetry, which Izutsu refers to as a discrete form of Zen poetry. In this form, silence and speech are contained within 17 syllables arranged in the units of 5/7/7 and the spaces in between.

d.

I express that listening to my grandmother's speech was like hearing a *haiku* poem. "There Mt. Aso, so beautiful isn't it?" is indeed as short and rich as *haiku*, suggesting all her memories associated with the place; memories that encompass her 100 years of lived life. I simply wonder, how many springs have come and gone, and how many times has she farewelled and welcomed a life?

As my second attempt to translate my grandmother's poetic enunciation, I discuss, lastly, the video work entitled *Topology between the Three*, which was made between 2014 and 2016 [figure 6-8].

The work consists of the video footage of the mountainous landscape (with atmospheric sound), and subtitles recording the conversation between three people (without the speakers' voices). The footage was shot during my first visit to Mt. Aso, and the conversation around Mt. Aso was recorded during another visit to my grandmother, accompanied by my mother.



Fig. 6. Utako Shindo, *Topology Between the Three*, (video still), 2014-2016. www.utakoshindo.info/exhibition/topology-between-the-three/

⁵² "Sans Soleil / Sunless, Chris Marker", *Markertext*, accessed 5 May 2014, http://www.markertext.com/sans_soleil.htm.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Izutsu, *Toward a Philosophy of Zen Buddhism*, 132.

On reflection, to actually visit the site on my own, and to hear more of her personal and social perspectives on the mountain, with the aid of my mother, helped me to get closer to the sense of ‘Mt.Aso as such’. What felt most strong through these events was the sense of an opening, an enigma, which had first been expressed as what is untranslatable about Mt. Aso.

My grandmother’s speech provides a kind of footnote, which contributed to this, my second attempt to translate her original enunciation. The way her speech and my and my mother’s speech sometime do not cross, resonates with Zen dialogue. As a result, the silence or the gap is deepened, in which I am immersed in a *universal* feeling of love and longing, and joy and grief. Thereby, the work is intended to articulate the sense of an opening, an enigma, which can provoke a feeling of one’s life (and death) between the work and the audience.

The footage and the subtitles are edited in a way which obscures the whereabouts: whom these voices and the eyes behind the camera belong to, and where these images of landscapes are sourced from. The sound of voices are taken out, to encourage audiences to read the subtitles in their mind with their own voices. The speed of footage is slowed down, in which the atmosphere shifts and drifts in and out of the frame, indicating how time passes around my grandmother. These are the strategies to open and extend such an interval that can prompt the transference between the work and audiences; between what is said and heard, and what is shown and seen, and what is felt and expressed. And now seeing this work once again as a spectator, I am as aware of the ‘mountain seeing myself’, as I am of ‘I seeing mountain, as it is’.

f.

As discussed earlier, Zen language, does not only express itself in a verbal form but in divergent forms amongst which Izutsu includes visual language⁵⁵. In referring to *haiku* poetry, black and white paintings are also considered to be an example of a poetic use of language as they encompass presence and absence (or speech and silence), hence, “a semantic network of suggestive associations”. This form, indeed, expresses more than just ‘black and white’; Izutsu describes it as “glistening black”, “water[ed] down to vaporous gray”, “a haziness of faint gray”, and “a blank, white space”⁵⁶. I suggest a link between what he sees in black and white paintings and what I observe in shadows: their nuances and subtle shades.



Fig. 7-8. Shindo, *Topology Between the Three*, (video still), 2014-2016.

⁵⁵ Izutsu, “Preface” in *Toward a Philosophy of Zen Buddhism*, xii

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 222.

This link shall be further elaborated in the following chapter, which asks, “How can a poetic use of language be employed in an installation art context?” In this quest, shadows are considered media that can embody subtlety and nuance visually and spatially. The investigation into the notion of shadows will also facilitate my research into what can be considered philosophical and artistic knowledge of the untranslatable.

CHAPTER THREE: Nuanced Shadows

In questioning, “how can a poetic use of language be employed in an installation art context?”, this chapter investigates ideas of the shadow across disciplines including philosophy of perception, and histories and theories of art and architecture in both Western and Eastern contexts. I discuss how shadows can be used poetically as a form of language; in other words, as a medium for an artwork to embody the untranslatable. In so doing, I reflect on the second object of my poetic translation in this research: the acrylic cube and its shadows and reflections. These investigations have guided my art-making to employ a poetic use of language visually, spatially and verbally in an installation art exhibition context.

3.1 The Shadow’s Appearance in Philosophy and Art

a.

At the beginning of my research, it was rather intuitive that I made a link between ‘shadows’ and the ‘untranslatable’. When I was under pressure to be translatable, I projected my self-image, onto shadows whose appearances constantly shift and transfer across different surfaces. These shadows were more fascinating to me than the kinds of artworks that I could translate into prosaic languages. The latter works, indeed, did not allow much nuance and subtlety in their appearances.

The acrylic cube (as a remnant) [figure 1] presents particular visual phenomena, which are silently expressive. Acrylic is a familiar material, which I often use in my art-making. Yet, the two, almost identical, acrylic cubes, which I saw in the display material shop, somehow caught my eyes. It was on my way from the hospital where my grandmother stayed between 2013 and 2014. They capture a flash of light as shadows and reflections, which are ambiguous and elusive. The trace of a cut made by a blade adds richer shades. They became a kind of mobile *utsu* (or void) for me to carry around, and to reflect and project different qualities of light and air in the places where I go.

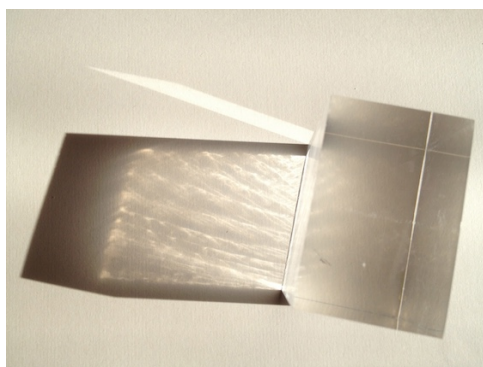


Fig. 1. Shadow and reflection of the acrylic cube. Photo: the author.

b.

Some shadows appear more ambiguous than others. The degree of this perceptual ambiguity depends on the materials and scenes where shadows are cast. Shadows appear and disappear according to the conditions and source of light, and the objects over which the light passes.

Before it disappears, one may capture the presence of a shadow by tracing its contour. In this instance, various shades of gray become reduced and flattened according to the perimeter of what one could decipher or what one would believe. Indeed, the myth of art, told by the ancient

Roman writer, Pliny, in his book, *Natural History*, depicts the scene [figure 2]¹ where the daughter of Butades, the ancient Greek modeler, traced a contour of the cast shadow of her lover². This is understood to be how painting originated. Here, the origin of painting is representational. Once outlined on the wall, the identity of the lover is fixed, in a way that it no longer allows for ambiguity. While its representational or factual meaning can be conveyed, the ambiguity or nuance, which an artwork or a word carries, remains untranslatable into another form. I discuss how this untranslatability is remarkable in depicting shadows.



Fig. 2. Eduard Daege, *The invention of Painting*, oil on canvas, National Galerie, Berlin, 1832.

On the idea of appearance, philosophical and empirical studies of cognitive perception have provided useful reference points for this research. In fact, some studies use the appearance of ambiguous shadows and artworks to re-examine the traditional perceptual model that divides sensation and cognition³. These studies, which cross the fields of cognitive science and philosophy of mind, have helped me to explore how shadows can prompt perception of something untranslatable, which hovers between the sensible and the intelligible.

It is understood that our vision can perfectly perceive variations in light on material surfaces, such as various shades on a wall. However, as soon as we attempt to describe what we see in verbal and written languages, we inevitably make mistakes. For instance, one may say “that wall is white”, while their eyes are actually perceiving 200 different tones of grayness or lightness that are covering the wall⁴. This mistake resembles some occasions on which one cannot adequately describe what one sees as/in artwork. An artwork that embodies the untranslatable is, therefore, nonrepresentational. It is, rather, of a kind that one may call enigmatic or mystical. It is not a dream or illusion. It comes as an experience. It overwhelmingly fascinates and makes one look at the world differently; such as when one is in love.

Shadows and art share characteristics of immateriality and dependency. Their appearance in one's perception is highly dependent on a scene that consists of the atmosphere of the surroundings, the mood of the viewer, and on the objects and materials that ground what is seen as shadow or art. This also means that shadow and appearance of art, on their own, are immaterial.

This observation sheds light on a gap in our common understanding of perception. We cannot physically touch a shadow or its appearance of art, not even instantly, hence they are not sensible. However, these characteristic do not prove that shadow and art do not exist (“like how immaterialist might have said in the 17th century”⁵). They are there and can be experienced, as we would intellectually and visually recognise them as taking part of (dependent on) other materials. What's more, their existence can have a significant effect on those who are *touched* by them. In this sense, distinctions between the sensible (sensation) and the intelligible (cognition) become blurred.

¹ This image shows one of many paintings which depict this event. The father, Butades, then made a relief based on her drawing, then originated sculpture.

² Stoichita, *A Short History of the Shadow*, 7.

³ I understand that this model is identical to ‘sensible’ and ‘intelligible’ binary model.

⁴ John O'Dea, in conversation with the author, Tokyo, June 22, 2014

⁵ O'Dea, conversation.

This leads me to consider that the perception of the untranslatable hovers ‘in-between’ these perceptual states. I refer to these ‘in-between’ states as the ‘interval’ or *ba*/field. In this understanding, shadows can play a role as a medium that can be poetically used for an artwork to embody the untranslatable. It is because shadows, which uniquely require material intervention, make the untranslatable visible. Shadows can also prompt opening of a scene as they depend on the surroundings and human perception, which in turn enable shadows to *appear*. This relates to my previous discussion of the untranslatable in Chapter Two: it is an opening, a place, a poetic scene that invites us to enter, in both an art context and in the everyday. In this scene, which is spatial and durational, our perception shifts between different appearances. It is this shift between what appears and disappears that makes us perceive something elusive and ambiguous (or untranslatable).

c.

This line between ‘sensible’ and ‘intelligible’ is drawn by the classical perceptual model in metaphysics, which is derived from Plato’s claim in *The Republic*. In this regard, when the North American philosopher, John Sallis, discusses the notions of *eikasia* and *dianoia*, representing perception of the ‘sensible’ and the ‘intelligible’, respectively, he inspiringly demonstrates the link between translation and perception. He does so by exploring the idea of ‘the force of imagination’ in translation.

In his book, *On Translation*, Sallis attempts to shed light on the imagination that traverses these faculties, by elaborating on “the classical determination of translation”⁶. The first mention of ‘translation’ in Western Philosophy can be found in Plato’s dialogue with *Critias*⁷, in which Sallis recognises the notion of *dianoia* as essential for translation. *Dianoia*, which is normally translated as ‘thought’ or ‘intention’, should, according to Sallis, “remain the ambiguity in the form of duality”; “thinking or that which is intended by it; the intending or that which is intended by”⁸. It is said that, in order to retrieve *dianoia*, Egyptians tested “the force of the names” which were written by Atlantis. They did so in the following way: firstly “as a way of effecting the transfer, they wrote down the names” and secondly they carried over “the foreign names” “into their (the Egyptians) voice”⁹. This shows that what mattered in translation was not meaning but ‘the force of the name’, which was tested through enunciation. This resembles how a poet would make an effort to sound their verse beautifully. It also reminds me of how strong my grandmother’s enunciation of Mt.Aso felt, when she *translatied* what she read in the scenery in front of her.

Tatsuya Nishiyama, the Japanese scholar and translator for Sallis’ *On Translation*, demonstrates a fascinating link between *dianoia* and *eikasia*. In his translator’s note, *eikasia* is described as “perception of shadowy image, perception through shadow and/or image”¹⁰, and this understanding confirms the link, when Nishiyama writes,

⁶ Sallis, *On Translation*, 51.

⁷ *Critias* is the fragmentary sequel to the *Timaeus*.

⁸ Sallis, *On Translation*, 51.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 55.

¹⁰ Trans. the author, Nishiyama, “Yakusha Kaisetsu: Honyaku Kono Sakusou suru Mono [Translator’s note: Translation, this entanglement],” 308.

In many of his other works, Sallis repeatedly points out that Plato considers *dianoia* to be the other side of the same—though not identical—for the work of image (*eikasía*)...¹¹

According to Nishiyama's articulation above, 'the force' is understood to mean the capacity to see through, to think through. This is called 'double seeing' by Sallis.

I observe that this 'double seeing', which both *dianoia* and *eikasía* are about, demonstrates the connection between the idea of translation and the idea of perception. I understand that the capacity (force) of both translation and perception depends on the degree of ambiguity (untranslatability). By ambiguity (untranslatability), I mean the metaphorical richness that provokes one's imagination. As discussed in the previous chapter, in poetry (and in a poetic use of language), the metaphorical richness can be measured in the layers of associations (or in the network of suggested associations). In art, the metaphorical richness can be experienced in shades of color/tones of sound, or as shadow/silence.

d.

Let us consider perception of ambiguous shadows discussed across histories of art and philosophy in both Western and Eastern contexts.

In the book, *A short history of the shadow*, written by the art historian, Victor Stoichita, shadows and reflections are depicted as overlapping. According to Stoichita, in the Narcissus myth, which describes "different degrees of reflection", the shadow is considered to be a kind of degree that is "the least clear" (closest to nothing)¹². He then points out that this "narcissistic paradigm of Western mimesis [is] replaced by the oriental eulogy on the transience of the shadow."¹³ In this picture, what Stoichita calls, "the shadow of the gaze" is observed as being captured in Monet's photographic self-portrait, which the artist took himself [figure 3]. The photograph frames a section of the water's surface partly covered by water-lilies, like his painting. Yet, the surface does not only reflect Monet, like a mirror, but also grounds his shadow.



Fig.3. Claude Monet *Self Portrait on the Surface of the Lily Pond*, Giverny, photograph, 1905.

At the point of history when this paradigm shift occurred, there was a Japanese influence, which was prominent among the European artists. With regards to the 'mysterious Orient', Stoichita makes reference to the essay entitled 'In praise of shadows', written by the novelist, Junichiro Tanizaki, published in 1933. This essay is informative not only as it depicts the Japanese aesthetic, but it also criticises the Western modernisation, which had been going for nearly a half century and had influenced Japanese culture and perception.

For Tanizaki, shadows and reflections are recognised as 'variations of shades' that play a key role in a unique aspect of the Japanese aesthetic discussed in the context of everyday architecture. An ink wash painting is used in a figurative sense to describe a traditional Japanese room: "the paper-paneled shoji being the expanse where the ink is thinnest, and the alcove where it

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Stoichita, *A Short History of the Shadow*, 109.

¹³ Ibid., 110.

is darkest.”¹⁴ This observation leads him to remark that, “The ‘mysterious Orient’ of which Westerners speak probably refers to the uncanny silence of these dark places.”¹⁵

This ‘uncanny silence’ in ‘dark places’ is comparable to the idea of ‘fertile silence’, considered to be a particular place (*ba*/field) in Zen experience. For Tanizaki, it is found in a room, or *ma*, as it is a particular space-time that frames (underpins), aesthetically and philosophically, the everyday in Japan. From the silence of this room (*ma*), a particular perception emerges, which takes divergent forms. These include a black and white painting (which Izutsu refers to); in other words, an ink brush painting. Tanizaki describes it in terms of shadows spatially and visually). Shadow is, hence, considered to be both spatial and visual. It is a form of poetic language that emerges from silence, and, conversely, articulates silence. This understanding supports my argument that shadows can be considered a medium for installation art to embody the untranslatable, and, conversely, that the untranslatable can be characterised by fertile silence and nuanced shadows.

Similarly, what can be called the ‘shadowy imaginal’ and considered subtle and nuanced, is elaborated by Izutsu in a philosophical study that covers the greater Eastern contexts including Indian, Tibetan, Chinese and Japanese mystical Buddhism, and Islamic thought. The Persian mystic and philosopher, Suhrawardi’s philosophical concept of ‘*ashbah mujarrandah*’ is interpreted by him and expressed in Japanese as ‘*Nisugata* 似姿’ or ‘*Omokage* 面影’. It indicates an image that reminds one of something and someone else that is similar but different. This “‘similar image’ is understood to have “drifted away from mass (material substance)”¹⁶ and “transferred from the dimension of material world to another”. This ‘shadowy imaginal’ or ‘similar image’ is, thereby, described as having a ‘metaphorical existence that floats in the air’. Yet, it does not mean that it does not exist in the Real. Izutsu argues that for some of the Eastern mystical, shamanistic, or philosophical people, like Suhrawardi, such a ‘shadowy existence’ appears to be deeply real rather than a mere image in one’s mind. Hence, it *is* the Real which “exists in a particular ‘post-mass’ dimension”¹⁷. And this dimension is characterised by being “nuanced, ambiguous and subtle”, as opposed to a ‘mass’ dimension that is “large, thick, heavy and rough”¹⁸.

This ‘shadowy imaginal’, which exists in a particular dimension that is comparable to the interval, *ba*/field and darkness (silence), challenges the traditional model of perception. By going beyond the sensible and intelligible dimensions, and by being intangible, it provokes one to experience an appearance that is metaphorical and imaginal yet ‘touching’ us as reality (or truth). Further, it is interesting that, so far, ideas of the shadow across histories of art and philosophy seem to always be associated with an image of someone else, a lover, or one’s own reflection. It is as though it is telling us something universal about human perception that ‘looks for’ love in nuanced shadows. This might be summed up in Tanizaki’s observation in another text: “shadows are the nuance of love”. I discuss this in the last chapter.

e.

Let us now consider shadows in detail, in the context of Japanese rooms, as discussed by Tanizaki.

¹⁴ Junichiro Tanizaki, *In Praise of Shadows*, trans. Thomas Harper and Edward Seidensticker, (London: Letter’s Books, Inc., 1977), 34.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Trans. the author, Izutsu, *Ishiki to Honshitsu: The consciousness and reality of existence*, 203.

¹⁷ Ibid., 204.

¹⁸ Ibid., 204–205.

In the “Japanese comprehension of the secrets of shadows” and “sensitive use of shadow and light”¹⁹, it is understood that “everything around the house is there to guide shadows towards beauty’s ends.”²⁰ And art objects or decorations are not exceptional [figure 4, 5]²¹. This perspective, which differs from the traditional Western paradigm discussed by Stoichita, art served the representation of the subject/object, is articulated as follows:

...the scrolls and the flowers serve not as ornament but rather to give depth to the shadows. We value a scroll above all for the way it blends with the walls of the alcove...²²



Fig. 4-5. Still from the film, *Maboroshi* [*Maboroshi no hikari*] by Hirokazu Koreeda, 1995.

According to Tanizaki’s original text written in Japanese, “the way it blends” is a translation of a noun, *yuka utsuri* (床うつり)²³ which literally means the floor reflection (projection). Hence, it can be said that the excellence of an artwork is evaluated by the degree of the nuance and ambiguity that the artwork carries, which will be then perceived as both shadows and reflections.

Tanizaki proposes that painting is “nothing more than another delicate surface upon which the faint, frail light can play.” In this context, another surface includes floors as well as walls, which are made of sand with neutral colors and the degree of shades are subtly controlled. This is in order to ‘guide shadows towards beauty’s ends’. Tanizaki writes,

The hue may differ from room to room, but the degree of difference will be ever so slight; not so much a difference in color as in shade, a difference that will seem to exist only in the mood of the viewer. And from the delicate differences in the hue of the walls, the shadows in each room take on a tinge peculiarly their own.²⁴

In pre-modern Japanese architecture, the light is taken indirectly from the outside²⁵, as reflections and shadows that mediate artworks and surroundings. In this context, the viewer is required to

¹⁹ Thomas Harper and Edward Seidensticker, trans. Junichiro Tanizaki, *In Praise of Shadows*, 33.

²⁰ Ibid., 31.

²¹ The still images are extracted by the author from *Maboroshi* [*Maboroshi no Hikari*], directed by Hirokazu Koreeda (Tokyo: Bandai, 2003), DVD. In the book, *Atomic Light (Shadow Optics)* by Akira Mizuta Lippit, (pp.133-143. Minneapolis: the University of Minnesota Press, 2005), *Maboroshi* is discussed as a contemporary example which embodies the aesthetic of shadow/reflections that Tanizaki discusses.

²² Ibid., 32.

²³ J. Tanizaki, “Innei Raisan [In Praise of Shadows],” 33.

²⁴ Ibid., 32.

²⁵ Stoichita also looks at the outside, when he discusses the roles of “truncated shadows” whose sources are unknown in impressionist paintings but “correspond(s) to a very precise moment in the day.” In both contexts discussed by Tanizaki and Stoichita, shadows and reflections similarly expand one’s awareness to what is beyond one’s visual periphery. Yet, there are difference between truncated shadows in paintings and the actual shadows and reflections. Stoichita calls the former, a “messenger” of the reality outside of the frame, which was captured in the eyes of the painter, whereas the actual shadows/reflections in a Japanese room belong to the viewer’s eyes.

anticipate and perceive this level of subtlety in order to complete its beauty: the nuanced difference between rooms. It is a task performed through her/his effort to experience and engage with the whole setting, not only an artwork.

The appearance of artworks relies on the viewer's gaze, not only on the artists in this particular perceptual and aesthetic system (if I am allowed to call it that). Yet, I suggest that it stands not only for a unique aspect of the Japanese aesthetic, but for a way of perception that is true to how the subject (the viewer) and the object (reflections and shadows of the light) together enable a nuanced understanding of the world, and the emergence of the world itself. In the next section, this will be discussed in detail.

