

REMAKING THE RAINBOW: QUEER MEMORIALIZATION, COUNTER-
HISTORIES, KINSHIP, AND LOCAL TRADITION IN TAIPEI'S
“SPECTROSYNTHESIS”

by

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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While Taiwanese queer film and literature studies have flourished over the last few decades, virtually no English language scholarship on the history of LGBTQ art in Taiwan and Mainland China exists. Due to the contentious reception of LGBTQ relationships in Mainland China and furthermore, Taiwan, queer studies remained a largely underexplored topic until the last few decades. Until the last few years and the debut of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei's "Spectrosynthesis – Asian LGBTQ Issues and Art Now," queer Taiwanese and Chinese art was virtually unheard of. My thesis focuses on three contributing artists including Chuang Chih-Wei, Wen Hsin, and Xiyadie, their utilization of distinctive methodologies and media, and uses their artworks as case studies to reveal the diverse approaches to queer art making that support the curatorial aims of "Spectrosynthesis," and contributes to a non-binary, nuanced understanding of queer art in Sinophone cultures.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

On September 9th, 2017, a historic exhibition opened at Taipei’s Museum of Contemporary art (MOCA) titled “Spectrosynthesis – *Asian LGBTQ Issues and Art Now*.”¹ “Spectrosynthesis,” organized by the Taipei Culture Foundation and MOCA Taipei; sponsored by the Sunpride Foundation, a Hong Kong-based foundation and collectors of LGBTQ Asian art: and curated by the renowned Sean C.S. Hu, included work from 22 artists from Taiwan, China, Hong Kong, Singapore, and North America. Curator Sean Hu states that the artist were selected based on a “similar backgrounds in culture, history, language, geographical locations, and ethnicity.”² While thematic exhibitions on LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) art have become fairly common in North America and Western Europe, “Spectrosynthesis” was the first exhibition held at a major museum in East Asia to display this

¹ The aim of representing a diverse range of Asian LGBTQ art and issues falls short in light of the backgrounds of the 22 artists who participated in “Spectrosynthesis” the majority of which were born in Mainland China and Taiwan with a few from Singapore, the US, and Hong Kong. An overwhelming majority of participants were male, with only 4 out of 22 artists being female or transgender artists. Many critics have commented on the lack of diversity within “Spectrosynthesis” noting the subtitle of the exhibition is “Asian LGBTQ Art and Issues Now” while 100% of the artists are ethnically Chinese and in turn the exhibition fails to recognize the diversity of Asia. I’ve attempted to rectify this problem in my thesis through reframing the way I write about the exhibition as an exhibition that focuses heavily on local Taiwanese and Mainland Chinese queer artistic contributions rather than a survey of LGBTQ Asian art as a whole.

See figures 19 & 20 for demographic information of participating artists for “Spectrosynthesis.”

² *Spectrosynthesis – Asian LGBTQ Issues and Art Now*, Edited by Yuki Pan (Taipei: Taipei Culture Foundation and Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei, 2017), Exhibition catalogue.

theme.³ The organizers envisioned Taipei to be the first stop of many on an international tour across Asia, Europe, and the United States.⁴ The exhibition draws its title from a “spectrum light” and the history of the LGBTQ community, referencing the rainbow gay pride flag.⁵ Hu states,

Rainbow and light are two sides of the same coin, implying this exhibition is not about the binary opposition of light and darkness, but as diverse and inclusive as the spectrum in terms of its artistic expression and exploration of LGBTQ issues.⁶

My thesis examines “Spectrosynthesis” as it relates to the development of Taiwanese, Chinese, and global LGBTQ histories, Sinophone studies, and Taiwanese queer film and literature studies. Shu-mei Shih describes Sinophone studies stating,

Sinophone studies - conceived as the study of Sinitic-language cultures on the margins of geopolitical nation-states and their hegemonic productions – locates its objects of attention at the conjuncture of China's internal colonialism and Sinophone communities everywhere immigrants from China have settled. Sinophone studies disrupts the chain of equivalence established, since the rise of nation-states, among language, culture, ethnicity, and nationality and explores the protean, kaleidoscopic, creative, and overlapping margins of China, Chineseness, America and Americanness, Malaysia and Malaysianness, Taiwan and Taiwanness, and so on, by a consideration of specific, local Sinophone texts, cultures, practices produced in and from these margins.⁷

³ Tate's *Queer British Art 1861 – 1967*, another historic exhibition which took place earlier in 2017 and celebrated the 50th anniversary of Britain's Sexual Offences Act (1967) decriminalizing male same-sex relationships, inspired some aspects of Spectrosynthesis.

⁴ *Spectrosynthesis – Asian LGBTQ Issues and Art Now*

⁵ Subsequently, people and nations all over the world adopted and in some cases, altered the flag rendering it an international symbol of LGBTQ identity. The title of the “Spectrosynthesis” exhibition as well as the imagery of Baker's original design represents a spectrum of identities.

⁶ *Spectrosynthesis – Asian LGBTQ Issues and Art Now*

⁷ Shu-Mei Shih, "The Concept of the Sinophone," *Pmla* 126, no. 3 (May 2011): 710 - 11.

The intersection of queer studies and Sinophone studies proves to be particularly rich as both concern the cultural contributions produced in and from the margins. In Petrus Liu's influential article *Why Does Queer Theory Need China*, Liu describes the complexities of the relationship between "queerness" and "Chineseness," arguing,

Rather, the "queer" and the "Chinese" bear on each other at all times, incessantly changing the ways each term is debated in public culture, represented in literature, and imagined in thoughts private or public.⁸

Liu goes on further to say,

The possibility of practicing queer theory in Chinese contexts demonstrates that critical attention to local knowledges and concerns does not immediately constitute a categorical rejection of "the queer"; rather, it shows that what is "queer" is constantly expanded, supplemented, and revised by what is "Chinese."⁹

The author highlights the nature of the relationship between Chinese or Sinophone cultures and queer theory, focusing on the ways in which Sinophone cultures expand, mold, and add to the richness of queer theory through the reframing of the question "Why does China need queer theory?" to "Why does queer theory need China?"

My thesis focuses on three contributing artists with distinctive methodologies and use their artworks as case studies to reveal the diverse approaches to queer art making that support the curatorial aims of "Spectrosynthesis," and contribute to a non-binary, nuanced understanding of queer art in Mainland China and Taiwan. Through my field research in Taiwan, which involved visiting Sean C.S. Hu's Double Square Gallery, conducting a one-on-one interview with the curator, and visiting the Museum of Contemporary Art Taipei's space, I gained rare insight into the planning of the exhibition and goals of the curatorial team. I utilize the "Spectrosynthesis" exhibition as

framework to examine modes of queer visual representation in Mainland China and Taiwan through the close reading of my three case study artworks in conversation with critical queer literary and film scholars, including Fran Martin and Hans Tao- Ming Huang. Taiwan studies have long been underrepresented in English-language scholarship for the reasons eloquently argued by Shu-mei Shih.¹⁰ Due to the contentious reception of LGBTQ relationships in Mainland China and furthermore, Taiwan, queer studies remained a largely underexplored topic until the last few decades. Until the last few years and the debut of “Spectrosynthesis,” queer Taiwanese and Chinese art was virtually unheard of. My thesis explores how queer art presented in “Spectrosynthesis,” contribute to LGBTQ studies in Taiwan, Mainland China, and beyond as well as how the rich histories of LGBTQ Sinophone cultures influence queer art making.

Legal and Political Context

Taipei’s “Spectrosynthesis” opened just months after Taiwan took steps to become the first country in Asia to legalize same-sex marriage. On May 24th, 2017 the island’s highest court, the constitutional court, ruled same-sex marriage to be constitutional and gave the Legislative Yuan two years to amend the marriage laws (Judicial Yuan Interpretation No. 748). Planning for “Spectrosynthesis” had begun over two years before the landmark court ruling, but the news came as an excitement to the organizers as its opening could now be a celebration for the historic win. Backlash and conservative uproars posed a threat to pushing the law forward as Taiwanese voters

⁸ Petrus Liu, "Why Does Queer Theory Need China?" *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 18, no. 2 (May 2010): 292.

⁹ Ibid 297

¹⁰Shu-Mei Shih, "Globalisation and the (in)significance of Taiwan," *Postcolonial Studies* 6, no. 2 (2003):

voted against same-sex marriage in the November 2018 referendum. The future of same-sex marriage seemed unclear, as many argue the court ruling trumps the referendum results.

However on May 17th, 2019, Taiwan approved gay marriage legislation as tens of thousands of people braved the rainy Taipei day to wave rainbow flags and demonstrate outside parliament in favor of same-sex marriage.¹¹

While the landmark legislation warrants celebration, same-sex couples will not be granted the same rights as heterosexual married couples. Much like the recent complicated nature of marriage equality laws in Taiwan, the status of Taiwan as gay-friendly or not proves to be equally as precarious. While frequently dubbed “the most LGBT friendly country in Asia,” tragic deaths in the LGBTQ community, issues at the family level, and a history of anti-gay government initiatives complicate this designation.¹²

Double Margins

Literary scholar, Shu-mei Shih points out the challenges in studying Taiwan in the West stating,

Studying Taiwan is an *impossible* task. I say “impossible” because Taiwan is always already written out of mainstream Western discourse due to its *insignificance*. Taiwan, when any attention is given at all, is most often reduced to an object of empirical political analysis, and has been systematically dismissed as

¹¹Julia Hollingsworth, "Taiwan Legalizes Same-Sex Marriage in Historic First for Asia," *CNN*, May 17, 2019, <http://www.CNN.com/>.

¹²French artist and teacher, Jacques Camille Picoux, committed suicide in Taipei upon losing his partner to cancer and being denied spousal rights. This event has been cited as triggering the marriage law amendments.

For more on family relations with LGBTQ family members, see Amy Brainer’s *Queer Kinship and Family Change in Taiwan*.

a worthwhile object of critical analysis in culture and other humanistic studies with theoretical import. Taiwan is too small, too marginal, too ambiguous, and thus too insignificant. Taiwan does not enjoy the history of having been colonized by a Western power in the nineteenth or twentieth century; instead it was colonized by other Asian powers: Japan (1895 – 1945) and the exiled Chinese Nationalist government (1945 to the late 1980s) respectively. If it had been colonized by Britain, Taiwan would have been able to share in the fashion of postcolonial theory. If it had been colonized by France, Taiwan would be part of Francophone studies. Colonization by Japan and another ethnic Chinese Regime effectively ghettoized Taiwan within the realm of “Asian Studies,” where it is further marginalized within so-called Sinology or Chinese Studies. Benign neglect aside, studying Taiwan has even been considered a liability. In the logic of US academia, if one devotes one’s scholarly attention to Taiwan, one must not know China well enough and therefore does not deserve to be hired in the field of Chinese Studies.¹³

This excerpt from Shih’s 2003 article titled “Globalisation: Taiwan’s (In)Significance,” for the journal *Postcolonial Studies* highlights the problems in the field and the marginalization of Taiwan as an object of study. Over fifteen years after the article’s publication, English language scholarship on Taiwan remains limited and the problems presented by Shih persist. However, in the past decade several scholars including Fran Martin, Petrus Liu, Hans Tao-Ming Huang, and others, published influential texts in the fields of queer studies, literary studies, and cultural studies giving due attention to Taiwan’s rich history of cultural production.

