Atopia: Digital Fictions of Place

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Certificate of Authorship/Originality

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Ying-Jui Huang

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Abstract

The central focus of this project is on how images of place mediate experiences of tourism and landscape. The invention of photography in the nineteenth century coincided with a boom in tourist activities, and since that time, photographs became an essential component of tourism. Tourists travelling to scenic areas for leisure and recreation use photography to capture and memorialise their experiences. Once they return home, these photographic images come to mediate their experiences of the landscapes they visited.

In contrast to the early explorations of touristic landscape imagery of the nineteenth century, photographic imagery in the contemporary world cannot be disembedded from the ubiquitous mass media networks that distribute vast quantities of images and information. Images of foreign landscapes are now ubiquitous, and the touristic photograph, which originally mediated between travellers and the landscapes they visited, has infiltrated and become a crucial part of human life. As a result the boundaries between geographical places and virtual places become more uncertain day by day. Furthermore, the relationships between users and images are blurring and shifting. A digital image can be transformed and recomposed, and becomes itself an autonomous image that represents a new fictional landscape.

The creative work and written analysis of this doctoral submission focuses on the concept of *atopia*. Willke refers to atopia as describing an 'anywhere/nowhere' state based on deterritorialisation, concentration and spatial inversion of social possibilities. The notion of atopia can refer to geographic spaces, but also can denote a fictitious place that is outside the actual world, an autonomous space that has the quality of being an in-between place, or an interface. In particular, an atopia can be an invented

place, caught between the local and the foreign. Lippard coins the term ‘tourist-at-home’ to signify the collapsing of the distinctions between the visitor and the visited, the touristic and the domestic. This work takes up the challenge of Lippard’s contention that there is the possibility for a critical artistic practice at the interstice of the local and the foreign. It does this through appropriating modes of image creation at the intersection of landscape and tourism photography and digital media practice.

The idea of the possibility of being both a visitor and a local at the same time is explored. By both studying and living in Australia but having grown up in Taiwan, I have myself had the cultural experience of being both ‘alien’ and ‘at home’ in the sense that crosses both the domain of travelling but also of dwelling. This investigation is pursued through a consideration of the significance and associations of fictional images of place, in that they have the quality of interfaces, standing between the actual world and the virtual spaces of imagination.

The project explores how seemingly mundane places can be transformed into extraordinary landscapes through reconceptualisation, digital manipulation and re-presentation. The creative component consists of a series of twelve digital images that are created by combining original photographs of local landscapes that I took in the manner of a tourist exploring my surroundings. The images are presented in the form of a photograph album. This form of presentation invokes traditions of travel and recording of tourist experiences from before the digital era. The form of the album, a hand-crafted book using the coptic binding technique, allows for the images to be displayed in the domestic environment, in the manner of a personal exhibition.

Keywords

Atopia, Photography, Landscape, Tourist-at-home, Hyperreality, Virtuality

Introduction

> Reality is hidden… Whatever the camera records is a disclosure – whether it is imperceptible, fleeting parts of movement, an order that natural vision is incapable of perceiving. (Sontag 1977, pp. 120-121)

In landscape photography, a virtual liminal space is created between the scenery and the photographer. Vilém Flusser notes that 'images are mediations' that are placed between the actual world and the human being, and that, in the end, the world itself becomes like an autonomous image (Flusser 2000, pp. 9-10). The image of a landscape is converted to a veil-like mediation, which re-presents a dominant visual ideology.

This is what Jean Baudrillard calls 'simulacrum': "[the image] has no relation to any reality whatsoever: it is its own pure simulacrum" (Baudrillard 1994, p. 6). The scenery of the photograph has been turned into a fictional place which is then re-presented as reality. This fictional intermediary space has the quality of ***atopia***: as a space which does not exist, it is a non-place.

On the other hand, in our contemporary era of almost infinite capability to manipulate images, once detached from the reality of a particular place the image could be taken to represent many different places. Donna Haraway reflects on this proliferation of perception as follows:

> Vision in this technological feast becomes unregulated gluttony; all perspective gives way to infinitely mobile vision, which no longer seems just mythically about the god-trick of seeing everything from nowhere, but to have put the myth into ordinary practice. (Haraway 1982, p. 189)

Gillian Rose outlines three sites at which the meanings of an image are made: “the site(s) of the production of an image, the site of the image itself, and the site(s) where it is seen by various audiences” (Rose 2001, pp. 16-28). Rose further indicates three modalities of aspects – technological, compositional and social – that can be used to critique the process of meaning-making at each of these sites.

This framework informs my investigation of the spatial significance of the art works analysed and those created in this thesis. The place where an image has been taken and the place of the image itself will be drawn on in reviewing the literature, and interpreting case studies and works analyses. The third place is that where the image is presented to viewers, in an exhibition, gallery or album (as is the case with the works submitted as the creative component of this doctoral submission). This is the where place the image interacts with the environment of its presentation, and delivers a new experience to its viewers.

Lucy Lippard argues that the appearance of places can be veiled by mythic impressions. In *The Tourist at Home*, Lippard expressed the meaning of where she lives as, “When I give my own walking tours through the rutted dirt streets, it seems to me that everything is here: culture, nature, history, art, food, progress, and irony” (Lippard 1999, p. 12).

This thesis researches the significance and involvement of fictional images of place, as interfaces, in that they have the quality of standing between the actual world and virtual spaces. The project is based on image theories of photography, especially landscape images, in the age of omnipresent and intricate networking.

In *Inside Architecture*, Italian architectural theorist Vittorio Gregotti defines atopia as the condition of non-places. He lists the places of ‘atopia’, including both

intentional (atopic typologies) and seemingly unintentional (residual spaces). These are places that offer none of the spontaneous and temporary gatherings that are familiar from, or typical of, the past:

> Supermarkets, parking lots, highway service stations, airports and their parking areas, transfer points between various means of transport, showroom centers along urban exit roads are all parts of these atopical typologies. To them we must add the residual spaces, shipping container yards, used car dealerships, auto graveyards, the odd spaces between highway interchanges, unused 'green spaces', junkyards, and abandoned farmlands (Gregotti 1996, pp. 79-80).

These marginal places have a low sense of belonging or social value attached to them. They are often overlooked or seen as dead or ugly places. Nevertheless, these mundane places reveal some insights about culture and society.

Atopias can also be invented places caught between the local and the foreign[1]. In *On the Beaten Track*, Lippard's term 'tourist-at-home' collapses the distinctions between the visitor and the visited, the touristic and the domestic. Lippard's contention is that the appropriation of modes of tourism allows a critical artistic practice at the interstice of the local and the foreign (Lippard 1999, pp. 13-21). This research project explores this idea of the possibility of being both a visitor and a local at the same time. By both studying and living in Australia but having grown up in Taiwan, I have myself had the cultural experience of being both 'alien' and 'at home' in the sense that crosses both the domain of travelling but also of dwelling.

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[1] **Atopia** in this project is a liminal virtual place that is constructed between people (the photographer) and the actual landscape. **Utopia** is a fantastic 'no place' that is imagined as a 'good place'. It is the prototype of the pursuit of atopia. **Dystopia** refers to the over-developed places of human civilisation that are the extreme opposite of a utopian place. **Heterotopia** is drawn from the work of Michel Foucault, and describes a mirror-place refracting reality, and is in non-hegemonic conditions. Heterotopia has in-between, neglected, and fringe features which illustrate the concept of a virtual atopian place.

The photographic creations in this research project attempt to capture this sense of hybrid experience of familiarity and strangeness. In particular, I am interested in how, in the current information technologies age, tourism may now be created and experienced through online environments without physical relocation. Rojek summarises cybertravel as having destroyed the distinction between 'home' and 'abroad', something that forces people to rethink the meaning of tourism within the context of contemporary society (Rojek 1998, p. 34). The cultural theorist Tim Oakes, writing on *Tourism and Modernity in China*, notes that the stasis of the imagined authentic reality of the theme park is what is desired by the tourist while outside the park the actual world seems to be fake. Yet both realities belong to the same present contemporary places that people live in (Oakes 1998).

As a result of the ever-expanding use of electronic media, the boundaries between different places have increasingly become ambiguous and fuzzy. Joshua Meyrowitz asserts that:

> Electronic media destroy the specialness of place and time. Television, radio, and telephone turn once private places into more public ones by making them more accessible to the outside world. And car stereos, wristwatch televisions, and personal sound systems such as the Sony 'Walkman' make public spaces private. Through such media, what is happening almost anywhere can be happening wherever we are. Yet when we are everywhere, we are also no place in particular. (Meyrowitz 1985, p. 125)

Over the course of human history, the progress of science and technology have changed everyday visual practices. With the development of the contemporary telecommunications networks, people live their lives in an ever faster-moving state. We receive and deliver an increasing volume of messages in real-time. People's everyday movements are inevitably implicated in relationship to movements

associated with tourism. Whether actively or passively, in physical actuality or digital virtuality, the body is often in a travel status. The result is the increasing blurring of the boundaries between territories, and frequent communications may be enhancing trans-cultural practices and learning exchanges. In the case of everyday visual practices, these concurrent flows of actual and virtual messages intertwine with each another. Images, in and of themselves, contain more possibilities for hybrid presentation. The contemporary cultural context is infused with these hybrid traits.

The experience of travel turns into the state of alternating or oscillating between physical and online environments. Whenever new types of space have come into being, people's interpretation of place have always been changed. Cyberspace, the space created by the internet and advanced communications networks, strengthens this trend. Tourism, for those who participate in it, is no longer just a matter of taking transportation to sightsee; it can also connote a virtual adventure in cyberspace. In our contemporary digital age, nearly all that matters is fully digitised, and human life operates within an immense simulant world that is subsumed into the global consumption system. Speedy communications and real-time transmission have indeed varied people's thought, behaviour, and forms of representation. In this age of social media, we often see people taking photos and immediately sending them to share with others by mobile communications technology. Or we ourselves are able to vicariously take part in others' pleasant travel experiences. Through the screen, it seems that we have participated in worldwide travel along with the tourists themselves.

An important aspect of the trend towards an environment of ubiquitous digital networks is that the image has spread and penetrated all media. Further, the media is now overflowing with images and messages. This over-consumption of images alters or even shapes people's perceptions of both physical and online environments. The

substance of the image has produced and reproduced itself and resulted in qualitative changes; in Flusser's words, the image is autonomy. An image no longer has a kind of existence at a particular time; based on networking technologies, the nature of the image has been transformed into a real-time existence, able to predict or anticipate a future existence. Because the image is autonomy, it can guide people towards what to do and how to do it. Images of real landscapes intermix and re-create an intermediate space of hybridity and hyperreality that provides an interface between the physical and online environments.

It is these fictional representations of places that could be anywhere or nowhere – or atopia in other words – that are explored in this thesis and its creative component, which is conceptualised as the creation of a hyperreal phantom place through recombining images taken in diverse locations in Taiwan and Australia.

Overview of the structure of the thesis

First, the thesis uses case studies from various artists' creations of landscape images to understand the significance of place in the images and their principles of construction.

Next, I review the literature commencing from landscape photography, then explore both actual and virtual images of landscape. The literature review principally covers the image and visual theories found in Jean Baudrillard's simulacrum, Roland Barthes' punctum and 'that-has-been', Susan Sontag's *On Photography*, Walter Benjamin's aura and reproduction of art work, Vilém Flusser's image as mediation and Gillian Rose's *Visual Methodologies*.

Following the literature review, the thesis explores the places/sites of images, painting on concepts such as non-place or 'atopia', and 'other', 'third' and 'heterotopology' for 'place' and 'space' in historical, architectural, geographical, tourism and cultural studies theory. Discussions of places/sites of images are principally found in (1) Michel Foucault's heterotopology, Edward Soja's thirdspace and Vittorio Gregotti's non-places atopia; (2) John Urry's tourist gaze, Lucy Lippard's tourist at home, Chris Rojek's cybertourism and phantasmagoric places, and Mike Crang's cultural geography of tourist and geographic studies; (3) Homi Bhabha's centre/periphery and intervening space of post-colonialism studies; (4) cultural studies in the fields of cross-border, cross-cultural and expanding third places theories; and (5), and lastly, cultural studies of Taiwan, Australia, Asia and Western countries.

Extrapolating from and informed by this collation and analysis of the literature review and case studies, I created my own series of fictitious landscape images, *Atopia: Digital Fictions of Place*. Each of these creative works is composed of at least two different landscape photographs that I took in the manner of a tourist exploring my surroundings, mainly in Taiwan and Australia. The images are presented in the form of a photograph album. This form of presentation invokes traditions of travel and recording of tourist experiences from before the digital era. As Sontag suggests, a photograph can be the starting point of a romance, taking us out from the confined spaces of our everyday lives. In particular, "photograph collections can be used to make a substitute world, keyed to exalting or consoling or tantalizing images" (Sontag 1977, p. 162). The form of the album is that of a hand-crafted book constructed using the time-consuming and painstaking coptic binding technique. This technique resonates with the detailed and meticulous process of digitally collaging and

manipulating the images themselves, but also allows the images to be displayed in the domestic environment, in the manner of a personal exhibition.

I argue that the *Atopia* series departs from our traditional understanding of the principles of production of ordinary photography, and tends instead toward the manifestation of a process that is also aligned to that of painting. Finally, the works are an expression of a liminal place – atopia – that sits between and alongside the physical and online environments. It creates a buffer zone that eases the differences between physical reality and the virtual world, people and place, and landscape and mediascape.

Chapter One

Atopia Studies in Images

In the contemporary era, people explore the world through both actual travel and virtual cyber voyage, as a way to discover and experience the places where different kinds of people reside. The ubiquitous development of information technologies has led to a collapsing of the barriers between real and online environments, showing paradoxical images of places we have never been to, but which seem as if we have been there before. In this chapter I describe the work of several artists who have influenced the conceptual and aesthetic development of my own creative project, which deals with this paradox of atopia.

This project starts with the case of the landscape images which are most familiar to me, of Taiwan. Yu's *French Chair in Taiwan* series takes ordinary corners all over Taiwan and creates a surreal picture of multicultural phenomena, via the device of a foreign French chair. Yuan and Schmidt adjust original photographs to present very different cityscapes with a hyperreal appearance. Both these series of works create images of places as imaginary atopia.

Liu's *Is There Anybody in There* masterfully combines two distinctive components. His images mark out intermediate and ambiguous characteristics of atopia. The bright colours of Zahalka's *Natural Wonders* suggest an atmosphere of magnificence that influences the composition of my own fictional places. *Easier than Just Waiting* by Shmith produces a picturesque landscape image assembled from several varied photographs.

1.1 Surreal Atopias

1.1.1 Ben Yu, *French Chair in Taiwan* series, 2002

> Many of the objects of the modern tourist gaze are functionally equivalent to the objects of religious pilgrimage in traditional society. When people travel (make a pilgrimage) to the great tourist sites of the modern world, MacCannell suggests that they are in effect worshipping their own society. (Urry 1995, p. 145)

French Chair in Taiwan is a series of works that consists of eighty-nine postcard-like photographs by Ben Yu completed in 2002 (Yu 2002). Yu made use of an imported French chair to symbolise the tourist who stands in front of ordinary places in Taiwan. This series of works look mundane, but have an inexplicable sense of distance. On the one hand, Yu re-explores familiar but neglected scenes throughout Taiwan in a way that is especially meaningful for Taiwanese viewers. On the other hand, the series indicates that when tourists visit places throughout the world, they often seek out scenic images that are familiar from tourist guides and virtual media networks. Somewhat ironically, the French chair in these photographs exhorts the viewer to see the real world in person rather than in an imaginative virtual tour. As a result, these photographs demonstrate a reality beyond the actual scenery which re-presents fictional places of atopia.

Places of Real and Illusory Coexistence

Figure 1.1 Ben Yu, *French Chair in Taiwan* series-1 (2002)

Figure 1.1, from the *French Chair in Taiwan* series, depicts an apartment block in a holiday resort in Sanzhi, one of the suburbs on the north coast of Taiwan. The utopian UFO-shaped complex was constructed at the end of the 1970s, but was never completed because of some business problems (San-Zhi Township Government 2008; Sanzhi Township Government 2008). Over the years the complex has degenerated into what seem to be the ruins of a future construction, an ambiguous place containing both illusion and reality. Yu's framing tranforms the setting into a bizarre film set in which the chair and buildings appear as homeless UFOs in Taiwan. As a result, this abandoned housing development is turned from a utopia into a dystopia.

Figure 1.2 Ben Yu, *French Chair in Taiwan* series-2 (2002)

The second photograph I have selected from the *French Chair in Taiwan* series (Figure 1.2) shows an ordinary street corner in a Taiwanese city. The beautiful French chair stands incompatibly in front of the typical gray concrete and monotone residential buildings, conveying a metaphor of post-colonialism. Since the 1960s, Taiwan has been one of the major manufacturing bases in the world, and its landscape has been transformed by this economic mode of colonialism. In the photograph, the French chair, the large cross and the concrete blocks hybridise both conflict and harmony, implying the multi-layered contradictions and complexities of Taiwanese society. The result is the construction of Taiwan as a freakish hybrid theme park combining images of Chinese, Japanese and American perceptions.

Figure 1.3 Ben Yu, *French Chair in Taiwan* series-3 (2002)

The golden-roofed Chinese pagoda and palace buildings in Figure 1.3 might appear to be the kind of buildings that are of great interest to foreign tourists. In fact, the French chair stands in front of a palace from another world – a cemetery on the outskirts of a city. In Taiwan, a charnel house is usually constructed as a tower-like building that in addition to religious belief reflects the narrow and crowded conditions in cities.

The French chair in this case references and authenticates cross-cultural differences and contradictions. In relation to the cemetery, Foucault notes that:

> This is certainly an 'other' place with respect to ordinary cultural spaces, and yet it is connected with all the locations of the city, the society, the village, and so on, since every family has some relative there. (Foucault 1997, p. 353)

The French chair (as itself a foreign tourist) takes precedence over the original Taiwanese scene, and transforms it into a virtual landscape.

References of the *French Chair in Taiwan*

According to the artist's statement describing the series of works on Yu's website, he created the series with the intention that the viewer would associate the works with the extemporaneous character of tourist snapshots. The image composition features loose, dilettantish but genuine qualities. The method of

storytelling of the photographs' presentation also satirises the familiar layouts published in *National Geographic* and similar publications. Through the French chair, Yu assembles and introduces scenic images of Taiwan to viewers. This style of creation often needs to accumulate large quantities of relevant image data. Jui-Chung Yao analyses Yu's work from the perspective of photographic creation, suggesting that the photographer is like a bystander with no individual perception of the images

> While the photographer does select from the photographs, that is, the objects taken in the photographs have been selected, they also provide feedback to the photographer. While the photographer selects a photograph from all the photographs, it also means that the objects in the photograph attracts ('selects') the photographer. In the process of Yu's creation, he gave up his own perception and just let objects in the photograph select themselves (Yao 2003, pp. 22-23).

While viewers are immersed in the series of postcard-like scenic images, they exhibit a postmodern atmosphere of spatial and temporal hybridity. The beautiful French chair looks incompatible with the surrounding Taiwanese sceneries; however, the work is similar to the form of a surrealistic collage that implies the influence of different cultures along the path of the island's complicated history.

Self-extension through the Dokodemo Door ('Everywhere Door')

The experience of viewing the total series of eighty-nine postcard-like photographs in Yu's *French Chair in Taiwan* series seems to me to be similar to browsing through images in website e-albums. In contemporary sense, the experience of viewing whole series images is like to log onto a Taiwanese tourist website that briefly shows throughout sceneries of Taiwan.

Yu's series of works therefore creates a kind of the rhizomorphic network of contemporary media that reminds me of the dokodemo door in the *Doraemon* comic

series. Just like surfing through the cyberspace, the eponymous Doraemon, a blue robotic cat from the twenty-second century, is able to reach anywhere he wishes to go through the dokodemo door ('everywhere door'), one of his magical gadgets (Time Asia 2006). The most popular comic and animation series in postwar Japan, *Doraemon* was created by Hiroshi Fujimoto, under the pen name Fujiko F. Fujio. The series first appeared in 1970 in the monthly children's magazine *CoroCoro Comic* (Shiraishi 2000, p. 287).

The characteristics of Doraemon's dokodemo door make it an ideal mediating device that can easily interlace with both the actual and the virtual world. In Yu's series, the French chair plays a role similar to that of an imaginative gadget, like the dokodemo door. The chair is a kind of magical device which not only delivers various images of innocent landscapes of Taiwan to viewers (as if they opened a dokodemo door), but also teleports the artist's ideas into the physical world (via exhibitions, newspapers, books, etc.) and online environments. In a similar way, Fujio's *Doraemon* creates a prototype image of cyberspace through which its protagonists travel to varied fantasy destinations, taking his readers along as well.

Wertheim describes how hyperspatial texts like these allow for self-extension in cyberspace:

> We must also acknowledge that some part of my self also 'goes' into every letter I write. If you like, my self 'leaks out' in the letters and stories that I write, and even in the phone conversations I have. (Wertheim 1999, p. 251)

A seemingly unlimited array of diverse information sources and images are intermixed in the rhizomorphic media networks. Although we may experience them sequentially, these information and images landscapes re-create new and autonomous spaces in and of themselves as we traverse them.

