

# Diasporic Discourse and Body Codes: Transnational Identities in Three Representative Chinese-French Artists

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**Abstract**—This paper focuses upon three such painters working in France from this time and their representations both of their host country in which they found themselves displaced, and of their homeland which they represent through refracted memories from their new perspective in Europe. What is their representation of France and China / Taiwan? Is it Otherness or an origin?

This paper also attempts to explore the three artists' diasporic lives and to redefine their transnational identities. Hou Chin-lang, the significance of his multiple-split images serve to highlight the intricate relationships between his work and the surrounding family, and to reveal his identity of his Taiwan "homeland". Yin Xin takes paintings from the Western canon and subjects them to a process of transformation through Chinese imagery. In the same period, Lin Li-ling, transforms the transnational spirit of Yin Xin to symbolic codes with neutered female bodies and tatoos, thus creates images that challenge the boundaries of both gender and nationality.

**Keywords**—Body Codes, Chinese French, Diasporic Discourse, Identity

## I. INTRODUCTION

"Where are you from?", "Which country are you from?" These simple words have become conversation starter for two strangers in today's society. Indeed, the advancement of information technology, globalization, and the disappearing of ethnic boundaries make personal identity has become the most vague and essential topic. The situation of transnational economy or globalization of networks as criterion, and the breakthrough of dualistic framework of "center", "marginal" or differentiation of global and local cultures, have caused and re-defined the meaning of global population movement. American scholar Aihua Ong proposed "flexible citizenship" among Chinese in North America. She advocated that the accumulation of capital is caused by the market and the dominance of the field regardless of individuality or politics. When the situation permits, the individual identity of Nation has become "flexible" in the globalization setting. Such ambiguity removes cultural boundaries, "emergence groups". Their personal cultural identity, which is wavering between globalization and localization, prompted the elimination of territory between the relationship of Nation and ethnic groups.

Similarly, many issues arise if the concept is placed in the

relationships of Chinese-French identity. First of all, can these "flexible citizenships" be regarded as "diaspora"? Were they forced to "drift" to a foreign land? Or did they take the initiative to move abroad to pursuit their dreams? In fact, scholars have expressed different views of the phenomenon of "Diaspora". Some views were too loose, leading to over usage of the term, and some are too conservative and cautious, such as that "diaspora" is limited only to the Jewish or African population. Therefore, the conception of "diaspora" among Chinese-French needs to be defined. However, how do the Chinese-French artists look at "themselves"? How do they, through painting, reproduce their immigrant identity? How do the memories give meaning to themselves? How does the involvement of the body present a new aspect?

This paper is intended to use Jing-Lang Hou's "A Duet of Life" (Hou Jing-Lang Exhibition, 2009), Xin Yin's "Metamorphoses" (Xin Yin Exhibition, 2005), and "Mole and Tattoo" (Lin Li-Ling Exhibition, 2008), to discuss the portrayal of the body in the paintings. First of all, using the three artists' "diaspora" status as a starting point for a preliminary discussion of the diasporic process of Chinese in France. Second, it analyzes how they crossed the East and West boundaries by the representations of "Body Codes"<sup>1</sup> which portray their memories, sexuality, national race, and personal identity. Finally, the paper will attempt to break the conception of the geographical circle, connecting different parts of the artist's identity; and hopefully the Taiwan artists will learn from them and find their own position.

## II. RE-DEFINITION:

### DIASPORIC DISCOURSE AND CHINESE-FRENCH STUDY

In the western context, the word "diaspora" is a metaphor saying: "a group of entities spread out in all directions" (disperse). It refers to the diaspora phenomenon of the Jews before and after the rise of Christianity, and the prototype of "diaspora" is exile. Exile, often with a derogatory meaning - it is the act of expulsion as a punishment (banishment, exile); it also means self-banishment, or a resistant act of individuals to choose to exile. Generally, the modern usage of exile refers to

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<sup>1</sup> Mieke Bal, a structural art history scholar, expressed her view on the definition of codes said: "... that the outcome is meaning, that is functions by way of discrete visible elements called signs to which meanings are attributed; that such attributions of meaning, or interpretations, are regulated by rules, named codes; and that the subject or agent of this attribution, the reader or viewer, is a decisive element in the process" (Bal 26).