In Petrus Liu’s book *Queer Marxism in Two Chinas*, Liu articulates the separation between Mainland China and Taiwan with his concept of two Chinas while suggesting new modes of studying queerness in Mainland China and Taiwan. He argues studying Mainland Chinese and Taiwanese queerness requires looking beyond utilizing Western queer theory and towards theoretical production from within the two Chinas.

¹³ Shu-Mei Shih, "Globalisation and the (in)significance of Taiwan," *Postcolonial Studies* 6, no. 2 (2003): 144.

Noting that scholars often view Marxism and queer theory at odds with one another, Liu argues:

For queer Marxists, the queer is not a synonym for homosexuality, but a material reminder of one's relation to an unequal structure of power as well as a capacity to recognize the distance between the diversity of erotic desires, genders, identities, and intimacies in human cultures and the liberal pluralist reduction of such expressions into fixed categories under global capitalism.¹⁴

In many ways, this text paved the way for thinking about queer theory in the fields of Mainland Chinese and Taiwanese studies, proving to be invaluable in informing my methodology of looking away from solely utilizing Western queer theory.

Fran Martin's 2003 book titled, *Situating Sexualities: Queer Representation in Taiwanese Fiction, Film, and Public Culture* examines queer themes in Chinese literature, film, and culture in the age of globalization and turn towards 'glocalization,' highlighting the multiplicities of *sexualities* and Taiwanese *modernities*.¹⁵ Martin's contributions to the study of Taiwan amidst globalization, namely the idea of *sexualities* and *modernities*, not only adds a nuanced, non- binary understanding of Taiwan to my analysis, but also influenced my argument that the Spectrosynthesis exhibition acts as a counter-monument subverting multiple dominant *histories*. Another more recent text, an anthology titled *Perverse Taiwan*, published in 2017 and edited by Howard Chiang and Yin Wang, suggests the reframing and challenging of dominant LGBTQ histories of

¹⁴ Petrus Liu, *Queer Marxism in Two Chinas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 40.

¹⁵ Fran Martin, *Situating Sexualities: Queer Representation in Taiwanese Fiction, Film and Public Culture* (Hong Kong University Press, HKU, 2003).

Taiwan which often locate the lifting of martial law in 1987 as the defining moment that made way for queer cultural production, and make claims about Taiwan's status as "queerest place in Asia."¹⁶ In a key way, their argument, which challenges the dominant Taiwanese LGBTQ history, complicates how I think about these historical narratives, which play integral roles in supporting my overall argument.

These fundamental texts in Taiwanese queer studies provide tools for rethinking how we study Taiwan, a region with complex histories of colonization and relationships to queerness. While the field of queer literary studies has flourished in Taiwan due to the undeniable popularity of Pai Hsien-yung's novel *Crystal Boys* (1983) and other works of fiction with LGBTQ themes, issues of queer representation in art remain largely unexplored. MOCA Taipei's "Spectrosynthesis" provides a critical framework for exploring the topic of queer representation in Taiwanese visual arts due its status as the first exhibition at a public museum in East Asia, to deal with these themes. As it would be impossible to give due attention to all twenty-two artists and fifty-four artworks exhibited in the "Spectrosynthesis" exhibition, I have chosen to focus on artists who utilizes artistic modes which I feel exemplify strategies in queer Taiwanese and Chinese art making. In chapter II, I focus on the medium of sculpture as it relates to counter- monumentality in Taiwanese artist Chuang Chih-Wei's site-specific installation for the MOCA Taipei front courtyard titled *Rainbow in the Darkness*, showing how the installation acts as a counter-monument to both dominant LGBTQ histories and state histories, utilizes local and global sources of inspiration, and provides a place for visitors to reflect and heal. In chapter III,

¹⁶ Howard Chiang and Yin Wang, *Perverse Taiwan* (Abingdon, U.K.: Routledge, 2018).

I discuss the use of painting and photography as portraiture in the exhibition, focusing primarily on Taiwanese artist Wen Hsin's 2013 *Half Series* and Shiy De-Jinn's 1960s youth portraits, showing the significance of representation of queer bodies of both past and present for LGBTQ viewers in order to establish genealogies and a sense of kinship. In chapter IV, I examine a third strategy of queer art making, which incorporates LGBTQ motifs into traditional methods of craft as present in Mainland Chinese artist Xiyadie's paper-cuts. While the exhibition took place in Taiwan, the chosen artists for Spectrosynthesis come from a variety of geographic locations and are arguably connected through their shared Sinophone culture and language. Since I examine artists with connections to both Taiwan and China, it is necessary to introduce the histories of these two Chinas. I argue alongside Petrus Liu and other scholars that Taiwan's significance exists independent from its relationship to mainland China. However, studying histories of same-sex relationships in both Mainland China and Taiwan enhance our understanding of queer representation in contemporary Taiwanese art due to the cultural influences the two places have on one another. I begin by looking to the comprehensive history of same-sex desire in Mainland China as laid out by Bret Hinsch. Hinsch's seminal book *Passions of the Cut Sleeve: The Male Homosexual Tradition in China*, provides a foundational history of male-to-male relationships in China beginning with the Zhou Dynasty (1122 – 256 BCE) and concluding with the Qing Dynasty (1644 – 1912 CE).

Before “Spectrosynthesis:” Histories of Same-Sex Desires

While the beginnings of male-to-male sexual relationships in China are often traced through mythology to antiquity, the Zhou dynasty poetic anthology *Classic of Odes* provides

the earliest written acknowledgment of such relationships. One passage reads:

How splendid he was!
Yes, he met me between the hills of Nao.
Our chariots side by side we
chased two boars. He bowed
to me and said I was very
nimble.

How strong he was!
Yes, he met me on the
road at Nao. Side by
side we chased two
stags.
He bowed to me and said, “well done.”

How magnificent he was!
Yes, he met me on the south
slopes of Nao. Side by side
we chased two wolves.
He bowed to me and said, “that was good.”¹⁷

Hinsch explains, “These and many other poems in the collection make clear that the prevailing social conditions of the early Zhou favored the open expression of affection between men.”¹⁸ While sexual and romantic relationships between men potentially existed regardless of class, historical documentation focuses on the elite and ruling classes. Beginning in the Han dynasty (206 BCE – 220 CE) documentation of the male sexual interests of numerous emperors emerges and for a period spanning over two

¹⁷ Arthur Waley, trans., *The Book of Songs* (New York, 1937), p. 292, no. 265.

¹⁸ Bret Hinsch, *Passions of the Cut Sleeve: The Male Homosexual Tradition in China* (Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press, 1992), 18.

centuries of the Han dynasty ten openly bisexual emperors ruled China.¹⁹ As the four hundred year stretch of national unity under the Han Dynasty came to an end, warfare, division, and weakened imperial power marked the Three Kingdoms and Six dynasties periods (220 – 581). Throughout the four centuries of unrest and division, male-to- male sexual relationships remained common among the elite classes.²⁰ Literature from the period illustrates that relationships between men also existed among the literati. Liu Hong, a writer living in the 6th Century illustrates this in the following lines:

So pretty he stands out easily
from the crowd, Fair, Fair, most
exquisite.
Elegant eyebrows arch smooth
over twin eyes, Mellifluous
flows his murmuring voice.²¹

Hinsch goes on to state,

The terseness of this short love lyric leaves much to the imagination. We cannot tell anything about the respective social classes of lover and beloved, or even whether this was an example of comradesly love or favoritism. All that we can see is a love so intense that it spilled over into verse, immortalizing an instant of private passion.²²

Both poetry and records of male-male encounters of the Tang dynasty (618 – 907) highly regarded sensuality.²³ However the prominence of imperial men's favorites (male

¹⁹ Ibid, 34-35.

²⁰ Ibid, 55.

²¹ Birell, *New Songs from a Jade Terrace*, 292

²² Ibid, 75.

²³ Ibid, 77-79.

lovers) in the court and official histories seem to diminish.²⁴ Both the appreciation for sensuality and decreased involvement of the emperor's male lovers in the court that heightened in the Tang dynasty continue into the Song (960 – 1279). Hinsch argues that homosexual visibility increased in the Song dynasty saying,

...the society appears in the broad variety of sources surviving in the dynasty as highly urbanized and creative. Inevitably this outward sophistication was accompanied by an appreciation of sensual pleasures. Records for the period describe luxurious restaurants, prosperous casinos, and opulent houses of prostitution. Highly developed expressions of homosexuality accompanied the many other forms of Song sensuality.²⁵

Hinsch paints a picture of a lavish and sensuous Song dynasty urban life in which sexual relationships between men exist as another form of indulgence for the urban man. The Yuan and Ming dynasties (1264 – 1644) mark a change in the types of sources available, records of sexual life from beyond the isolated imperial court emerge.²⁶ Due to rising literacy rates and refinements in printing technology during the Ming dynasty, reading about historical instances of male lovers became possible for a much wider audience. Hinsch notes that these developments allowed men to look back on a two-thousand-year history of male same-sex love and sex, legitimizing their actions through this connection to history.²⁷ The Manchu ruled Qing dynasty (1644 – 1912) marked a drastic shift in the tradition of same-sex relationships in China. The Manchu court implemented laws and

²⁴ Ibid, 89.

²⁵ Ibid, 90.

²⁶ Ibid, 119.

²⁷ Ibid, 120.

increased regulation on male-to-male sexual activity.²⁸ The Kangxi emperor (r. 1661 – 1722), perhaps due to his traditional Manchu upbringing, harshly punished acts of same-sex sexual encounters to the extent that he executed three of his son’s male favorites.²⁹ Additionally, Kangxi developed comprehensive legal codes in which “consensual sodomy” could result in a month in the cangue and one hundred heavy blows.³⁰ M.J. Meijer explains that Qing legal codes aimed to outlaw all forms of extramarital sexual activity as a means to strengthen Confucian family ideals, as a response to the chaotic Ming dynasty.³¹ Hinsch describes the end of the tradition stating,

Emperors and scholars, monks and prostitutes – a cross-section of society had partaken of the passions of the cut sleeve. Soon this continuity with the past was to come to an end. A growing sexual conservatism exemplified by Qing law, together with a new literary language and influences from Western morality, was soon to sever most links with the homosexual tradition of antiquity.³²

This combination of factors drastically changed conceptions of sexuality in China in the Qing dynasty. The author further argues that modern LGBTQ identified people in China look towards cities in the United States such as San Francisco and New York City rather than turning to Chinese literary sources.³³ The Qing dynasty legal code is of particular

²⁸ Ibid, 139 – 140.

²⁹ Ibid, 143.

³⁰ Ibid, 144.

While this law existed, Bret Hinsch argues that it was likely never systematically enforced due to the prevalence of male same-sex activity in the Qing dynasty.

³¹ M.j. Meijer, "Homosexual Offences in Ching Law," *Toung Pao* 71, no. 1 (1985):109 - 133.