Figure 1.4 Doraemon's dokodemo door (anywhere door)

I find the *French Chair in Taiwan* series appealing because it presents a juxtaposition of diverse cultural symbols onto an ordinary Taiwanese landscape. The idea of jumping between times and places, accumulating images along the way, suggests to me the notion of juxtaposition that will be put into practice in the creation of my images of atopia.

1.2 Imaginary Atopias

1.2.1 Goang-Ming Yuan, *City Disqualified – Ximen District in Day Time/at Night*, 2002

Figure 1.5 Goang-Ming Yuan, *City Disqualified – Ximen District in Day Time* (2002)

Figure 1.6 Goang-Ming Yuan, *City Disqualified – Ximen District at Night* (2002)

Hybridity in a City Block

The *City Disqualified – Ximen District* (Yuan 2002) series consists of hyperreal images created by Goang-Ming Yuan. The series signifies the loss of the qualities of the human being – hence disqualification – which Yuan quotes from Japanese author Osamu Dazai's novel *No Longer Human* (Yao 2003, pp. 101-103). The *City Disqualified* series developed from Yuan's previous *Human Disqualified* (2001) work.

With city growth and development, the civic centre of Taipei has moved to the east from its original location at the West Gate (Ximen). Consequently, the Ximen District has gradually been transformed into a haven for young people in recent years, adapted from an initial Japanese proposal for a recreational business district in the city.

Yuan's use of a quotation from a Japanese novel as the title of his Taiwanese cityscape reinforces this connection between Taiwan and Japan. In particular, 'Xi Men Ding' means a district that is located outside the west gate of the old Taipei Fortress. 'District' is '町' ('ding') in Chinese, which is originally from the Japanese word meaning city block.

Lee describes the contemporary Ximen District as follows:

> Some stores bear Japanese signboards to create a Japanese aroma even if they do not sell Japanese goods. … Japanese pop songs are emitted from nearly every shop at deafening volumes. Boys and girls dress 'Shibuya-style' and carry Japanese mobile phones with cute Japanese accessories. (Lee 2004, p. 134)

In 1945, Taiwan emerged from fifty years of colonisation by Japan. Since that time, many reminders of Japanese rule remain throughout the whole island. The images in this series are metaphors for colonial relics which signify the disappearance of history. The hyperreal image of *City Disqualified – Ximen District* shows an inconceivable scene in the real Taipei city block, which is one of the busiest intersections in the city, twenty-four hours a day.

Mirror Place

The Ximen District's development and change can be observed from the point of view of cultural translation. In *Unpacking My Library ... Again*, Bhabha uses the concept of 'intervening space', analysing Adrienne Rich's poetry (Bhabha 1996, p. 204). Ximen itself is a kind of in-between space which derives from both past Japanese and recent Taiwanese/Chinese cultural influences. Nowadays Ximen presents a new appearance with a fragrant Japanese scent as Taipei's equivalent to Harajuku (Tokyo's famous youth subculture area). This scene of intersecting streets is one of the most vivid and busiest traffic centres of Taipei. Furthermore, the

contemporary Taiwanese hybrid cityscape is made up of buildings in Western architectural styles and advertising logos. In Yuan's images, this bustling and vibrant place has been transformed into an inconceivable ghost town. Through digital technologies, Yuan has erased the visual evidence of all living organisms. This surreal city block negates utopia, in the sense that it is a metaphor for people escaping the apathy and alienation of a glamorous and bustling urban life. Just as the *French Chair in Taiwan* series evokes ideas of an 'other place', in Foucault's terms as "those singular spaces to be found in some given social spaces whose functions are different or even the opposite of others" (Foucault & Rabinow 1984, pp. 239-256). Here Ximen also becomes a heterotopia, a place of a mirror refracting reality (Foucault 1998, pp. 239-240).

Yuan created these works through digital technology: both images consist of nearly three hundred photographs in total taken in the same location over a period of three months (Yuan 2004). He then digitally pieced those photographs together in layers, erasing and re-creating selected components from the 'original' photographs. The finished works conveys their meaning through piecing together asynchronous time frames in a concrete space, representing a fictionalised, but existing cityscape.

A reality is present in both what digital technology replicates and re-presents. This expresses an accurate image of what Baudrillard defines as simulation "[which] stems from the utopia of the principle of equivalence, from the radical negation of the sign as value, from the sign as the reversion and death sentence of every reference" (Baudrillard 1994, p. 6). In a digital and consumer-oriented contemporary society, the consumer system is no longer part of a culture which creates images or symbols. On the contrary, the image simulates and then re-creates itself; the symbol produces and

then deconstructs itself. During the process of image transformation, a new hyperworld is constructed through a process of alteration.

The two city block photographs of *City Disqualified – Ximen District* are impressions of hyperreality based on the images of a real-world place. Yuan's concept and technique have created an impressive fictional reality. I will adapt these ideas to compose both Taiwanese and Australian landscapes into my own fictions of created places.

1.2.2 Andreas Schmidt, *Atopia - Las Vegas* series, 2005

Figure 1.7 Andreas Schmidt, *Atopia – Las Vegas* series (2005)

Entering Las Vegas in the daytime after driving along a highway is like a mirage, with the city emerging out of the desert; in the evening, the city is like a splendid rainbow, suspended on the other side of the horizon. Since its development as a stopover on the trail to the West in the 1900s (Land, Land & Rocha 2004, pp. 37-48), Las Vegas has been like a fantastic oasis awaiting the camel caravans in the desert. However, Las Vegas is an artificial utopia that has created a psychological retreat for people in an illusory world to make a pilgrimage to, from bustling California and many other places in the world. Baudrillard describes the landscape of Las Vegas:

> … Rise in its entirety from the desert at nightfall bathed in phosphorescent lights, and return to the desert when the sun rises, after exhausting its intense, superficial energy all night long, still more intense in the first light of dawn, to understand the secret of the desert and the signs to be found there: a spellbinding discontinuity, an all-enveloping, intermittent radiation. (Baudrillard 1988, p. 127)

Placing Transition

Schmidt's Las Vegas is quite different from the city's garish and bustling appearance. The photographs are devoid of human figures, Schmidt paying attention

purely to impressive architecture and brilliant neon lights. Las Vegas's appearance is that of a mirage, with the hidden silent and indifferent desert rising up from the space of artificial structures. It implies that the livelier the city is, the lonelier it is, and the more abundant it is, the more vacant it is, suggesting the interpersonal alienation of contemporary society. Through Schmidt's eyes, Las Vegas has been given a more surreal interpretation than in its earthly appearance. Christina Erb criticises the *Atopia – Las Vegas* Series: "[He] strips away this sense of glamour and excitement by exposing a frighteningly perfect yet lonely side of this desert-sprung city" (Erb 2005).

Gregotti extends the meaning of atopia from the work of British scholars Ian Nairn and Gordon Cullen, by considering the phenomenon of settlements, particularly those undefined areas between countryside and urban periphery. In the contemporary world, urban development has created new kinds of places, such as supermarkets, parking lots, highway service stations, airports and their parking areas, transfer points between various means of transport, showroom centres along urban exit roads and so on. A parking lot, for example, is one of the archetypal atopic places (Gregotti 1996, pp. 79-80). In the centre of a city, parking lots are always located on the edge of where people are gathered (such as basement or parking structure next to building). Except for vehicles carrying passengers, no activity takes place. On the other hand, a parking lot is an ambiguous place as drivers and passengers change status into pedestrians and vice versa. In the comic and movie series *Superman*, Clark Kent transforms himself Superman in a telephone booth to get ready to address an emergency. When a driver leaves a vehicle in the parking lot, it is like a motel for vehicles to stay in (in a physical sense) and is like a site of religious purification for people to restore energy (in a psychological and spiritual sense). Perhaps this is the reason why 'automotive beauty shops' provide services in a parking lot, especially in

the busiest business districts. Furthermore, driver and vehicle separate (while parked) and then meet again (while being picked up), as is the practice in a railway station or an airport. This discussion illustrates how a parking lot is a heterogeneous space which has the characteristics of telephone booths, motels, sites of religious purification, stations and airports.

Assorted Architectural Collections

In Las Vegas, in addition to gambling and entertainment, dramatic architecture is the other icon of the city. Mark Gottdiener comments that, "Las Vegas architecture represents the rejection of modernism. It is, in fact, constructed as if modernist doctrines never existed. … Las Vegas architecture is the apotheosis of signs and symbols" (Gottdiener 2000, p. 277). Urban renewal projects came into being as part of increases in population and tourism, which changed the cityscape of Las Vegas. American architect Robert Venturi observes the urbanised phenomenon of the Strip of Las Vegas:

> The strip has become a conventional urban element. A proliferation of streets parallel and perpendicular to the Strip has produced superblocks, whose density derives from the building of larger and ever larger hotels and the replacing of parking lots with parking structures. (Venturi & Brown 1996, pp. 125-126)

Schmidt's images spread out Las Vegas' spectacular skyline in the vast desert using a wide-angle view from a parking structure. He then collages two images taken from right- and left-side angles together. In my interpretation of the artist's point of view, the photographer is positioned to be a calm bystander while photographing, similar to August Sander in *Man of the Twentieth Century*. As Benjamin comments on Sander's works: "It was assuredly a very impartial, indeed bold sort of observation,

but delicate too" (Benjamin 1985, p. 252). Schmidt presents the panorama of the Strip in the evening in a simple way. Seen from this angle, the viewer is like someone watching collections of scenic architecture in the display windows of a museum. These assorted architectural collections exhibit antique Roman palaces, pyramids; characteristic regions (Sahara, Mediterranean, Spain, New York, Paris, Venice and Monte Carlo); and fanciful tropical islands and circuses. In the photograph, the skyline crosses the centre of the image, describing several different spaces juxtaposed and entangled in the real city strip.

It may be said that Schmidt's representation illustrates Las Vegas as an excellent example of Foucault's heterotopia. Foucault defines 'heterotopias' as singular social spaces whose functions are different to or even the opposite of others (Foucault & Rabinow 1984, pp. 239-256; Soja 1996, p. 149). Foucault describes this kind of place through the comparison between oriental gardens and rugs: "The garden is a rug onto which the whole world comes to enact its symbolic perfection, and the rug is a sort of garden that can move across space" (Foucault 1998, p. 242). Moreover, the oriental garden presents a sort of happy, universalising image of heterotopia. Schmidt's Las Vegas indeed expresses an imaginary utopian picture which jumbles dissimilar places together.

The cityscape of Las Vegas in Andreas Schmidt's *Atopia – Las Vegas* series builds a feeling of hollowness. It removes the trace of people from the appearance of the photographs. Vegas is a dazzling place that runs twenty-four hours a day without stop; however, its under the surface is void beneath its appearance of bustling and flourishing. It presents a different approach but a similar purpose to Yuan's *City Disqualified – Ximen District*. The formation of a sense of spatial emptiness in an image is explored in my own creative work, *Atopia: Digital Fictions of Place*.

1.3 Hybrid Atopias

1.3.1 Chung-Hsing Liu, *Is There Anybody in There*, 2004

Figure 1.8 Cung-Hsing Liu, *Is There Anybody in There – New Kong* (2004)

Figure 1.9 Cung-Hsing Liu, *Is There Anybody in There – Sydyork* (2004)

Is There Anybody in There – New Kong and *Sydyork* series consists of hybrid images created by Chung-Hsing Liu (2004). Contemporary electronic media expand to break up 'reality', causing our concepts of actual spaces to be rearranged, and forming virtual spaces. The series of works containing new fictional landscapes features the characteristics of the internet – captured in a moment, linking omnipresent spaces, and exposing the truth of the media. McLuhan's 'discarnate man' (Levinson 1999, pp. 55-64) describes how a physical body is teleported or dispatched anywhere and anytime through the network of the media. The power of dispatching anywhere is like the idea of the dokedomo door that was explored in relation to the *French Chair in Taiwan* series. Since the development of information technologies, human beings have experienced more and more mediated communication in online environments that disregard temporal and spatial boundaries. As a result, the "[human being] has a very weak awareness of private identity" (McLuhan 1989, p. 199).

Analogously, Barthes specifies:

> The jet-man is a jet-pilot.……The pilot-hero was made unique by a whole mythology of speed as an experience, of space devoured, of intoxicating motion; the jet-man, on the other hand, is defined by a coenaesthesis of motionlessness ('at 2,000 km per hour, in level flight, no impression of speed at all'), as if the extravagance of his vocation precisely consisted in overtaking motion, in going faster than speed. (Barthes 1973, p. 78)

Through the high-speed shuttle, a motionless bodily consciousness is substituted for an immersion in contractions, blackouts, terror and unconsciousness. In the high speed digital age, it is no longer necessary for the body itself to be mobile, bodily mobility has been replaced by the mobility of bodily consciousness. Liu cites the differences in the experience of buying goods online from other types of shopping. For goods sold online (before getting the real product), he encounters a virtual seller,

virtual bidding competitors and virtual shops in cyberspace (Liu 2004, pp. 7-8). This is happening in a way which involves the virtual world of the electronic media and obscures or hides the real identity of all resources, forming fictional spaces.

Composing Utopias

In the *Is There Anybody in There* series, Liu adapts scenic photographs from digital image galleries to create new concentrated hybrid places. The conflict in the image between fictional works and the reality experienced arises from differences in perception. In the same way, Liu compounds the titles of the works in accordance with the components of the images. For example, in figure 1.8 *New Kong* is composed of photographs of New York and Hong Kong, and its title is compounded as New Kong. His collage approach is similar to the manner of the Surrealists. Max Ernst, for example, played a key role in the Surrealists' creation of a particular world-view, which led to the discovery of certain procedures of a poetic nature that reconstructed the elaboration of the plastic work (Breton 1972, p. 274). The Surrealists arbitrarily cut headlines or sentence fragments from newspapers, then composed the fragments to create a new poem. The process of collaging in Surrealism makes an unforeseen reaction out of a collaborative re-creation, which invokes a miraculous transformation. It might be said that when Liu finished his multilayered image composition and clicked the 'flatten image' command on his computer graphic software, a new and unprecedented utopian place resulted.

These images disrupt the tendency for commercial landscape photography to reflect the aspiration to create utopian landscapes. Although there is an overwhelming array of images around us, very few traces of them are left in one's mind. The contemporary phenomenon of information overload means that "in modern society people specialize and consume individual information diets" (Stefik 2000, p. 108).

Those few significant images that are retained from browsing travel journals, tourism brochures, online community sites, blogs, and so on rely on the perfect presentation of landscape itself as an indispensable quality. These are images created for commercial and strategic purposes, where the photographer selects the best position, lighting conditions, angle of view, avoids unpleasant weather conditions (depending on what messages will be presented), constructs elements of the physical environment, and even reinforces the performance of the image in postproduction. As Carol Crawshaw and John Urry point out, commercial scenic photography reproducing a dominant visual ideology (Crawshaw & Urry 1997, p. 188). They quote a tourist photographer's expressed intention:

> I like the people to be able to drive around in their cars, and perhaps go over the brow of a hill and see the shot that I have done and say 'I recognise that'…I like people to have an instant recognition of what they see and think 'I've seen that place'. … People have a tendency to think that they know what they want to see. (Crawshaw & Urry 1997, p. 188)

Disorder Fantasies

Liu's *Is there Anybody in There* series confronts spectators' usual expectations of these cultural contexts. The aerial features of New York, Sydney and Hong Kong are not presented in their familiar configurations. In postmodernism, traditional unitary or dualistic thinking about culture and science has been deconstructed by decentralised and multi-centred thought. People's commonsense perceptions appear more and more pluralistic through rhizomorphic media networks. One's life and intellect are not constrained into a unitary response, but have been transformed into multi-centred, pluralistic forms of decentralisation. The characteristics of postmodernism are 'anything goes' – the famous methodological slogan of Paul Feyerabend: "[which] is

not a ‘principle’ I hold... but the terrified exclamation of a rationalist who takes a closer look at history” (Feyerabend 1993, p. 14). However, Liu’s landscapes have approached the fourth phase of Baudrillard’s typography of the image (Baudrillard 1994, pp. 6-7). These cityscapes’ appearances are detached from the reality (likewise the titles of the works).

Because Liu’s approach assembles photographs found in cyber-galleries, a series of unknown photographers have participated in his collage. Digital photographic images found on the internet can be not only limitlessly copied but also arbitrarily amended. In other words, acquiring information through searching contemporary communication networks does not result in a comprehensive point of view, but a fragmented, piecemeal or mobile perspective. All the fragmented information forms a liminal screen between human beings and the actual world. This is like Flusser’s notion of ‘images as mediation’ (Flusser 2000, pp. 9-10); people are led by the autonomous informational screen and cannot read the integral content of the reality of subjects. Through the mediation of images, Liu expresses a surreal illusory utopia, which is also a fantastic hybrid atopia.

Liu’s combination in *Is There Anybody in There* inspires my further thinking. The binary composition of his image creations is in line with my intention to create images of both conflict and reconciliation. I find it a fascinating notion to integrate varied landscapes in the creation of images.

1.3.2 Anne Zahalka, *Natural Wonders* series, 2004

Figure 1.10 Anne Zahalka, *Natural Wonders* series: *Sunset Viewing Area, Uluru, Northern Territory* (2004)

Figure 1.11 Anne Zahalka, *Natural Wonders* series: *Twelve Apostles, Great Ocean Road, Victoria* (2004)

> Tourism is essentially about making available a diverse range of geographical locations to potential visitors and thereby translating those locations into tourist destinations (Hughes 1998, p. 18).

The Floating Chain

Anne Zahalka is an Australian contemporary visual artist. *Sunset Viewing Area* and *Twelve Apostles*, of the *Natural Wonders* series, depict two of the most recognisable landscape icons in Australia.

Uluru, in Central Australia, is a place of myths, legends and Aboriginal traditions. Robert Layton describes the legend of Uluru in *Uluru: An Aboriginal History of Ayers Rock*:

> Uluru (Ayers Rock itself) was built up during the creation period by two boys who played in the mud after rain. When they had finished their game they travelled south to Wiputa ... Fighting together, the two boys made their way to the table-topped Mount Conner, on top of which their bodies are preserved as boulders. (Layton 1986, p. 5)

In contrast, the Twelve Apostles, located along the Great Ocean Road on the Victorian coast, are clearly recognised by their extraordinary geographical formation.

Alexander Wilson points out that 'tourism' is a modern phenomenon: "We tour the disparate surfaces of everyday life as a way of involving ourselves in them, as a way of reintegrating a fragmented world" (Wilson 1992, p. 22). Zahalka's *Natural Wonders* series reintegrates landscapes as intermediary images between human beings and the actual world. On the one hand, it introduces the Australian legends to foreign tourists via images; on the other hand, it leads foreign tourists into an imaginative place of Australia. In the course of the interaction, images result in ambiguous social patterns. According to Urry's interpretation of 'the tourist gaze':

> There is no single tourist gaze as such. It varies by society, by social group and by historical period. Such gazes are constructed through difference: By this I mean not merely that there is no universal experience which is true for all tourists at all times. Rather the gaze in any historical period is constructed in

> relationship to its opposite, to non-tourist forms of social experience and consciousness…. The viewing of such tourist sights often involves different forms of social patterning, with a much greater sensitivity to visual elements of landscape or townscape than is normally found in everyday life. People linger over such a gaze which is then normally visually objectified or captured through photographs, postcards, films, models and so on. These enable the gaze to be endlessly reproduced and recaptured (Urry 1990, p. 3).

Every image implies multiple significances. Through different social or cultural contexts, the tourist gaze gives the images diverse interpretations. “All images are polysemous; they imply, underlying their signifiers, a ‘floating chain’ of signifieds, the reader able to choose some and ignore others” (Barthes 1977, pp. 38-39). From the opposite aspect, the unanchored polysemous images provide spaces in artistic creation and analysis which can remythologise the legends of images and local landscapes. For example, these massive limestone stacks on the south coast of Victoria were originally named the Sow and Piglets, and the name changed to the Twelve Apostles later in an attempt to lure more tourists (Porter 2006, p. 203). In Chinese society, the rock formations might have been renamed the Twelve Chinese Zodiac Animals. Or as these spectacular rocks stand with stately carriage in the sea, they might have been named after heroes of martial arts fiction.

Simulation Wonderlands

Zahalka produced the fantastic panoramas of the *Natural Wonders* series by adjusting the colours of the images to give them higher saturation (Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery 2004). The colour format makes the images seem of the illusory nature of tourist picture postcards. As C. Michael Hall states, “Images are an inherent part of the tourism phenomenon which, perhaps more than any other business, is based on the

production, reproduction and reinforcement of images" (Hall 1998, p. 140). Thus nature is no longer its primary mode but a hybridity, conveyed by 'veiled' impressions of both authentic and mythic experiences through the mass media and tourist brochures.

