A Photographic Investigation of Simulated Realities in Hong Kong’s Urban Landscape

A Project submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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The simulacrum is never what hides the truth – it is truth that hides the fact that there is none. The simulacrum is true.

(Baudrillard 1994, p.1)
Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the dissertation is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

Sun Lo-Chuan, 2015
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Abstract:

This practice-led research project is a photographic investigation into the artistic, visual simulations and their effect on the perception of the urban landscape in the city of Hong Kong. Specifically, the research project investigates how and why large photographic simulations of natural imagery are used within the urban environment to present an alternative or idealized view of a specific space or place. The project aims to produce a series of photographic artworks, which not only document examples of this urban phenomena, but which also consider how the use of images of simulated realities changes both the perception and reception of the urban landscape. The visual outcomes of this research project will be accompanied by a dissertation that examines the existence and construction of simulacra, and the visual relationship between the simulations and their urban surroundings.

In the densely populated city of Hong Kong, manufactured/imitative simulations, in the form of digital photographic reproductions, have been commonly and widely used for civic and commercial beautification or concealment purposes, gradually shaping and altering our urban landscape. Saturated with large and out-of-scale images of nature such as trees, sky, leaves or grass, digital reproductions on development hoardings, in particular, seem to create some incoherent, yet desirable, images of nature with the surrounding urban spaces. These paradoxical realities, created usually by shoddy and poorly manufactured printed reproductions, challenge our perception and reception of the urban landscape. The image simulations push the conceptual boundary between the real and the unreal to such an extent that the seen and the experienced in everyday living is put in a state of ambiguity, uncertainty and suspense.

Keywords: simulacra, simulated realities, urban landscape, space, place
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Chapter One: Introduction

Every image is to be seen as an object and every object is an image. Hence photography ranks high in the order of surrealist creativity because it produces an image that is a reality of nature, namely, a hallucination that is also a fact.

(Bazin 1996, p.93)
Landscape is a ‘shaped land’ that could be seen and imagined. It is a human construct that is seen and depicted in our mind. Human geographer and scholar Denis Cosgrove (1948–2008) defines landscape as

*the external world mediated through subjective human experience in a way that neither region nor area immediately suggest.’ It is not ‘merely the world we see, it is a construction, a composition of that world. Landscape is a way of seeing.* (Cosgrove 1984, p.13).

Notable anthropologist and author Tim Ingold (b. 1948) believes that all seeing is entirely ‘imagining’ and he asserts that ‘to perceive a landscape is therefore to imagine it’ (Ingold 2012, p.2). For people living in a modern urban society where artificial structures occupy a large percentage of the space, organic and natural elements in the landscape could be perceived as having another meaning and definition to perceive. In Hong Kong, presentations of image simulacra of nature have gradually gained prominence in the urban landscape, becoming an integral part of the city.

In contrast to the traditional use of real plants to simulate the natural environment for the purposes of urban beautification or concealment, the everyday visual experiences of seeing temporary manufactured prints of nature construct the reception and perception of the city landscape in a different way. As a resident photographer in the city, I am constantly observing changes in the local urban landscape. A primary aim of this studio-based research project is to investigate how the usage and the placement of these photographic image simulations can change a person’s experience of the urban environment.
During stage one of the project, I documented and investigated how these image reproductions of simulated realities of nature visually interact with the immediate urban space. Photographic experimentations were conducted to explore the visual relationship between the manufactured/imitative reality created by the image print and the reality of the existing urban space around it.

Stage two of the project involved active interventions in the relationship between the simulated reality of the image reproduction and the reality of the existing urban space. A set of image simulacra of nature were photographed, printed and placed at selected sites as a way of creating fictional realities to further explore and interrogate the relationship.

The project culminated with the exhibition *More Real than Real* at Elephant Studio, Fotan, New Territories, Hong Kong, 2015, consisting of a selection of twelve colour photographs from the two stages of the project, represented as captured manufactured realities of nature and constructed simulated realities. Both stages were sub-divided into categories of perceptual spaces defined by the way I observed, experienced and photographed the spaces occupied by both the visual simulated realities of nature and their adjacent environment – determined as being the Open Space, the Closed Space, and the Inverted Space.

Informed by theoretical analysis and an investigation of other related artists’ practices, the two stages in the research project formed a trajectory of the practical research. The major difference between the two stages was the extent of intervention in the making of the visual simulated realities appearing in the selected urban sites. In the first stage, the visual simulated...
images of nature printed on the hoardings of construction sites were all found and pre-existing. In the stage two, they were photographed, printed and eventually placed by me as an artistic act of intervention.

In the process of producing photographic artworks that reflected the observed phenomenon, conventional photography was conducted with no physical adjustment or alteration of the target subjects, namely the printed images of nature, the foreground and background of the hoardings where the image simulacrum was situated. I used a direct photographic documentation of the actual condition of how the image simulacrum was presented in the urban space. This non-interventionist approach enabled me to produce research outcomes that totally reflected the reality of the co-existing realities and unrealities. The resulting photographic artworks chiefly expressed my artistic reflection and interpretation in response to perceiving the manufactured realities in urban spaces. The second stage, on the other hand, was characterized by the act of intervention to create varied visual and spatial relationships of the images of simulated nature and the surrounding urban space, allowing greater extent of control over the selection of the sites to be photographed, the contents and physical conditions of the visual simulations of nature that suit my research intentions and artistic creativity as a photographic artist.

A primary focus of the project was to research how and why the simulated images of nature appear and the ways they are used on selected sites within the city. The outcome of this project was the production of a new series of photographic images that reflect and respond to the images of simulated nature appearing in selected urban spaces that form the focus of the research.
Throughout the project, I aim to ensure that all my works respond to traditional photography as a way of representing the chosen subject matter, while exploring the capabilities and limitations of digital devices and photography as an art form.

The research project presents a visual recording of what is disappearing and reappearing, in relation to change in technologies and our ever-changing perceptual adoption of the external world. The visual outcomes consequently express photographically the tendency towards the use of simulations in constructing the urban landscape, and their capacity for changing our perception of an increasingly urbanized environment. The project artistically and philosophically contributes to a new body of knowledge in the field of urban landscape photography and the conception of simulated realities.
The Research Questions:

The project aimed to investigate three questions concerning the presentations of photographic simulations of nature-imagery in the Hong Kong urban landscape and the artistic and technological capabilities for reproducing the simulations:

1. In what way(s) does the use and placement of photographic simulations of images of nature influence the perception and reception of the urban landscape?

2. How can the development of a new series of photographic images express the psychological conditions that result from the use of photographic simulations of nature in a range of urban contexts?

3. What are the artistic and technological capabilities and limitations of photography as a way of simulating a simulation of reality already existing in the urban landscape?
About the Exegesis

The exegesis articulates two concurrent research activities:

a) Practice-led research

The practice-led research aimed to explore, produce and consolidate a new series of digital photographic images. This was realized through a range of on-site photographic field trips that investigated and documented the nature-based image reproductions installed on construction site hoardings, and the physical surrounding urban environment. The physical sites which accord to the project’s research aims and performing the photography tasks were identified, selected and photographed. The type of image contents printed on the hoardings were also identified and categorized. In this part of the project, there was no direct intervention to the subject-matter to be photographed, and the choice of camera angle was limited by the physical and geographical environment of the selected sites. The second stage of the visual research involved a focus on the production of the image contents of the hoardings’ reproductions as well as the sites. The aim was to examine the potential visual and spatial impacts and psychological variation of the idealized relationship between the constructed simulated reality of nature and the urban surroundings.
b) Contextual research

Contextual research outlines the extensive academic and scholarly research, and the subsequent analysis of selected artists and theories that connect to this project’s artwork production. Bibliographic research of publications, artists’ practice, artworks, both photographic and in other media demonstrates both the relevance of this project as important research, and the critical engagement in the related field of enquiry.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter 2: Project Methodology

This chapter outlines and discusses the various research methodologies that inform the site exploration, theoretical and contextual analysis and practice-led photographic activities throughout the research process. The methodologies applied guide and reinforce the implementation of my intentions, ideas, and decisions to ensure a practice-led approach to the research.

The project commenced with casual visits as a way of an heuristic enquiry within the city to various areas of interest – specifically sites where printed images that suggest visual realities have been introduced. These visits allowed me to observe individual locations and the subsequent placement of visual simulations. This observation and exploration process evoked memories, personal experiences and reflection on how visual simulations intervene in the appearance
of the urban landscape, informing my decision on choosing a specific image subject for the project that has cultural influence and visual impact on the landscape for the project. This cyclic process of heuristic enquiry throughout all the research trips contributed to the determination of “images of nature” as the only target subject for an investigation of visual simulations appearing in the urban landscape, the identification and selection of photographically suitable and accessible sites; the artistic approach to visualize the altered landscape by simulations, and consequently the selection of photographs for exhibition. Empirical data was gathered during the enquiries, observations and reflections, helping to support a more informed decision making process in the identification of sites for photographing.

Critical discourse analysis determined the scope of in–depth contextual, theoretical and artistic texts by artists and photographers on interpretations and construction of simulated realities. The reflective methodologies that were utilized in the research project also informed the need for categorizing effective visual explorations and creative photographic productions on the relationship between visual simulations and their immediate urban environment.

Empirical Enquiry enabled how visual experience was gathered during the exploration and investigation of the sites that informed the determination of target sites in the research project.
Lastly, the phenomenological process of continuous enquiry through self-awareness and perceptual experiences led to a discovery and subsequent realization that both the ontological status of nature, and the perception of images of nature, vary in different ways based on visualizations of simulated realities of nature of different sites. Both editorial and creative photography are performed as documentation and interpretation of such variations.

Chapter 3: Reproducing the Manufactured

This chapter situates the project into the relevant conceptual, theoretical and historical meanings of urban landscape simulations, and the field of fine art and photography. It examines and analyzes ideas of reproduction and representation by scholars from Greek philosopher Plato’s comments on art as mere imitation to contemporary French social theorist Jean Baudrillard’s ideas of simulacrum and simulation in modern consumer society. Through this analysis, the chapter discusses specifically how this lineage of theoretical ideas informed the research, specifically the decision-making, experimentations and explorations during the production of artworks in the project.

This chapter also discusses the visual experience of interacting with a variety of appearances of the image-saturated visual realities in the city, and analyzes how the city’s emerging proliferation of photographic simulations are used as a replacement of the natural landscape. The chapter also investigates the potential realization and actualization of Baudrillard’s hyperreality in contemporary Hong Kong’s urban environment, evidenced by the
wide and increasing use of manufactured and simulative realities of nature in the city, in exchange for natural space which is disappearing. Developed from the empirical analysis of producing the visual outcomes in Stage One, this investigation formed the basis of how stage two unfolded, focusing on the intervention to imitatively construct a near hyper-real state of simulation, thereby raising awareness of the urban condition.

*Reproducing the Manufactured* introduces the first stage of discovery and investigation experiences of the various site visits of construction locations, and discusses how the theoretical texts by a number of contemporary writers about simulated reality and space production inform the process of locating, observing, selecting and categorizing the type of images of nature and their relative environment.

Through further critical discourse analysis on the artistic texts by a number of art practitioners – for example, Australian painter Jeffrey Smart’s (1921–2013) mysterious depictions of the urban environment, and British Surrealist photographer Bill Brandt’s (1904–1983) photographic illusionistic imageries of subjects, the chapter discusses the technical approaches required to photograph and document selected sites and existing simulative images of nature in relation with its surrounding urban scenery. The discussions include how artistic and photographic decisions during the production were made to illustrate and reflect my experience of the urban space and interpretations as a fine art photographer.
Finally this chapter also explores how the sites were selected through an awareness of the integration of photographic simulations, and the taxonomic identification of three visual spaces – Open, Closed, and Inverted – as a way of responding to investigations. The chapter will outline the constraints of mere photographic documentation and interpretation of the visual simulations as an observer to analyze the peculiar conflicting relationship between reality and unreality co-existing in our modern urban environment in Hong Kong, and the need to extend enquiry in the research through the development of more active involvement of photographing the phenomenon.

Chapter 4: From Documenting to Intervening

*From Documenting to Intervening* marks the beginning of stage two of the project. Identified through the research as a major contributor to the practice and philosophy of interventionist art, German sculptor-photographer Thomas Demand’s (b. 1964) works will be thoroughly examined for his unique approach to re-constructing realities as an intervening means through which to create in his photographic works. In addition to Demand’s work, an analysis of French multi-media artist Pierre Huyghe’s (b. 1962) fictional reality will reinforce the relevance of this project and situate it within a contemporary community of practice. The selecting of subject matters for the image simulacra used in stage two will be discussed.