³² Bret Hinsch, “Passions of the Cut Sleeve,” 161.

³³ Ibid, 171.

interest in this study of Taiwan, because the Island was subject to Qing laws from 1683 until ceding to Japan in 1895.³⁴

In Loretta Wing Wah Ho's book titled *Gay and Lesbian Subculture in Urban China*, Ho

states,

These Chinese *gay* and *lesbian* identities signify a quest for the Western experience of modernity and authenticity in a more self-conscious manner than ever before. They are not necessarily 'modern' or 'indigenous', but claim primacy to an individual's social status, a fact that is often subtly manifested in one's use of language. What is more, they are always in tension with older forms of Chinese same-sex identity.³⁵

Ho further argues modern Chinese gay and lesbian identities emerge from a state discourse of 'opening up' and rapid globalization that are paradoxical in their embracing of global influences and severing from local traditions of sexuality while having roots in a "renewed form of nationalism."³⁶ The tensions of contemporary same-sex identity as laid out by Ho, manifest in the artworks exhibited in "Spectrosynthesis," through the ways the artists both highlight and seemingly dismiss tradition. In order to understand the ways in which the exhibited artists react to LGBTQ histories, I consider the exhibition's timeline of LGBTQ history alongside other scholars' critical histories.

"Spectrosynthesis:" A Timeline of LGBTQ History and Identities in Taiwan

Laws regulating sexuality before the modern and contemporary periods were largely in accordance with Mainland China beginning in the 17th Century. Unlike the

³⁴ Fran Martin, *Situating Sexualities*, 12.

³⁵ Loretta Wing Wah. Ho, *Gay and Lesbian Subculture in Urban China*(London: Routledge, 2011), 3.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 4-5.

Qing Legal code, Japanese criminal code (1923 – 1945) contained no references to ‘homosexuality’ or ‘sodomy’.³⁷ Similarly the Republican code, drafted in 1920s and 1930s and governing Taiwan from 1945 until the present, also made no such references. However, during the period KMT martial law in the 1960s and 1970s, T (butch) lesbians, gay men, and anyone perceived to be cross dressing were prosecuted under an article preventing “wearing odd outfits” due to fears of ties with Communist party spies.³⁸ Scholar Jens Damm describes the period of the 1980s in Taiwan, between the suppression of the opposition movement during the Formosa Incident in 1979 and lifting of martial law in 1987 as a period of societal transformation, upheaval, and uncertainty.

A timeline of LGBTQ global and local histories and artistic representation accompanied the “Spectrosynthesis” exhibition. This timeline groups the 1980s-1990s as one period marked by the first case of AIDS on the island in 1984 and increased prejudice against homosexuals, which resulted in the beginning of the LGBT movement. At the turn of the decade, doctors and psychologists within Taiwan began to claim connections between same-sex desire with abnormality and mental illness. Psychologist Peng Huaizhen argued in his early 1980s essays on so-called “homosexuals” that same-sex desire was a disease and represented a “sick part of society.”³⁹

³⁷ Fran Martin, *Situating Sexualities*, 12.

³⁸ Antonia Chao, "Embodying the Invisible: Body Politics in Constructing Contemporary Taiwanese Lesbian Identities," (PhD diss., Cornell University, 1996).

³⁹ Jens Damm, "From Psychoanalysis to AIDS: The Early Contradictory Approaches to Gender and Sexuality and the Recourse to American Discourses during Taiwan's Societal Transformation in the Early 1980s," in *Perverse Taiwan*, ed. Howard Chiang and Yin Wang (London and New York City: Routledge, 2017), 65.

Another figure, Shen Chuwen, believed “homosexuality” could be cured without making reference to American conversion therapy that gained popularity amongst conservative circles. Unlike others working in the field, he believed same-sex desire did not warrant any kind of punishment.⁴⁰ In 1985, Xinzhi wenku publishing house and writer Er Dong published “The Love That Dare Not Speak Its Name,” whose title comes from a poem discussed in court before the trial of Oscar Wilde in which he was accused of sodomy. In the preface of this work the author states, “Homosexuals” represent a minority in the erotic world, “less,” however, is not synonymous with “abnormal” and one should therefore show understanding.”⁴¹ He goes on to argue, “homosexuality is not a disease but rather an ‘alternative form of sexual behavior,’” adding, “we believe that homosexuality is not a choice, but an orientation... and should therefore be accepted.”⁴²

In the early 1980s, the majority of Taiwanese citizens and media sources considered AIDS a foreign problem. Even after the first case was reported in Taiwan in 1984, the patient’s status as an American visitor, reassured the public that AIDS was a foreign epidemic and as long as one avoids sexual contact with foreigners, no problem would develop. A variety of publications began to link same-sex intercourse with AIDS and inevitable death.⁴³ The early media discussions of AIDS led to a lasting affect that linked AIDS and same-sex desire together in the eyes of the public.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 68-69.

⁴¹ Jens Damm, “From Psychoanalysis to AIDS,” 70.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid, 74-76.

The 1987 lifting of martial law in Taiwan is often cited as a watershed moment in the history of Taiwan leading to open discourse on human rights, democratization, pluralization, liberalization, and globalization. However, Jens Damm argues that increased awareness on human rights issues, began in the 1970s and 1980s. Damm states, “while the history of the LGBT movement today usually disregards the authoritarian period, it is worth looking more closely at the broader changes which paved the way for Taiwan to become a “queer and gender” friendly state in Asia – at least compared with other Asian states.”⁴⁴

Creating Language for Desire: Before and After “Spectrosynthesis”

In the Han dynasty, the terms *chong* (寵) and *xing* (幸) frequently appear in historical records to denote male-male sexual activity. Hinsch notes how the use of these Han dynasty terms in later periods “shows a continuation of the earlier tendency to describe sexuality in terms of social roles rather than sexual essence.”⁴⁵ The use of these early terms continues into the later six dynasties period along with the “less objective” term *xie xia* (褻狎), *xie* means both “nude” and “dirty” while *xia* means “intimacy” or “intimate.” Censorious historians used the term to criticize male-male sexual relationships within the court.⁴⁶ In this same period, *Records of the Wei* introduces a new term *nanfeng* (男風) literally translating to “male wind” but

⁴⁴ Ibid, 79.

⁴⁵ Bret Hinsch, *Passions of the Cut Sleeve*, 57.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

properly translated to “male practice” or “male custom.”⁴⁷ In the Northern Qi dynasty (550 – 557) the term *nanshe* (男色) appears in official historical documents. *Se* in this context refers to sexual attraction, passion, or lust translating to “male eroticism.” The Chinese terminology developed in these periods remained in use until 19th Century encounters with non-Chinese concepts of sexuality. Around the Tang to Song dynasties, when the role of favorites in the court begins to diminish, a new term for referring to male-to-male sex appears *jijian* (雞姦). Derogatory in nature, the term literally translates to “chicken lewdness” and the term’s associations with animal sexuality make “sodomy” an accurate English equivalent.⁴⁸

In the contemporary period, finding language to discuss a broad range of genders and sexualities has proven difficult in both Mainland China and Taiwan. During the postcolonial period in Taiwan, those who desired the same sex began to identify as “homosexuals” or *tongxinglian zhe* (同性戀者).⁴⁹ In a 1994 issue of the journal *Isle Margin*, novelists and critics Chi Ta-wei, Dantangmo, and Lucifer Hung proposed the term *ku-er* (酷兒) as a transliteration of the English words “queer” and “cool.” This term became popularized through 1997 queer theory publications by Chi. Another queer publication, *Ai Bao*, introduced another term in a special 1994 issue. The term *guai-tai* (怪胎) translates to “queer,” “freak,” or “mutant.”⁵⁰ Fran Martin states, “Since its arrival in Taiwan Mandarin in the early 1990s, *tongzhi* (同志) has become the term most

⁴⁷ Ibid

⁴⁸ Ibid, 88-89.

⁴⁹ Jens Damm, “From Psychoanalysis to AIDS,” 65.

⁵⁰ Petrus Liu, *Queer Marxism in Two Chinas*, 42

commonly used to refer to something like ‘lesbian and gay.’”⁵¹ The term, which translates as “comrade” in English, has origins in usage by the Communist party. Michael Lam first used the term *tongzhi* to denote sexual minorities in Hong Kong’s City Magazine and subsequently usage in the 1989 Hong Kong Lesbian and Gay film festival popularized the term.

Tongzhi remains the most widely used term for LGBTQ identities in contemporary Taiwan. Scholar of Political Science, Rosalind P. Petchesky, argues in her article “The Language of ‘Sexual Minorities’ and the Politics of Identity: A Position Paper,” “in any vital and highly contested political domain, language can be a potent force for change or an obstacle to understanding and coalition building across difference.”⁵² Due to the contentious nature of LGBTQ rights in contemporary Taiwan in the wake of the recent referendum and preceding court ruling, language proves to be of particular importance. In the curatorial statement for “Spectrosynthesis,” Sean Hu explains the greater impact of the exhibition stating,

Spectrosynthesis - Asian LGBTQ Issues and Art Now responds to this historical wave of our time and is the first survey exhibition featuring LGBTQ issues in Asia. Through artistic critique that prioritizes concept, the exhibition aims to serve as an intermediate for a dialogue about diverse issues in society, allowing people upholding different ideas and principles to create enthusiastic and positive relationships through different forms of interaction.⁵³

⁵¹ Fran Martin, “Situating Sexualities,” 3.

⁵² Rosalind P. Petchesky, “The Language of ‘Sexual Minorities’ and the Politics of Identity: A Position Paper,” *Reproductive Health Matters* 17, no. 33 (2009): 105.

⁵³ Sean C.S. Hu “Spectrosynthesis: Asian LGBTQ Issues and Art Now” mocataipei.org.tw.

Hu highlights the tensions within society following the recent court rulings, and the joint goal of artists and curator to create dialogue and conversation between oppositional groups. “Spectrosynthesis” aims to initiate conversations and change through exhibiting critical artworks with queer themes.

CHAPTER II

CREATING A COUNTER-HISTORY: RELECTION AND SUBVERSION IN CHUANG CHIH-WEI'S *RAINBOW IN THE DARKNESS*

Chuang Chih-Wei, born in Taichung, Taiwan in 1986 and holding Masters degrees in both the fields of Architecture and New Media Art from Chiao Tung University and Taipei National University of the Arts, created the site-specific installation *Rainbow in the Darkness* for the courtyard of Taipei's Museum of Contemporary Art's 2017 "Spectrosynthesis: Asian LGBTQ Issues and Art Now" exhibition. The artist arranged a matrix of eight rectangular structures evenly spaced in the museum's front courtyard and invited viewers to take part in his work by scratching messages unto the surface of the blocks, Chuang describes these scratched messages as parallels to the graffiti in Taipei's New Park. The subject matter of the inscriptions on "Rainbow in the Darkness," varied and most of the inscriptions were written in English or Chinese. Some of the English language inscriptions included the following: "gender is a construct tear it apart," "marriage equality," "love transcends gender," "no pain no gain support LGBTQA," and various other expressions of support and pride including initials of lovers. Some participants used the interactive installation as a means of anonymously coming out by inscribing the words "I am T" onto sculpture's surface.⁵⁴ Similar sentiments were expressed in Chinese, including the following:

你不是一個人(ni bu shi yi ge ren) or "you are not alone," 男同超可愛

⁵⁴ Here "T" could mean either Transgender as T is used in English as a shorthand for Transgender. In Chinese colloquial language, T is also used to refer to Masculine presenting or "Butch" lesbian or otherwise queer women.