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one leaves one's home country for a long period of time due to the stressful environment. Exiling makes the intellectuals live in a mixture of cultures. This challenge makes one feel alienated due to the separation from one's homeland politics and traditional cultures and the presence. In a sense, exile, following the peripheral, is the remodeling of collective experience. Other than the Jews, the Afro-ethnic group is frequently described as "diaspora", and they have appealed to use the word "drifter". Colonial leads to regional re-location (replaced placehood), is also a shift (displace), is a relative relationship of the position in space. A post-colonial person has a strong self-consciousness and a sense of loneliness due the ever-changing language of narrative strategy. It is manifested in the cultural roots of anxiety, identity of ruminating, the difference of respect and recognition further exile the spirit. As a person under colonization, especially when creators (writers, artists, etc.) try to regain cultural pride from historical amnesia, colonial trauma, suppression of culture and loss of their mother tongues, their establishment of the text is often a metaphor for reconstruction of the world, in which is from the patchwork of memory and historical trauma is often the theme of the text.

As for Chinese community and "diaspora", that began with the early Chinese immigrants in San Francisco when large number of Chinese immigrants coming for mining. This group of Chinese-Americans recorded their homesickness and concerns for their homeland through texts. The writer Maxine Hong Kingston (Maxine Hong Kingston, 1940 -)'s "Woman Warrior" for example, through the context of (contextualization) the special techniques to re-engrave the history of Chinese immigrants in black and white, creating the literature of "real". The great-grandfather, in "Jinshan Warriors", a symbolic figure who first started the acts, said, "There's never been the kind of custom ..... That's what we've created. We can create custom, because we are the ancestors who have laid the foundation of this land" [9]; this "create" the concept of "Woman Warrior" and has transformed into legendary writing: a text is written by word of mouth of original legends through two ways, "realness" and "imagination". With many tests and challenges in the process of personal growth, appreciating the traditional attitudes and behavior, and leading to the discovery of cultural identity.

The nostalgia of Chinese-American immigrants, wavered between trueness and realness, which showed a unique style in their literatures. However, over the years, the Chinese communities were influenced by the needs and desires of the mainstream culture in the United States. In the mid-nineteenth century, most of American culture portrayed China in the negative light. "Exposure to that kind of Orientalism, are those who were similar to Maxine Hong Kingston, born and raised in China and United States, able to extricate oneself from the burden of Orientalism in the discussion or position of their works?" Caught between the United States and China, Chinese-American writers were neither Chinese writer, nor American writers. Facing such a mixture of the plight, scholars termed it as "diaspora literature". Therefore, compare to Afro-Americans, Chinese-American's "diasporaness" are more

hybridity, meaning that, "In post-colonial hybridity, the diaspora is extremely painful. Through a variety of cultural relics and traces to form oneself, hence, the principal is not unified, stable, and the final is always caught in conflict and division, which one is unable to extricate themselves" [2].

Oppositely, the Chinese-French has "diasporaness" movement to those Chinese Americans, the Chinese-French mostly initiated the migration to France in order to work or study. In the work of Professor Shumei Shi's "Feminist Writing of Diaspora Culture" which analyzed the raise and development of post-colonial theory, mentioning the borderline culture of non-Western diaspora to the center in the twentieth century. It is gradually becoming a perspective of a critique. "In the occasion of Post-colonialism in the Third World, the focus of colonial cultural critique and criticism has moved outside the United States, thus eliminating the critics of "internal colonization"(internal colonialism), it is necessary for the United States mainstream society to dominate the ethnic minorities "[2]. The new generation of Asian-American scholars, under the influence of globalization and transnational culture, think that diaspora culture is no longer limited to country, and one should look at it as a whole. In a relevant work of Minh-ha Trinh T., he described the painfulness of diaspora body incisively and vividly: "Asian female immigrants in the United States are not only a suppressor in a patriarchal society but also a native in the Third World, and so she has initiative" [2]. Other than in the United States, there is no doubt that the Chinese-French has the same emotions of "losing root". These people were neither insider nor able to return to their home country, but they were not completely considered as an outsider, they were not part of the home country after immigration. This increases insecurity due to moving from places to places that causes material and mental problems and become dynamic sources for artistic creations. Therefore, the author in this article will categorize the Chinese -French artists in the same "diaspora" group as the Chinese -American.

