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Artist Statement

I have been studying overseas and living alone for 9 years. Besides both the East and West have shaped me culturally, my long-term single life leads my art research and practices to focus on my solitude, soliloquy, self-doubt, self-exploration, and self-growth. There are perpetual internal communications within and between my art, such as performance, film, painting, photography and music, where I constantly self-question and self-answer. The reflexive circle of questioning-answering makes my acting and creating retrospective and spirally develops my art skills. This way, my aloneness conveys its beauty and expresses my inner power.

For instance, wisely adopting varied digital media and technologies, I create streams of layered physical or theatrical performances of my single self, where I continuously retrospect and reflect on myself. These productions are both live performances and mediated videos, where I traverse the boundaries between reality and virtuality, past and present, the digital and the physical. Similar to my photomontage practices where I superimpose my doppelgangers across time and space, via constant self-reflection and self-interaction, these projects accumulate performative contents overlooking spatial-temporal barriers and embody my aloneness artistically, physically and digitally. This practice-based research provides examples of creating performances of a single one to promote self-awareness and self-growth and is an applied theatre approach benefiting contemporary performance methodology.

Informed by art movements since the mid-19th century such as Impressionism, Dadaism, Fluxus and Happening, for my pursuit of self-revealing and returning to true nature, with physical actions, I squeeze acrylic paints from the tubes directly and apply them onto the canvas baldly. I often mix colours afterwards. This phenomenological reductive attitude and technique has been extended and applied in my embodied drawing/painting. I take out solid or liquid pigments directly and throw/splash them onto the paper/canvas with my whole performing body. My directing style for films and live performances also reflects this intuitive wildness. I improvisationally dance and act with my actors in sync, response or contrast when

directing. I first learned filmmaking by audaciously taking on multiple roles and intuitively using my theatre-making knowledge. The choreography and body movements of my filmed/live performances similarly feature chances and improvisation, in line with my intrinsic understanding of physicality and dance, echoing the concepts of Merce Cunningham, Jerzy Grotowski, Mary Overlie, and Trisha Brown.

Besides expressing individuality, I keep asking myself — if nobody loves me, how can I love myself? Within the group-driven context of the societal communities, embracing the fact that my art and I are part of the intersubjective world, I redirect my attention to self-power; I argue that the last step to emancipation is self-love, recognising that one was born and will die alone. This is realistic and individualistic but not bourgeois or capitalist, as I argue that taking care of oneself is the priority. In other words, one needs to love oneself first, then learn how to love others. My artistic productions aim to awaken self-awareness and the desire to self-explore and self-care from various perspectives. For example, my applied performance-making paradigm, Theatre of One, is a self-driven performative methodology that exploits the instinct and potential of oneself alone instead of a social gathering, inspired by and promoting applied theatre practitioner Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed and philosopher Jacques Rancière's concept of the emancipated spectator, which are both highly contextualised in group situations. Theatre of One has complemented both Boalian and Rancièrian aesthetics and praxis, and has been a ready-made tactic to be easily accessed and practised by any individual in this intersubjective world. My art research aims to address how an individual may save themselves before rescuing the group or being rescued by the group. Yet nothing is absolute, as we are not absolute minds — my art and I myself are not absolute but ambiguous, complex and exploratory likewise. This is true of everything in this universe.

PORTFOLIO

1. *CARNIVAL x Doll*

<https://www.yifangong.art/video-performances/carnival-x-doll/>

<https://youtu.be/eFSZstfcfZQ>

Format: Digital film

Year: 2023



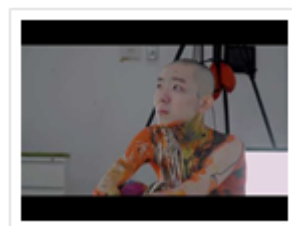
Produced, directed, and performed by myself alone, this is a recreated film extracted from an intermedial performance intertwined with the screening of *Doll*, another film directed, written and designed by myself. The actor of *Doll* functioned as my doppelganger since I was directing, acting, choreographing and dancing in real-time with him on site. *CARNIVAL x Doll* became a renewed two-layer accumulated performance where two entangled subjects echo and respond to each other, transcending spatial-temporal boundaries. This is the theme and strategy that I have been researching during my practice-led PhD. During this improvised performance, I soliloquised “I’m doing shit... just like Duchamp’s urinal. But we can contextualise it. We make meanings out of nothing. If a thing is meaningless, and that’s its meaning”. This is part of the aesthetics of my art-making.

2. *CARNIVAL: Paint ME in DC*

<https://www.yifangong.art/live-performances/carnival-paint-me/>

<https://youtu.be/9hrSli4ZsmE>

Format: Performance



Year: 2023

This is a representative of my applied theatre strategy, Theatre of One's aesthetics and practice as my PhD's research output. The 1st highlight is 01:45–3:06 when I drew the cage pattern and danced inside it, with my arms drawing triangles and feet walking along the four corners, four edges and the cross of the cage in a constant stereotypical behavioural pattern. This is how my drawing *CARNIVAL The Drawing No. 2* was produced and how I concretely express my daily obsessive-compulsive behaviours triggered by my anxiety disorder. This typical choreography with the symbolic drawing process was performed as a variant during *CARNIVAL: Paint ME* in Edinburgh to show my chronic burnout and anxiety. The rest highlights are 3:05–5:01 and 5:55–6:57 which shows how I created my painting *Paint ME*. This performance is more than just a Happening, a theatre performance or a performance art; it's them all. I also composed the music.

3. *CARNIVAL: Paint ME in Edinburgh*

<https://youtu.be/4j0TxeBpQsU>

<https://www.yifangong.art/live-performances/carnival-paint-me-phase-2-2024/> (Full info.)



