

The Integral Map: My Taipei

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The process of creating art is similar to the quest for the Holy Grail, where the portfolio of creativity reflects the artist's life contexts. Through works developed from maps and cartographical concepts, I reach into my own past and attempt to locate my present position as well as to survey and navigate my future. Mapping is a recurring operative metaphor in my work, and like these maps, my creative condition also occupies a border position: simultaneously of reality and of fantasy; both subjective and objective; of the past, and of the future. It comes from the known and points to the unknown, with certainty or uncertainty; it is a process as well as an end. Mono-directional or interactive in its projection and reception, it embodies knowledge content, and includes emotional experience. It is abstract and representational. It is in our (human) vernacular, as well as being a text of the world. Maps take me on journeys to learn about the world, and the paintings I've developed from maps upon my return convey concepts of images within an image. The spaces that the images in my work signify are spaces within a space; the time that it concerns is a period of time within time.

Maps serve as a foundation for me, the practical function of maps as a directional guide leads me to an understanding of existing environs and of known information, while enabling the exploration of unknown realms and new knowledge. The *Taipei Series* represent my life in Taipei. They are not only relevant to the geographical location of my abode, but also reveal my psychological and emotional position while connected intimately to issues of concern to me. These works not only depict the geography of Taipei and an emotional map of where I live, but also point to my depictions of the cartography of power (school, gallery, gender, and politics). Through the act of illustration, I understand my own location and reclaim powers of dominion, space, and gender. Mercator's famed world map (1595) may be full of distortions and inaccuracies, yet it remains -- with various corrections and adjustments -- the basis for map that we still use today. The world maps we read are actually a type of projection of this world, and the Taipei maps that I illustrate are my projection of Taipei. I use them to explain how the self in Taipei has become the self I am today.

My life in Taipei is the creative subject and content in the artistic concept for the *Taipei Series*. The city of Taipei (specific to my artistic pursuits and development) also serves as a position from which I recognize and understand the world. My work does not focus on describing my artistic pursuits and developments; on the contrary, these processes are taken as a method of observation. I use my archive of cartographic information as a foundation from which to discover and create a systematic sense of visual imagery, to build new artistic knowledge through this process of creative study, and to open up new conclusions and possibilities (as opposed to the scientific pursuit of knowledge which seeks solutions). I do not portray scenes from the destination (nor of a subject), but create a map of it. This perspective maybe subjective and distant, but it nevertheless reflects a certain emotionality and connection with a destination. I do not directly portray characters, but the maps, charts, and signs in the works hint at human (my) activities. Though my work has often been described as pure rationality, or even a little cold, the reality is that the places, events, and objects I depict time and again reveal human applications and social actions. The works in the *Taipei Series* may be defined as a creative study into the nature of visual lexicons and possible representations of reality.

In the process of creating the *Taipei Series*, the practical functions of maps, as an indicator of geographical directions and spatial concepts, served as a starting point from which I explored an urban location (Taipei) and studied a new environment. I gradually realized through creative practice and study that, what is truly meaningful and produces meaning in the overall creative process is not the arrival at a finish line (completing a work) as indicated on a map, nor is it the speed or posture at which one arrives at destination. On the contrary, I began to understand the interactions along the way with people, events, and objects, as well as one's own process of contemplating the journey on a whole, are equally important. The maps of Taipei I create concern contemplations on locations, stories, and meanings. They are my life's map of Taipei, as well as my maps of creativity. By creating maps of Taipei, I reveal my emotions regarding living in Taipei as I explore my relationship to the city in which I live and work, and convey both the real and the emotive geographies of Taipei through my observations. At forty there is clarity in both emotion and consequence. Creating these maps is a retrospective act of reexamining one's past. A large part of the so-called "My Taipei" points to my path of artistic pursuit since my university days, as well as the sights and sounds I've encountered along the way. And where I have a foothold now responds to a personal life course, as well as reveals my various subtle relationships with the realities of Taipei City.