

CONTEMPORARY
INTERPRETATION OF
TRADITIONAL
PHILOSOPHY

by Tattfoo Tan

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April 15 Wednesday
6-7:30pm
at FIT

Scholar Rock

last supper:
breaking the
bread

energy

fellowship

sharing

gastronomy

Bread Rock

convivial

tea ceremony

Bread Rock

Bread Rock is an edible sculptural and participatory art project. I use flour, water, yeast to bake bread. While it is still soft, I hand sculpt the dough to resemble a rock formation. The hardened bread will be fitted into a custom made wooden pedestal to resemble the ancient practice of scholar rock. I then let the audience break the sculptured bread and enjoy it with olive oil accompanied by sake. The partake of this bread invite the participants to see, touch, smell and taste and experience the total immersion of the senses. The entire event is also documented on video and photographed. These Bread Rocks comes in different names that are derived from the materials used. Gold Mountain is coated with gold powder, Green Mountain is coated with green tea (matcha) powder and adored with a stem of rosemary. White(snow) Mountain is coated with coconut shavings and sprinkled with confectionary sugar. Condiments are also thoughtfully presented. There are various goat cheeses, capers, olive oil and freshly ground pepper with lavender-infused sea salt.

The act of sharing food is part of the human basic nature of a social being. Sharing food includes conviviality, intimacy and building relationships. All these characteristics expose the human basic need for social interaction and network building. Bread Rock is more about participation/multiple authorship, inclusion/connection, ephemeral/temporary, chaos/process/unpredictable as opposed to control/perfection/predictable, and specific instead of universal. It is also about finding moments and points where people can connect to each other, which is non-collectible, experiential, and immaterial. Each participant is his or her own author of the art piece. Their actions and participation activate the artpiece. Each one is both the spectator and the performer.

Rocks have long been admired in China as an essential element in gardens. By the early Song dynasty (960–1279), small ornamental rocks were also collected as accoutrements of the scholar's study, and the portrayal of individual rocks—often joined with an old tree or bamboo—became a favorite and enduring pictorial genre. From the fourteenth century onward, depictions of gardens almost always included representations of a fantastic rock or "artificial mountain," and scholars' rocks often supplanted actual scenery as sources of inspiration for images of landscape. Especially prized are stones that have been sculpted naturally by processes of erosion or that appear to have been shaped by nature even if they have been artfully enhanced by man. Pitted, hollowed out, and perforated, such rocks, which are often displayed on end, are seen as embodiments of the dynamic transformational processes of nature. By the Tang dynasty (618–907), four principal aesthetic criteria—thinness (shou), openness (tou), perforations (lou), and wrinkling (zhou)—had been identified for judging scholars' rocks as well as the larger examples featured in gardens. Besides these formal qualities, rocks were also admired for their resemblance to mountains or caves, particularly the magical peaks and subterranean paradises (grotto-heavens) believed to be inhabited by immortal beings. Some rocks were appreciated for their resemblance to animals, birds, human figures, or mythical creatures









Empire Fulton Ferry State Park, DUMBO Art Festival, DUMBO Art Center, Brooklyn, New York, 2007





















Bread Rock at The Field, Jamaica Center for Arts & Learning, Queens, New York, 2007