Chapter 5: Simulating the Simulated

*Simulating the Simulated* explains the process of actual production of stage-two artwork which demonstrated the intervening characteristic as determined in Chapter four: Reproducing the
way the simulated realities are presented in the local environment. The selection of the two specific sites that satisfy and enable the reproduction of the criteria --- foreground/background in relation to the image simulacrum and the subsequent visual spaces of Open, Closed, and Inverted will be discussed.

Chapter 6: Project Conclusions

This last chapter marks the end of the research project, providing conclusions resulting from the practice-led research. The chapter discusses how the photographic activities set in both stages of the research project work as a functioning epistemological enquiry to explore the visual, spatial and cultural relationship between the appearance of simulated realities and Hong Kong’s urban landscape through undertaking the investigation and experimentation of realizing the formation of a hyper-real world.
Chapter Two: Project Methodology

Each answer remains in force as answer only as long as it is rooted in questioning.

Martin Heidegger (Fried 2008, p.1)
A Photographic Investigation of Simulated Realities in Hong Kong’s Urban Landscape was a practice-led research project involving specific practice-based art making and research activities, ultimately producing a new series of photographic artworks for a final exhibition. Through a range of interlinked methodologies, the project investigated, explored, and responded to specific sites and locations within the city of Hong Kong, revealing the modification and intervention of the use of visual simulated realities on the urban landscape. Specifically, the research aimed to explore the spatial and visual relationship between the presentation of both visual simulations and their immediate surrounding urban environment.

The aim of the project was to create a body of photographic artworks that responded to the intervention of visual simulations (images of nature) that influence perceptions toward Hong Kong’s urban landscape. The research sought to identify, categorize and photograph sites and subject matter that responded to the altered urban landscape by simulations through a series of field trips and site visits to those of highly commercialized districts where visual simulations of nature are more evident and concentrated for investigation and exploration. The process of discovery, exploration, response and reflection during defined field trips formed a trajectory of artistic and scholarly inquiry that persisted throughout the research. The use of specific methodologies was not linear. Instead, the visualization of the presentation of image simulacrum of nature in the urban landscape was made by the most suitable and comprehensive methodologies available.

The project was conducted through four specific arts-based and practice-led research methodologies:

1. Heuristic enquiry
2. Critical Discourse Analysis
3. Empirical Analysis
4. Phenomenological art making processes

Heuristic Enquiry

Heuristic or ‘Heuristik’ in German, means ‘to discover’ or ‘to find out.’ Heuristic enquiry is a research method utilized to investigate human experience through a process of a continuous cycle of discovery, exploration, observation, experimental practice, and self-reflection. This cyclic process of enquiry and awareness aims to discover, improve or revise the ways of conducting the research through a systematic framework. Awareness of what and how to observe increased gradually as the research progressed.

Specific to this project, heuristic enquiry was most relevant in the selection of subject matter of simulation, and sites and location. To determine the target subject for the research project investigating the simulated realities in Hong Kong’s urban environment, a series of interconnected/connected tasks were devised.

1. Determining the exact subject for the practice-led aspects of the research project.

   - Non-nature content as subject matter: those image simulacra that illustrated all imageries and subjects except nature. Being visually similar to the surrounding urban landscape, non-nature related simulacra did not demonstrate substantial visual contrast and confrontation that suggested any significance to continue the investigation in the research.
2. The exploration of the target – the image simulacra of nature (both nature only and the combination of both) in terms of their representation in the simulation:

- Nature as subject matter: Due to their nature-related green colour and their effect in connecting the imagination of people to nature, image simulacra of nature provided significant visual contradiction to the artificiality of the dense urban environment in Hong Kong.

- A combination of non-nature and nature: This mixture of natural elements and other elements also induced a similar response as nature only subject matter.

2. The exploration of the target – the image simulacra of nature (both nature only and the combination of both) in terms of their representation in the simulation:

- Nature in Graphics: those image simulacra of nature that were in graphical and symbolic representation. They were also simulations of nature, however, their meticulous and careful design through symbolic representations of nature visually resonated with urban forms. Similar in appearance with those non-nature subjects, these artificial and non-realistic representations of nature did not contrast with the surrounding urban space.

- Nature in Photographs: those image simulacra of nature that were in photographic representation, and this type of visual representation of nature demonstrated significant visual contrast with the urban landscape. They possessed substantial potential for exploration and investigation of the presentation of the simulated realities in the urban space and the photographing of them to produce research outcomes.

Based on the implementation of the two tasks, the image of nature as the subject matter of simulation for exploration was determined, and the sites/places where the image simulacrum of nature was mostly presented was identified through continuous observation and exploration. This
reflective approach is heavily evident in Chapter Three – *Reproducing the Manufactured*. This chapter outlines the awareness of the presentation of image simulacrum of nature being a increasingly distinctive, but peculiar, phenomenon in Hong Kong’s urban landscape. The chapter also describes the identification and categorization of the specific target sites where the image simulacrum of nature in photography was found, and discusses the research effort to inform the photographing of the simulated realities in the sites:

- Urban Parks
- Construction sites

**Sites as reference: Critical Discourse Analysis**

Critical discourse analysis was used to inform the photographing of the selected sites and determine the sites for stage two’s photographic exploration in the project. An analysis of the historical and contemporary writers, artists and photographers and their contribution to simulacra and urban landscape was undertaken to reveal the significances of colour, scale and position/place of the simulacrum at the sites. The contrast between the image simulacrum, which were printed in brilliant and saturated colour, and the surrounding collective colour of the urban environment generated a response from the viewers. The relative size of the image simulacrum with its foreground objects and/or background urban space produced, created visual and psychological tension, changing perception of the overall urban landscape in front of the viewers. In each sites, the roles of the image simulacrum acting as a background of objects in front, or as a foreground itself of the urban landscape or both also revealed a different appearance of the city, perceived by the viewers.
Sites as reference: Empirical analysis

Empirical analysis was used to determine the criteria for the selection of sites, and the photographic approach to visualize the presentation of the image simulacrum in the urban landscape. Complemented by the intellectual and artistic inputs through heuristic enquiry and critical discourse analysis, empirical analysis is a research methodology using empirical evidence (empirical data – photographic images in this case). It is a way of gaining knowledge by means of direct and indirect observation and experience. English cultural scholar Raymond Williams suggests that the term empirical (with empiric) is rooted in the sixteenth century. In Latin, empeirikos meaning to ‘trial’ or ‘experiment’ and the general modern sense indicates ‘a reliance on observed experience, but almost everything depends on how experience is understood, interchangeable with experiment’ (Williams 1976, p.99). Through a set of criteria induced from observation and experience in the field trips, suitable sites were determined where to photograph in both stages in the research project.

Empirical analysis, as a methodology, informs on how I sought to identify sites, and determine suitable approaches to visualize the presentation of the image simulacrum in the urban landscape through a set of criteria:

1) the defined role of the image simulacrum as background or foreground in the urban space.
2) the visual space conceived through photographic framing of the image simulacrum and the urban surrounding.
This identification of the positional role of each image simulacrum at the selected sites enabled me to determine where to photograph, what to photograph and the techniques used to photograph. Also, the methodology allowed me to observe changes in perception towards the representation of the image simulacrum of nature, when the image simulacrum acted as a background with objects in front obscuring, or as foreground obscuring the urban background.

In the research process, the informed photographic framing also discovered another categorizing of specific visual spaces conceived through the image simulacrum in relation with its urban background. The specific spatial relationship between the simulated reality and the immediate urban background space, created by the specific framing, were identified, classified and characterized as Open/Closed/Inverted Spaces, subsequently informing the photographing of the final research outcomes.

*Open Space:* A visual space conceived when the image simulacrum was framed with a large open urban landscape background at the site. The presentation of the image simulacrum of nature produced a positive but surrogate effect.

*Closed Space:* A visual space conceived when the image simulacrum of nature or urban objects, were framed in a way that either the image simulacrum or any surrounding urban objects occupied the entire pictorial plain, producing a deceptive effect.

*Inverted Space:* This visual space shares similarity with the Open Space except that the openness of the reality of the urban background is the simulacrum, the reality itself. The image simulacrum of nature is acting as a *trompel’oeil*, producing illusionistic and deceitful visual effect.
Sites as location of enquiry: Phenomenological methodology

Phenomenology is a methodology that ‘focuses attention on the deeply embedded frameworks of tacitly known, take-for-granted assumptions through which humans make sense of their lives (Yanow 2006, p.15) Phenomenologists believe that meaning-making and understanding take place in the everyday world of the individual. Reality consists of objects and events as they are perceived in human consciousness, not independent of it. It is constituted by ‘an intentional interpretation of our sense perceptions...against a backdrop of pre-existing conceptual categories derived from life experience in interaction with others’ (Yanow 2006, p.12).

This methodology was critical to the undertaking of this research project. A series of discoveries throughout the research project revealed new and different ways of seeing the image simulacrum of nature in the city. Two major discoveries were experienced: The role change of each image simulacrum – being a background or foreground or both influenced the perception of the simulacrum, and the visual spaces conceived by the framing. Due to a discovery that the use of the image simulacrum in the parks was actually related to the construction activities, the urban park sites were completely rejected as potential target for the selection of the sites in stage two.

Phenomenological processes emphasize how one approaches, perceives and senses the investigating environment, inducing experiences and memories of it. This methodology embraces the importance of open-mindedness, minimizing any pre-determination and judgment of what may possibly be encountered during the site visits and field trips. This experience of an open
mentality allows the full spectrum of possibilities and discovery of subject matter and their relationship with the nearby environment. Instead of being equipped with prior experiences and learned information, the absence of knowing the sites enabled my bodily senses and self-awareness to engage in phenomenological observations and appreciation of the sites encountered and consciously responded to.

...the ability to enter into lived experience and perspective of the other person, to stand not only in their shoes, but also in the emotional body – to see the world with their eyes. This requires not only empathy for the other, but the ability to make an imaginative and intuitive leap into their world (Hawkins 1988, p.63).

Over the research period of four years (2011-15), with little prior knowledge, most of the site visits were executed through randomly walking around areas of interests in the city like a humble flâneur, wandering ‘here and there.’ This attitude of exploring the city allowed me to see the city I grew up in – usually a taken-for-granted reality from different, possibly new perspectives. The choice of transportation and the time of the visit during the day usually yielded unexpected and surprising encounters with simulations. Occasionally, some unplanned car or bus trips, or impulsive night trips to some random place around the city were made, allowing me to spot and observe simulated nature imageries from a variety of perspectives. Also, a large number of repeated site visits and photographic field trips were being continuously made to cope with the constant changes in ideas and new interpretations informed by concurrent theoretical research. This phenomenological approach allowed me as a photographer and resident to artistically and intellectually photograph the urban environment.
Walking is the best way to explore and exploit the city; the changes, shifts, breaks in the cloud helmet, movement of light on water. Drifting purposefully is the recommended mode, tramping asphalted earth in alert reverie, allowing the fiction of underlying pattern to reveal itself (Sinclair 1997, p.4).

The outcome of this methodology enabled the identification of a two-stage process. This realization led to stage two of which a number of photographic outcome would result from the intervention as a way of investigating the impact of simulated realities in urban landscape – that is, by simulating photographically the constructed simulated reality.

**Stage One (Manufactured Reality)**

Editorial photo-documentation of sites where photographic simulations were discovered, observed, and explored. The discussion on the discovery and exploration in Chapter three highlighted this first stage of the entire research. Photographic interpretation of the three selected categories of urban sites with pre-determined criteria for selecting and photographing the sites. The photographic simulations contacted were considered ‘manufactured’ realities for its unfitting contents and environmental misplacement.

**Stage Two (Simulated Reality)**

Stage two consisted of photographic simulation of pre-manufactured photographic simulations with selected textures of natural elements (i.e. Sky for Atmospheric, Sea for Oceanic, and land for Surface) in selected urban sites.
All the methodologies used in this research enabled me to determine the target subject/subject matter for investigation and the suitable and relevant urban sites for exploration with informed criteria. It also assisted with the development of a trajectory of constant cyclical processes of discovery, exploration, photographic practices and reflection, and in acquiring appropriate artistic and photographic approaches to depicting and visualizing the selected sites, ultimately providing visual outcomes culminating in the final exhibition.
Chapter Three: Reproducing the Manufactured

For it is another nature that speaks to the camera rather than to the eye.

(Benjamin 2008, p.558)
The Simulacrum and the Urban Landscape

Central to the exploration of simulated realities in Hong Kong’s urban landscape is a comprehension of several key philosophical terms; ‘Simulacrum,’ ‘Space,’ ‘Place’ and ‘Urban Landscape’ which set the research scope of the project, and provided a way of identifying and photographing the sites.