Natural Wonders presents a phantasmagoria of iconic landscapes to its viewers. Landscape images have been given different interpretations at different times. Australian photography curator Helen Ennis claims that the landscape holds a preeminent position, contributing to highly charged debates about national identity, attachment to the land and human relations with nature, particularly in the past and during war-time. In recent years, images of landscape have been highly visible in the tourism industry and the conservation movement (Ennis 2007, p. 51). In the contemporary tourism industry, these implications of landscape in position, contribution, and attachment are all applicable to tourists, whereas local residents are more concerned about attachment to the land and implications for the economy. Lippard indicates a peculiar tension existing between locals and outsiders: "Local residents both possess and become a natural resource which produces more pleasure, and tourists are necessary to its conversion to wealth" (Lippard 1999, p. 13).

While nature is thus made part of our system of consumption, landscape has undergone a qualitative change. Zahalka says about *Natural Wonders* that it "presents curiosities of the consumption of Nature as spectacle alongside spectacular artificial landscapes, kitsch icons of national identity next to eco-emporiums" (Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery 2004). These hybrid landscape images have contradictory characteristics: while nature seems to be instantly accessible, it is actually inaccessible, in the sense that it is impossible to enter the actual world as it is seen in tourist pictures or

postcards. And while the landscape can be possessed via modes of commodification, the reality of nature cannot.

The images of *Natural Wonders* have a postcard-like composition and pleasant heightening of colour, giving an engineered appearance of landscape. Today more and more tourism development is oriented to economic ends, to which the innate character of the landscape has been subjugated. When the symbolic image is commercialised in the system of commodification, the symbolism of the image itself is alienation. Relph claims that the conclusion that "there has been a relative desacralising and desymbolising of the environment seems undeniable, ……" (Relph 1976, p. 65). Ching-Chih Lee, for example, argues that the symbolism of the Statue of Liberty has been fetishized by constantly being reproduced and disseminated in Taiwan. One replica stands in the entrance of an amusement park which conveys a message of tourism or international entertainment, another at the entrance to Taipei City beside the highway, conveying a message to people arriving in the metropolis (Lee 2001, p. 130). Similarly, there is Venturi and Brown's description of busy Las Vegas: "It was not the prototype but the phenomenon at its most pure, rising from the open desert without historic underlays" (Venturi & Brown 1996, p. 123). Hence, the symbolism of Zahalka's Australian landscapes, Twelve Apostles and Uluru, have been transformed via commodity fetishism into fictional wonderlands.

In addition to the spectacular wide-angle view panoramas, the saturated colour photographs of the *Natural Wonders* series are impressive. These techniques give the images somewhat of a sense of the surreal. I adopt similar techniques to adjust the colour of my creative imagery to enhance the sense that these are fictional places.

1.4 Polymorphic Atopias

1.4.1 Sam Shmith, *Easier than Just Waiting Around*, 2007

Figure 1.12 Sam Shmith, *Easier than Just Waiting Around* (2007)

> If the real is disappearing, it is not because of a lack of it – on the contrary, there is too much of it. It is the excess of reality that puts an end to reality. (Baudrillard 2000, pp. 65-66)

Easier than Just Waiting Around by Sam Shmith exhibits a transparent perception of a watercolour-like digital work with multiple gradations. The image portrays a placidly fantastic holiday resort far from the madding crowd, such that the air has a poetic atmosphere. Its vernacular title implies multiple significances. The upper left parachute in the image conveys a humorous message of escaping from everyday involvement. On the other hand, from the perspective of its technique, the multilayer composite image suggests scenery of timelessness instead of simply waiting for a decisive moment when photographing.

Picturesque Paradise

We can see that in this work that Shmith creates his own unique landscape through the digital composition of elements chosen from many other photographs. In terms of technique, the movement of light and shade are the leading factors in composing a convincing landscape. Shmith uses the mouse and keyboard of his computer as painting brushes, the monitor as canvas, and the original photographs as medium to reconstruct seemingly real yet not real landscapes. Shmith's creative procedure makes use of digital composition, continually erasing, pasting, copying and replacing.

The construction of landscapes as a kind of palimpsest is described by cultural geographer Mike Crang as a similar kind of process: "The earlier inscriptions were never fully erased so over time the result was a composite – a palimpsest representing the sum of all the erasures and over-writings" (Crang 1998, p. 22). The ground under foot or the landscape before one's eyes are accumulated and constructed through gradational layers of nature, local history, local society and regional culture.

At first glance Shmith's landscape looks like it could be a tourist promotional poster or an ordinary scenic snap. Yet on closer inspection there are no iconic signs, no landmarks to anchor the image to any actual place. Shmith comments on his own works: "I am continually trying to find the balance between the real and the surreal, the painted and the photographed" (Shmith 2007).

Easier than Just Waiting Around is created using collage techniques, the image emerging with a poetic ambiance of surrealism. André Breton refers to collage in the creative practice of Surrealism:

> [Collage techniques] were employed before the advent of surrealism, but were systematized and modified by surrealism, have allowed certain artists to set down stupefying photographs of their thought and their desires on paper or canvas. (Breton 1972, p. 275)

Since digital photographic images can be adjusted, composed and even created from nothing, this means that the 'subject' was not necessarily there when the photo was taken. The contemporary techniques of digital photographic practice do not entirely support Barthes' argument that the 'that-has-been' was taken directly from traditional photography:

> Painting can feign reality without having seen it. Discourse combines signs which have referents, of course, but these referents can be and are most often 'chimeras'. Contrary to these imitations, in Photography I can never deny that the thing has been there" (Barthes 1981, p. 76).

Yet Shmith composes images, elements or signs that he took from actual places to present his own images of destination. The meanings of landscape image are not anchored; they are slippery and unmotivated in semiotic terms. To think of the essence of a digital photograph, it can be a re-creation, drawing-like that is the antithesis of directly taken photography.

A Polymorphic Atopia

Before the merging together of the many photographs of diverse timeframes, places and contexts to create one composite image, each original carried its own stories. The reconstructed image of place departs from the original stories and meanings of these fragments of photographs and turns into a hyperreal landscape. In terms of Baudrillard's notion of simulation, *Easier than Just Waiting Around* has detached itself from any specific reality and become its own pure simulacrum

(Baudrillard 1994, pp. 6-7). Nicholas Mirzoeff's description of the interaction between seeing and knowledge in postmodernity responds to this same transformation of the relationship between place and image:

> At New York's Empire State Building, the queues are longer for the virtual reality New York Ride than for the lifts to the observation platforms. Alternatively, you could save yourself the trouble by catching the entire New York skyline, rendered in attractive pastel colours, at the New York, New York resort in Las Vegas. This virtual city will be joined shortly by Paris Las Vegas, imitating the already carefully manipulated image of the city of light. (Mirzoeff 1998, p. 1)

Mirzoeff goes on to note that the boundary between physicality and virtual reality has become increasingly indistinct, further disrupting the definition of place in the contemporary world. Rojek clarifies this, saying, "Our conventional categories of ordering space and classifying difference cease to be tenable when online environments may now be created and experienced by travellers without physical relocation" (Rojek 1998, p. 34). This means that, in the postmodern perception, the conception of space possesses both physical and virtual features. Shmith's work presents an 'other' place with an ambiguous nature – actual but fabricated, from history but not belonging to it, seemingly natural but artificial, real but also hyperreal, and of mundane appearance but full of implications – which is a polymorphic atopia.

The image of *Easier than Just Waiting Around* was constituted from many components of various photographs that hint at a phenomenon of hybridity. Shmith's work presents an illusion in a manner that is painting-like. In my own work, I am trying to develop the presentation of a landscape image that exists in both the real and the fictional, the natural scene and the artificial landscape at the same time.

1.5 Digital Atopias

1.5.1 James Edmonds, *A Fleeting Landscape* (7 minute video), 2007

Figure 1.13 James Edmonds, *A Fleeting Landscape* (2007)

> Tourism and leisure become major areas of investment and profitability, adding their weight to the construction sector, to property speculation, to generalized urbanization … No sooner does the Mediterranean coast become a space offering leisure activities to industrial Europe than industry arrives there; but nostalgia for towns dedicated to leisure spreads out in the sunshine, continues to haunt the urbanite of the super-industrialized regions. (Lefebvre 1991, p. 353)

In *A Fleeting* Landscape, James Edmonds takes his observation of everyday life to be an imaginary filmic landscape passing before his eyes. Like scenery receding from a moving car window, a tracking shot that is shifting and recording at the same time, it implies a prior memory of the elapsed moments. The entire video consists of fragments taken of factory chimneys, rooftop telecommunication receivers, high-voltage poles, high-rise commercial buildings and viaducts, taken from a 45-degree angle upwards perspective. On the one hand, these engineered elements construct a world of excessive industrialisation; on the other they reflect a world under the barbarism of industrialisation.

A Gyroscopic World

Moving with speed has changed the way people see and think about the world. The editing of the video makes its times and spaces cross each other rapidly, resulting in fleetingly transitory fragments of landscape, which symbolise the collapse of boundaries in the real world. Edmonds adjusted the video colour to be approximately achromatic — the tones with black, white, and gray. Its soundtrack presents a sensation of rumble while the engine and the wheels resonate with the sound of a moving car, or the rhythmical, mechanical tune of an industrial plant. These elements constitute a postmodern image of excessive industrialisation and commercialisation, in a world that has become intensely informationalised. People increasingly communicate with each other through digital and virtual forms of communication, and less through face-to-face modes and social activities.

Virilio cites Paul Morand: “Speed destroys colour: when a gyroscope is spinning fast everything goes grey” (Virilio 1997, p. 59). Virilio further interprets real time ‘teletopia’ as substituting for physical space:

> Meeting at a distance, in other words, being telepresent, here and elsewhere, at the same time, in this so-called ‘real time’ which is, however, nothing but a kind of real space-time, since the different events do indeed take place, even if that place is in the end the no-place of teletopical techniques (the man-machine interface, the nodes or packet-switching exchanges of teletransmission). (Virilio 1997, p. 10)

Human beings not only create water, air and noise pollution, thus impacting the natural environment, but also increase pollution of the ‘speed layer’, which Virilio refers to as the the ‘dromosphere’. Ian James explains:

> Dromology is that body of knowledge concerned specifically with the phenomenon of speed, or more precisely with the way speed determines or limits the manner in which phenomena appear to us. (James 2007, p. 29)

Human traces completely disappear when space and time skip fleetingly by in the video images of *A Fleeting Landscape*, which presents contaminated human social activities through extremely fast information technologies. Furthermore, for me, *A Fleeting Landscape* presents Virilio's notion of the borderless, and of the centre and the periphery being redefined as 'omnipolitan' (Virilio 1998, pp. 186-187).

The Expansible Digital Atopia

In *A Fleeting Landscape*, the same subject appears over and over again in each scene of the video and its images imitate the step of repeated industrialised production. The flashing industrialised video clips reconstruct a teletopia of accelerating time and highly compressed space. The work also expresses the movement of the eyeball when a human body is moving forward, while the scenes are moving backwards. The images seem to portray a digital place that frames scenes from a moving camera. Through the frame, a digital intermediate place is created from all the images.

A curious first glance at the scene may be decoded instantly by the viewer, which is followed by subsequent glances which reflect the viewer's anticipation of a destination. Urry speaks of the visual images of a tourist's gaze:

> Places are chosen to be gazed upon because there is an anticipation, especially through daydreaming and fantasy, of intense pleasures, either on a different scale or involving different senses from those customarily encountered. (Urry 1990, p. 3)

Anticipation constructs and reinforces the gaze through film, TV, literature, magazines, records and videos. This is a thought-provoking practice, since Edmonds placed the video onto the internet so that viewers everywhere can experience its journey anytime from borderless cyberspace. In addition, via the ever-changing

networked mobile devices (such as smart phone, tablet personal computer and laptop) as monitors, viewers could see these industrial scenes in mobile locations that may bring about different experiences in visual perspective.

Video images have entered the common consciousness of all humans in the industrialised world. As McLuhan remarks, citing Lowell Thomas's phrase: 'On the air, you're everywhere' (Levinson 1999, p. 82; McLuhan & Powers 1989, p. 70), the content of video can be distributed to every computer terminal. Rose generalises the site where it is seen by a variety of viewers as one of three at which the meanings of an image are made in visual images interpretations (Rose 2001, pp. 16-28). Through cyberspace, different gazes which different tourists practise cross-link to the site where viewers have seen the reconstructed place (the site of the image itself) of *A Fleeting Landscape*. Three sites relate to the image – the production of an image, the image itself, and where it is seen by viewers who reconstruct a mysterious place of digital atopia.

In recent years, the networked mobile devices with handy webcam function can let people easily produce and reproduce images. These re-formed images intertwine with one another as well as other elements that appear as augmented fictitious reality. The blended context of places present new fictions of digital atopia.

Edmonds' *A Fleeting Landscape* is like a video snapshot that is similar to our visual experience of everyday life. When I take a photograph, I must pick up the most significant frame from the ordinary video-like images that pass in front of my eyes. In this way, I observed and found fragments of the urban landscape around me with which to collage my own images of atopia.

1.5.2 Sigrid Hackenberg, *The Time and the Place* (25 minutes loop, two-channel video projection), 1999

Figure 1.14 Sigrid Hackenberg, *The Time and the Place* (1999)

> We cannot form an idea of landscape except in terms of its time relations as well as of its space relations. It is in continuous process of development or of dissolution and replacement. (Sauer 1962, p. 333)

Sigrid Hackenberg was born in Barcelona, Spain, growing up in a multicultural context in Spain, Germany, Japan, Canada and America (Hackenberg 2003). Therefore, her works are of necessity a cross-cultural vision, juxtaposing and hybridising different cultures and multiple identities. Hackenberg published her two-channel video projection installation *The Time and the Place* in the exhibition 'Imaginary Homelands: Reconstituted Narratives in the Digital Landscape' in New York in 2002 (The Center for Photography 1996-2009). Both videos constituting this work were recorded in Herguijuela, Extremadura, Spain (Hackenberg 2003). Two video channels, showing images of houses on the left and of olive trees on the right, are projected onto a stretched-out frame of over 80 inches. The presentation references a memory of crossing time and space; the overlapping images further represent a piecing together and intermixing of characteristics in postmodernity.

In my opinion, the emerald green trees uniting the image with the tawny house/arid landscape convey human emotions about land and the natural world. The colour palette also shows a warmth and personifying tinge which expresses

Hackenberg's nostalgia for her homeland and sense of lives fading away. The flow of time in this digital moving landscape drives the movement of place, which together constructs a unique emotional destination in the viewer's mind.

In *Place: A Short Introduction*, Tim Cresswell investigates the various forms of production of place: "Places are never finished but produced through the reiteration of practices – the repetition of seemingly mundane activities on a daily basis" (Cresswell 2005, p. 82). Hackenberg's contemplation of the way in which "a spiritual presence in nature, sound, objects, people, and places exists" (Ruiz 2002) has been internalised into the notion of the never-finished landscape. In addition, *The Time and the Place* recorded two places from different time segments of everyday life, and then has the two places interact in an irrelevant location (gallery) to reconstitute a new mythical landscape. In terms of the passage of time, it is absorbing to note that each loop of the video projection is the beginning of a new mythical creation.

Interlaced Imaginary Homeland

In *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Benjamin expounds that viewing images in reproduction differs from the experience of reality seen by the naked eye: "uniqueness and permanence are as closely linked in the latter as are transitoriness and reproducibility in the former" (Benjamin 1999, p. 217). Benjamin observes an ever-stronger urge to get closer to the objects in the world through their reproduction. However, the process of reproduction pries it from its 'shell', and destroys its *aura* of uniqueness and permanence:

> While resting on a summer afternoon, you follow with your eyes a mountain range on the horizon or a branch which casts its shadow over you, you experience the aura of those mountains, of that branch (Benjamin 1999, p. 216).

Hackenberg's work transfers the presence of the original to different locations; it shortens the physical distance and expresses the sense of equality of different places through the digital medium. This projected image reproduces a fictional homeland – the Extremadura area of Spain – at a New York gallery.

In *The Time and the Place*, videos of two different places are combined into a framed image to make manifest a metaphor of border-crossing and heterogeneous blending. The juxtaposition of imaginary landscapes creates a surreal atmosphere, but also explores the issue of the deconstruction of space.

As the viewer gazes at the projected image, it is like looking through a window to a space that is experienced as a virtual space. The ambiguous definition of space between inside and outside evokes Le Corbusier's blunt statement that 'the exterior is always an interior' (Le Corbusier 2007, pp. 177-179). When viewers place themselves in front of the video presentation at the gallery, the question to be asked is, which is the real place of their existence? Is the viewer perceiving the passing time of Extremadura when the video was taken, the juxtaposed landscape of two scenic video projections, the hyperreal landscape reproduced by digital re-presence, or the new mythical landscape reconstituted from the multiple interlaced places? Or can we say that it is an atopia with multiple significances?

Sigrid Hackenberg's *The Time and the Place* is a three-dimensional installation art work which presents a two-dimensional moving image. A hybrid image hints at a fictional landscape with multiple meanings in the digital era. It expresses a similar idea, in different form, as my own digital creations of fictional place.

1.6 Conclusion

The creative works considered in this chapter come from a number of artists of diverse backgrounds. The works contain unique notions drawn from the artists' observations and experiences. The content of the images, their composition, and their atmospheric formation have profoundly impacted on my own creative process.

In *City Disqualified – Ximen District,* Yuan transforms the assumed impression of a bustling Taipei city block into a hyperreal perception. Like Yu's *French Chair in Taiwan*, it gives my familiar Taiwanese landscape a hybrid appearance. Their works bring me to think deeply about the connotation of places where I have resided. Moreover, these diverse landscapes develop my experience of images of place.

Liu's *Is There Anybody in There* series perfectly plays the role of bridge. Each of his photographs connects two well-known landscapes from different parts of the world. On the other hand, the inclusion of *Is There Anybody in There* provides a transition to the rest of the creative cases, in which the images are from the landscapes other than Taiwan.

Shmith's *Easier than Just Waiting Around* provides an ideal experiment in image composition towards the creation of a seeming scenic photograph. Both Shmidt's *Las Vegas* and Zahalka's *Natural Wonders* provide insights into the importance of perspective when taking photographs, and into ideas about how to select component images from among the thousands of my own original landscape photographs. They also aid the technical application of techniques for digitally composing images on the computer.

Finally, the images from two video-based digital atopias influence my broader creative concerns with the perception of an in-between place, with a sense of both diversity and integration.

Chapter Two

Space in Visual Images

Travelling in unfamiliar places is usually seen as both adventure and risk. As a result, seeking out familiar flavours and environments similar to those of the home country become common ways of surviving in a foreign place. Robert Sack links identity, the diversity of contexts experienced, and the places where one has lived:

> Place and its landscape become part of one's identity and one's memory. Its features are often used as mnemonic devices... Returning to a city where one was a child, the sights, sounds, and smells may trigger memories that might never otherwise be recollected. For all of us the landscape is replete with markers of the past – graves and cemeteries, monuments, archaeological sites, place names, religious and holy centers – that help us remember and give meaning to our lives.(Sack 1997, p. 135)

A foreign place can take on familiar and meaningful attributes for an outsider, enabling them to adapt to the new environment. Memory is the panacea for the treatment of time and spatial distance. On the one hand, it is like a bridge that unites many fragmented but profound images pertaining to one's life experience. On the other hand, memory plays the role of a buffer zone that encourages one to confront unfamiliar places.

Perhaps that desire for the remembered and familiar is like the Chinese attachment to rice, or the British attachment to potatoes. James Spencer, who is originally from the United Kingdom but is currently living in Taipei, speaks of his deep-rooted potato complex in an interview about his experiences in Taiwan in the *United Daily News* (Lai 2008). Through such subconscious symbols, people access embodiments of past sensations or the warmth of family feelings across time and

space. In other words, people will construct a familiar place to be one's own emotional destination.

People seek safe and familiar contexts when they confront foreign environments during the process of migration or travel. This represents an intermediate stage between departure and destination. The process of seeking the image of home in the context of a destination may be, as Chris Rojek describes Samuel Smiles' state in 1859, in *Cybertourism and the Phantasmagoria of Place*: "Domestic space was identified as the foundry of character and the private refuge from the amorphous and turbulent 'exterior' of society" (Rojek 1998, p. 34).

2.1 Images of Intermediacy

According to Susan Sontag, "photographs give people an imaginary possession of a past that is unreal, they also help people to take possession of space in which they are insecure" (Sontag 1977, p. 9). The invention of photography accompanied by the expansion of international transportation in the eighteenth century brought us significant images that commemorate and memorialise that epoch. Since that time, photography has developed as a powerful medium for inscription of human action. Continuing this process into the present, photographs have become an emotional link between people and their families and communities within the time frame of past, present and future. In *On Photography* Sontag notes how the photographic image creates an interpersonal emotional connectedness, especially of family events, and provides evidence that activities were experienced (Sontag 1977, pp. 8-9).

Roland Barthes defines the ‘photographic referent’ in photography and then presents the concept of ‘that-has-been’ as the necessarily real thing which has been placed before the lens, without which there would be no photograph (Barthes 1981, pp. 63-89). In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes stresses that his mother had indeed existed at the time and in the space when the photograph was taken. He had a profound impression of one of his mother’s childhood photographs called *A Winter Garden*, which he describes as the most ‘real’ image of his mother in his memory.

