

FRANK VIGNERON LESONGE CREUX

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Frank Vigneron has been Assistant Professor in the Department of Fine Arts, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, since 2004, he also received a Ph.D in Chinese Arts History at Paris VII University in 1998. His research focuses on the history of Chinese painting from the 18th century onwards and on different aspects of contemporary Chinese art seen in a global context. His artworks have been shown in the Hong Kong Art Biennial in 1996, 1998 and 2004.

LE SONGE CREUX

Le Songe Creux, a series of drawings all bearing the same title started in Paris in 1984. Since then, although always made with a technical pen on paper, it has taken many different forms in the way it was shown. From paintings on the wall to large scale installations, from video to books, all these works still share the same basic idea of lines interacting in an ongoing process, a process that will only stop at the death of its maker. The triptych clarified my desire to make explicit the spiritual dimension of my work, but there were other ways to do so with the creation of obvious spaces of meditation.

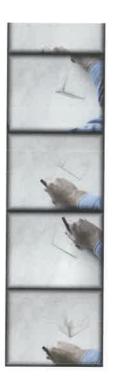
To answer the need to emphasize the spiritual dimension of these drawings, it became obvious that any circumscribed space could become a spiritual space as long as its context made it clear that it was a transformed site. In this case, the simple use of standing screens like the ones Chinese scholars would use in their studies, to delimit a circular space in the gallery can instantly be read as a space of meditation as long as there are enough elements to force the viewer to see the installation as such.

These elements would very simply be several dark objects used to display the pieces of artworks inspired by the paintings and the video. The installation would therefore be made of dark screens with the drawings encased in frames completely transparent on both sides (this is made possible by the translucency of Chinese paper).





The screens thus delimit a space inside which a cabinet would show on its top a video of my hand drawing. Open and closed at the same time, this space satisfies all the requirements necessary for inducing the spectators into a meditative state. As for the video: in the background, behind the drawing being executed on a table, a cube is rotating at random. On each side of the cube. another cube is revolving with the same hand drawing, and thus ad infinitum. This movie was made to show that 'behind' the painting there is nothing else than more paintings and the process of making them. It is designed to remind the viewer that meaning is not to be looked for as 'the idea behind the form': meaning simply lies in the interaction between the lines and the void in between and the only thing the making of a painting leads to is the making of another painting.



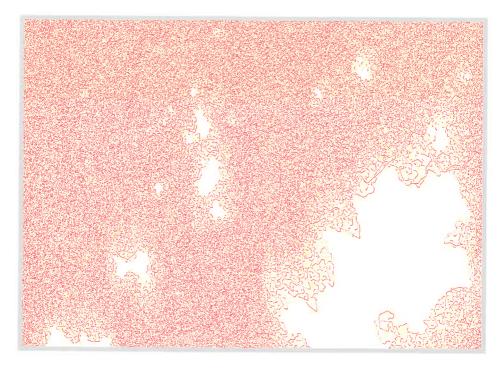


There was, however, still the need to realize another arrangement of objects to showcase the many books I have been working on for years in order to create another space of spirituality. The book has, from the onset, been a favorite form of display since I have always considered drawing to be closely related to writing. Blurring the line between the written sign and the drawing, between linear narrative and abstract representation has been a fascination of many artists of the 20th century, and I saw this endeavor in the same light, with a similar desire to avoid words in order to create a story.

The idea that China and Japan, and more particularly the Chinese character, had something to offer to the idea of the book as art object has been in the mind of several Western artists and poets of the 20th century. The white page of the book and the book itself can become ideal spaces of cross-cultural mediation.

To explore further the cross-cultural possibilities of the book form with my work, I therefore decided to use the books I had been working on for years. Le Songe Creux – Codex brings this process into a Chinese-style book: a portable, half-size version of a large scale drawing. This type of book is in Chinese referred to as 'butterfly form' (蝴蝶式) and lends itself more easily than the constantly interrupted space of the modern book to this notion of process and, although, it still eventually comes to an end at both extremities, might convey more convincingly the continuity it has in the mind of its maker. All these books were made to be put in a bookshelf that will be of the two elements of another 'separate space'.

The books are obviously the heart of the library but can they constitute a spiritual space by themselves? The combination of bookshelf and table provided the necessary elements for the constitution of a 'separate space' by circumscribing any space with screen-like objects displaying these drawings and another central object functioning as the heart of this spiritual space. The book and its pages have always been a sacralized medium with an obvious link to the eternal.



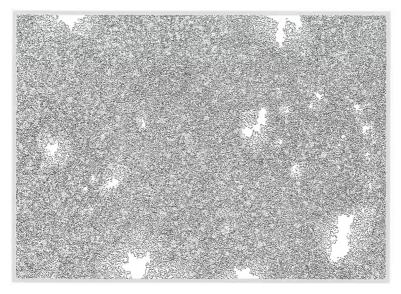
FRANK VIGNERON LESONGE GREUX

Le Songe Creux is an ongoing painting and drawing series the artist Frank Vigneron has started since 1984 in Paris. The artist dedicates some time every day for making these line drawings for over 20 years. The process is completely meditative. The outcome is a wordless journal of the artist's life over the past 24 years with stories told by the delicate lines and space he creates on large scale papers and Chinese painting "butterfly form" albums.

The audience is invited to experience this spiritual journey by walking through the exhibition hall. Most of the works on display have never been shown to the public before. The 15 pieces of the artwork includes butterfly format Chinese painting, two large scale installations and ink on paper paintings occupying the main hall.



It was clear that the library had always been a privileged space of meditation in both the Western and the Chinese civilization because of the centrality of the written word and the act of meditation it leads to. But the importance of the written word in this context could not hide the role played by the image in that space, and it was obvious that the library and the study were also a place of observation: the world was in the library because of the words but also because of the pictures.



From these slightly different usages of the library, it was obvious that the creation of a space of meditation did not even need a closed place as long as the books' presence was obvious. One does not need walls to circumscribe a spiritual space, the simple presence of the books in their bookcase and the table, or even more simply on shelves attached to the wall, already signifies a delimitated space. And the delimitated space is the space of meditation produced by these objects in the mind of any viewer who grew up in a civilization of the book, the written word. It therefore fulfills its function which is to convey a sense of spirituality.

--- Frank Vigneron.