The term ‘simulacrum’, Latin *simul’crum* from *simulare*, meaning to make like, to simulate and ‘simulacra’ being the plural form, refers to ‘an image or a representation of something or somebody’, ‘a vague or superficial likeness or an imperfect imitation,’ and an image of assumption of ‘outward qualities or appearance of (something), usually with an intent to deceive’ (Allen 2000, p.1305). Being a model of reality, instead of a copy, the notion of simulacrum is increasingly embraced with certain positivism or optimism towards its presentation in a media-dominated post-modern world. It is more received in contemporary era, and it no longer necessarily implies negation. Instead, since the 1960s when vast amounts of signs and images produced by media gradually dominated modern culture, critics and philosophers began to rethink or even revive the idea of simulation and simulacrum. New scholarly interpretations on the term emerged (Nelson & Shiff 1996).

In the 1980s, French Marxist Sociologist Jean Baudrillard (1929–2007) utilized the term to explain his controversial ideas concerning the coming existence of hyperreality in a modern society that is highly mediated by technologies. In his book *Simulacra and Simulation* (1994), Baudrillard offered a way of seeing our modern society as full of excessive signs
and images that jeopardized the idea of reality. He argued that a simulacrum was an image with no origin.

He believed a simulacrum simply holds no truth of what it represents because the simulacrum is the truth and the reality itself. Baudrillard suggested a four phase representation, with the last order eloquently summing up his theory of simulation and the hyper-reality:

*It has no relationship to any reality whatsoever: it is its own simulacrum.*

(Baudrillard 1994, p.7)

Baudrillard strongly asserted that a hyper-real society was being constituted by the increasing amount of simulacra, implying a total collapse in meanings of signs and symbols. A society becomes a total fabrication of reality that is empty in meaning.

A relatively positive response to the notion of simulacrum was explored by French philosopher Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995) in the book *The Simulacrum and Ancient Philosophy*, published in 1967. In an attempt to ‘reverse Platonism,’ Deleuze argued that the simulacrum could be a positive power by which to perceive reality. To Deleuze, a copy is ‘an image endowed with resemblance’ while simulacrum is ‘an image with resemblance,’ (Deleuze 1990, p.257) and he strongly argued that:

*the simulacrum is not a degraded copy. It harbors a positive power which denies the original and the copy, the model and the reproduction. At least*
two divergent series are internalized in the simulacrum ---neither can be assigned as the original, neither as the copy....The same and the similar no longer have an essence except as simulated, that is expressing the functioning of the simulacrum (Deleuze 1990, 262).

Nonetheless, the notion of simulacrum was not always seen as positive in the history of representation. In the chapter Simulacrum in Critical Terms for Art History, art historian Michael Camille eloquently describes that simulacrum has been ‘denigrated as its negation’ that it has been simply considered as ‘an image without a model, lacking that crucial dependence upon resemblance or similitude, the simulacrum is a false claimant to being which calls to question the ability to distinguish between what is real and what is represented’ (Nelson & Shiff 1996, p.31). The worst as in classical tradition, a simulacrum was considered as merely a bad imitation of the appearance of reality. The simulacrum was simply a ‘phantasm’ or ‘semblance’ of the true reality, specific terms used by celebrated Greek philosopher Plato, in attempt to distinguish ‘essence from appearance, intelligible to sensible, and idea from image’ (Plato 1992, p.282). In his famous dialectics of The Republic, Plato claimed that imitations by artists did not represent any truth. The artworks were merely the appearance of the truth being imitated instead of the truth itself. Thus, he strongly argued that imitation was just ‘phantom’ which was ‘far from the truth, and apparently it manages to make all things just because it attacks only a small part of each, and that an image’ (Plato 1992, p.286). Plato argued that the artist, being just an imitator, have no knowledge of reality, of ‘any value on the subjects of his imitation’ (Plato, 1992, p.290).
These manifold interpretations of the concept of simulacrum are not seen as a concern in highly commercialized Hong Kong where images and image simulacra are highly regarded as a valuable means of communication. From private to public sectors, image simulacra were used in a regular and volumetric fashion, serving extensive social and commercial functions of consumerism. Since digital imaging gained its popularity in modern consumer society, the city manufactured a large and growing amount of image simulacra, occupying all corners of city spaces. These growing number of presentations of image simulacrum not only altered the overall appearance of the urban landscape, but also influenced our perception towards the urban landscape, changing our sensitivity towards the living spaces.

To satisfy commercial consideration of property value, these interventions by business-oriented image simulations in the urban landscape do not usually take serious account of the aesthetic of the overall appearance of the urban landscape. It was a sacrifice of a livable urban environment or an ‘aesthetic–economic trade–off’ as British architect and lecturer Richard Koeck calls it (Koeck 2013, p.125). Image simulacra of nature in particular were among the most commonly used motifs in the densely populated and highly urbanized city. With their enormous size and the simulative contents of nature, these aesthetic trade–offs continuously transform the urban landscape to the extent that the city has a tendency of turning itself into a nature–theme park. A row of image simulacrum illustrating a series of out–of–scale image of unknown leaves clustered in some large windows in a building clearly demonstrate how image simulacrum is presented in an awkward manner. Its commercial slogan – “Green is All Around; It’s Just Natural” eloquently demonstrates, through the language of advertising, the
peculiarity of simulacrum in the city (Fig. 14). The slogan promoted a sense of connection to nature in the most artificial way – an image simulacrum of nature imagery. This type of ambiguous presentation of image simulacrum seems to suggest the notion of simulacrum in Hong Kong does not appear either as positive or negative for what it represents.

Together with the metaphor of Hong Kong being an ‘urban concrete jungle’ because of its numerous architectural high-rise buildings, the simulated realities created by the image reproductions of nature in the city altered the appearance of the city into a new kind of virtual forest, made up of signs and symbols of nature. Within these social spaces, the presentations of the image simulacrum and the residents daily activities are seemingly integrated and blended together harmoniously (Fig. 15) in a positive way. An image simulacrum of a grass field is utilized as a rolling blind to conceal the unpleasant interior of a garbage depot while a couple of school girls are walking by. From the imaginary natural open grass field, a simulative ‘green space’ is created in the place where human activity and the image simulacrum merge and coincide. The space conceived through the presentation of the image simulacrum of the grass field becomes meaningful as a place. Positive memories of nature by the pedestrians are recalled to reduce the relatively negative impression of the garbage depot. The place becomes concealed by memory.

The notion of space is amorphous and complicated when it comes to the idea of spatial practice. According to French social theorist, Henri Lefebvre (1901–1991), space itself is a ‘social construct’, and there is ‘an indefinite multitude of spaces, each one piled upon, or
perhaps contained within, the next: geographical, economic, demographic, sociological, ecological, political, commercial, national, continental, global. Not to mention nature’s physical space, the space of (energy) flows, and so on’ (Lefebvre 1991, p.8). Human geographer and scholar Yi-Fu Tuan (b. 1930) describes space and place as ‘basic components of the lived world; we take them for granted’ (Tuan 1977, p. 3) Tuan points out that ‘the ideas space and place require each other for definition. For security and stability of place we are aware of openness, freedom, and threat of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place’ (Tuan 1977, p.6) In his book Space and Place: Humanistic Perspective in Philosophy in Geography, Tuan points out the relationship of space and place, as place is ‘a portion of geographical space occupied by a person or thing’ and ‘center of felt value’ (Tuan 1977, p.23). To Tuan, Place is also considered as ‘space infused with human meaning’ (Tuan 1977, p.23). Tuan clearly asserts that:

place incarnates the experiences and aspirations of a people. Place is not only a fact to be explained in the broader frame of space, but it is also a reality to be clarified and understood from the perspectives of the people who have given it meaning (S. Gale and G. Olsson, p.387).

Urban residents utilize the benefit of modern imaging to appropriate ‘nature’ to satisfy their needs for natural space within the urban spaces. In the past they brought in landscape paintings to their interior living space to continue their linkage to nature in a self-deceptive way. In modern cities where natural spaces and landscape have long been destroyed and replaced by
the man-made landscape, the presentation of the image simulation of nature in the artificial environment provides an alternative natural space, even it is imaginary, changing perception of space and place. The place where the image simulacrum of nature appears and the visual conceptual spaces the image simulacrum creates in the space of the urban landscape demonstrate a still ostensible/paradoxical connection of people living in the city to nature. In The Production of Space, Lefebvre points out that natural (physical) space is ‘vanishing’, but:

\[it\ has\ not\ vanished\ purely\ and\ simply\ from\ the\ scene.\ It\ is\ still\ the\ background\ of\ the\ picture;\ as\ decor,\ and\ more\ than\ decor,\ it\ persists\ everywhere,\ and\ every\ natural\ detail,\ every\ natural\ object\ is\ valued\ even\ more\ as\ it\ takes\ on\ symbolic\ weight\ (Lefebvre\ 1991,\ p.30).\]

Some image simulacra of nature are presented as surrogates of nature, substituting nature once remembered, while other image simulacra were introduced in a deceptive manner, strategically blending the image print with real plants. These image simulacra were mostly manufactured computer generated images of nature, often fabricated with no clear sign of an original. During an early field trip gathering information on the image simulacra presented in the city for the research project, I was confronted with a large wooden hoarding at a construction site, showing a photographic image of a girl in an open field under a blue sky. It was a sunny day with a faintly blue sky above the site, and I was impressed and actually confused by the way the perfectly blue sky in the image reproduction stood side by side with the real, and seemingly less–than–desirable blue sky
above (Fig. 16). The visual and psychological boundary between the real sky and the fake sky became so indistinct that a sense of doubt arose – whether I preferred to see the ideal but fake blue sky or the imperfect but real sky. A sense of peculiarity towards the two realities also emerged in my mind. I could not help but ask myself: Where did that reflection of ‘strangeness’ come from? Since the actual sky I ‘saw’ was just an appearance of reality according to Plato, this open sky and the urban architecture were not entirely ‘real’. There was a fake-ness to it. One the other hand, the ‘fake’ beautiful blue sky and the yellow open field in the image simulacrum appeared to be realistic and certainly idealistic, and the image simulacrum became a reality itself. Was there ‘realness’ in it as well? Did I experience a state of the hyper-real? Would the ‘strangeness’ derive from the extent of the real–fake dichotomy and the ambiguous visual relationship between the simulated reality and the urban reality around it?

To explore the ‘strangeness’ experienced from the early site visits, I focused on the search for locations where image simulacrum are commonly found. I noticed that ironically, they were found in many of the urban parks in the city, especially those under construction, which heavily used image simulacrum as a way of concealing the construction area. I subsequently identified two targets for the research:

1. Urban parks with construction activities.

2. Local construction sites outside parks, due to their needs for concealment and representational beautification.
With the objective of exploring and investigating the ambiguous relationship between image simulacrum and the nearby urban spaces, I utilized my camera as an investigative tool to document and collect evidence (empirical data), responding to the presentations of the image simulacra of nature in the urban landscape at the two main categories of sites – namely Urban parks and Construction sites. As a genre of street photography, the easy handling of my 35mm camera and a portable but sturdy tripod allowed me to walk around the busy streets of the city swiftly, and to find good camera positions which best interpreted the relationship.

One of the urban park sites visited was Victoria park in Causeway Bay. Its ‘nature within nature’ phenomenon of simulation captivated my imagination as a good departure point through which to explore the notion of simulacrum. The park was under a remodeling project, and a large part of the area was sealed off for re-construction. Instead of using photographic images, pure graphics that imitate a bush-like space were used on the soft hoardings as a temporary disguise or to offer an environmentally friendly appearance (Fig. 17). The disproportionately enlarged graphical images of leaves contradicted with the natural size of the large trees, creating an illusionistic response towards this part of the landscape in the city. Baudrillard once described the essential idea of simulation as ‘to simulate is to feign to have what one does not have.’ (Baudrillard 1994, p.3) When we simulate, we are constructing something that is absent, and the simulacrum becomes a reality that is present. The graphical leaves were real. The contrast between the obvious fake-ness of the sagging site hoardings displaying artificial representation of nature and the realness of the living trees behind revealed how the pure image simulacrum that had no original at all aesthetically

Fig. 17
Sun Lo-Chuan, Victoria Park, Causeway Bay, 2013, Project archive
and physically transformed the urban park that was itself a simulation of the real natural environment. Such an awkward altering of the urban landscape provided new perspectives toward our perception and idea of simulation and the concept of an urban landscape.