### III. THE PURSUIT OF ART: THE CHINESE FRENCH ARTIST'S PROGRESS

Before World War II, France had been the center of Western art, and also the Holy Land for foreign art students. The Chinese students abandoned Japan, a "paraphraser" of western art, and chose France. During this period, many people studied in France, including Hsun-chin Pang, Yu Chang, Yu-liang Pan, Shu-hung Chang, Feng-mian Lin, Bei-hong Xu, Da-yu Wu, and some other well-known artists, who sought through the study of Western art to resolve difficulties faced in Chinese painting, especially Feng-mian Lin's and Bei-hong Xu's contributions were the most important in the recent China modern art. In the mid-20th century, Chinese-French artists, Te-chun Chu, Wu-ji Zhao, Da-yu Wu, Ping-ming Hsiung, Shi-Cong Fang, and other representatives, were studying painting in France, and constantly studying the essence of Western art. They also felt more deeply for the broad Chinese culture that reveals the convergence of East and West cultures in their works. In the

early period, this group of Chinese -French painters embraced the dream to study art in France, however, when the war broke out, most of them were forced to stay in France for at least 20 or 30 years. They only could show their homesickness and attachment to home and country through painting their feelings of regret and diaspora on the canvases.

In recent years, many Chinese -French artists were from Taiwan, such as Yin-xiong Zhang, Yuan-heng Li, Shu-huang Yang, are quite famous in the French art community. After Taiwan's White Terror period, Jin- Lang Hou, because of brain disease, he switched to his left hand to paint his perception of the world, and created a multi-cut style. Similar to Chen-wang Wei's portrait, Ri-wen Wu created different type of human faces by making use of large screen space with ink and paint, also he sketched, daubed and cut his work. Shi-zhen Liao is a new generation of painter in France. His works include garden series, the four seasons, richness of the sea series, still life series. Li-Ling Lin and Bai-rei Wang are representatives of Taiwan's contemporary Chinese -French woman artists. Li-Ling Lin lived in France for 10 years, she focus mainly on Western nudity, and her works are fine bold, and unique with her own style. Nudity is an important study in the history of Western painting, but Li-Ling Lin's works emit an oriental flavor. Unlike Li-Ling Lin's nudity works, Bai-rei Wang focus on still life paintings, using Western painting techniques.

Although the contemporary Chinese-French artists were not troubled by war, political barriers, differences in intellectual level but many Chinese- French artists were forced to stay in France for a long time, even though the country is quite different from the diaspora Jewish and the early United States. Due to the political diaspora, today' -Chinese-French protest with more "free consciousness". Using self-diaspora as globalization is frustrating and pragmatic. Through the process of diaspora, the Chinese -French painters have been facing identity and status problems due to influence of East-West artistic skills. The painters develop the perception of alienation and their own bodies. These produce two different levels and judgments of internal and external boundaries, but also identify issues that are beyond body codes.

#### IV. RECOVER IMAGES FROM THE MEMORY: JIN- LANG HOU'S MULTI-SPLIT

Most people may not know Jin- Lang Hou, a Taiwanese painter, but he is a reputable the scholar and renowned artists in France. As an artist, he is inclined to Fauvism and Cubism styles, using vivid color to split screen; in academic, he is a researchers of French National Scientific Research (CNRS), and studied Chinese folk religion and Chinese painting, at the same time, he also engaged in research works at the French Institute of Advanced Research Laboratory (l'Ecole pratique des Hautes Etudes), French National Guimet Museum (Musée Guimet), French National Library (Bibliothèque Nationale) and other research institutions; on the level of individual consciousness, although he was in Paris, he was actively promoting and participating in Taiwan's democracy movement. He experienced the transfer of political power in Taiwan after

Japanese Occupation as well as the White Terror period following the event of 228, Jin-Lang Hou witnessed the historical unfortunates in Taiwan. He once recalled: "228 incident, I was ten years old, there were sheep outside that day and I saw five trucks loaded with "Taiwanese Soldiers" armed with pistol or rifle, the adults of the village were scared, and hide in the nearby sugar cane plantations, only I was not afraid, and ran to see ... .." [6]. Taiwanese society was in conflict and confusion at that time, Jin Lang Hou was traumatized and had written a poem, "Reading the Ancient Map of Taiwan at Night" which expresses condolence over Taiwan's colonial history. Disappointed with Taiwan's politics, Jin- Lang Hou decided to study painting in France.