Tao Te Ching

Wabi-Sabi

void

imperfect

PONDering

repetitions

Ready made

PONDering

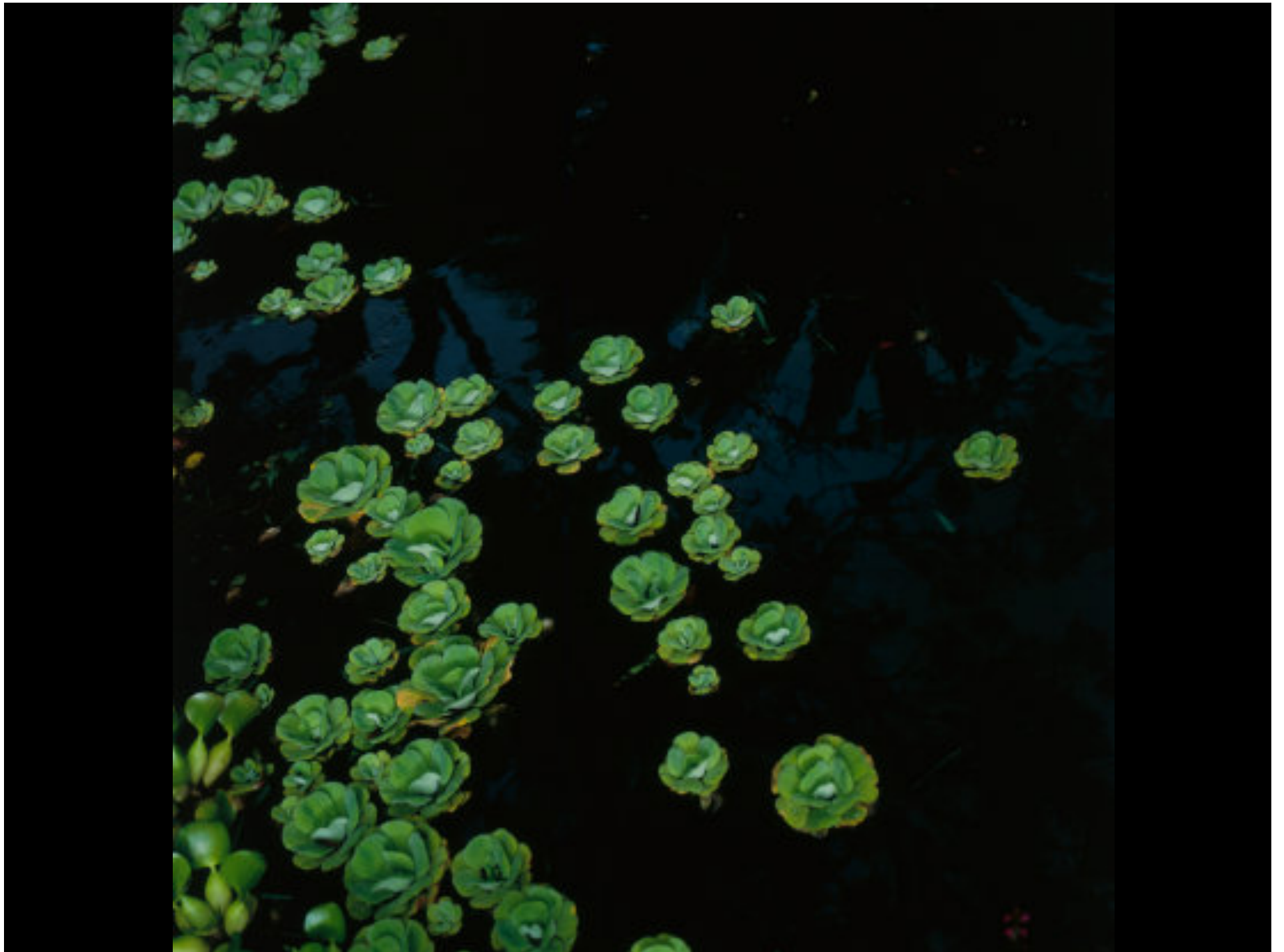
PONDering is Energy in the Stillness,
PONDering is Noise in the Silence,
PONDering is Shapes in the Unshapable.
PONDering is Void against the Objects.