Similar to the construction site in the urban parks, the installations of image simulacra of nature also became normal and common practice in many other development sites in the city. A large construction site in Tsim Sha Tsui near the Avenue of Stars was encircled with a long stretch of concrete and metal hoardings as a way of security and protection (Fig.18&19). Photographic images of bush-like subjects were utilized to cover the entire surfaces of the hoardings. At first glance, the fake bush appeared somewhat real with the background city-scape of Hong Kong island. However, when looked at for a period of time, a strange pattern emerges from the seemingly chaotic ‘organic’ bush. There was only a tiny trace of what the original could be because the image was apparently a digital collage constructed by numerous identical panels of photographed leaves. The whole image simulacrum of the bush plant represented an element of nature, and the single image was stitched up digitally forming an endless repetition. A part of the bush image or even a single leaf was real but the overall image representing the lush bush was fabricated. The man waiting at the bus stop was dwarfed by the sheer scale of the image simulacrum of the ‘bush’. Naturalness and artificiality crashed in a peculiar way. His vision was likely to be optically overwhelmed by the large print – something that is familiar, yet the presentation is unfamiliar. The ‘bush” did really exist in reality, but its transformed version forming the image simulacrum of nature being presented in the urban site of construction altered the urban landscape in the area.
Art historian Malcolm Andrews (b. 1944) suggests in his *Landscape and Western Art* that people living in the city acquire paintings or photographs of natural landscape to “supply what is missing; arguably, the more we live in towns, the higher the value of such artificial views of what we can no longer see through our windows’ (Andrews 1999, p.107). In a city where ‘nature’ is considered rare or seen far away in the distance, nature–imagery was usually a seemingly sensible choice to be introduced in the intense urbanized environment, as a way of providing the ‘missing.’

Since the site visits had commenced and photographs were made to interrogate the phenomenon and use of simulacra in the city, there was an initial awareness of the possible source of ‘peculiarity’ from the observations of the altered urban landscape by image simulacrum. The photographic documentation suggested that the sense of strangeness came from the visually ambiguous relationship between the urban landscape and the ‘nature’ motif, the unauthentic characteristic of a digital manipulation, and the imitative quality of the image simulacrum respectively. The unreal were introduced to the real. The duality of realness of the selected urban landscape and the fake–ness of the simulative nature, the digitally manipulated image and the simulacrum itself, suggested relational significance of the background urban environment. The notion of landscape became an important and integral part of the phenomenon for the investigation of the dichotomous real–fake relationship between the image simulacrum and the surrounding landscape. How is landscape, specifically urban landscape, perceived?
Landscape, with its German root – *Lanschaft* or *Lantschaft*, is ‘mediated land that has been aesthetically processed’ (Andrews 1999, p.7) and when we ‘look we are already shaping and interpreting’ (Andrews 1999, p.1). Landscape is also considered as being how people see a section of land and ‘what the viewer has selected from the land, edited and modified in accordance with certain conventional ideas about what constitutes a “good view”...’ (Andrews 1999, p.4). Art critic W.J.T. Mitchell (b. 1942) describes landscape as a cultural construct, ‘both a represented and presented space, both a signifier and a signified, both a frame and what a frame contains, both a real place and its simulacrum, both a package and the commodity inside the package’ (Michell 1994, p.5). Historian and author Simon Schama in *Landscape and Memory* gives a more philosophical translation of landscape, defined as ‘...culture before they are nature; constructs of the imagination projected onto wood and water and rock’ (Schama 1995, p.61). Human geographer Denis Cosgrove (1948–2008) suggests a relatively perceptive approach to interpreting landscape In *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*, he asserts that the idea of landscape is determined by the way we perceive it. He points out that landscape is:

> the active engagement of human subject with the material object. In other words landscape denotes the external world mediated through subjective human experience in a way that neither regions nor area immediately suggest. Landscape is not merely the world we see, it is a construction, the composition of the world. Landscape is a way of seeing the world (Cosgrove, 1984 p. 13).
Being one of the most populated and confined living spaces in the world, the perception of the urban landscape in Hong Kong is determined by how much or how willing the residents want to visually and psychologically connect. More traditional practices of using plants was gradually replaced by the less expensive and more manageable image simulacra of plants, and this way of altering the urban landscape required a new way of seeing to explore the existence of simulated realities in the urban landscape.
In search of a new form of seeing

With a focus on the two main selected categories of sites, a more systematic approach was required to undertake the exploration and visualization with photography. Through continuous and detailed observations during informed field trips, I noticed that each selected site (either urban park or construction sites) shared one particular phenomenon of presentation – a subtle visual and perceptual change in the appearance and presentation of the image simulacrum of nature. When the image simulacrum was viewed with any tangible objects (either organic plants, human artifacts or others) acting as a foreground, the image simulacrum appeared differently due to the differences in scale, proportion and between the items in the foreground and the background simulacrum. For example in (Fig. 20), when a pedestrian (acting as a temporary foreground) walked along the street near a construction site with the relatively large image simulacrum of off-scaled lawn imagery on the construction hoarding as a background, the image of lawn, appeared different due to an immediate visual and physical contradiction between the enlarged image of fresh grass and the pedestrian in terms of scale and space. The pedestrian became dwarfed and overwhelmed by the sheer size, scale and the peculiar, yet familiar, visual space of the image simulacrum. A sense of both peculiar intimidation and humour emerged, revealing an intriguing, but ambiguous, relationship between the real (the pedestrian) and the unreal (the image of lawn) when the simulacrum was presented in the urban landscape. Once the pedestrian departed from the area, the role of the image simulacrum instantly shifted, and, in turn, it became a foreground of
the construction site (part of an urban landscape). The perception towards the image of lawn changed accordingly as it became a tool for the purpose of beautification and concealment. This constant change in role of being a background or foreground, in either temporary or prolonged fashion, contributed to an important discovery of the presentation of the image simulacrum in the city – the role or geographical positioning of the image simulacrum at the specific site. Three scenarios were identified accordingly becoming a useful criterion to inform the photographing of the phenomenon:

1. Acting as a background: when any object or being is situated in front of the image simulacrum, whether temporarily or permanently, the image simulacrum serves as a background interacting with the foreground subjects.

2. Acting as a foreground: when there is no object or being situated in front of the image simulacrum, whether temporarily or permanently, the image simulacrum serves as a foreground of the urban landscape behind.

3. Acting as background and foreground simultaneously: when there is an object or being situated in front or behind at the same time, the image simulacrum serves in a dual role.

In another construction site in the Tsim Sha Tsui park area, the developer deliberately placed a number of live potted mini trees in front of two image simulations of assorted natural imagery to disguise its chaotic working space and also fence off possible intruders to the construction area (Fig. 21). Photographically framed on street level, this kind of mixed/
synthesized arrangement of image simulacrum with other physical objects placed in front appeared to convey a sense of uncanny deception to the viewers. This influence on the perception of the image simulacrum in the urban landscape by the awareness of the extent of obstruction and the associated photographic framing constructed the first set of criteria to explore the latent ‘strangeness’ of the image simulacrum presented in urban space.

To reveal the latent strangeness of the real and unreal relationship, the application of strong pictorial composition could create affirmative visual and psychological tension through juxtaposing objects that are off-scaled. This idea of visual tension is also evident in the famous surrealistc nude photographs taken by British photographer Bill Brandt in the mid-twentieth century. Taken in 1957, *Nude East Sussex* (Fig. 22) for instance, depicts a partial body lying on a beach full of pebbles against a cliff as the background. From an unusual perspective, the ear in the foreground appears abnormally large compared to the distant and massive cliff behind. The play in scale of supposedly common objects created a familiar yet unfamiliar atmospheric imagery, successfully stimulating the viewer’s imagination and anxiety. Brandt once said about an essential characteristic of his images:

*I found atmosphere to be a spell that charged the commonplace with beauty.... it is a combination of elements....which reveals the subject as familiar and yet strange* (Jay 1999, p.16).

The idea of the ‘as-familiar-yet-strange’ sensation in Brandt’s images through juxtaposing common objects brought me to further investigate how such a conflicting
peculiarity works in depicting urban spaces. I looked at the work of contemporary Australian painter Jeffrey Smart (1921–2013) who is well known for his surrealist urban landscape. In his painting, *Corrugated Gioconda* (Fig. 23), Smart depicts the urban landscape through the use of lines, precise forms and colours, revealing a strong sense of isolation and aloneness. Smart’s emphasis on verticality and horizontality of divided spaces demonstrates the surreality of the urban environment. This surreality of the modern world is a product of post-industrial activities as excessive images and signs that are mediated by technologies accelerate the construction of the alienated urban environment with banalization and homogenization. French Marxist theorist Guy Debord (1931–1994) rightly points out that:

*capitalist production has unified space, breaking down the boundaries between our society and the next. This unification is at the same time an extensive and intensive process of banalization* (Koeck 2013, p.76).

Natural elements are rarely seen in Smart’s paintings as he did not find them moving to be included in the paintings. He claimed that an artist ‘has to be moved to move his viewers.’ (The Gallery View, 2013) Rather, he was obsessed with man-made nature, as he once clearly said:

*I like living in the 20th century, to me the world has never been more beautiful. I ‘m trying to paint the real world I live in, as beautifully as I can with my own eyes.....It is obvious a bunch of flowers or a billabong is beautiful, and I love natural beauty, but I am not moved by it....to me composition is everything.* (The Gallery View, 2013)
Project site 1: Urban Park sites

During the construction of Tamar park near the government headquarter in Admiralty, a row of large and continuous panels of hoardings were installed to separate the completed portion of the park from the rest of the construction area (Fig. 24). This large-scale installation of an image simulacrum in the hub of the city’s financial district made a pristine target for investigation in the research project. The long stretch of hoardings was in part obscured and synthesized with real plants or human objects while the rest was left clear of any obstruction in front of it. The extent of obstruction that influenced the perception towards the image simulacrum of nature and the photographic framing determined the section of the landscape to be documented. Also informed by the ideas of strategically defining sections of pictorial space and creating uncanny tension through contradicting scale in creating *Entrapped in the Real* (Tamar Park, Admiralty, 2013), the relationship between the image simulacrum and the urban landscape is intensified (Fig. 25). With a carefully selected camera angle to exclude all the physical distractions in the scene, I framed the top part of the enormous building cluster and a small section of the hoarding situated in an urban park nearby with the image simulacrum showing off-scaled silhouettes of flying birds against a background of a lawn. The camera angle was determined in an attempt to construct an unequal juxtaposition between the two realities, creating a near-symmetrical composition laterally and vertically with defined sections of spaces within. The well-lit and colour-saturated hoarding was photographed in such a way to show its ostensible appearance in contrast with the artificiality and unreal-ness of the modern architecture of the Wan Chai district.
This series of images taken in Tamar park with a focus on the synthesis of simulacrum with presence (or absence) of real plants and artifacts led me to notice an intriguing and aesthetic visual space. With the wide open space (the open sky) included, the single simulacrum looked so ‘familiar’ and ‘real’ as if it were a real patch of green lawn in front of the buildings in the newly produced photographic image. Most importantly, there was a sense of positivism from my reproduction of the image simulacrum. As a model of nature, it might be far removed from the truth, but its very existence might not be leading us to total degradation. Moreover, as in Our Private Corner (Fig.26) my reproductive images with the inclusion of real plants intensified that positivism further. The ambiguous relationship perceived became less irritating, and a sense of pleasure emerged. ‘We have a modern notion of embellishment---beauty is not inherent in anything; it is to be found, by another way of seeing---as well as a wider notion of meaning, which photography’s many uses illustrate and powerfully reinforce’ (Sontag 1977, p.172).

Project site 2: Construction sites

This sense of pleasure from producing images of the simulacrum of nature in the urban landscape persisted when the image simulacrum was placed in an inverted manner, as a background, specifically when the simulacrum was an image of an idealized representation of sky. In Blue Sky for example (Fig. 27), a pile of mud, dirt and wood sticks was discarded in front of a construction hoarding in the commercial district of Admiralty with an image simulacrum of a blue sky. The juxtaposition of the image simulacrum and the construction artifacts (the discarded construction materials) created a peculiar, but intriguing, confrontation
between the real and the unreal. As a background for the mud pile, the simulacrum of the sky appears to be relatively realistic. The imagination and memory of a viewer towards the idea of a bright and clear open sky reinforces the positive and strong belief in the realness of the image simulacrum. Devoid of the presence of surrounding objects and spaces, the photographic framing of the *Blue Sky* produced a clean and simple depiction of an imaginary mountain landscape with the ‘open’ blue sky in the middle of the city environment.

When photographed in a way that contains no open and empty sense of space, the image simulacrum of nature presented a totally different aesthetic. The images looked artificial, abstract, deceptive and even claustrophobic, as evidenced in the photograph, *Plaza of Symmetrical Nature* (Fig. 28). The tight framing of the image simulacrum produced a closed and confined visual space, which to an extent influenced our positive perception towards the simulated realities in the urban landscape. The way of framing in photography determines the psychological response to presentation of the image simulacrum.

Of the visual outcomes produced up to this point of the research, three captured visual spaces emerged, contributing to the peculiar visual experience and influencing our perception towards the altered landscape by the simulacra. At this stage, the newly discovered way of seeing the spaces created by the image simulacrum itself and the surrounding urban environment brought about a need to theorize them. Summing up the observations of the framed spaces, definitions were devised as criteria to continue the exploration effectively for the research.
1. **Open Space** is defined as a photographic framing of visual space that encloses a target subject matter (the image simulacrum - the unreal) with an open urban space (the real), producing a duality of positive and negative spacing of two realities.

