

Healing Inscape

Under the influence of authoritarian filial piety culture, can young Chinese people (Chaoshan) use Healing Inscape to enhance their self-awareness, achieve psychological separation from their families of origin.

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Abstract:

This research delves into the struggles faced by young individuals in the Chaoshan region, characterized by conflicts arising from differing aspirations for the future and traditional familial expectations. Rooted in the clash between emerging independence and entrenched authoritarian filial piety (AFP)¹, the study identifies the prolonged influence of traditional culture hindering psychological autonomy among Chaoshan young adults. This dilemma perpetuates a vicious cycle wherein individuals seek external validation and empowerment from elders to shape their destinies.

The objectives of this study encompass personal healing, escape from the dilemma, and spiritual communication. Through art therapy, the researcher explores avenues for self-healing by using Catharsis to navigate repressive emotional release. Additionally, the pursuit aims to strengthen self-awareness, achieve psychological separation² from familial constraints, and foster genuine independence, thereby liberating individuals from the constraints of authoritarian filial piety.

This study's contribution lies in providing Chaoshan young people with a path to transcend dilemma through inner empowerment and self-reliance. By promoting a shift from dependency on external validation to internal resilience, the study advocates for a paradigm of self-empowerment. Furthermore, through innovative art therapy techniques, such as accessing to spiritual visions with Healing Inscape³ creation, the research illuminates avenues for enhancing self-awareness and fostering spiritual connection, thereby offering holistic healing and empowerment strategies for individuals grappling with familial and societal expectations.

¹ **Authoritarian filial piety (AFP):** Authoritarian filial piety (AFP) refers to a strict adherence to traditional Confucian values regarding family and parental authority within a hierarchical structure (Chao, 1994: 1111-1119).

² **Psychological separation:** Psychological separation is an important developmental milestone for humans. Individuals must establish psychological autonomy and break free from internal dependent on their parents in order to develop a separate self-image (Erikson, 1968).

³ **Healing Inscape:** "Healing Inscape" is a visual practice I developed based on this paper. It combines two psychological therapy methods, Inscape and Catharsis, and creates a new form of art therapy using 3D and VR technology.

1. Introduction

1.1. Motivation

My research starts from a very personal place. As a young woman growing up in the Chaoshan area, I had arguments from time to time because my plans for my future were different from the lifestyle my family had set out for me. After I interviewed many people, I found that I was not the only one who had the problem of conflict with family and hometown because of different plans for the future.

Its essence is the conflict between the gradually awakening sense of independence and the traditional authoritarian filial piety (AFP) culture. However, because young people in Chaoshan have been influenced by traditional culture for a long time, they are unable to fully achieve psychological separation with original family and become an independent mind individual. This leaves them in the dilemma of begging their elders to give them the power to control their own future.

1.2. Aims and objectives

Personal Healing:

One aim of my practice is to serve as a way of self-healing. It provides a platform for me to release my own repressed emotions. It is also a creative experiment in art therapy, combining catharsis and inscape and using 3D modeling and VR technology to realize the therapeutic process.

Escape from the dilemma:

Through my practice, I hope I can strengthen my self-awareness, gradually achieve psychological separation from my family of origin, and form a truly independent personality, so that I can finally escape from the dilemma about the future of young people set up by the authoritarian culture of filial piety.

Spiritual communication:

I use visual art in my practice to show my inner world and share my innermost thoughts and truest emotions. I hope my work can form a link with the audience on a spiritual level and communicate with them.

1.3. Contributions

In my practice, I share a possible way for young Chaoshan people to escape from their dilemma. Change habitual thinking and stop begging and waiting for elders to empower them to control their future. Seek solutions from within, improve self-awareness, achieve psychological separation from family of origin as soon as

possible, and learn to empower themselves.

For art therapy, I propose an innovative approach. I assume that tapping into spiritual vision, which involves receiving insights or guidance from a higher spiritual realm, can deepen self-awareness and understanding. Based on a psychological theory called Inscape⁴, I merge dreams, visions, and consciousness through visionary art⁵, to create what I call a Healing Inscape. This artwork serves as a gateway to spiritual vision, connecting individuals with their inner selves.

In Healing Inscape, I integrate the principles of Catharsis, a process of releasing negative emotions and achieving positive change, by using artistic metaphors to recreate scenes of trauma. This enables individuals to confront and process suppressed emotions.

Moreover, Healing Inscape, as visionary art, not only acts as a personal spiritual tool for the artist but also has the ability to transmit energy to the audience. This visual communication fosters spiritual connection and facilitates a deeper understanding of the artwork.

However, it's important to note that this confrontation I mentioned does not 100% guarantee an automatic release of emotions. The new art therapy method I propose also cannot guarantee applicability to everyone. My practice is only aimed at testing its therapeutic potential and whether it has positive effects on individuals, even if it's only for certain groups of people.

⁴ **Inscape**: Inscape in psychology uses surrealist, abstract, and fantastic art to build a spiritual landscape world, and this visual metaphor can truly reflect inner emotions.

Wikipedia. (2021). Inscape. Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inscape_\(visual_art\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inscape_(visual_art))

⁵ **Visionary art**: Visionary art is art that purports to transcend the physical world and portray a wider vision of awareness including spiritual or mystical themes, or is based in such experiences.

Wikipedia. (2024). Visionary art . Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Visionary_art#cite_note-AlexGrey-1

2. Background of Chaoshan

2.1. The influence of Chaoshan history on traditional lifestyle

Chaoshan, located in the southern part of China. In the 20th century, many Chaoshan people sought better opportunities abroad, particularly in Hong Kong and Southeast Asia. These areas offered more economic stability and opportunities compared to the challenging conditions in China (Wang, 2018: 100-103). Compared to the last century when the Chaoshan people liked to go on adventures in exchange for a better life, people living in the Chaoshan area nowadays are more interested in pursuing a stable life. The main reason may be that the most of the original group of Chaoshan people who were adventurous and willing to take high risks in pursuit of a better life have migrated to other places and left Chaoshan in the last century. Those who remain in Chaoshan are more conservative and cautious people who prefer to have a predictable life rather than taking risks. So they also want their children to lead a stable life like them, thinking that this is the best way of life.