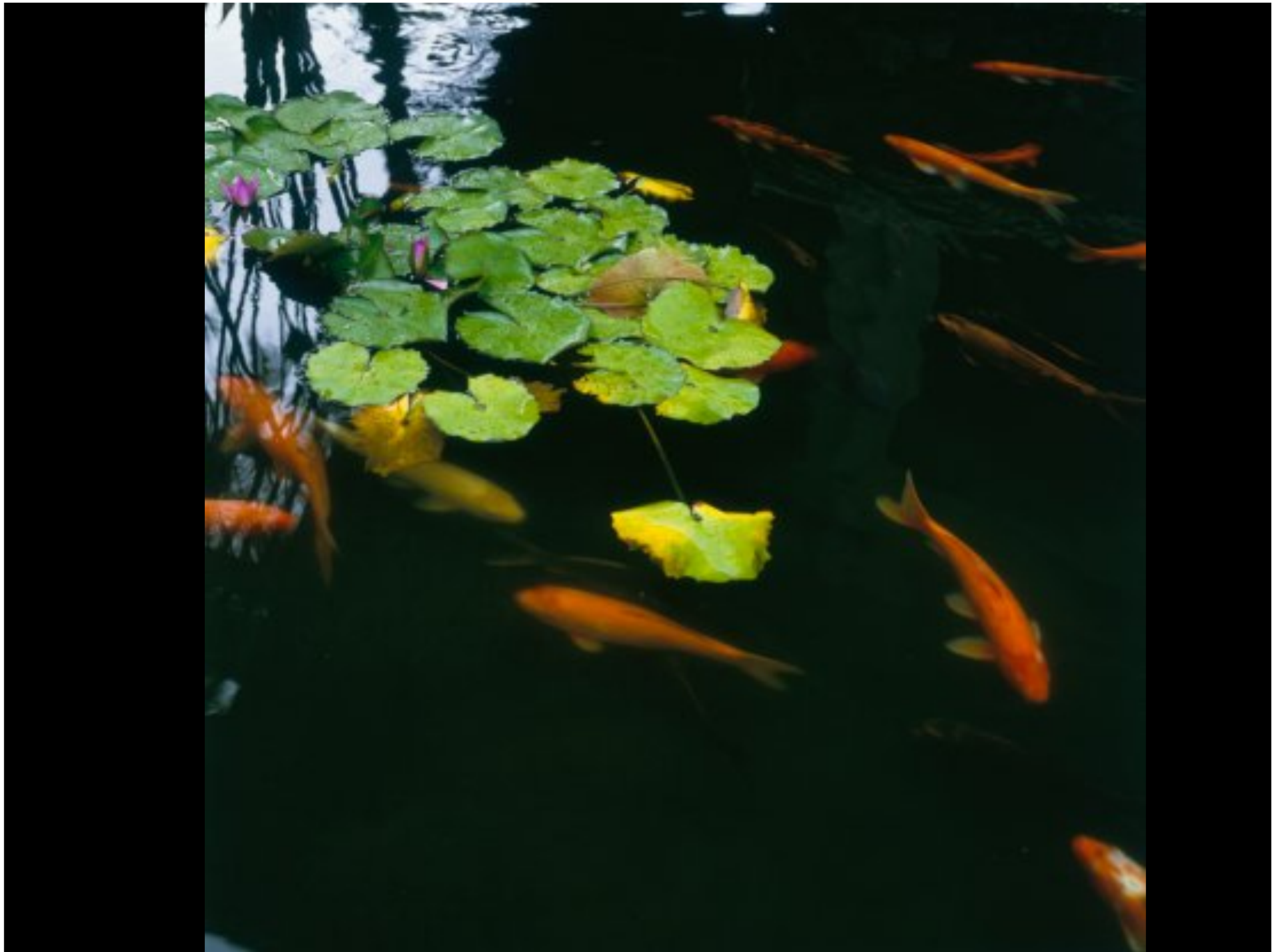
PONDering is the title of two floor installations consisting of either hundreds of paper coffee filters or hundreds of skeins of wool and acrylic yarn. The coffee filters are bound together to create a rosette shape that resembles water lettuce (*pistia stratiotes*). The yarn is laboriously crocheted together to create the same shape. These repeating bundles—like a reiterated chant—are then arranged in a random pattern as if they are floating on a pond or configured by a moving stream of water. Viewers are encouraged to walk into the installation among the individual bundles and stop for a moment to contemplate and meditate, to grow into the void and float, like flowers. PONDering is based on the Japanese concept of wabi-sabi, in turn based on Buddhism principles, loosely defined as a kind of beauty that is imperfect, incomplete and impermanent.

卅輻同一轂，當其無，有車之用也。
埏埴而爲器，當其無，有埴器之用也。
鑿戶牖而爲室，當其無，有室之用也。
故有之以爲利，無之以爲用。

Thirty spokes will converge at one hub,
But the utility of the cart is a function of the
nothingness (wu) inside the hub.
We throw clay to shape a pot,
But the utility of the clay pot is a function of the
nothingness inside it.
We bore out doors and windows to make a dwelling,
But the utility of the dwelling is a function of the
nothingness inside it.
Thus, it might be something (you) that
provides the value,
But it is nothing that provides the utility,