Just as his careers of research and painting were at the peak, Jin Lang Hou, unfortunately, was diagnosed with brain tumors. After several operations, he was still partially paralyzed, unable to move his right half of his body. He did not give up painting under the torments of the illness. Oppositely, he started to learn to use his left hand to paint, and created a "human partition" style. Jin- Lang Hou's works are mainly portraits, ranging from individual to group portraits. Each body can be split into two or three faces with different expressions to convey a person's outer and inner worlds, and he used the color technique, in particular, the contrasting colors highlight the multi-layers of the character and physical. "The human body deformation, since after 1989 was a series of brilliant experiment, from the usage of partial Cubist cutting structure in the beginning to gradually developed a unique beginning part of the recourse began to deformation of the cutting, after which the body gradually developed a multi-head structure, which symbolized the multi layers of the spiritual content and timing, at the same time, constituted the dynamic activity of space" [6]. Characters in the paintings often reflect the writer's own interpretation of life. For example, the painting of "Hospitals" [6], has two patients' heads in the center, visitors chit- chatting on both sides. Jin- Lang Hou practiced the cutting technique of Cubist to deform his body by blurring visual perception; he broke away from the traditional Cubist cutting technique and innovated his style of multi-body structure with the use of color, giving new life to the human body, so that a group of unrelated visitors appears to be in harmony. "Share Those Concerns" [6] has a strong vibrant color. Mr. Yinngde Chen has said:

Men and women dressed in large tracts of dark red and almost black to show contrasts, while the main character on the right side of the work wore a little light yellow and light purple, so the painting is utterly simple and displays unparalleled brilliance ... .. to cubism, Fauves deformation and color contrasts, were in his early paintings, but by this time these elements have been infiltrated freely by many artists, which developed a Jin-Lang Hou's style [6].

Jin-Lang Hou's original partition style, not only highlights the painfulness of his disease, but also expresses his homesickness for Taiwan through multi-structure technique. In 1994, in his works of "Vulnerability of Democracy Protestors" [6], "Anti-nuclear Protest" [6] ...etc, highlighted the people's pursuit for democracy and the struggle with external rebellion

through physical conflict and the body's double-sided cutting. The previous paintings, the figure dresses in green clothes. His eyes are covered by a pair of hands. In the front, there is a blue arm, suppressing the green clothed character's right chest. In the center, there appear a few characters with black and white faces. The painter used colors and segmentation to show irony of democracy and it also reflects the artist's ongoing concern and disappointment with Taiwan's society. In addition to ridicule politics, Jin-Lang Hou always worried about the situation in his hometown in southern Taiwan. "Kite- Flying" [6] depicts a mother who takes a little boy to fly kite. It's a seemingly mundane subject, but it's the painter's favorite activity since childhood. In the painting, the mother also has two faces, one side is a kind face with a faint trace of sadness, gazing the little boy on left side. The other side is the green-brown face with chin slightly up, black eyes, watching viewer helplessly that appears to have the desire to reveal some secret to the viewer. Let's take a look at another painting "The Woman Who Wears Caoli" [6], the woman in the painting seems to be the same as in the previous painting. Thin, also wearing a white dress, but through careful observation, there's another character in black clothes is wearing a purple Caoli and standing behind the woman who wears the yellow Caoli. The two female characters' heads and bodies overlapped. The woman who wears the yellow Caoli, her body was in the front and her head was in the back, showing only half of the face; On the contrary, the woman who wears the purple Caoli, her head is leaning forward and divided into two sides, while her body is in the back. The screen presents three split faces. The brightest face is on the left, the darkest face in the middle. The painter used dark red to highlight a down expression. However, the face on the left and right sides looks at the viewers with one eye, so the viewers could feel inexplicable sadness from two sorrowful eyes. Such "gaze", based on the mental analysis is a way to build self-identity, through "recognition of "he" or "she" who were being stared at" to understand that oneself may have been followed, and this has become part of self-identity. Lacan (Jacques Lacan), using the "mirror" point of view, explained that the self in the mirror cannot mediate self-division but only able to see their own self through "others". Therefore, "gazing" brought out "I", and self named "Male" or "Female", that is the "Main Body" or the "Self". These subjects could include "Gazing" or "Re- emergence of the Main Body" [10].

Jin-Lang Hou combined eye gazes, character segmentation, time and space. The dark side is of him in the innermost world, his experience of illness, and his homesickness for his hometown: the bright side is his external self, what everyone could, and what his desire to present to others. The contradiction between a positive and negative, the cross-usage of color and structure, Jin-Lang Hou was able to connect memory with reality. His Taiwan childhood memories and his time spent in Yinn in his hospital bed in France were in two different regions, times and spaces, which condensed in his paintings, for example, "Artist and Childhood Playmates" [6]. The artist is split into half from head to toe. Everyone could see his enjoyment of his childhood as his left face is blue green