Another possible reason is that some Chaoshan people have no choice but to return to their hometowns after failing to start businesses in other cities. The confidence of this group of people has been shattered by their failure, leading to a pessimistic attitude towards life outside their hometowns (Chapman & Phillips, 2022: 5). They believe that it is more difficult to achieve success outside the hometown. Therefore, they also believe that staying in the hometown and living a stable life is the most correct way of life.

2.2. Traditional value in Chaoshan : Filial Piety

Filial piety promotes a set of moral principles, beliefs, and behaviors that include respecting, obeying and caring for one's parents (Li et al., 2021: 1). In Chinese culture, filial piety, a fundamental principle of Confucian⁶ philosophy, emphasizes the importance of children maintaining a respectful relationship with their parents and meeting their parental expectations, even amid conflicts (David Yau-Fai Ho, 1994; Chen et al., 2007). This viewpoint on filial piety has led to the widespread belief that Chinese young people, when in conflict with their parents, should demonstrate filial piety by prioritizing their parents' wishes over their own desires. (Zhang et al., 2019, 1). But this situation is not only found in China, it is also prevalent in Korea and Japan. Filial piety has a profound influence on the entire East Asian society (Ikels, 2004).

⁶ **Confucianism:** Confucianism is a system of thought and behavior originating in ancient China. The idea that "Among all virtuous acts, filial piety is the most important" embodies the ethos of traditional Chinese societies, which values filial piety above all other virtues (Zhang et al., 2019, 1).

According to Yeh and Bedford (2003: 215–228), filial piety can be divided into authoritarian filial piety (AFP) and reciprocal filial piety (RFP). Authoritarian filial piety (AFP) refers to a strict adherence to traditional Confucian values regarding family and parental authority within a hierarchical structure. In this concept, children are expected to unquestioningly obey their parents and elders, regardless of their own desires or beliefs (Chao, 1994: 1111-1119). This form of filial piety emphasizes obedience, respect, and duty towards parents and ancestors, often at the expense of individual autonomy and personal growth. Authoritarian filial piety (AFP) can be traced back to the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 AD), advocating the principle of respecting the superior over intimacy (Hsu, 1975: 155-200). This principle emphasizes the decision-making role of the superior, aiming to strengthen political sovereignty by aligning patriarchal parental authority with the emperor's absolute authority (Miao, 2015).

After WWII, Chinese societies underwent political reform and social change, prompting scholars to question the harmful effects of filial beliefs in the modern context, which appeared to inhibit individual independence and suppress creativity (Liu & Lin, 1988). As a result, Reciprocal filial piety gradually gained popularity in Chinese society. Reciprocal filial piety (RFP) refers to a more balanced and mutually respectful relationship between parents and children within the framework of Confucian values (Gates & Yan, 1998: 185). Unlike authoritarian filial piety, which emphasizes obedience and deference from children towards their parents, reciprocal filial piety emphasizes mutual care, support, and understanding between generations. In this concept, parents are not only seen as authority figures but also as individuals who have responsibilities towards their children. Likewise, children are expected to respect and care for their parents while also having the freedom to express their own opinions and make independent decisions (Yeh & Bedford, 2004: 132–144). Reciprocal filial piety encourages open communication, empathy, and cooperation within the family, fostering a harmonious relationship based on mutual respect and love (Zhou et al., 2020).

3. The dilemma of young people in Chaoshan

The elders in my family expect me to follow a traditional lifestyle, prioritizing career stability and putting family first. However, this contradicted my own expectations for the future. They were angry and disappointed that I chose not to follow their plan, and they demanded that I must obey them. I found myself torn and confused. I understood that their advice was motivated by love, but I also questioned the depth of that love. I believe that true love is wanting a loved one to realize their own dreams, not the expectations imposed on them.

Based on my personal experience, I think I was subjected to more authoritarian filial piety. I conducted the following interviews with people aged 20-35 in my hometown. Based on their own experiences, they can tell whether they have received more AFP or RFP.

3.1. Interview: AFP or RFP

During interviews it can be observed that both most of cases mentioned that they have difficulty in saying no to the demands of their elders. Even though elders' demands make them feel uncomfortable, they still choose to obey them to avoid disputes with their elders and to maintain peace in the family. Once they do something against their elders, they always feel guilty and uneasy.

Interview 1

Name: Jianyi Huang (female)

Age: 25 | Work: Unemployed | City: Jieyang (Chaoshan) | Interview date: 5-2-2024

Xiao: I remember you went to college in Guangzhou? Why are you back in Jieyang now?
我记得你大学是在广州读的?为什么现在回揭阳了?

Huang: Yes, I actually like Guangzhou very much. I even did an internship in Guangzhou before.
是的,我其实很喜欢广州的,之前还在广州实习过。

Xiao: Don't you like working in Guangzhou?
是不喜欢在广州工作吗?

Huang: I like it, I even enjoyed my internship in Guangzhou, and I even had the chance to become a full-time employee. But because my mom didn't agree with me to work in Guangzhou, I came back.
我喜欢,甚至很享受在广州实习的时候,甚至有转正的机会,但是因为我妈妈不同意我在广州工作所以我回来了。

Xiao: Do you regret not staying in Guangzhou?
那你会因为没有留在广州而感到遗憾吗?

Huang: Yes, but I have no way. My mom just didn't agree with me staying in Guangzhou and I had to listen to her...
会的,但是我没有办法,我妈妈就是不同意我在广州,我不得不听她的话...

Xiao: But it's your life. You have the right to make the choice you want.
可是是你的人生,你有权利做出你想要的选择的。

Huang: I don't know, I just can not do it. I can't convince my mom, I don't even dare to tell her what I really think.
不知道,我就是不敢,我说服不了我妈妈,甚至不敢跟她提起我的想法。

Interview 2

Name: Changfeng Liu (male)

Age: 25 | Work: Numerology Planner 命理规划师 | City: Shanghai | Interview date: 10-2-2024

Xiao: That's a pretty unique career you have, what exactly do you do?
你这个职业很特别啊,具体是做什么的?

Liu: Helping people plan their careers based on psychology combined with Ba-Zi.
以心理学为基础,结合Ba-Zi帮助人们规划他们的事业。

Ba-Zi: The Four Pillars of Destiny, as known as "Ba-Zi", which means "eight characters" or "eight words" in Chinese, is a Chinese astrological concept that a person's destiny or fate can be divined by the two sesagenary cycle characters assigned to their birth year, month, day, and hour.