Format: Intermedial performance

Year: 2024

This is another applied theatre practice of my Theatre of One aesthetics during my PhD. The 1st highlight is 3:32–5:49 when my cage drawing and the triangle/3-cage/4 choreography appear again echoing *CARNIVAL: Paint ME in DC*. Also, this is how I started to make *CARNIVAL The Drawing No. 3*. The 2nd highlight is 6:35-9:12 when I soliloquise and self-reflect by self-questioning-answering. My argument on self-love is realistic and individualistic but not bourgeois or capitalist as taking care of oneself is the priority. *CARNIVAL* series aims to promote self-awareness and self-care during and after the socially isolated pandemic era — one can save oneself before

saving or being saved by the other. As an applied theatre with ethical and social meanings, it tells people that one can make therapeutic theatre just by oneself.

4. *CARNIVAL: The Duets*

<https://youtu.be/uv54JkPQ2wc>

Format: Performance

Year: 2022-2023



This clip shows how I explored improvised one-to-one performances and relational aesthetics with different individuals. Highlights are 2:47–6:37. I improvise in real-time with people with various personalities and professions to produce intimate performances in the manner of narrative or physical choreography, exploring the boundaries of intimacy, which leads to challenging outcomes. The highlights are when a professional dancer and I, a theatre actor, danced in pure improvisation and intuition. The physicality and theatricality are beautiful, as we are dynamically in and out of sync. This is our first collaboration and the dancer's first collaboration with an actor without professional dance training experience. The other three performers are not professional artists, but we had similar success. This illustrates the boundless potential of bodily intuition of performing arts participants — to perform is a human commonality.

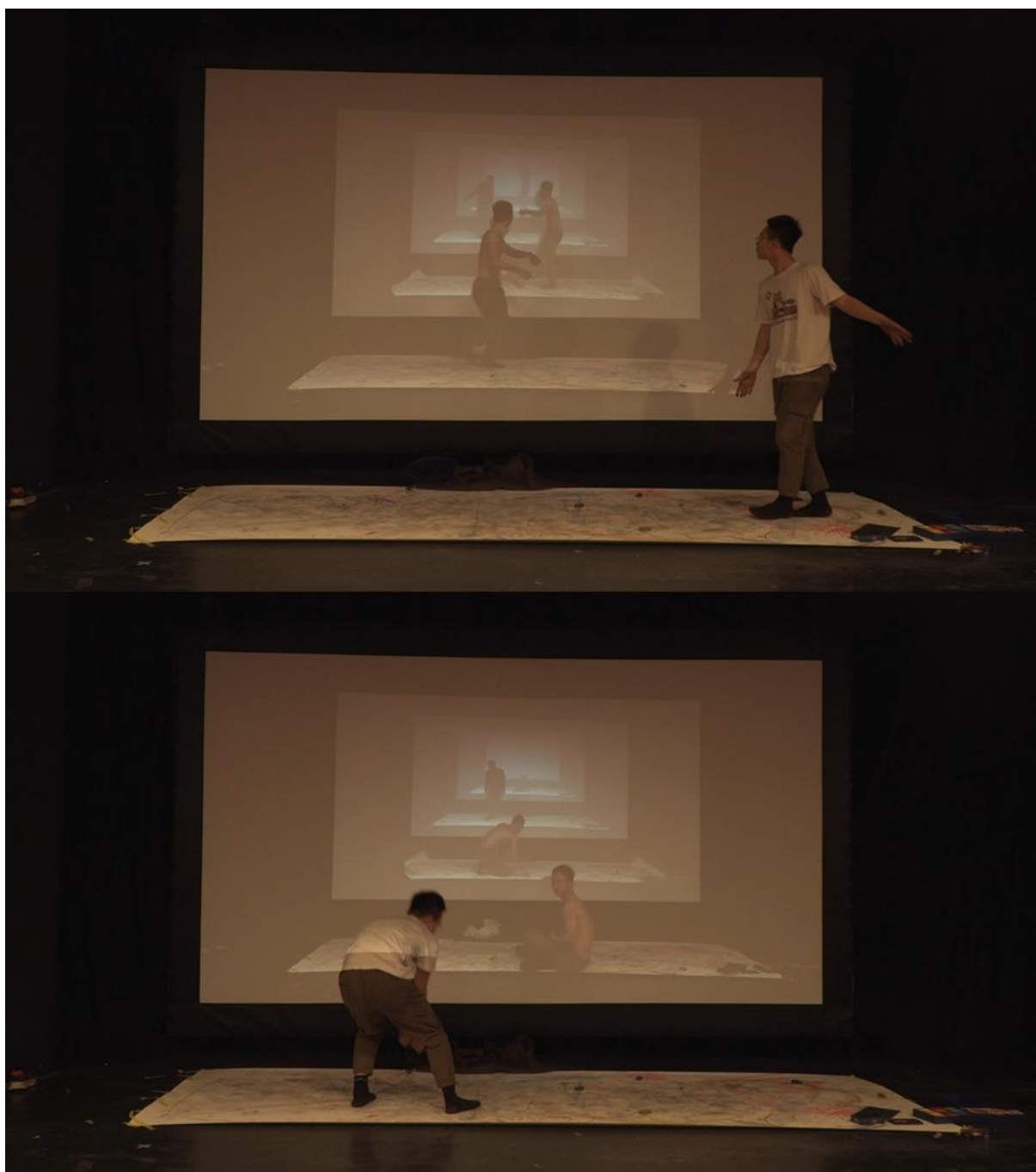
5. *Theatre of One* performances from my research participants

Format: Performance

Year: 2023

Participant 1:

<https://youtu.be/luuC9ZGrp3Y> (highlight from 11:00)



Participant 2:

<https://youtu.be/ovinyGm8AnA> (highlight from 10:20)



I held some applied theatre workshops at the University of Edinburgh during my PhD journey. For a workshop in 2023, I invited one undergraduate student from Edinburgh College of Art and one PhD student from the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine. They were both new to performance-making. The former had some experience as an audience member in participatory theatre, while the latter never participated in a non-traditional theatrical activity and had little experience in art. Therefore, I initiated instruction through: (1) My vivid, in-person, live and creative demonstration of the performance-making methodologies via my own creating procedure in advance; (2) Real-time one-to-one guidance during each individual practical implementation; (3) Post-practice informal one-to-one interviews collecting reflective feedback on my designs and each participant's feelings; (4) Context-sensitive one-to-one discussions on the theoretical and analytical aspects of the creations tailored to the participant's own artistic backgrounds. This reflective procedure not only helped me refine my applied performance tactics but also generated egalitarian and collaborative dialogues between my participants and me,

as we exchanged ideas based on both experiential learning and critical discourse in a non-dualistic and friendly manner.