3.2 Multistable Perception ('perceptual ambiguity comes in degrees')

Investigating the kind of gaze that can perceive the subtlety and nuance in shades, in the light of empirical and philosophical studies of perception, has implications for one's ability to perceive, or in Sallis' term *imagine*, something untranslatable by means of an art practice. This ability is important in respect of works (translated work, poetry, artwork) whose ambiguity (untranslatability), in other words, *force* is strong.

a.

In these quests: "how does one perceive subtle degrees of similarities and differences?" and "how does her/his perception shift between them?", Gestalt theory helps us to understand a mechanism of one's vision that distinguishes a form (gestalt) from the rest, which would otherwise blend. The studies on 'Gestalt-shift' ("the phenomenon of *multistable perception*"²⁶) in particular, demonstrate our perceptions of ambiguous 'appearance'. The Australian scholar, John O'Dea, discusses this in relation to the perception of art in the Western context, in his article, 'Art and Ambiguity: A Gestalt-Shift Approach to Elusive Appearances'. His analysis seems to respond to Tanizaki's observation that the beauty created by the slight differences in 'neutral' colors of walls is, otherwise, unnoticeable:

...*elusiveness* of "appearance"; whatever they are, they are not normally noticed, and then only with "special effort". The real virtue of the Gestalt-shift approach to "appearance" is that it can explain the precise nature of this effort, and the reason for the elusiveness.²⁷

A most familiar and classic example is given by O'Dea, which causes Gestalt-shift, in other words, double image: the duck-rabbit image, used by the American psychologist Joseph Jastrow [figure 6]. As some readers may have also 'tried' this perceptual shift before, it is understood that one's having "an awareness of *potential ambiguity* is normally a pre-requisite" for the

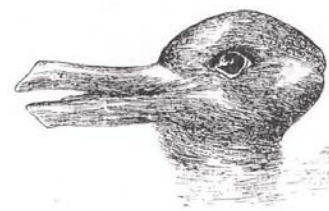


Fig. 6. Joseph Jastrow, *the duck/rabbit*, 1899.

²⁶ O'Dea, "Art and Ambiguity," 11.

²⁷ Ibid.

switch, which is “amenable to *prompting*”, to occur²⁸. And such an awareness is attainable through an instruction, for instance, the name of this image, the ‘duck-rabbit’ image. This, in fact, is reminiscent of a title of an artwork, which often frames the interpretations of the artwork.

Another study, by Leopold, D. A., & Logothetis, N. K., uses an image of jungle foliage image [figure 7] as an example to shed light on “the connection between multistable perception and ordinary, as it were *monostable*, perception”²⁹. In the image, what are seen as leaves and shade need to ‘appear’ differently as a camouflaged tiger. In this context of survival, this perception is directed at detecting danger, by the work of ‘higher processes’ that are understood to “persistently intervene in sensory processing in a continuing search for better hypotheses about the stimulus”. The important finding, expressed by O’Dea, is that “[T]he sensory system does not rest content with first appearances, which is important in a challenging visual environment”³⁰



Fig. 7. Jungle foliage image.

In order to relate these findings to my research context, let me imagine how a rabbit-duck image in a Japanese room could look. The picture would oscillate between being an image and being a material object, since a pictorial and non-pictorial situation, in other words, art and the everyday, come together in mediation of shadows and reflections and by architectural framing. This situation, in which our perception would be expected to follow one ambiguity to another: from rabbit/duck shifts to object/surface shifts, may be challenging for someone who is not familiar with this way of experiencing, or this way of conceptualising art. It would be as challenging as being in jungle foliage, yet, one should be content with the beauty, instead of detecting the danger. It would be in the abstract patterns of shadows that one is expected to find as a supreme beauty. They blend a dangerous picture of tiger into their beauty.

b.

Today, it is certainly not only the Eastern aesthetic that serves for this type of perception. The artwork by the North-American artist, Agnes Martin, is also thought to *appear* differently as image/object/surface/architecture [figure 8]. Martin, who is known for her abstract expressionist paintings, often marks geometric lines and grids on a canvas. Their surfaces are also characteristically covered with thinly painted colors. The North-American art critic, Rosalind Krauss, describes “what it is actually like to see the [Martin’s] paintings”³¹. In her catalogue essay, entitled *The /Cloud/*, a reference to Brunelleschi’s perspective experiment [figure 9], she claims,



Fig. 8. Agnes Martin, Paintings from 2001, installed with Donald Judo Benches selected by Martin. The Harwood Museum of Art.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 12.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ R. Krauss, “THE /CLOUD/” in *Agnes Martin*, ed. Barbara Haskell (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1992), 158.

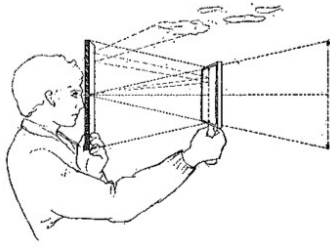


Fig. 9. Reconstruction of Brunelleschi's first experiment.

if the /architecture/ came to symbolize the reach of the artist's knowledge, the /cloud/ operated as the lack in the center of that knowledge, the outside that joins the inside in order to constitute it as an inside.³²

Shadows and reflections suggest an absence in our normal conception, like the way clouds are considered here a symbol of lack in our knowledge (what is unintelligible). As discussed earlier, they are employed to bring outside inside in the architecture of Japan. I also recall the mountain objects (which look also like clouds) in my installation work, *Understanding of Misunderstanding*, creating their own shadows and reflections inside of the frame, while remaining outside.

Martin similarly employs light and shadow to provoke a perceptual ambiguity between an image and a material, and from/to an object and an architecture. Krauss calls for our attention to the art writer, Kasha Linville's closer examination of one's experience of Martin's work, which comes as "sequences of illusions of textures"³³. At first, in "the close-to reading", there are "details of its materiality in all their sparse precision"³⁴, in which "her line is sharp" while "its own shadow softens it"³⁵. It is because Martin often applies her paint to draw lines on the high places of the grains of the woven canvas. From the middle-distance [figure 10], "the ambiguities of illusion take over from the earlier materiality of a surface"³⁶, and "the paintings go atmospheric"³⁷. Lastly, from far back, "opaqueness" is produced, as a "more objective vantage on the work brackets the atmospheric interval of the middle-distance view, closing it from behind". Hence, what appears at last is "[W]all-like and impenetrable"³⁸.



Fig.10. Agnes Martin, *Leaf*, (middle view), acrylic and graphite on canvas, Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth 1965.

These three distances "transform the experience from an intuition into a system". I would like to make a link between this system and the particular perception (articulation) process which guides us to employ a poetic use of language, letting forms emerge from fertile silence, as in the distance between the sensible and the intelligible.

c.

With regard to this transformation (transference) in one's perceptual experience in the art context, O'Dea, discussing multistable perception, claims that "perceptual ambiguity comes in degrees"³⁹.

³² Ibid., 161.

³³ Kasha Linville, "Agnes Martin: An Appreciation," in *Artforum* 9 (June 1971), 72.

³⁴ Krauss, "THE /CLOUD/," 158.

³⁵ Linville, "Agnes Martin: An Appreciation," 72.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Krauss, "THE /CLOUD/," 158.

³⁸ Linville, (1971): 72

³⁹ O'Dea, "Art and Ambiguity," 13.

According to O'Dea, it is mostly the case that genuine ambiguity is realised when the two options are “equally likely”. However, “higher cognitive processes” are also able to direct a Gestalt shift “to an unlikely (or *dispreferred*, by the visual system) interpretation of the visual stimulus”⁴⁰. In the latter case, it is observed that “higher cognitive areas can bring about a transient shift in the precept to one of these alternative (normally illusory) interpretations.” I suggest that this “alternative (normally illusory) interpretation” can be counted as what an artist would intend to provoke, namely, a unique ‘perspective’ on the world.

Here, I am inspired to contextualise my understanding of an art practice in the context of multistable perception. For alternative interpretations to happen, an artist is given a task to create a situation where a viewer can ‘practise’ to gain “the ability to notice ‘appearance’” which is, according to O'Dea, “different or dis-preferred”. To do so, an artist shall/would normally manipulate what are considered “various contextual clues”, which include “the familiarity of the stimulus, spatial attention, instruction, semantic association, visual imagery, information from other sense modalities”⁴¹.

Let me now discuss how these “various contextual clues” are manipulated in my installation work, entitled *Distancing for opening*, presented at the art & architecture bookstore, Perimeters, in Melbourne in 2014 [figure 11]. Being outside of the gallery context could be challenging as it requires more careful utilisation of these clues as well as motivations for those who walk into another context: the bookstore, in this case. Yet, it can also prompt one to practise noticing a different appearance within their familiar everyday contexts.

In the middle of the store, a sheet of printed work on timber stands is installed, bordered by two sheets of acrylic which are bent into 90 degrees [figure 12]. This case-like structure is unlike the normal display case for an art object: it does not disclose and there is no obviously noticeable object inside. It, instead, holds a sheet of paper that presents visual information that is ambiguous and indecipherable [figure 13]. Is it printed image, or shadow/reflection? The hint of opening and the sense of the unknown call for engagement. This active engagement, in fact, mirrors what is common in a bookstore

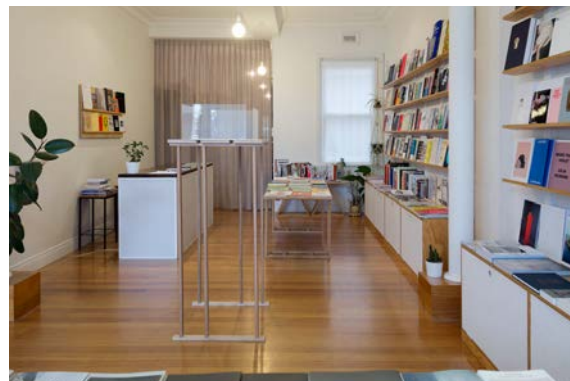


Fig. 11. Utako Shindo, *Distancing for Opening*, (installation view), Perimeter Books, Melbourne, 2014.

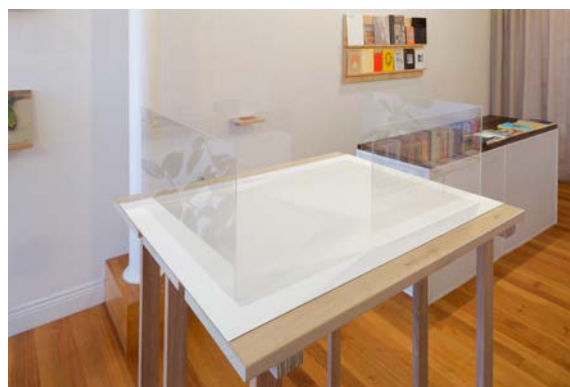


Fig. 12. Shindo, *Distancing for Opening*, (middle view), 2014.



Fig. 13. Shindo, *Distancing for Opening*, (detail), 2014.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 14

⁴¹ Ibid., 15

context: one initiates her/his opening and reading of printed matter.⁴²

d.

My attempt to learn and manipulate systems of visual perception is aimed at proposing strategies that can facilitate one's perceiving ambiguous shadows, which, in my context, characterises the untranslatable. For this to happen, a viewer should be encouraged to dwell in-between possibilities: at one moment tilt one side, and at the next moment to another, as if a viewer feels that s/he had anticipated what they now see. Through this subtle yet active perception, the experience of art could become more intimate. It also leads one to question the apparent, familiar knowledge. The 'appearance' of art and the viewer's context and environment are unified, blended. Hence, knowledge needs to be re-discovered through his/her experiencing the artwork, as if his/her perception expresses the knowledge.

In his book, entitled, *Chikaku to Seikatsu Sekai (Perception and Life-Worlds)*, Junichi Murata, an expert in philosophy of mind and philosophy of technique, writes an inspiring view. For Murata, a kind of 'form', discussed through the lens of Gestalt theory, means a form of 'expression', as it plays the role of generating a 'meaning'⁴³. This 'expression' that generates 'meaning' is considered to be 'technique', to which 'art' (technē) is included for the ancient Greeks. His view leads me to consider 'artistic technique' belonging to both sides: one who makes and one who sees. Hence, 'expression' is not a kind of faculty given limitedly to the maker (artist). It is a form of technique that is practised not only in the art context but in the everyday.

Murata gives a detailed account when he writes,

Even a small degree of attention shift demands one's visual field to process Gestalt shift. Moreover, it cannot help but let the shift of meaning occur, even though the shift may be subtle. And through this, various experiences of 'friction (creak)' and 'gap (slippage)' happen. This is why one day, suddenly, we are surprised to find ourselves in different conditions from where we were before, while we repeat mundane perception and actions.⁴⁴

In my understanding, Murata's above observation, which articulates how one notices and expresses a new meaning, suggests an enquiry into repetition, as in practice. In his context, this practice is done unconsciously, and this is why it is so surprising when it happens that the world appears differently from what one had a control over its appearance as well as its expression/meaning. In my art research context, I also observe that a similar practice is exercised when I, as a viewer, am repeatedly exposed to a kind of artwork that embodies nuance and subtly. This puts me in a particular interval (creak or slippage) or *ba*/field, in which I oscillate and negotiate between

⁴² With an intention to frame the contexts in which the artwork is installed, I wrote a text, whose extract is as follows:

... The space between art and life can be porous. 'Perimeter Books' houses unaccountable spaces to be opened by readers and viewers. The books housed along the walls and on the tables await our life to slip between their pages. Pieces of timber are stretching horizontally and vertically to hold surfaces. Shadows and reflections traverse across sheets of acrylic, paper. These obscure media touch our eyes, at their very height, from the distance.

The text is provided, not to explain what the work is about, but to serve the artwork as another poetic form of language. It is similar to how a poetic use of language can take divergent forms, and how the particular beauty of a Japanese house is poetically articulated in the form of an essay, which then allows reader to approach the experience of subtle differences in color, textures and shades. Martin, too, talks about how her painting and poems are related. "This poem, like the painting, is not really about nature. It is not what is seen. It is what is known forever in the mind." (Martin,)

⁴³ Trans. the author, Junichi Murata, *Chikaku to Seikatsu Sekai [Perception and Life-Worlds]*, (Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 1995), 101.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 102.

suggested networks of associations (possibilities) with shapes, forms, colors, textures, tones and so forth. That is to say, an artist exhibiting (presenting) her/his artwork contributes to the world, not by imposing any fixed *alternative* perspectives of the world, but by generating a place (situation) where such a practice can be exercised unconsciously, such that an audience is guided towards experiencing the world in more rich and poetic ways, in accordance with where s/he is at, at a particular point in life.

3.3 Shadows mediate knowledge

a.

The Italian philosopher, Roberto Casati, known for his book *Shadow Club*⁴⁵, which demonstrates the significant role of shadows in astronomy, science, art and literature, both discusses and practises the perception of ambiguous visual phenomena—shadows, in his context—through repeatedly experiencing and reflecting on it in his writing. His study also challenges the Platonic model of human cognition, as discussed earlier in this chapter, which rates shadow, illusion, poetry and art below light, truth and knowledge (philosophy).

Casati argues that “despite their being so precarious, and despite their being so mysterious, shadows are a valuable aid to knowledge”⁴⁶. For visual artists, Casati’s claim that “vision can’t do without shadow: the information carried by shadow is a fundamental aid to seeing”⁴⁷. However, it is also the case, as I touched on earlier by looking at the shades of a ‘white’ wall, that “[u]sing shadows in perception doesn’t require one to have a concept of shadows, but such a concept is needed for *thinking* about shadows”. This is why Casati practises paying attention to and describing shadows in words. While he calls this challenge, “the stumbling block”, as what “one dears to the Romantics_ ineffability”, his playful and persistent effort enables him to list his poetic attempts⁴⁸, which then leads him to expresses that “I have learnt light can become shadow and shadow light”⁴⁹.

Let me point out that his observation of “shadow light” greatly resonates with the Japanese architect, Isozaki’s interpretations of darkness, elaborated by Tanizaki in *In praise of shadows*. In his essay, *Yami no Kukan* (*Space of Darkness: spiritual structure of illusion*), young Isozaki observes ‘light flashes’ in what Tanizaki designates as ‘darkness’ in the Japanese traditional architecture. Isozaki clarifies that “shadows are not born when light is projected but rather [are] everything left over when light cuts through darkness”. In this understanding of darkness, light is not “absolute” but “ephemeral” and “must pass”⁵⁰. Through these interpretations, Isozaki’s

⁴⁵ In the book, Casati starts each chapter in the imaginal conversation between Plato and his own shadow, who questions Plato’s model of cognition. Casati sheds light on shadows’ key roles in the areas of astronomy, science, art and literature (from Galileo Galilei, Kepler, Leonardo Da Vinci to the contemporary neuroscience research).

⁴⁶ Casati, *Shadows*, 10.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴⁸ These lists include: *I have seen seagulls fly backwards, hands stiffening to grasp an edge and then freely relaxing around the corner that trapped them, drainpipes and gutters transformed into veils covering whole faces of building...* (Roberto Casati, “Shadow Tales of Knowledge and Power” in *Shadow Play*, 2005, 47)

⁴⁹ Roberto Casati, “Shadow Tales of Knowledge and Power”, in *Shadow Play*, ed. Kunsthallen Brands Klaedefabrik (Denmark: Kunsthallen Brands Klaedefabrik, 2005), 47.

⁵⁰ Isozaki, “Yami no Kukan [Space of Darkness: spiritual structure of illusion],” 153.

‘architectural philosophy’ is formed, maintaining that “space is essentially darkness” and “[A]bsolute blackness is the background essential to the manifestation of all phenomena.”⁵¹.

There are, indeed, strong connections between Isozaki’s philosophy of darkness (shadow light) and Izutsu’s philosophy of *ba*/field (fertile silence). Izutsu maintains that “the phenomenal world is constantly and uninterruptedly emerging out of, and sinking instantaneously back into” *ba*/field (place), and that “each of the phenomena thus makes itself manifest for an instant, the non-articulated discloses itself like a flash⁵²”. I would also like to add Casati’s philosophy as that which echoes Isozaki’s and Izutsu’s. Casati argues that “[t]he concept of shadow is a *spatial* concept; shadows are (dark) areas. But space comes into it subtly⁵³”. This claim is underpinned by his observation of how shading can recover three dimensional information on ‘flat’ surfaces, as well as give texture. For instance, what appears to be ‘concave’ and ‘convex’ can be recognised as mountains and valleys in the moon, at the moment of perfect lunar eclipse. It is a moment as short as a flash of light, when the moon is entirely in the shadow of the sun. As he claims that “in the case of shadows, astronomy has provided the most fertile ground for discovery”⁵⁴, from this fertile ground, or *ba*/field, characterised by darkness, a true knowledge is subtly revealed in space and as a concept.

B.

The works by the Japanese artist, Takemi Azumaya, appear to me to embody shadows as ‘darkness’, ‘flashes of light’, ‘fertile’, ‘spatial’ and ‘subtle’. The work, *Mizu no Shouzon I*, is from the series called *eclipse* [figure 14]. This is the life work of Azumaya since the early 80s. He rarely verbalises or writes about his works, but when he does, his words both sound and look beautiful. It is no wonder that he also worked as a judge of *haiku* poetry for years. The force of these words, expressed and written in Japanese, is so strong that I am provoked to see something untranslatable through them. I hope my translation conveys a glimpse of that:

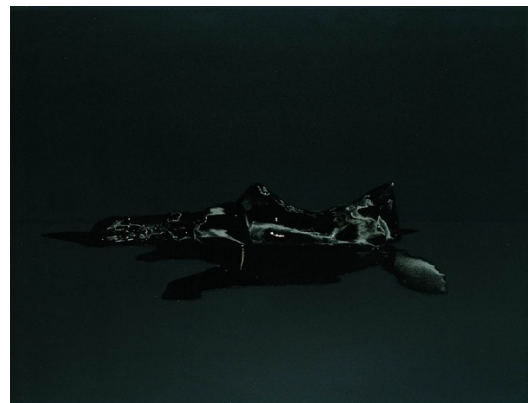


Fig. 14. Takemi Azumaya, *Mizu no Shouzon I* *eclipse*, lithograph, 2002.

Ice is the motif of my work, but it is the state that anticipates its solid body changing into a liquid, the energy that keeps transforming in the silence, or the thing that is like a life form. If its real condition is brought about by the light, its contour begins to be conspicuous, supported by the shadow standing out. If the inherent subject is lost, the shadow also hides away.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Izutsu, *Toward a Philosophy of Zen Buddhism*, 131.

⁵³ Casati, *Shadows*, 205.

⁵⁴ Casati, “Shadow Tales of Knowledge and Power,” 47.

⁵⁵ Trans. the author, Takemi Azumaya, “Sekihanga wo manabu [Learning to make lithograph]” (1999), *Takemi Azumaya Exhibition: Eclipse*, (Tokyo: Tokyo University of Arts, 2015), 77.

Both his print and text are wonderful examples of the capacity of artists to perceive and reflect on, (in other words, translate), the subtlety and nuance of one's being in the world. Azumaya does this through his accurate, hence, poetic, understanding of 'shadow-light'. Both his print and text are articulate and poetic 'shadow light'.

目読_Mokudoku is my installation artwork exhibited in the gallery space, HAGI ART⁵⁶, whose space extends to their cafe area, hence to the space-time of the everyday [figure 15]. I recall this work being work-in-progress in the context of my research, as it was made during 2014 and early 2015 while I had a chance to have several meetings with Mr. Azumaya⁵⁷ in Tokyo. He kindly agreed to share his perception: how he sees shadow, light, reflection and color, how he understands the materiality of paper, how he values one's expressing her/himself through art and the everyday living, and how he sees living and dying. Dialogues with him also helped me to explore my fascination with the acrylic cube (the second object of my poetic translation in this research): its solidness, emptiness, texture and transparency, which transforms the space around it.