From Barthes’ viewpoint, it seems that the reality of the photograph is distanced from the reality of the context of the time when it was taken. The childhood image of Barthes’ mother in *A Winter Garden* originated in a part of her life that Barthes had not himself participated in, and her appearance at the moment that the photograph-was-taken had gone forever. The profound impression of his mother’s childhood appearance that existed in Barthes’ mind had, in fact, been originally seen by someone else. This image inscribed and retained a definite moment of Barthes’ mother’s life, as seen through a photographer’s eyes and camera. Yet her appearance is as familiar (if not more so) as others he had seen with his own eyes. The reality of the photograph is therefore one that exists in the spectator’s mind, and it is not the case that the photograph reproduces the reality of the original context.

Barthes discusses portrait photography and its four image-repertories:

> In front of the lens, I am at the same time: the one I think I am, the one I want others to think I am, the one the photographer thinks I am, and the one he makes use of to exhibit his art. (Barthes 1981, p. 13)

This sentence conveys a unique awareness in which four forces interact when people face a camera. It indicates an invisible space existing between the photographer and the subject being photographed. This intermediate invisible space

makes a fictional place, as atopia, that it is not only an in-between interface but also an autonomous space.

For both Barthes and Flusser, images create and make an invisible space which lies between the subject and the actual world. Flusser elaborates on the structure of this space by conceptualising of images as interfaces: “Images are mediations between the world and human beings. Human beings ‘ex-ist’, i.e. the world is not immediately accessible to them and therefore images are needed to make it comprehensible” (Flusser 2000, p. 9). Images are transformed from their original character as three-dimensional world into two-dimensional screens, and then re-present the actual world to human beings. “Instead of representing the world, they obscure it until human beings’ lives finally become a function of the images they create” (Flusser 2000, pp. 9-10). At this stage, the image creates its own intermediate space, and then re-presents its reproduced world to the human viewer. Eventually, the invisible space of images becomes a substitute for the real world, and their relations are transformed into a context of scenes and states of things.

Reflecting on the nature of the image, Guang-Her Jang generalises: “photography is not reappearance but has made a transformation” (Jang 2005, pp. 112-114). This nature of this transformation is a central concern of this thesis. Photographic images are not an approach to reality; they are in many ways works of fiction. Moreover, in the digital age, the editing capabilities of digital photography brings this medium for the artist’s work much closer to the traditional techniques of drawing. In Yuan’s *City Disqualified – Ximen District*, for example, the artist deliberately erases the temporal diversity of the original three hundred photographs, which were taken from the same angle over a three-month period. He creates a fictionalised cityscape by digitally piecing all the selected components together. This

process is similar to drawing in that Yuan generates a new image that is intermediate between the human and the actual world. Similarly, in *Easier than Just Waiting Around*, Shmith uses selected components from his own photographs to 'draw' an image of fictional place. However, in contrast to traditional drawing, the features of photographic images which cause reality to re-appear, and to re-present time and space, are still essential components in reconstructing new fictional images.

A Hyperrealistic Real

In the mid-nineteenth century philosophers invoked an apprehension of reality liberated from the constraints of religious and political context. Sontag quotes Feuerbach's 1843 observation about 'our era': "it prefers the image to the thing, the copy to the original, the representation to the reality, appearance to being" (Sontag 1977, p. 153). These prophetic words are verified in the contemporary world where images, which are mostly photographic images, carry unlimited authority.

Capitalist society requires an image-based culture to serve and reinforce people's needs:

> A capitalist society requires a culture based on images. It needs to furnish vast amounts of entertainment in order to stimulate buying and anesthetize the injuries of class, race, and sex. And it needs to gather unlimited amounts of information, the better to exploit natural resources increase productivity, keep order, make war, give jobs to bureaucrats. (Sontag 1977, p. 178)

Richard Howells also describes the contemporary phenomenon of the proliferation of visual images:

> We live in a visual world. We are surrounded by increasingly sophisticated visual images. But unless we are taught how to read them, we run the risk of

> remaining visually illiterate. This is something that none of us can afford in the modern world. (Howells 2003, p. 1)

Sontag notes that the camera has two cognate capacities: “to subjectivize reality and to objectify it” (Sontag 1977, p. 178). The photographic image possesses both reality and fiction concurrently. It engraves the shapes of actual objects through light reflection, however it is only an outward conveyance that re-presents reality at a distance.

The complementarity between camera technology and photography in the tourist industry provides some illustration. In recent years, advances in technology, along with mass production, have made digital cameras more and more popular. From the perspective of supply and production, landscape photographs build imaginative dreams that advertise and disseminate scenic spots to stimulate tourism. From the point of view of consumption, tourists use their cameras while travelling to capture landscape images as they see them, but which are already familiar through their experiences of viewing images of these locations across various media. The industry then stimulates consumer desire through increasing the supply of superior camera technologies and landscape photographs, which both satisfies and constructs a greater imagination of wonderland. Hence the production of images of tourist destinations is itself a dynamic force in both photographic and tourist industries.

Just as Flusser describes the image as an mediation between the world and human beings, in some ways, as Barthes indicates, it is like a specimen of a butterfly in that its realistic resemblance has been frozen on a two-dimensional plane: “When we define the Photograph as a motionless image… it means that they do not emerge, do not leave: they are anesthetized and fastened down, like butterflies” (Barthes 1981,

p. 57). In contrast, it is its very simulation of realistic resemblance that makes it unreal.

In keeping with Flusser's observation that "images are mediations" (Flusser 2000, p. 9), the image has become an autonomous space which exists in itself and is re-presented. People's lives tie in with the images that are re-created by the mediation of images. Jean Baudrillard has studied this phenomenon in depth and categorises four successive phases of the image:

> it is the reflection of a profound reality;
> it masks and denatures a profound reality;
> it masks the absence of a profound reality;
> it has no relation to any reality whatsoever: it is its own pure simulacrum.
>
> (Baudrillard 1994, p. 6)

Here Baudrillard is describing the impact of the media in real life as different from the reproduction of reality through production prior to the Industrial Revolution. In the post-industrial era, reality is re-presented through imitation, including reproduction, reconstruction and simulation. Then reality reproduces itself and becomes no longer the original reality but a substitute for it.

When simulation and reality blend together in a way that cannot be distinguished, hyperreality – an excess of reality – is the result. Symbols lose their referential function to objects, which is a feature of the morphology of merchandise in postmodern consumer society. Baudrillard refers to Disneyland as an example of hyperreality:

> Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, … It is no longer a question of a false representation of reality but of

> concealing the fact that the real is no longer real, and thus of saving the reality principle. (Baudrillard 1994, pp. 12-13)

In a similar process, both Yu's *French Chair in Taiwan* and Yuan's *City Disqualified – Ximen District* construct an image of 'Taiwan' as a hyperreality. By placing a French chair in many familiar but neglected scenes throughout Taiwan, Yu's series presents a fantastic cross-cultural panorama of Taiwan. The intersecting streets of Yuan's Ximen District – among the busiest and most vivid traffic centres of Taipei – signify not just the disappearance of Japanese colonial relics but also the more recent city scenes of Western architecture and advertising logos. The uncanny composition of both artists' images conveys a hybrid atmosphere, situated between the real and the virtual places, and which demonstrates Taiwan's complicated cultural associations.

To provide an illustration from my own experience, in January 2012 Taiwan held a presidential election in which two main candidates were in fierce competition. This event attracted the attention of the majority of overseas Taiwanese who obtained up-to-date campaign news through cable television, websites, e-mails, blogs, social networking sites, YouTube, or Messenger. The global Taiwanese and others involved in this event constructed an internet community of 'Taiwan' through these media, or perhaps these media constructed a virtual 'Taiwan' through the election. The people involved could not escape from this hyperreal phantom without disconnecting from the rhizomorphic network constructed by the media and the events taking place in Taiwanese society.

This idea of a hyperreal phantom place leads me to the idea of creating images of such an intermediate place – as atopia – through recombining images taken in diverse locations in Taiwan and Australia. In the experimental images presented as the

creative component of this doctoral submission, and as described in chapter four, the Taiwanese components are like anchors that not only construct a virtual 'Taiwan' but also attach themselves to the places where I travel.

2.2 Illusory Image of the Electronic Age

It's a Small World

The development of international transportation concentrated the distances between different regions of the world, thereby developing the human vision of cross-cultural adventure. Rojek cites the example of 'Cookite' – a Cooks package tour, founded by Thomas Cook in the 1860s, that involved the regimentation and transportation of tourists through advertised scenic routes (Pemble 1987; Rojek 1998, p. 34). The convenience of transportation and information technologies stimulated the demand for travel, as people could more easily reach different regions and experience diverse lifestyles. The world became smaller, and since then human beings have had a different perception of distance, and have attached different meanings to geographical spaces.

Rhizomorphic Networks

From the 1950s, television quickly became a popular mass medium all over the world. The home television set became the universal thoroughfare for maintaining contact with the world. Throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, when an event of international consequence happened in a small corner of the world, millions of people received identical information through television. Television audiences constructed a virtual community in which they participated in a common purpose at

the same time. Moreover, people who lived in different regions of the world might share common ideas and values through the far-reaching dissemination and impact of television.

From the 1960s onwards, this one-to-many broadcast model was paralleled by developments in information technologies. The evolution of an environment of virtual communication eventually provided people with the highly interactive modes of information gathering that we see today. The internet also shifts where people receive information from the family living room to the private desk, personal office, or to the more and more ubiquitous personal mobile accessories. Through increasingly intensive global networking, people are now able to interact with one other across different regions, ethnic groups or cultures without limitations of time and space.

The concept of space and time frames in the digital age can be compressed like a layer cake. It alters people's thinking and way of life. For instance, in crowded metropolitan centres, people extend their living spaces by constructing high-rise and underground structures above and below the surface of the earth. The concept of space changes from extended horizontal to vertical structures.

Faced with the successive progress of these technologies, Chiou uses the term 'territorial liquidation' to describe the changing of territorial boundaries (Chiou 1999, p. 24). The development of the railway saw the entrance to a city shift from the city gate to the railway stations; with the development of the motorway the entrance shifted to the motorway exit-ramps; with the development of the aeroplane, the entrance to major cities worldwide shifted to the airports. Similarly, since the development of television, the portal to the world shifted into the living room; since

the information technology revolution, the portal has shifted to the personal computer, and now even into the individual's pocket.

Thus, space has taken on diverse definitions in terms of variable time or environmental differences. It could be as large as the whole universe, or in contrast, as small as an invisibly microscopic point. It could be defined as an isolated existence, or hyperlink to a multitude of different dimensions.

The Image of a Hidden Place

Observing the process of rapidly developing globalisation in the late twentieth century in relation to contemporary cultural geography, German sociologist Helmut Willke refers to the notion of 'atopia' (Willke 2003). Atopia describes an 'anywhere' state based on deterritorialisation, concentration and spatial inversion of social possibilities. Willke's argument is based on the geographic spaces that physics describes, yet 'atopia' can be further expressed as a fictitious place that is outside the actual world. Margaret Wertheim describes these spaces other than the physical world, in terms of the way that people use 'personal space', have 'room to move' for 'relationship space', the 'mental space' of psychoanalysis, the 'literary space' of literary discussions, the 'pictorial space' of art, and also of molecular space, evolutionary spaces, topological spaces and the phase spaces of the contemporary science (Wertheim 1999, p. 231).

One of these spaces, of course, is the current network space, which some call cyberspace. Leaving aside such issues as a universal language, computer usage, internet penetration, or cultural identity, in addition to across time and space, network space is beyond the physical territories and relatively freer from the barriers of gender,

race, and culture and thus is like an idealised virtual community. That is to say, this 'space' may be a place that freely links and blends many varied values.

Marshall McLuhan wrote of the concept of 'discarnate man', by which he meant that the spirit of a human being is extended out from the physical body and sent out through the virtual media of television, telephone, radio or internet (Levinson 1999, pp. 55-64). McLuhan writes in terms of a divide between the physical human body and the spirit. Levinson argues that what is a shaky metaphor for McLuhan in relation to television suddenly finds vivid fulfilment in the online digital world, where personal identity can indeed be easily jettisoned (Levinson 1999, p. 58). In cyberspace, the possibility to be 'discarnate' allows for a shuttling that strings together different spaces and places in real-time.

As described in chapter 1, Liu's *Is There Anybody in There* series expresses the features of the internet – captured in a moment, linking omnipresent spaces, and exposing the truth of the media – in a way that demonstrates McLuhan's argument about the 'discarnate' nature of contemporary experience. Liu gathers landscape photographs from digital image galleries to reconstruct new fictional images of place. These produce an experience for the viewer that is similar to McLuhan's 'discarnate' description, in that a physical body is teleported or dispatched anywhere and anytime through the network of the media.

Wertheim describes the 'discarnate' experience of surfing cyberspace: "When I 'go into' cyberspace, my body remains at rest in my chair, but 'I' – or at least some aspect of myself – am teleported into another arena …" (Wertheim 1999, pp. 230-231). Through networking, people can teleport into any corner of the world and even escape from gravity into outer space – if there is any terminal there.

If every moment of tele-presence is a ‘that-has-been’ (in Barthes’ terminology), the trail of discarnate humanity through time and space is analogous to piecing together asynchronous moments on the computer, compressing the multi-layered ‘that-has-been’ into a unitary layer through human thought.

While browsing travelling information online, one’s ‘online spirit’ is dispatched to every scenic point. Simultaneously, these images of foreign landscape are brought back to the actual world. The body at rest in the chair plays the role of gathering and arranging images. The website ‘Looking at Taiwan’ (Research Development and Evaluation Commission 2011), for example, provides real-time webcam videos from over sixty scenic points around Taiwan. Connected to the network, regardless of time and place, one can have a ‘discarnate’ experience of a real-time virtual tour to look at Taiwanese landscapes. In combination, the live images from ‘Looking at Taiwan’ gather and re-create a singular hybrid vision of Taiwan that is an authentic but fictitious landscape.

The mass media construct a rhizomorphic network which interacts with human beings. In contrast to geographically-based political or economic domains, network space goes beyond physical territory, and involves both actual and virtual structuring of the symbiotic constructs of hyperreal place. Compared with space as physics defines it – through three dimensional geometry (the properties and measurement of lines, angles, surfaces, and solids) – the network is invisible and intangible, but has its actual being there in this virtual space.

Levinson refers to the notion that “centers are everywhere and margins are nowhere” (Levinson 1999, p. 7), proposed by Edmund Carpenter and Marshall McLuhan in the 1970s while the television and radio were booming. These media

formats produce and broadcast programs from stations to audiences in a manner that could be thought of as giving their institutions the characteristic of centres. Their broadcasting range is still limited to the reach of their broadcast infrastructure of transmitters, relays and satellites. Today, the medium of the network expresses the significance of ‘everywhere’ and ‘nowhere’ at the same time more logically. Network space embodies the features of decentralisation. As long as one is linked to the network, one has the characteristics of centre (sending messages) or margin (receiving messages), or perhaps both.

Postcolonial theory has devoted much attention to the concepts of centre and periphery. In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha quotes from Heidegger: “a boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something begins its presenting” (Bhabha 2004, p. 1; Heidegger 1997, p. 105). In the contemporary rhizomorphic network of information technologies, the interaction between forces constructs hybrid virtual spaces of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion.

Developments in information technologies and the tendencies of globalisation complement each other to alter people’s vision in interpreting time and place. The boundaries between real and virtual places dissolve increasingly and become difficult to distinguish. Thus, the scenic images presented before one’s eyes have crossed beyond the physical world where we are and mix with those which reach us from the network. McLuhan’s ‘discarnate’ internet user is an ‘online spirit’ who shuttles in leisurely fashion on a virtual scenic tour through cyberspace, stringing together a series of volatile phantasmagoric images. These sequences of virtual landscapes compose a brand-new hybrid image of a wonderland atopia.

2.3 Conclusion

Seeking out familiar environments is the most common way for travellers to survive in a foreign place. Drawing on personal identity and the contexts of previous experience, the traveller constructs or finds a secure image to confront the destination. In other words, imagery mediates between the experience of the external world and the human being.

The contemporary progress of technology brings different ideas of time and space into human life. In the digital age, the process of seeking out mediating images during travel involves a complicated implication between the real and the online environments. Images intertwine in diverse formations and appearances that interact with visual experiences of actual landscapes and places. Nevertheless, the tourist will find the most proper picture of the interior imagined place, to anchor themselves in their destination.

Chapter Three

Atopia: An Unforeseen Place

Travel in the literal sense involves being physically transferred from place to place; however, our understanding of place is shifting between actual and virtual spaces through the expanded environment we inhabit through contemporary digital communications networks. From the macroscopic point of view, in the actual world, there are intermediate nooks in the peripheries or the ignored corners between places.

People often evolve their impressions of the world through images. In *Place: A Short Introduction*, Cresswell argues for a view of "place as a way of understanding… place is a way of seeing, knowing and understanding the world" (Cresswell 2005, p. 11). The traveller, in addition to understanding the world, is looking for self-identity. In the process of exploring, the traveller makes attachments and connections between themselves and the places they visit.

3.1 Definition of Atopia

The etymology of 'atopic' leads us to the following definition: "Greek atopia uncommonness, from atopos out of the way, uncommon, from a- + topos place" (Merriam-Webster 2009b).

In *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, Barthes defines 'atopos' as "The loved being … recognized by the amorous subject which is unclassifiable, of a ceaselessly unforeseen originality" (Barthes 1978, p. 34). Barthes describes the lovers as unclassifiable and unqualifiable and thus an example of atopos. If the surrounding

place substituted in one's ordinary life for the lover, it would be an exploration of an unforeseen virtual space of one's mind.

Likewise, in *Inside Architecture*, Italian architectural theorist Vittorio Gregotti defines atopia as the condition of non-places. By reference to the great highway infrastructure, he discusses the phenomenon of exploding settlements of modern urban development in the undefined area between the countryside and the urban periphery (Gregotti 1996, pp. 79-80). Gregotti draws attention to the neglected corners or liminal places in the physical world, which exist between the dominant cores.

3.2 Kinds of Atopia

3.2.1 Tourist Atopias

George Hughes argues that tourism takes dreams and myths and inscribes them on to places; in other words, it spatialises social meanings (Hughes 1998, pp. 17-32). The tourist is often on a quest for an experience of authentic signs of place. In *The Holiday Makers*, Jost Krippendorf analyses the complex motives and expectations of travel. The wish to escape is the main motive for travelling, which Krippendorf describes as follows:

> Tourism is assuming unmistakable characteristics of a mass flight from the reality of everyday life into an imaginary world of freedom. Because the everyday situation is unsatisfactory, people try to avoid it, at least temporarily, by travelling. (Krippendorf 1999, p. 25)

The contemporary urban living realm is like a prison that the inmates want to break out from. The fear of inner emptiness and boredom has been more obvious in

the more highly urbanised regions. As Krippendorf states, “When our roads are covered by dirty slush, when the sky weighs as heavy as lead and it seems the sun will never shine again, wouldn’t you rather be …” (Krippendorf 1999, p. 26). It is since time immemorial that human beings have had the aspiration to go beyond their accustomed life to a paradise – a spiritual utopia, for instance, Plato in *The Republic* 2400 years ago; Sir Saint Thomas More in *Utopia* in 1516; Yuanming Tao in *End of the Peach Forest* about 1700 years ago portrays a lost wonderland in ancient China during a troubled time; ‘Xanadu’ is a metaphor of a prosperous land which was extended in meaning in Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s poem *Kubla Khan*, based on Marco Polo’s Eastern adventure; and in Greek mythology ‘arcadia’ originally meant avoiding disaster, extended to mean an imaginary idyllic paradise. These examples all reveal the human longing for an emotional destination.

Relying on Jody Berland’s ‘peculiar reciprocity of longing’, Lippard points out the different natures of tourist and local inhabitant: “Tourists may long for warmth, beauty, exoticism, whereas locals may long for escape, progress, and an improved economy” (Lippard 1999, p. 13). There is contradictory anticipation on both sides, and ambiguous characteristics leading to the construction a multi-centred definition of place. Hughes also refers to this: “Even the ubiquitous sun, sea and sand continue to assert their spatial particularities in order to attract tourists to one destination over another” (Hughes 1998, p. 21). Tourism both encourages an open future and promises to heal the wounds inflicted by the ambivalence of modern life.

Edwin Relph claims that there is the phenomenon of the identity of places: “[The] improved knowledge of the nature of place can contribute to the maintenance and manipulation of existing places and the creation of new places” (Relph 1976, p. 44). To carry out inquiries into the destination of tourist atopias, tourism presents,

constructs and rebuilds places of destination through their tourist photographs or memories. Thus, the images of tourist atopias could be presented through promotional tourist postcards or ordinary holiday snaps. These fictional tourist atopias are indeed people's emotional destinations.

Both Chung-Hsing Liu's *Is There Anybody in There* and Anne Zahalka's *Natural Wonders series,* analysed in chapter 1, are based on famous sceneries of the world. Just as these artists create images of spectacular fictional landscapes that resemble tourist atopias, in chapter four I describe the creation of my own experimental images of atopia, as kaleidoscope-like images that represent the swift conversion of local landscapes in the tourist's eyes.