Xiao: Is this related to religion and spirituality?
这跟宗教和灵性相关的?

Liu: Kind of. It's similar to tarot cards in Western countries.
有些相关,其实就像西方国家的塔罗牌。

Xiao: I remember your major in college wasn't in this field, right?
我记得你大学时的专业并不是这方面的?

Liu: Yes, I studied engineering mechanics.
是的,我是学的工程力学。

Xiao: Did you pursue both bachelor's and master's degrees in that?
还可以本硕连读是吗?

Liu: Yes, but I gave up. It wasn't a field I was passionate about, it was my parents' choice. They thought it would lead to a stable job, but I just couldn't muster the interest.
是的,但是我放弃了,本来也不是我喜欢的专业,是我父母帮我选择的,因为容易找到一份稳定的工作吧,但我实在提不起兴趣。

Xiao: Do your parents support your current job now?
那现在你的工作你的父母支持吗?

Liu: Far from it, they don't understand it at all, and they don't even want to try. They just say it's a cult... And they had a big fight with me for giving up engineering mechanics.
别说支持了,他们不理解,也根本不想去理解。他们只会说这是邪教...而且当时放弃读工程力学的行业跟他们大吵了一场。

Xiao: I can understand. They probably saw it as giving up a stable future.
可以理解,毕竟在他们看来是在放弃一个稳定的未来生活。

Liu: Exactly, they think whether I like engineering mechanics or not doesn't matter as long as it provides a job. But I can't find happiness in it, and I don't want to spend the rest of my life that way!
是的,他们认为喜不喜欢工程力学根本不重要,只要能提供一份工作就好了,但是我的感受不到开心,我也不希望往后余生都这样度过!

Xiao: How's your relationship with your parents now?
你现在跟你父母关系如何?

Liu: We don't really keep in touch. Every time we talk, it ends up in an argument, with no understanding from either side. They still expect me to return to the engineering field and find a job there.
不怎么联系了,反正一打电话也是吵架,互相不理解,他们仍然在期望我回到工程力学的行业里寻找一份工作。

Xiao: Do you like what you're doing?
你喜欢现在的工作吗?

Liu: Yes, I think I've found the meaning of life. Part of it...
是的,我觉得我找到了人生的意义,部分意义吧。

Interview 3

Name: Yijie Lin (male)

Age: 30 | Work: Businessmen | City: Jieyang (Chaoshan) | Interview date: 14-2-2024

Xiao: I heard you're getting married, congrats!
听说你要结婚了,恭喜!

Lin: Thanks.
谢谢。

Xiao: How did you decide to get married? Did you meet someone you love?
怎么下定决心要结婚了,是遇上爱的人了吗?

Lin: Well, yes and no. I really like her though.
是也不是,我很喜欢她的。

Xiao: And then?
然后呢?

Lin: Mainly because I'm turning 30, you know? It's about time I got married.
主要是我也30岁了,年龄不小了,也该结婚了。

Xiao: Age shouldn't be the reason to get married, though...
年龄不应该成为结婚理由吧...

Lin: Yeah, I know, but all my friends and relatives around my age are already married, I just feel like I'm lagging behind.
但是我身边跟我同龄的亲戚朋友都结婚了,我也感觉比别人慢了一步。

Xiao: Why compare yourself to others, especially when it comes to a big life event like marriage. Everyone has their own pace.
为什么要和别人比较呢,特别是结婚这种人生大事,每个人都有自己的节奏。

Lin: Yeah, I know. But my parents keep pushing me to get married. You know my family's into business, and I'm their only son. I need to find someone quickly, get married, have a son to inherit the family business.
而且我爸妈也总催婚,我压力好大,你也知道我家是做生意的,我爸妈只有我一个儿子,我得尽快找个人结婚生子,生个儿子好以后让他能继承家族生意。

Xiao: What do you think about it?
你自己是怎么想的呢?

Lin: I don't know, honestly. I just follow what my parents say, I don't want to argue with them. At least now that I'm getting married, they'll be quiet for a few days, and they won't keep calling me a loser...
我不知道,反正听我爸妈的话就行了,我也不想去反驳他们,至少我现在结婚了,他们会安静几天吧,至少不会老说我是个废物了...

Xiao: Yeah, but they might start pushing for a grandchild next, especially a grandson.
可能他们接下来会催生了,而且是必须男生儿子。

Lin: I know, I know. Let's not talk about it. Just thinking about all this stresses me out!
我知道我知道,别说了,我想到这一些就烦躁!

Interview 4

Name: Yuyi Zhu (female)

Age: 28 | Work: Teacher | City: Jiayang (Chaoshan) | Interview date: 16-2-2024

Xiao: Remember you studied in Europe, what made you decide to come back to Jiayang and become a teacher?
记得你在欧洲留学过, 怎么决定回揭阳当老师呢?

Zhu: Yeah, I got my Master's in Europe, and as soon as I graduated, I came back to China.
My parents wanted me to come back to hometown and become a teacher.
是的, 我在欧洲读硕士, 毕业就立马回国了, 我爸妈还都希望我回家乡当个老师。

Xiao: Why did they want you to come back and be a teacher?
他们为什么希望你回家乡当老师呢?

Zhu: Because being a teacher is stable. And it leaves more time to focus on finding a guy to marry.
因为当老师稳定简单, 而且有更多时间把重心放在找个男人结婚了。

Xiao: Finding a guy to marry? Why do you think that way?
找个男人结婚? 为什么你会这么想?

Zhu: My parents always say you should do certain things at certain ages.
At my age, if I don't find a guy to marry soon, they think I'll be too old
我爸妈跟我说什么年龄就干什么事, 我现在这个年龄再不找个男人结婚就老了。

Xiao: What do you think about it?
你怎么想的呢?

Zhu: Me? I haven't really thought about it. Teaching is alright, I guess, but I wouldn't say I love it.
As for marriage, I'm actually quite worried.
我? 我自己还真没想过, 当老师也还行, 谈不上多喜欢, 至于结婚, 我其实挺害怕的。

Xiao: What are you worried about?
你在害怕什么?