What you see on a sheet of paper is joined squares, given presence by nuanced colors and subtle differences in textures [figure16]. They are "the accumulation of translation repeated_繰り返される翻訳の集積"⁵⁸, which is my poetic translation of the acrylic cube. The title, Mokudoku (目読) is a coined word, which is loosely defined as "to read what your eyes will see in silence_目に見えるも



Fig. 15. Utako Shindo, 目読_Mokudoku, (installation view), HAGI ART, Tokyo, 2015.



Fig. 16. Shindo, 目読_Mokudoku, (middle view), 2015.



Fig. 17. Shindo, 目読_Mokudoku, (detail), 2015.

⁵⁶ HAGI ART is located near Tokyo University of the Arts, where Mr. Azumaya was teaching till 2014. The building was formerly an apartment for the art and architecture students, who renovated it into a small art complex (open plan with cafe & bar, and gallery). The open atmosphere and the accessible location suited this particular work, which was designed to engage with wider audiences. The exhibition enabled me to gather various feedback from both the general public and the art community around the university and beyond. I also organised a 'reading night' to read key texts for my research and discuss the ideas of perception and translation with the participants who have art and academic backgrounds (photography, architecture, dance, installation, painting and geography).

⁵⁷ Mr. Takemi Azumaya, a former Professor and head of the Printmaking discipline at Tokyo University of the Arts, visited VCA (School of Art) in 2006. I acknowledge that his visit was coordinated by Neil Malone, the former head of the Printmaking department. This gave me, as an honours student at the School of Art, an opportunity to meet with him and learn about his practice. Regardless of his high profile in Japan, he has always been generous about sharing his expertise as well as contacts with his colleagues in Australia, since his visit to Australia.

⁵⁸ My own words from the exhibition invitation. printed by Hagi Art Studio, 2015.

のを黙して読む”⁵⁹, inviting a visitor to both the gallery and the cafe to engage with the work as if opening, looking at and reading a book that is ambiguous.

The repetitive marks of short lines, symbolic of a letter, records and narrates how I learned to work with the materiality of the acrylic cube, the paper (*yupo trace*, made out of plastic and resin) and the color pencils, through the processes of embossing, tracing, drawing and transferring [figure 17]. As a result of these processes, the work grounded an image of ‘shadow light’ on its translucent yet textured surface with concave and convex forms. Another of my mentors from Australia, Neil Malone⁶⁰, who is also a master of printmaking as well as painting, described it thus, “we are actually looking at light in what you think is shadow in your work”.

c.

Agnes Martin’s artworks⁶¹ similarly present an enigmatic power, which Azumaya’s works possess. Their works provoke me to perceive the nuance and subtlety of the world that make my experience richer and more poetic. But Martin’s work, in contrast to Azumaya’s, embodies lightness rather than darkness, from/into which an image is engendered/sinks. Her later works especially have such a lightness, in terms of both color and weight, that it cannot be fully grasped by the eyes of the viewer. For example, in her work entitled *Little Children Loving Love* [figure 18], colour and weight appear variant according to the constant play of ‘light shadow’, which enhances the sense of silence⁶² that her works carry. (I will further discuss this work later in this section.)

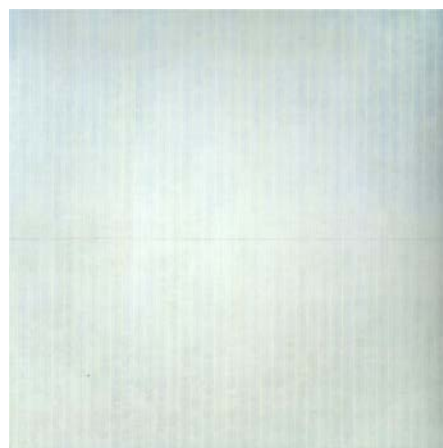


Fig. 18. Agnes Martin, *Little Children Loving Love*, acrylic and graphite on canvas, private collection, 2001.

Among the many critical writings on her artworks, of which Krause’s *THE/CLOUD/* (1999) is considered influential, I am particularly inspired by the recent essay (2015) written by the British art theorist, Anna Lovatt, entitled ‘In pursuit of neutral: Agnes Martin’s shimmering line’. Her argument resonates with other philosophical discussions in this chapter, which challenge binary models in Western metaphysics. According to Lovatt, there has been a shared observation expressed by some critics that “[M]artin’s artwork confounds familiar oppositions—representation versus abstraction, objectivity versus subjectivity, materiality versus spirituality, to name a few”⁶³. In the discussion on this “kind of structural play” which operates all through Martin’s practice, the concept of ‘shimmering’ is employed by Lovatt, as follows:

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ He expressed this during the Skype meeting for the Progress Review Meeting with supervisors and other committee members, in February, 2015. Malone’s comment here, actually brought, for the first time, the perspective of ‘shadow light’, into my research, which I followed up through textual research, as discussed in this chapter.

⁶¹ Her artworks do not often travel to Australia nor Japan, so I have only seen her work once in the real. Yet, there are many publications of high in quality that enable me to appreciate both her works and writings, as well as essays by the curators, critics, historians and gallerists, talking about her art practice and life

⁶² The influence of Eastern philosophy (Taoism and Zen) on Martin can be found in her interest in silence (similar to the way John Cage expresses silence in his work). This is discussed in many texts, of which I include the recent book by Nancy Princenthal entitled *Agnes Martin_Her Life and Art*.

⁶³ A. Lovatt, “In pursuit of neutral: Agnes Martin’s shimmering line,” in *Agnes Martin*, eds. Frances Morris and Tiffany Bell (London: Tate publishing, 2015), 104.

The shimmer refuses to submit to this demand (of oppositions)... it slips between and glides beyond our habitual patterns of thought, longing for the absence of every sign.⁶⁴

Her perspective on ‘shimmering’ is derived from the French philosopher, Roland Barthes’ exploration of the notion of the ‘neutral’. In his book, *The Neutral*, Barthes elaborates on the ideas of the ‘shimmer’ and the ‘monochrome’, when he writes, “the monochrome (the neutral) substitutes for the idea of opposition that of the slight difference... of the effort towards difference, in other words, of nuance”⁶⁵.

I suggest that Barthes’ elaboration resonates with the rich grayness spoken by Zen visual language with monochromatic “reticence”⁶⁶, as articulated by Izutsu. This resonance can be traced to the influence of the Chinese ancient philosopher, Lao Tzu (老子) on Barthes’ writing in *The Neutral*, as Lao Tzu’s philosophy influenced other strands of Eastern thought, including Zen articulation. Furthermore, I maintain that the understanding of the monochrome (the neutral) as “the effort towards difference” does echo my own understanding of the untranslatable; that is, as an attention to subtlety and nuances.

The above elaboration on the shimmer (the neutral) guides me to recognise ‘shadow light’ as ‘light shadow’. In this inversion, it is no longer essential to have a space which is literally darkness (as it is observed in the old Japanese architecture). In the Australian context, where lightness is the space for my artwork to emerge (as an installation artwork), the shimmer (the neutral) of Martin’s work shows how to work with lightness as ‘light shadow’.

This set of my works [figure 19, 20] shows my attempt to work with the ‘light shadow’, through manipulating the subtlety in materials and colors that compliment each other. It also comes with a title, with which I intend to form a short poem, based on the Japanese word (私雨_わたくしあめ, read as *watakushi ame*)⁶⁷, by poetically translating it into English as ‘I rain’, with three images of letters: Chinese, *hiragana*⁶⁸ and alphabet; 私雨_わたくしあめ_I rain. The work was hung in the project space, in the annex of the main gallery, located in Melbourne, at the end of summer. Before I exhibited the work, Mr. Azumaya precisely articulated that “one cannot see textures and colors without

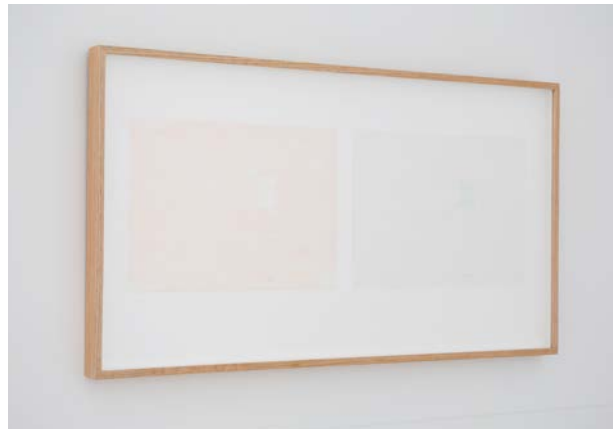


Fig.19. Utako Shindo, *I rain_Watakushi ame*, (installation view), Sutton Projects, Melbourne, 2016.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Roland Barthes, *The Neutral, - Lecture Course at the College de France (1977-1978)*, trans. Rosalind E. Krauss and Denis Hollier, (N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 2005), 51.

⁶⁶ Izutsu, *Toward a Philosophy of Zen Buddhism*, 223.

⁶⁷ 私雨 (watakushime) means the rain which falls in a limited area, particularly in mountains, and it can also be translated literary as personal/private rain. The word is not used in everyday language any longer, but it sometimes appears in haiku, and wake (Japanese poetry).

⁶⁸ *Hiragana* is one of the kinds of Japanese letters, which also consist of kanji and katakana.

having shadows”⁶⁹. Indeed, if there is only the over-exposed gallery light or the sunlight directing the work, it lets what makes the work disappear. Hence it was installed in a dim corner, which I created by building a wall. What would be lost, otherwise, is nuanced light-shadow. It is the untranslatable, which cannot exist only on one side of shades (languages). It has to constantly transfer (shift, drift) from/into light and shadow, in other words, it has to shimmer.



Fig.20. Utako Shindo, *I rain_私雨*, (installation view), Sutton Projects, Melbourne, 2016.

d.

As a way to sum up the discussion on poetic use of language in an installation art context, which is spatial and visual, let me consider two works that unite visual and verbal languages poetically through embodying nuanced shadow-light/light-shadow.

Here I come back to discussing *Little Children Loving Love*, whose title exemplifies the kind of poetic writing that accompanies Martin’s art practice. I consider this title a short poem, like *haiku*, being comprised of sounds and silence. It is known that Martin only paints when inspired. I imagine that with this painting, she could not help but tell us about it. The work is distinct yet its meaning is not firmly fixed by the title. Indeed, none of her other titled works lose their untranslatability. Her poetic wording, instead, functions to guide us closer to her work, intimately, through our own ways. The short text below expresses her thought on perception.

*We perceive - we see
We see with our eyes and
we see with our minds
We want to see the truth
about life and all of beauty*⁷⁰

This image [figure 21] is my photograph of the reproduced image of *Little Children Loving Love* in the book, *Agnes Martin: Paintings, Writings, Remembrances*. It records a moment of my intimate perception of beauty which touched me truthfully, one autumn afternoon in Tokyo, sitting beside a window in a room where I spent my childhood. In this perceptual experience of shimmering light-shadow coming through the window and touching an image of Martin’s artwork, my own life and its surroundings was not excluded from the artwork (though it was a reproduction). I was also, perhaps, following



Fig.21. Photograph of the reproduction of Martin’s “Little Children Loving Love”, as appeared in Glimcher, *Agnes Martin: Paintings, Writings, Remembrances*.

⁶⁹ Takemi Azumaya, in conversation with the author, Tokyo, November 2015, Tokyo

⁷⁰ A. Martin, “We perceive. We see...” in *Agnes Martin: Paintings, Writings, Remembrances*, ed. Arne Glimcher (London: Phaidon, 2012), 144.

the manner expected of a viewer in a Japanese room, in Tanizaki's sense.

In my view, the colors of the shadow and this line of words: *Little Children Loving Love*, which I perceive with a feeling of awe and respect, resonate with how Marcel Proust described Vermeer's yellow patch, "like a child upon the yellow butterfly" in his novel, *In Search of the Lost Time*. It appears in the following passage:

...and finally the precious substance of the tiny patch of yellow wall. His giddiness increased; he fixed his eyes, like a child upon a yellow butterfly which it is trying to catch, upon the precious little patch of wall. "That is how I ought to have written," he said. "My last books are too dry, I ought to have gone over them with several coats of paint, made my language exquisite in itself, like this little patch of yellow wall."⁷¹

I read this line as suggesting how the untranslatable is to be perceived and expressed by means (language) of art. The scene is located in the museum, where the main character *Bergotte*, who wants to become a writer, faces his death. He is inspired to say what he sees in Vermeer's painting, *View of Delft* [figure 22], in front of him. This almost unnoticeable but beautiful yellow patch embodies various degrees of shades, showing shimmering shadow-light. To me, in both the painting and the work of literature, it is this yellow patch that holds these 'forms' together. This yellow patch is the medium that joins perception and expression: the gaze of the painter and of the writer; and they are also the viewers. The sensible and the intelligible are joined lovingly by this ambiguous medium. And this event occurs when the total silence of death awaits (as if he falls into sleep). This is perhaps one of the most poetic scenes in the history of an entire art form, where the untranslatable is embodied and held within different languages of art, by mediation of nuanced shadows.



Fig. 22. Johannes Vermeer, *View of delft*, oil on canvas, Mauritshuis 1660-1661.

⁷¹ Proust, *The Captive: In Search of the Lost Time*, under "the captive".

CHAPTER FOUR: Transference

This chapter focuses on the processes of ‘transference’ that takes divergent forms in an art context. This process corresponds to the understanding, discussed previously, that nuanced shadows transfer into/from fertile silence. I discuss how these processes can be considered a form of poetic translation by which an artwork embodies the untranslatable, while etymologically investigating the notions of the transfer across various traditions, which commonly indicates emergence of an image and survival of ‘life’. In so doing, I intend to respond to the last object of my research: Derrida’s remark at the *Anyone* conference, which identifies translation as transfer and movements. The idea of survival also connects my discussion back to theories of translation by Benjamin and Berman. These examinations provide appropriate vocabularies that lead me to reflect on my artworks, including the final installation art work in an exhibition context. Through this, I articulate how my installation art practice embodies the untranslatable as a poetic place and how it responds to Derrida’s question, ‘What is a place for translation?’ I then further discuss other works that motivate and inspire ‘transference’ in my final work, including an ancient statue of *mirokuboatsu bankashiyui* in *Chugu-ji* temple in Nara, which literally embodies the god who transfers from another dimension to this world, and Rilke’s ‘Letter to a young poet’, as these works bring us the knowledge of love, the sense of longing for love, and life.

4.1 ‘Imago’ (life and image) Transfers

a.

This section considers the notion of transference in exploring the derivations of the term *utsu*, which I introduced in Chapter One. In so doing, I intend to respond to the last element of my research. That is, Derrida’s proposition that,

The place for translation is untranslatable. And if we define *ma* as a place for translation, it’s a place for translation, not only translation in the semantic, linguistic sense, but translation as transfer from, for movements, transference of objects from others, and so forth.¹

I begin by explaining why I explore the derivations of *utsu* as a way to unfold this remark. As I indicated in Chapter One, the oldest form of the concept of *ma* is considered to be the notion of *utsu*, which is ‘void’ or empty space-time. Similarly, the concept of *chora*, referring to “what rhythmically vibrates between Void and Being”², originates in the movement of *rhuthmos*³ which is considered to be attributed to ‘void’ rather than ‘atom’. As indicated in Derrida’s remark, there is an analogy between *ma* and *chora*. This makes the notion of *utsu* relate to the notion of void (*rhuthmoi*),

¹ “Discussion A-1”, 90.

² In his co-presentation with Isozaki, Asada discusses that “The *chora* is said to function like a sieve, vibrated by the various elements within it and vibrating them in turn. “Does the *chora*, which rhythmically vibrates between Void and Being, not share properties with what is called *Ma* in Japan?”. (Asada and Isozaki, “A Fragmentary Portrait of Anyone,” 65.)

³ Burchill, “In-Between “Spacing” and the “Chora” in Derrida: A Pre-originary Medium?”, 46.

hence *chora*. Therefore, the exploration of the notion of *utsu* can contribute to furthering our understandings of *ma* and *chora*. From this perspective, I speculate that *utsu* grounds or originates a place for ‘translation’, which Derrida recognises “as transfer from, for movements, transference of objects from others”. In fact, from this ancient notion of ‘*utsu* うつ’, the word ‘*utsuron* うつろう’ is derived, which indicates the state of transferring movement; and the verb ‘*utsuru* うつる’, too, which precisely means ‘transfer’.

Let us now further explore ‘*utsuron*’ and ‘*utsuru*’. According to Seigo Matsuoka, ‘*utsuron* うつろう’, first expressed, in the ancient time of Japan, something drifting and shifting from/away in nature and atmosphere (or, as spirits or gods). It eventually described such conditions in human emotions and feelings⁴. In referencing Matsuoka’s articulation, the Japanese art theorist and curator, Atushi Shinfuji demonstrates the plasticity of the verb ‘*utsuru* うつる’, in discussing various possible movements that show images. They are transfer(移る), reflect(映る), project(影る), trace(写る) and emerge(現る)⁵. Each of them is expressed in a different Chinese character, but they are all read (pronounced) as ‘*utsuru* うつる’ in Japanese.

Shinfuji compounds his art historical understanding of what makes an image, in the form of his curated exhibition,⁶ entitled かたちはうつる (*Katachi ha utsuru*)_Form Transfers⁷. His insight is highly informative for my research, as it sheds light on intersections between various histories of art and philosophy that identify ‘the movement of transfer’ as what prompts transformation and metamorphosis, in turn creating images.

Let us first look back to the ancient time in Japan, where there was a sacred bell, worn by the shaman, called *Sanagi*. It contained a hollow (which is another description of *utsu*) to mediate the transfer of ‘what is to come’ (spirits; gods). The word *Sanagi* also means, even today, ‘pupa’, which is also a kind of hollow from which an imago is born. In his book entitled *Japan as methods*, Seigo Matsuoka discusses this transformative relation between words and images, by making a link between ancient Japan and ancient Greece and Rome. The Greek word *psyche* meant both ‘soul’ and ‘pupa’ in the ancient time. It was Latinised to *anima*, which indicates the spiritual, emerging in a hollow⁸. And from this *anima*, the Latin word *imago*, which means both image and butterfly (adult insect), originates.

The link between the words *anima* and *imago* is clearly indicated in the conclusive volume (XV)⁹ of *Metamorphoses* written by the Roman poet, Ovid, in which the Greek Pythagoras states that “(T)he soul is always the same, but migrates into different forms...Everything flows, and is formed

⁴ Trans. the author, Matsuoka, *Nihon to iu Yarikata - omokage to utsuroi no bunka* [*Japan as methods: Culture of reminiscent-shadow and transferring*], 91-93.

⁵ Shinfuji, “Katachi ha Utsuru [Form Transfer],” 10.

⁶ The exhibition was held in 2009 at the National Museum of Western Art, Tokyo. It attempted to gathered and newly compile works from the museum’s extensive collection of prints from the 15th century to the 20th century.

⁷ It should be mentioned that the Japanese title for the exhibition is only written in *Hiragana* characters, while the formal Japanese writing is usually written in a combination of *kanji* (Chinese characters) and *hiragana* (Japanese characters). When it is a deliberate choice to not have Chinese characters, it suggests that the writer intends to imply the multiple possibilities for readings (meanings). As discussed, *uturu* indicates variant forms of ‘transfer’ processes.

⁸ Trans. the author, Matsuoka, *Nihon to iu Yarikata*, 94 - 95.

⁹ Pythagoras speaks of the emergence of imago (image) in his teaching ‘Metempsychosis’ and ‘Eternal Flux’ in Ovidius’ *Metamorphoses* Book XV.

as a fleeting image”¹⁰. According to Shindo, the French Philosopher and art historian, Georges Didi-Huberman suggests that Pythagoras’s remark on the notion of image (*imago*) influenced the 19th century Austrian art historian, Aby Warburg’s notion of *Nachleben*. As Didi-Huberman¹¹ argues, the translation of *Nachleben* is difficult, but Shinfuji translates the notion into Japanese as ‘残存 -zan-zon’, meaning both ‘remain’ and ‘survival’.

What all these intersections show us is an image (and word) originating from/in a hollow (*utsu*), and continuing to transform while it metamorphoses a place, where it temporarily inhabits. Through finding a temporal place, the soul, spirit or life continues to remain, hence, survive. To me, such life also seems to keep escaping from being entirely grasped and formed, or translated. When Didi-Huberman reveals¹² that Warburg had the pathological symptom of speaking to butterflies (*imagos*)¹³, it strikes me as though his symptom is symbolic of the human struggle for comprehending (‘comprehend’ meaning ‘to grasp’) what is not fully comprehensible; what is, hence, untranslatable.

b.

How, then, in case of an artwork, can it be born through the processes of transference, in turn manifesting this transferring of life, for which to remain and survive? In this quest, Shinfuji’s articulation is highly relevant to my understanding of art-making. As discussed previously, the processes of ‘transfer’, expressed in Japanese as *utsuru*, indicate reflect, project, trace, transfer as well as emerge. And these are processes that I follow in creating my artwork, in visual and spatial contexts. These processes usually belong to different disciplines: photography, video art, drawing, and printing. To name these processes using one word: ‘*utsuru*’ blurs these disciplinary boundaries. My art-making always consists of a process of ‘transfer’, making an image appear by mediation of nuanced shadows and the audience’s perceptions.

The words ‘reflection’ and ‘projection’ have appeared in the last chapter, in which I discussed nuanced shadows, as in shadow-light/ light-shadow, which are in one way or another, recognised as reflections and projections of light and shadows. In the process of making imagery, these phenomena are captured by a still camera and video camera. In the installation art context, projections and reflections can be ‘created’ on material surfaces: paper, wall, and acrylic, by using the natural light coming through window [figure 1], the gallery light or the light from the video projector.