color with bright yellow clothing and an innocent white lamb is in the lower left corner; In contrast, his true self was suffering from the pain as a foreigner is shown on his right red face with closed eyes, clenched lips, and dark yellow clothing. In his self-portrait "The Blue Memory" [6], one can discover his past was dark left part when he was mobile, and that's what he remembered of himself. However, the immobile right side was what others see, the real him in Yinn in the hospital in France. Jean-Paul Desroches, the director of the French Ministry of Cultural Heritage Stones, thought that: "... .. But he insisted these memories associated with today's fight, faces were split into two parts, faces were repeated several times, he drew figures often with stiffed and crooked right forearm like himself. He even wore white clothing in self-portraits, painting himself standing with the same right arm paralyzed. In this, he has no doubt for his existence ... .."[6]. "The Death and Life" [6], which was his memories of 1989. At that time, he was experiencing the risk of post-operation period. He was uncertain about his life, thus he expressed the complexity of internal and external emotions by changing the human body, from the top to bottom, into multiple or double deformation. Showing more faces is a way to reveal family's anxiety and waiting, and the helplessness reality and past nostalgia.

Past / present, memory / reality, Taiwan / France, a bizarre juxtaposition, all condensed in the canvas to reproduce his double "flexible" identities. Paralyzed, he cannot move freely. He expressed his attachment to Taiwan through paintings. At the same time, he reflected his existence through characters and color partition, combining "diaspora" with dark colors. Then, using eye gazes "tell" the viewers his most profound words.

#### V. VARIATIONS OF THE HUMAN BODY: XIN YIN'S PAINTING OF DEFORMATION

Jin-Lang Hou's unique splitting style of the human body emphasizes the double identity issue by contrasting internal / external and past / present self through the deformation of character and usage of color. In the paintings of Xin Yin, a Chinese- French Painter, show such an intense and conflicted dualistic identification model. Similar to Jin-Lang Hou's diaspora political background, Xin Yin, in XinChieng, China, amended the Western painting skills and "transforms" a Western character into an Asian, so the Asian characters and Western background will co-exist in painting. Jin-Lang Hou's "distortion" is segmentation of the human body. On the other hand, Xin Yin expresses multiple identities through displacement of body parts. He deliberately arranges the body codes in a strange way, and uses the incompatibility of "deformation" to change to another heterogeneous space.

Xin Yin was born in XinChieng, Kashigeer. In 1982, he admitted to the Department of Xi'an Academy of Fine Arts and, after graduation she started to teach in the XinChieng Arts Institute. He went to Australia in 1989 to study at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University (RMIT). In 1991, he moved to France and has been living since then. Xin Yin grew up in China but also lived in Australia and France for a while. He was able to create art concepts by appreciating

Western Art with his Chinese perspectives as he was under the influence of different cultures and religious beliefs, and he was very cheerful and tolerant. Xin Yin studied 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century traditional painting for years, and was fascinated by the fusion of Chinese and Western cultures, which were brought by policies opening to the outside world in the Chinese History. The above two factors were key to arouse his unrestrained and never-ending ideas. His "Mita Mofo Si" exhibition is "Metamorphoses" in French, meaning deformation, metamorphism. He had been having the idea for more than 10 years. He bought a number of nineteenth-century paintings from the antique and flea market in Europe. These paintings were dilapidated due to poor preservation, therefore, he thought of adding new elements at restoration, enabling the ancient works to come alive again. Xin Yin mainly picked up nineteenth century paintings centering the lifestyles, portraits, and romantic with Rococ classicism styles of religion, nobility and high society themes. In the re-creation process, Xin Yin has also chosen Chinese characters and scenery in the nineteenth century. The nineteenth century, during the late Qing dynasty, China opened the door to Western trade and Western culture was introduced to China. It was the moment of intersection and collisions of Chinese and Western Cultures. During this period, Chinese people began to do oil painting. The early Chinese oil painters were selling their oil paintings abroad, while Western oil painters were painting oriental theme during this period, therefore, Xin Yin deliberately kept the works with the atmosphere of commerce in China's late Qing dynasty. These works not only appears to be like a Western painter's painting a Chinese theme but also liked like a Chinese painter's painting that was traded to foreign land.