tao te ching, lao tzu









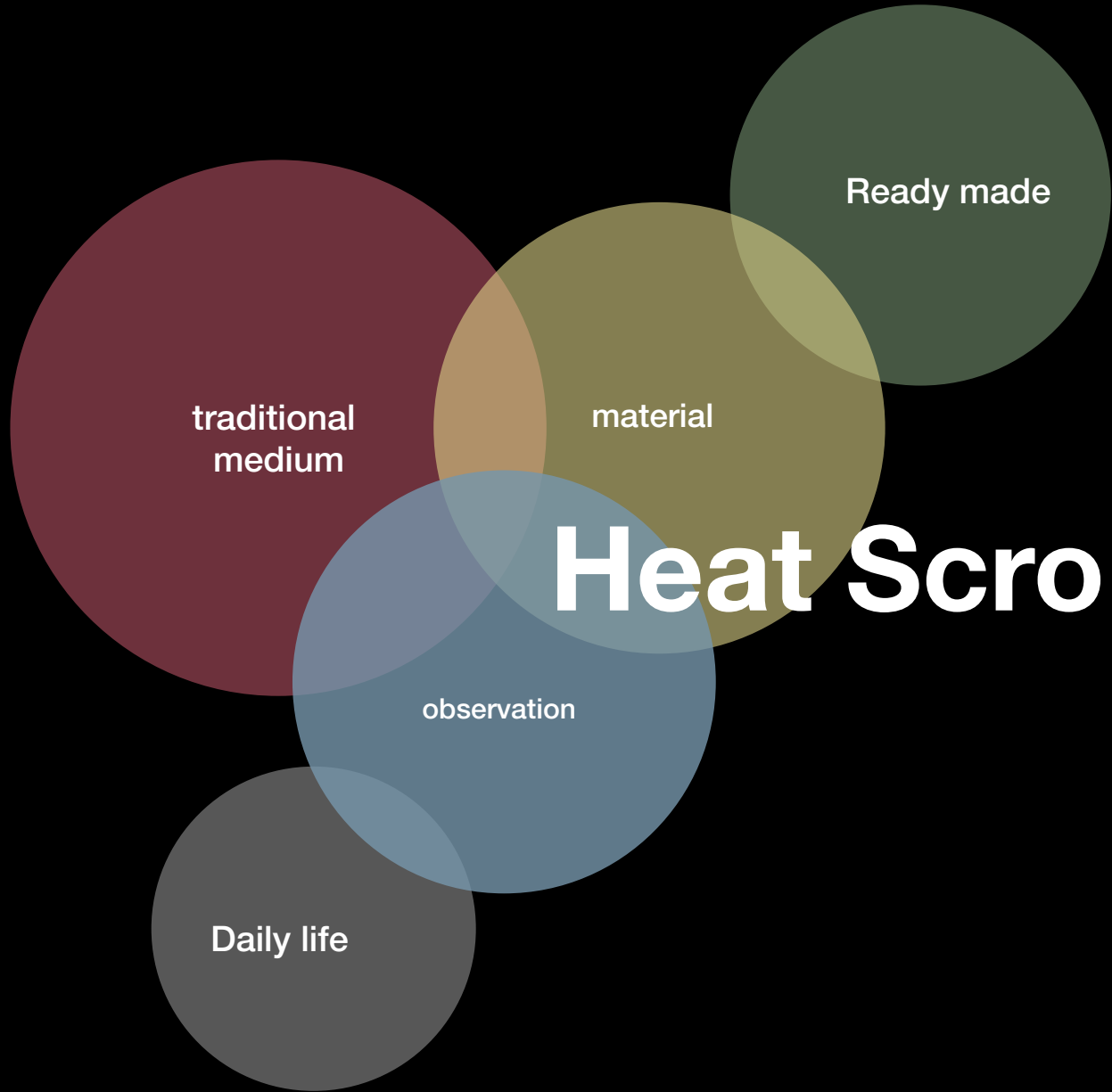




Repetition; negotiating the irrationalities, ArtSpace@16, group show, Malden, Massachusetts, 2006







