

The Sieve, Nets and Everything *

My paintings do not mimic the visible appearance of things, but I seek to make vivid underlying connections between things. I am interested in how the stability of geometric structures in paintings, combined with transparent colours in a fluid relationship to light, can create an ambient relationship with the natural world.

I have found a strong connection in the way that some traditional Chinese courtyard gardens encourage expansive relationships with the surroundings through ambiguous spatial contrasts. All the man-made elements in the garden are bound into reflective correspondence with nature. The lattice geometries of windows between these inside and outside environments provide openings to see through, while drawing subtle connections to unifying patterns of light and shade. These lattice shapes draw light visually as patterns of circulation, and one becomes aware of seeing into things in an inclusive manner.

I see this intention echoed in cultural forms wherever I look, where the universality of geometric structures connect elements which are otherwise in contrast or conflict, encouraging philosophical speculation. This understanding of metaphor has been transmitted in painting and poetry in every culture throughout recorded history. For instance, linking observations of natural phenomena to social conditions.

I understand for artists, making room for our ancestors to speak to us through our work, does not necessarily mean our own family, because we all belong to a larger framework. I think you learn a lot by observing natural phenomena everywhere, especially in nature, where living patterns are not disturbed. You can apply this knowledge to painting. This is really a very simple idea. So that style is not an issue and you do not need to work hard to challenge tradition; you are already in the tradition of 'seeing'. You have to keep on working, not only because you want to keep learning, but because you should not let go of the net that you are creating.

*Sieve (箕) and Net (罟) refer to star constellations, ref: 'The Book of Songs'