6. *Theatre of One at Guangxi Arts University: Theatre of Two*

Format: Digital performance

Year: 2026

In April 2026, I was invited to give a guest lecture on the theoretical foundations and basic practical methods of digital theatre at Guangxi Arts University. This video captures an improvisational collaboration between me and Dr. Zheyu Wei, Associate Professor at the College of Film, Television and Communication. The title of this short digital performance is *Ni Hao (Hello/You Are Good)*. <https://b23.tv/y0ML3Zm>

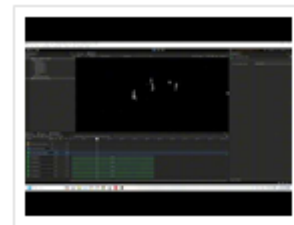




I also did a demo of Theatre of One to instruct the students at Guangxi Arts University in producing a digital performance. <https://b23.tv/MBwL6ad>

7. CARNIVAL: Paint ME in DC Scene 1, 2 & 3 Volumetric Captured Works-in-Progress

<https://youtu.be/tOy1Q525fIM>



<https://youtu.be/hsb32KNUZ2E>



Format: Digital recording, VR

Year: 2024

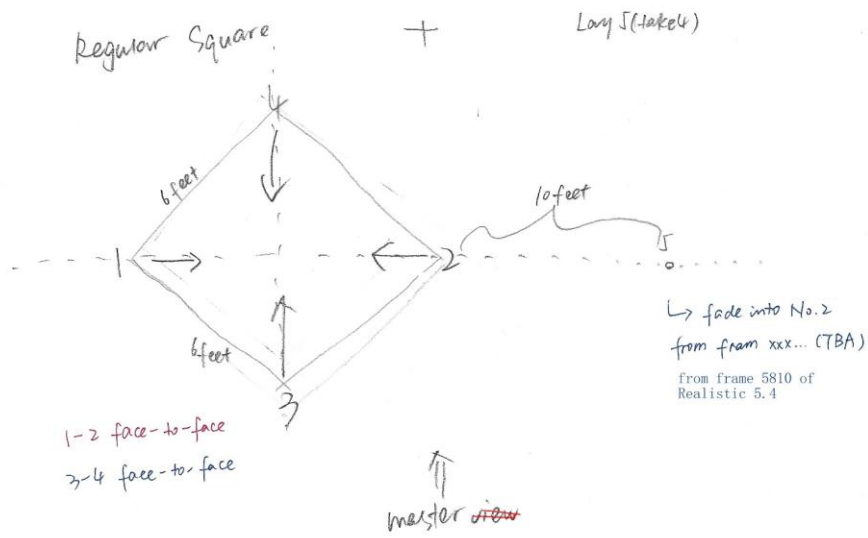
Initially, *CARNIVAL: Paint ME in DC* was intended to be released as a mixed reality volumetric capture film with four scenes in varied performing styles and content. I applied volumetric capture to capture my embodied live performances and created a self-interactive performance of one person by performance accumulation in VR. There is only myself there but because of XR, I have multiple performing doppelgangers. This first video is an in-process Unity project preview recording that includes the 1st and 2nd scenes with highlights: 00:03–02:31 and 04:13–06:10. However, as the volumetric capture lab at American University disbanded, I failed in its following postproduction. The MIDI-produced music scores are partly composed by me. All the designs and layout of the scenes are conceptualised and determined by myself. Also, I thought I could wear an optic see-through HMD like HoloLens during the layer-by-layer making but failed.

The second video is the 3rd scene of the semi-finished volumetric version of *CARNIVAL: Paint ME in DC*. The description of the last video applies to this one as well. The 1st scene is a line-based realism scene, while the rest 3 scenes are more abstract, dance-based and non-linear. Yet they all express how I struggle with my

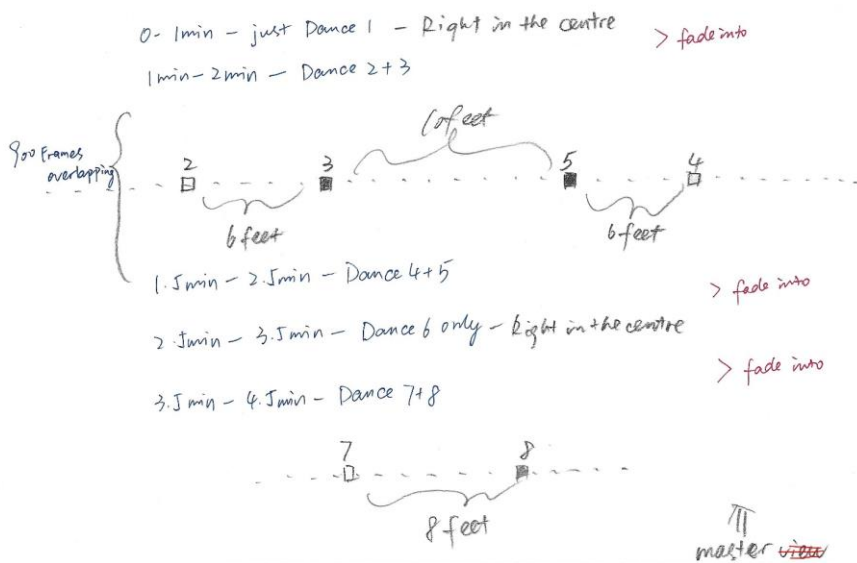
internalised self-oppression. My existence and life are constantly in this cycle of soliloquy, self-questioning, self-struggling, self-comforting and self-solving. The volumetric film version of *CARNIVAL: Paint ME in DC* would highlight the validity and significance of the core of my doctoral outputs: the aesthetics of Theatre of One and its practice. A one-person performance produced by only one to enhance self-awareness and evoke self-love is viable, socially valuable and practicable in virtual volumetric forms, even though it is highly challenging in terms of technology and production. I also tried motion capture during the shooting and planned to have 3D animation flowing with my physical movements and choreography — but failed. I want to realise this after my PhD.