2. **Closed Space** is defined as a photographic framing of visual space in which both the target subject matter (the image simulacrum - the unreal) and the surrounding environment (the real) occupy the entire pictorial frame, incorporated and confined within that closed visual space.

3. **Inverted Space** is defined as a photographic framing of visual space in which the target subject matter (the photographic simulation - the unreal) was positioned as a background of the urban elements (the real) - a trompe’oeil background.

All photographs produced in stage one were informed documentations and interpretations of the image simulacra which were identified, observed, and explored during the defined field trips with pre-set criteria that guided the photography. These research outcomes suggest a crucial significance in the appearance of the image simulacra of nature that shapes Hong Kong’s urban landscape. However, I did not feel that the photographs sufficiently demonstrate a transformative experience in responding to the research. Therefore, to further investigate the influence of the simulacra on the perceptual experience of the urban landscape, a more active and intervening strategy needed to be implemented to interrogate the ambiguous and peculiar relationship of the image simulacrum and the locational urban landscape.
Chapter Four: From Documenting to Intervening

It is no longer possible to fabricate the unreal from the real, the imaginary from the givens of the real. The process will, rather, be the opposite: it will be to put decentered situations, models of simulation in place and to contrive to give them the feeling of the real, of the banal, of lived experience, to reinvent the real as fiction, precisely because it has disappeared from our life.

(Baudrillard 1994, p.124)
The project up to this point has been concerned with an epistemological and methodological journey of photographic documentation and interpretation of my visual experiences towards the existing simulated realities being presented in the urban landscape. The photographic images produced in this stage reflected how the manufactured and fictional realities of nature were placed into the real urban environment as ways of concealment and corporate marketing. The image simulacra of nature—imagery observed and selected in this stage were treated as mere photographic objects, and the research image outcomes produced by the photographing of those image simulacra of nature recorded the manifold relationship between two realms of realities, between the fake and the real, between natural and urban, between the illusionistic spaces and realistic spaces, revealing how the real (a new reality of nature) was actually constructed by the unreal (the simulacrum of nature). These photographic recordings depicted, in part, Baudrillard’s prognosis about the construction of the real from the unreal, as Baudrillard once suggests that it is:

no longer possible to fabricate the unreal from the real, the imaginary from the givens of the real. The process will, rather, be the opposite: it will be to put decentered situations, models of simulation in place and to contrive to give them the feeling of the real, of the banal, of lived experience, to reinvent the real as fiction, precisely because it has disappeared from our life (Baudrillard 1994, p.124).

However, to fully re-enact Baudrillard’s idea and to further interrogate the uncertain relationship between the real and the unreal, an interventionist approach, as an art strategy, was utilized to re-create the similar situation of the existing presentation of the image simulacrum of nature.
Community of practice: Strangeness and the work of Demand

In stage one where visual spaces were discovered, identified and categorized, the peculiar appearance of the image simulacrum–altered urban–scape revealed the significances of where the image simulacrum was observed against the urban backdrop on the streets, and the degree of the physical image simulacrum blending with urban artifacts. Not only did the realization of the obscuring of physical objects provide a new and alternative way of seeing the inter–relationship between the realities, but also revealed a reflection of an ‘as–strange–yet familiar’ psychological response through informed photographic framing of the specific visual spaces. This strangeness towards the presentation of the image simulacrum is evident in the work of German conceptual artist and interventionist Thomas Demand (b. 1964). His large–scale photographic artworks are known for the uncanny depictions of re–constructed life–size paper models imitated from an unpeopled mediated image source. In Demand’s work, he always extracts the colours and the form rather than duplicating them. This extraction creates a new reality that separates from the unreality of the paper model as a copy of a copy (the original image source selected). Besides the re–construction of reality through modeling from the image source of real social events, Demand shares some personal moments in his artwork. As a practice of trompe l’oeil, his other large–scale wall piece, for example, The Clearing (Lichtung) (Fig. 29&30) describes a personal moment, the moment in memory, through a photo–realist depiction of a startling daybreak moment in a park in Venice. Through its immortal nature, the photograph recorded a brief, but long–lasting memory Demand possesses in his mind through the constructed paper landscape. Curator Francesco Bonami describes that

Fig. 29
Thomas Demand, Clearing (Lichtung), 2003, Chromogenic color print (C–print), 192x495 cm,

Fig. 30
Thomas Demand, Clearing (Lichtung), 2003, Chromogenic color print (C–print), installation of the photographic print in Venice Biennale
looking at Demand’s photos is ‘like looking at the physical representation of memory and its spatial dimensions.’ (Bonami 2007, p.19). The large photograph is a depiction of a meticulously hand-made cardboard model of a dense forest, first painstakingly constructed and then lit by a sun machine to imitate the light of the sun at the brief moment of breaking and streaming through the forest packed with the trees. According to a MoMA video description, *The Clearing* is a record of his fond memory – a see-able memory of a brief personal moment with nature. It is a photographic representation of a sculptural representation of a conceptual representation of nature in his mind and memory. When we look at the photograph, it is very personal. It recalls our closeness to nature and yet it is emotionally detached due to the slight imperfection of the craftsmanship. The large photo-print was put on exhibit at the Venice Biennale in the park, offering a direct, yet ambiguous, visual experience of confrontation between the real and the unreal for viewers to engage with – a ‘representation of a real thing next to a real thing’ (MoMA 2003). The organic shapes from the trees and their leaves and branches devise a complicated visual sensation, and yet its uniformity and mono-minimalistic subject matter celebrate the beauty of painterly simplicity. The model forest was an illusion of reality itself in tangible form, and the photographic representation of this illusion takes us back to the very reality where strong emotion arises. Like his other works, when you look closer, the seemingly real leaves start to reveal their true form. The sculptural model is itself a reality. A photograph of the model and the referent (the forest) itself established its double identity – the unreal and real.
Also, an imperfect cutting of the paper edge that forms the corner of the wall behind the piano suggests reality. The discovery of such flaws or imperfect details brings us to a state of unreality out of the supposed reality when viewing the photograph. For Demand’s work, it is always the replica, itself of the cardboard model, imitated from the image of a reality as seen and photographed as a reality itself.

In his book *Why photography matters as art as never before* in 2008, writer Michael Fried describes the specific strangeness or “off-ness” in Demand’s works coming from a two-stage response:

"...a first stage in which the image seems cold and abstract but otherwise unexceptional, and a second stage in which the viewer senses that something (indeed everything) is “off” or wrong, and progressively come to realize, from different sorts of clues, that the ostensible subject of the image is nothing more nor less than a reconstruction (Fried 2008, p264)."

Art historian and writer Joshua Decter points out that Demand’s work has possessed a sense of ‘psychological strangeness’ (Bonami 2007, p.53). Curator Francesco Bonami believes that one strangeness comes from the use of materials for the re-construction of the image original. Bonami points out that the use of paper material for the recreations

*gives a strange representation of the original scene, and the simulation itself opens up a peculiar space which many viewers would find unsettling......The*
more this reality appears to present itself in a simple and innocuous manner, the
more it creates perceptual short-circuits upon careful observation of the scene
represented (Bonami 2007, p.5).

This simplification creates a world that is looking real yet at the same time surreal. Moreover,
the photographed scene displays rough edges through imperfect trimming and cutting of
the cardboard during the re-construction process. The subtle imperfection of the paper
craftsmanship reveals that of an image of a reality, a simulation, and not the actual subject.
This ‘off-ness” or ‘strangeness’ comes from the contradictory sense of familiarity towards the
perception of reality. Being ‘strange’ is a relational concept. Without the sense of familiarity
towards the object itself, things do not appear to be strange. It is the simultaneity or co-
existence of both unfamiliarity and familiarity that creates the sense of uncanny atmosphere
or the aura of the constructed reality in Demand’s images. In fact, Demand himself also
expressed the existence of the strangeness in an interview with Alexander Kluge in 2006:

When I walked around them I felt a strange sense of destabilization.......Yet it’s
the idea of the space that you remember, even if you can’t yourself experience the
memory of it. That’s the strange thing---you transpose yourself to a time and space
in which you could never be. Yet you can be there in your imagination and then it’s
all gone and the photo takes over.
( “A conversation between Alexander Kluge and Thomas Demand” in Thomas
According to art critic Michael Kimmelman, “the reconstructions were meant to be close to, but never perfectly realistic so that the gap between truth and fiction would always subtly show.” (New York Times, 2005) The photographs are the art. The cardboard is just a medium which he never intends to keep or to display. The constructed rooms or spaces will be discarded and re-cycled.

Like Demand’s usual practice of destroying the model after photography, my subject (the image simulacrum) to be photographed is temporary. Once the photography is completed, the image reproduction will be removed and destroyed. The destruction of the original makes the photographs only artifacts and remembrances. Demand’s photography immortalizes the embedded meanings in the structured space created by the model similar to the way I immortalize the once existence of imaged nature in the urban-scape by photographing it. The reproductions were meant to be temporary and transitional, and my photographs immortalize and subvert that temporality. The photographing of the image simulacrum provides a repeated impression over the idea of nature.

To build spaces and images over and over was to bring them back to their origins, in much the same way that certain icons bring back the origins of Jesus or Buddha (Thomas Demand 2006, p.29).
Similar to Demand’s effort to reproduce a potential new reality within reality, French multi-media conceptual artist Pierre Huyghe (b. 1962) also investigates through his work how a fiction could create a reality through the artistic strategy of intervention. In 2008, Huyghe created a magical ‘forest’ in an unconventional way inside the Concert Hall of the iconic Sydney Opera House. Huyghe’s mega installation of *The Forest of Lines* (Fig. 31&32) was a reality created within a reality. The entire concert hall was intentionally lit to imitate the light of dawn in the mist-shrouded forest. Unlike Demand’s cardboard re-construction, the imitative forest was constructed with a large number of real plants, of different sizes and species, placed in the vast space of the hall. A singer was arranged to sing words by Huyghe among the trees during the course of the one-day exhibition to link with the reality of the Opera House as a cultural place. The constructed forest seemed to come alive in an artificial environment. Huyghe stated that:

...*the Concert Hall presents a geographical displacement. This image is a diversion, an extension towards another world and yet it is the same. The song is a map for a journey towards what constitutes the image. It is a line following a chain of events in the life of an environment* (e-flux 2008).

The indoor forest became a familiar reality itself, hosting a music event while the Concert Hall peculiarly hosted a live man-made simulated forest living in its constructed reality. This paradox disrupted the faint boundary between realities, confusing what is real and unreal to the participants of the event. *The Forest of Lines* was ‘an in-between reality, an image of an environment, a fact that appears for a brief moment just before vanishing’ (e-flux 2008).
This fictional reality or situation Huyghe constructed in a reality demonstrated Huyghe, together with Demand’s artistic strategy to intervene, effectively interrogate the ambiguous relationship between fiction and reality. Both artists engaged the viewers with confusion and familiarity simultaneously that allowed them to see reality with new eyes.

From the photographer Bill Brandt delivering the sense of “as-strange-yet-familiar” in his black and white surrealist images, to Australian painter Jeffrey Smart creating his painterly version of urban strangeness through the depiction of the extracted forms and banality, the notion of strangeness seemed like an effective way to begin exploring a different photographic process. The strangeness evidenced in Demand’s photographic images was a result of his unique approach to intervention in the construction of reality. Demand’s simplification approach and the intentional imperfection of the model of the image source provided useful tools to simulate the simulated realities.

The manufacturing of custom-made image simulacra of simplified nature and the selecting of the relational and complementary, yet imperfectly matching urban landscape, could greatly contribute to interrogating the ambiguous relationship between image simulacrum of nature and its immediate urban spaces. Instead of just photographically reproducing the manufactured realities of nature as in stage one of the project, the practice-led research continued with an informed construction of a fictional scene of the simulated realities in the urban landscape – a pre-fabricated image simulacrum of selected natural elements in a carefully selected section of the urban landscape.
Preparing simulations

The research photographs produced in the previous stage, i.e., the printed image simulacrum of nature, were appropriated and found, and the mere interpretative way of interrogating these presentations of the simulated realities limited the capability of answering the three research questions fully. In stage one, there was no control over the contents of the nature reproductions, how they were represented at the sites, nor control over the situated location. The only controls were my camera perspective and choice of photographic equipment. In stage two, in order to investigate the phenomenon of simulation, it became crucial to take control over the aspects of how the image simulacrum was presented in the city environment. Through suitable selection of the image simulacrum of material nature that provides extensive visual and psychological conflict to the selected urban location, and vice versa, the new controls enabled me to intensify the peculiarity of the presentation of the image simulacrum in the urban landscape.