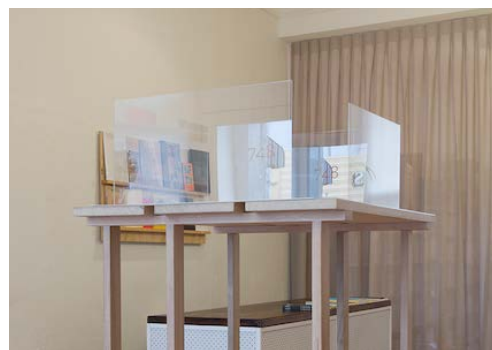


Fig. 1. Shindo, *Distancing for Opening*, (installation view), 2014.

¹⁰ Ovidius, *Metamorphoses Book XV*, trans. Anthony S. Kline, (2000), under “*Metamorphoses Book XV* (A.S. Kilne’s Version)”, accessed October 12, 2014, <http://ovid.lib.virginia.edu/trans/Metamorph15.htm#488378548>.

¹¹ Didi-Huberman, “The Surviving Image: Aby Warburg and Tylorian Anthropology,” 68.

¹² Didi-Huberman, “Forward_Knowledge: Movement (The Man Who Spoke to Butterflies),” 14.

¹³ It is interesting how Didi-Huberman considers the ‘transfer’ as what reveals “unheard voices” or “*unconscious vision*”, when he discusses Warburg’s pathological symptoms: “spoke to butterflies” (and “paranoid fantasies”). He argues that “it is perhaps in this sense that he *listened* to them” and reasons that “one cannot *know* the symptom—the pathos of Antiquity, the unconscious gesture of the nymph (Greek mythological spirits or fairies who live in nature)—without *comprehending* it (To comprehend, “*to take with*”, or “experiments with otherness”. (Didi-Huberman, “Forward_Knowledge: Movement (The Man Who Spoke to Butterflies),” 14.)

The processes of ‘trace’ and ‘transfer’ are applied to making drawing and printmaking. The line drawn by graphite traces the shifting movements of shadows [figure 2]. Drawing a line on a sheet of paper simultaneously leaves its trace as an embossment on another sheet of paper underneath. By applying pressure, the layers of oil pastel or colored pencil are transferred from the surface of the plate to the surface of a sheet of paper. In the process of digital printing, digital data is transferred onto a sheet of paper.

As a result of these processes, images ‘emerge’, but their appearances differ according to the perception of individuals. Hence, in the space between the artwork and the audience there is another process of ‘transference’, which I discussed in Chapter Two: Mountain looking at us, “I” seeing mountain) [figure 3].



Fig. 2. Utako Shindo, *Shadow Drawing_autumn*, graphite on paper, 2013.



Fig. 3. Utako Shindo, *Pensé en ir de alguna manera*, (installation view), Museo Taller Erasto Cortés, Puebla, 2013.

c.

Let me elaborate further on one of the works, entitled, 波の間に間に [*Nami no Ma ni Ma ni*], which is made out of various transference processes. The work, as my another attempt to poetically translate the acrylic cube (as a remnant), also responds to the idea of the ‘remainder’, which is considered ‘untranslatable’ in Derrida’s *Passe-Partout* (discussed in Chapter One). Now we can also make a link between this idea and the notion of *Nachleben*, ‘remain’. Cézanne’s “strange utterance” in his letter to Emile Bernard: “I owe you the truth in painting and I will tell it to you”, makes Derrida consider that “the truth in painting” is the “*trait*”, meaning, in French, “a characteristic mark”, which “remains the untranslatable”¹⁴. His articulation of untranslatable, “(B)ut untranslatable, it remains in its economic performance, in the ellipsis of its trait, the word by word, the word for word, or the trait for trait in which it contracts”¹⁵, resonates with how I had always experienced the impossibility of chasing and tracing shifting shadows with my line drawing. Yet it is this inability that made me want to continue.

I was inspired by Derrida’s comments on working towards articulating such remainders through the manner of repetitive - ‘trait for trait’ - poetic translation. By using sheets of tracing paper and oil pastels, I transfer the layers of color, applied on a sheet of thick paper placed on the acrylic cube,



Fig. 4. Works in Progress. Photo: the author.

¹⁴ Derrida, “Passe-partout,” 4.

¹⁵ Derrida, “Passe-partout,” 4-5.

The entire section goes: “Untranslatable: this locution is not absolutely so. In another language, given enough space, time, and endurance, it might be possible for long discourse to propose laborious approaches to it. But untranslatable, it remains in its economic performance, in the ellipsis of its trait, the word by word, the word for word, or the trait for trait in which it contracts: as many words, signs, letters, the same quantity or the same expense for the same semantic content, with the same revenue of surplus value. That is what interests me, this “interest” when I say: “I am interested in the idiom of truth in painting.”

to other sheets of thinner paper [figure 4]. I use the pressure that I put by drawing a short line (*trail*) from the reverse side of thin tracing paper with a blank ink pen. It is a form of printing, not per an aspect, but per a line. When the bundle of short lines covers the entire surface of colored area, I change papers to peel off another layer [figure 5]. I continue transferring the color until there are no more layers that can be transferred [figure 6]. At the end of the process, the original colored thick paper is left embossed and almost colorless [figure 7]. The ‘remainder’, a very thin layer of color pastel and oil, which cannot be transferred, appears to be ungraspable yet beautiful. It looks almost like the ‘skin’ of something, or the ‘shadow’ of something, which is left after some kind of transformation. It is as though this transference process helps a life transfer into another body (sheet of paper) in turn. In a sense, the work embodies the untranslatable, not because it captures and visualises but because it suggest that each process of poetic translation of the acrylic cube differs [figure 8]. After all these processes, it could not entirely trace or transfer, could not complete a word-to-word or trait by trait literal translation, either.

Yet as a result of applying various ‘transfer’ processes, there is an emergence of some kind of transformation, like a skin or shadow of something, as though a ‘remainder’ of life. This life is not only sacred (that of gods or spirits), but pertains to any ‘thing’ that lives, including the human body and our sense of being.

The title is after a Japanese phrase: *nami no ma ni ma ni* (波の間に間に), which is

translated as ‘at the mercy of waves’, literary meaning ‘in-between the breaking of waves’. Let me remind us of the link between Hölderlin’s notion of *Zäsur* (*Cäsur*) (caesura) and Mitsugi’s Japanese interpretation of the notion of *ma*. The analogy is also evident in the way that the movement that pulls and breaks like waves is metaphorically associated with these notions of *Zäsur* (*Cäsur*) and *ma*. The former is described as “the counter-rhythmical interruption...so as to confront the pull of the succession of scenes at its height and in such a fashion that instead of facets of a manifestation there comes manifestation itself”¹⁶. And the latter is used in the following Japanese phrase which, as discussed in Chapter One, is a line from a famous ancient *waka*: “*Momiji*



Fig. 5-6. Works in Progress.



Fig. 7. Utako Shindo, 波の間に間に_Nami no Ma ni Ma ni, (detail), Sutton Projects, Melbourne, 2016.



Fig. 8. Shindo, 波の間に間に_Nami no Ma ni Ma ni, (installation view), 2016.

¹⁶ Hölderlin’s *Sophocles*, 63.

no nishiki Kami no Ma ni Ma ni”, meaning ‘a brocade of crimson leaves, here along with the gods’. By taking into account the fact that Hölderlin’s above quotation was born out of his translation of the Greek tragedy, *Oedipus*, and the gods (plural) in Japan include the spirits of deceased people, in-between the successive waves the remainder of someone emerges.

This work, to me, is, in one sense, a trait of who I was during 2014 and 2015, not only tracing my own bodily interaction with the acrylic cube [figure 9] through making the work, but my observations when commuting between my residence in Tokyo and my studio in Saitama. Every day, I was surrounded by changing atmosphere in the sky during the day, and in the reflections on the pond at night. The deep darkness of the night, or the shadow-light of the sun, is not entirely black or white. The observation



Fig.9. Shindo, 波の間に間に *Nami no Ma ni Ma ni*, (detail), 2016.

is reflected in the color palette of the work: navy, purple and a hint of white, which is also influenced by the *Eclipse* series by Mr. Azumaya, who spoke to me of the color and waves of the ocean in *Hokkaido*, the north island of Japan, where he grew up. Among these remainders of someone, I admit that the work carries a strong sense of my grandmother, which was totally unintended. It is evident in the way it appears, like ‘skin’ which is very thin and pale, particularly an old person’s skin, through which you can see veins, purple-blue. It also made me aware of my own being as a part of the continuation of life, succeeded from my grandmother through my mother. It is simple and obvious, hence, forgettable, yet a truth that comes through these ‘transfer’ processes.

4.2 Prolonging Life through a Poetic Translation

a.

Let me point out that the idea of ‘survival’ is also essential to Walter Benjamin’s theory of translation, discussed in his text, *The Translator’s Task*. For Benjamin, translation, which tends towards attaining to “pure language”, is a difficult and even impossible task. Yet, such translation is described as “prolonging the life of the original” Benjamin insists that “it is translation that is ignited by the eternal continuing life of the work and the endless revival of language”¹⁷. In Antoine Berman’s “creative interpretation”¹⁸ of Benjamin’s theory, the ability of translation to prolong the life of the original is explained as the transformation of the original, and the language into which the original is translated is also metamorphosed. It is understood that this ability is expressed through ‘a poetic translation’.

I observe that my research, which intends to embody the untranslatable through a poetic translation, has prompted such transformation and metamorphosis. It can be found in the relationship between three works (*Understanding of misunderstanding* [figure 10], *Topology between the*

¹⁷ “The Translator’s Task, Walter Benjamin,” 157.

¹⁸ Trans. the author, Kishi, “Antoine Berman ‘Honyaku no Jidai: Benjamin ‘Honyakusha no Shimei’ Chukai’ wo Yomu [‘Reading Antoine Berman’s ‘L’âge de la traduction: “La tâche du traducteur” de Walter Benjamin, un commentaire’],” 42.

Three [figure 11], and *Gesture of Shadows* [figure 12]) which I presented earlier. These works are my attempts to poetically translate and embody the untranslatable in my grandmother's enunciation. And now it can be said that it was the *life* of the mountain, named Aso, which I felt to be untranslatable. Across these works, what 'Mt. Aso' means to me keeps transferring and moving between objects (clay sculptures and works on paper), footages (video) and shadows (images). It can be seen as the life of Mt. Aso, embodied in my grandmother's enunciation, surviving through continuous transformations. And I express that 'I', who is the subject of this art of translation, have also metamorphosed. At the beginning of this research, my body felt empty, being exhausted by the kind of translation which only consumes the subject of the translator and artist. But the sense of emptiness was eventually filled with fertile silence, from which nuanced shadows emerged. To my eyes, they appear in the last video work as images of a silhouette of a hand, a contour of mountain, and a monochrome butterfly.

b.

Having described the appearances of these images, I declare that I do not expect them to match with others' perceptions of these works. In fact, the appearance of my artwork also shifts every time I return to it. It is as though the life embodied in the work escapes from us in order to survive, to remain untranslatable. Regarding this survival, Didi-Huberman adds an inspiring perspective to Aby Warburg's thought that it "sets art history in motion"¹⁹. It is stated that as well as "incarnating the survival", there is also "a 'living' reciprocity between the act of knowing and the object of knowledge"²⁰, in other words, "the relationship between the 'spectator' and 'movement'". This perspective leads him to state that "the scholar (an art historian) must set himself in motion, displace his body and his point of view, proceed to a sort of transfer"²¹. I argue that his statement about an art historian can apply to anyone who perceives and reflects on artworks. For instance, they can be the audience as well as the artist, encouraged to be 'in motion', for their bodies and views to be 'displaced' (to be 'outside').

In the relationship between knowing and knowledge, and spectator and movement, we can also refer to the French Philosopher, Jacques Rancière's argument in his book *The Emancipated Spectator* that the spectator, in the contemporary art context, possesses a capacity to translate the work poetically. The text is based on his speech given to artists at the Fifth International Summer Academy of Frankfurt in 2004, and first appeared as an article in *Art Forum* in 2007. His argument is based on a critique of the traditional relationship between the learner and the schoolmaster. He articulates a work (an artwork or a text book) as 'the third' containing 'irreducible distance'. I

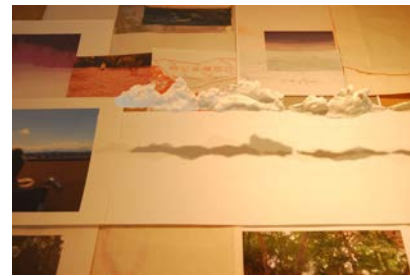


Fig.10. Shindo, *Understanding of misunderstanding*, (installation detail), 2013.



Fig.11. Shindo, *Topology between the Three*, (video still), 2014-2016.



Fig.12. Shindo, *Gesture of Shadows*, (video still), 2016.

¹⁹ Didi-Huberman, "Forward_Knowledge: Movement (The Man Who Spoke to Butterflies)," 16.

²⁰ Ibid., 18.

²¹ Ibid.

understand that his use of the world ‘distance’ owes to Benjamin (and Derrida)’s articulation of distance between the translator and pure language, and the 19th century educator, Joseph Jacotot’s critique on “the pedagogical relationship” within which “a gulf”²² between schoolmasters and students is never overcome. Yet for Rancière’ such distance is not considered to be unattainable or divisional, but “simply the path from what she already knows to what she does not yet know but which she can learn just as she has learnt the rest...”²³. Based on his understanding that ‘learning’ is to practise “the art of translating”, as though composing a poem, he claims, “The spectators also acts, like the pupil or scholar. She observes, selects, compares, interprets... She composes her own poem with the elements of the poem before her... They are thus both distant spectators and active interpreters of the spectacle offered to them.”²⁴

In terms of the act of ‘seeing’, and the spectator’s role in an exhibition context, I was given inspirational perspectives from the participants²⁵ of the reading night event that I organised during my exhibition, 目読_Mokudoku, in HAGI ART and Cafe [figure 13]. In reading the sections from

these essays: Benjamin’s ‘The Task of Translator’ and Rancière’s ‘The Emancipated Spectator’ in both Japanese and English versions, one of the participants, a dancer, expressed that the act of seeing is not only visual, but bodily, especially in an installation art context, as your body keeps moving to see the work. Another participant, a photographer, suggested considering a mode of seeing through a ‘detached gaze’ (which is her translation of the Japanese expression: *bonyari miru*, literally meaning to see with vague consciousness).

Both articulations led me to notice the possibility of a poetic translation through a particular mode of seeing that can be guided by a body that moves, and a gaze that drifts. Through this movement and drifting, in other words, ‘transference’, a poetic place (spatiality) opens in between the artwork and the viewer, which allows one to experience an artwork as s/he engages with the work whose appearance, meaning and expression do not only belong to the artist’s sense.

Here I shall discuss an experimental film in which my last exhibition in Melbourne is seen through the eyes of others [figure 14-17]. The eyes are those of my friends²⁶ who are also filmmakers. Even though I do not deny the documentation aspect of this film, I would call it a new work. It was born out of their translation of something about the work that



Fig.13. *Reading Night*, (an public event as part of 目読_Mokudoku), HAGI ART and Cafe, Tokyo, 2015.

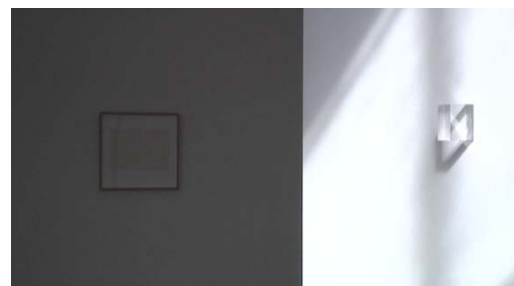


Fig.14. Utako Shindo with Dimple Rajyaguru and Ben Andrews, *The Untranslatable, a Poetic Place*, (film still), 2016. <http://www.utakoshindo.info/exhibition/where-it-is/>

²² Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. Gregory Elliott, 10.

²³ Ibid., 11.

²⁴ Ibid., 13.

²⁵ I thank all the participants who happened to all be artists and/or academics: Celine Marks, Elodie Hiryczuk, Kaoru Murakami, Aya Murakami, Mitsuhiro Yamagiwa, Anna Sakurai and Arthur Huang for joining the night and sharing their knowledge and experience as artists and spectators.

²⁶ I thank to the cinematographer, Dimple Rajyaguru and the film director, Ben Andrews.

attracted their eyes, but not the work itself as I know it. When the footage was shot by these people, my body and perspective, as an artist, were literally displaced. It turned out that their footage, as their poetic translations, presented to me, in a far more accurate way, the essence, hence, the life of the work. It seems to me that it was captured in how their eyes (through the camera lens) moved between various images, which appear and disappear from/into (within) the installation artwork. The way the footage becomes unfocused interestingly resonates with a kind of gaze that is detached. These images in motion are so beautiful and enigmatic that I simply responded to the beauty and the enigma when I processed and joined this footage together. I feel that this film attains to the same qualities (or the life itself) that I was first attracted to in my grandmothers' poetic enunciation: the subtlety in nuances and the slowness of movements. Indeed, at the time of filming, I observed that the cinematographers' bodies also moved only very slowly; so did they breathe.



Fig.15-17. Shindo with Rajyaguru and Andrews, *The Untranslatable, a Poetic Place*, (film still), 2016.

c.

Regarding the title of the film, '*The untranslatable, a poetic place*,' it sums up my answer to Derrida's question, 'What is the place for translation?'. To unfold this summary, I come back to my research question, 'How can an art practice embody the untranslatable?' The answer to my research question, for now, is: the untranslatable is a poetic place, where nuanced shadow transfers from/into fertile silence. This place can be articulated with an installation artwork comprised of transference, through projection, reflection, trace and emergence, between image and material, sound and texture, atmosphere and architecture, and subject and object.

I discuss that such an installation artwork can join together that which has been divided into disciplines: drawing, printing, photography, sound, moving image, and architecture. They come together by the mediation of 'nuanced shadow'. What I mean by 'nuanced shadow' is 'light shadow' ('shadow light'), which drifts and shimmers reticently and monochromatically, appearing as plane of color or flash of light that is transformed into an image through one's perception. The concept of 'nuanced shadow' can transfer one's perceptual attention from bold to subtle, from substance to immateriality, or from the metaphysical to metaphorical. It can, in turn, metamorphose the 'I' of the subject. (For the final installation artwork, I employed all these understandings, to embody the untranslatable.)

The embodiment of the untranslatable is meaningful, not only because it can contribute to 'prolonging the life of the original', but also because it can prompt one's experience of perceiving and reflecting on the world in a richer and more poetic manner. I consider that this experience

occurs in a poetic place that is itself the untranslatable, which remains and survives beyond the limitation of one's life. Hence, through employing my understandings of 'fertile silence', 'nuanced shadow' and 'transference', I intended the last installation artwork to become a place that embodies the untranslatable, and prompts an audience's poetic translation.

d.

These images [figure 18-19] of my final installation artwork at Sutton Projects, entitled, *ここがどこなのか_ where it is here_ どうでもいいことさ_it does not matter_ どうやって来たのか_how I have got here_忘れられるかな_can I forget*, convey visually what I have just discussed above. Though I also consider these documentation images as another poetic translation of my work—hence different from the original—I admit that these images carry and share my sensitivity towards the subtle shifts in variant shades and textures in an image and in space. They are taken by Christian Capurro, who has documented my installation works over the last 10 years. Capurro is a master artist whose language of art I highly admire as it draws our attention from what is obvious to the unnoticeable in the everyday. I consider these images to be representative the whole.

Hence, I shall only discuss a few of them; what contributed to make the work appear in the gallery space, in the way these documentations/poetic translations (the film and the photos) present. There are two walls in this installation artwork, which are newly and temporarily built [figure 20-22]. One is built near the entrance, and the other is built in front of the existing wall where the visual images on paper and the video works are shown. The first wall functions to make space through which audiences can transition from one

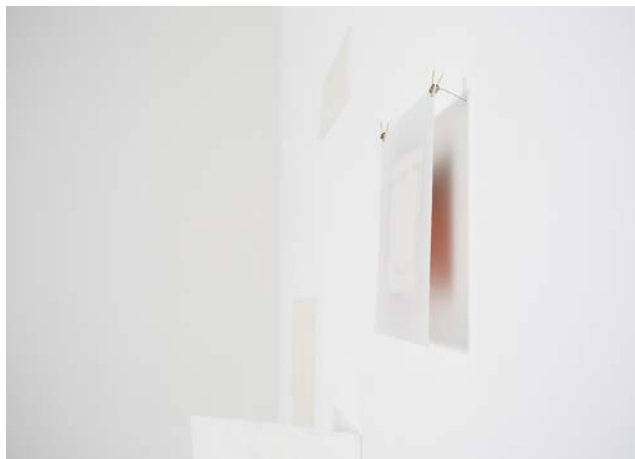


Fig.18-19. Photo by Christian Capurro, from Utako Shindo, *ここがどこなのか_ where it is here_ どうでもいいことさ_it does not matter_ どうやって来たのか_how I have got here_忘れられるかな_can I forget*, (middle view), Sutton Projects, Melbourne, 2016.