CARNIVAL: Paint ME in DC Scene 1&2 Visual Design:

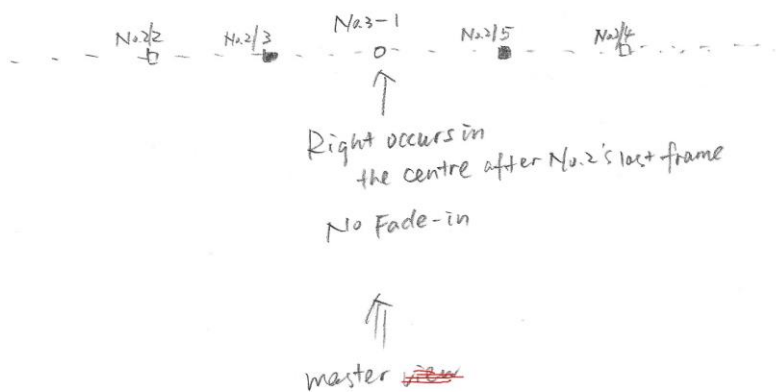
No. 1 Realistic Design - Top View



No. 2 Dance - Design Top View



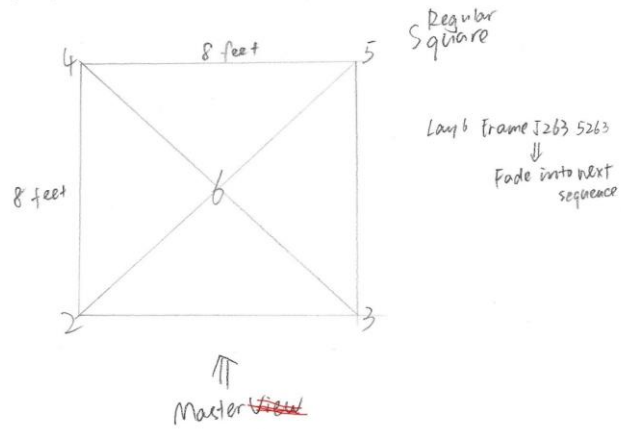
No. 2 - No. 3 Transition



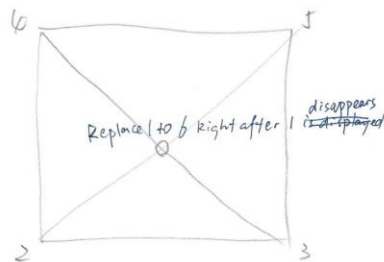
CARNIVAL: Paint ME in DC Scene 3&4 Visual Design:

No. 3 Drawing Design - Top View

Lay 1 is independent - Lay 1 view by default (almost)

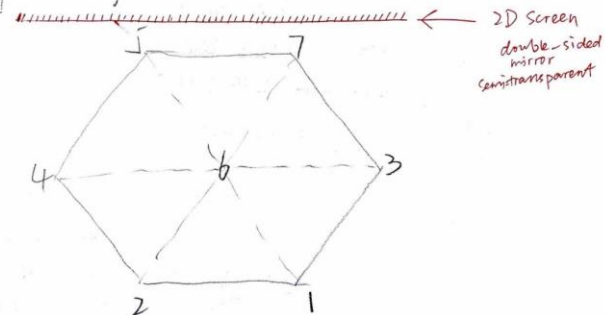


No. 3 1 - 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 Transition



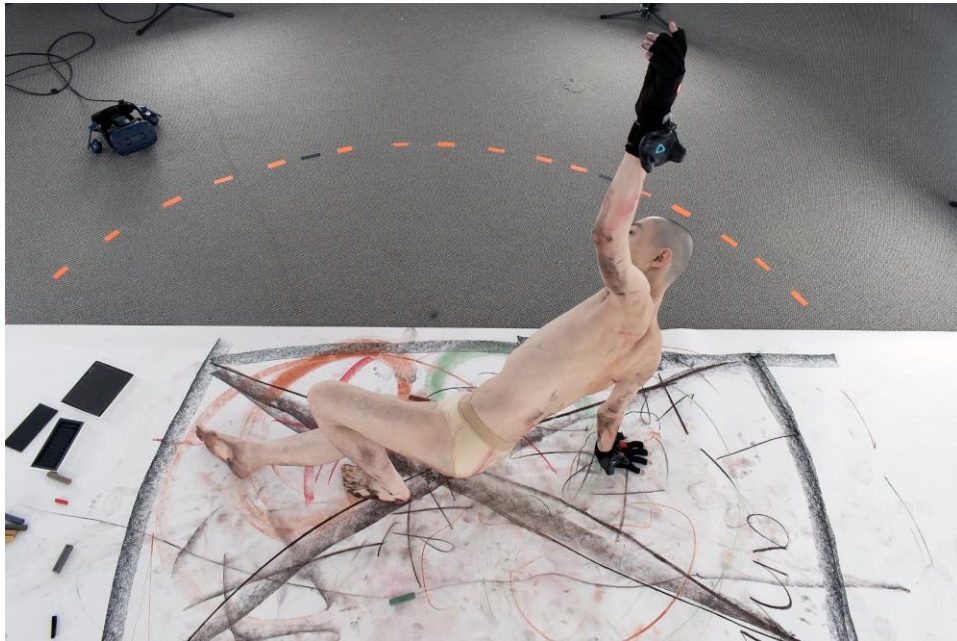
No. 4 Painting Design - Top View

Regular Hexagon



Lay 6: Delete frame 219-533 (if not possible then delete all from 0-533)

Delete frame --- (towards the end) TBD



I was performing and wearing the trackers at the Institute for IDEAS, the volumetric capture studio of American University, the USA.