Xin Yin made use of his skilful painting techniques to transform ancient paintings. He would scrape off some oil paint, and then he carefully painted his ideas by adding embellishment and also cautiously repairing the artwork. The process blends the old and new elements together. Sometimes, he gives the figure a face-lift, sometimes he changes the character's clothing into Chinese style clothes. Through different body codes and under Xin Yin's transformation, Napoleon III has become the last emperor Pu Yin in the "Emperor" [11]; French Heroine has become China's Heroine Xiu-Yinng Zhou in the "Knife Meet - Xiu-Yinng Zhou" [11]; ambassador's wife's lace collar has become a the traditional Chinese traditional Qi pao in the "ambassador's wife" [11]; Virgin Mary has turned into a rural Chinese woman in the "Mary" [11]. His work "Mother and Child" [11] reflects gentle and obedient Chinese women's personality and boundless maternal as the Chinese women is looking down at the quiet and peaceful child in her arms. The pure black background and a strong brightness contrast seem to celebrate the great maternal love, enveloping the entire works in a sacred atmosphere. Xin Yin wrote "Mother and child" in the upper corner of the painting to highlight the relationship between the people; "The Last Supper" [11] is an imitation folk art that is transformed into a gathering among the Chinese women which plays down its religious overtones; there is a female portrait painted copy

"Women Dressed in Black" [11]. Another Xin Yin's work is "The Lost Colonel" [11]. The original painting is a French officer, wearing a feathered cap, a Saint-Cyr uniform with badges of Legion of Honor and St. Louis emblem on his chest. Xin Yin selectively changed the background of the painting into Beijing's ancient buildings, but he didn't change the character's face and expression of the character. He retained the lost expression of the original character- his eyes make us reminisced grief, guilt and helplessness brought about by aggression. Courbert of French Fine Arts Museum commented, "He catered to the late painter's performance in the subject... crossing space and time, the works came into contact were alive again. This life, he made the works become Chinese, with deep and sharp feelings without losing humor. He adjusted according to the character's clothing and surviving attitude. Under his transformation, everyone get to live again..." [11]. As a XinChieng and French- Chinese, Xin Yin made use of changing old paintings method to transform conflicted East- West theme into oriental nature, so all the Western ancient paintings are reborn in the East, also he put the essence of a "diaspora" Chinese artist into practice.

If compare Western original work with Xin Yin's work, one will find differences and similarities between Chinese and Western cultures. However, every old painting, after transforming by Xin Yinn, the original work no longer exists, and this is why Xin Yin's works are so controversial. Most of these paintings came from anonymous painters, even though some works have signature, but it's very difficult to find their identity; there were also some copy paintings that were placed on the shelves of antique markets. Some art critics thought that Xin Yin rescued these abandoned and neglected works; but other suggested that it's disrespectful and embezzling to make changes on other artists' works. Moreover, these nineteenth century paintings were of historical significance. It is sad to lose them, just like the modern artist Marcel Duchamp added beard on the "Mona Lisa Smile," even it was only on an imitation. However, as the ancient art historian Louise d'Argencour assessed on Xin Yin's works, "Although the content is personal, spreading expressive modern attitude, but Xin Yinn's work is deeply rooted in his country's tradition" [11]. Xin Yin uses a variety of body codes to instill Oriental perspectives to Western artworks to reproduce traditional Chinese images. It also shows his diaspora identity in a subtle way.

#### VI. CODES FOR BODY CREATION: LI-LING LIN'S CROSS-GENDER TECHNIQUE

Jin-Lang Hou applies melancholy, dark eyes to gaze at the viewers; Xin Yin employs deformation of ancient paintings mode to infuse East and West elements, such visual communication can found in Chinese -French painter, Li-Ling Lin, who uses cross- gender point of view change into strong body codes. In comparison to Xin Yin's border origin and Jin-Lang Hou's experience of Taiwan reformation period, Li-Ling Lin was born in 1965 and lived in France for nearly 20 years. She, an enthusiastic native born, grew up in Tainan County and went to France to pursue the emancipation of painting. Unlike

Jin-Lang Hou's immobility and political stance of "diaspora", Li-Ling Lin is more in line with the aforementioned "free consciousness" diaspora. She is a practitioner of "flexible citizens" who has lived in France as Taiwan-Chinese and separated from her homeland for a long time. Her works are nothing more than the bodies of Asians and her style is bold but shy and mysterious at the same time. She combined the symbolic tattoos of the East with nudity of the West on a human body. She injected Oriental elements by the use of body codes (tattoos, moles, Buddha bead, etc.) to make her works with unique oriental flavor. Meanwhile, she focused her creations on Western nude painting while she was receiving art education in France. Under the influence of Western arts, her paintings impacted the viewer mentally and emotionally. Hence, she becomes the system maker for dual "diaspora" identities restrained.