(nantong chao ke'ai) "gay guys are cute," and 只有我們自己, 能決定我們的樣子 (zhi

you women ziji, neng jue ding women de Yangzi) “only we can decide our appearance/our own way.”⁵⁵ At nighttime, the messages carved into the surface of the blocks illuminates in a rainbow of LED. Chuang explains his work can be split into two categories ‘internal manifestation’ and ‘external manifestation,’ and *Rainbow in the Darkness* represents a synthesis of these two types of artistic manifestations; the first deals with emotion and intrapersonal reflection on larger questions of life and death, while the second relates to architecture and space.⁵⁶ The artist describes this installation stating, “through this work, the plaza ceases to be just a physical space, nor the audience mere spectators; instead, they both become integral part of the work.”⁵⁷ Chuang’s installation, while seemingly simple in design, combines imagery from Taipei’s gay meeting site New Park and their associations to produce an interactive installation that reflects a local queer history. In this chapter, I argue that both “Spectrosynthesis” and *Rainbow in the Darkness* utilize *guaitai yizu* (怪胎一族), described by Fran Martin as “a localizing strategy that seeks ways of imagining a *tongzhi* community, history, culture, and politics arising specifically from Taiwan.”⁵⁸ While “Spectrosynthesis” aimed to

⁵⁵ The final Chinese inscription mentioned is a quote from the popular Taiwanese coming of age romantic comedy titled *Our Times* (2015) in English and 我的少女時代 *wo de shaonü shidai*, directed by Frankie Chen.

⁵⁶ Chih-Wei Chuang, "Rainbow in the Darkness," Chuang Chih-Wei, accessed May 3, 2019, <http://www.chuangchihwei.com/work-rainbow-in-the-darkness-2017.html>.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Fran Martin, *Situating Sexualities: Queer Representation in Taiwanese Fiction, Film and Public Culture* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003), 2.

highlight artistic and cultural achievements of LGBTQ people from Taiwan and East Asia, the exhibition negotiates the landscape of the globalized and international Taipei City. This effort materialized through displaying the contributions emerging from Taiwan and situating them amongst a timeline of global LGBTQ history. Chuang's installation furthers this goal through incorporating the local imagery of NewPark graffiti with the gay pride flag, designed by San Francisco artist Gilbert Baker in 1978 and subsequently gaining popularity.⁵⁹

I argue for a reading of *Rainbow in the Darkness* that views this temporary installation as a counter-monument that "materializes queer memory," and local queer history through reconstructing queer space.⁶⁰ Chuang Chih-Wei's interest in manifesting architectural space is twofold: creating a sense of architectural space with his installations and recreating and memorializing existing space. Chuang places blocks standing over 6.5 feet tall in the museum's courtyard in order to create a kind of architectural intervention. The artist constructs the materialization of queer memory through references to New Park, a popular gay cruising destination. Both *Rainbow in the Darkness* and MOCA Taipei's "Spectrosynthesis" exhibition function as a

⁵⁹ San Francisco based artist, designer, and drag performer, Gilbert Baker designed the first rainbow flag as a symbol of gay pride in 1978. Harvey Milk commissioned Baker to design a new symbol of gay pride as an alternative for the pink triangle which LGBTQ people reclaimed after its use in Nazi Germany to identify homosexuals. Baker cut, dyed, and with the help of volunteers sewed together eight individual strips of cloth to create a symbol of LGBTQ freedom.

⁶⁰ Thomas R. Dunn, "Remembering "A Great Fag": Visualizing Public Memory and the Construction of Queer Space," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 97, no. 4 (2011). Here I am borrowing the language used by Thomas R. Dunn in his writings on public queer monuments in Canada.

countermemory, which historian Thomas R. Dunn defines as in opposition to official, state constructed memories and histories.⁶¹ These efforts arise as opposition to both normative local histories, including Taipei's mayoral administration's attempts to transform the city, as well as queer histories that prioritize a Western viewpoint.

Dunn explains the significance of materializing queer public memory stating,

...these other embodied memory practices can supplement less queer historical imaginings, challenge anti-queer attacks, and disrupt the stability of identities that far too often become encased in these structural forms of public memory.⁶²

Dunn elaborates on the impact of queer monuments, reaching beyond challenging normative histories and exclusions of a queer presence to counter discrimination and violence inflicted upon queer communities. These counter-monuments prove themselves critical to preserving queer histories and memory, as these marginalized groups have historically been systematically denied the right to space, memorialization, and remembering. Through Chuang Chih-Wei's installation in the Museum of Contemporary Art Taipei's courtyard, the artist creates a means for preserving written reflections of LGBTQ people and allies on the sculpture's surface while memorializing local queer histories.

New Park, Crystal Boys, and Rainbow in the Darkness: Private/Public Divide

The graffiti in Taipei's New Park influenced Chuang Chih-Wei in his design of the site-specific sculpture for MOCA Taipei's courtyard. New Park carries a variety of associations within Taipei's gay community, in both lived experience and through gay

⁶¹ Thomas R. Dunn, "Remembering a Great Fag," 440.

⁶² Thomas Dunn, "Remembering a Great Fag," 453-454.

literature, primarily the famous novel titled *Crystal Boys* written by Pai Hsien-yung, first published in Chinese in 1983. The 1980s marked a period following exposure to Western queer theory and culture. *Crystal Boys* gained popularity in part due to its representation of a recognizable local gay community, a community that had yet to be rendered visible in literary sources. Despite the fact that Pai lived in the United States when the novel was published, the story seems to be free of US influence and represents a uniquely Taiwanese queerness. *Crystal Boys*, which is considered the first Taiwanese novel with gay themes, begins with a description of Taipei's New Park, a place known to be a popular space for gay men to meet up. The park is located in Taipei's city center in the *Zhongzheng* district; nearby lies the nation's government buildings including the Judicial Yuan and the Presidential Office Building as well as many museums such as the National Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall. The park's prominent and central location account for opposition by local authorities to the park as spot for gay cruising. New Park brings sexual activity that usually exists on the peripheries of a city to the center and subverts the public/private divide. The following passage in the opening pages of *Crystal Boys* describes the temporal disconnect between gay private and public life:

There are no days in our kingdom, only nights. As soon as the sun comes up, our kingdom goes into hiding, for it is an unlawful nation. We have no government and no constitution, we are neither recognized nor respected by anyone, our citizenry is little more than rabble...⁶³

This passage establishes the dichotomies of night vs day and public vs private prevalent

⁶³ Hans Tao-Ming Huang, *Queer Politics and Sexual Modernity in Taiwan* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011), 2.

throughout of the book, as well as reinforces the precarious status of gay men in 1980s Taipei.

Here, our kingdom, signifies the constructed community of New Park, not defined firmly by the physical borders of the park, but rather created through a sense of collective trauma and policing experienced by its frequenters. Hans Tao-Ming Huang explains that ‘our kingdom’ is defined less by its physical space and more through the constant policing.⁶⁴ Huang analyzes another passage of *Crystal Boys*, in which author Pai Hsien-yung repeats the homophobic slur *renyao* back and forth on the page.

Utilizing Judith Butler’s “queer as performative” theory, Huang explains how Pai’s typographical design attempts to mimic the repetitive nature and pain inflicted by the use of derogatory language.⁶⁵ Butler states, “The term ‘queer’ has operated as one linguistic practice whose purpose has been the shaming of the subject it names or, rather, the producing of a subject *through* that shaming interpellation.”⁶⁶ Butler’s explanation of how shaming interpellation produces subjects accounts for the sense of community or conception of ‘our kingdom’ found in *Crystal Boys*. It is through the character’s collective sense of shame and the heavy policing of their domain that a sense of ‘us’ develops. Taiwan’s government, like that of many other places, attempts to regulate and control sexual minorities in the form of discriminatory policies and policing of queer spaces.

⁶⁴ Hans Tao-Ming Huang, “Queer Politics and Sexual Modernity in Taiwan,” 126.

⁶⁵ Hans Tao-Ming Huang, “Queer Politics and Sexual Modernity in Taiwan,” 129.

⁶⁶ Judith Butler, “Critically Queer,” *Gender*, 2000, 155.

Chuang Chih-Wei's references to these spaces recalls memories of the contentious nature of New Park. In the introduction to Han Tao-Ming Huang's book *Queer Politics and Sexual Modernity in Taiwan*, Huang explains the significance of the day/night imagery utilized by Pai Hsien-yung in *Crystal Boys* saying,

Pai's evocation of day/night imagery – a symbolic dyad through which meanings such as 'licit / illicit', 'disclosure / secrecy' and 'presentable /unpresentable' are played out – renders the social predicament of homosexuals in Taiwan instantly intelligible.⁶⁷

Similarly, Chuang Chih-Wei's *Rainbow in the Darkness* evokes the contrast of day / night and light / darkness through his use of his installation's dark surface that illuminates at night, and therefore conjures the other dyadic associations laid out by Huang. Additionally, representations of New Park also deal with divisions of public/private space as it relates to sexuality.

The 1990s, the decade following the publishing of *Crystal Boys*, marks an era of political efforts to transform Taipei into a "global city" and a "city for citizens." This dual mission to both globalize and localize Taiwan's capital city masked homophobic efforts to transform New Park from a gay cruising spot to a more socially acceptable heterosexual space, with language of progress and acceptance from the city's mayoral administration. In my discussion of the significance of New Park I will first turn to Fran Martin, who has written extensively on the topic and argued for reading the park as a site of queer resistance stating,

⁶⁷ Hans Tao-Ming Huang, "Queer Politics and Sexual Modernity in Taiwan," 2.

But the reconfiguration of the spaces of nation and city; private and public in this period, also marks the point at which new contestatory possibilities open up to those who organize in resistance to Taiwan's emergent liberal regime of sexual and social regulation.⁶⁸

New Park once symbolized the oppressive power of the Kuomintang (KMT) government, surrounded with guards and a sense of militarization. Chen Shuibian, who served as Taipei's Mayor (1994 – 98) and later went on to serve as president of Taiwan, led his administration in efforts to transform the district of New Park from a symbol of KMT power to a new public space for all citizens.⁶⁹ New Park's status as the most well-known and popular gay cruising area and associations with male prostitution complicate the seemingly positive aims of Chen's vision for Taipei. Zhang Jingsen, Director of the Department of Urban Development in 1996, argued that the intersections of both class and sexuality result in the administration's discomfort and they aimed to replace forms of non-consumptive sexual behavior with businesses such as gay bars.⁷⁰ Further complaints about the use of New Park by the Taipei police states concern about those gathering in the park disturbing neighborhood residents.⁷¹ This statement reveals the root of the concern about New Park lying in the status of its frequenters are non-property owners. The intersection of both economic status and non-state approved public displays of sexuality create unease for Chen's administration and their initiative to transform

⁶⁸ Fran Martin, "From Citizen to Queer Counterpublic," 91.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid, 88.