To repeat the framework in search of the similar but different types of conditions of obstruction and the visual spaces conceived as Open, Closed, and Inverted in stage one, similar but relatively more idealized imageries of nature were used to construct the staged urban landscape altered by image simulacrum. Images of clouds, water, and plants were determined. In order to create sufficient nature–urban contradiction and visual contrast between the image simulacrum and the artificiality of urban location, the selection of the image content of the simulation of nature followed the criterion of simplification in terms of colour, form, and subject matter. However, in what way could ‘nature’ be simplified and yet retain a sense of organic naturalness? Cultural critic Raymond Williams defines nature as ‘the essential quality of
something... the inherent force which directs either the world or human beings or both .... the material world itself, taken as including or not including human beings’ (Williams 1983, p.184). A single floating cloud in the sky, a flower field depicting one single kind of flowers, and a portion of Victoria Harbour was individually photographed to represent the three most basic elements of Earth that construct the material nature – sky, land, and sea (Fig.33,34,35). The colour tones were manipulated and enhanced to produce idealized photographic images for the simulations planned in stage two. It was the positional role of the image simulacrum and the photographic framing through the camera that produced a varied relationship between the simulated realities and the supposedly realistic reality.

To successfully re-enact the simulation of the simulated, four criteria were set to inform the photographing of the research outcomes:

- the selection of familiar and common elements of nature as a simulacrum of nature to contrast with the artificiality and banality of urban spaces.
- the use of common and familiar urban background that appears with a sense of banality.
- the photographic framing that merges the pre-fabricated image simulacrum with the surrounding urban spaces (front and back), producing the visual spaces of the Open, Closed, and Inverted in the new photographs.
- including hints of imperfections (the quality of the image simulacrum, and the way of installation at the sites, and the way of framing)
Chapter Five: Simulating the Simulated

If the Real is disappearing, it is not because of a lack of it--on the contrary, there is too much of it.

It is the excess of reality that puts an end to reality....

(Baudrillard 2000, p.66)
Simulating the Simulated

The real is a relational concept. The unreal exists because of the presence of the real, and they are bounded together in concurrent existence. Without the concept of the real, the notion of unreal does not exist. The boundary between the real and the unreal is not a separating line but an imaginary glue holding them together in the same living space. The unreal contains some pieces of the real while the real consists of certain parts of the unreal. Although the image simulacrum of nature is a fabricated representation of the material nature, the elements of nature represented in the image are still real --- the image of an individual leaf is a true representation of an original leaf. Similarly, the rainbow looks real to those at a distance while the others in close proximity do not realize it exists --- the rainbow is both real and unreal in its own right. The unreal interchanges with the real, and the massive influx of images in modern society merely exemplifies their ambiguous existence. Baudrillard points out that the real is seen disappearing in the media-dominated world simply because there is way ‘too much of it. It is the excess of reality that puts an end to reality’ (Baudrillard 2000, P.66). Through simulating the presentation of the simulated realities in the urban landscape, as a way of intervention, a new reality of the unreality was created.

In this new stage of the project, I initiated a change in the target site being investigated. The urban park site was rejected due to the awareness that the presentation of the image simulacrum in the parks was actually associated with the construction activities within the park. To reflect this awareness and to achieve stronger contrast with the prepared image simulacrum of natural elements, only construction sites were targeted for the simulation.
To explore the relationship further, a new construction site was selected, inspired by an editorial photograph I documented earlier in the research project at the Star Avenue in Tsim Sha Tsui (Fig. 36). This particular photograph depicted a perfect and idealized image simulacrum used in the iconic urban landscape - the famous Victoria Harbour view with the architectural high-rises of Hong Kong Island in the distance. Situated on the Star Avenue along the harbour in Tsim Sha Tsui, the image simulacrum of an almost identical view of the harbour was printed on a temporarily construction hoarding which was abruptly erected on the sea-shore walkway apparently to conceal the messy construction activities behind it. However, it was intriguing that the construction company had selected a photograph of the same, but idealized, Victoria Harbour and nearby central hub of the city, just like what people could see for real in front of them. A simulated reality and an actual material reality of the same subject matter were existing at the same time and in the same space. The only major difference was the kind of reality both represented.

The grey and smoggy sky (the less attractive actual reality) collided with an idealized version of itself. As a city’s renowned spectacle, a perfect, post-card like image of the Victoria Harbour and the sophisticated looking financial centers under a beautiful blue sky were what tourists preferred to see and photograph, while the gloomy, but real in itself, view of the harbour was seemingly ignored, according to the on-site observation. The unreal probably triumphed over the real as the tourists seemed to use the image simulacrum as a more desirable
background for photography. The reality of the harbour was seen as ‘unreal’ because it seemed to look as though it was from the post-card imagery of an idealized Hong Kong city-scape. The realness was injected into the unreal-ness of the image simulacrum. The peculiar phenomenon that people would rather take photograph with the hoarding showing the idealized beautiful image rather than taking a photograph with the actual greyish harbour view immediately behind the hoarding reflected a modern obsession of appropriating, not photographs, the image simulacrum. (Fig. 37). In On Photography, writer and critic Susan Sontag (1933–2004) stated that a photograph is ‘both a pseudo-presence and a token of absence’ (Sontag 1977, p.16). For the tourists, a photograph with the image simulacrum of ‘Hong Kong’ through the icon of the high-rises sitting on top of the Harbour suggested the tourists’ ‘presence’ with the once ‘present’ beautiful Victoria Harbour. The image simulacrum was a reality to them. The photograph of the tourists with the image simulacrum makes the phenomenon more important. Meanings, aesthetic value and importance were granted to the unreal through just the intention and subsequent act of photographing the phenomenon.

To photograph is to confer importance. There is probably no subject that cannot be beautified; moreover, there is no way to suppress the tendency inherent in all photographs to accord value to their subject (Sontag 1977, p.28).

This conferring of importance on the unreal through photography marked the significance of the photographing of the custom-made image simulacra with its selected urban background in stage two. In order to produce a sense of familiarity, the first new location was required to resemble the iconic Victoria harbour, but appear different, in the new series of
photographs. A new search began and an industrial urban- scape that showed signs of construction activities in Kwun Tong industrial district was firstly selected as a research site. Other than its resemblance to the actual city- scape of Central district on the island viewed from the Kowloon side, the banal and plain urban appearance of the site was also an important determinant for its selection. In order to take a photograph of that section of urban landscape from a distance with sufficient flexibility to select camera perspective for both the image simulacra and the background urban landscape, a spot opposite the industrial district was located accordingly. It was an old airport runway recently revitalised to become a cruise ship terminus with a long near-shore open recreational park constructed along the waterway which separates the cruise terminus and the Kwun Tong industrial area. Two image canvasses of the blue water body were installed on a fence in an attempt to conceal the muddy and polluted water way behind. The idealized water imagery was used to mimic a perfect Victoria harbour, and the industrial architecture of Kwun Tong were a perfect imitation of the tall buildings on Hong Kong island. Two particular commercial buildings, positioned in the middle of the photographic framing, were still under construction and selected as the key background subject matter for this project due to their indistinctive appearance. The buildings’ vertical and rectangular form are crucial as balancing elements in compositional consideration.

Titled Not So Victoria Harbour (Fig. 38&39) is an example that demonstrates how the urban landscape is perceived through the presentation of the simulacrum of nature as a foreground, creating a strange, yet familiar image of the urban landscape. The artwork also illustrates how the urban landscape was framed in such a way to conceive and construct the
Open visual space through photography, producing a positive atmosphere to the presentation of the image simulacrum through the openness of the empty space in the sky at the site – a new and positive reality. The visual outcomes of the first simulation were not successful due to the excessive wrinkles found on the canvas prints during the photographing; the wrong alignment of the gap between the two buildings and the gap between the two canvas prints, reducing the intended illusionistic effect as a simulacrum. A second trip with a selection of another nearby spot was made to re-photograph the same scene with extra attention on the structure of the resulting photograph for the research project. With no physical object in front of the two canvasses, the image simulacra of the ‘sea’ serves as a foreground of the buildings, creating a relationship between the realities.

The lines and forms in the composition were emphasized to re-create a similar uniformity and regularity as seen in Thomas Demand’s works. Also informed by Jeffrey Smart’s unique approach to creating characteristic sections of spaces within the image, the framing of the altered urban landscape aimed to divide the entire pictorial space into many internal sections of spaces, intensifying the sense of regularity. The tops of the two canvas prints were carefully aligned with the shoreline under the two buildings forming an illusion of a single picture plain. The tarpaulins were again mounted in such a way as to mimic the loosely hung, flexible tarpaulin hoardings of local construction sites. It was important to retain a certain quality of imperfection (such as the gap in between the two canvas prints in this simulation, to allow the creation of a calculated confusion for the viewer. The saturated
sunlight delivered a more realistic reflection of the water image while the distant buildings appeared less realistic due to their uniformity.

**Project Site 2: Sam Ka Tsuen, Lei Yue Mun**

Stage two of this project aimed to continue and intensify the exploration of the ambiguous relationship between the presentations of both the single and the mixed simulations in specifically selected urban environment. The selection of the new target urban locations, were characterized by a condition of the unfamiliarity of the familiarity. In other words, they had to look both familiar and unfamiliar at the same time. After a number of site visits for suitable locations in 2014, the site of Sam Ka Tsuen in Lei Yue Mun, Kowloon was selected. As one of the earliest fishing and mining villages in Hong Kong, Sam Ka Tsuen is located on the Kowloon side of Victoria Harbour, with a full view of the urban architecture on the Hong Kong side. Although it was geographically close to the city’s urban areas, the historic village was relatively under-developed showing a different urban appearance.

During the initial photographic investigation, all three image simulacra of white cloud in the sky, a field of purple flowers, and blue water, representing “Sky”, “Land”, and “Sea” respectively, were each separately placed against selected areas of the site in order to finalise the most peculiar yet seemingly sensible integration between the two types of realities --- the image simulacrum and the urban environment. The focus on the extent of image simulacrum with immediate urban artifacts (the positional role of the image simulacrum in relation to the urban objects in front or behind) and the making of the conceived visual spaces of Open,
Closed, and Inverted that reflect the perceptual response to seeing the image simulacrum in the urban environment were the primary concern of the selection process. In Ocean View Estate, for example, in order to create an illusion by reducing slightly the amount of fakeness of the simulacrum, the simulated water body was strategically placed and mounted at the back of a fence structure in front of two buildings, satisfying the need for the presence of tangible obstruction in front and the urban landscape behind (Fig. 40 & 41). The ‘water’ was acting as a background to the fence intensifying the real-ness of the water representation, and simultaneously was serving as a foreground to the buildings. A sizeable portion of the lower parts of the buildings were deliberately covered through adjusting to a lower camera angle in order to intensify the un-real-ness of the overall simulative structures in relation to the water body. The Ocean View Estate demonstrates an urban landscape being substantially altered by the awkward placement of the image simulacrum, re-interpreting the conceptual relationship between architecture on land and the ocean. Moreover, to imitate the realistic untidiness of the streets, the mounting of the canvas prints was never anticipated to be perfect or professional; rather the appearance of a slight sloppiness or ‘imperfection’ was intended to interrogate the ambiguous relationship between the real and the unreal. This imperfection was also deliberately hinted at through the depiction of the physical gap that separated the background buildings. The inclusion of the vertical, yet uneven, gap was also meant to echo with the ‘gap’ between the two image simulacra in Not So Victoria Harbour.

With a complementary rectangular form and the colour of the blue “sea,” the misplaced red sign plate on the right was intentionally framed in the photograph to intensify the confrontation between the real of the unreal (the image simulacrum of water) and the
unreal (the sign that suggests a direction—an inconclusive direction) of the real (the sign). The presentation of the word ‘Pedestrians’ and the directional arrow on the sign signaled human’s construction activity and exertion of power on the urban landscape. As a result of the carefully selected camera position and perspective, it was the photographing of the tight visual relationship between the simulated reality of nature on the canvas prints and the colourful urban buildings behind that constructed a world of the hyper-real. The facades of the two buildings, as well as the canvas print of water, occupied the entire picture frame creating a Closed visual space conceived through the camera’s viewfinder. The uniformity and regularity dominated the pictorial composition forming a grid-like visual structure. The juxtaposition of the banality of the buildings’ appearance, the realness of the unreal image simulacrum, and the man-made fence revealed a paradoxical and as-strange-yet-familiar appearance of reality in the same space.

The three visual spaces of Open, Closed and Inverted were usually conceived independently when viewed through the camera lens. However, two or all three of these visual spaces could appear in at the same time. In The Displaced, both Open and Inverted spaces emerged through the meticulous photographic framing (Fig. 42). Similar to Not So Victoria Harbour, the “sky” image simulacrum was placed with no visual obstruction in front of it, making it only a foreground of the urban landscape. The staged presentation of the printed board of the cloud image with the appearance of a fisherman in a boat riding ‘on top’ constructed a different yet unconventional imagery. Far from an ease of digital manipulation, the appearance of the fisherman boating in relation to the presentation of the cloud image in the foreground was a result of careful framing and intense patience on behalf of the
photographer – a photo-stitching through framing on site. The playful camera perspective constructed a simulation, a new simulated reality that showed a familiar reality and an imaginary reality simultaneously. The resulting visual outcomes became records of conceptually and visually fused realities. The reality of the fisherman doing his fishing work was intervened by the insertion of the image simulacrum, another reality, changing the perception towards both realities.