Zhu: I have a good friend who's already married and has her first kid.
But her mother-in-laws keep pressuring her to have two more kids.
It's putting too much stress on her, she's even showing signs of depression.
I'm afraid I'll face the same pressure if I get married.
我有一个朋友已经结婚了和生了第一个小孩, 但是她的婆婆还一直要求她再生两个小孩。
给她太大的压力了, 她都有点抑郁倾向了, 我害怕我结婚也会遭受这种巨大的压力。

Xiao: Have you talked to your parents? Tell them not to pressure you to get married.
你跟你爸妈聊过吗? 让他们别给你逼婚的压力。

Zhu: I'm too scared to. They also think having kids is a woman's duty.
Honestly, I'm also worried if I rush into marrying someone just because of my age,
instead of marrying someone I love, I won't be happy in the future.
我不敢, 他们也觉得生孩子是女人的义务, 我也是担心如果因为年龄, 而匆忙找一个男人结婚, 而不是找一个相爱的人结婚, 未来应该也不会幸福。

Xiao: Maybe you should find a chance to talk to your parents about your concerns.
或许, 还是要找个机会跟爸妈聊一聊你的担忧。

Zhu: I want to, but you know how my parents are, they're pretty conservative and serious. I'm still afraid of them.
我也想, 但你也知道, 我爸妈比较保守严肃, 我还是很怕他们。

Figure 1: Yulin Yao (2024). Interview young adults in Chaoshan

Based on their experiences, to contrast the characteristics of the APF, it can be inferred that the culture of filial piety embraced by the young people of Chaoshan is more inclined to be the authoritarian type.

Their obedience, for example, corresponds exactly to the authoritarian type of filial piety that emphasises hierarchy and obedience in the family structure and usually requires children to put their own needs aside to conform to the family's expectations (Yeh & Bedford, 2004). The need for early marriage and childbearing, mentioned repeatedly in the interviews, also matches the characteristics of AFP, which places importance on preserving family honour, meeting parental needs, maintaining family harmony, and ensuring the continuation of the family line, particularly through the production of male offspring. However, strict adherence to these ideals can lead to negative psychological outcomes (Yeh & Bedford, 2004) such as increased levels of depression, anxiety, and aggression (Yeh, 2006: 237-257), which were also reflected in the interviews.

3.2. Conclusion: Vicious Cycle

Under the long-term influence of AFP, young people's struggle for future autonomy is caught in a vicious circle.

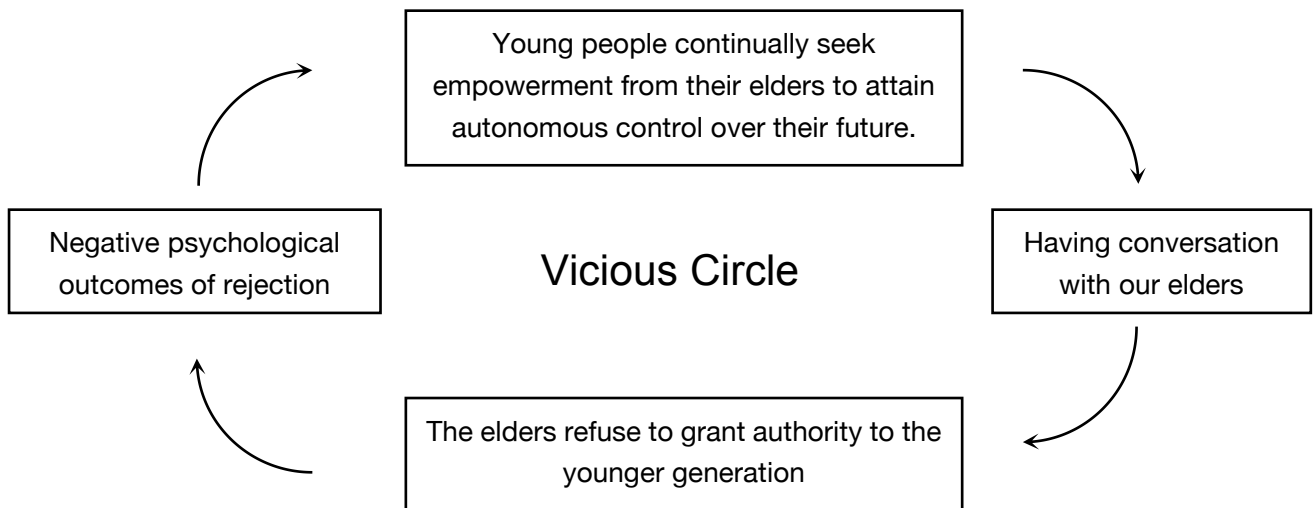


Figure 2: Yulin Yao (2024). Vicious Circle

The elders' refusal to grant autonomy to the younger generation is largely influenced by AFP, which prioritizes hierarchical control and traditional protection, views divergent paths as a threat to family stability, and reinforces adherence to traditional norms and values (Wu C-W & Yeh K-H, 2021). Young people ultimately fail to gain approval for their future autonomy from their elders, and instead negative emotions build up after being rejected over and over again.

4. Psychological separation aids in escaping dilemma

One key aspect leading to a vicious cycle is that young individuals become trapped in a habitual mindset, assuming that authority needs to be granted by elders rather than self-empowerment for controlling their own future. The reason for the formation of this habitual thinking may be attributed to the prolonged influence of AFP on young people, resulting in their inability to achieve psychological separation from their families of origin.

4.1. Psychological separation

Psychological separation is an important developmental milestone for human growth. Individuals must establish psychological autonomy and break free from internal dependent on their parents in order to develop a separate self-image (Erikson, 1968). Those who achieve a high degree of psychological detachment while keeping healthy emotional relationships with others exhibit independence, a better sense of self-identity, improved self-esteem, and more confidence in reaching personal goals (Jianchao et al., 2022: 3).

On the contrary, young individuals who fail to achieve psychological separation from their families may exhibit low self-esteem, reduced independence, and a lack of self-awareness. These qualities are very similar to the behaviors displayed by young people who have been subjected to AFP for an extended period of time.