3.2.2 Visual Atopias

Sontag describes the reappearing function of the camera in the perception of time: "while an untold number of forms of biological and social life are being destroyed in a brief span of time, a device is available to record what is disappearing" (Sontag 1977, p. 16). She indicates that the subjects of Atget and Brassaï's photographic images of Paris from the beginning of the twentieth century have already disappeared, but through their works retain both a pseudo-existence and a non-appearance. British photographer Paul Graham in an interview with Gillian Wearing restates Robert Capa's dictum, "If your pictures weren't good enough you weren't close enough", to talk about the reality of photographs. "The world out there alters completely according to the way you look at it" (Wilson 1996, p. 16). Graham explains that people usually have their own versions of reality and try to impose it over and above others. Thus before entering a state of photographing, he tries to forsake the popular,

clichéd misunderstandings and to seek further, into the unexpected. In *War and Photography*, Sontag submits the viewpoint of images of news events:

> Photographic images have become essential. To make a crisis take up residence in the consciousness of those who follow the 'news' requires a non-stop photographic account, diffused through television and video streaming. Something is not 'real' – to those who are not experiencing it, but following it, consuming it, as 'news' – until it is photographed. (Sontag 2003, p. 256)

Barthes states that image is an illusion with contradictions:

> The photograph then becomes a bizarre medium, a new form of hallucination: false on the level of perception, true on the level of time: a temporal hallucination, so to speak, a modest, shared hallucination (on the one hand 'it is not there,' on the other 'but it has indeed been'): a mad image, chafed by reality. (Barthes 1981, p. 115)

This manifests a debate about the nature of reality in photographic images. The image exists interposed between human beings and the real world, through streams of light it etches objects which should represent reality. However, in some respects, images are an unreal, even fictitious medium.

Flusser defines images as 'mediation' between human beings and the real world, through re-presenting itself, which presents the 're-presented' images autonomously. This results in human beings forgetting that they created the images in order to orientate themselves in the world (Flusser 2000, pp. 9-10). On the other hand, through the architectural structures of contemporary North America, Frederic Jameson analyses the phenomenon of the hyperreal (Jameson 1991, pp. 40-42). Jameson claims that hyperworlds and hyperspace were created by the kind of 'hypercrowd' postmodern buildings, such as the Bonaventure in Los Angeles, which are like miniature cities.

As was cited in chapter 1, Baudrillard argues for a state of simulation by citing the imaginariness of Disneyland. Further, Baudrillard mentions that, "[Disneyland] is a deterrence machine set up in order to rejuvenate the fiction of the real in the opposite camp" (Baudrillard 1994, p. 13). This imaginary machine is also what Italian theorist Umberto Eco might call 'authentic fakes' in his analysis of Disneyland in California and Disney World in Florida: "Journeys into hyperreality, in search of instances where the American imagination demands the real thing and, to attain it, must fabricate the absolute fake" (Eco 1987, pp. 39-48). Similar to Flusser's autonomous 're-presented' image, hyperreal spaces not only refer to real existence themselves, but also reveal the simulated realities.

To sum up these arguments, concealed visual atopias exist in our visual experiences. As was previously described, Goang-Ming Yuan's *City Disqualified – Ximen District* and Sam Shmith's *Easier than Just Waiting Around* construct plausible but fake landscape images. These images re-present hyperreal impressions of visual atopias that go beyond local people's everyday visual experiences. I apply a similar visual notion to my creations. As will be seen in the next chapter, both *Metro Pastoral* and *Sundown Cove* both combine multiple scenic images from different places into a new fictitious landscape.

3.2.3 Spatial Atopias

> The place in which we live, which draws us out of ourselves, in which the erosion of our lives, our time and our history occurs, the space that claws and gnaws at us, is also, in itself, a heterogeneous space. In other words, we do not live in a kind of void, inside of which we could place individuals and things. We do not live inside a void that could be colored with diverse shades of light, we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one

> another and absolutely not superimposable on one another. (Foucault 1998, p. 239)

French philosopher Michel Foucault's *Des Espaces Autres*, originally lecture notes from 1967, were published by the French journal *Architecture-Mouvement-Continuité* in 1984. In 1986 the article was translated into English with the title *Of Other Spaces*. Foucault proposes a concept of 'heterotopology', which describes his new conception of spatial thinking. In an interview, Foucault defines 'heterotopias' as singular social spaces whose functions are different to or even the opposite of others (Foucault & Rabinow 1984, pp. 239-256; Soja 1996, p. 149). Its arguments are used to discuss the concept of virtual spaces as well as of fictional places in this dissertation.

A Place of Reflection

The idea of the mirror is borrowed by Foucault from the Surrealists to interpret the relations of heterotopias. He argues that the mirror is a placeless place:

> I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself there where I am absent: such is the utopia of the mirror. (Foucault 1998, pp. 239-240)

Foucault describes the relationship between the existence of the physical space in front of the mirror and the virtual space reflected in the mirror. According to Foucault, such 'utopias': "have no real space. … They represent society itself brought to perfection, or its reverse, … utopias are by their very essence fundamentally unreal" (Foucault 1997, p. 352). Compared to the physical world, heterotopias are a given, and function differently – even in an opposite way – to social spaces that exist in the

physical world. Utopia is an imaginary placeless place that presents an unreal and dreamy wonderland. There must be a mixed, intermediate, and reflecting place that is fictitious but based on an actual visual connection between real and imaginary spaces. Perhaps this designates a liminal third place.

In spatial terms, the process engaged in by a photographer when fixing images of objects on film or the CCD (Charge Coupled Device) of digital cameras through the lens (mirror). Different from the reflecting virtual place in the mirror, a photograph presents a static space – a fixed or dead 'that-has-been' place in Barthes' terminology. Identically, the function of the mirror is similar to the invisible screen between a human being and the world posited by Flusser. As an autonomous intermediary, the mirror image reflects not only its own looking-back, but it also represents the preference of its own reflection. The significance of the image is not the image itself, but an impression in a spectator's mind, which is an atopia in one's own emotional destination.

Heterotopology as Non-place

For a discussion of liminal places, in *Of Other Spaces*, Foucault ponders other spaces from the normal regulatory framework or unusual locations and categorises heterotopology under six principles:

1. Crisis heterotopias are privileged or sacred or forbidden places and sites, and contrast with 'normal states', with respect to a personal crisis in a state or stage, for example, boarding school, military service, honeymoon trip in trains and hotels, retirement homes, psychiatric hospitals and prisons.

2. Dissimilar heterotopias can change in function and meaning over time, Foucault noting that the cemetery, associated with illness and death, is located at the heart of cities or next to churches. They were associated with resurrection and immortality of the soul; gradually, these sites and spaces were designed for the socially othered.
3. Heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in one real place several different spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible. It might be an oriental garden exhibiting a scenic landscape, or a theme park blending varied human landscapes together.
4. Heterotopias are typically linked to slices in time. There are many specialised sites existing to interpret the crossroads of space and time in the contemporary world, for example, museums and libraries. In contrast, temporal heterotopias are transitory and precarious spaces and times, such as fairgrounds, leisure villages and festival sites.
5. Purifying heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that simultaneously makes them both isolated and penetrable. These sites are not freely accessible like a public place. Religious purification, hygienic cleansing, American motel rooms with incompatible features of openness/closure and freedom/isolation are examples.
6. Heterotopias of compensation, not a fantastic utopia, have a function in relation to all the space that remains. Either their role is to create a space of illusion that exposes every real space, or their role is to create a space that is another real space such as the Puritan society founded in America and the Jesuit colonies founded in South America in the seventeenth century. These

religious believers followed stringent precepts and created more realistic living spaces. (Foucault 1997, 1998; Soja 1996; Wei 2005)

As part of the heterotopological principles detailed in *Space, Knowledge and Power (Interview Conducted with Paul Rabinow)*, Foucault explains that figures of domination in the fields of power relations have power which passes or which are important key figures (Rabinow 1982, p. 373). 'Power' creates its own legalisation and normalisation by the social system, and should be differentiated as 'other form' from an abnormal position or cognition. There are also other heterotopias, such as utopias – religious societies with alternative places, providing better and more authentic ways of life than actual societies. These heterotopias resist the dominant space through the marginal space which arises from liberation.

The spaces of heterotopias exist around people's mundane life. The arguments about heterotopias give different observations of spatiality with which people situate themselves in or face the environment. This concept reveals some of the intermediate places that are faintly visible around us in everyday life.

3.3 Conclusion

The definition of atopia and the discussion of different kinds of atopia clarifies liminal spaces surrounding our everyday environments. It also widens our thinking about how people face the environment. In particular this discussion shows multiple complexities in ways of thinking about the environment that are meaningful for a photographer involved in creation of images of landscape.

From another viewpoint, in the position of photographing, the photographer, whether active or passive, becomes the dominant power over the landscape. The fixing of images inside the camera interacts and then forms the third space between the forces of photographer and the objects. According to Barthes' comment regarding portrait photography, there are four forces interacting between photographer and the object that has been photographed. Both are what they think they are, and want the others to think they are (Barthes 1981, p. 13). It can be said that the image (the third space) appears an ambiguous state after these four forces' interaction by both photographer and the objects. In *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*, Edward Soja summarises Foucault's heterotopias as having intentional ambiguity and being both similar and different from the third spaces of Bhabha. This ambiguity keeps the third spaces open and inclusive (Soja 1996, p. 162).

Chapter Four

Developing Digital Fictions of Place

4.1 Photographic Works

Layers of Memory

Barthes defines the photographic image as being like a butterfly which is anesthetised and pinned down (Barthes 1981, p. 57). Sontag describes photographs similarly:

> All photographs are memento mori. To take a photograph is to participate in another person's (or thing's) mortality, vulnerability, mutability. Precisely by slicing out this moment and freezing it, all photographs testify to time's relentless melt. (Sontag 1977, p. 15)

People's lives are like autobiographical documentaries. Millions of fragments of images from everyday life present themselves in front of our eyes (or our vision) and we are like people watching their own film of themselves performed every day. John Berger and Jean Mohr make the following point:

> All photographs have been taken out of a continuity. If the event is a public event, this continuity is history; if it is personal, the continuity, which has been broken, is a life story. Even a pure landscape breaks a continuity: that of the light and the weather. (Berger & Mohr 1982, p. 91)

People capture frames from the space inside their memories of life experience to highlight their lives. However, these frames (images) are also captured to touch people's inner feelings and essential fragments of their identity. In other words, these frames of memory are transformed onto a celluloid-like layer which captures on film 'events' from people's individual lives. At the instant that the photographer presses

the camera shutter, that context of a dead moment is kept eternally in memory as specimen.

Painting and Photography

In my own creative work, as exemplified by the works that form the creative component of this Doctorate of Creative Arts submission, I use my own photographic images as components and then accomplish the creation of fictional images of place through the idea of painting.

First of all, I look at the process of the imaging. The steps in image formation are different in essence between photography and traditional painting. A painted image is entirely invented by the artist and the human will substantively controls the process of creation; in the case of the photographic image, in addition to the artist, the process is also subject to the photographic devices and the performance of the subject, which presents a more objective reality than is the case with painting.

Further, the strokes of a traditional painting are chosen and then executed according to the artist's training and experience, whereas the photographic inscription of a physical reality seen by the photographer is achieved through the sensitised device of the camera lens. In my own work, I strive to combine the idea of the stroke of traditional painting into my photographic image creation. Every composed photographic fragment is similar to a painting stroke in my images of landscapes across times and spaces.

In terms of time, a painting is what an artist simulates and then transforms from images during the time of creation, unlike photographic images which are achieved in the instant of clicking the shutter.

Sontag analyses the dissimilarities between painting and photography:

> The hand-made-image is openly a construction – that is a report, filtered through the artist's mind and hand – of what may or may not have been witnessed, while a photographic image entails witnessing, because the photograph is itself a light-trace of an actual event. (Sontag 2003, p. 260)

In addition, Berger and Mohr also state how a drawing differs from a photograph:

> A drawing contains the time of its own making, and this means that it possesses its own time, independent of the living time of what it portrays. The photograph, by contrast, receives almost instantaneously – usually today at a speed which cannot be perceived by the human eye. (Berger & Mohr 1982, p. 95)

When I take landscape photographs, the camera is a copying machine which makes a photogravure of the physical reality of a scene in an isolated instant. In traditional terms, I freeze an eternal moment in a specific place and time of a scene which really exists. After that, the fragment of time will vanish forever. Nowadays, handy digital photography equipment and the resulting images are everywhere in people's everyday lives. Within the scope of traditional photography, Barthes' 'that-has-been' – the physical scene that existed necessarily at the moment of photographing – can be retained.

The processes involved in digital photographic image creation, however, give it the potential to become closer to the creativity of painting than it is to the traditions of photography on film. David Hockney describes the spatial conversion of the creative process: "Physical reality comes through this flat surface of my eye (although it's actually curved, it's two-dimensional) and is converted by the mind into space and materiality" (Hockney 1988, p. 119). In *The Photography is not Art*, Jang defines respectively traditional and digital photographs by the image formatting process. Further, Jang defines and distinguishes digital photography, from small to large, into

directly taken digital photographs, composite images and computer-generated imagery (Jang 2005, pp. 85-89). Nevertheless, computer-generated imagery does not generate images from a camera, but makes something out of nothing through computer software.

This definition resonates with Flusser's explanation of the development of a prospective virtual world which will construct autonomous visual mediations between the actual world and human beings (Flusser 2000, pp. 9-10). Thus Jang contemplates the current controversy whether to include computer-generated imagery in the category of digital photography.

The digital photographic image, which has been taken directly and not been post-edited by computer, comes relatively close to traditional photography. The image may be adjusted in terms of colour, saturation, contrast, tone, and so on by a microprocessor in the camera while the image is being formed. In composition, this technique has been commonly applied in commercial images and in the visual arts since the advent of digital photography. Furthermore, in contrast to the analog photographic image, the digital data of photographic images can be effortlessly adjusted, composed, collaged, duplicated and edited by computer. Compositions involving various times, places, people and objects can be built into one image, and the adjustment of details within the image will transform the photographic image of reality into hyperreality. This supersedes Berger and Mohr's rather narrow interpretation that if a photograph is adjusted by elaborate tampering, collage and re-photographing, it has ceased to be an example of photography (Berger & Mohr 1982, p. 96).

In the *Atopia: Digital Fictions of Place* series the hyperreal images are not anchored; they are slippery and unmotivated in semiotic terms. Viewers could think that these landscapes are indeed real even if they look extreme or strange in some way. In the transformation of a landscape, natural impact and human activity accumulate layer upon layer, changing it over time. Compared with the creative process of painting, it could be said that both play similar tunes on different musical instruments. My experimental photographic images are unlike traditional photography. Through the use of computer software, I made elaborately constructed creative painting-like images by using the actual objects from photographs which have compressed several 'that-has-beens' through additions and deletions into a unitary dimension. This process ultimately presents meaningful images of both real and fictitious places. In this sense of constructed fictional landscapes they are a hyperreality that does not yet exist but might do so in time. So the hyperreality of this project lies in it being "the simulation of something which never really existed" as Baudrillard phrases it.

Border-crossing Images

On the relationship between photography and identity, Barthes says, "All I look like is other photographs of myself, and this to infinity: no one is ever anything but the copy of a copy, real or mental" (Barthes 1981, p. 102). Barthes explains the likeness of photographs as resemblances referring to the subject's identity. Likeness, rather than appearance, identifies its intrinsic subject. In other words, people in different cultural contexts will have different interpretations of the same image. Urry similarly addresses the 'tourist gaze' that varies people's interpretations of scenic images, depending on their membership of different societies and different social groups in diverse historical periods (Urry 1990, pp. 1-4).

My photographic creations draw from actual locations in Taiwan and Australia (particularly tourism places) to produce images that are fictional in appearance. Looked at closely, the images do not appear contradictory but harmonious, and do not seem to have any natural flaws. However, these images form atopias of deterritorialisation, temporal concentration and spatial inversion. It is my intention for these visual atopic works to be like premonitions, dreams or idealised advertising visions. However, I have built in a somewhat dystopian aspect to the images as well. The viewer should feel that these are places they may have been before, but which are yet unfamiliar, because they are based on real places, but transformed into fictional or imaginary places of atopia.

The landscape images are like a composition of everyday visual fragments, which highlight moments within one's own documentary. In the presentation of my experimental images, borderless framing implies an ongoing daily filmic plot and an infinite spread of the photographic image. This is appropriate to express the immense existence of ubiquitous communication network in contemporary life. Besides borderless framing, I printed the images on professional photographic paper without a white edge, and then attached them into a handmade photograph album using the Coptic binding technique. This type of album can be unfolded to a fan-shaped circular presentation that reinforces the immense expanse and borderless significance that the images imply (figure 4.1.1).

Figure 4.1.1 *Atopia: Digital Fictions of Place* series work - photograph album presentation

4.2 My Experimental Photographic Images: Ying-Jui Huang, '*Atopia: Digital Fictions of Place*' Series, 2010

4.2.1 Illusory Screen

Figure 4.1 *Illusory Screen* (2010)

Figure 4.1.2 source: Sin-Jhuang, Taiwan (2008)

Figure 4.1.3 source: Wollongong, Australia (2010)

Figure 4.1.4 source: Port Kembla, Australia (2010)

Resuscitation of a Historic Suburb

> The products of 'Disneyfication' are absurd, synthetic places made up of a surrealistic combination of history, myth, reality and fantasy that have little relationship with a particular geographical setting. (Relph 1976, p. 95)

The photograph of the urban skyline was originally taken in Sin-Jhuang, which is located in the west of the Taipei metropolis, in one of the most densely populated regions of Taiwan. In the course of its development since the end of the seventeenth century, Chinese immigrants crossed the strait to Taiwan. In the period of river transportation commerce, Sin-Jhuang rapidly developed into one of two main commercial settlements in northern Taiwan due to its advantageous location near the

northern bank of the Tahan River. As a result, the major development of the town for the past three centuries has been on the south side along the river. In contrast, with Taipei's urbanisation, the northern outskirts of Sin-Jhuang have increasingly gone into decline. It is probable that its terrain was originally low-lying swampland that became flooded when there was heavy rain (Lin 1996). With urbanisation, population growth and the development of commerce, in the early 1980s the Taipei County Government put forward a plan for a Sin-Jhuang Sub-Metropolitan Centre and mapped out a reserved area in the northern outskirts of the town. On 17 December 2001, the Taipei County Government announced the implementation of 'A Specific Plan for the Sin-Jhuang Urban Project'. The main work on this, along with other subsequent proposals and constructions on the urban frontier, has been ongoing since 2006 (MAA Group Consulting Engineers 2006; Sin-Jhuang Township Government 2007).

Globalised industrial production has affected Sin-Jhuang progressively by way of government policy guidelines since the 1960s (Liu 2002, p. 113), linking it to the global economy through the key production bases of a number of transnational corporations. During this period Taiwan's overall image was transformed from agricultural to industrial. Liu cites and summarises research data from Cen-Lou Zhu, Wen-Long Wang and Ying-Hwa Chang, indicating that after the global energy crisis of 1971 and 1972, from 1973 to 1990, the rate of population increase was maintained at more than 60% due to the improvement of the local traffic connection and the establishment of surrounding industrial estates (Liu 2002, p. 50). This rapid population increase caused the topography of Sin-Jhuang to be transformed again. The city now extends from the south along the Tahan River to the north and west frontiers. Concrete blocks have gradually supplanted farmland to the extent that

ten-storey residential high-rises have replaced the four or five-storey apartment buildings.

The distant high-rise buildings in the work *Illusory Screen* are typical of contemporary residential buildings in Taiwan's cityscape. In this image, a modern fiction is ridding itself of the past innocence of a rural landscape. The sunny azure sky was captured from the immense Pacific coast and the texture of overlapping foreground is from the unfrequented Australian outback. Both the azure sky and the outback vegetation offset the abruptly active metropolitan towers. In the context of globalisation and climate change, the image of the vacant land in the foreground and bright blue sky in the background infer the green frontier that has been gradually swallowed up by urbanisation and development. The driver of the car that has inadvertently stopped in an on-street parking space aims to give the image a natural appearance, as if the composition has been deliberately arranged. As a result, the cars create an interface between civilised illusiveness and the peripheral plain.

A Future Utopia

It is a significant characteristic of capitalism that governments draw up great visions for bureaucracy's prosperous execution. As Sontag argues:

> The production of images furnishes a ruling ideology. Social change is replaced by a change in images. The freedom to consume a plurality of images and goods is equated with freedom itself. (Sontag 1977, pp. 178-179)

In Taiwan, land development and re-zoning are often inevitably linked to political and commercial interests. Development projects, in effect, are designed to create a new urban centre in the interests of the greater urbanisation of the northern region of

Taiwan. This may be the result of the government's successful policy of economic development, but in reality this future vision projected by the government reflects a brand mentality in which the people of Taiwan have acquiesced. Meanwhile, government organisations and mass media reports promote a brilliant future image for the re-zoning project. As Lee observes in *Taiwan's Incredible Architecture*, Taiwanese people who purchase well-known brand luxury handbags are not concerned whether they are 'real' or 'fake', but only in the dream of becoming a celebrity, even though this dream is not fake, exaggerated or fabricated (Lee 2009, p. 25). In a display of public power which is trusted by citizens, the government has built a dream of constructing a 'Sin-Jhuang Sub-Metropolitan Center' with the slogan: "Promoting the most brilliant diamond in the north of Taiwan" (Sin-Jhuang Township Government 2007); however, this is in essence a land development project. The dream involves the possibility of government ministries and agencies being relocated in this metropolitan suburb, which means a promise of increased people and money flows. This exaggerated future image of Sin-Jhuang obscures the issue of surrounding house prices rising and the impact on the quality of life. The government's vision, the operation of industrial society, and the needs of the citizens construct a utopian image of a capitalist society that is expressed as the hazy high-rise buildings in the work *Illusory Screen*.