The Institute for IDEAS, the volumetric capture studio of American University, the

USA. I was finishing the painting Paint ME.

8. *CARNIVAL: Paint ME poster*

Dimensions: 3508 x 4961 pixels

Media: Digital photography and illustration design

Year: 2024

This is the poster for the performance *CARNIVAL: Paint ME in DC*. It reflects the “carnival” nature of this performance as part of the *CARNIVAL* series. Juxtaposing multiple stills and figures of ME, myself, as related to the performance, this chaotic but gorgeous poster embodies my aesthetic pursuit and philosophy of the fact that one can also party on one’s own and please oneself alone. This echoes my Theatre of One aesthetics research. The colourful iridescent fonts and the rainbow highlights of the painting all imply my advocacy and quest for aesthetic freedom. Poster design, logo design and photography-postproduction by myself.



9. *Paint ME*

Dimensions: 63" x 112" (160cm x 285cm)

Media: Acrylic and ink on canvas

Year: 2023



This is a static, solid and embodied painting as one result of my physical live performance *CARNIVAL: Paint ME in DC*. It is a compressed projection of the three-dimensional space on a two-dimensional canvas plane, compressing and materialising the non-static, immediate and corporeal information of my performing body in the three-dimensional space. Such work helps my audience appreciate my bodily performance after the live event and beyond the digital recording. The static tangible painting becomes another form of media documentation and provides alternative perspectives of viewing and comprehending my performance. This painting is suffused with the theme of I, me and Self — I kept writing the Chinese character “我” (means “I”) and the English “I” in white ink on top of the colour chaos in the later stages of creation. This work is a significant milestone in my artistic self-challenge.

10. *CARNIVAL The Embodied ME*

Dimensions: multiple

Media: Mixed media

Year: 2023

The dance belt, dance pants and one of the acrylic paint tubes that I used for my performance *CARNIVAL: Paint ME in DC* together form a dependent installation of *Paint ME*. They represent the embodied and material presence of myself, my body and my past live performance. This way, part of the liveness and immediacy of *CARNIVAL: Paint ME in DC* is somehow perpetually maintained for being transformed by such mediation and materialisation: some pigments are eternally woven into the fabric fibres, or dried on the paint tube; my smell and the crumbs of skin that rubbed off while I was performing were also mixed by those pigments and permanently stuck to my clothes. They become paintings on clothes/plastic tube. I will always make similar mixed-media installations during and after my embodied performances in the future. This practice is off to a great start.



11. *Untitled (Prototype of Theatre of One)*

Dimensions: 3960 x 2640 pixels

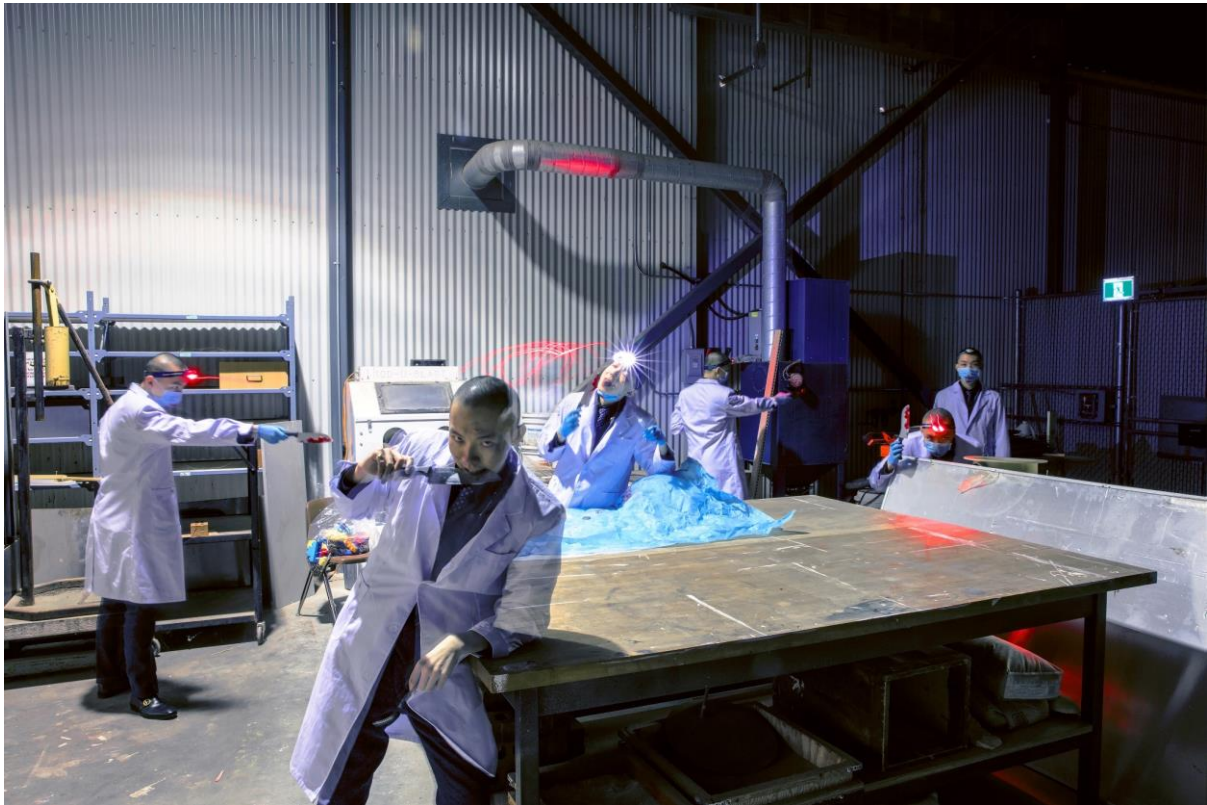
Media: Digital photography

Year: 2019

This project is the prototype for my PhD research in performance aesthetics on the concept of Theatre of One and the practice of spatial-temporal superimposition.