Based on previous research, characteristics of young people who have not achieved psychological separation from their families of origin (Bowlby, 1969; Ekstein, 1961; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Steinberg, 2001) and those who have been influenced by AFP for an extended period (Yeh & Bedford, 2004; Yeh et al., 2013; Chen et al., 2000) have been summarized separately and compared. From the Figure 3, it can be inferred that prolonged exposure to AFP may hinder successful psychological separation from the family of origin. Failure to achieve psychological separation, in turn, makes young people more susceptible to the influence of AFP, further impeding the formation of an independent sense of self-awareness and trapping them in vicious cycle.

Characteristics of young people who have not achieved psychological separation

Low Self-Esteem
They may lack confidence in themselves and their abilities, seeking validation primarily from their family members rather than developing a strong sense of self-worth independently.

Dependence
They may rely heavily on their families for emotional support, decision-making, and problem-solving, finding it challenging to assert their independence and make autonomous choices.

Difficulty Establishing Boundaries
They may struggle to set healthy boundaries with their family members, often feeling enmeshed or overly involved in family dynamics

Limited Decision-Making Skills
They may have limited experience making independent decisions, as they are accustomed to deferring to their family's authority or seeking approval before taking action.

Lack of Self-Awareness
They may have difficulty understanding their own emotions, desires, and values independently of their family's expectations or influence, leading to a lack of clarity regarding their own identity and aspirations.

Characteristics of young people who have long been subjected to a culture of AFP

Obedience
They are likely to prioritize obedience and compliance with authority figures, particularly their parents and elders, over individual autonomy and personal desires.

Dependency on Authority
They may rely heavily on authority figures for guidance and direction, lacking the confidence and initiative to make independent decisions or take risks

Emotional Suppression
They may suppress their own emotions and desires in order to maintain familial harmony and avoid conflict, leading to a lack of emotional expression and self-awareness.

Limited Decision-Making Autonomy
They may have limited autonomy in decision-making, as familial expectations and traditions often dictate their choices and behaviors

Figure 3: Yulin Yao (2024). Similar characteristics

4.2. Self-awareness

Self-awareness can be defined as the conscious understanding of one's own thoughts, feelings, sensations, and actions (Duval & Wicklund, 1972). It involves the ability to recognize and reflect upon one's emotions, beliefs, values, strengths, weaknesses, and motivations. Self-aware individuals possess insight into their own behavior and experiences, enabling them to make informed decisions, manage their emotions effectively, and navigate social interactions more skillfully (Morin, 2011: 807-823). This heightened level of self-understanding allows individuals to align their actions with their goals and values, leading to greater personal growth, fulfillment, and well-being.

One of the important reasons for the inability to separate psychologically is the lack of independent self-awareness, as can be seen in the comparison chart. It can be assumed that to break the dilemma faced by young people, one could start by enhancing their sense of independence and promoting the achievement of psychological detachment, thus enabling them to have the ability to control their own future from within.

From various previous studies, it can be seen that improving self-awareness does indeed facilitate psychological separation from one's family of origin (Mroczek & Kolarz, 1998; Beyers & Goossens, 2008; Luyckx et al., 2008).

- **Understanding Personal Needs and Desires:** Enhanced self-awareness helps individuals recognize their own needs, desires, and aspirations separate from those of their family. By understanding their own values, goals, and preferences, individuals can begin to differentiate themselves from familial expectations and establish their own path in life.
- **Clarifying Identity:** Self-awareness allows individuals to develop a clearer sense of identity and self-concept. This clarity enables them to define themselves based on their own beliefs, experiences, and interests rather than solely on their familial roles or expectations.
- **Recognizing Emotional Boundaries:** With increased self-awareness, individuals can identify and set emotional boundaries with their family members. This boundary-setting is essential for maintaining healthy relationships while also asserting one's autonomy and individuality.

- **Managing Emotional Dependency:**Self-awareness helps individuals recognize and manage emotional dependencies on their family. By understanding their emotional triggers and patterns, individuals can develop healthier coping mechanisms and reduce their reliance on familial support for emotional regulation.
- **Asserting Independence:**As individuals become more self-aware, they gain the confidence and autonomy to assert their independence from their family. This may involve making decisions based on their own values and preferences, even if they differ from those of their family.

Overall, improving self-awareness can empower individuals to navigate the process of psychological separation by fostering a deeper understanding of themselves and their relationship dynamics with their family. It enables them to establish healthier boundaries, clarify their identity, and assert their independence while maintaining a sense of connection with their family members.

5. Healing Inscape: assisting in enhancing self-awareness

Meditation has long been regarded as a powerful tool for facilitating self-awareness and spiritual exploration. It serves as a catalyst or guide, enabling individuals to delve into their inner realms and access their spiritual visions. These spiritual visions often provide individuals with profound insights into their innermost thoughts, emotions, and beliefs, thereby enhancing their self-awareness and understanding of themselves (Baer et al., 2006). Inspired by spiritual visions and meditation, as a visual artist, I aim to explore whether visual art can serve as a catalyst, similar to meditation. Guiding individuals to reach their spiritual visions, thus facilitating self-awareness and personal growth.

5.1. Spiritual vision

I would like to begin by sharing an experience I had of participating in a religious healing practice. The religious practice is to lead the participants into mindfulness meditation through the chanting of scriptures by a master. During the process, I saw visions that seemed to be images reflecting my inner thoughts. Afterwards, I felt like my head had never been clearer. I was curious as to what these visions were and if they could help me with my self-discovery and increase my self-awareness.

Vision has many different meanings, and the vision mentioned in this thesis refers specifically to vision in spirituality. Spiritual vision refers to the capacity or ability to perceive or receive insights, revelations, or guidance from a higher spiritual realm or consciousness (Cordner, 1981). It involves feeling a profound sense of clarity, understanding, or intuition about one's spiritual journey, purpose, or relationship to the divine. Spiritual vision can take many forms, including dreams, meditation, prayer, and direct spiritual experiences, and it frequently goes beyond regular awareness. It allows people to receive profound insights into spiritual truths, values, and principles, guiding them toward spiritual progress, enlightenment, and union with their higher self or divine source (Schreuder, 2014: 671).