The structure of the existing political and business relations duplicates those of familiar urban centres and the transnational chain stores of globalisation, replacing the former urban utopia of a Taipei metropolis. As Lefebvre points out:

> (Social) space is a (social) product. ... the space thus produced also serves as a tool of thought and of action; that in addition to being a means of production it is also a means of control, and hence of domination, of power. (Lefebvre 1991, p. 26)

Urban space is the production of capitalism. The development of contemporary capitalism is not only actively seeking an accumulation of business capital, but also the social forces of domination and a patriarchal power system. The operation of capital is clearly inscribed in the physical spaces of the city and surrounding regions. Then, the accumulation of capital can be achieved more rapidly, and the domination of capital will be imprinted in everyone's living space. In *Illusory Screen*, does the vision re-create Sin-Jhuang as a new utopia? Or perhaps it leads to the disappearance of an urban utopia?

A Place of Ambiguity

In the early 1990s, the site of the Sub-Metropolitan Centre Project was still full of the ruralism of an urban fringe of the Taipei metropolis. There was a sense of urgency in shooting images of an urban utopia which was about to fade away from both familiar and unfamiliar swampland. Sontag analyses the photographic significance of recording events: "Photographs both create and secure the significance of what is photographed. That is why everyone is eager to photograph what is important or cherished" (Sontag 2003, p. 257). Now, the site where the high-rise tower image was taken has been transformed into a dissimilar image since I first photographed it in April 2008. At that moment, a light trace formed the image of the existing site on the sensitisation device of the camera that this work may retain the moment of 'changing' reality and nostalgic perception. From another perspective, this is one of the heterotopias addressed by Foucault: "[It] juxtaposes in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible" (Foucault 1998, p. 241). The creative work is hybridised by images of actual re-zoning sites and future imaginations, like a mirror reflecting a Disney theme park in a three hundred year-old

Taiwanese township, on a rural metropolitan fringe, on a current construction site, and in a brilliant future urban centre.

4.2.2 Floating Skyline

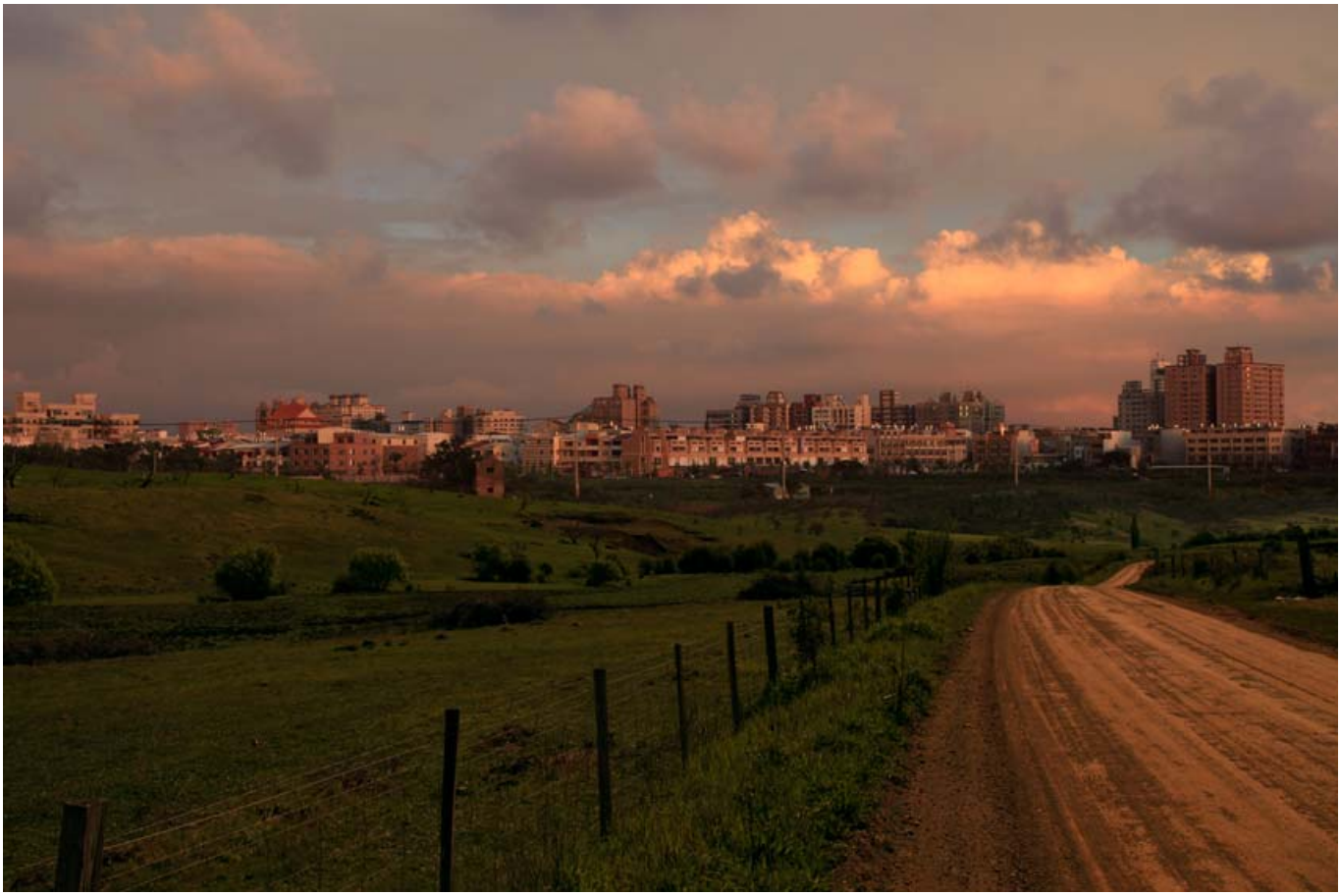

Figure 4.2 *Metro Pastoral* (2010)

Figure 4.2.1 source: Tainan, Taiwan (2010)

Figure 4.2.2 source: southern Tasmania, Australia (2009)

Figure 4.3 *Urban Farmyard* (2010)

Figure 4.3.1 source: Mittagong, Australia (2006)

Figure 4.3.2 source: Sin-Jhuang, Taiwan (2010)

Figure 4.3.3 source: Sin-Jhuang, Taiwan (2010)

A Liminal Tourist Image

Through contemporary telecommunication networks, people can easily travel through different cultural areas beyond visible boundaries regardless of values, beliefs and life styles. In physical reality, a tourist going somewhere experiences dissimilar people, scenery, and food flavours from their everyday practice. The tourist, at the same time, is a reflection of themselves, in the sense of, as "Albert Camus said, a grander and deeper process of learning which leads us back finally to ourselves" (Lippard 1999, p. 5). People encounter new and different scenes, but will always regress inevitably to their own experience. For instance, we often hear someone murmur: 'Wow! The landscape looks like some places I am familiar with' while

sightseeing. Frequently tourism is a crucial intermediary to reconcile and harmonise the diverse images of landscape we encounter throughout the world. As Lippard puts it: “Tourists make ordinary places extraordinary by their presence, but travel changes the travellers as well; it is a speeded-up counterpart of ordinary life” (Lippard 1999, p. 5). The work *Metro Pastoral* lies on these dynamics between artificial/natural, physical reality/virtual space and routine/escape. From some points of view, the status of representation of tourism itself may be compared to what Gloria Anzaldua describes as the in-between state of ‘borderlands’ in *Borderlands: the New Mestas = La Frontera*:

> [Where] is physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy. (Anzaldua 1987, p. unpaged preface)

The borderland functions in the interest of a higher integration of politics with academic creativity, as well as the possibility of a more moral place. In other words, the borderland functions in the hope of creating a more illustrious world. Bhabha also interprets borderlands, putting forward the notion of ‘intervening space’ (Bhabha 1996, p. 204), which is an in-between place with ambiguous characteristics from a cultural perspective. The position of the tourist in space appears to cleverly reflect the actual/virtual hybridity of atopia.

A Cyberspace-like Physical World

To arrive at a more specific description of perception, Lee clarifies ambiguous spaces by observing the postmodern phenomenon of Taipei’s architecture:

> The division between urban and rural is usually both contradictory and ambiguous: the advantage of a centralised media is to make possible the great cultural impact of the city, while old traditions and taboos are still significant in people's minds. Hence there is an annoying complex of contradictions – modern/ medieval and city/ countryside – found in any area bounded by the urban and the rural. (Lee 2001, p. 129)

In an extension of Lee's argument, the sites that produce images and the images themselves have been transformed into buffer zones that absorb forces and pressures from all influences. In other words, these in-between places relate to the space of escape and relaxation in modern societies.

The marginal sites of the physical world can also be a reference to the virtual cyberspace. William Mitchell refers to 'geocode' as a possible stratifying force in people's perceptions of one another:

> The Net eliminated a traditional dimension of civic legibility. In the standard sort of spatial city, where you are frequently tells who you are. (And who you are will often determine where you are allowed to be.) Geography is destiny; … the Net's despatialization of interaction destroys the geocode's key. There is no such thing as a better address, and you cannot attempt to define yourself by being seen in the right places in the right company. (Mitchell 1995, p. 10)

Social status in cyberspace is not as egalitarian as Mitchell claims; for instance, an online server operator, the different permissions of users, and even hackers may all create a newly stratified order of status in cyberspace. The actual geocode is hidden by new cyber identities to achieve different social status in the cyber world. However, cyber-utopia provides an anchoring place that can temporarily relieve people from the geographic territories where they are thought to be part of the physical world, regardless of identity and status of reality. For this reason, I applied the foregoing notions to create the image.

Metro Pastoral is composed of two main landscape photographs. The top half is the typical cityscape of south Taiwan under the sunset light, that consists of a chaotic arrangement of buildings and a community-based Buddhist temple, contrasting with a neat arrangement of the roof top water towers. The bottom landscape is a verdant sheep farm and track in central Tasmania. In software, I stitched these landscape images together with a seamless appearance. Bright orange sunset clouds shine on the verdant grassland while the direction of the unpaved track to the right unites the two landscapes. It appears to be a natural image of landscape, however inauthentic it may be revealed to be on closer inspection.

The Imaginary Castle

> The spirit of demoralization has elected domicile in the castle, and it is with it we have to deal every time it is a question of contact with our fellowmen, but the doors are always open, and one does not begin by 'thanking' everyone, you know. Moreover, the solitude is vast, we don't often run into one another. (Breton 1972, pp. 17-18).

The original two photographs were taken on trips I took to Taiwan and Tasmania, and composed a singular image. The light before sunset spreads an orange-purple-gray colour into the city sky, after colour adjustment, such that the ambiance displays a surreal vision, like the images in some fantasy films. In the section from the *Manifestoes of Surrealism* quoted from above, Breton describes a 'castle' where some of his friends are permanent guests who can come and go as they please. He asks if we can be really sure that this product of imagination is only an image? He puts forward the proposition that our fantasies have an existence we can live by, if we give free reign to them. To create an atmosphere that resonates with this idea of a utopian ideal, the landscape images combined into *Metro Pastoral* have been

heightened with a saturation of orange and green tones to emphasise the surreal atmosphere of the two original, unretouched photographs. With copy, paste, and erasure techniques, especially on the sheep farm photograph, refuse left behind by humans was digitally removed in a process similar to the collective shaping of local landscapes. Crang considers that the process of landscape shaping emphatically links people and land. He points out that, “A landscape shaped and shaping the people living there becomes a bank of cultural memories – some still in use, others as residues of past practices and knowledges” (Crang 1998, pp. 22-23). As a result, the image of ordinary physical landscapes has been transformed into an imaginary atopia.

4.2.3 Watery Town

Figure 4.4 *Impression of Harbour* (2010)

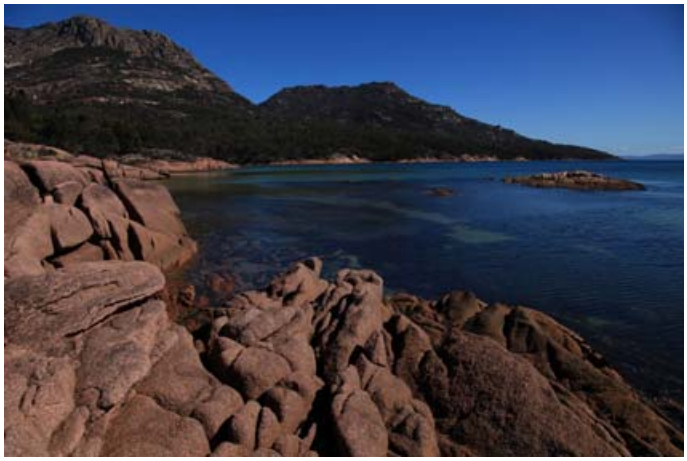

Figure 4.4.1 source: Freycinet, Australia (2009)

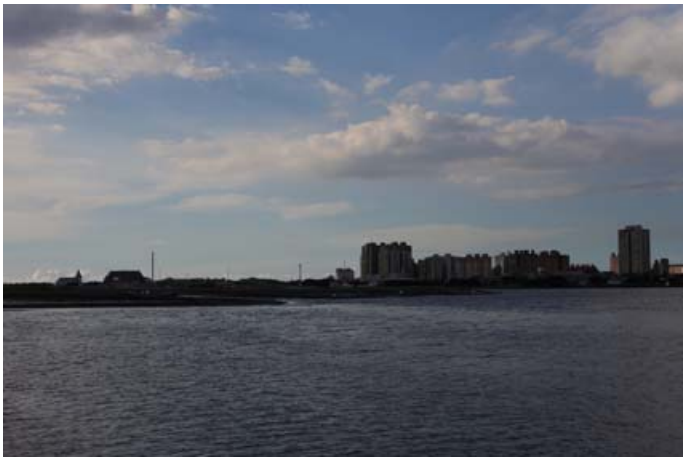

Figure 4.4.2 source: Tam-Sui, Taiwan (2010)

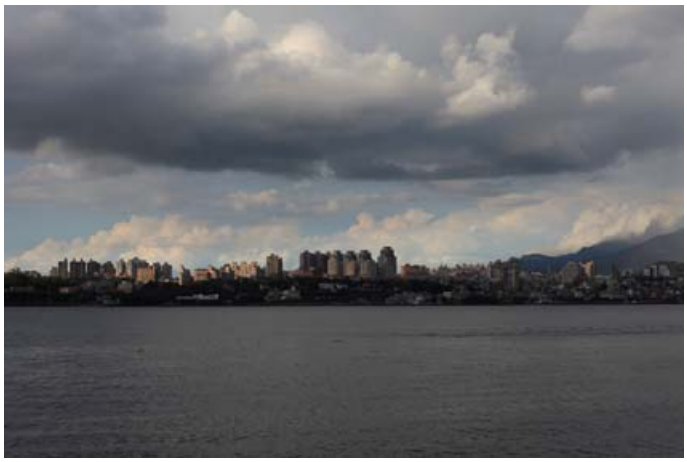

Figure 4.4.3 source: Tam-Sui, Taiwan (2010)

Figure 4.4.4 source: Tam-Sui, Taiwan (2010)

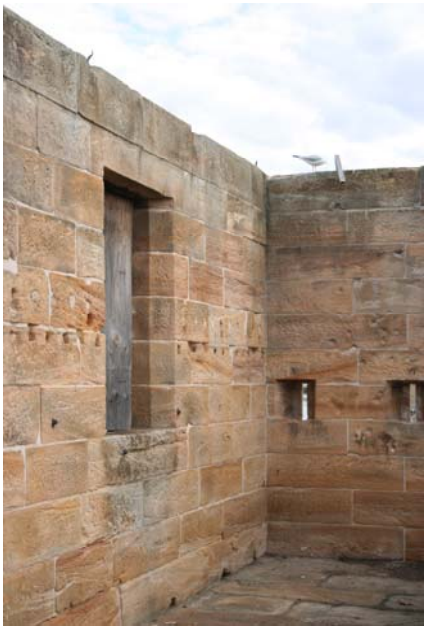

Figure 4.4.5 source: Cockatoo Island, Australia (2008)

Figure 4.5 *Mythic Wetland* (2010)

Figure 4.5.1 source: Port Arthur(TAS), Australia (2009)

Figure 4.5.2 source: Sin-Jhuang, Taiwan (2010)

It isn't clouds that are fleecy here, but brains. Clouds float over the city like cerebral hemispheres driven by the wind. The people have cirrus clouds in their heads or coming out of their eyes, like the spongy vapours that rise from earth

> cracked by hot rains. Sexual solitude of clouds in the sky; linguistic solitude of men on the earth. (Baudrillard 1988, p. 15)

With the ferry anchored to the wharf, it is as if stepping into another place across time. This lost ruin in a secluded corner of the contemporary metropolis has played a crucial role in history during two World Wars. From some aspects, it is more like a great monument from the past standing in the harbour.

Cockatoo Island, located to the west of the Harbour Bridge, is the largest island in Sydney Harbour. Although the distance from the busy city centre to the island is relatively short, it represents a totally different world in terms of its development. The appearance of the island has seen many changes since its initial European occupation in 1839 (Chambers 2000, p. 15). It has been used as a convict prison, a stone quarry, a nautical school, an industrial school, a reformatory and a naval dockyard. A recommendation to the British Government in 1846 caused the island to be gradually transformed into a naval dockyard (Parker 1977, p. 10). Later during World War II, Cockatoo Island became the main maintenance and repair base of the Allied navies and merchant marines in the South Pacific. With the process of global economic development, it experienced the growth of industrialisation and its ownership has shifted between the Australian government and private enterprise several times in the twentieth century. The Cockatoo Island dockyard was decommissioned on 31 December 1991 and then transformed into a recreational site after a long period of maritime industrial activity (Chambers 2000, pp. 17-21; Sydney Harbour Federation Trust 2009).

Site of Various Reflections

Regardless of whether it was a convict prison, stone quarry, school or naval dockyard, the past purposes of Cockatoo Island can all be classified as enclosed spaces. Cockatoo Island juxtaposes several different time slices and spaces that are entangled with each other. In addition, in today's busy Sydney Harbour it serves as a public window display. The development of Cockatoo Island nowadays fits heterotopology in the terms of Foucault's description. By comprehending the island through its developing history and cultural context, in front of a camera lens it turns into a museum or theme park attraction. In this intermingling site with its traces of colony, war, industrialisation and globalisation over the past two centuries, the ambiance of dread chill and troops and industrial discipline have faded with the wind.

Reflecting the surrounding modern cityscapes of the harbour, almost anywhere on the island is filled with a postmodern and surreal atmosphere. Its docks, cliffs, tunnels, industrial precincts, in fact the entire space, resemble the fantastic filmic scene of *Laputa: Castle in the Sky* (1986) written and directed by Hayao Miyazaki. In the film, Laputa was set in an abandoned manufacturing and mining town. According to David Gordon, Miyazaki drew inspiration from a trip to the mining communities of Wales at the time of the miners' strike, which made a profound impression on him. In an interview in 1999, he said, "I really admired the way the miners' unions fought to the very end for their jobs and communities, and I wanted to reflect the strength of those communities in my film" (Gordon 2006). This disturbed sense of place has an imperceptible link with the different time slices of the migrant history of Cockatoo Island and Australia.

Figure 4.5.5 Hayao Miyazaki, Laputa: Castle in the Sky (1986)

In *The Tourist at Home* Lippard states that, “Past places and events can be used to support what is happening in the present, or they can be separated from the present in a hyped-up, idealized no-place, or pseudo-utopia” (Lippard 1999, p. 15). For most tourists and Sydneysiders, Cockatoo Island is only an ordinary local geographical name, if they do not recognise its remnants and past history in depth. As its webpage claims: “It has magnificent views of the harbour bridge, the city skyline and the wonderful juxtaposition of headlands, suburbs and water” (Sydney Harbour Federation Trust 2009). Tourists stopping on the island might neglect the significance of the island itself in the surrounding beautiful cityscape. Consequently, the island is a utopia of the contemporary metropolis, a placeless place reflected in the mirror of

Foucault's significance (Foucault 1998, p. 239). Through the lens of a camera, forgotten areas, unfamiliar people and an unknown history are reflected and then reconstructed into the image of a surreal theme park.