With the same overlapping of the conceived Open and Inverted spaces through framing, another work, Mise en abyme (Fig. 43), also illustrates the concurrent shifting of dual positional role when the image simulacrum of the “Sky” was placed behind a stack of dried plants, making it as a background and also a foreground. Compared to Not So Victoria Harbour and The Displaced, the intervention to the urban landscape with the presentation of an image simulacrum is more evident in Mise en abyme. Not only was the image board not positioned in an absolute upright position, but also the inclusion of a human hand holding the image board behind was photographed, giving an indication of the way the image simulacrum was introduced into the environment. Together with the dried plants obstructing part of the image board, the partial hand indicates the image board was real as an actual physical object, an entity or a reality of existence. The hand also simultaneously intensified the sense of unreal-ness of the image content – two pieces of cloud in open sky being physically superimposed into an unlikely urban space. As in Demand’s work showing traces of imperfect paper trimming and omitted details to construct his models for photography to increase the sense of ambiguity, these hintings of imperfection and additional awkward-ness were
embedded for the viewer to explore and discover.

Art critic John Berger once expressed his view toward the essence of photography stating, “in itself the photograph can not lie, but, by the same token, it can not tell the truth; or rather, the truth it does tell, the truth it can by itself defend, is a limited one” (Berger and Kean Mohr 1995, p.5). Photography performs meticulous surgery of stitching the realness and unreal-ness of individual realities, whether an actual reality or a simulated one. The truth in the image simulacrum was no different from the truth in reality as both represented a world of uncertainty and ambiguity of what was perceived. Although the simulated reality of the Ocean View Estate, Mise en abyme or The Displaced was totally fabricated and re-constructed to simulate the simulated, it still held certain truth that was based on the values, experiences and beliefs of the photographer.
Chapter Six: Project Conclusions

The way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe.
(Berger 1972, p.8)
New reality of the simulated

As a genre of urban photography informed by scholarly and artistic information and inspiration, the research project which culminated in the exhibition titled *More Real than Real* produced a final series of thirteen photographic images that interrogated the paradoxical nature of the image simulacra being presented in the urban landscape in the city of Hong Kong. Based on early observations in Stage one of the research project, being a distinctive and opposing appearance in the urban environment, the image simulacra of nature were determined as the target subject, through their distinctive and opposing appearance in the urban environment. Through two consecutive stages of documenting, interpreting and constructing simulated realities of nature, the project investigated how those simulations of nature were presented that altered and transformed our perception of the ever changing urban landscape. The final exhibition explored and categorized the phenomenon to raise awareness of the impacts of simulation and simulacra in modern society.

Central to the research was an awareness of the growing usage and application of image simulacrum of nature as a means of temporary disguise, replacing, displacing, and misplacing organic nature in the urban environment of Hong Kong. The ambiguous presentations of the image simulacrum of nature in the urban landscape, especially at the locations where an undesirable part of urban space needed to be concealed, influences our perception and reception towards the simulated realities in relation to the urban spaces.
Four major discoveries during stage one of the project were consecutively made, leading to the ultimate determination of how to photograph the image simulacra of nature in the urban landscape. The first realization came from the process of selecting and determining the sites where the image simulacra were most evidently visible. The initial photographic documentation of all the potential target sites suggested that the presentation of image simulacra of nature dominated two major components of the city – the urban parks and constructions sites. They were the main sites where the image simulacra of nature were commonly and heavily utilized on the hoardings encircling the construction areas as a way of concealment and temporary beautification. However, the urban park site was eventually rejected in the later half of the stage one and entirely rejected in stage two due to observations that the hoardings consisting of the image simulacra of nature in the urban parks were also mostly erected for construction activities, sharing similar functionality with those regular construction sites in the city. It became clear that the image simulacrum of nature utilised in the urban parks also acts as a visual and psychological tool to deceive and manipulate our sense of perception by concealing the negative nature of destruction of the landscape in the construction sites. This uncovering prompted me to decide that the image simulacrum of nature presented on the construction hoardings would become the sole target for the photography of the project.

This determination of the construction site as the primary target location also brings out a phenomenal significance of urban people’s equivocal and dichotomous love–hate relationship with the image simulacra of nature. We psychologically reply and even embrace the existence of the image simulacra of nature to conceal the reality of the undesirable nature of frenzied
urban development and the chaotic and destructive appearance of construction activities, while we express certain discontent towards the fabricated and artificial reality of visualized ‘nature’ being presented in the form of image simulacrum in the city. Social critic and writer Susan Sontag (1933–2004) rightly expressed in her book *On Photography* that:

...in the past, discontent with reality expressed itself as a longing for another world. In modern society, a discontent with reality expressed itself as a longing to reproduce this one. As if only by looking at reality in the form of an object – through the fix of the photograph–is it really real, that is, surreal (Sontag 1977, p.80).

The image simulacrum of nature does bring ‘another world’ to us. However, when this other reality physically and visually crashes with the reality we live in, a strange and surreal world begins to emerge.

Moreover, the various forms of placement of the image simulacra of material nature on the construction hoardings offer tremendous and intriguing visual contrast and contradiction with the urban and artificial characteristics of the urban landscape around them. The first discovery of the construction site being the most popular site for the usage of image simulacra of nature urged me to consider how to photograph the various presentations of those image simulacra of nature in the city that influence the perception and reception towards the altered urban landscape by the image simulacrum of nature. Repeated site visits and photographic documentation enabled me to explore the presentations of the image simulacra of nature on the hoardings of the selected construction sites in close detail.
The contents of the image simulacrum of nature play a crucial role in the visual and psychological impacts of the perception and reception of the presentation of the image simulacrum in the urban landscape. The various textures of material nature that represent the realm of the physical world are commonly observed in the image simulacra, and they were primarily classified into three main types:

- Atmospheric (replacement for sky)
- Surface (replacement for land)
- Oceanic (replacement for sea)

The choice of subjects reflected urban people’s innocent, yet calculated, mentality towards how nature was objectified and commodified to benefit the well-being of urban life. The common and overuse of those elements of material nature as subject matter in the image simulation also revealed a banal and paradoxical attitude towards the material nature and what nature means to urban people in modern society. Moreover, these simplified visualizations of nature reflect a weakening cognition towards the conception of nature. Due to recent technological advances in digital imaging and also consumerism, the massive amount of presentation of image simulacrum in the city further alienate urban residents from nature. The fabricated reality from the image simulacrum seems to become an integral part of the understanding of the concept of nature. In order to resemble the textures commonly used, these specific elements (Atmospheric, Oceanic and Surface) from nature were intentionally extracted and imitated to produce new realities as a way of further interrogating the
relationship between the image simulacrum of nature and the urban landscape by simulating the simulated in stage two of the project.

The third crucial discovery in the research project was an awareness of the various presentations of the simulacrum of nature at the construction site – the positional role of the image simulacrum in relation to urban objects and artifacts situated in front of, or behind it. It was gradually realized that the reception and perception towards the image simulacrum presented varied from the way it interacted or synthesized with the urban artifacts existing around it, either intentionally placed or littered. When the objects appear in front of the image simulacrum, the role as a background changes the way we perceive the image simulacrum. Also, the juxtaposition of the scale and subject matter greatly influences how viewers perceive the actual urban reality with the simulated reality in the same place. When there is no foreground obstruction, however, the image simulacrum becomes a foreground obstruction itself of the urban landscape. This shifting of positional role happens in a concurrent manner as the image simulacrum acts as a dual role of being both a foreground and a background simultaneously, further influencing how the image simulacrum is perceived and comprehended. Through observations, there were largely three forms of presentations in the urban landscape that contributed to the strangeness towards the image simulacra:

- Without foreground obstruction – front view of the image simulacrum is not obscured by anything (Fig. 44). The image simulacrum acts as foreground of the urban landscape, appearing as a surrogate, a way of replacement different from those that were seen mixed with plants or other urban artifacts.
• With foreground obstruction – front view of the image simulacrum is obscured by fixed plants (either deliberately placed or wild) and/or human artifacts (Fig. 45). The image simulacrum acts as background of the urban objects in front, appearing to be a more deceptive perception towards the image simulacrum.

• The image simulacrum acts as both foreground of the urban background and as background of the foreground obstruction simultaneously (Fig. 46).

The photographic outcomes from the identification of the presentation condition of the image simulacrum revealed the visual and conceptual significance of how we perceived the visual relationship between the simulacrum and its adjacent urban space. Moreover, in the complex city environment of Hong Kong, it was also understood that the three types of presentations could appear individually or in multiple situations in the same location.

The identification of these three types of obstruction provided a more focused photographic strategy to explore how the real and the unreal were presented at the same time and in the same space. This informed photographing subsequently led to the next and the last significant discovery of the project. Through the informed photographic framing of the individual simulacrum in the selected section of the urban landscape, a variety of ‘visual spaces’ emerged to assist the comprehension and appreciation of the image simulacrum. Three conceived visual spaces – Open, Closed, and Inverted – were identified and categorized to further inform the photographing of the image simulacrum of nature. The project defined the conceived visual spaces in the photographs as both the pictorial and psychological...
spaces created by the specific photographic framing of the image simulacrum in the urban environment. The research outcomes suggested that through the specific photographic framing, the three visual spaces emerged individually/independently or even as a mixture of them in the photographs, influencing the perception of the image simulacrum in the urban landscape. The real was pictorially fused or merged together with the unreal, forming a proximity of the “as-strange–yet familiar” reality. The already uncertain relationship between the real and the unreal became deteriorated, further inducing the sense of ‘strange-ness’ and ‘surreal-ness’ when the image simulacrum was being observed. Through the analysis of the synthesis of urban materials with the image simulacrum of nature and the perceived visual spaces, I realized it was this surreality of the city itself that constituted the sense of “as-strange–yet-familiar” in urban photography as well as the photographs produced in the project. The more urbanized a city becomes, the more surreal and hyper-real it seems. This realization and epiphany constructed an apprehensive belief that Hong Kong as a potential ‘nature-theme park’ owed its success to excessive urbanization and the pursuit of technological convenience in society.

In On Top of the World (Fig. 47) for example, the construction materials (the wood junk, the excavated mud and sands) represent the destructive nature of the construction activities while the fake blue open “sky” as an image simulacrum simulates a positive openness to the site. Through intentional framing, the mud pile (something that is considered ‘real’) appears to resemble a mountain top, while, acting as a background, the simulative image of “sky” (something that is considered ‘unreal’) appears to be real. This sense of concurrent “Open-ness” and “Inverted-ness” in the photograph reveals the ambiguous
relationship in the presentation and placement of the image simulacrum of nature in the urban landscape, creating a peculiar and intense sense of hyper-reality.

The four discoveries in stage one became the primary criteria for exploration and investigation in stage two. Informed by the recognition of the positional role of the image simulacrum at its site and three specific visual spaces conceived by photographic framing, production of works in stage two focused on the construction of simulated reality and the photography of it with the corresponding urban spaces. There were three main differences in stage two:

- the image simulacrum itself that was specifically custom-made for the project, instead of those observed and photographed on the locations in stage one.
- the selection of the urban locations specifically aimed to correspond to the specific content of the prepared image simulacrum of nature.
- the intentional simulation of the three positional roles and the visual spaces in stage one.

Through informed framing, each of the three pre-fabricated and idealized image simulacra of nature and the one of two selected construction sites (Kwun Tong district and Sam Ka Tsuen) were photographed, forming a new relationship between the real and the unreal – a new reality. Most importantly, creating the new simulated reality through this intervention was produced with a hint of imperfection to reveal its reality. Photographed in 2015, The Temporary Garden (Fig. 48) was an example of how imperfection of the construction of the new reality contributed to the perfect simulation of the simulated – the

Fig. 48
Sun Lo-Chuan, *The Temporary Garden*, 2015, 110x77cm, Archival pigment print
slightly tilted placement of the flower photograph, the battered physical condition of the print for instance.

The concerns over the extent of how the image simulacrum was mixed with the urban artifacts and the uncovered visual spaces by the photographic framing were repeated in the second stage as a methodological strategy to interrogate the ambiguous relationship. With all four aspects of simulating the simulated, the photographic images produced in stage two as research outcomes revealed that the intended imperfection did play an important role in inducing the “as strange–yet familiar” psychological response. This negative and positive dichotomy of psychological reaction when observing the urban phenomenon came from the controversial nature of digital image making as much as the essence of photography – how real it is in a photograph depicting the reality, and how unreal it is in reality.