More examples will be shown to demonstrate that spiritual vision has the potential to help increase self-awareness. What follows are a few examples from the record "An introduction to religious experience" (Rankin, 2005):

At some moment in time during that 'journey' I became conscious of a person additional to the hospital staff walking quietly beside me. I recognized Him at once-like an old, familiar, trusted friend, and I tried to say to Him, 'My Lord, you need not have come yourself, one of your angels would have been good enough for me' He did not speak, but somehow I knew that all was well and I felt no more fear or pain. I had a long uphill road to complete recovery

(seventeen years ago) but I never doubted that I would 'make it' . I shall also never again fear to walk in the valley of the shadow of death because I know I shall not walk alone.

I can't really explain the feeling; I have no words to express the feeling that one has, or I have, when I sit down to meditate. But I do know that there are occasions when my mind wanders and I feel that at the end of my devotional period, I have sat and meditated and that I've achieved nothing. But there are other occasions when my mind gets in tune with something beyond, and you have a feeling of peace inside, and you can sit in devotion for hours on end, and you are completely oblivious of your surroundings and everything; and what you see or hear is something I can't describe, but it is a unique feeling; and at the end of the period you have that innermost satisfaction of having been ... of having achieved something. But how to describe that, I don't know.

"It was a hot summer Sunday afternoon, and I was lying on my back in a [small group of trees] lost in reverie. I was not really thinking of anything, and then my mind went blank-suddenly I found myself surrounded, embraced, by a white light, which seemed to both come from within me and from without, a very bright light but quite unlike any ordinary physical light. I was filled by an overwhelming sense of Love, of warmth, peace and joy -a Love far, far greater than any human love could be-utterly accepting, giving, compassionate total Love."

In addition to the quotes mentioned above, by summarizing the characteristics of spiritual vision mentioned in different studies (Emmons, 2000; Payne & Roof, 2002, Pargament, 2013, pp. 3–19), one can further infer its positive role in self-awareness. Spiritual experiences often involve gaining insights into one's innermost thoughts, emotions, and beliefs, which can lead to a deeper understanding of oneself. Here's how spiritual vision can contribute to self-awareness:

- **Insight into Inner Processes:** Spiritual vision may provide individuals with insights into their inner processes, including their motivations, fears, and desires. This deeper understanding can enhance self-awareness by allowing individuals to recognize and acknowledge aspects of themselves that were previously unconscious or unrecognized.
- **Clarity of Purpose:** Spiritual vision can offer individuals clarity about their life's purpose, values, and beliefs. This clarity can help individuals align their actions and decisions with their true selves, leading to greater self-awareness and authenticity.
- **Recognition of Patterns:** Spiritual experiences may reveal recurring patterns or themes in one's life, highlighting areas for growth or transformation. By recognizing these patterns, individuals can gain insight into their behaviors and thought patterns, leading to increased self-awareness and the potential for

personal development.

- **Connection to Higher Self:** Spiritual vision often involves a connection to one's higher self or divine source. This connection can provide individuals with a sense of inner wisdom and guidance, facilitating self-reflection and self-discovery.

Therefore, spiritual vision has the potential to deepen self-awareness by providing insights into one's inner world, clarifying life's purpose and values, recognizing patterns, and fostering a connection to one's higher self.

5.2. Healing Inscape as catalyst

Normally, access to spiritual vision needs to be triggered with the help of an outside source, such as the way I resort to religious practice. As a visual artist, I would like to explore whether visual art can serve as a catalyst or trigger for connecting spiritual vision.

5.2.1. Visual arts as a catalyst into spiritual vision

Art can be a great choice for people without religious beliefs (Rankin, 2005, pp. 2), for example, by singing, dancing, writing, listening, painting, etc. Many studies and literature suggest that art can facilitate access to visions and achieve healing (Miguel, 2023; Hinchey, 2018; Savage, J., & Canty, S., 2001). These studies usually involve practitioners of the arts and explore their experience of the process of making art and its connection to spiritual vision.

One of the musicians describes in the following terms what occurs when he is improvising (Miguel, 2023):

Then I can empty myself, silence my thoughts, and enter the flow... Sometimes I feel it is not me entirely who creates music in those moments. Indeed, I feel that the I dissolves.

The above offers proof that art has the potential to act as a catalyst that stimulates people into vision. According to Burello (2021), visual art could trigger spiritual experiences. Moreover, he mentions that "If art can trigger a spiritual experience, then it is safe and appropriate to theorize about the spiritual or awakening dimension of art." in his research (Burello, 2021: 45). In fact, there are already many artists who have made artistic visual practices that trigger spiritual vision.

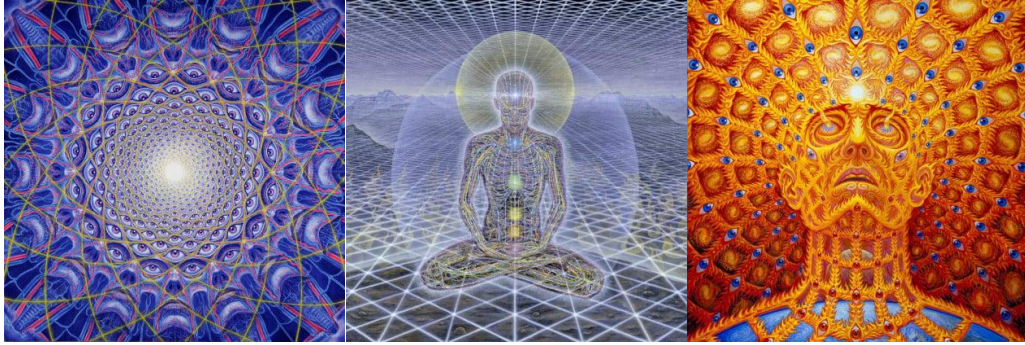


Figure 4: Visionary Art by Alex Grey⁷



Figure 5: Symbolism Art⁸ by Odilon Redon⁹

5.2.2. Inscape: The intersection of visual arts and psychology

The preceding text explored the potential of visual art in stimulating the generation of spiritual experiences. Therefore, Inscape, as an art therapy that combines visual and psychological elements, is the creative approach I have found that may suit my ideas.