Heat Scroll

traditional
medium

material

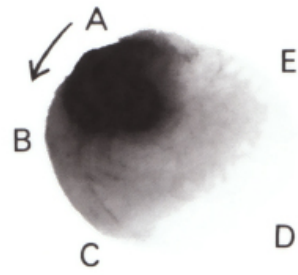
Ready made

observation

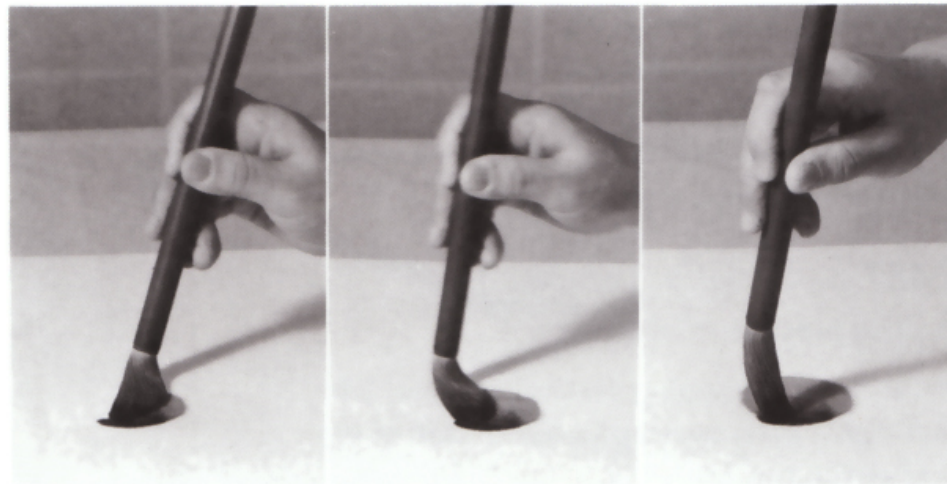
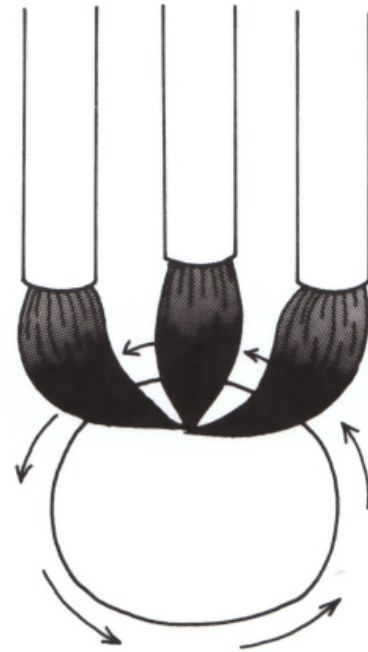
Daily life

Heat Scroll

Heat Scroll is an ephemeral performance piece in which I trade my paintbrush for a hair dryer, hot glue gun or hot water and my rice paper for facsimile paper. After first suspending several rolls of white fax paper between two poles or hanging them vertically. I then create a drawing using only hot air or hot water. By exposing the heat sensitive facsimile paper to high temperature, dark markings slowly begin to emerge across the surface. Heat Scroll is one example of what I label “cultural hybrids” in which ancient techniques are altered through the use of a contemporary medium and creative experimentation.