The peculiar sense of ‘as-strange-yet-familiar-ness’ or the psychological ‘off-ness’ in the presentation of the image simulacrum in the altered urban spaces was particularly evident when viewed through the informed framing of photography, and this photographic visualization influenced the way we perceive the presentations of image simulation in the modern urban environment.

Urban landscape altered by image simulacra is different from other forms of urban intervention as it challenges our perceptual experience towards the visual world around us. The awareness of the growing use of image simulacra of nature in an urban environment leads us to believe we could be living in close proximity to a nature–theme world and reality. The
project describes the image simulacrum–infested urban landscape of Hong Kong as surrogate landscape constructed by humans to redefine reality. The image simulacra of nature were presented as the equivocal replacement of the real organic nature in an attempt to conceal the repeated and continuous destruction of nature by ever-expanding urban development. The image simulacrum of nature is at the same time also perceived as the reality itself (which does not have the original to begin with or exist) – a surrogate and deceptive tool. Being a photographic product and an imitation, the image simulacrum of nature may be a fake representation of nature we are used to knowing epistemologically. Its existence was indifferent from the use or imitative construction of parks or gardens in the urban spaces. The image simulacrum does hold some truth to representing nature, in a similar way to looking at a photograph. The final photographs initially appear as if they are digitally constructed collages, and have a sense of the familiar about them. It was the following moment of realization that the combination of both simulated reality and the real urban reality through photographic perspective that deceived our perception towards both the found realities in the stage one production and the simulated realities in stage two. It was the uncertainty along with the visual and conceptual ambiguity towards the realities that led to a continuation of the research of what reality and unreality could be.

**Findings and contributions to contemporary photography**

The erection of image simulacra by the construction agencies and by society as a whole suggested a discontent with the urban environment or the dismissal of nature and simultaneously an embrace of the idea of simulation used in contemporary urban living
and the conception of nature. Taking photographs of the image simulacra of nature in the landscape also proposed a similar duality of discontent and appreciation towards the image simulacra of nature in the city.

Through the practice of photography, the continuous exploration and categorization of the phenomenon of the presentation of image simulacrum in the urban landscape proved to be a constructive approach to understanding how the simulated reality can construct an environment that is more real than real. The research outcomes provide a way of utilizing photography to devise a new direction in the way urban spaces are both lived in (experienced) and seen.

In the first stage of this research project, the conventional photographing of these simulated realities of nature produced visual research outcomes that revealed the strong illusionistic reaction of the viewers to the photographic artworks. These photographic depictions of the real urban environment were a direct response to the existing reality. As Jeffrey Smart once vividly described his love of the urban scenes:

I find myself moved by man in his new violent environment. I want to paint this explicitly and beautifully...only very recently have artist artists again started to comment on their real surroundings (The Gallery View, 2013).

The visual outcomes in this stage were not meant to be surrealistic, rather they were photographic depictions of the surreal. As Jeffrey Smart eloquently contended that it was
not his depiction of the modern urban environment that was surreal, rather, it was actually ‘the modern urban world that was surreal’ (The Gallery View, 2013).

In the second stage, however, the illusionistic effect from the research outcomes diminished and were replaced by exaggerated juxtaposing of the custom-made simulated reality and the specifically selected urban reality, creating an even more purely and peculiarly surreal construct. It was the appearance of the custom-made image simulacrum of nature in the man-made environment which intensified the surrealist quality and shaped the already surrealist urban environment into even more uncanny realm of living space. This deepened and amplified surreality in the city saturated with increasing use of simulacra broadens the possibility and opportunity of modern photography. Photography, as a tool of engagement and a way of perceiving the simulacrum, helps to form an awareness of the degree of ‘fake-ness’ in reality and the extent of ‘real-ness’ perceptually existing in the simulacrum – therefore making it more real than real.

In addition, the increasing awareness of the hyper-realist world, and the combination of the contemporary technology and urban development, creates a situation where citizens of major cities are increasingly separated from nature, while given a space that is increasingly simulating this same nature. The paradox being the contrast between the physical object and the imaginary space as one and the same. The existence of the image simulacrum in Hong Kong suggests a strong desire, or acceptance, of the value of nature and the urge to appreciate and remain connected to nature – even if it is more real than real in the hyper-real world.
More Real than Real is a practice-led research project that investigated the idea of simulation and its presentation in the urban landscape. The thirteen photographic images in the final exhibition provided evidence of the impact of image simulacrum on the urban society, and the psychological influence of observing the mediated images of nature on our perception of the concept of nature and the urban environment.
Appendix I: Taxonomy
Fig. 49 Taxonomy of Stage One – Reproducing the Manufactured
Fig. 50 Taxonomy of Stage Two - Simulating the Simulated
Appendix II: The Project Exhibition and Curation

Through being photographed, something becomes part of the system of information, fitted into schemes of classification and storage. Photographs do more than redefine the stuff of ordinary experience and add vast amounts of materials that we never see at all. Reality as such is redefined---as an item for exhibition, as a record for scrutiny, as a target of surveillance.

(Sontag 1977, p.156)
Through numerous individual and interconnected trips in urban districts such as Wan Chai, Admiralty, Central, Sheung Wan, and Tsim Sha Tsui, over 800 raw photo images were produced from the two stages of my research, spanning four years from 2011 to 2015. For its optimal resolution capability and convenience in being carried around in the harsh and frenzied urban environment of the city, a Canon EOS 7D of approximate 17.90 Mega-pixels (5,184 x 3,456) with 20 to 120mm lens was the primary camera used to produce the majority of the images. A secondary Canon 5D was also used as a back-up camera and for the purpose of editorial documentation. The research trips aimed to explore and investigate how we perceive and receive the presentation of image simulacrum of nature in urban landscape. The categorization of the discovered visual spaces created between the single or mixed image simulacrum and the immediate urban spaces formed the core of the entire research project, culminating in a series of photographic images that evidence the outcomes of the research. Research outcomes culminating from both stages of the research project were carefully selected to form the final exhibition, titled “More Real than Real.” The final selection of twelve photographs from the productions in Stage One and Two were based on how successfully they responded to the research questions: the appropriateness for the determined exhibition theme, and the allocated exhibition space.

Since all images were produced solely to explore the relationship between the simulated realities and the urban landscape, there was no difference aesthetically and conceptually among the visual outcomes, and therefore, the twelve images from both stages were mixed together and presented in the exhibition as a whole in the same manner. The arrangement, the
positioning and the printing size of the twelve photographic prints involved consideration of the following three factors:

- How much the viewer is personally engaged in the simulated realities when viewing the artworks.
- The dimension of the exhibition space.
- The cropping of the image (vertical or horizontal).

**Designing of the exhibition**

The final exhibition was held in September 2015 in an industrial flat of roughly 1500 square feet with a ceiling height of approximately 20 feet in an industrial building in Fotan, New Territories, Hong Kong (Fig. 51). All thirteen photographs selected were presented in the main exhibition space which measured approximately 24’x24’, with three usable sides.

All photographs were digital colour inkjet prints of 110x77cm in dimension (except for *The Two Great Outdoors* and *Behind the Real is Unreal*, which measured 110x50cm), with a one inch inclusive white border, as uniformity of viewing was the main concern. The choice of colour printing on Photo Rag paper was determined by the intention to retain the brilliant colours of the image simulacrum captured in both stages of the project. Due to the windows and draperies on two of the three exhibiting walls, each photographic print was individually mounted on a separate wooden panel which was each hung from the ceiling in the flat with four prints on each wall available (Fig. 52-55).
The photographs were unframed to provide a clean and minimal appearance to enhance the pictorial construction of my works. Natural light from the windows was shut out to allow maximum control of lighting, and two halogen spotlights for each image were positioned for best illumination.

The prints were evenly spread to create a sense of unity and integrity and set at eye level height. The intention was to provide the viewer with an experience of discovery at the moment of viewing the individual image, revealing the sense of ‘off-ness’ as seen in Demand’s works or strangeness when perceiving image of the image simulacrum of nature in the urban landscape. For maximum impact, the most colourful and visually striking images were strategically positioned on Wall A which viewers were firstly be confronted with when entering the exhibition space for maximum impact. One image which was photographed and printed in vertical format was arranged on the right side of the Wall B, which was away from the main body of works so that its irregular size did not affect the overall uniformity of the exhibition.

The title of the exhibition, ‘More Real than Real’ was printed on 10x4’ Magenta die-cut stickers and attached on the greyish floor as a layout design and proclamation of the exhibition theme that conveyed the key message that the unreals in our world could appear more real than the reals.

Finally, electronic social media were utilized to inform the art community and the public of the event. A set of postcard will be designed, printed and given to all visitors as a complementary gift. Wall D near the entry to the main exhibition area was designated as a
space of introduction. Die-cuts stickers of an artist statements were printed and attached on the wall. Exhibition postcards were placed on a table by the same wall for visitors to collect before entering the main exhibition space.
Fig. 5.2 Layout of the exhibition space - Elephant Studio, Fotan, Hong Kong
Fig. 53 Side views of the exhibition space
Appendix III: Appropriate Durable Record
Stage One

Open Space

Fig. 56 Sun Lo-Chuan, *Entrapped in the Real*, 2013,
Exhibition image

Fig. 57 Sun Lo-Chuan, *Our Private Corner*, 2013,
Exhibition image

Fig. 58 Sun Lo-Chuan, *Island of Alienation*, 2013,
Project artwork archive

Fig. 59 Sun Lo-Chuan, *Freedom of Flying*, 2013,
Project artwork archive

Fig. 60 Sun Lo-Chuan, *Integrity*, 2014,
Project artwork archive

Fig. 61 Sun Lo-Chuan, *Broken Nature*, 2014,
Exhibition image
Closed Space

Fig. 62 Sun Lo-Chuan, *Plaza of Symmetrical Nature*, 2013, Project artwork archive

Fig. 63 Sun Lo-Chuan, *The Urban Landscape*, 2013, Project artwork archive

Fig. 64 Sun Lo-Chuan, *The Secret Entrance*, 2013, Project artwork archive

Fig. 65 Sun Lo-Chuan, *The Veil of Nature*, 2013, Exhibition image

Fig. 66 Sun Lo-Chuan, *Really Real Red*, 2014, Project artwork archive

Fig. 67 Sun Lo-Chuan, *Behind the Unreal is Real*, 2014, Exhibition image
Inverted Space

Fig. 68 Sun Lo–Chuan, *On Top of the World*, 2013, Exhibition image

Fig. 69 Sun Lo–Chuan, *Pearl of the Orient*, 2013, Project artwork archive

Fig. 70 Sun Lo–Chuan, *Blue Sky*, 2013, Project artwork archive

Fig. 71 Sun Lo–Chuan, *The Lost Sky*, 2013, Project artwork archive

Fig. 72 Sun Lo–Chuan, *Nature in Its Night Shift*, 2013, Project artwork archive

Fig. 73 Sun Lo–Chuan, *The Forest*, 2014, Project artwork archive
Stage Two

Open Space

Fig. 74 Sun Lo-Chuan, *Above the Water*, 2015, Project artwork archive

Fig. 75 Sun Lo-Chuan, *The Rock*, 2015, Project artwork archive

Fig. 76 Sun Lo-Chuan, *The Temporary Garden*, 2015, Exhibition image

Fig. 77 Sun Lo-Chuan, *Not So Victoria Harbour*, 2015, Exhibition image

Fig. 78 Sun Lo-Chuan, *The Misplaced*, 2015, Project artwork archive

Fig. 79 Sun Lo-Chuan, *The Displaced*, 2015, Exhibition image
Closed Space

Fig. 80 Sun Lo-Chuan, *Ocean View Estate*, 2015, Exhibition image

Fig. 81 Sun Lo-Chuan, *Wall Flowers*, 2015, Project artwork archive

Fig. 82 Sun Lo-Chuan, *Crumbled*, 2015, Project artwork archive

Fig. 83 Sun Lo-Chuan, *The Hidden*, 2015, Project artwork archive

Fig. 84 Sun Lo-Chuan, *Hydrant and Flowers*, 2015, Project artwork archive

Fig. 85 Sun Lo-Chuan, *The Fallen Sky*, 2015, Project artwork archive
Inverted Space

Fig. 86 Sun Lo-Chuan, *Mise en abyme*, 2015, Exhibition image

Fig. 87 Sun Lo-Chuan, *Wild Sky*, 2015, Project artwork archive

Fig. 88 Sun Lo-Chuan, *Piled-up*, 2015, Project artwork archive

Fig. 89 Sun Lo-Chuan, *Above the Peak*, 2015, Project artwork archive

Fig. 90 Sun Lo-Chuan, *Imprisoned Sky*, 2015, Project artwork archive

Fig. 91 Sun Lo-Chuan, *Steamy Hydrant*, 2015, Project artwork archive
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