In Li-Ling Lin's "Mole and Tattoo" series of works, all the characters have single-eyebrows, thin eyebrows except the male characters have a slightly bushier eyebrows. You can clearly see the character differences in "Red Beads"<sup>2</sup> and "White Dragon". Majority of Li-Ling Lin's characters have modern short Chinese black hair differ from the traditional bun, except "Girls", is the only painting consists of female with long hair. Yet, she painted the characters with straight black hair, instead of painting them with Westerner's blonde curly hair. Moreover, the male and some female characters wear the traditional hairstyle called the "Suit Hairstyle" that is styled by parting the hair into 3 sections. Such traditional hairstyle could be seen in "Phoenix Tattoos" and "Green Silk Scarf". Li-Ling Lin may appear to look like a typical Chinese, but in fact she is rebellion against the tradition. She used the "neutral" posture of a woman to challenge the male-dominated traditional society.

Regardless of nature differences or social construction, women have been attached to male art history. Qian-hui Gao, while analyzing Latin American female artists, mentioned: "Where there is no equality in education, the development of female artists almost relies on the opposite sex for enlightenment. It's not that there is no great female artists in the history, but for a longest time, there is no to accommodation for female artists to develop their skills" [4]. Yin-ren Hou, in the article of "Turn to the other side of the art history – the need and significance of Taiwan's art development for female artist", disclosed: "Before feminism, women often have to stand in neutral and create non-feminine works, hoping to survive in the men's society" [7]. Taiwan's economic take-off since the 1970s, the art market has gradually become more active. In 1990s, there's a dramatic increase of young women engaged to becoming professional artists. Their styles break away from the feminine "lady art" and head towards the development of a wide range of personal character. Li-Ling Lin adopted "neutral" female nude painting to criticize the masculine male-dominated society. The women in her paintings are less gentle and

graceful: "Fullness", a picture of fat body, "Tiger Tattoos" consists of deformed and bloated fingers, and many of her artworks include moles on white etc... Art critic, Hsun Chiang commented on Li-Ling Lin's works: "... However, Li-Ling's nude paintings are very oriental. The characters have single eyelid with hanging eyes that were innocent yet luring. The mole on the white skin is to show the immovable mistakes, like it is a witness of one's crime (Hsun Chiang art album)". Li-Ling Lin deliberately highlighted the above shortcomings and broke the Chinese traditions of female "perfect" image, showing the desire and pursuit of Western "freedom of consciousness".

Li-Ling Lin's works express Western "sense of freedom" in the Oriental appearance. Other than revealing imperfect female body, the "invisible clothes" in addition to reproduction in the female body is not perfect, their nude paintings in the "invisible clothes" - moles, tattoos and other marks which actually carry her memories in Taiwan and her life which she collides with the western culture in France. "Recently, when I was in studio by the Seine, using the most thorough Western techniques and injecting passion in the important subject of Western painting history: being naked, I couldn't help to think about friends from Taiwan two decades ago, the beautiful body, and the mysterious and seductive body of moles and tattoos" [11]. If one takes a closer look at the artwork, there's only one main naked character in the painting. The character, on one hand, appears seductively, on the other hand, gazes at the viewers. Regardless of any actions or eye contacts, all of them points towards the body "codes". These codes of the body, the paintings of the core issues for the Li-Ling Lin, in the same series of nude paintings, her tattoos with a different mark, as the title of each piece of art in order to suggestive symbols, emphasized her multiple identities. First, "Dragon Tattoos -1" depicts a oriental woman with a red long dragon tattoo printed from her right chest to her right thigh; "Dragon Tattoo -2" depicts an oriental man has a green dragon tattoo printed from his left shoulder to his left arm, and he has peony flower tattoo on right thigh. "Dragon" is the symbol of imperial and men's authority. Two of same title of Li-Ling Lin's paintings, a man and a woman have "dragon tattoo" on them. The contrasting of the body sides and the color of the tattoos echoed gender equality. Traditional weak women were tattooed with "dragon", the authority imprint; the same time, Western nude painting often stippling codes with strong "oriental" meaning. Such painting technique and artist memory of Taiwan inspired the infusion of works. Similar tattoo technique was showed in the "Phoenix Tattoos" and "Tiger Tattoos" that present irony. The former painting, the male has a flying phoenix on his left side of the body; the latter painting, the female has a ferocious tiger on her right shoulder. "Phoenix" represents woman in Chinese tradition, and "tiger" has the meaning of masculinity. The codes were oppositely imprinted on the man's and the woman's body. This broke away from the traditional gender framework through staggering of body codes to illustrate the artist's cross-gender perspective. The master of Western feminism, Bell Hooks once said: "To those who were oppressed, exploited and colonized, it is important for them to interpret marginal as the position and location of resistance. If

<sup>2</sup> The Li-Ling Lin's paintings, that were mentioned in this article were from the art album "Mole and Tattoos" and were not coded because there is no label of code on the album.

we only consider the edge as a despair symbol, then, the nihilism will destruct the foundation of our existence. In this despair, our creativity, our imaginations are at stake, our hearts are completely colonized, and our desires for freedom are lost" [5]. Li-Ling Lin, didn't rejects the Western influence fully, started at the foundation of Western painting to fight for woman's right to speak in Taiwan. At the same time, she used dragon, phoenix and tiger tattoos, with the Buddha beads worn by the woman in "Red Beads", the scarf worn by the woman in "Green Silk Scarf", the "protective shield" worn by the aboriginal woman and other body codes that carried past memories, the body codes. All of these tell the story about the Oriental woman's hometown.