The tip of the brush stays on A







Peng Gallery, Philadelphia, PA, 2006





Tin Shop Guest Artist program, Breckenridge, CO, 2006







Tin Shop Guest Artist program, Breckenridge, CO, 2006











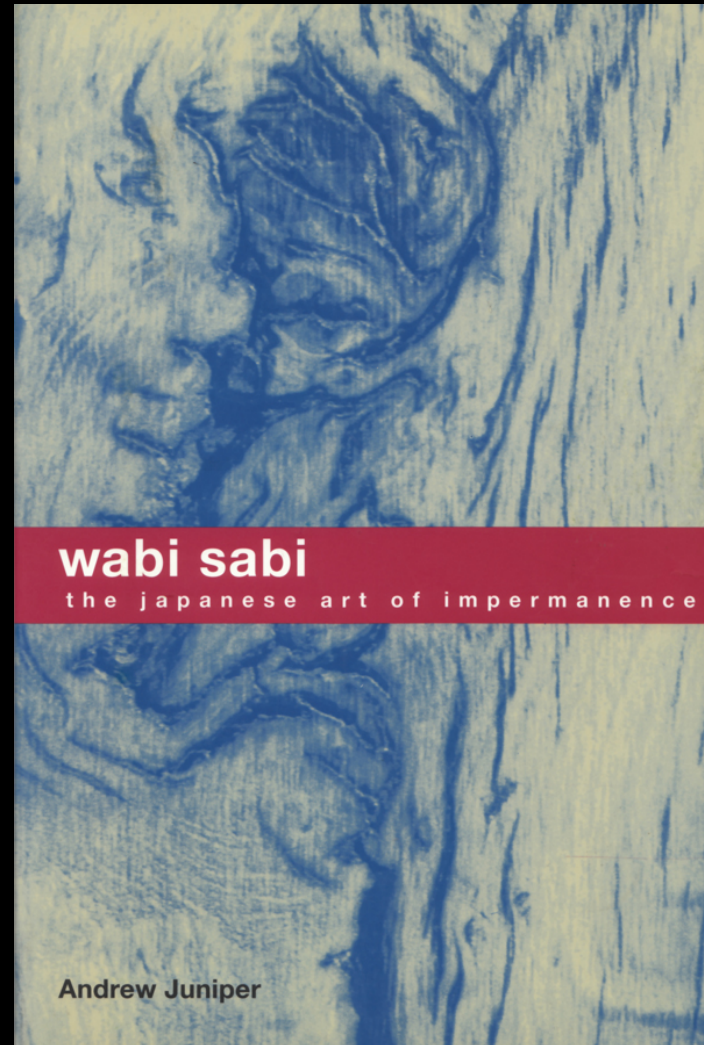
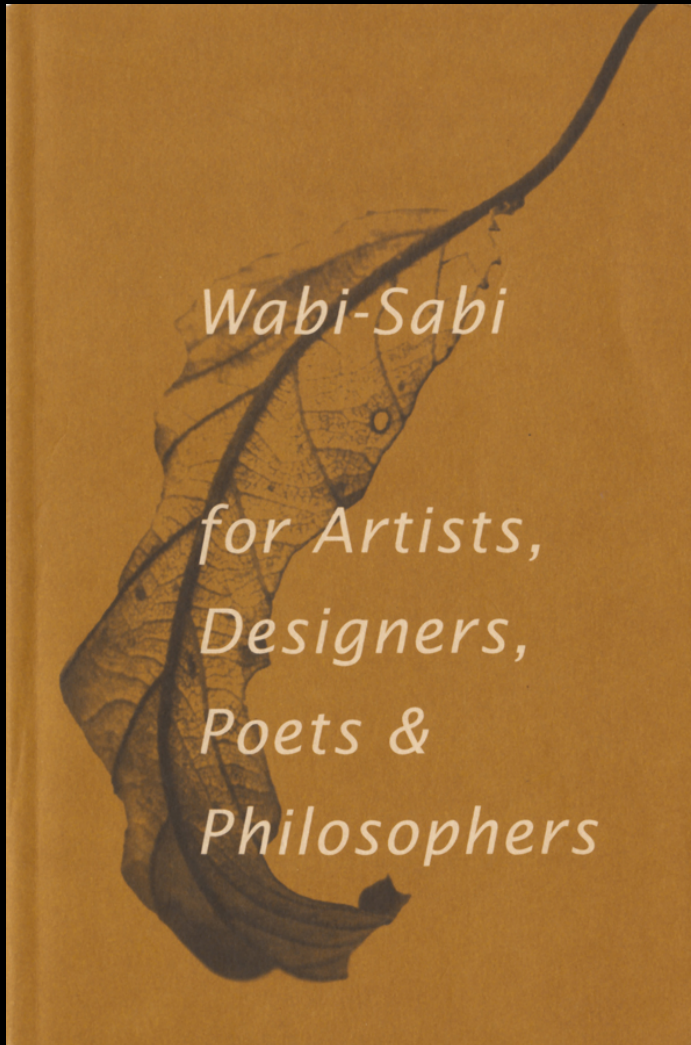