An Irreplaceable Centre

In *Unpacking My Library … Again*, Bhabha notes Adrienne Rich's historical memory, which

> … likens variously to film and photography, is a material 'medium' that must be 'restored and framed', cut and edited: its ethical importance lies in its being at once a form of presence – an 'exposure' – and a technology of 'processing', remembering, repeating and working through. (Bhabha 1996, p. 203)

The remnants on the island are irreplaceable as the centre while the physical reality centre – the city – turns into a vague periphery. The unnoticed nooks and crannies makes modern cityscapes indeed form a mocking contrast. In some respects, this implies the more and more ambiguous relations between centre and periphery which hybridise opposite essences of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion through the urbanisation telecommunication network. McLuhan states a new power structure with respect to the global village: "Centers are everywhere and margins are nowhere" (Levinson 1999, p. 7). A further extension of the concept is what Virilio calls 'omnipolitan', the city to end all cities, a virtual metropolitics of instantaneity and hyperconcentration in which every actual city will ultimately be merely a suburb. A new definition of time and space will splinter the society of tomorrow into two opposites: the real time of the global city within the virtual community of the 'haves', and the real space of the local cities of the 'have-nots' (Virilio 1998, pp. 186-187).

While I stood at the highest point of the island, I looked around at the surrounding contemporary urban landscape, with its postmodern and surrealistic atmosphere that seemed to be in contradiction with the authentic and romantic place I was standing in. Like other international cityscapes in the age of globalisation, the visible skyline had been assimilated by transnational commercial icons. Thereupon I moved the viewfinder away from the iconic landmarks – the Opera House, the Centrepoint Tower and the Harbour Bridge – in an attempt to sense the multiple implications of this place. Hockney relies on a quotation from John Berger to question 'time' as a factor in photography and drawing:

> A photograph is evidence of an encounter between event and photographer. A drawing slowly questions an event's appearance and in doing so reminds us that appearances are always a construction with a history. (Hockney & Wechsler 1984, pp. 9, 40)

A technique of dislocation in the process of creating *Impression of Harbour* experiments with using an absence to build an impression of atopia. The only remaining relationship to the location of Cockatoo Island is the embedded brick texture on the foreground sandstone. The sandstone is itself a connection with the island's history, scenic images, and ambience that delivers its implications of origin (Cockatoo Island) into the landscape of *Impression of Harbour*. Additionally, I selected the cityscape image of a riverside suburb in Taipei, and the foreground vivid seaside rocks of a national park in Tasmania. With the skeleton of the Taipei cityscape in place, I added and adjusted the other elements of the city skyline onto the image, in a painting-like process. I composed these images of diverse landscapes and varied times into a singular frame to present the far-reaching meaning of both a tourist and spatial atopia. In doing so I aimed to construct the trace of McLuhan's 'discarnate man' shuttling in a leisurely journey across time and space.

At the hyperconcentration of time and space, Cockatoo Island is no longer just Cockatoo Island; Sydney is no longer just Sydney; both images are transformed into a hyperreal existence. As in Sontag's comments on the 'society of spectacle' – something has to be turned into a spectacle in order to be real. There are only media representations: reality is obsolete (Sontag 2003, p. 268).

4.2.4 Wavering Horizon

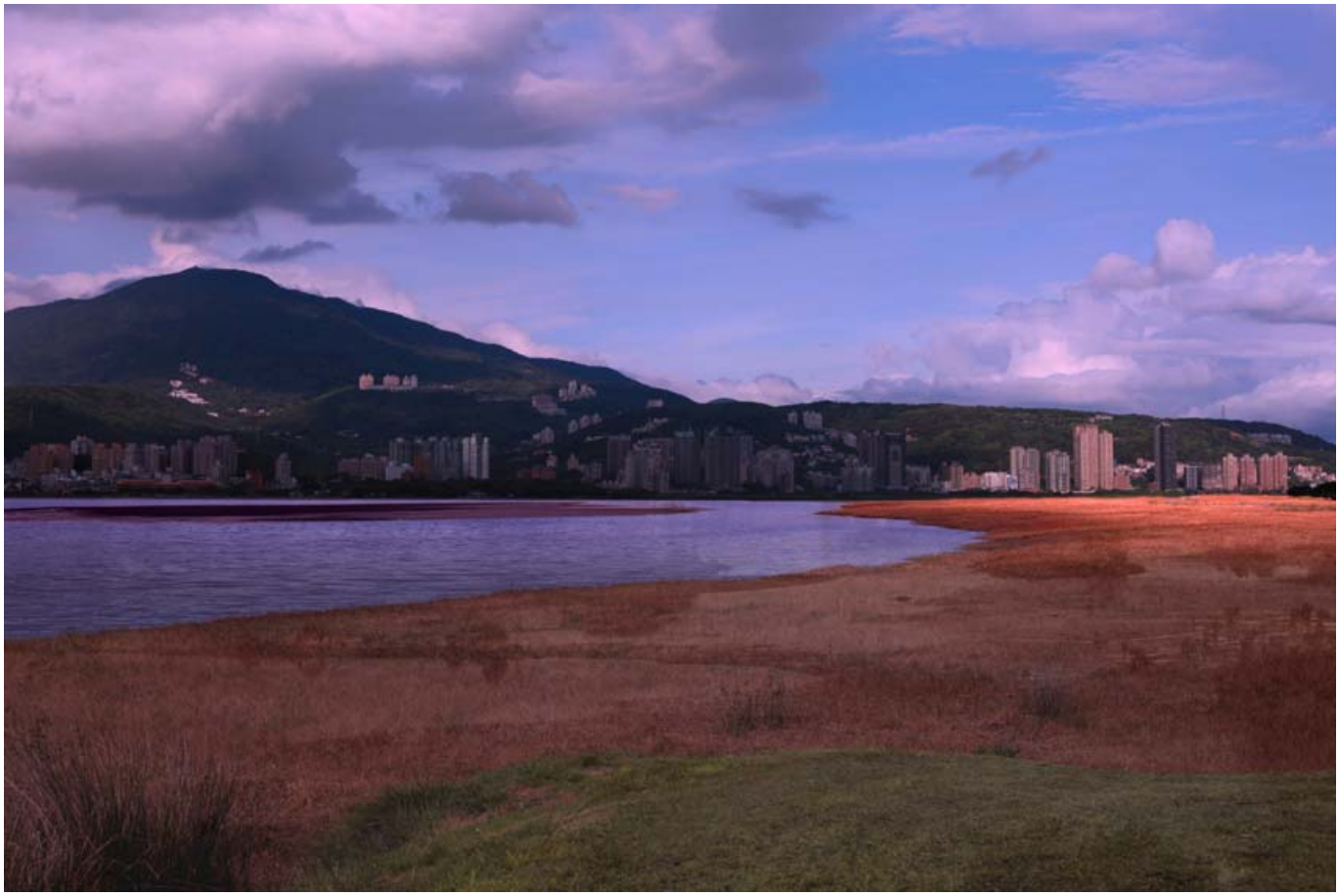

Figure 4.6 *Waterfront Fairyland* (2010)

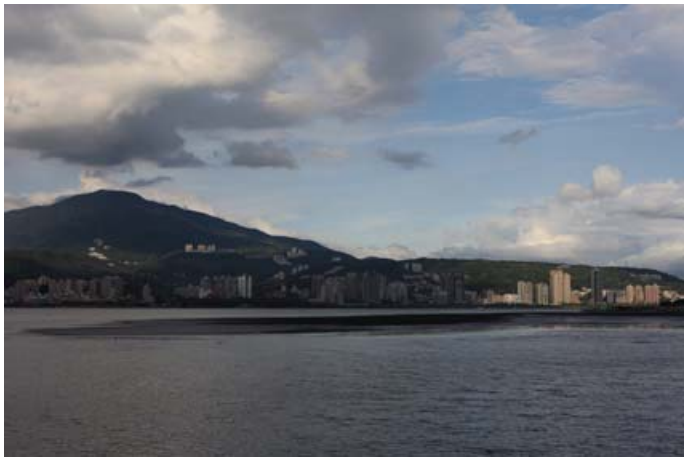

Figure 4.6.1 source: Tam-Sui, Taiwan (2010)

Figure 4.6.2 source: Tainan, Taiwan (2010)

Figure 4.6.3 source: Tamar River, Australia (2009)

Figure 4.7 *The Lakeside Reserve* (2010)

Figure 4.7.1 source: Lake Illawarra, Australia (2006)

Figure 4.7.2 source: Lake Illawarra, Australia (2006)

Figure 4.7.3 source: Tainan, Taiwan (2010)

Figure 4.7.4 source: Tainan, Taiwan (2010)

> I sought the finished form of the future catastrophe of the social in geology, in that upturning of depth that can be seen in the striated spaces, the reliefs of salt and stone, the canyons where the fossil river flows down, the immemorial abyss of slowness that shows itself in erosion and geology. I even looked for it in the verticality of the great cities. (Baudrillard 1988, p. 5)

The Formation of Praise

Roaming aimlessly in the neighbourhood, whether psychologically or physiologically, is a meaningful way of seeing from the perspective of ordinary life. The alleys or gutters beside residential blocks are like buffer zones that keep private territories apart. In this manner, I am drawn to the marginal nature of alleys and

gutters, defined as ‘a thoroughfare through the middle of a block giving access to the rear of lots or buildings’ (Merriam-Webster 2009a). The original photographic sources I took are ordinary and mundane scenes, yet they are symbolic images of localisation. Moreover, the landscapes have become specific cultural references.

Village researcher Santiago Chub portrays one Belizean village in his *Maya Mapping Project*: “This village loves this village because its river banks are full of iguanas sunning themselves and its fishes love to bite” (Chub 1997, p. 91). His description evokes an impression of invisible emotion between the locality and its residents. Since I am not just a tourist but also an inhabitant here in Australia, it is the same situation as if I were in Taiwan. Life here provides me with the excellent experience of a neighbour. This perception is what Foucault finds in one of the heterotopian places, characterised as isolated and penetrable, concerned with religious purification, and apparently hygienic (Foucault 1997, p. 355). However, the extent of my penetration of the ordinary local landscape is difficult to assess by an outsider.

Iverson and Sanders discuss the neighbourhood narrative and mention traces of the inhabitants: “… their desires, anxieties, memories, and histories are communicated thru social histories made meaningful thru an archeological process of unearthing multiple layers of narrative” (Iverson & Sanders 2008, p. 134). Incremental localised perception constructs an intermediate space to draw closer relations between new migrants/long-term visitors and the land. From another viewpoint, the intermediate space performs the role of buffer zone that supports newcomers’ settling in, as well as allowing locals to adapt to diversity and comprehension. Moreover, Crang refers to ‘landscape as a palimpsest’, the development of landscape likened to inscribing on medieval palimpsests that were not erased but would be written over continuously (Crang 1998, p. 22). In other words,

the continuous timeframes in erasures, accretions, anomalies and redundancies shape the cultural landscape. The process of the landscape taking shape over time is similar to the creation of art in that both undergo a process of subjective designing with a romantic objective.

The first photograph I used to compose *Lakeside Fairyland* is a mundane corner of wetland in southeast Australia. Another cityscape photograph on the top shows ordinary residential blocks in the Taipei environs. The faint layer down the image of the wetland is river flood land in southern Taiwan. All the images are drawn from the surroundings of neighbourhoods where I myself have resided. Patrick Wright discusses the different states of perception between local residents:

> People live in different worlds even though they share the same locality: there is no single community or quarter. What is pleasantly old for one person is decayed and broken for another. (Wright 1985, p. 237)

For locals, these images, in a sense, are as commonplace as the images in newspapers, web pages, or advertising posters seen every day. Nevertheless, these mundane landscapes, intertwined with one another, build up a blended context into a new hybrid landscape. In southeast Australia where I live now, it is customary to see coal fragments on the ground in parks, on wild land or even on the beaches. And it is easy to see exposed sandstone around hills, mountains and beaches. In short, coal and sandstone are commonly exposed on any ground that is not covered by asphalt. Recalling the development of Australia by Europeans since the late eighteenth century, the regional geology reveals how the contemporary landscape of Australia has been constructed. In addition, areas along the coastline of Australia have a strong relation to the ocean, amidst year-round splendid sunshine.

Overlapping Places

I have described how *Waterfront Fairyland* is composed of scenes alongside ordinary residential areas. According to Gregotti's statement, residual space and unused green space are two aspects of the atopic typology (Gregotti 1996, pp. 79-80). Gregotti analyses these spaces as a result of rapid urban expansion in regions between the countryside and the urban periphery, and calls them non-place atopias. Actually, these unused green spaces or reserves, in some respects, are the consequence of ground retained as buffer zones (recreational parks) in the busy metropolis since the region began to be developed. On the one hand these spaces do not belong to residents, but on the other hand the spaces are extensions of residents' living space. In contrast with the cluster of city blocks, these odd green spaces pass into ambiguous and marginal status. By reconstructing these dislocated images of landscape, the affiliation of authority of the centre and periphery are scattered. I took these photographic sources from the edge of the towns and re-created a fictional image of atopia by combining them. Across the river, there are city blocks (man-made) and green wetland (residual) spaces – which one dominates?

The composition is formed by horizontal and vertical lines. Its sunshine has gone across the top right to the mountains and the ground with dramatic lighting; the cumulus clouds drift in the sky randomly; the ground is shadowed by the clouds which blurs the boundaries of the terrain. The indistinct layer of river flood land inscribes a flowing progress on the land. In short, these mundane associations were not in the original; however, they achieved significance through the synthesis of consciousness. As Barthes points out: "When it becomes form, the meaning leaves its contingency behind; it empties itself, it becomes impoverished, history evaporates, only the letter remains" (Barthes 1973, p. 127). In the creation *Waterfront Fairyland*,

these landscape segments were pulled out from their original forms, and the possibilities and pursuit of the meanings of new forms was reconstructed. The new image has gone beyond any local association with the physical reality, it displays the form of hyperreality. This continuous altering of the form itself perhaps is one of the significances of touring. Lippard discuss the effects of travelling alone and moving through different locations:

> We are far more likely to interact with both places and people on an unselfconscious or at least less self-conscious basis. We are not who we think we are when we are elsewhere. We can even become another person entirely. (Lippard 1999, p. 5)

Then by re-exploring cultural geography, local history and the humanity of the neighbour, recent cognition and interpretation have superseded the primary perception. These new surface perceptions reconstruct a frontier as polymorphic atopia, making it a prototypal tourist destination. It creates an inherent metamorphosis where the surreal atmosphere overlaps the real sceneries, in the process constructing a blended third place that has never existed in the past and may not even in the future.

4.2.5 Coast of Southwest

Figure 4.8 *Sundown Cove* (2010)

Figure 4.8.1 source: Chi-Gu, Taiwan (2010)

Figure 4.8.2 source: Warilla, Australia (2010)

Figure 4.8.3 source: Warilla, Australia (2010)

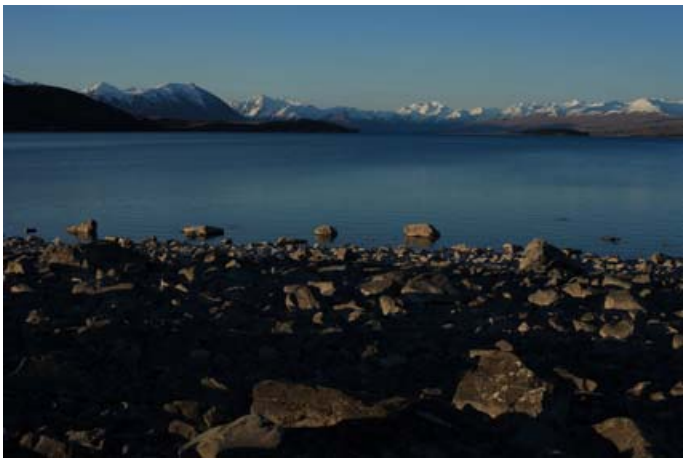

Figure 4.8.4 source: Lake Tekapo, New Zealand (2010)

Figure 4.9 *Leisure Fir Pond* (2010)

Figure 4.9.1 source: Chi-Gu, Taiwan (2010)

Figure 4.9.2 source: Windang, Australia (2010)

Figure 4.9.3 source: Windang, Australia (2010)

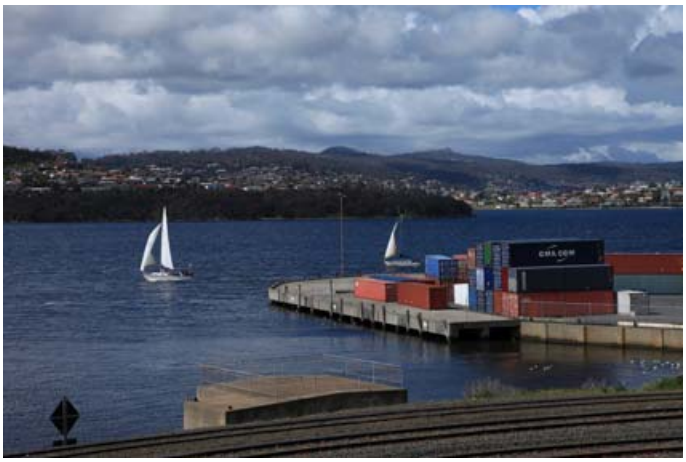

Figure 4.9.4 source: Hobart, Australia (2009)

By connecting a number of places together in the manner of a series of still images (places) being used to compose a video clip (space), the tourist herself or himself can be thought of as a intermediate space in movement through various places. Yi-Fu Tuan distinguishes between ‘space’ and ‘place’:

> The ideas ‘space’ and ‘place’ require each other for definition. From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa. Furthermore, if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place. (Tuan 1977, p. 6)

A Multilayer Visual Atopia

Crang holds that, by means of the developing technology of communication, the homogenisation of places relates to the creation of a global space. The characteristics of boundaries between different cultures have gradually become ambiguous, and in the process have created meeting points where people can interact. Crang calls these meeting points 'liminal' border spaces which can also be referred to as non-places. He quotes Meyrowitz's note that people shift from cultures inhabiting specific areas to a more mobile society, so whereas people used to interact in a cultural area, relationships are now increasingly distantiated. Thus many interactions occur at meeting points, or 'liminal' border spaces between cultures. (Crang 1998, pp. 113-114). Consequently, the relationship between non-place and its local environment changes, i.e. the non-place becomes disengaged from its local environment. However, under the contemporary telecommunication network and its comprehensive transmission, this homogenisation of places is often caused by images of domination. Crang cites the example of a 'motorway' to illustrate:

> In these non-places our understandings are thus governed by texts, …the relationship to the environment is distanced and often dominated by images – thus on motorways travel is punctuated by signposts to places the motorway now bypasses and as we look out of the car window, we are set apart and distanced from the landscape – in phenomenological terms, we are existential outsiders. (Crang 1998, p. 114)

The practice of travel is like a vehicle moving in a space formed by stringing together landscapes from place to place. That is, the moving vehicle itself is a particular intervening space which unites continuous time nodes and diverse places. The image *Sundown Cove* comprises photographs of oyster frames off the southwest coast of Taiwan, a coastline landscape in southeast Australia on the right side, and snowy mountains from the South Island of New Zealand. The perspective of the

image is deliberately focused on the landscape of the oyster frames extending out from the coastline. Gratuitously, the impression of the sea of floating oyster frames is like Barthes' 'punctum' (Barthes 1981, p. 26), in touch with the similar landscapes of Australia's east and south coasts as well as New Zealand's coastline. From another perspective, the convergence of three landscapes and time zones in *Sundown Cove* combines these sea-related environments into a unique hyperreal space with various temporal and spatial layers.

An image as an Omnipolitan

Telecommunications not only reduce the individual characteristics of different global regions but also further concentrate the three-dimensional physical space. With regard to the space in-between different places, based on developing communication as Crang's liminal border space, Virilio proposes another vivid point of view to adapt the contemporary condition, especially in the telecommunications age:

> Critical space and critical expanse are now everywhere, due to the acceleration of communications tools that obliterate the Atlantic (Concorde), reduce France to a square one and a half hours across (Airbus) or gain time over time with the TGV, the various advertising slogans signalling perfectly the shrinking of geophysical space of which we are the beneficiaries but also, sometimes, the unwitting victims. (Virilio 1997, p. 9)

A thought-provoking sensation is that while editing that image, the three original landscapes were flattened into the sense of an intermediary space. Although the appearance of the landscapes is still there, the significance of time and space has been collapsed. In *Sundown Cove*, I adjusted the colour and contrast of the three original photographs to be in concordance, to give the image a hyperreal atmosphere of atopia. As Judith Williamson indicates: "All signs depend for their signifying process on the

existence of specific, concrete receivers, people for whom and in whose systems of belief, they have a meaning" (Williamson 1978, p. 40). When someone sees the image, each one will perceive the familiar aspects and interpret through their own experience. This perfects the performance of the image as a space of atopia, through a participatory approach that is similar to the experience of netizens surfing in cyberspace with a common purpose, and thus constructing a temporary virtual community. Following the accomplishment of their common purpose, these netizens retreat from cyberspace to their actual affiliated places. *Sundown Cove* represents this creation of a omnipolitan-like place in the telecommunications age, in line with Virilio's statement (Virilio 1997, pp. 143-144).