Li-Ling Lin mentioned in the foreword of her art album: "I have left Taiwan for 10 years and drawn in Paris for more than ten years. The conflicted themes in my paintings were like having a Chinese identity in the Western world. The situation was embarrassed and complex, always in different directions, and tough to intercept each other" [8]. As a French- Taiwanese female artist, Li-Ling Lin does not confine herself to a single identity of Taiwan. Each Asian faces on the canvas revealed the pursuit of Western freedom. She transcends traditional concept of women by revealing women's imperfections like curvy body and moles. In the mid of rebelling traditional gender concept, she express her memory of hometown, Taiwan through the use of symbolic animal tattoos and accessories. Li-Ling Lin combined Western painting brush strokes with Oriental body symbols to show the interception of France and Taiwan "diaspora" and create the most "flexible" model in her unique statement. Some said that in the men's dominated art world, Taiwan women are unwilling to indulge in the social framework to multiple, but to use "flexibility" method to integrate of portraits of the West and image of the East that define one's value and status.

#### VIII. WHERE MY HOME IS: IMPLEMENTATION AND PRACTICE OF "FLEXIBLE" STATUS

Jin-Lang Hou, Xin Yin and Li-Ling Lin are three Chinese-French artists who have not been through the baptism of French art. Like other overseas Chinese artists, they were constantly looking for a place to settle down. Because of politics, Jin- Lang Hou and Xin Yin drifted to France respectively. They employed the "deformed" body codes to express their dual identity. The former artist applied his memory of Taiwan, segmented human body, combined dark with bright colors, contrasted the present mental state from the past mental state, and utilized eye gazes to convey his inner self; the latter artist, also practiced body deformation, changed Western character's look of the original work to Chinese single- Eichhornia, straight black hair, flat nose, and adopted body codes replacement, so the East and West cultures coexist at the same time. To extend Jin-Lang Hou and Xin Yin's concept of body deformation, Li-Ling Lin, a female painter from Taiwan, through another kind of "cross-gender" perspective, transformed traditional women's thin body into voluptuous, "neutral" body. Li-Ling Lin made use of exposing

woman's imperfection: a mole on silky white skin and layers of fat around the waist, so to get rid the Oriental tradition of ladylike by applying Western perspective to the gender inequality society. However, the imperfection of the body is not confined to criticism of the traditional concepts, Li-Ling Lin painted tattoos of symbolic figures like dragon, phoenix, tigers, with oriental ornaments in Western nude artwork to strengthen the Oriental imagery codes. At the same time, her distinctive method of cross- gender (male has phoenix tattoo, female has tiger tattoo) that escapes from the conventional framework to express cross- border painting through her French/Taiwan diaspora identity.

"People use culture to define themselves. It will change according to "the demands of individual and social groups" in a post-modern world, cross-cultural channel will be an important tool"[10]. The three Chinese-French artist learn from their diaspora experiences. They began from the relationship of self and other characters portraits to mastering the body codes- eyes, hair, tattoos, moles and outlining the "other" out of "him". Regardless the maturity of vocabulary of different characters, they were still able to reflect the reality through their oriental self-reflection. "Globalization should not be regarded as a homogenization practice of different cultures, but it is a combination of different strategies, with its own plan and purpose. Hence, it is so full of contradictions and conflicts" [3]. Under the influence of Western Culture, the three Chinese-French artists were able to use multiple perspectives to explain the meaning of alien paintings, cross territory and space, showing inclusive segmentation, deformation screen, and cross-gender misplaced symbols, to validate the "flexible" identity under globalization. He reflected true self through the diaspora society (Jin-Lang Hou), she attempted to breakthrough gender stereotype (Li-Ling Lin), or his imaginary works echoed to him (Xin Yin). The three artists begin to appear and identify self, through painting, to describe their past experience while the image of the symbol is a portrayal of returning to self and it further provides an open space for dialogue.

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