Taipei into a ‘city for citizens,’ citizens clearly serving as a stand-in for heterosexual and economically privileged.

The public nature of the space and the economic position of New Park visitors seem to be the underlying reason for the city’s efforts to transform the park. The public/private dichotomy is one that finds its origins in Europe, as early Chinese cities lacked the kind of public spaces such as squares and parks that comprise the public realm. Post-European colonization marks the first instances in which we can begin to speak of the public/private divide in this same way within Taiwan. In the case of Taipei City, Japanese colonization and the construction of the 1919 Presidential Palace (of which New Park is considered a part) introduced the European idea of division between public and private spaces. For this reason, the private/public as object for queer and feminist critique is a conversation only made possible by the contemporary period.⁷² Cultural geographer Nancy Duncan states in her article “Renegotiating Gender and Sexuality in Public and Private Spaces:”

The public/private dichotomy (both the political and spatial dimensions) is frequently employed to construct, control, discipline, confine, exclude, and suppress gender and sexual difference preserving traditional patriarchal and heterosexist power structures.⁷³

These attempts to control and suppress non-normative displays of sexuality and gender in Taipei City by Chen and his administration were met with opposition by members of Taipei’s LGBTQ community. In Gordon Brent Ingram, Anne-Marie Bouthillette, and Yolanda Retter’s

⁷² Fran Martin, “From Citizenship to Queer Counterpublic: Reading Taipei’s New Park,” 91.

⁷³ Nancy Duncan, *Bodyspace: Destabilizing Geographies of Gender and Sexuality* (London: Routledge, 1996), 128.

essay on queer place making, the authors state, “sites of public and semipublic sexuality, political activity, and remembrance have remained contentious issues within both our communities and broader society.”⁷⁴ Although their writing primarily focuses on North American and European contexts, the authors highlight the contentious nature of queer placemaking due to normative expectations about the public and private divide.

Opposition to the city government’s plans for New Park demonstrates the fluidity of the park’s borders. Writings in lesbian magazine, *Ai Bao*, affirm that if New Park becomes a heteronormative space, then LGBTQ people in the city have the freedom to claim any space as their own. This analysis calls for more fluid conceptions of queer space and looks forward toward a future in which queer people have agency in choosing the spaces they inhabit within the city.

Beyond serving as inspiration for Chuang Chih-Wei’s “Rainbow in the Darkness,” Pai Hsien-yung’s *Crystal Boys* and Taipei’s New Park further the goal of “Spectrosynthesis” of highlighting local aspects of LGBTQ history, culture, and artistic production. For the past few decades, conversations in academic writing about Taiwanese LGBTQ culture often begin with Pai’s famous novel and the well-known cruising spot. The status of *Crystal Boys* as a purely Taiwanese gay narrative, free from noticeable outside influence marks the novel as a starting place for conversations on Taipei’s gay culture. Drawing upon sources such as *Crystal Boys* and New Park, Chuang highlights unique local, and often-marginalized, aspects of LGBTQ history and culture, in which the exhibition further aims to showcase.

⁷⁴ Gordon Brent Ingram, Anne-Marie Bouthillette, and Yolanda Retter, "Placemaking and the Dialectics of Public and Private," in *Queers in Space: Communities, Public Places, and Sites of Resistance* (Seattle, WA: Bay Press, 1996), 296.

CHAPTER III

WEN HSIN'S *HALF SERIES*: PORTRAITURE, GENDER, AND KINSHIP IN “SPECTROSYNTHESIS”

Artist Wen Hsin, born in Taipei Taiwan in 1988 and a graduate of the School of Film and New Media at Taipei National University of the Arts, works primarily in photography, video, and installation dealing with themes relating to the body and identity. Wen's work highlights the broader “Spectrosynthesis” exhibition theme of a spectrum of light creating a rainbow as a metaphor for the broad range of LGBTQ identities and rich contributions to history through her photography series *The Half Series*. As stated in the exhibition's catalogue, “Wen attempts to present a spectrum of physical appearances to deconstruct the stereotypes of bodily images, and re-define values of individual existence.”⁷⁵

The artist's previous projects, titled *Beauty and the Beast* and *X/Y* (2013), inform her later explorations for *Half Series*. Wen's mastectomy surgery sparked self-reflection on her own gender identity and the rigid societal pressure surrounding gender. The artist reflects on these projects stating:

I could look like a woman defined by society with external symbols; however, when I remove everything that makes me look like a woman, am I a man, then? Men and women defined by our society have long been accustomed to deliver messages in a dichotomous logic. I make use of these messages and photograph strangers other than me, dressing the men as women. During the process, I gain new knowledge about the models as well as examine myself. My intention is to allow the photographer and the photographed to just be themselves and reflect upon the idea of subjectivity.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ *Spectrosynthesis – Asian LGBTQ Issues and Art Now*

⁷⁶ Ibid.

This interest in gender markers, identity, and subjectivity manifested in a series of interviews between participants and the artist herself leading to a series of videos and photographs. The process begins with a question, “when facing this extremely dichotomizing world, if there were ever a day you could decide your own appearance without thinking about the outside world, how would you choose your appearance,” the artist asks.⁷⁷ Wen describes the process of storytelling and discussing the participants’ journeys of self-discovery. The intimacy involved in the process and feeling of mutual experience translates into a sense of openness and vulnerability on camera. The close relationship between artist and participant results in a similar sense of connectivity between the viewer, the photographs, the participant, and artist. This chapter argues that portraiture in the “Spectrosynthesis” exhibition represents a strategy in queer art making and curating that allows the viewer to identify with the sitter, establishing a sense of kinship and belonging for the often-marginalized LGBTQ viewer. The use of contemporary photographs by Wen Hsin in conjunction with the preceding oil paintings of Shiy De-Jinn creates a genealogy of queer subjects, allowing the viewer to imagine LGBTQ people thriving throughout history.

A Timeline of Queer Portraiture: Portraits by Wen Hsin and Shiy De-Jinn in “Spectrosynthesis”

Although not chronologically displayed, the “Spectrosynthesis” exhibition, surveys a half century of LGBTQ East Asian art beginning with Shiy De-Jinn’s 1960s oil

⁷⁷ The Sunpride Foundation. “WEN Hsin | MOCATaipei, 'Spectrosynthesis.'” Filmed [October 2017]. YouTube video, 00:53. Posted [October 2017]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_OxShbL4kjE.

painting portraits moving into contemporary works as recent as 2017. Including both contemporary portraits alongside earlier ones allows the LGBTQ or *tongzhi*-identified viewer to imagine themselves in a timeline of Taiwanese queer history and establishes a sense of belonging in the viewer, that they may not experience elsewhere.

Shiy De-Jinn (1923 – 1981) born in Sichuan, China, graduated from Hangzhou National College of art in 1948, and later moved to Taiwan due to the war. Masters like Pang Xunqin and Lin Fengmian, whom Shiy studied under, as well as European painting styles inspired the artist's early work. Upon returning to Taiwan from travels in the United States in 1966, Shiy began to look toward traditional Taiwanese art forms such as Eastern folk architecture and landscape painting, leading others to praise him as a pioneer of Taiwanese folk art. Two of Shiy's youth portraits, *Young Girl in Red Skirt* (1960) and *Male Youth in Yellow Shirt* (1967) hung side by side in the main hallway to the galleries for the "Spectrosynthesis" exhibition, making Shiy's oil paintings the first artworks seen by the viewers as they enter. *Young Girl in Red Skirt* depicts a figure seated cautiously to one side of a chair, gazing to the bottom right of picture plane with an uneasy expression. "The essence of portraits lies in the exploration of the figure's psyche, which reveals the subject's deep, inner secrets," the artist once stated, revealing the emotional and introspective qualities of his portraits. Resembling the artist's earlier abstract works, layers of muted, neutral-toned paint applied in layers and revealing shades beneath create the background of the portrait. *Male Youth in Yellow Shirt* shows a standing figure centered on the canvas leaning slightly with one hand on the hip. In many ways, *Male Youth in Yellow Shirt* represents shifts in the artist's style, most prominently illustrated in the appearance of the background. Shiy abandons soft brushwork and abstract painting

styles for bold color-blocking influenced by hard edge painting, pop art, and op art that became popular in the 1960s during the time the artist lived in Paris. The contrast of the blue and white background emphasizes the figure's form. Alongside Shiy De-Jinn's rich oil-paintings lie portraits by Wen Hsin.

Four digital prints from Wen's *Half series*, enlarged to 180 by 90 centimeters each, appeared side by side in one of the exhibition space's hallways. Each print features one model centered on a well-lit black backdrop mimicking studio portrait photography. The artist explains the juxtaposition of traditionally feminine elements against masculine ones as an exploration of both her model's complex identities, and her own. One of Wen's portraits titled *Half Hao* depicts a male subject crossing his arms to cover his hair-covered chest. The figure gazes upwards with slightly parted lips and an uneasy expression. Glossy tears well out of his eyes staining his made-up face with tear marks. The rose-colored lipstick worn by the model smears to one side of the figure's face. A slightly disheveled wig adds a sense of urgency and emotion to the photograph. The inspiration for this model's portrait stems from his childhood idolization and imitation of his elder sister and the shame other's inflicted on him for displaying feminine attributes, recalls the artist.⁷⁸ The model further explains that he wonders how he might present if he had not experienced this ridicule as he contemplates the artist's initial research question. His comments illustrate the element of personal reflection and mutual identity exploration facilitated by Wen's project. Another portrait in this series, *Half-*

⁷⁸ Christie Chen, "Taipei Holds First LGBTQ Art Exhibition in Public Art Museum," *Focus Taiwan*, September 8, 2017, <http://www.focustaiwan.tw/>.

Blue, features a model grabbing their breasts and looking straight into the camera. Short, light blue-colored hair softly frames their forehead. Soft elements like the powdery blue hair contrast with the model's harsh gaze and rough grabbing of their own body. The black backdrop and highlights on the figure's skin from the studio lighting add to the contrast in the image. The artist utilizes these contrasting elements to reference the contrasting masculine and feminine qualities the models and herself embody. The third photo featured in the exhibition, titled *Half-Yellow*, shows another model wearing a long black wig which cascades down covering the model's bare chest. Both the model's face and eyes turn downwards, their facial expression and the small amount of makeup worn by the model give the image a sense of softness. The last image, *Half-Pin*, exposes the curves and bones of the model's back as they peer over their shoulder with slightly lowered eyes. Bleach blonde hair lies in a neat bun while touches of makeup highlight the model's facial structure. The figure's expression seems pensive and introspective leaving the viewer to wonder about the concealed identity and personal details kept between the artist and participant.