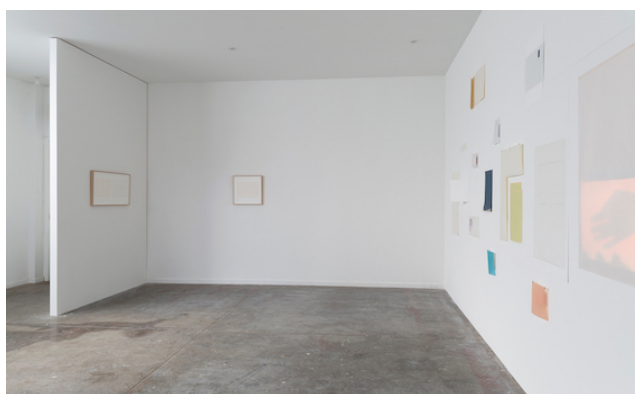


Fig.20(above), 21-22 (next page). Photo by Capurro, from Shindo, *ここがどこなのか_ where it is here_ どうでもいいことさ_it does not matter_ どうやって来たのか_how I have got here_忘れられるかな_can I forget*, (installation view), 2016.

experience to another. The second wall intends to become a base (*ba*/field) from/into which various images appear and disappear. In this wall, there is a hole, through which the video works are projected onto the backside of the layered sheets of paper. The space behind the wall metaphorically expresses ‘darkness’ where the ephemeral light must pass. The other side (front) of the wall is covered with more light, whose degrees are reticently dimmed by the papers that hang in front of the window, so that the flash of light from the darkness can be witnessed. To build these walls, I borrowed the hands of my friends²⁷, as well as my husband, Manabu Kanai, who acted as the Greek *Demiourgos* (Demiurge), the architect and the creator, giving order to the chaos of *chora*. As an artist working with an existing space, this tailoring of the architecture of the gallery for the exhibition, which was undertaken as quietly and precisely as we could, has proved important to carefully re-create the sense of space-time necessary to the intention of the artwork. This necessity might be recognised as the experience and knowledge that the artwork carries.



4.3 Longing, Love, a Form of Prayer

a.

My research question— “How can an artwork embody the untranslatable?” —consequently leads me to ask another question: “What kind of experience and knowledge do I want to provide through presenting my artwork?”. It was a particularly important question in preparing for the final exhibition. As a way to approach and answer this question, I found it helpful to recall my own encounters with artworks—during my candidature—that imparted knowledge to me and made a strong impression on me. Here, I shall touch on a few works— all both artistic and architectural— which were informative and inspiring to me in the attempt to clarify the kind of experience and knowledge to be conveyed through the final installation work that embodies the untranslatable.

I remember seeing the light coming through one of many window slits of the Berlin Jewish Museum, designed by Daniel Libeskind [figure 23]. I saw it from the bottom of the stairs, which



Fig.23. Daniel Libeskind, *the Berlin Jewish Museum*, Berlin, 2001. Photo by the author.

²⁷ Many thanks to the artist, Dimple Rajyaguru and the artist, Jeremy Bakker.

stretch straight to the top floor as if reaching to the sky. The light was leaving a residue, symbolically, along the wall of the stairs [figure 24]. On the same trip to Europe, I also visited the Judenplatz Holocaust Memorial in Vienna, known as the Nameless Library, designed by Rachel Whiteread. I recall how I sat and walked around for a long time to look at and listen to the silence. The afternoon light was slowly moving across as if giving warmth to the stone spines of nameless books.

I open a small catalogue for Casa Luis Barragán, which I visited in Mexico City. The photographs in the catalogue remind me of the miraculous, peaceful and inspiring environment inside of his house and studio [figure 25-26]. I remember how it was filled with the play of shadow light on the differently textured and colored surfaces: that of paintings, sculptures, furniture, floor mats, walls, tree trunks and so on. I recall something untranslatable in the stillness of these objects, which provoked a feeling of awe; even more so, a sense of longing.

A similar kind of emotion hit me strongly when I visited the statue of *Miroku-Bosatsu banka-shiyui* in *Chugu-ji* temple in Nara City. The wooden statue with lacquered finish appeared to be so soft that its contour blended into the dark depth of the temple. At the same time, it gently absorbed and reflected the light coming through the front entrance, left open [figure 27]. The wind also quietly blew in and touched the curved drapes of the robe. It seemed that its eternal beauty was most graceful and loving.

Regardless of historical, cultural and locational differences in the contexts of these works, together they have drawn my attention towards shifting lights, nuanced shadows, and a sense of sphere that breathes in between the object and myself. My fascination with these atmospheric qualities is, indeed, perpetual, as though they symbolically indicate something about my longing. I feel (or seek) some form of life, or the soul, in these atmospheric qualities, which invites me to visit and re-visit (through remembering), both patiently and lovingly. This observation led me to consider that ‘a sense of longing’ and ‘the longing for love’ is the kind of emotional experience and knowledge that the final work shall transfer.

b.

The final exhibition [figure 28, 29] is entitled ここがどこなのか *where it is here*_どうでもいいことさ *it does not matter*_どうやって来たのか *how I have got here*_忘れられるかな *can I forget*. The title was given to the work at an early stage, in order to anchor the direction of its making. It functioned as a reminder of



Fig.24. Libeskind, *the Berlin Jewish Museum*, 2001. Photo by the author.



Fig.25-26. Luis Barragán, *Casa Luis Barragán*, Mexico City, 1948.



Fig.27. *Chuguji-Temple*, main building, Nara.1969 (originally 7th Century). Photo by the author.

a kind of experience and knowledge that I would like to convey with this work. That is the sense of the longing for love (a kind of motherhood, an immanent love). For this, I borrowed the first line of a 70s Japanese song, which is written by the internationally regarded Japanese musician, Haruomi Hosono²⁸, entitled 恋は桃色 *Love is Pink*.

The first line goes like this: “ここがどこなのか

— *where it is here*— どうでもいいことさ *it does not matter*— どうやって来たのか *how I have got here*— 忘れられるかな *can I forget*”.

The entire song conveys one’s feeling of love (romance) which drifts metaphorically in a shifting atmosphere. The expression of the words felt as gentle as the shifts in atmosphere, which my video works capture. The lyrics and rhythm together carry the sense of the world which is felt so differently and is so beautiful that one who is in love forgets and

accepts everything. The first line also appealed to me as a poetic prayer, which prays with longing for the love that is grace, mercy and affection, which the *Miroku-Bosatsu hanka-shiyui* statue in *Chugu-ji* temple in Nara, embodies. The nuanced shadows that the statue carries around in the dim interior of the temple were reminiscent of Tanizaki’s recognition of shadows as a nuance of love.

c.

Let me further elaborate on my visit to the *Miroku-Bosatsu hanka-shiyui* statue in *Chugu-ji* temple, a nunnery that is located in *Ikaruga*, on the periphery of Nara, an ancient capital of *Yamato* (Japan)²⁹. The temple is surrounded by the quiet neighbourhood beyond an uncultivated, open field with the backdrop of mountains [figure 30]. It is this *milieu* (*fudo*)³⁰ of Nara that nurtured the culture of *waka*

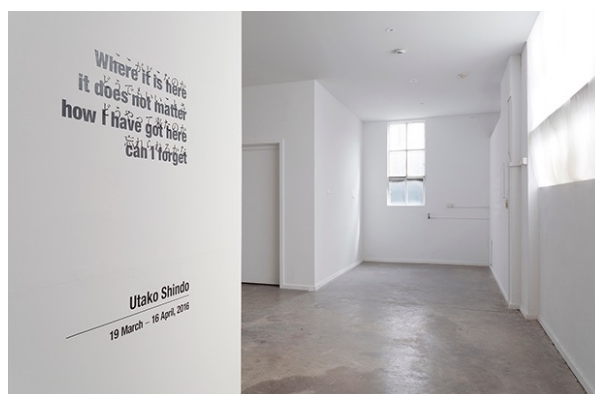


Fig.28-29. Photo by Capurro, from Shindo, ここがどこなのか_ *where it is here*— どうでもいいことさ *it does not matter*— どうやって来たのか *how I have got here*— 忘れられるかな *can I forget*, (installation view), 2016.



Fig. 30. *Ikaruga*, Nara. Photo by the author. 2015.

²⁸ Hosono is recognised internationally, and known for his pioneering ‘ジャパニーズ ロック Japanese rock’ during the 70s and 80s, in terms of how Japanese words can come together with the rhythm of rock and roll.

²⁹ *Yamato* is the older name for Japan. The geographical areas of ‘Yamato’ and ‘Japan’ differ. The former was much smaller and was a country, not a nation.

³⁰ Here, I avoid using the word, ‘landscape’. I discuss that the idea of ‘landscape’ presents the Western view of the relationship between humans and nature, which differs from how Japanese engaged with nature before modernisation, (modernisation means Westernization in Japan). In fact, the Japanese word for landscape, which is ‘*Fukei*’, was coined newly when the concept of ‘landscape’ was introduced in the first period of modernisation. The concept of *Fudo*, was created by the modern philosopher, Tetsuro Watsuji, as a critical response to the idea of *Fukei*, expressing the Japanese way of engaging with nature. *Fukei* literally means ‘air vista’. *Fudo* literally means ‘air land’. Hence, humans are part of the atmosphere and the ground, whereas, in the West, humans are separated, through vision, from nature. *Fudo* is normally translated as ‘Climate and Culture’ in English, but it is interpreted by the French geologist and philosopher, Augustin Berque, as the French notion of *milieu*, which originally means ‘in-between’, ‘medium’ or ‘*ma*’ space-time. The original meaning also differs from the normal English translation of *milieu*, which is ‘environment’. For these reasons, I find that *milieu* (*fudo*) is the more appropriate term for describing the human-nature connection through nature, which shaped the ancient *Nara*.

(the classical Japanese verse) for many years, before its base was moved to Kyoto.

The figure of the *Miroku-Bosatsu* (Maitreya, the future *Buddha*, whose being exceeds sexual difference) ‘sits with one foot on another thigh’ (*banka*) and ‘thinks and sees to it’ (*shiyui*) by almost fully closing its eyes; its finger lightly touching its cheek³¹ [figure 31]. Its graceful face is known for wearing the ‘Archaic smile’, which is the signature of ancient Greek sculptures. Nara was the last destination of the Silk Road, through which Buddhism was introduced via Korea. Thus, there was, not only conceptual, but physical connections between ancient Japan and Greece.³²

My visit was accompanied by the book entitled *Yamato-ji Junrei - A Pilgrimage to Yamato Temples*, written by the modern Japanese art critic, Shinichiro Kamei. Kamei’s background is Catholic and he is an art critic of Western Modern Art, which makes his voice unique and means that he never blindly praises his culture. Yet, he expresses his difficulty in treating these statues as objects for critique. His reason is not that they are located outside of museum contexts, but simply that they are originally made for a different purpose: for prayer.

Though the statue of *Shiyui* with its dreaming-like expression is compared to Rodin’s *The Thinker*, which shows the modern man in both the fierceness and vulnerability of his thought, Kamei points out the fact that *Miroku-bosatsu* is actually in pain as it “throws its own body away” in order to be “transformed [to emerge]” into this world for salvation³³. One could hardly believe such suffering from just looking at the statue. As Kamei writes, “the statue looks as though it is sitting on the spring hill, remembering the lover in far distant India”³⁴. Hence, this sense of ‘love’ or ‘affect’ carried by the *Miroku-Bosatsu* statue has a more profound effect when one realises that “its elegance is in the balmy soul, which is actually suffering.”³⁵

History tells us that the Nara period was filled with fights between the local powers. The grief of the *Nara* people is also expressed quietly but in many verses of *waka*. I imagine the pain caused when *Miroku-Bosatsu* transfers between the external and the internal worlds, ‘forming’ prayers for the *Nara* people. By knowing that Kamei, who was touched by the statue, was also living through the period of World War Two at that time, I wonder if his writing might also have been a form of prayer³⁶.

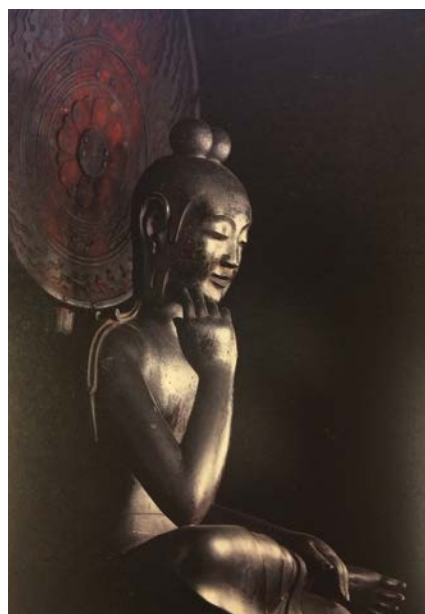


Fig. 31. *The Miroku-Bosatsu statue*, Chugu-ji Temple, Nara, 7th Century.

³¹ After filming the video work *Gesture of Shadows*, I notice that the way the shadow moves, weightlessly, resonates with the light gesture and touch that *Mirokubosatsu* expresses through its hand.

³² According to Kamei, this shows that the ancient culture of *Yamato* was more open and “broad-minded” than the traditional Japanese culture that informs non-Japanese people’s typical image of Japan.

³³ Trans the author, Kamei, *Yamato-ji Junrei [A Pilgrimage to Yamato Temples]*, 84.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., 85.

³⁶ If I am allowed to make a comparison between a religious statue and a human, let me express that my memory of the statue, which carries shades of love and longing, brings my image of my grandmother, wearing her gentle face. Since her dementia has progressed much further, it reveals what has been deeply embedded: the unforgettable memory of ‘separation’ that happened nearly a century ago. Until recently, no one had seen her expressing grief, instead of a balmy smile, on her face. I understand that this separation was not entirely tossed about by fate, but by the conflicts and fights between humans, regions and nations over profits, fame and pride.

This visit also made me ‘think and see to’, the grief of people who have lost their loved ones or their own lives in those conflicts and fights still continuing today between humans, regions and nations over profits, fame and pride. What strikes me is the meaninglessness of dividing the world into prosaic expressions such as ‘us’ and ‘them’, ‘good’ and ‘evil’, ‘right’ and ‘wrong’, or even ‘light’ and ‘dark’. But these seem to be the views more and more shared in the world today. I feel powerless, and at the same time I also want to remain foreign from them. But it is a difficult task.

d .

When I feel challenged, I often come back to reading *Letters to a Young Poet*, which the Austrian poet, Rainer Maria Rilke, addressed to a young man. I listen to him, perhaps, through the images of my mother and my supervisor, Elizabeth Presa, who both read Rilke, and who both have shown me how to live one’s life lovingly (with a subtle sense of humor!), though it still remains a difficult task for me. Rilke writes,

... dear sir, to be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and to try to love the *questions themselves* like locked rooms and like books that are written in a very foreign tongue. Do not now seek the answers, which cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live every day. *Live* the questions now.³⁷

In the letter, he encourages a young man to, “remember that all beauty in animals and plants (“patiently and willingly uniting and increasing and growing”³⁸) is a quiet enduring form of love and longing”³⁹ This love and longing is for “a great motherhood” which Rilke recognises as a “common longing”⁴⁰. To Rilke, motherhood is not only found in “the mother’s beauty” or “a great remembering of the old woman”, but also in the physicality and spirituality of “man” (that contributes to the birth of life), which I take to include woman, and one who is neither mother nor grandmother, like myself. He claims that the idea of ‘motherhood’ undermines the opposition of “man and maid”, such that these “come together as *human beings*”⁴¹.

Interestingly enough, this idea of ‘motherhood’ relates to the idea of *chora*, in its proper sense before it is given form. In the article entitled ‘In-Between “Spacing” and the “Chora” in Derrida: A Pre-originary Medium?’, the Australian philosopher, Louise Burchill argues that the state of being pre-chora, is like “being motherhood”⁴², or “groundless ground”⁴³ that “engenders

³⁷ Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet*, 35.

³⁸ Ibid., 36.

³⁹ Ibid., 37

⁴⁰ Ibid., 38.

⁴¹ Ibid., 39.

⁴² Louise Burchill, “Deconstruction and the matricial space of ‘woman’,” (a paper presentation) in the conference *1966 And All That*, The School of Media Studies and Cultural Communications, The University of Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, June, 9, 2016.

⁴³ In her text, ‘In-Between “Spacing” and the “Chora” in Derrida: A Pre-originary Medium?’, Burchill discusses how the French philosopher, Michel Haar critiques Derrida’s interpretation of Plato’s *Chora* according to his concept of *différance*. In Haar’s critique, the idea of “groundless ground” is elaborated as a “conducting underlay” or “conducting medium”, haunting “a pure Apollonism”, to which, Haar contends, Derrida’s conception owes. It is fascinating how Burchill solves the problem here (the unresolved rival relationship between the spatio-sexual tropes and the typographical (artisanal) metaphors) when she concludes that, “differentiation in general” depends upon a certain “spatial milieu”—what Haar would name a “groundless ground”—revealed as such to be an “in-between” more “originary” than the play of differences it in-forms.” (Burchill, “In-Between “Spacing” and the “Chora” in Derrida: A Pre-originary Medium?”⁴⁷.)

movements”⁴⁴. In my context, these movements are transferences, which give birth to life: a life, that is to say, which gives an image to the untranslatable.

e.

This chapter has demonstrated how my research findings are expressed through my making and exploring an installation artwork, in which I intend to embody the untranslatable as a poetic place. On reflection, I consider that it is an attempt to prompt subtle and singular transformations and metamorphoses that can be experienced as “quiet, enduring form[s] of love and longing” or prayer. This attempt becomes possible through various processes of transference, as forms of poetic translation of love and longing, expressed in artworks, writings and people, which enables us to remain alive; to live.

⁴⁴ Burchill articulates that “for Democritus’ acception of “*rhuthmos*” designates, in fact, the “form in the instant that it is assumed by what is moving, mobile and fluid, the form of that which does not have organic consistency”. (Ibid.)

CHAPTER FIVE: Embodiment

In this last chapter, I discuss why I use the word ‘embody’ in my research, when I maintain that the untranslatable can be embodied as a poetic place, articulated with an installation art, through poetic translation. While the main argument continuously refers to a poetic translation, in which, as Berman describes it, the subject metamorphoses and the object transforms, this chapter adds a more personal, hence intimate, investigation into my own body, which I have only lightly touched on previously, in discussing the video works, *Gesture of Shadows* and *Topologies between the three*: where I observed that ‘I’ as the subject of this art of translation, metamorphosed.

This further investigation is designed to respond to the questions received after giving my PhD completion seminar in August 2016 in Melbourne. When asked: “Why do you use the word ‘embody’ to state that an artwork can ‘embody’ the untranslatable?” And, “How does your own body experience the process of poetic translation?” These questions forced me to pay closer attention to my own body, and my state of being in-between disciplines, languages and locations. I admit that it feels vulnerable writing about my being and my body in this context. But the other bodies that are important to my research, and that I have already discussed—the statue of *Mirokubosatsu*, and the body of my grandmother—are also in a sense vulnerable. Thereby, I begin by readdressing their beings. This leads me to reconsider the notions of *bokahi* and *bokahi-bito*, onto which I reflect my body, which often feels vulnerable as an artist and a translator. I, then, discuss how the body of *bokahi-bito*, which contains *utsu* structure (empty, hollow, *ma*) as a fundamental architecture, fascinates me in connection with the meaning of my name, Utako, written 詩子 in Chinese character (depicting word-temple=poetry (詩) and child (子))¹. This highly self-reflective writing period coincided with my moving house and undertaking a short term artist-in-residency program. Hence, the second part of this chapter, which includes my journal writings, reflects how these events allowed me to face up to my existence as an artist, a translator, and a woman.

5.1 Vulnerable Body, an Emptied Container

a.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the statue of *Mirokubosatsu* embodies what has transferred from the external world into this world. As Kamei describes: “(i)t throws its own body away” in order to be “transformed [to emerge]” into this world for salvation². What could be a painful process is unnoticeable, just by looking at the statue. It instead holds an elegant smile on its face, to which its finger is gently attached. In a seeming contradiction, its being is weightless as though it is dispersing all the grief in the world, in the way that the spring wind cleanses the world, cutting across the hills and mountains, through a field of grasses, from somewhere far away.

The statue’s weightlessness within an absolute presence resonates with how I feel about my grandmother in recent years, during which her dementia began and progressed, as did this research

¹ While the latter character often accompanies a girl’s name, the former character represents an architecture of poetry.

² Trans. the author, Kamei, *Yamato-ji Junrei [A pilgrimage to Yamato Temples]*.

project³. I have been sensing her living in between being life and death, dying and awakening. Her eyes and hands move slowly as she speaks, following the light coming through the window. Both the statue of *Mirokubosatsu* and the body of my grandmother embrace the eternal silence from which we have risen and will fall back. I do not need to literally touch their bodies in order to feel my soul trembles with their transferring. Their bodies stay here, in front of me, wearing ‘shadow light’ and gentle wind blowing from the mountains. As with *Mirokubosatsu*, who throws away its body, my grandmother has been gradually leaving ‘the sense of who she is’ behind, due to her dementia. This transferring could be painful but is itself invisible. Instead, it makes the unforgettable memory visible to others’ eyes, which shows the beautiful mountain and gives (provokes) a sense of longing for love. Similarly those who come and see the statue are guided to witness the elegance of shadow-light, and to pray for peace, and are in turn guided to remain alive. This is how I understand that *Mirokubosatsu* realises salvation, through embodying the quiet, invisible, endurable forms of love, or prayer.

b.

The very experience of being a translator is also invisible. The ‘invisibility’ of the act of translation, as discussed in Chapter One, is observed by the translator Tatsuya Nishiyama⁴ in the context of global translatability. Likewise, in my discussion of poetic translation, the event of transferring is invisible. It is when there is a struggle in transferring what is untranslatable that something becomes visible, as a new life, which is formed and engendered as a poetic work.

Here I attempt to describe the invisible events that occur in my body and my being when I experience a poetic translation, between semantic languages (English and Japanese)(i), between life (the world) and the language of art (ii). This attempt also demonstrates how I perceive fertile silence inside my body, from which nuanced shadows emerge as images, sounds or trembles (iii), to become a poetic work (art work) (iv).