The Phantasmagoria of Image

The process of creating this image frame is analogous to the experience of a traveller's reliance on contemporary telecommunication devices. That is, travel is a shuttling between both physical landscapes and computer monitors. As the traveller views their surrounding scenery it is as if the images are criss-crossing with each other. As a result, this creative image presents complicated and multilayered sites: three places where photographer took the landscapes; the composed image of atopia itself; the image itself, which represents an intermediary fluid space; a fluid place during the period that the artist spent editing the creative image. In other words, *Sundown Cove* is itself the practice of polymorphic atopia.

4.2.6 The Intertidal Zone

Figure 4.10 *Paddy Coast* (2010)

Figure 4.10.1 source: Windang Island, Australia (2007)

Figure 4.10.2 source: Windang Island, Australia (2007)

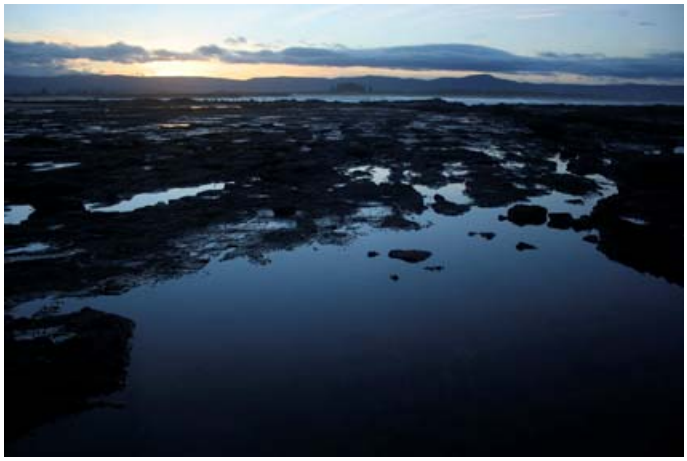

Figure 4.10.3 source: Windang Island, Australia (2007)

Figure 4.10.4 source: Guei-Ren, Taiwan (2009)

Figure 4.10.5 source: Yong-Kang, Taiwan (2010)

Figure 4.10.6 source: Sin-Jhuang, Taiwan (2008)

Figure 4.10.7 source: Sin-Jhuang, Taiwan (2008)

Figure 4.10.8 source: Sin-Jhuang, Taiwan (2010)

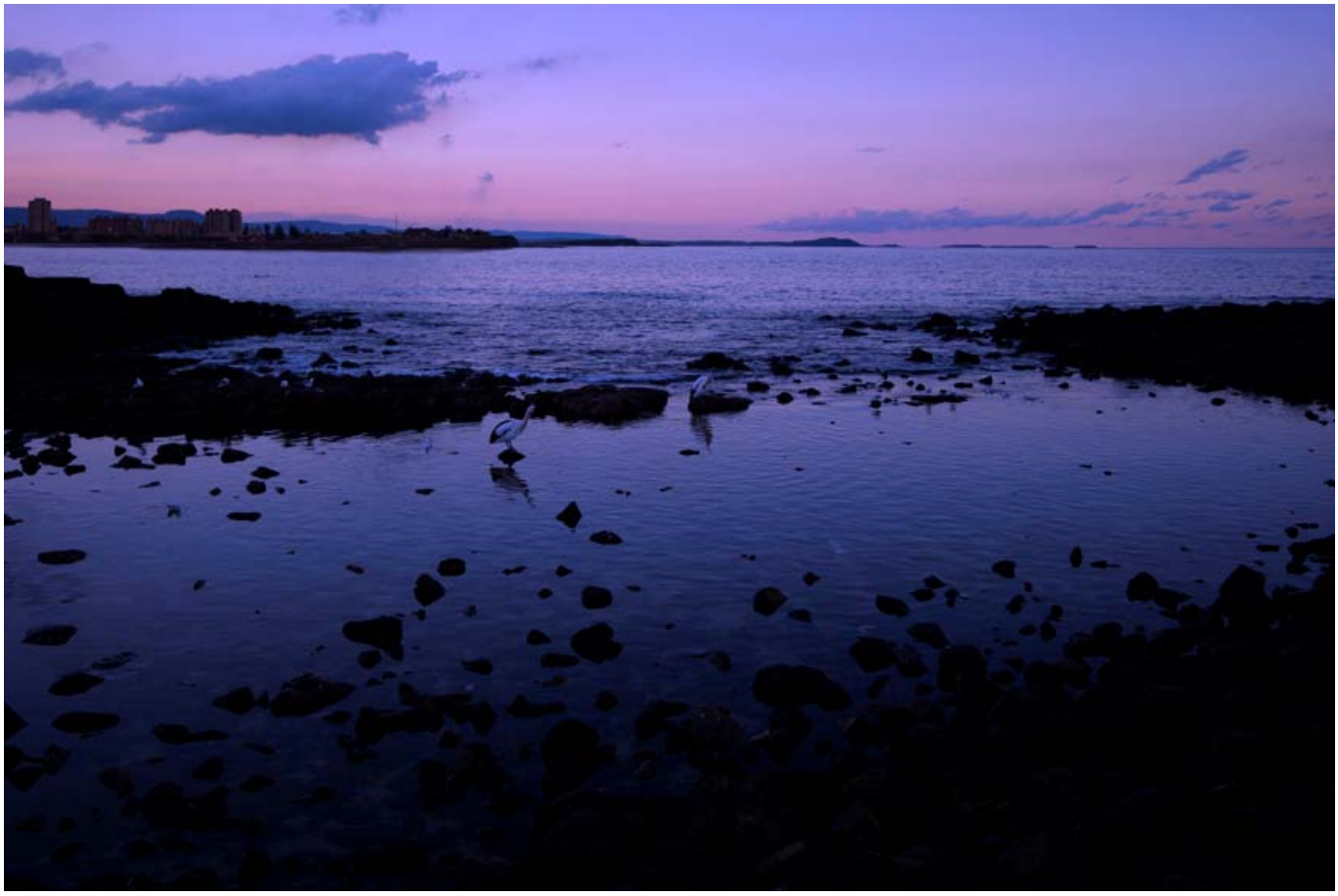

Figure 4.11 *Purple Coast* (2010)

Figure 4.11.1 source: Shellharbour, Australia (2007)

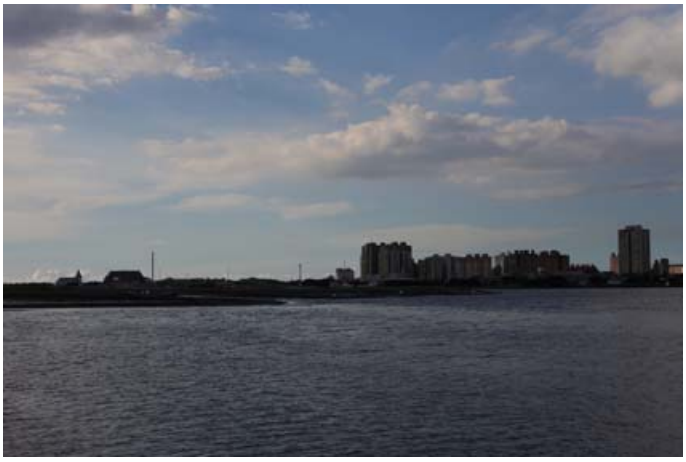

Figure 4.11.2 source: Tam-Sui, Taiwan (2010)

A Hidden Place

> Each such place will be viewed from a variety of perspectives. There will be differences between what visitors and locals 'see' in a place, and between the viewpoints of old and new residents. (Urry 1990, p. 126)

For locals, perhaps, it is just a fishing paradise or a place for walking around. One day just before sunset, I discovered Windang Island on the south coast of New South Wales. This rocky island is an exposed reef that lies just off the coast. At low tide, the coastline is divided into neat squares with the light of the sunset reflected on the surface of the sea. The picturesque image creates the impression of a moisture-rich paddy similar to the landscape of rice-growing countries in South East Asia. As I gazed at this crisscross paddy field, it struck me like an arrow, or a 'punctum' in Barthes' terminology (Barthes 1981, p. 26). The déjà vu image of the crisscross lines linked deeply to my connection to my homeland. The crisscross lines wove a complicated configuration on the seashore. I thought about the Taiwanese people, living on an island and yet unfamiliar with the ocean because of political constraints: "due to the unusual progress of history, we had our backs to the sea and facing inland from the island" (Long 2003). Richard Bush depicts the status of Taiwan in those days, "Political freedoms were severely restricted, it was asserted, because of a national emergency to suppress the Communist rebellion" (Bush 2004, p. 5). In addition, the status included a prohibition on the shoreline, which was like an invisible wall restraining the island during the long-term political suppression. Consequently, the citizens had become alienated from the shore in an island country for over forty years. This absurd feature of Taiwan's history means that this paddy coastline is at the same time close and far away.

In fairy tales, supernatural beings often haunt dual sites: ocean/land, land/sky, sky/ocean. In the Chinese novel *Journey to the West*, for example, the main character Sun Wukong is born from a mythical stone that absorbs the essence of sky and earth. *The Classic of Mountains and Seas*, the most famous and the foundational source of ancient Chinese mythology, describes mythical figures appearing on the border of

space within a ‘third site’. Creatures of Greek mythology have similar descriptions. Similarly, Wertheim cites examples to argue that all cultures have had parallel ‘other’ worlds throughout human history:

> For Christian medievals, it was the world of the soul described by Dante. For the ancient Greeks it was the world of the Olympian gods and a host of other immaterial beings – the Fates, the Furies, et cetera. For the Aboriginal people of Australia it was the world of the Dreamtime spirits. … I only want to point out that a multileveled reality is something humans have been living with since the dawn of our species. (Wertheim 1999, pp. 243-244)

Humans faced nature with respect and imagination, and as a result, they conceived of a hidden virtual space, which had been different from the ordinary since ancient times. This virtual place is similar to Foucault’s description of ‘utopias’ as “sites [which] have a general relation of direct or inverted analogy with the real space of society” (Foucault 1998, p. 231).

Ambivalent Impression

Paddy Coast is composed of a row of high residential buildings with illusory and blurry features which are Taiwanese urban symbols standing on an Australian natural coast. I have adjusted the hue of the image into dark blue which turns it into a surreal ambiance, a fantastic land. A Taiwanese cityscape overlaps the crisscross coast of New South Wales. Washed away by the tide of globalisation, national boundaries increasingly vanish due to migration. In Hawaii, for example, “everyone is a minority. There is no majority racial group, … perhaps it is the future of most countries” (Sheridan 1999, p. 265). Besides the migration of people, geographical and cultural hybridity are becoming an increasing global trend. In Australia, with the opening up of the nation’s immigration policy, more and more immigrants from around the world

have arrived to start new lives in Australia. “Migrations and trading relations have long linked different peoples throughout the region and the wider world” (Hall 1998, p. 141). Commercial activities usually associated with people’s movements change the regional landscape gradually, as they become part of the system of globalisation. Just like the waves of the sea which scour the beach day after day until we look back and become aware of the changes they have made. The composition of distinct impressions is hybridised imperceptibly in the creation of an atopic place. This photographic image demonstrates an intermediate scene that overlaps conjunction of daylight and darkness, nature and artificiality, ocean and the land, the Western rocky coast and the Oriental paddy field, tradition and modernity, conflict and harmony. As a result, an iconic landscape blends into and reconstructs an image of new fictional place.

4.2.7 Blue Imagination

Figure 4.12 *Blue Imagination* (2010)

Figure 4.12.1 source: Port Kembla, Australia (2008)

Figure 4.12.2 source: Tainan, Taiwan (2010)

Figure 4.12.3 source: Franklin(TAS), Australia (2009)

An Island off the Island

The Illawarra Historical Society notes that Captain James Cook's journal in April 1770 records that "…this is a point which I called Red point, …a round hill the top of which look'd like the Crown of a hatt" (Illawarra Historical Society 1966, p. 5). The crown-of-a-hat-like Red Point is known as Mt Kembla today. This was the first historical written record of the Illawarra region and Port Kembla. At a later time, Port Kembla was developed into a significant steel works and harbour: "Port Kembla Harbour Act passed in December 1898. … Construction work began in January 1900. It was in this regional context that the industrialisation of Port Kembla began"

(Eklund 2002, pp. 10-11). It soon became the major regional port for exporting coal mined in southern and western New South Wales. In its importance in industrialisation at the turn of the nineteenth century, Port Kembla was deeply influenced by both major industrial powers, the United States and Great Britain. In accordance with the operational mode of the colonial economy, Great Britain (and later the United States and Germany) provided capital and technical support for Port Kembla's development so that raw materials could be acquired by the colonial powers. In turn, Australia re-imported processing necessities and goods from these countries. Eklund concluded that there was a reciprocal effect in Port Kembla between the global and the local: "Port Kembla had become the epitome of a town created by industrial capitalism, though the scale of the new industries was increasingly obscuring its boundaries and distinctiveness" (Eklund 2002, p. 33).

Port Kembla followed the trend of industrialisation and gained from the development of the global economy until the long period of the decline of manufacturing began in 1970. This decline has resulted in a dead town in terms of population, with commercial premises moving outside the area. Mr. Garrett recalled during the 1980s: "It saddens you to think what Port used to be. The shops used to be busy and now they're deserted. That's progress" (Davis 1985, p. 96). This was followed by worse: "In the 1990s a rise in drug-related problems and visible street prostitution accompanied commercial decline of the main street" (Eklund 2002, p. 183). This decline was manifested in visible symbols; it also revealed the gradual marginalisation of Port Kembla. The process of development was full of the characteristics of colonialism and imperialism. In terms of cultural outlook, it implied an interaction between centre and margin within the ambiguity of post-colonial theory (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 2007, pp. 32-33).

A Hyperreal Theme Park

> In fact what you are presented with in the studios is the degeneration of the cinematographic illusion, its mockery, just as what is offered in Disneyland is a parody of the world of the imagination. (Baudrillard 1988, p. 55)

Port Kembla has been emanating a blue atmosphere for me, not in any lucid sense, but in terms of exploiting its possibilities of terror and eroticism as a surrealistic place. Though the steelworks plant stands along a sublime coastline, its dull, smog-filled exterior excludes visitors and makes it a discrete suburb in Illawarra. As a place, it becomes an island off an island, and also outside the periphery of the border. When I first walked along Wentworth Street in 2008 – the main business sector of Port Kembla at eleven o'clock on a Sunday morning – it was like taking a sightseeing tour at a theme park or the set of a western film. A desolate image greeted my eyes, which unexpectedly evoked a variety of possibilities for re-imagining this place. At that moment, I shot the empty street of the physical reality. It was as if the street in Port Kembla was full of an illusory atmosphere that transformed it into a cinematographic panorama from the dreaming world of Hollywood. Yet the smoking plant at the far end of the street points up its actual existence, making a mockery of industrialisation and globalisation. As Mr. Garrett sighs: "Port Kembla has never been – I don't know why" (Mr. Garrett 1986, p. 96). The site of Port Kembla is a museum or an industrial theme park due to its air of obsolescence. Along the street, I acted out the role of an invader carrying a 'ray gun' (Sontag 1977, p. 14) to bring a sense of adventure to this ruined industrial theme park. Indeed, Sontag's 'ray gun' metaphor of the camera and the surrounding atmosphere of Port Kembla strengthened the illusion of the ghost town. Its sense of non-involvement is like the connotations of the moody Parisian photographs of Atget and Brassaï.

In *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*, Flusser suggests "Instead of representing the world, [images] obscure it until human beings' lives finally become a function of the images they create" (Flusser 2000, p. 10). The images replace human beings' 'ex-istence', and then human beings cease to decode the images. Finally, images re-present a hyperreal world themselves. Hence Port Kembla is no longer the original itself; it simulates a hyperreal theme park.

Hockney talks about his Polaroid collage creation that has locked in a period of layered time (because from several singular photographs). This has never seen on an ordinary photograph.(Hockney 1988, p. 18) Taking photographs from the angle of the top of the street in 'Blue Imagination' involves overlooking the steelworks plant that influenced the transformation of the town throughout the past two centuries. On the other hand, imitating the technique of expression of collage art, I composed a rough surface texture that took in the other side of Australia on the foreground of street. That is to say, I try to extend time and space presentation of the image. The rough moist sward foreground (borrowing to pretend aged) reflects the image of its antique years as well as linking place elsewhere. A soft tone cloud replaced the original plain sky (on the original photograph) to harmonise the street block's cold atmosphere. This ambivalent place outside the periphery of the border reconstructs successive time frames in a present moment. The crossing time image expresses a visual atopia which evokes the historic fragments of Captain James Cook's voyage passing through Red Point in 1770, a bustling and crowded industrial town in the twentieth century, and the image of simulation of Western film panorama in a dreaming land.

4.2.8 Conclusion

In *The Tourist at Home*, Lucy Lippard observes to an Aspen, Colorado county commissioner: “What defines you as a local, in my mind, is whether you give more than you take” (Lippard 1999, p. 14).

These atopic images rely on real landscape photographs so that they can conceivably seem familiar at first glance but be revealed as unfamiliar when the viewer takes a closer look. This experience is intended to be like that which tourists have on a sightseeing package tour, or a virtual scenic tour in cyberspace. This phenomenon of familiarit and unfamiliarit when confronted with the real landscape reveals the over-consumption of images. During the creation of this series, in addition to aesthetic considerations, the intention was to break up then reconstruct the original notions of times and localised places of the photographs. In this series of works I have attempted to practise three emphases. First of all, since the works are all composed from two or more landscape photographs, where the original photographs are taken of places that are thought to be centre rather than periphery, then the composite image contains two or more centres. In other words, these creative landscapes break up the boundaries of centre and periphery of the physical world. Secondly, these images aim to convey the impression that the space depicted has infinite extension. Thirdly, in a manner similar to collage art works, the extended landscape combines with the creative image to connotes that it comprises not just the spaces beyond the fixed frame but an extension in time as well.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

> We only see what we look at. To look is an act of choice. ... We never look at just one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves. Our vision is continually active, continually moving, continually holding things in a circle around itself, constituting what is present to us as we are. (Berger 1972, pp. 8-9)

The contemporary world, functioning within telecommunications networks as if Virilio's omnipolitans, concentrates geophysical space in a unitary place (Virilio 1997, pp. 143-144). Contact between people, whether face-to-face or via virtual mediated communication, has become so frequent that people's movements have also become extremely frequent, in either the physical world or in virtual space. As a result, people and the local environment are no longer inseparable as it was for traditional agricultural or industrial patterns of community; instead, the relationship between them is or can be fractured, which produces an image of humankind floating in boundless and indistinct spaces. This perception of space is analogous to Baudrillard's journey in the desert of North America. Beyond a certain point, movement through space changes into an absorption by space itself (Baudrillard 1988, p. 10). The central focus of this project is on how images of place mediate experiences of tourism and landscape. Once people take scenic photographs, these photographic images come to mediate their experiences of staying temporarily on a journey. However, as long as people travel in physical or virtual space, they will always seek a temporary or permanent place to inhabit. The image, positioned as mediation, is between human beings and the physical world (Flusser 2000, pp. 9-10), and is like a bridge maintaining the relationship between tourists and locals.

The creation of the experimental the images of atopia comprising the series *Atopia: Digital Fictions of Place*, involved scanning over thousands of the landscape photographs I have taken over the years. This was like a phantasmagoria of my worldwide adventures, or like reviewing the highlight moments of my past. My intention in working in this way has been to recognise and perceive my local contexts sufficiently profoundly to be able to use my landscape images afterwards in my creative practice. This investigation is pursued through a consideration of the significance and associations of fictional images of place, in that they have the quality of interfaces, standing between the actual world and the virtual spaces of imagination. My experimental images bring together scenic fragments, mostly of images of Taiwan and Australia, to integrate diverse times and places into a unitary dimension. The twelve images of *Atopia: Digital Fictions of Place* express my own wavering state of being an alien inhabitant observing the hybrid destinations in the contemporary world that I have passed through.

The idea of the possibility of being both a visitor and a local at the same time is explored. Through reconceptualisation, digital manipulation and re-presentation, I explore how seemingly ordinary places can be transformed into exceptional landscapes in the process of creation. The twelve digital images are drawn from the components of scenic photographs that I took in the manner of a tourist exploring my surroundings. All the images are presented in the style of an antique-like photograph album that also expresses the fragments of a period of my life. This hand-crafted album is operative and appropriate to invoke traditions of travel and recording of tourist experiences from before the digital era.

At this stage in my life, I am anchored at the temporary destination of southeast Australia. I perceive intensely: the images of migration and settlement history of

Australia that is linked with the United Kingdom; the faith and culture of Aboriginal people; the connection between mining and the land; and Australia's multicultural contexts in a particular location. Besides, I re-explore my homeland of Taiwan, the images of place of my birth and my growing up: the history of my ancestors crossing the straits; Taiwan's historical connections with China, Japan and the United States; its course of pursuing industrialisation and globalisation; and the psychology of its deep-rooted relations with the land. These explorations have profound implications for the significance of the concept of image itself and of places reconstructed by the processes of image-making. If one shows genuine concern for a given place and lives one's life conscientiously, the mythical veil of a place will be removed and individual fictions of place will be able to be reproduced. It may be that when holding a camera and trying to find a fantastic landscape to photograph, the actual physical place or location is less important than just being oneself.

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