Both Wen Hsin's *Half Series* and the youth portraits by Shiy De-Jinn open up the possibility for dialogue relating to gender identity and expression. In relation to Shiy's paintings, the catalogue states, "through placing the two paintings side by side and the composition of the figures, the audience are invited to reflect upon the issue of gender identity."⁷⁹ Furthermore, both figures appear androgynous, presenting both

⁷⁹ *Spectrosynthesis: Asian LGBTQ Issues and Art Now*

traditionally feminine and masculine attributes. The artist leaves the sexuality and the gender of the figures ambiguous, noting this element of withholding from the viewer in the artist's discussion of the portraits. In Jackson Davidow's essay titled "Beyond the Binary: the gender neutral in JJ Levine's Queer Portraits," the author analyzes Montreal based photographer JJ Levine's representations of gender nonconforming subjects and the use of neutral facial expressions to signify their gender neutrality. Davidow discusses Levine's strategy stating,

Levine gives their models the opportunity to be represented as they wish to be, helping them visually convey their own personal gender stories. But regardless of the subjects' disparate gender and sexual identifications (which are never totally evident to the unacquainted viewers), the artist invariably focuses on the neutral face and, particularly, the mouth; this strategy corresponds to philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy's concept of the buccal.⁸⁰

Davidow summarizes Nancy's buccal stating, "the buccal is not only the mouth prior to signification, but also a mouth through which signification, and thereby identification, occurs."⁸¹ The author further relates the concept of buccal to Levine's subjects in the moment before revealing their gender identity and speaking their preferred pronouns, but both subject and artist intentionally withhold this information from the viewer. Similarly, both Shiy De-Jinn's portraits and Wen Hsin's *Half Series*, utilize the strategy of neutral facial expressions in order to signify the implied gender neutrality and unknown sexuality of the sitters. Many of the model in Wen Hsin's *Half Series* hold their lips slightly parted,

⁸⁰ Jackson Davidow, "Beyond the Binary: The Gender Neutral in JJ Levine's Queer Portraits," in *Otherwise : Imagining Queer Feminist Art Histories*, ed. Amelia Jones and Erin Silver (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2016), 313.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 313

as if they might begin to speak and in turn, reveal more about their own identities.

Portraiture provides the opportunity for establishing lineage and genealogy that marginalized LGBTQ groups may not otherwise have. Laura Doan states,

Just as the grand portrait collections of European aristocracy rendered the individuals portrayed as constituent parts of a ‘genealogical tree’, its several branches extending across centuries, so too have LGBT and queer communities sometimes used portraiture to establish kinship ties with ‘gay icons through the ages’.⁸²

The instability of biological familial relationships and high suicide rates prevalent among LGBTQ, and especially transgender, youths in Taiwan render non-traditional forms of kinship and genealogy necessary for survival.⁸³

The use of both contemporary photographic portraits, Wen Hsin’s *Half Series*, and the modern painted portraits by Shiy De-Jinn, creates a queer timeline of portraits in which the viewer can see themselves and their identities represented in both the present and the past. These examples of portraiture support the larger goal of “Spectrosynthesis” which aims to create a timeline of LGBTQ history which both highlights the contributions of Taiwan in a global history and develops a local queer history of its own. In a 2018 interview, “Spectrosynthesis” curator Sean C.S. Hu discussed the overwhelmingly positive response to Wen Hsin’s *Half Series*. This response stems from the viewer’s ability to see themselves reflected in the artist’s work and establishment

⁸² Ibid, 24.

⁸³ While it is difficult to access statistics on LGBTQ youths and suicide, a 2014 survey conducted by the Intersex, Transgender, and Transsexual People Care Association (ISTSCare) in Taiwan showed that 70% of 200 transgender participants have considered suicide

of a sense of kinship and belonging.⁸⁴

While Taipei may be regarded as Asia's most LGBT friendly city, home of East Asia's largest pride parade, and the first Asian country to rule in favor of same-sex marriage legalization, LGBTQ people living in Taiwan still face many obstacles especially in terms of their own families. Amy Brainer notes an older gay man's reflection at a Kaohsiung LGBTQ event; he states that many young people are planning to come out after becoming financial independent while for most people in his generation coming out was not something they even imagined.⁸⁵ Several conditions lead to pressure within Taiwanese families for children to be in heterosexual monogamous marriages and reproduce, including Confucian values inherited from Chinese culture, various governmental influences, and current late marriage ages and low fertility rates. Under the Chinese Nationalists (KMT) era of martial rule in Taiwan (1949 – 1987), nationalist propaganda focused on the family and later a comprehensive family planning plan was implemented with aid from the US.⁸⁶ Amy Brainer summarizes the work of Hans Tao Ming Huang and Naifei Ding,

⁸⁴ Hu, Sean. Interviewed by Landry Austin. Personal Interview. Taipei, August 4th, 2018.

⁸⁵ Amy Brainer, *Queer Kinship and Family Change in Taiwan* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2019), 915.

⁸⁶ Pei-Chia Lan, "Compressed Modernity and Glocal Entanglement: The Contested Transformation of Parenting Discourses in Postwar Taiwan," *Current Sociology* 62, no. 4 (2014): 532.

The bodies of queers, sex workers, and other sex and gender ‘deviants’ became battlegrounds in the construction of modern sexual subjects in Taiwan, with emerging familial ideals such as the ‘wife-in-monogamy’ as regulatory and disciplinary mechanisms.⁸⁷

Given the complex landscape of political and cultural influences shaping Taiwan’s family ideals, those with non-normative genders and sexualities often face pressure from within their own families to live up to these standards. The use of portraiture in the “Spectrosynthesis” exhibition subverts these ideals and provides gender and sexuality affirming representation for LGBTQ youths in Taiwan. Shiy De-Jinn’s youth portraits alongside Wen Hsin’s *Half Series* acts as a timeline of queer portraiture giving Taiwan’s LGBTQ communities both a feeling of belonging to a genealogy and sense of kinship.

⁸⁷ Amy Brainer, "New Identities or New Intimacies? Rethinking ‘Coming Out’ in Taiwan through Cross-Generational Ethnography," *Sexualities* 21, no. 5-6 (2018): 917.

CHAPTER IV

ART OF XIYADIE: CALLING UPON TRADITION IN “SPECTROSYNTHESIS”

Artist Xiyadie, whose pseudonym translates to the Siberian Butterfly, reflects on his own experiences being gay in the People’s Republic of China and journey of transformation through his paper cut work which utilize traditional regional methods. Artworks from three of Xiyadie’s series titled the *Door Series*, *Train Series*, and *Pleasure series*, featured in the “Spectrosynthesis” exhibition, represent the artists strategy of negotiation between tradition and the contemporary in both his work and personal life. The artist grew up in a rural part of China’s northern Shaanxi province and learned the prominent folk art of paper-cutting, for which his home province is known for, from watching his grandmother and mother as a child.⁸⁸ Later Xiyadie attended the Special Arts and Crafts School in Heyang County and worked in the crafts department of the Xi’an Film School.⁸⁹ His vividly colored paper-cuts have received attention on international web-based news sites and forums and have been exhibited in the United States, the Netherlands, Hong Kong, Belgium, Sweden, and Germany, gaining popularity for his use of homoerotic imagery and the interesting juxtaposition of sexual, but not pornographic, acts and whimsical designs. Xiyadie’s paper-cuts exemplify the goals of the MOCA Taipei exhibition, as he combines the colorful imagery that signify queer identity while conveying the complexities of his rural, traditional upbringing, coming out

⁸⁸ *The Siberian Butterfly*. Directed by Anna Sophie Loewenberg. China: Queer Comrades, 2012.

⁸⁹ Hera Chan, "Cut Sleeve, Split Peach," NOME Gallery, 2018, , accessed May 22, 2019, <https://nomegallery.com/exhibitions/cut-sleeve-split-peach/>.

to his wife, and being gay.⁹⁰ His colorful folk-art inspired paper-cuts transcend sexual identity, communicating a more universal message of love, acceptance, pain, and challenging societal expectations. As a trans-nationally exhibited artist, his art contributes to the landscape of globally engaged queer artists. In a 2018 exhibition at NOME Gallery located in Berlin titled “Cut Sleeve, Split Peach,” the theme of calling upon tradition comes through in the exhibition’s title, which references two tales of same-sex desire in Chinese history. Curator, Hera Chan states,

The passion of the cut sleeve and split peach began in predynastic China, when Mizi Xia tasted a peach so sweet, he had to share it with the Duke Ling of Wei. Later, in the Han Dynasty, Emperor Ai’s lover Dong Xian fell asleep on his sleeve. He could not bear to wake him. Instead, he cut through the silk fabric. In the search beyond the pleasures of this moment, queer desire disrupts normal patterns of love that govern the social order.⁹¹

This sense of disruption, noted by Chan, highlights the subversive quality of Xiyadie’s representations of queer desire in the heteronormative society in which the artist works. In this Chapter, I argue that Xiyadie’s paper-cut artworks represent a mode of queer art making that utilizes traditional forms of craft to communicate LGBTQ themes in broader Chinese and Taiwanese art making and the “Spectrosynthesis” exhibition. In order to fully explain the significance of the artist’s work and the traditional references he employs, it is necessary to briefly lay out the history of Shaanxi province paper-cutting techniques and motifs.

⁹⁰ It is not uncommon for gay married in China to be in heterosexual marriages. Perhaps due to the fact that initially gay relationships were looked at negatively due to its departure from Confucian values and continuing family lineage.

Jin Cao and Xinlei Lu, "A Preliminary Exploration of the Gay Movement in Mainland China: Legacy, Transition, Opportunity, and the New Media," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 39, no. 4 (2014): 840-841.

⁹¹ Hera Chan, "Cut Sleeve, Split Peach."

Traditional Shaanxi Style Paper-Cutting and Contemporary Art

Paper-cutting as a means of artistic expression can be traced back to before the invention of paper in the Han Dynasty, when leaves and other organic materials were used. Due to the inexpensive nature of the materials and ease of learning, paper-cutting quickly became a prominent Chinese folk art. Paper-cutting traditions can be divided into several distinctive regional styles, one of which being “The Northern Group” which encompasses the work of artists from Shaanxi and Shandong provinces. Scholar Xuxiao Wang describes Northern group paper-cut designs as well-known for their “simplicity and candor.”⁹² Paper-cutting relies on the use of auspicious motifs often based on Chinese language homophones. Shaanxi paper-cuts occupy a highly regarded status in the People’s Republic of China due to their connection with China’s Communist Party (CCP) as the art was recreated in this province in order to resist the Japanese and spread revolutionary ideas.⁹³ Xiyadie’s work embodies the Northern Group style in terms of referencing common auspicious motifs as well as their overall design. Some of his work alludes to the simple and open nature of Shaanxi paper-cuts. This category is typically executed on red paper, being a celebratory color often utilized in Chinese paper-cuts. Some of his other artworks depart from this tradition as he incorporates a variety of colors.

⁹² Xuxiao Wang, “Lucky Motifs in Chinese Folk Art: Interpreting Paper-cut from Chinese Shaanxi,” 123.

⁹³ Ka-ming Wu, *Reinventing Chinese Tradition the Cultural Politics of Late Socialism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015): 33.