(i)

Based on my experience of traversing the distance between Japanese and English, in translating between them, I have become conscious of an impact upon my art practice as well as my body. For instance, these two languages employ different syntaxes in their sentence constructions. A Japanese sentence has the following order: the subject (or sometimes no subject) - object - verb. Contrarily, Chinese and English follow the same order of subject - verb - object. This reverse or jump exhausts my brain. It doubles the time that I require to process translation. This larger gap extends the silence; broadens *ma* space time; deepens caesura. The harder it is, the greater it opens a spatial and temporal dimension—silence—from which a poetic work may emerge. My body is left with a feeling of extreme exhaustion. It is a kind of momentary death or cessation of being ‘I’. As an artist, this body being emptied can become a chance to embodying the soul of something else that is untranslatable.

This ‘else’ is *hoka* (外 or 他), the Japanese ancient concept, meaning outside, external or else. As explained in Chapter One, it is a brief *ma* or cesura, through which the spirit, the sacred or the

³ Interestingly, Mt. Aso became active during this period, in which it has been mostly smoking and occasionally erupted to make the source of the earth’s life visible, and to tremble us. Strangely enough, the largest eruption was coincided with my final exhibition period.

⁴ Trans. the author, Nishiyama, “Yakusha Kaisetsu: Honyaku Kono Sakusou suru Mono [Translator’s note: Translation, this entanglement],” 310.

unknown information arises and falls. These externals were believed to temporarily come into an object, called *Hokabi* (a wooden container whose inside is hollow; in other words, *utsu*: an original concept of *ma*), or to transfer into people, called *bokabi-bito* (bard, orphans, the nomadic), who remained socially peripheral or 'external'. Within this condition, both *bokabi* or *bokahibito* are able to embody the 'external', which prompted the birth of art. Since *boka* now also means 'foreign' in contemporary Japan, I consider the body of the translator to be *bokabi* and the subject of the translator to be *bokabi-bito*. Their embodiment of the 'foreign' (the external) can be expressed as the embodiment of the untranslatable, as what evokes the emergence of art.

(ii)

The notions of *bokabi* and *bokabi-bito* express what makes an artwork. It is the external, the soul, the spirit, or the untranslatable that which transfers into a body and transforms from fertile silence to nuanced shadow. I argue that, for this to happen, a translator and an artist can play the role of *bokabi-bito*, if their bodies are ready to be emptied, in order to invite the external: to embody the untranslatable. When the soul is guided to another body (material), it is the beginning of the birth of a poetic work, an artwork.

Perhaps it can be said that to be a true translator/artist, in other words *bokabi-bito*, one has to stay at the margin of any society. In order to remain foreign to both languages from/into which s/he translates, it is not possible for one to rest in one place permanently. To some extent, this is reflected in the way a translator takes certain distances from linguistic systems that are attached to value systems. The same can be said about an artist who does not comfort her/himself in one expression, one value, one discipline, but instead keeps moving from what has become already familiar to her/him.

Hokahibito are those who drift and migrate, temporarily or seasonally. It resembles the cycle of an insect, which metamorphoses from egg to a butterfly via pupa. The purpose is similarly to form the beautiful work, the wings that fly like an angel. For a long time, the soul stays inside the hollow, listening to the silence, patiently awaiting the moment to fly out. Though the life of a butterfly is short, like a flash that rises from the darkness, the beauty remains traveling the world to touch our heart even if the object dies. In a similar way, if the language, the country, or the culture of the original work might die, the life of the work remains alive through translation. Over time it will be reborn. Agnes Martin writes, "When the beautiful rose dies beauty does not die, nor is it impaired. Beauty is unattached."⁵ Likewise, *bokabi-bito* shall give birth to a poetic work through its own metamorphosis, in migrating and experiencing a momentary death in time.

It is not always easy to live as *bokabi-bito*. Often, I have tried to pressure myself to settle down. However, something has stopped me doing so. My last move, which happened after giving the completion seminar, made me finally conscious that this way of living actually helps me to hold an empty space in my body and being into which something else can enter. During my PhD project, I have moved between eight districts (city/town/village), three languages, eight studios and five residences. It is not entirely clear why this happens; it depends in part on the place where my research or creative activity takes place, on my financial situation, on whom I live with; but there is another unknown flow that takes me away from staying in one place. In reflection, during this

⁵ A. Martin, "When I think of art I think of beauty...", in *Paintings, Writings, Remembrances*, ed. Arne Glimcer, (London: Phaidon, 2011), 168.

period, I have learnt to stay light and mobile, in both a perceptual and physical sense. Within a day, *bokabi-bito* lightly moves between ‘double seeing’, in Sallis’ sense. Within a year, s/he migrates between homes, like a seasonal bird, an itinerant theatrical troupe⁶ or a minstrel. So s/he is not homeless, entirely. There are people and places that welcome her, providing her with temporal habitation and engagement with the place. Hence, leaving the place, thing, people, is painful and almost breaks my heart every time. But at the same time, it enables me to pay attention to the nuance of love, (which Tanizaki describes as shadows) to form an enduring form of prayer.

(iii)

My being dwells in the body that I was given from my parents who named it *Utako*. As discussed previously, the concept of ‘poetry’ became important to my research project since it connects the philosophy of translation (Benjamin), philosophy of art (Hölderlin), and philosophy of Zen (Izutsu). In my understanding, all of these employ a poetic use of language to embody the untranslatable, and open a poetic place between the work and readers/audiences/artists. Here I would like to add another reason why the word ‘poetry’ became significant in my research. It connects my own being and body to my PhD research. The meaning of the name, *Utako*, given to me, is poetry (child) in Japanese. The word, ‘poetry’ in Chinese character, is written 詩. It is comprised of two parts, ‘word (言)’ (left part) and ‘temple (寺)’ (right part). Poetry is an architectural place, as in a temple of the word. This connection was discovered in the final year of my PhD and came as a total surprise. I had not known how my own name could contribute to my research project. Yet at least this realisation allowed me to pay attention to a human body, as well as poetry, as a site for embodying the untranslatable.

According to the American composer and performer, who is now based in Melbourne, David Shea, the architecture of a temple is not that of a building but is designed as a place in which the sound produced by chanting creates an overtone⁷. Hence, it is understood that the temple is an empty hollow, where the sounds fulfill and produce certain vibrations that prompt resonances externally. I add to what fulfills the empty space, the nuance shadow, shadow light. I witnessed it in the temple where the statue of *Mirokubosatsu* dwells. In Japanese, the word that describes how the spirit (god) descend to human being temporarily, is *yongou*, depicted in Chinese character as 影向 (Shadow Coming). In this way, in Japanese and Chinese contexts, the architecture (void) and the image (shadow), as well as the sound (vibration), have always been symbolically understood as something sacred or unknown that comes to us.

(iii & iv)

I experienced this 影向 (Shadow Coming) at its closest and clearest in the last destination⁸ of my temporal migration during my candidature: the Bogong Alpine Regions along the border between Victoria and N.S.W. in Australia, and after coming back to Melbourne.

⁶ Yasujiro Ozu's film, *Floating Weeds* (*Ukigusa* 1959) depicts well the life of modern *bokabi-bito*, in my understanding.

⁷ Shea, “Architecture and Sound” (a lecture)

⁸ Initially, this two weeks residency experience in the Victorian Alpine region, Bogong, was planned as a post-doctoral project, for me to undertake after submitting my thesis. But because of this delay in my responding to the request and questions that were given at the completing seminar, I am now including the experience in this thesis.

Unexpectedly I experienced being emptied, as though embodying something untranslatable through being entirely immersed into Country (starting with capital C in accordance with how contemporary aboriginal people call it). It presented itself as nuanced shadow, rising and falling from and into fertile silence. My body, named Utako, a temple of a word, became a container to resonate with what came externally. It was experienced through my chasing the phantom of Bogong (a brown moth), with a video camera and a sound recorder, in the reflection of water, in the shapes of rocks and mountains, in the oscillating leaves, and so on.

The fragments of footage and sounds recordings resonate with the untranslatable, expressed and observed during my candidature, in my grandmother's enunciation and recalling Mt. Aso, in the interval between female bodies described by Irigaray *Where?*, in monochromatic reticence which Izutsu observes in nature, in the sensual beauty of dawn and dusk that Mitsuki depicted, in the spring which Chris Marker calls untranslatable, and in the subtle and patient form of prayer sung in Rilke's poetry.

While the film work will be completed after the submission of my thesis, I still would like to include some of my journal writings from and continuing after the Bogong Residency, as they possess the freshness (or the flesh of the body) of Bogong, while the feelings of being awakened and alive were still there in my body. They also touch on the indigenous knowledge, which is incomparably distinct, originating in this unique Country. It calls for our close attention and our care in co-living respectfully with the natural world. These writings are in transition, flying out from this PhD project, like the way a butterfly or a moth is guided by the cycle of the seasons, to somewhere and sometime.

5.2 My Body as a Site for the Embodiment

a.

(excerpt from my journal on 18.10.2016)

My second attempt to climb Mt. Bogong was accompanied by the woman⁹ who is believed to be guarded by the mountain spirits. She is extremely capable and equipped, and at the same time she stays alongside nature humbly and closely. In the mountain, the way she sat on the log appeared to be like a hermit who lives with the spirit [figure 1].

It is known that the mountain was originally called 'Warkawoolowler', meaning the mountain where people collected the Bogong moth in Waywurru and Dhudhuroa languages. The current name is after the word 'Bugung', meaning the brown moth in Dhudhuroa language. In continuation of this context, we followed the track that would have traced how the Aboriginal people had travelled to feast on the Bogong moths on the peak. Or it has always been the path drawn by the wind since the beginning. The evening before our walk was indeed memorably windy.

We walked along the track right up to the rocky area just before the peak, where the cloud and the snow let me cease from looking for the sites: one is supposed to be a key site to an Aboriginal people (e.g., some say that there are hand prints on the granite) and another is reported to be a moth aestivation site. Instead, we were presented with something different, but perhaps similarly awe-inspiring: the seas of mountains, which made me imagine the crowd of the Bogong moth flying towards us from far, far away. They were present for less than a half hour as the cloud cover quickly came to the point where we were.

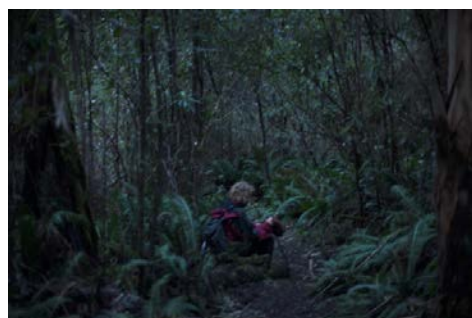


Fig. 1. Photo: the author.

⁹ I thank Madelynne Cornish, the co-director of Bogong Center For Sound Culture in Victoria, Australia.

Yet I was left with such a strong impression that the transference of the atmosphere leads to the transformation of the place [figure 2].

Something else also happened in this sacred mountain, called Bogong, which in the local Jaimathang language is believed to also mean 'big-fella'. The site of an event was inside of me, as I felt drawn back to my childhood by being fascinated with ephemeral and intangible things that kept moving around me. In trying to capture them with my extended ears (Zoom 4Hn and Rode NTG1) and eyes (Canon D5 Mark2), my being was becoming absorbed into the shifting nature. Simultaneously, my body was slowly emptied for something else (external) to enter into it. It came through the unaccountable shadow-light plays, and through the indecipherable silence between the sounds of leaves and creeks. Hence, I was not entirely surprised when I noticed myself bleeding like the way in which the white gum tree drips its juices. Though it was early for my usual cycle, a clue might be found in the full moon night three days ago after my first visit to Mt. Bogong where I had experienced an intense ascending and descending. Or, this unexpected blood can be seen as an experiential metaphor for the 'first' period, entering into the womanhood from a childhood. In any case, I was reminded of the fact that my body embraces a hollow which is regularly filled and emptied, being ready for a new form to emerge. I wondered if a link can be made between this cycle and the life cycle of an insect: how a larva (the active immature form of an insect, which also means ghost in Latin) becomes a pupa (inactive immature form of an insect), then metamorphoses to become an adult insect (or moth in this context).

At this point of residency, I have not seen any Bogong moths in the real (and it is likely I will not see them as the timing is a little earlier than their migration season). Yet I have seen the signs of their coming in shadows of trees and contours of mountains. I have witnessed the boundless sea of the mountains that showed an image of the crowd of moths nearing me. They have been captured by audio-visual materials with which I can now start working, and joining images and sounds together. I hope that something will emerge from them, like an imago flying out quietly. I also expect that in the process of making artwork, my body would embody a life again while it will be metamorphosed into... something that perhaps I cannot know at this point.

b.

(excerpt from my journal on 18.10.2016, 25.10.2016)

After our climb, the hermit lady said: "you were making an interesting sound" (while I was filming and recording). In our second walk together on a different track, she said: "I was listening to you" but she could not hear 'it' again. She described it in these words: "Something was awakened inside of you on Mt. Bogong".

Indeed, my body felt that it was being led by something else after climbing Mt. Bogong. The body was alert to something all day and night. It wandered to encounter appearances of something which evoked in me an imagining of how a Bogong moth would sound, look or feel. For instance, under the midday sunlight, I was looking at an old fallen leaf that I had picked up on Mt. Bogong: how it created shadows, doubled by the reflective light, on a sheet of paper [figure 3]. They shivered with a wind, like wings of a moth, as fragile as its short life. In another instance, which was in the early morning when the sun was just about to rise from the mountain ridge, I saw a clustering of fungus on a tree trunk by the lake Guy, coming out from a hole in the trunk, like the way a crowd of moths would fly out from a cave where they hibernate during the summer. As I looked up at the moths flying out along the trunk, morning birds were singing like bells, ringing at regular intervals. My body, while filming and recording, moved in accordance with the rhythm of the bell ringing, the shadow-light shifting and the serene air oscillating. I recall these encounters as highly sensual. Something about them appealed to me as symbolically female. It could be because the fallen leaf looked like intricate lace, and the hole of the trunk resembled a vagina.



Fig. 2. Video still: the author.



Fig. 3. Video still: the author.

Or, it was to do with my body being sexed female, which I experience more strongly during my periodical cycle. In any case, it was filled with a sense of life; with nuanced shadows of spring coming out from the fertile silence of winter.

This morning, 'my' body felt emptier than yesterday, almost like an ecdysis. My soul floated and drifted, a bit like a worried fire, looking for somewhere to land. Since all the footages and sound recordings are still digitally stored inside of the hard disk, my soul, instead, temporarily dwelled in the pieces of granite, leaves, barks and stones that I have collected since I started the residency. They are the simplest fragments of natural life that not only remind us of the beauty and the wonder of the world, but which actually embody and hold them. I thought that feeling emptied can never be easy but is worthwhile if it gives rise to life's metamorphosis and art's transformation, for embodying a world that is beautiful and wonderful. And I pondered whether what animates the world distinguishes us and nature, especially in the context of this land, whose original people possess quite different and distinct words¹⁰, images and sounds.

C.

(excerpt from my journal on 21.10.2016)

Last morning a moth began to enter into the realm of death in front of me, near the cabin window where I stay.

It happened right after I started to film her. What she showed me was a fragile, subtle death that left me with a feeling of ecstasy. The way it trembled and turned over felt too intimate and vulnerable to witness with naked eyes. (And, interestingly, the recording was blurry, as the focus of the lens had not been adjusted.) Its feeler kept shivering on and off. In between the silence, I could hear the sound of the shiver and also feel the air shaken by the shiver. I was so close to her that it felt that I was breathing together with the moth. This might have prompted me to inhale the life of her, which made my body start to tremble with an ecstatic sensation. In that process, the sensual feelings that had struck me on the mountain and at the lake came back to me, like waves of mountain oceans or a crowd of moths. The body that I touched was filled with awe-inspiring images and sounds. The absolute beauty descended, as though the soul of Bogong country transferred into the body, which perhaps belonged to the moth, not to me, in that instance.

After filming her about half hour, I placed her/him on the drawing paper with leaves that I had collected at Mt. Bogong last Monday. It was still moving very slowly, every several minutes or so. Today, when I came back to see her (I decide now that I call it 'she') around noon, she was in a different pose under the leaves. Her body and legs were slightly twisted in an awkward way, cast in the moment of death, which escaped me. So I realised that she had left this side of the realm [figure 4].

Earlier this morning, I was looking at the butterfly, originally from Chile, woven by the Indigenous people, which I have carried around with me for the last several years [figure 5]. It was sitting on a sheet of paper—printed Japanese text written by the artist for whom I translated the talk; it was particularly memorable as it was like poetry read spontaneously. And behind this paper, there was the book, an anthology of Rainer Maria Rilke's poetry. I was reminded of the Ninth Elegy of the Duine Elegies in which he writes about transformation, which is translated into Japanese as '転身', closer to



Fig. 4-5. Photo: the author.

¹⁰ Before I took the trip to Bogong, I had conversations with my aboriginal colleague (Tiriki Onus) and my friend (Rueben Brown) a musicologist specialized in Aboriginal aural cultures, about the untranslatability between Aboriginal languages and English. By having hundreds of Aboriginal languages in the old days, people learnt each other's languages and never had a common language to communicate, because the language meant their identity, which is staged and connected to the country. On the contrary, today, contemporary Aboriginal people use English in order to discuss the reconciliation and the reclaiming of their cultures (plural). In this crucial instance for maintaining their identities, the meaning of their cultures can never be fully brought to presence as the key concepts translated into English are, to a great degree, reduced, in conveying their original meaning and their significance in Aboriginal cultures: such as 'Dreamtime' and 'songline'. This untranslatability, which is remarkable in their challenges, made me fascinated with their languages: how they engender from this distinctive nature, or Country, which is also a 'new' land, where today other people from 'else' where, including myself, seek and cultivate their identity and belonging. This time of the residency, I am with people who are all 'Australians' yet their ancestral backgrounds are diverse. These people, as well as myself, have another language on top of these. That is the language of art. I wonder how it be enacted this situation where all sorts of linguistic and geographical gaps and disruptions exist: could art engender from them and embody the untranslatable? In my case, it is a kind of language that is poetic, which is untranslatable in a sense that it prompts transformation and metamorphoses in between the space of subject and object.

‘transference’. The butterfly, onto which I project myself, somehow looked different and alive, then. As though, in her process of dying, the moth’s soul was also transferring to it, while it did so into my body.

Now I do feel that I can fly a little bit better, more freely as a human, as an artist, from here to there. This is a kind of embodied poetry, the language of art that I experienced this time, which should be expressed in the works I will compose based on the materials and the inspirations that I have encountered and offered through the residency.

(The last section of The Ninth Elegy from Rainer Maria Rilke’s Duino Elegies)¹¹

Earth, isn’t this what you want: to arise within us,
invisible? Isn’t it your dream?
to be wholly invisible someday? - O Earth: invisible!
What, if not transformation, is your urgent command?
Earth, my dearest, I will. Oh believe me, you no longer
need your springtimes to win me over - one of them,
ah, even one, is already too much for my blood.
Unspeakably I have belonged to you, from the first.
You were always right, and your holiest inspiration is our intimate companion, Death.

Look, I am living. On what? Neither childhood nor future
grow any smaller Superabundant being
wells up in my heart.

d.

(excerpt from the second Journals on 25.10.2016)

When I returned from Bogong to Melbourne, ‘I’ felt that I was still in the dream that began during my first visit to Mt. Bogong. This might resonate with what my musicologist colleague, specialized in Indigenous languages, told me: Dreamtime is not the past but is continuing today. If I can say that I am now becoming part of Dreamtime, my life shall also continue along side with spirits of those bodies that have fallen or become deceased. In fact, in the mountains I observed many things falling¹²:

snow falling
rock falling
water falling
and
tree falling

Does any beauty fall onto me?¹³

butterfly flew up towards the sky
a tree fell down, in between my presence, hence in my absence

falling,
also happens when one falls in love

I brought one of them, the corpse of the moths, back with me to Melbourne.

On my way back, driving and following the hermit lady’s car, it came back: what she said about the sounds coming out from my body. I tried to remember what it was like for me, being in Mt. Bogong. I was in awe at what I saw, heard, felt, smelled and sensed in the incredible play of shadow light, and in the transformative atmosphere from winter to spring. In this particular moment of the year, spring, life and death come very close. Likewise, an act that joins opposing sexes (sexual union) can bring the sensation of transferring between dying and being alive, so intensely and lightly at the same time. This sensation resonates with the experience that I have had this time, which metamorphosed ‘I’, its body, while it embodied the soul, the untranslatable. I recall how Benjamin talks about translation, joining different fragments together lovingly. I remembered that

11 Original and English Translation are from: “Duino Elegies” in *The selected poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke*, edit. and trans. Stephen Mitchell, (London: Pan Books, 1987), 200-203. Japanese Translation is from: *Duino no hika*, trans. Tomio Tezuka, 3rd edition of revised edition (Tokyo, Iwanami Publishing, 2014), 75-76.

12 Notes from my diary on the first day of the residency (11, October, 2016.)

13 Giorgio Agamben’s essay on Cy Twombly’s sculptural works, ‘Falling Beauty’ inspired me to write this. (Tran. Sarah Moore. In *Cy Twombly: Sculptures 1992-2005*. [Munich: Bayerische Staatsgemaldsammlungen, 2006], 13-16.)

on the mountain, I was breathing loud and sighing sometime with voices, in response to the untranslatable wonder and beauty of Country, and being immersed into it.