Statement:

I feel like I have multiple personalities. In my imagination, many of my self/s play different roles with different personalities in various dimensions, where I am either calm or crazy, concentrated or disordered, brave or scared, cold or warm. I constantly question whether I have killed someone in another dimension or if someone else has killed me. But who? In this world where I feel genuinely alive, I strongly believe in Hemingway's most famous quote, "A man can be destroyed but not defeated." I argue the only one who can finally defeat me is just myself. I always seem to "try to kill my past self/s" in different situations in various dimensions; in fact, I keep oscillating, spiralling and reincarnating in diverse times and spaces. This is the adventurous circling process of being and living. It is so exciting and so live.



12. *True Colours*

Dimensions: 3508 x 4961 pixels

Media: Digital photography

Year: 2024

This photographic montage shows my pursuit of reducing my thoughts, ideas, struggles and concerns to their primary status — I need to focus on the essence of things and then solve them one by one from the lowest level of logic. I constantly remind myself to question myself: What was I like primarily? What is the problem that most essentially plagues me? What problems can I solve so that I can be free of anxiety? And what is the factual source of my pain? During the self-answering-questioning process, there are always many conflicts, so the triangle inside the rectangle always exists. The imbalance is always with the balance. This is probably the true colour of me — I endeavour to achieve dynamic equilibrium in my life;

however, I cannot help failing and cannot predict success. Yet, this is me, as a human who is live and alive. The triangle-rectangle concept echoes my choreography and drawing in *CARNIVAL* performances. Producing, styling, makeup, design and postproduction by myself.



13. *CARNIVAL The Drawing No. 1*

Dimensions: 59" x 152" (150cm x 386cm)

Media: Charcoal and pastel on paper

Year: 2023

This is the first one of *CARNIVAL*'s embodied drawing series where I started to draw the image of cage to trap myself — a rectangle with its 4 corners linked by a cross. It is a static, solid and embodied drawing as one output of my physical live performances *CARNIVAL x Doll* and some pilots in 2023. It is a compressed projection of the three-dimensional space on a two-dimensional paper plane, compressing and materialising the non-static, immediate and corporeal information of my performing body in the three-dimensional space. Such work helps my audience appreciate my bodily performance after the live event and beyond the digital recording. The static tangible drawing becomes another form of media documentation and provides alternative perspectives of viewing and comprehending my performance. The highlight of this drawing is that I drew a set of concentric circles in line with the choreography of *CARNIVAL x Doll*.

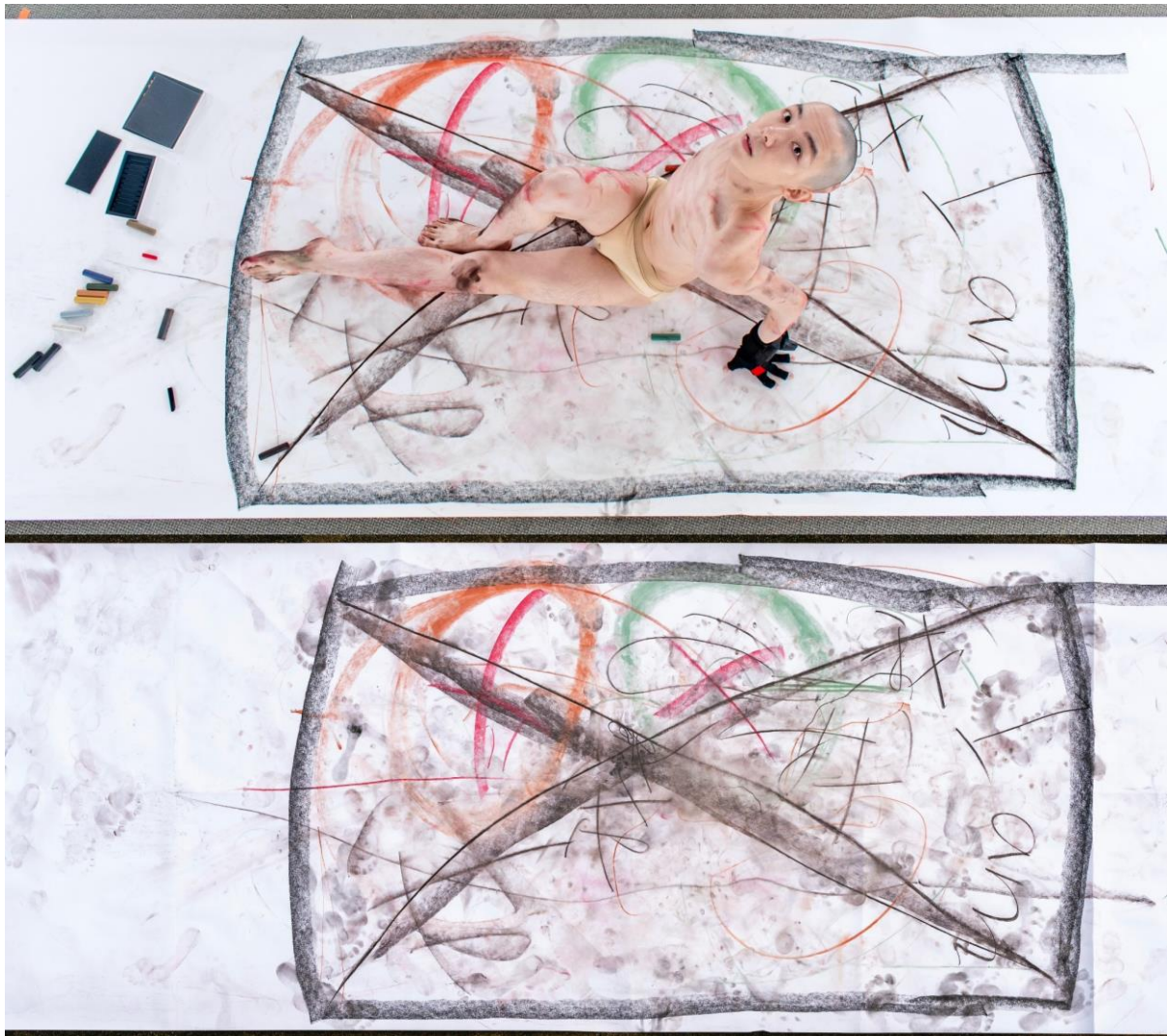
14. CARNIVAL The Drawing No. 2

Dimensions: 55" x 98" (140cm x 250cm)