Two of Xiyadie’s series fit neatly into these categories of his style. The first

series, titled the *Red Door Series*, documents the painful process of coming out to his wife. *The Butterfly Series*, focuses on the positive feelings he experienced while with his lover. This series is a clear divergence from the more typical style used in the *Red Door Series*, and shows his experimentation with his own unique artistic style. The visual contrast between these two series amplifies the complexity of his experience as a gay Chinese man in a heterosexual marriage.

One image from the *Red Door Series*, titled *Running Away from Home* shows his family as the artist is preparing to leave home. The image is rich with traditional folk motifs such as flowers and the outline of butterfly wings on the figure on the right side's clothing. The top of the image shows a paring of two birds, a common auspicious motif in Shaanxi paper-cuts. The image of the two birds belongs to a category of paper-cut imagery called *xi* (禧) along with images of melons and butterflies.⁹⁴ The majority of the auspicious symbolism in his work relates to wishes for a happy marriage. *Running Away from Home*, like many of the images in the *Red Door Series* expresses the artist's struggle to come out to his family, along with their pain. One figure, potentially his daughter, is shown with tear drops streaming down her face. In both the *Red Door Series* and the *Butterfly Series* the artist communicates aspects of his experience of being LGBTQ and married in China, two different sides of the story.

⁹⁴ Xuxiao Wang, "Lucky Motifs in Chinese Folk Art," 136.

Many of the images in Xiyadie's *Butterfly Series* show the artist alone with his lover, *Sneaking Around* and *Door Indoor Outdoor* are the exception. These paper-cut artworks shows both his wife and child in the interior of his home, while he engages in sexual acts outside of their home's back door. While most of the images in the *Butterfly Series* avoid directly confronting the experience of Xiyadie's wife and focus on the artist's positive feeling for his lover *Sneaking Around*, confronts them directly. The motif of the love birds appears again here looming over his wife. Both of these images show the two figure's genitalia prominently. Even this aspect of his paper-cuts is a reference to traditional Shaanxi paper-cuts for fertility, child birth, and other aspects of sexuality where sexual organs and their functions were emphasized.⁹⁵

Xiyadie's images do not related to fertility or child birth directly, but instead pure pleasure that challenges the heteronormativity of these displays of sexuality.

Rural and Queer Identities

Xiyadie uses traditional Shaanxi province paper-cut motifs as a strategy in his contemporary practice used to navigate the complicated intersection of his rural and queer identities. This strategy is most clearly utilized in two pieces, *Sneaking Around* and *Gardening*. *Sneaking Around* references the Confucian ideals around the significance of the family, leading many gay Chinese men into having extramarital relationships while remaining with their wives and children. *Gardening* communicates the intersection of these identities in a more straight- forward way, combining elements of the artist's playful homoeroticism within the context of the garden. Vines, flowers, and gourd-like

⁹⁵ Ka-ming Wu, *Reinventing Chinese Tradition the Cultural Politics of Late Socialism*, 48.

shapes surround the two lovers, signifying the rural setting of this scene.

Xiyadie's art speaks to both queer and straight audiences and have more universal underlying messages about the tension between societal sexual ethics and one's desires. Queer representation in art, film, and other media subverts and challenges these norms while providing sexual repressive societies with positive images of same-sex relationships. The bright colors, whimsical, and folksy motifs in Xiyadie's paper-cuts provide his global audience with affirmative representation of sexual desire and love. An article about Xiyadie's exhibition "Metamorphosis of a Butterfly" in the San Pedro, California alternative art space Flazh! Quotes the gallery owner Joe Flazh reports,

Gallery owner Joe Flazh says acceptance of Xiyadie's work has been overwhelmingly positive because the artist touched on emotions that are deeper than sexual orientation. "[Xiyadie] addresses subjects that are relevant to the LGBT community, but also to any person, gay or heterosexual, male or female and parents. Comments have varied from, 'I understand this piece,' to, 'I remember going through situations like that with my parents or kids'."⁹⁶

This quote illustrates the impact Xiyadie's images of same-sex love has on people from a variety of cultural backgrounds, ages, and sexual identities. Queer media that gains multi-national recognition such as, Xiyadie's art contributes to queer individual's subjectivity and impacts LGBTQ populations on a global level. The language of partially going against societal heteronormative norms but still contending with those

⁹⁶ Carren Jao et al., "Gay Life Portrayed in Traditional Chinese Paper-cuts," Hyperallergic, May 29, 2012, , accessed March 23, 2018, <https://hyperallergic.com/51813/xiyadie-the-metamorphosis-of-a-butterfly/>.

norms in the subject's lived experiences make it relatable beyond within LGBTQ communities.

The Queerness of Craft and Reclaiming Folk Art in "Spectrosynthesis"

In a 2012 US-based College Art Association panel entitled "What is Contemporary about Craft," panelists attempted to theorize the relationship between craft and the contemporary. One proposition goes as follows,

Craft is contemporary because it is queer, with its nelly yarn bombers and wild cross-stitch faggotry and dykes who throw pots. Craft's queerness keys into interlocking discourses of pleasure, shame, disappointment, difficulty, exuberance, and community-building. Craft's unruly libidinal energy is a bridge across the high/low divide.⁹⁷

This proposition encapsulates many of the themes and aims of Xiyadie's work. It goes through the ranges of emotion that the artist navigates and expresses through his craft. His *Red Door Series* explores the feelings of shame, disappointment, and difficulty as the artist expresses the emotions his wife dealt with after he came out. In a 2012 documentary called *the Siberian Butterfly* produced by Queer Comrades, Xiyadie discusses how he views his process as a way of dealing with pain, and the significance of paper-cutting as a medium in this process. Every time he cuts the paper for one of his paper-cuts, he views this act as further cutting his wife and causing her emotional turmoil.⁹⁸ For Xiyadie, the traditional craft of paper-cutting is tied closely to emotion and pain. His scissors help him deal with his own emotions, both negative and positive, but he recognizes ways in which his work affects his family and audience on an

⁹⁷ Julia Bryan-Wilson, "What is Contemporary about Craft?", 10.

⁹⁸ *The Siberian Butterfly*. Directed by Anna Sophie Loewenberg. China: Queer Comrades, 2012.

emotional level. Xiyadie's paper-cuts, especially the more sexual images, convey pleasure as a central theme. This pleasure, for the artist, transcends cultural pressure and expectation around sex.

Chinese paper-cutting as a medium maintains a significant status as a highly respected craft but lacks recognition as "high art." As Ka-ming Wu explains,

However, both in and outside of China, paper-cutting is almost exclusively treated as or reduced to a simple time-honored traditional practice, a domestic craft, and a folk-art form. Considered a rural and feminine practice, paper-cutting has often been included in what is thought to be authentic Chinese culture.⁹⁹

Contemporary artists working in the medium of paper-cutting bridge this gap. Xiyadie and other paper-cut artists simultaneously modernize the craft while staying true to their folk-art tradition. Exhibitions of Xiyadie's paper-cuts, within East Asia as well as abroad, raise the visibility of folk art-based practices. Xiyadie's work does not simply reproduce traditional paper-cut designs, but changes and queers the medium. The rich colors used in his *Butterfly Series* bring new life to folk-life inspired motifs, while the playful sexual imagery gives new life to traditional fertility images. Xiyadie is a contemporary artist and a crafter and his work allows us to understand what is contemporary about craft. Craft is contemporary because it allows artists to reference culture and tradition while dealing with their emotions and experiences in the contemporary. It also questions the "high/low" divide, as many respected contemporary artists incorporate craft into their practice.

Xiyadie pays homage to his home province of Shaanxi and his familial ties through his use of traditional paper-cut methods as a medium. His work often resembles or references tradition, the same tradition that the themes of his work calls into question.

⁹⁹ Ka-ming Wu, *Reinventing Chinese Tradition the Cultural Politics of Late Socialism*, 34.

Xiyadie utilizes references tradition as a strategy to process the complexities from the multiple identities he assumes. He copes with being gay, a father, married, and a rural farmer. In some of his images, he displays himself occupying all these identities and in others he focuses on one in particular. Although he speaks directly to queer experience, his paper-cuts are still relatable to a wide variety of audiences. The ability of many different types of people to connect with his work speaks to the universalizing quality of these images. Xiyadie's paper-cuts, through their multi-national exposure, address and impact a global queer audience. The success and receptions of works like these, depicting rural queer life, show the broader appeal to these types of images. Although regionally influenced and situated, Xiyadie's art has a global and universal quality, allowing his experience and emotions to be felt by a wide audience. This emotional quality of his work seems to be a thread connecting queer people, crafters, and folk artists from across the world, building a community of people who can feel and cope with heteronormative societies. He reclaims folk-art as a tool, using it to communicate his experiences growing up in rural China and his journey of coming out. For Xiyadie paper-cutting is not only a healing act for him as he processes his experiences but also for his family and audiences. Xiyadie supports the broader aims of the "Spectrosynthesis" exhibition through his nuanced approach to traditional and local methods of artmaking. Xiyadie's paper-cuts represent a strategy of queer artmaking in which artists insert LGBTQ narratives where they have historically been omitted. As previously discussed artworks, including Chuang Chih-Wei's *Rainbow in the Darkness* act as a counter-monument to dominant histories, Xiyadie's paper-cuts contribute an LGBTQ narrative to the histories of both traditional Shaanxi paper-cutting as well as Mainland Chinese and Taiwanese art more broadly.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION: LOOKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE

In a 2018 interview, the curator of “Spectrosynthesis” Sean Hu expressed the roadblocks setting up subsequent stops in the “Spectrosynthesis” exhibition tour, noting more conservative attitudes towards LGBTQ issues in Hong Kong and Mainland China.¹⁰⁰ Additionally, the complicated politics between the People’s Republic of China and Taiwan may have deterred museums within and outside of Asia from hosting the exhibition. In November 2019 “Spectrosynthesis II – Exposure of Tolerance: LGBTQ in Southeast Asia,” organized by the Sunpride foundation and curated by Chatvichai Promadhattavedi, will open in Bangkok at Thailand’s Bangkok Art and Culture Centre (BACC). Although information on “Spectrosynthesis II” remains limited, an exhibition announcement published by the Sunpride Foundation, which included a list of some participating artists, sheds light on the past, present, and future of “Spectrosynthesis.” Out of the fifty participating artists in “Spectrosynthesis II,” the majority come from Southeast Asian countries including Thailand, Vietnam, the Philippines, Singapore, and Malaysia. The exhibition also includes artists from outside the region including India, Taiwan, China, Hong Kong, the United States, and Sri Lanka in order to “look beyond the region to present the theme in a global context.”¹⁰¹

The impact of the landmark legalization of same-sex marriage in Taiwan goes far beyond the borders of the nation. Head of the Beijing Gender Health Education Institute,

¹⁰⁰ Hu, Sean. Interviewed by Landry Austin. Personal Interview. Taipei, August 4th, 2018.

¹⁰¹ "Exhibition Announcement: SPECTROSYNTHESIS II- Exposure of Tolerance: LGBTQ in Southeast Asia," The Sunpride Foundation, January 10, 2019, , accessed May 17, 2019, <http://sunpride.hk/exhibition-announcement/>.