The day after I came back from Bogong, I attempted to record how the sound would come out from the body, and to film the process. It was also a gesture of mourning the moth and welcoming the soul, in my own way. In the foreground, I set the corpse of the moth and the broken bottle that was found in the area; filled with soil and moss, it looked like a miniature of Mt. Bogong. In the background, there was 'my back to the world' (coincidentally this is the same as the title of Agnes Martin's work in which she engages with the world internally). In the footage, I observe that the dent of bones and muscles in my back gather shadows like a valley. The shoulder reflecting light resembles volcanic rocks exposed in the Victorian Alps. The body, the corpse of the moth, and the miniature mountain relate to each other [figure 6]. Even the awkward pose of the corpse overlaps with the body at its ecstatic moment. In that moment, it felt that the part of the body that I touched felt like wings or lips, between which there is an interval, as Irigaray would call it. The breath sounded sometimes like the blowing wind and crying birds that had surrounded me all the time while I was in Bogong. After all, there was a silent tremble in the depth of the body that I had never heard and felt before. It was perhaps the sound of the untranslatable being embodied, in this architecture of the body that is called 'a temple of a word.' It vibrated as the entire body became membrane, sounding life and death, which are the intimate companions of 'I,' (as an artist, a translator, a *hokahi-bito* and a woman).



Fig. 6. Video still: the author.

5.3 Conclusion

It was my grandmother, a woman who gave life to my mother who gave birth to me, whose enunciation of a beautiful volcanic mountain on Kyushu island was one of prompts for my PhD project. Her skin is as fragile, sensitive and white as the moth from another beautiful volcanic mountain in Victoria, which now stays with me. As the project got close to the end, the body, which I was given, has gone through a fully immersive experience of embodying the untranslatable.

This strong experience makes me reflect and express that I am called for translating the life, the soul of the earth and universe, its beauty, its wonder all that is untranslatable, into nuanced shadows by means of the language of art. It is mediated by this body of mine, named 詩子 [Utako], and the material bodies where the artwork is manifested, and the body of the audiences. And this is predominantly why I express this translation as 'embodiment of the untranslatable'.

I do this though letting the untranslatable come into the body with which 'I' am gifted to look after. This is the first transferring event that occurs in the embodiment of the untranslatable. For this, somehow 'I' leave the body, made as a female; this might coincide with the cycle of season, of tide or of period. Then, with an aid of other devices, the body shall become a good lens, a keen microphone, a reactive membrane, so that it can capture how the untranslatable falls into the body: the process of perception (=letting the soul into; receive). When it arises from the body, it is the time when nuanced shadows (art) engenders: the process of reflection (=letting the soul out; project). This is how I experience a poetic translation, as the artist, translator (or transferee) and a

woman, who becomes the medium for the process. She¹⁴ embodies the untranslatable, which will be then be passed onto another body; in my art context, this is the material body and the body of the audience. These processes are manifested in various transferences between appearance and perception, subjects and object, form and expression, or image and imagination.

¹⁴ Since this section 4 (in Chapter 7) is dedicated to talk about 'my' body sexed female, I use 'she' here. However, the rest of my thesis intends to discuss a poetic translation by an artist, translator, audience whose bodies can be either sex. My understanding of 'fertile silence', which relate to the notion such as be *ba/field*, *caesura*, *pre-chora*, groundless ground, or motherhood was expressed in the other sections of this chapter. In which I elaborated on the notion of 'motherhood' as what connects man and woman in reference to Rilke's fourth letter to young poet. Hence I understand that 'fertile silence' is not only found in bodies which are female in nature.

CONCLUSION

At the outset of this research project, two questions were posed: “What is the untranslatable in art that touches me lovingly and truthfully?”, and “How can an artwork embody the untranslatable?”. The thesis responded to these questions through a review of relevant philosophical, theoretical and artistic literature, and through an analysis of my and others’ artworks. By writing the thesis, I, as an artist researcher, sought to form a set of terms that can help us in thinking about the untranslatable in art; in turn, providing deeper understandings of the work of art.

This project, situated in the globalised academic and art context (or the era of global translatability), was prompted by my struggle, as well as fascination, with the untranslatability of art. The direct prompts were observed in these three things: my grandmother’s poetic enunciation, shifting shadows of an acrylic cube, and Jacques Derrida’s interpretation of *chora* and *ma* as a place for translation/transference, which is untranslatable¹. They were assigned crucial roles as elements of my ‘poetic translation’, underpinning research processes that were experiential and reflective, and material and semantic. These elements also generated the sub-questions that frame the chapters of this thesis: “What does it mean to ‘translate?’”, “How can the untranslatable be articulated?”, “How can ‘shadow’ be considered an artistic medium?”, and “How can ‘transfer’ be considered an artistic process?”

Walter Benjamin’s idea of ‘pure language’ was first investigated, as it is considered untranslatable. In his theory of translation, pure language is an intended object of translation, aimed at through a manner of literal translation (joining different pieces lovingly). I have discussed how this manner coincided with the way my first installation work for this project, *Understanding of Misunderstanding*, attempted to connect different locations visually and metaphorically with lines, shadows and blank space as a way to articulate the untranslatability of my grandmother’s poetic enunciation.

The origin of ‘pure language’, considered “expressionless and creative”², was then found in Friedrich Hölderlin’s theory of poetry (art) as ‘pure word’: *caesura* in verse. This finding shifted the focus of my discussion from translation to ‘a poetic use (function) of language’. Further elaboration on Hölderlin’s theory of poetry, Toshihiko Izutsu’s philosophy of Zen and Luce Irigaray’s philosophy of linguistic and psychoanalytic practice, have provided a useful set of terms that articulate ‘in-between spatiality’ from which poetic languages engender ‘*ba*/place’ and ‘interval’, characterised as ‘fertile silence’, and that which is ‘calm and enigmatic’, ‘pregnant with words’ and ‘transferable’.

These references, sourced broadly, have also liberated my research, which would otherwise have been constrained by the connotation of the untranslatable as ‘ineffable’ within Western

¹“Discussion A-1”, 90.

² “The Translator’s Task, Walter Benjamin,” 163.

metaphysics. In particular, Zen is inspiring as it aims at articulating the ineffable (the untranslatable) by the poetic; a semantic network of suggestive associations³. This poetic function was further examined through discussing how my video work, *Topologies Between the Three*, poetically translates my grandmother's enunciation by drawing our attention to a quiet opening between what is seen and shown, and what is said and heard.

A poetic language can also be visual, such as a variant of gray that is monochromatically reticent and metaphorically rich, *like* shifting shadows. This realisation allow me to hypothesise that ambiguous shadow can be a poetic language that can articulate the ineffable; in other words, a medium that can embody the untranslatable. This thesis is underpinned by my observation that the characteristic of shadow as immaterial and dependent parallels that of the appearance of an artwork.

As the research proceeded it became increasingly evident that the perceptual ambiguity of both shadow and an artwork have often been studied together in various philosophies and theories. For instance, in philosophies of translation, it is demonstrated that the force of poetic translation and the degree of ambiguity in appearance (such as shadow or image) both rely on our capacity to think and see through (called 'double seeing' by John Sallis⁴). In philosophies of perception, such multimodal perception is also examined, as it blurs the conventional division between the sensible (sensation) and the intelligible (cognition). These studies, indeed, increased our understanding of the centrality of elusive appearance (such as shadow or image) to the embodiment of the untranslatable.

In particular, the theory of Gestalt Shift (multimodal perception) has provided a highly useful perspective on the potential to cultivate one's perceptual sensitivity towards subtlety and nuance, achieved through 'practice'. In addition to this, Junichiro Murata's claim: perception can be a form of expression as it produces new meaning⁵, also shed light on the essential role of an audience member to my hypothesis. I have tested this by exhibiting an installation work, *Distancing for Opening*, as a device for 'practice'. Through manipulation of 'contextual clues' (spatial attention, textual instruction, visual information, and so forth) the work presented shifting images to invite the viewer to express what s/he thinks and sees in perceiving these shifts.

These findings align with Casati's philosophical claim that shadow is an aid to knowledge⁶ as well as vision, which overturns the conventional (Platonic) view on shadow, poetry and painting as secondary to light, philosophy and knowledge. In fact, we have discovered that shifting shadow (and ambiguous imagery) is given a primary role in literature from Eastern and Islamic philosophy, Japanese aesthetics, contemporary and modern art, and architecture. Their conceptions of shadow (image) have provided another useful set of terms for my thesis: 'shadowy imaginal', 'light passing

³ Izutsu, *Toward a Philosophy of Zen*, 130.

⁴ Trans. the author, Nishiyama, "Yakusha Kaisetsu: Honyaku Kono Sakusou suru Mono [Translator's note: Translation, this entanglement]," 310.

⁵ Trans. the author, Murata, *Chikaku to Seikatsu Sekai (Perception and Life-Worlds)*, 101.

⁶ Casati, *Shadows*, 10.

through darkness', 'a flash from the depth of silence', 'shades', 'nuance', 'subtlety' 'shimmer' and 'drift'.

These terms guided my awareness towards the 'neutral' (against the oppositional) in keeping with the way Agnes Martin's works are articulated by Anna Lovatt. In consequence, my artworks have come to possess more and more subtle and nuanced appearances; in short, 'shadow light' or 'light shadow'. This visual and spatial awareness is the medium deployed in my works, *Mokudoku* and *Watakushime*. The surfaces of translucent thin paper were textured through embossing the acrylic cube (as a remnant) and water-coloring, to bear this 'shadow light/light shadow' and to prompt our awareness towards subtlety and nuance. All of this aimed at embodying the untranslatable.

This embodiment of the untranslatable, mediated by *shifting* shadow (image), is articulated as the process of the 'transfer'. It is evident in the analogy between the Greek-Latin and the Japanese derivations, as articulated by Seigo Matsuoka and Atsushi Shinfuji: variant processes of the 'transfer' (*utsuru*) project, reflect, trace or emerge as moving soul (*anima*), in turn forming an image/butterfly (*imago*) from life (*psyche*)/void (*utsu, pupa*)⁷. This process—the positive engendering from the negative space-time—is transformative and metamorphic, hence, poetic.

This articulation penetrates the linkages between theories of translation, art histories and philosophies of the spectator. Translation prolongs the life of the original work through transforming the work and metamorphosing what/who translates it. The image survives/remains (stays in motion) in the spectator's movement across art histories. New knowledge (to a spectator) is engendered not in the work but in the distance between the spectator and the work. The shared view among these perspectives is that the work of art (in a broad sense) makes us move between what there was before and what there will be, in space and time, in terms of meaning, image and understanding. This is another process of the transfer that is poetic, for the embodiment of the untranslatable. Evidently, audiences of my installation artwork, *Mokudoku*, similarly articulated their movement in their experiences of the work.

These findings allowed me to respond to Derrida's interpretation of *chora* and *ma*, as untranslatable, a place for translation/transference. I have asked, "Can such a place be considered poetic, as well as untranslatable, if the untranslatable can be embodied through the 'transfer' process (which is poetic), mediated by shifting shadow (poetic language)?"⁷; and, conversely, "Can a place for poetic translation embody the untranslatable?". My final exhibition in this project became an attempt at answering these questions.

In my analysis of the final exhibition, I first focused on discussing the execution of my installment (my built walls as well as visual works), which transformed the existing architecture and metamorphosed the venue into rooms — *ma* — in-between space-time. I then examined how this was intended to transfer 'shadow light (image)' and move audiences from/into rooms. Did all this result in opening a poetic place (embodying the untranslatable)? It could, perhaps, be said that this

⁷ Trans. the author, Matsuoka, *Nihon to iu Yarikata - omokage to utsuroi no bunka*, 91. & Shinfuji, "Katachi ha Utsuru [Form Transfer]", 10.

was the case, provided that a new work was born in the space-time between the work and audiences, similar to how my grandmother's enunciation opened a poetic scene that generated a series of my video works. Through the gazes of others, the film work, *The Untranslatable, a Poetic Place*, quietly and slowly captured movements between rooms and images (shadow light) in the final exhibition. It carried me with its reminiscence of something untranslatable about her enunciation. As I worked, I recognised it as the life of Mt. Aso, which felt untranslatable.

What is this life (of Mt. Aso, of the original work, and so on) that transfers from/into artworks? This wonder underpinned another aim of the final exhibition towards transferring (conveying) a 'sense (knowledge) of love for longing'. It was implied in the title, *ここがどこなのか_ where it is here_ どうでもいいことさ_ it does not matter_ どうやって来たのか_ how I have got here_ 忘れられるかな_ can I forget*, after a line of song which oscillates between atmospheric shifts and human emotions. First provoked by my grandmother's enunciation, this sense continued to be nurtured as 'shadow light', transferred across architectural works that informed my works in this project. Intimate observation of the *Mirokubosatsu* statue in *Chugyuji* temple has greatly contributed to growing this sense in me, as the statue embodies a nuance of love, in its calming gesture clad with 'shadow light', prompting our longing or prayer.

A similar knowledge (sense) was identified in Rainer Maria Rilke's articulation that the life which nature forms is an enduring form of love or prayer, or longing for motherhood. I have linked this poetic association to the Greek concept of *chora*, which is considered untranslatable (the void) by Derrida, but articulated as motherhood (groundless ground) by other philosophers who insist on its generative nature. This new knowledge formed another set of terms: life, love, longing for 'motherhood', *chora*, and 'groundless ground'— as another form of the untranslatable. It also transformed my conception of an artwork into that which is an enduring form of love and longing, or prayer, by which we are guided to remain alive; to live, in a more poetic manner, with attention to subtlety and nuance.

The 'I' as the subject of this art of poetic translation has, indeed, metamorphosed, as witnessed and captured externally in my video work, *Gesture of Shadows*, as in a shadow transforming from a mountain to a butterfly. Lastly, this embodied experience of 'my being and body', through which life transferred and formed images, was internally excavated. This research process first produced a feeling of vulnerability, and called close attention to the vulnerability of these *bodies*, which are similarly receptive of some external (*boka*) life, information or god: the statue of *mirokubosatsu*, the body of my grandmother, pupa (*sanagi*), *boka-bi* (an empty container) and *bokabi-bito* (a marginal human). Without overstating it, they all give birth to art, as we have discussed and discovered through the signification of these Greek and Japanese terms.

Some of these *bodies* formed a useful set of terms for my reflection on my being in *the* body with which I am charged: being foreign and marginal (*boka*) to the dominant language and culture as Japanese and as an artist, and internalising hollowness/emptiness (*utsu*) as shown in the ideogram 詩 (poetry = word 言+ temple 寺), implying a temporal fulfillment with verse (chant) or 影向 (shadow

coming). The latency of the female artist being *bokabi* and a poetic place; in other words, the potential of embodying the untranslatable, was carefully examined in Bogong, an ideal milieu filled with ‘shadow light’ and ‘fertile silence’. As inscribed in my journal, some external (*boka*) life temporarily inhabited *her* body, which temporarily empties out and momentary trembles at the embodiment, reticently and metaphorically.

The female artist is materially and semantically intended to contain hollowness/emptiness (*utsu*) inside. Her body metamorphoses to be a poetic place, in embodying the untranslatable, though briefly, while something external (*boka*) transfers from/into *her* and other material bodies, which are an artwork and an audience. The artwork and the audience are enacted to freely shift and move between images and rooms; to poetically perceive and express understandings and meanings.

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What is the untranslatable in art that touches me lovingly and truthfully? How can an artwork embody the untranslatable?

The untranslatable is the life that drifts as it metamorphoses and transforms our experience in and reflection on the world in a more rich and poetic manner. It can only be embodied temporarily by the poetic work of art as it ‘transfers’ in variant ways. It is embodied in a poetic language that contains fertile silence, an architectural *body* that internalises emptiness/hollowness, or an enduring form of love that longs for motherhood. The embodiment of the untranslatable is experienced as ‘shadow light’ (as an aid to knowledge, hence it is truthful) that shifts; an ambiguous image that shimmers; a poetic place that opens; or a nuance of love that trembles.

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This thesis has developed sets of terms that can help us in thinking about the untranslatable. This development was achieved through joining fragments of ideas from different literatures and texts in a manner of poetic translation. Many were uncovered as well as discovered from ancient to contemporary philosophical, theoretical and artistic resources. It has been difficult to articulate the untranslatable in this thesis. But the untranslatable in art is, indeed, a struggle for anyone, whether an artist, an audience member, Japanese, English, female, male, and so on. This is why I drew voices from various disciplines, not limited to either Western or Eastern knowledge, to one side or one sex.

The main research questions, in retrospect, have responded to what I had always wanted to know: “What is the work of art?” and “How can I achieve it through my practice?”. This articulation process has increased my awareness of nuance and subtly that mediate semantic and material understandings of the world. This, in turn, liberated my own sense of being (life) and reminded me of its transformative nature grounded in motherhood, described by Rilke as shared intention towards life⁸. The work of art is to provoke this mode of intention, provoking a sense (knowledge)

⁸ Rike, *Letters to a Young Poet*, 38.

of love and longing among an artist and an audience. The significance of the untranslatable (what resists translation) is that which makes us remain alive.

I have differentiated poetic language from everyday language. I consider the former to articulate the untranslatable. I think of art as embracing literature, poetry, architecture, drawing, music, dance and so forth. As a visual artist who works with installation and video art, I have honed my research in these mediums. But more generally the concepts discussed in this thesis are just as useful to other art forms. (For example, 'fertile silence' may work in music.)

This thesis is, thereby, written for both artists and audiences. I hope that the thesis can educate us to think about art in relation to language, including art's untranslatability. Indeed, it has already helped my understanding of art, and has enriched my own sense of possibility for making art. This is evident in the last work that emerged from this project, *shadowlight*, [figure 1]. Among other photographs from the same shooting, this image caught my eye (as an audience member as well as an artist) precisely because of the way 'light shadow' keeps transferring from/into fertile silence and prompts the opening of a poetic place.



Fig.1. Utako Shindo, *shadowlight*, archival print 40 x 60 cm, 2016.

Towards the end of this project, I have observed the growing sense of division and exclusion in the human world. It appears to me that the era of global translatability has contributed to forging oppositions, perhaps against its intention. The cause might be its weakness with the untranslatable; with that which is capable of mediating, maintaining and embracing subtle differences through drift and transference. My research findings suggest that it is difficult to have a good grasp of the untranslatable without the aid of poetic language that can express nuanced understandings. And this aid is lacking in the translatable view of the world, supported by those subjects who are often doubtful and fearful of changes: transformation of the world and metamorphosis of themselves. So, I have wanted to emphasise the generative aspect of poetic translation, which prompts these changes through articulation and embodiment of the untranslatable. It does require our patience, to keep working on it and waiting, but when the moment comes, like a butterfly taking off, it gifts us with surprise, beauty, wonder and joy. While we wait for it, we can also cultivate playful and humorous sensitivities that will engender 'boredom'— a neutral space or empty space that allows for things to enter — without doubt and fear.

What I have just written may appear to be outside of an art context, but it is not. It was necessary for me to speculate how this art of poetic translation shall find its place in this world where we live, and to think through how this project can contribute in a generative manner. As just indicated, the sense is now strongest that we are called to work towards securing and cultivating poetic places where the untranslatable can dwell, within this world. In terms of my own practice, this calls for a few steps to be taken in the wake of this research project. Firstly, the research findings shall be accessible to wider audiences; through making and presenting my artworks that reflect these findings, and through translating this thesis (the useful sets of terms, to begin with) into other languages to be readable for non-English speakers. Secondly, my own poetic language shall be further developed through more practice and experimentation with materials, processes and venues, and through more time spent on learning and absorbing the poetic sensitivity of works that set a precedent (in literature, visual art, architecture, film, and so on). Lastly, the soul of *this* body and others shall be nurtured through more care and attention to the nuances of love that ground this life-world.

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APPENDICES

1. Catalogue poster for ここがどこなのか_ *where it is here*_ どうでもいいこと_ *it does not matter*_ どうやって来たのか_ *how I have got here*_ 忘れられるかな_ *can I forget* (the final exhibition):

text by Dr. Katsuhiko Suganuma and the author.

edited and directed by the author.

designed by Atelier W (Manabu Kanai).

printed by Arena Printing and Publishing (John Hinkson).

available from http://www.utakoshindo.info/writings/where-it-is-here-can-i-forget/images/Texts_KSuganuma_UShindo_March2016.pdf.

2. Review on the final exhibition by Dan Rule:

text by Dan Rule.

published on April 1, 2016. by The Age Newspaper.

available from <http://www.theage.com.au/entertainment/whats-on-melbourne/the-pick-of-this-weekends-exhibitions-20160327-gns21d>.

3. Images from the final exhibition by Christian Capurro:

photo by Christian Capurro.

on view at <http://www.utakoshindo.info/exhibition/where-it-is/>.

4. Film from the final exhibition directed and edited by the author:

entitled *The Untranslatable, A Poetic Place*.

filmed by Dimple Rajyaguru and Ben Andrews.

directed and edited by the author.

on view at <http://www.utakoshindo.info/exhibition/where-it-is/>. or <https://vimeo.com/169430138>.

ここがどこなのかわからない でもいいことさ どうやって来たのか 忘れるかな

翻訳不可能なもの、詩的な場所 The Untranslatable, a Poetic Place

Like a little child chasing a butterfly, here and there, I try to capture a shifting atmosphere with my eyes and hands. Their shapes sometimes look like my mother's and my grandmother's, who have shown me how to live one's life lovingly. But I am still learning to do so, as it is a difficult task. In his essay, *The Translator's Task*, the philosopher, Walter Benjamin redefined 'translation' from what makes "itself" remember the meaning of the original" to what "must lovingly, and in detail, fashion in its own language a counterpart to the original's mode of intention". I imagine that it will be the same risk and chance for a poet to translate love, as for an artist, but it would be the ultimate task. My exhibition title is the first line of a 70's Japanese song, 恋は桃色 (Love is Pink), written by Hanuomi Hosono. When one is in love, the world appears so different that one reflects everything and accepts everything. Such poetic experience/reflection is perhaps 'untranslatable', but that is what my artwork is longing for.