Everyone Is An Artist, Redux Contemporary Art Center, Charleston, SC, 2007

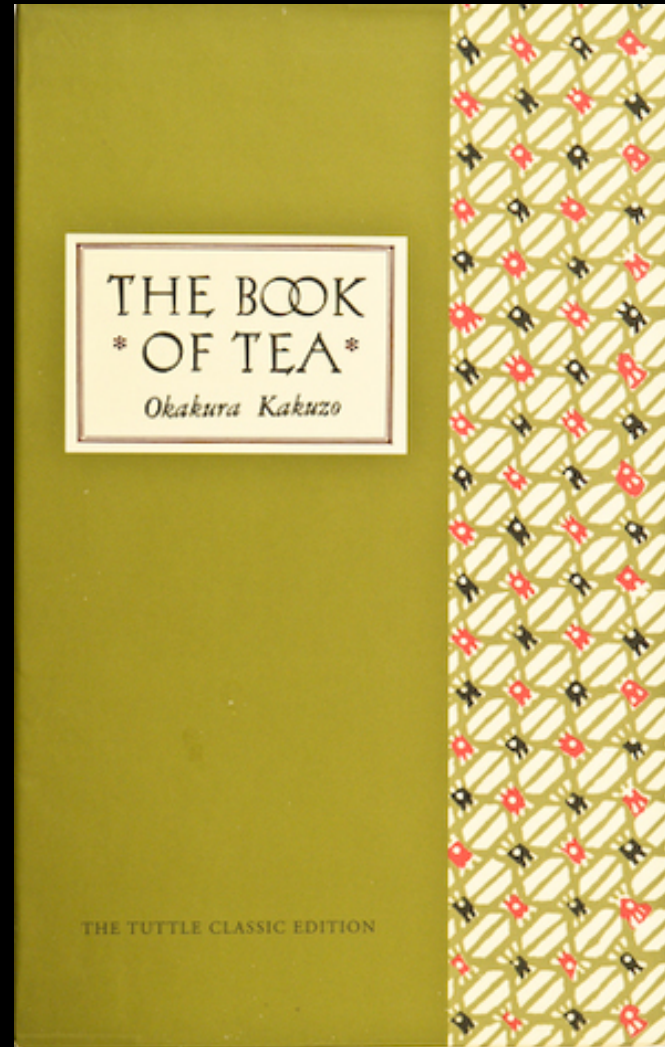
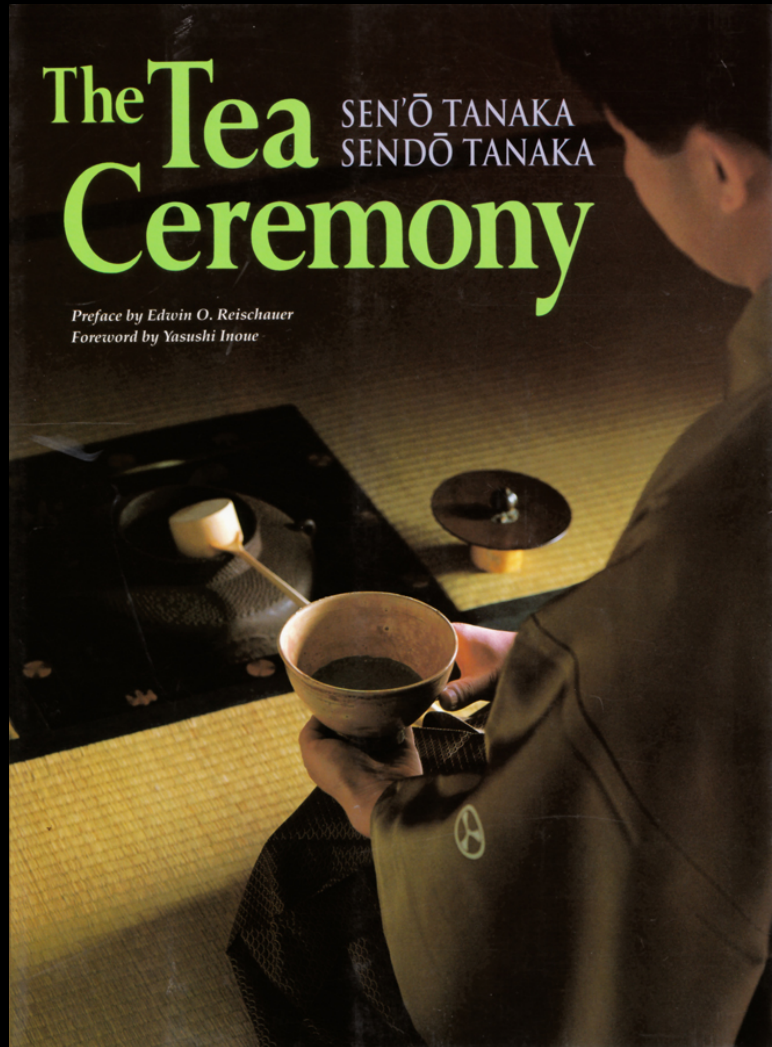




Resources on Wabi-Sabi



Resources on Tea Ceremony



Resources on Tao Te Ching



Be creative and have fun