Xiaogang Wei argues the ruling is a historic moment for Asia and the global LGBTQ community stating,

The Chinese government has pointed to cultural tradition as a reason for same-sex marriage being unsuitable in China. But the decision in Taiwan, which shares a cultural tradition with us, proves that Chinese culture can be open, diverse, and progressive.¹⁰²

Many hope that Taiwan's success, after much opposition, serve as a model for other countries in East Asia in the struggle for marriage equality. Thailand, the next stop for "Spectrosynthesis," took steps towards LGBTQ rights when the country's government supported laws allowing civil partnerships between same-sex couples in late 2018. Nada Chaiyajit, law student and LGBTQ rights activist who was consulted by the government during the drafting of the civil partnership laws, remains hopeful that, following the United Kingdom and other countries' trajectories, Thailand's move towards support of civil partnership rights means marriage equality lies ahead.¹⁰³ I am hopeful that continued exposure to LGBTQ issues and identities through efforts like "Spectrosynthesis" will bring about more landmark moments for LGBTQ rights throughout Asia and around the globe. In addition, these watershed moments in LGBTQ history will certainly influence the production of queer art and future exhibitions like "Spectrosynthesis" around the world.

¹⁰² Julia Hollingsworth, "Taiwan Legalizes Same-Sex Marriage in Historic First for Asia," *CNN*, May 17, 2019, <http://www.CNN.com/>.

¹⁰³ Jamie Fullerton, "Thai Government Backs Same-Sex Civil Partnership Bill," *The Guardian*, December 27, 2018, <http://www.theguardian.com/>.

APENDIX: FIGURES



Figure 1. Chuang Chih-Wei, *Rainbow in the Darkness* (ca. 2017), Black Paint, Laminated Glass, LED, Metal. Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei.
<http://www.chuangchihwei.com/work-rainbow-in-the-darkness-2017.html>



Figure 2. CHUANG Chih-Wei, *Rainbow in the Darkness* (ca. 2017), Black Paint, Laminated Glass, LED, Metal. Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei. (In *Spectrosynthesis – Asian LGBTQ Issues and Art Now*, edited by Yuki Pan, Sean C.S. Hu, Shirney Wong, Shuman Chang, Jing-Ming Wang, and Yiling Lee, Taipei: Taipei Culture Foundation, 2017, Plate 36 & 37)



Figure 3. Chuang Chih-Wei, *Rainbow in the Darkness* (ca. 2017), Black Paint, Laminated Glass, LED, Metal. Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei.
<http://sunpride.hk/sunpride-event-spectrosynthesis/>



Figure 4. Spectrosynthesis Entry (2017), Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei, <http://sunpride.hk/sunpride-event-spectrosynthesis/>



Figure 5. “Spectrosynthesis” Timeline (2017), Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei.
<http://sunpride.hk/sunpride-event-spectrosynthesis/>



Figure 6. WEN Hsin, *Half-Hao* (ca. 2013), Digital Print. Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei. (In *Spectrosynthesis – Asian LGBTQ Issues and Art Now*, edited by Yuki Pan, Sean C.S. Hu, et al. Taipei: Taipei Culture Foundation, 2017, Plate 122)



Figure 7. WEN Hsin, *Half-Blue* (ca. 2013), Digital Print. Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei. (In *Spectrosynthesis – Asian LGBTQ Issues and Art Now*, edited by Yuki Pan, Sean C.S. Hu, et al. Taipei: Taipei Culture Foundation, 2017, Plate 123)



Figure 8. WEN Hsin, *Half-Yellow* (ca. 2013), Digital Print. Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei. (In *Spectrosynthesis – Asian LGBTQ Issues and Art Now*, edited by Yuki Pan, Sean C.S. Hu, et all. Taipei: Taipei Culture Foundation, 2017, Plate 123)



Figure 9. WEN Hsin, *Half-Pin* (ca. 2013), Digital Print. Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei. (In *Spectrosynthesis – Asian LGBTQ Issues and Art Now*, edited by Yuki Pan, Sean C.S. Hu, et al. Taipei: Taipei Culture Foundation, 2017, Plate 123)



Figure 10. WEN Hsin, *Half Series* (ca. 2013), Digital Print. Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei. <http://sunpride.hk/sunpride-event-spectrosynthesis/>



Figure 11. SHIY De-Jinn, *Young Girl* (ca. 1960), Oil on Canvas. Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei. (In *Spectrosynthesis – Asian LGBTQ Issues and Art Now*, edited by Yuki Pan, Sean C.S. Hu, et all. Taipei: Taipei Culture Foundation, 2017, Plate 81)



Figure 12. SHIY De-Jinn, *Male Youth in Yellow Shirt* (ca. 1967), Oil on Canvas. Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei. (In *Spectrosynthesis – Asian LGBTQ Issues and Art Now*, edited by Yuki Pan, Sean C.S. Hu, et al. Taipei: Taipei Culture Foundation, 2017, Plate 82)



Figure 13. SHIY De-Jinn, *Male Youth in Yellow Shirt* and *Young Girl* (1967 & 1960), Oil on canvas. Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei.
<http://sunpride.hk/sunpride-event-spectrosynthesis/>



Figure 14. Xiyadie, *Running Away From Home* (n.d.), Paper.
<https://hyperallergic.com/51813/xiyadie-the-metamorphosis-of-a-butterfly/>



Figure 15. Xiyadie, *Gardening* (n.d.), Paper. <https://hyperallergic.com/51813/xiyadie-the-metamorphosis-of-a-butterfly/>



Figure 16. Xiyadie, *Sneaking Around* (n.d.), Paper.
<https://hyperallergic.com/51813/xiyadie-the-metamorphosis-of-a-butterfly/>



Figure 17. Xiyadie, *Door Indoor Outdoor* (2017), Paper. Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei. (In *Spectrosynthesis – Asian LGBTQ Issues and Art Now*, edited by Yuki Pan, Sean C.S. Hu, et al. Taipei: Taipei Culture Foundation, 2017)



Figure 18. Xiyadie, (2017) Paper. Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei.
<http://sunpride.hk/sunpride-event-spectrosynthesis/>

COUNTRY OF BIRTH	% OF PARTICIPANTS
Taiwan	41
Mainland China	27
Hong Kong	14
Singapore	9
United States	9

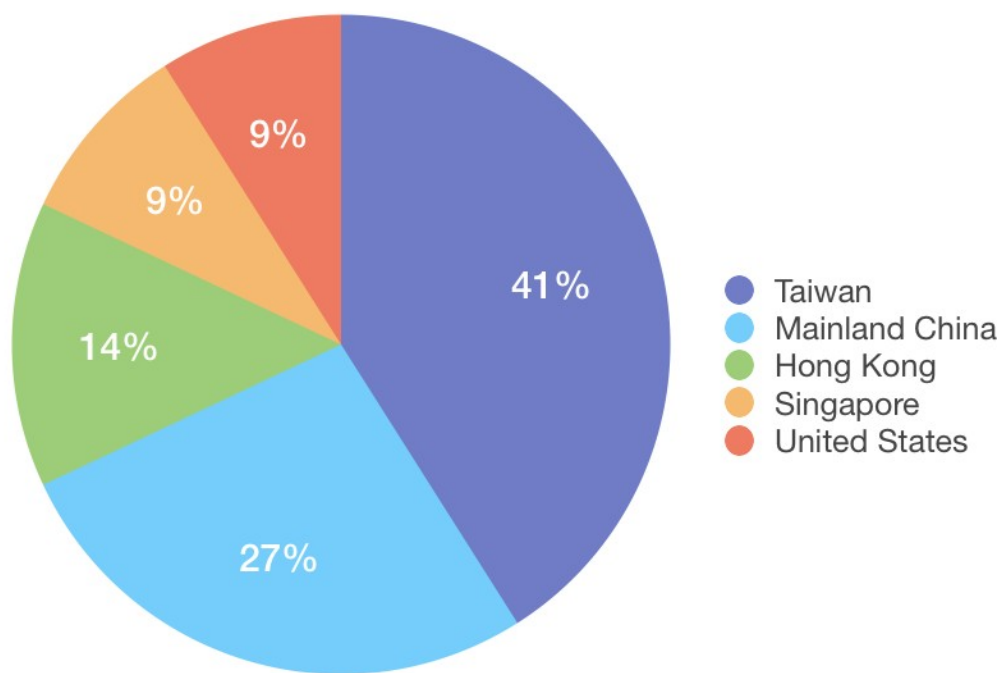


Figure 19. Pie Chart showing “Spectrosynthesis” participants by country of birth. Chart by the author.

GENDER OF ARTISTS	% OF PARTICIPANTS
Male	81
Female	14
Transgender	5

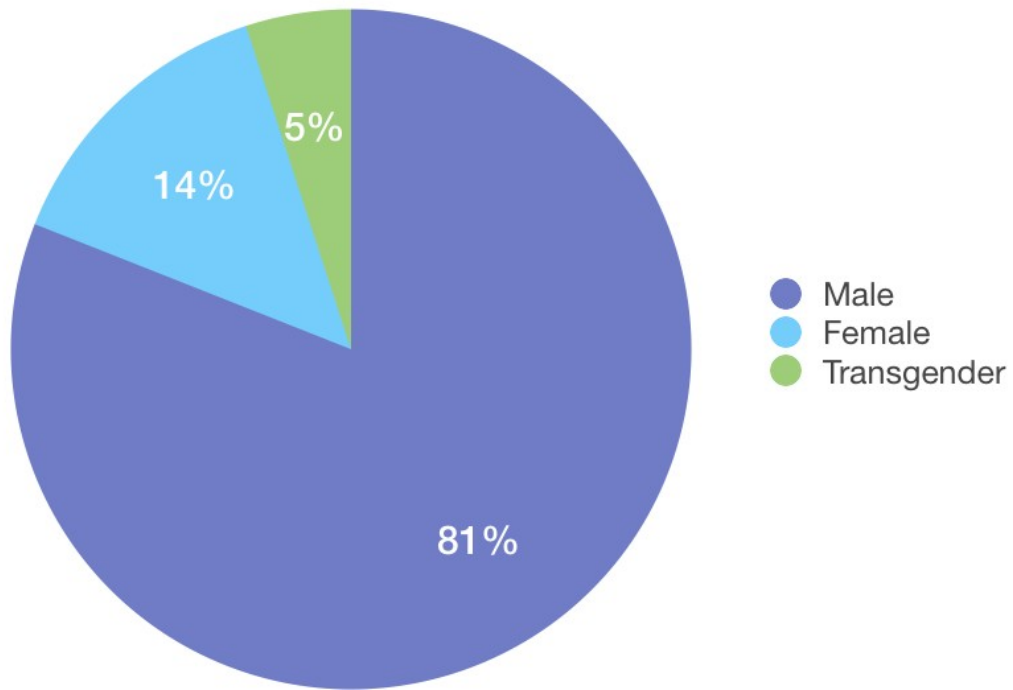


Figure 20. Pie Chart showing “Spectrosynthesis” participants by gender. Chart by the author.

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