Utako Shindo, 2016

2016年 進藤 詩子

語りきれぬモノをアートする Art of (dis)-Articulation

Katsuhiko Suganuma 菅沼 勝彦

「ボクは僕から二つの文化背景を継ぐオーストラリアの白人男性でしょうか」と、あるワタシの学生が言った。これは「あなたは何者なのか」というしりとりには無難なワタシの問いかけに対する彼からの返答だった。この後の言葉は本人のアイデンティティについて多くを語りつつも、多くを語り尽くさずにいる。「オーストラリアの白人」として「男性」というやや画一化されたラベルに比べ、「二つの文化背景」という言い回しには深い解読の余地が残されている。とりわけオーストラリアの文脈に照らしてみれば、「僕から二つの文化背景を継ぐ」というしりとりには複数のバターンが瞬時に想起される。異なるヨーロッパ系統の両親を持つ場合もあれば、アンソロポケルト系とアボリジニー系との間、またはヨーロッパ系とアジア系の間といったように。しかしこの学生が、後者の二つのケースのどちらかに当てはまるようになった場合、当初自明とされていた「白人」というラベルは否応にも曖昧なものへと変化してゆく。異人種間の性交を経て産まれた本人が「白人」であることと認識するということは何を意味するのだろうか。このワタシの学生による発問は、発せられた瞬間に多くの語り尽くせぬモノを内包している。

ワタシたちは時折、語られたことよりも、語られぬことから多くを知ることがある。一例として、性的マイノリティーの多くは、社会においてゲイ、レズビアン、バイセクシュアル、トランスジェンダーといった自らのアイデンティティを公言せず日々暮らしている。偏見や差別といったものが、その状況を置く。しかしながら、語られぬ、いや、語られぬ自己の中にこそ彼らの多くの物語が語られている。したがって、ワタシたちは彼らの沈黙から彼ら自身をより理解することも可能となる。ただ、その沈黙や語りきれぬモノを翻訳しなせる術を、ワタシ達の社会は未だ十分に持ち合わせていない。

世界中の多くのアーティストや学者が今までもこの語りきれぬモノと正面から向き合い、対話することによってきた。それを介することで、ワタシたちは社会規範の恣意性や、そのズルさに気付かされ、批判視することも学んだ。進藤詩子の放つアートもまたその仕上がり、視覚を要する創作活動という名の甲斐を出発点とするものではないだろう。

進藤の作品の多くは自我や思惑といったコンセプトに取り組んでいるといえるだろう。それによって、彼女のアートからはこれといったナラシスト的、あるいは内的的な要素を感じ取れない。彼女の作品は、それに触れる者の視覚、聴覚、触覚を利用し、ある空間へと引き寄せる。その空間は膨らんでいくが、それを察せ、未知知れぬモノとの遭遇を期待させる。と同時に、進藤の作品と触れ合うとき、ワタシたちは忍耐を要する。彼女の作品が織り成す空間には抽象、曖昧、陰、そして誰といった形而上なモノが常にざわめく。言うなれば、スピード化と便利化、そして情報の画一化が予期せぬ勢いで進む今日の情報社会の日常とは大きく事を異にする空間である。

英国の大家コメディヤーが「computer says no」のフレーズをもって、現代人の忍耐力の無さを露呈しパロディ足らした。膨大な情報を処理するに比べて多忙になりがちな現代のワタシたちは、「Why?」「How so?」といった質の問いかけを毛嫌いする。画面で、時間や場所といった。しかし、どんなパロディにも免れぬのは恐れが待っている。もコンピュータが「no」できまらずでなく「no more」もいう前例みえせんから」と言っただけで、ワタシたちはどう振舞えるのか。インターネット接続やスマートフォンを使えなくなるといふ状況に恐怖を覚えるとしても、それは

筆者を追いかける小さな子供のように、手や目を使って、私は絶え間なく変化する「空気」を描き出そうとする。時おり、その手や目の形が母や祖母のものと似ているように見えることがある。彼女たちは、どのように愛情を込めて日々を生きているのかを私に教えてくれた。でも私はまだそのやり方を身につけているところだ。なぜなら、それはとても難しいことだから。

哲学者ヴァルター・ベンヤミンは「翻訳者の使命」の中で、翻訳を「原作の意味に自らを似せようとする」とではなく、むしろ「愛を込めて、そして細部に至るまで、寄り添うようにして原稿の意図する仕方を自らの言語において形成すること」とだと再定義した。

詩人が愛を翻訳するのはリスクであると同時にチャンスでもあるが、それは芸術家にとっても同じことだろうと、私は思いを巡らす。それは究極の使命だろう。展覧会のタイトルは、細野晴臣が70年代に書いた曲「恋は桃色」のはじめの節からきている。恋をしている時、世界はあまりに満ちて見えなくなる。だから、人はすべてを忘れ、そしてすべてを受け入れる。そのような詩的な経験と省察は「翻訳不可能」かもしれない。でも、私の作品はそれこそ求めていて。

進藤 詩子 | アーティスト。影のドローイング、反射のプロジェクション、痕跡のプリントなど、様々なマテリアルやプロセスを用いて制作を展開している。現在、ザ・センター・フォー・アイディアズ（メルボルン大学）の博士課程に在籍中。「翻訳不可能なもの」という概念とそれを体現する詩的実践について、知覚や物質、イメージ、言語の間を「翻訳/うつすこと」を通して研究している。

Utako Shindo is an artist working with a range of materials and processes, including drawing shadows, projecting reflections and printing traces. She is currently undertaking PhD research at the Centre for Ideas (The University of Melbourne) to explore the notion of 'untranslatable' and a poetic practice that embodies this through the 'translation/transference' between perceptions, materials, images and languages.

Utako Shindo Solo Exhibition 進藤 詩子 個展

ここがどこなのか・Where it is here - どうでもいいことさ・it does not matter - どうやって来たのか・how I have got here - 忘れるかな・can I forget

Sutton Projects 19 March – 16 April, 2016	サットン・プロジェクト 2016年3月19日 [±] - 4月16日 [±]
Artist: Utako Shindo Edited by Utako Shindo Text by Katsuhiko Saganuma Designed by Atelier W Printed by Arena Printing	アーティスト 進藤 詩子 編集 進藤 詩子 テキスト 菅沼 勝彦 デザイン アトリエ W 印刷 アリーナ・プリンティング

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constructive methods of pushing this boundary. Utako Shindo's recent artwork contributes to this endless, brave mission of revising our cultures anew. Despite Shindo's concern for self-identity and longing, her artwork is neither narcissistic, nor self-absorbed. Through an effective assemblage of visual, audio, and tactile material, Shindo's work invites the audience to be part of collective art making. Although the outcome of this collaboration is perhaps unknown, it certainly leads to an opening of hitherto unexplored alternative ways of being. At the same time, in order for us to be part of Shindo's artwork we need patience. Her work relentlessly illuminates a space of abstraction, ambiguity, shadow, and gap. The space in which we find ourselves through her work is, then, remarkably different from our current fast-paced, 'empirical' data-oriented digital world. When it comes to Shindo's work, nothing is facile or ready-made.

'Computer says no'. Thus one British comedy show makes us laugh at ourselves, parodying our impatience. It is increasingly difficult for our generation to question 'why?' or 'how so?', when everybody keeps themselves busy processing information in abundance. The witty insight can also be read as a fear of 'computer says no more'. The sheer thought of no longer having computer or mobile phone frightens us - not necessarily because we lose connection with others, but because we begin to realise that we do not have much

connection with anyone in the first place, triggering a crisis of self-identity and belonging.

The perpetual pursuit of filling the void by adding 'friends' onto our social network sites - making the self 'much fuller' - attests to this fear. The recent commercial and academic fad for genealogical self-searching in immense data banks is perhaps yet another endeavour to make ourselves appear legitimate. Computers and the Internet once promised to connect us by getting rid of spatial boundaries. Many people now realise that this is not the case at all, but continue to cling to their hope for connection by crossing temporal and generational boundaries instead.

Shindo's recent works tell us not to rush things. When we feel incomplete and ambiguous, there's no need to fear - instead, dwell on it. By bringing our attention to, and patiently dealing with part of ourselves that is untranslatable and yet-to-be articulated, we might be able to be more articulate about ourselves.

Dr. Katsuhiko Saganuma is Lecturer in the School of Humanities at the University of Tasmania. His area of interest includes Queer Studies, Gender Studies, Cultural Studies, and Japanese Studies.

APRIL 1 2016

The pick of this weekend's exhibitions

Dan Rule

MORE

UTAKO SHINDO: WHERE IT IS HERE / IT DOES NOT MATTER / HOW I HAVE GOT HERE / CAN I FORGET

Blink and you will miss the crucial details, narrative strands and poetics of Melbourne-based Japanese artist Utako Shindo's latest show. Comprising various (and variously obscured) photographic techniques, cut paper and layered paper, printing techniques and video, the show – which takes its title from a 1970s Japanese pop song – purports to deal with love, memory and the limits of translating them in art. Formally, the work assumes the guise of a sprawling constellation of abstract collage. Cut paper, layered tissue paper and eschewed and filtered photographic prints – fragments of landscape and light – forge a syntax of suggestion, evocation and trace. They are moments of clarity buried in layers of time and the fog of recall. A pair of video works – presented behind paper – anchors the installation. One pictures a shifting rural landscape in southern Japan, a conversation between Shindo, her mother and her grandmother playing out as we traverse undulating hills and tall grass. Another sees the silhouette of a feminine hand dancing against the light, coaxing and grasping at something that isn't immediately apparent. In the context of a wider Western contemporary art sensibility, Shindo walks a fine line. Her gestures are of such a light touch that many viewers may lack the attention span. But given time, these evocative and poetic gestures punch well above their weight.



A still from Utako Shindo's 'Gesture of Shadows', 2015-2016, video. Photo: Supplied

Until April 16; Sutton Projects, 230 Young Street, Fitzroy, 9416 0727, suttongallery.com.au

where it is here_どうでもいいことき_it does not matter_どうやって来たのか_how I have got here_忘れられるかな_can I forget

The final exhibition by the author in this project.

19 March and 16 April, 2016

Sutton Projects, Melbourne.

(clockwise from door)

I rain_私雨, 2015

water color, glassine, MG Litho
47 x 88 cm

I rain_Watakushi ame, 2015

water color, glassine, MG Litho
47 x 48 cm

where it is here_どうでもいいことき_it does not matter_どうやって来たのか_how I have got here_忘れられるかな_can I forget

2016

comprised with 20 pieces of works on paper or fabric, 2 video works *
332 x 645 cm

*

Gesture of Shadows, 2015-2016

video work (3:40)

*

Topology between the three, 2014-2016

video work (3:55)

波の間に間に_Nami no Ma ni Ma ni [*at the Mercy of the Waves*], 2015

oil pastel, tracing paper, acrylic cube
dimension variable

All images were photographed and digitally produced by Christian Capurro in April 2016.

Where it is here
it does not matter
how I have got here
Can I forget

Utako Shindo
19 March – 16 April, 2016



ここがどこなのか
Where it is here
 どうでもいいことさ
it does not matter
 どうやって来たのか
how I have got here
 忘れられるかな
can I forget

Utako Shindo

 19 March – 16 April, 2016

A photograph of a minimalist art installation in a white room. Various small, rectangular objects, including papers, cards, and small framed images, are pinned to the wall. The floor is dark and textured.

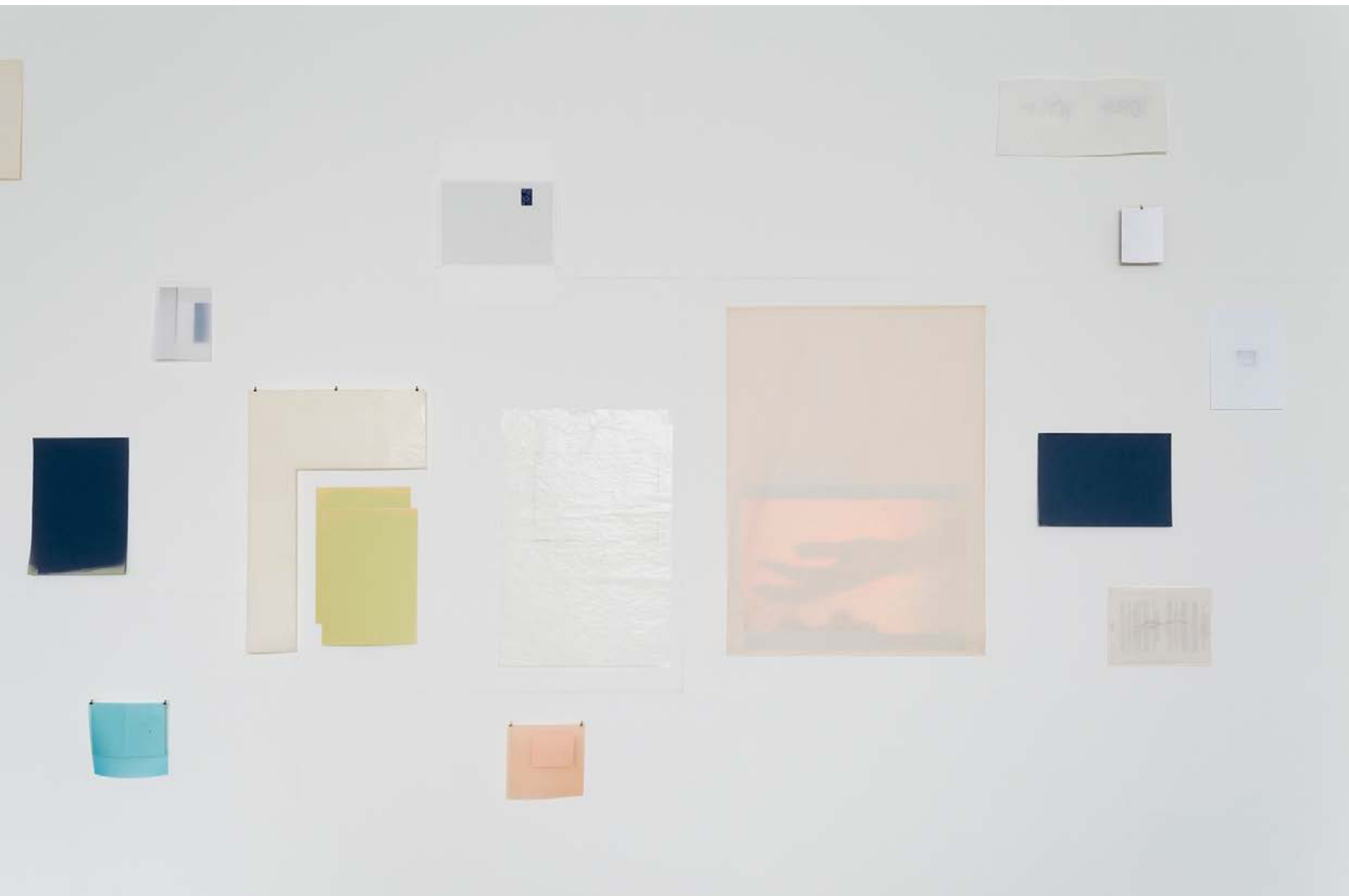










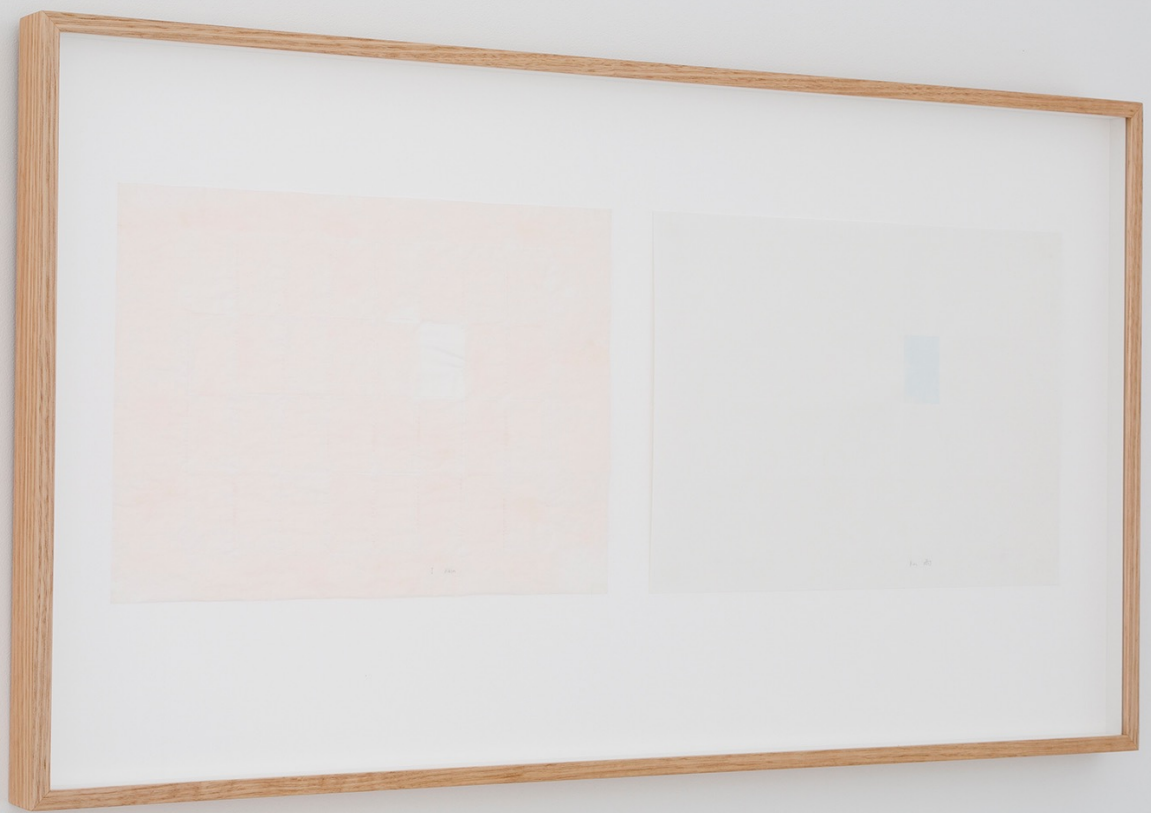


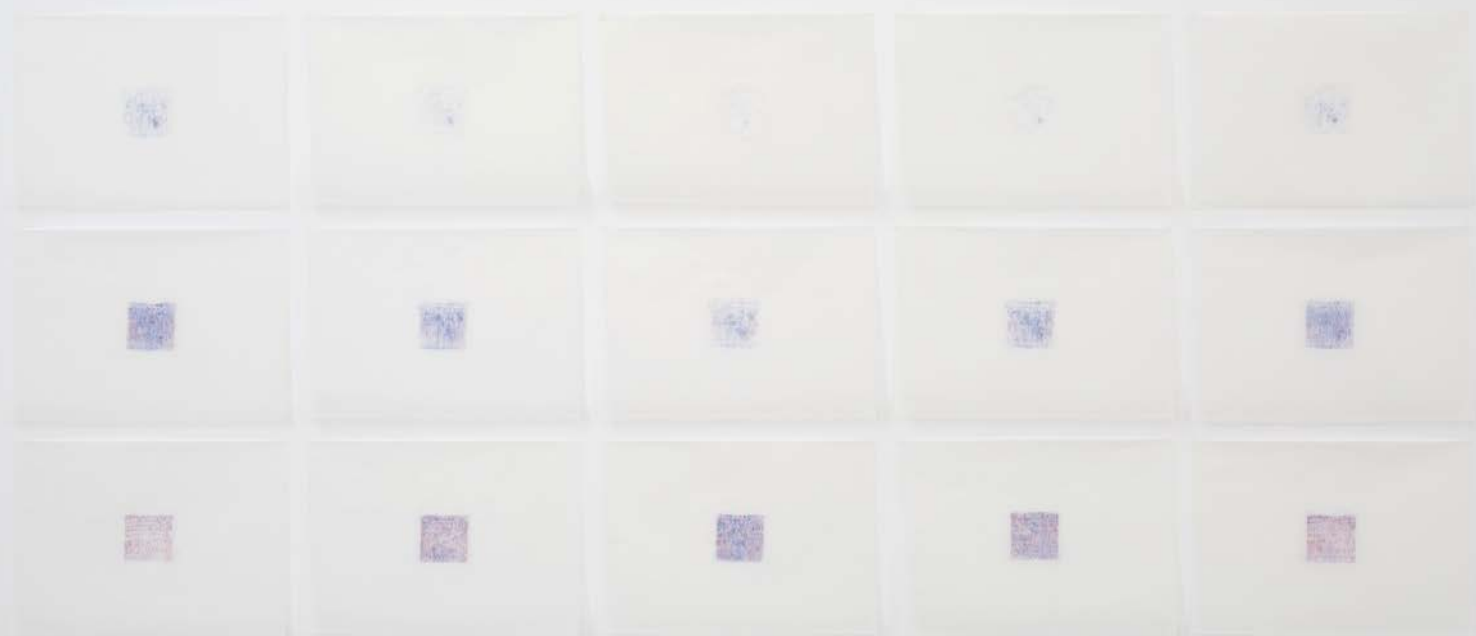


















The Untranslatable, A Poetic Place

Title: The Untranslatable, A Poetic Place

Year: 2016

Duration: 9min. 46sec.

Filmed by Dimple Rajyaguru & Ben Andrews

Directed and Edited by Utako Shindo

Please view from <http://www.utakoshindo.info/exhibition/where-it-is/> **or** <https://vimeo.com/169430138>.