Media: Charcoal and pastel on paper

Year: 2023

Similar to the above *CARNIVAL The Drawing No. 1*, this is the second one of *CARNIVAL*'s embodied drawing series where I purposefully draw the cage to trap myself. It is an embodied drawing as one output of my physical live performances *CARNIVAL: Paint ME in DC*. Besides the cage, this drawing is on the theme of the Self like my painting *Paint ME* — I drew the Chinese character “我” (“I”) and the English “I” by charcoal. The recurring symbol of the cage which traps “I” inside means I am haunted by my struggles continually regardless of place or time.



15. *CARNIVAL The Drawing No. 3*

Dimensions: 59" x 138" (150cm x 350cm)

Media: Charcoal and pastel on paper

Year: 2024



Similar to the above, this is the third one of *CARNIVAL*'s embodied drawing series where I purposefully draw the cage with crosses to trap myself. It is an embodied drawing as one output of my physical live performances *CARNIVAL: Paint ME in*

Edinburgh. The recurring symbol of the cage means I am haunted by my own struggles continually regardless of when or where I am. Spanning two years, the three drawings connect me from two cities and at three moments, representing an eternal cycle of my lived/living existence that extends into my future career.

16. *Doll*

<https://youtu.be/Hz0pgrwPGEg> (Clips)

<https://www.yifangong.art/video-performances/doii/> (Full video and info.)

Format: Digital film

Year: 2021



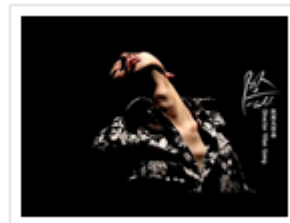
Doll is an experimental dance film in which I was not allowed to be the performer but director, scenic designer, choreographer, editor, and musician. The actor of *Doll* instead functioned as my doppelganger as he actually played the role of me. I improvisationally danced and acted with the actor when directing off camera. Regardless of the fictional narrative, *Doll* (double “l” rather than “L”) is a film of and about One, who is the subject-object two-in-one. The doll is an objectified external expression of the Self, and this film welcomes the audience to enter my lonely and struggling spiritual world, so as to raise attention to people living an alone life with emotional distress. *Doll* is an early practical experiment of my aesthetics studies of the subjectivity and objectivity of the Self during my PhD.

17.  Fall

<https://www.yifangong.art/video-performances/%E5%9D%A0fall/> or
<https://youtu.be/9fPPf8TtIT0>

Format: Digital film

Year: 2019



Highlights are 02:54–07:22. Directed, written, performed, designed and scored by myself, this experimental artist's film introduces a series of dreams of mine where I traverse various times, spaces and dimensions. This laid the conceptual and practical foundations for my subsequent practice-led PhD research. My daydreams and nightmares are very complicated, consisting of multiple narratives and fantastic stories in which I play different characters. This may be because my cerebral cortex is overactive. It is such a burden for me, but it brings abundant beauty and fantasies to my art. I may upgrade it with more performers, more advanced cinematography and more diverse scenic designs (e.g., using the swimming pool and dancers for underwater performance filming).

18. COSMOS

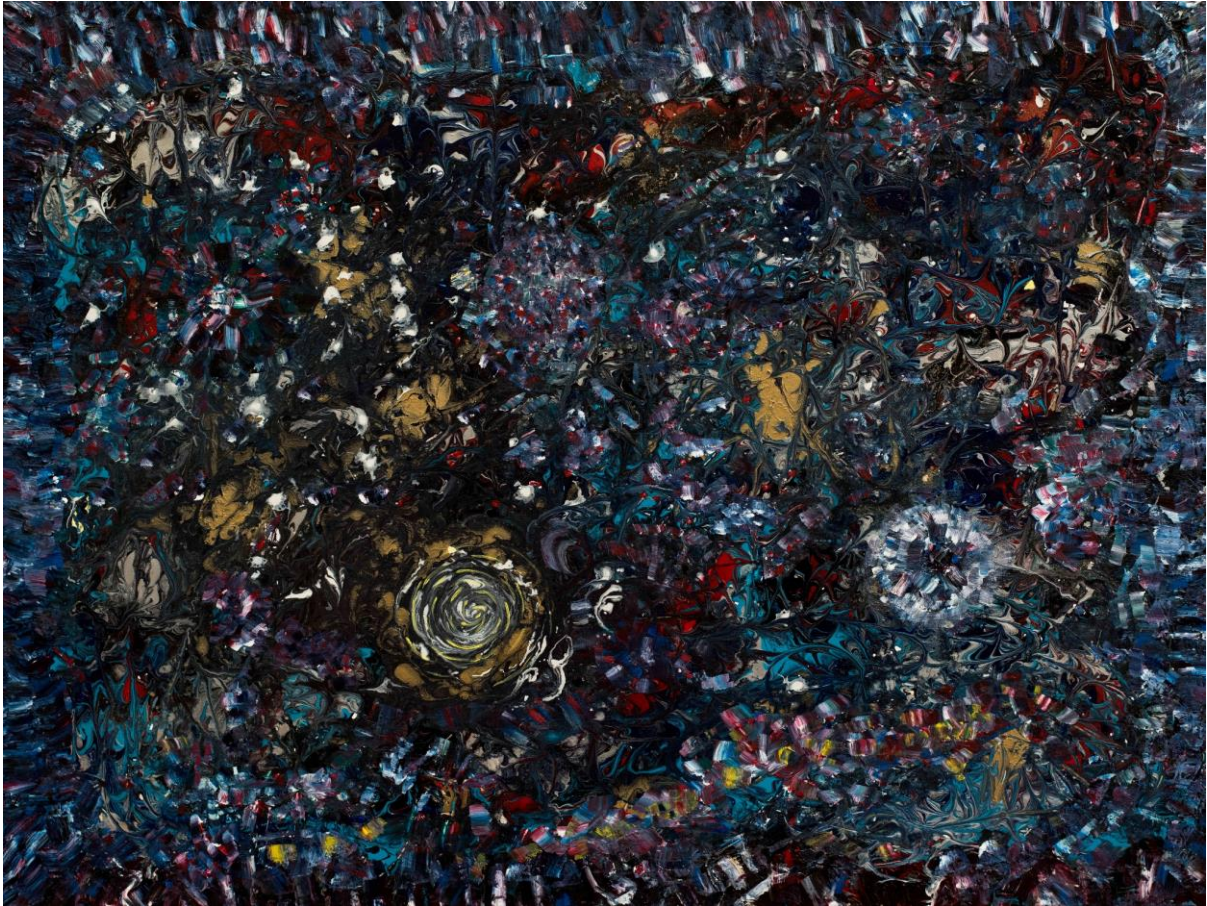
Dimensions: 36" x 48"