Inscape in psychology uses surrealist, abstract, and fantastic art to build a spiritual landscape world, and this visual metaphor can truly reflect inner emotions. Inscape was first proposed by Chilean abstract painter Roberto Matta to depict a series of landscape-like abstract or surrealist paintings. According to the essay on Matta

⁷ **Alex Grey:** An American artist renowned for his visionary artwork, Alex Grey's paintings often depict mystical and spiritual themes, including depictions of the human body as a vessel for spiritual energy and consciousness. His intricate and detailed paintings aim to evoke spiritual experiences in viewers.

Alex Grey. (2023). www.alexgrey.com. <https://www.alexgrey.com/>

⁸ **Symbolism art:** Symbolism arts seek to represent absolute truths symbolically through language and metaphorical images. The symbols used by symbolism are not the familiar emblems of mainstream iconography but intensely personal, private, obscure and ambiguous references.

Wikipedia. (2019). Symbolism (arts). Wikipedia; Wikimedia Foundation. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symbolism_\(arts\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symbolism_(arts))

⁹ **Odilon Redon:** A French symbolist painter, Odilon Redon's dreamlike and fantastical artwork often explores themes of spirituality, imagination, and the unconscious mind. His mysterious and otherworldly images aim to provoke introspection and contemplation in viewers.

Wikipedia. (2019). Odilon Redon. Wikipedia; Wikimedia Foundation. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Odilon_Redon

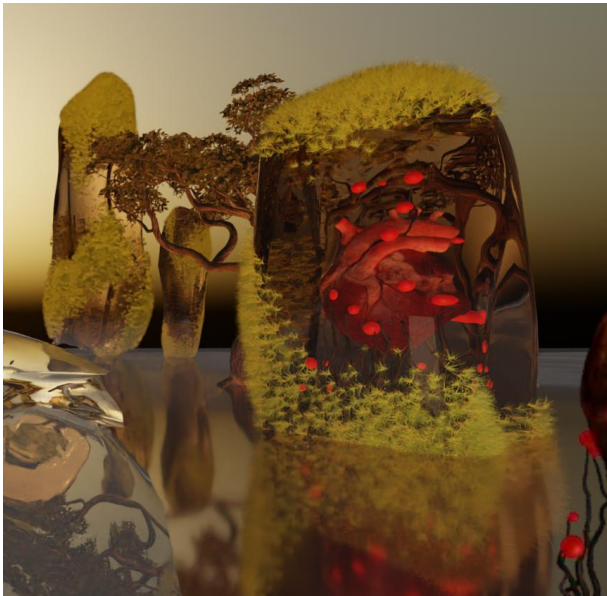
in *Crosscurrents of Modernism* (Fletcher, 1992), the inscapes' evocative forms "are visual analogies for the artist's psyche".



Figure 6: Roberto Matta's Psychological Morphology

In Sherwood's study "Inscape, art, and depression" (2012), the relationship between artistic expression, particularly through the concept of "inscape," and mental health is explored. It also examines how the concept of "inscape," which emphasizes the unique inner essence of a subject, can be a valuable tool for artists in exploring and understanding their emotional states, including depression. The research discusses how artistic expression can serve as a form of catharsis and self-expression for individuals experiencing depression, providing a means of coping and healing. Additionally, it address how the creative process and engagement with "inscape" can contribute to greater self-awareness and emotional insight, aiding individuals in managing and navigating their mental health challenges (Sherwood, 2012) .

Inscape, as a fusion of visual art and psychology, inherently possesses qualities that connect individuals to their inner selves and enhance self-awareness. Undoubtedly, this makes it one of the excellent choices for my visual medium. My practice will also draw inspiration from dream and visionary images, combining abstract art, visionary art and symbolist art to build my own spiritual landscape. Depending on my personal situation, creating a Healing Inscape serves as a key for my entry into spiritual vision.



Dream
A heart is pierced by black tentacles and sealed under a thick layer of ice...

Visionary Image
A headless body, crawling forward slowly and numbly without purpose...



Figure 7: Yulin Yao (2024). Healing Inscape Demo

5.2.3. Virtual reality (VR)

The Healing Inscape I created will be exhibited by means of virtual reality technology (VR) as it shows potential in the field of art therapy.

VR technology creates highly immersive environments, providing individuals with a

sense of presence and engagement that traditional art therapy methods may not achieve (Riva & Mantovani, 2012, 203-210). Through immersive VR environments, individuals can fully immerse themselves in a virtual world, engage in self-reflection and introspection, ultimately leading to heightened self-awareness (Pan, X., Gillies, M., & Barker, C., 2012).

VR provides immersive experiences, enabling a deeper connection with one's inner self. Moreover, compared to conventional mediums like oil painting, VR represents an innovative approach within Inscape, offering unparalleled opportunities for self-exploration and expression.