Media: Acrylic and golden spray on canvas

Year: 2020

COSMOS represents my pursuit of self-revealing and returning to my true nature. With physical actions, I squeeze acrylic paints from the tubes directly and apply them onto the canvas baldly. I do colour mixing after the pigments are already on the

canvas. *COSMOS* reflects both the inner chaos and body-mind unity of my Self. My spiritual universe is a universe in itself, which extends infinitely outward to reach out to the outside world and the Other. For more details and to see the edges of this painting, please go to <https://www.yifangong.art/paintings/cosmos/>



19. *ONE Series*

Dimensions: No. 1, 24" x 30" (61cm x 76cm); No. 2, 24" x 24 (61cm x 76cm); No. 3, 24" x 36" (61cm x 91cm)

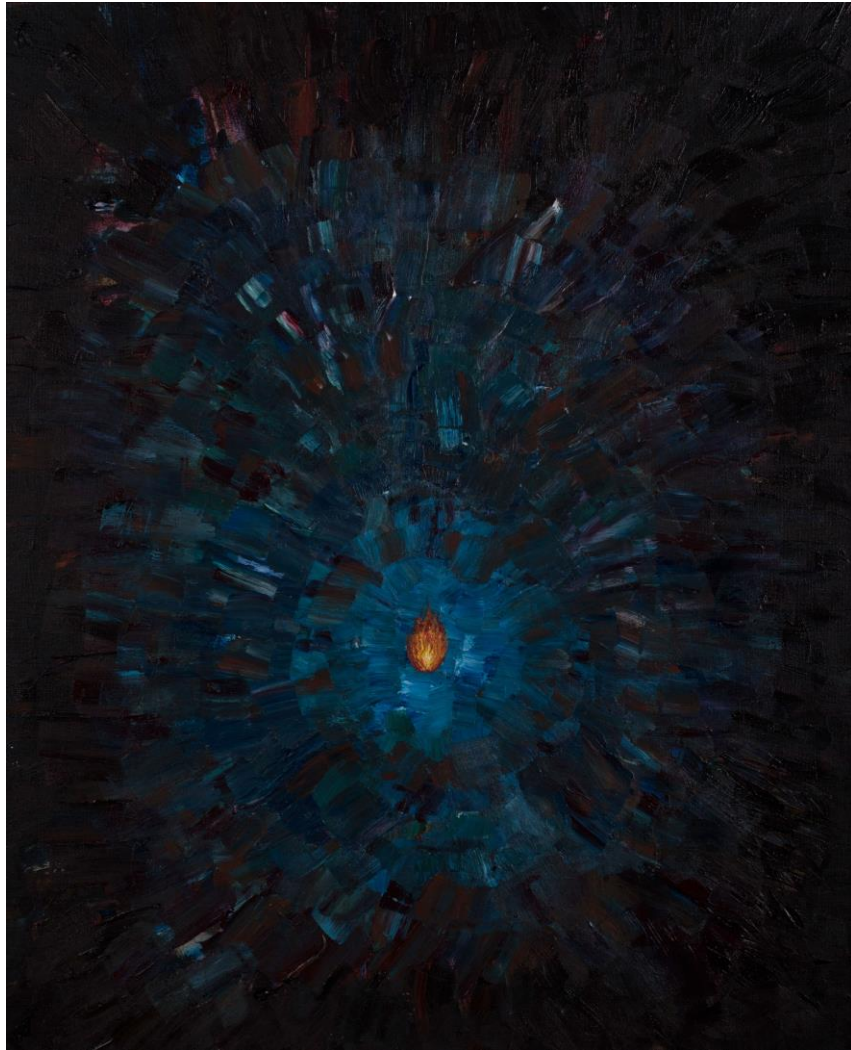
Media: Acrylic on canvas

Year: 2020

Loneliness and anxiety seem to have occupied my life. However, they bring artistic inspiration. This series is named "ONE" as I agree with Taoism. "The Tao produced One; One produced Two; Two produced Three; Three produced All things." One can be one, and it can also be everything. We all live only once, and we are all going to die. However, we cannot be defeated as the end of One is eternity. The evidence of our existence is perpetually present. I am alone and lonely, but I know my possibilities are unlimited. An individual may be more powerful than they realise. I believe in this and am practising this by myself and by my art.

I squeeze acrylic paints from the tubes directly and apply them onto the canvas baldly. I also used a variety of acrylic paints to make watercolour and 3D effects. My colour mixing happens afterwards. For more details, please refer to

<https://www.yifangong.art/paintings/one-series/>





20. *Forest Mist*

Dimensions: 4" x5" (10cm x 13cm)

Media: Black & White analogue film, digital scanning

Year: 2020

Forest Mist has been awarded in Monochrome Photography Awards 2021 with Honorable Mention in Amateur Photomanipulation category.