6. Healing Inscape: Vessel for the emotions and spirit

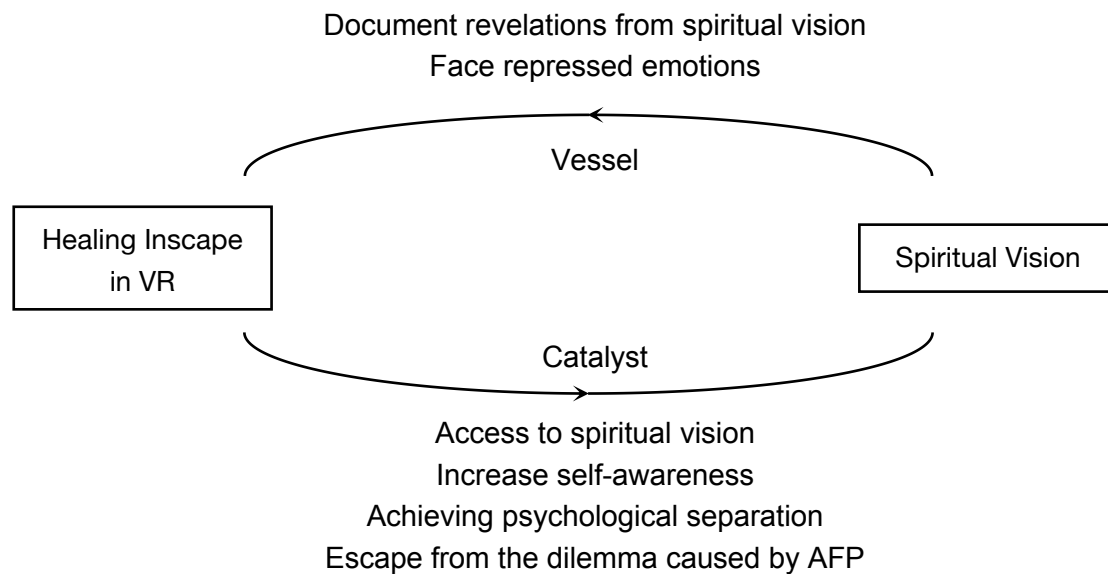


Figure 8: Yulin Yao (2024). *The Logic of Healing Inscape*

Using Healing Inscape in VR, I initially express my inner thoughts. This creation acts as a catalyst, aiding me in entering a visionary state where I can deepen my self-awareness. As I engage with the spiritual vision, I draw inspiration and revelations to enrich the Healing Inscape I've created. My practice becomes a form of documentation akin to a spiritual vessel. Moreover, recording these visions offers artists like myself an opportunity to release emotions and engage in reflection. So the relationship between Healing Inscape and spiritual vision is long-term, fluid, and mutually enriching.

6.1. Emotional vessel: Catharsis

In the analysis of characteristics of young people influenced by long-term AFP in Figure 3, one point mentions that they may suppress their emotions and desires to maintain family harmony and avoid conflicts, leading to a lack of emotional expression and self-awareness (Wu & Yeh, 2021).

In psychology, there is a method for dealing with negative emotion suppression called catharsis. Catharsis is a powerful release of negative emotions and when successful is accompanied by cognitive insight and positive change. In psychology, the phrase is related with Freudian psychoanalysis, where it specifically refers to the expression of repressed trauma, which brings it to consciousness and releases it, hence improving

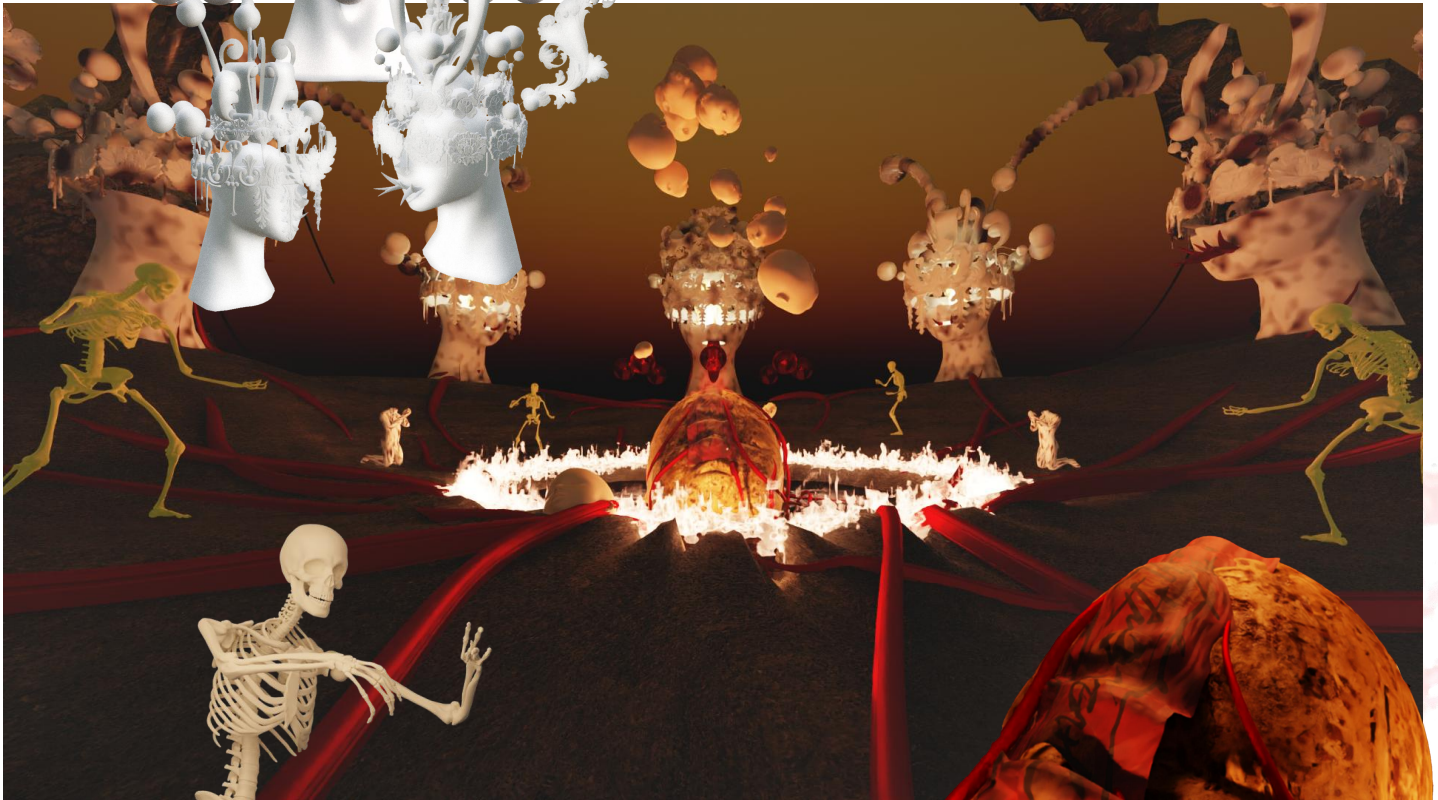
happiness. Psychoanalysis is often used to treat depression and anxiety disorders. A person can be helped and "cured" after having a cathartic experience (Freud, 1917).

The concept of "catharsis" plays an important role in the field of art, especially theater. In dramaturgy, the phrase often describes evoking negative emotion in the audience, which is then removed, leaving them feeling happier (Merriam-Webster, 1995: 217). In the 19th century, psychologists discovered that catharsis combined with theatre could be a form of psychotherapy. The similarity of personal experience with the experience presented in a dramatic work can lead the viewers into a strong emotional state, causing a cathartic effect: spiritual renewal of his soul, restoration of internal balance and mental state (Zonina, 2023: 550-551). On April 1, 1921 J. Moreno presented an experimental production "on the topic of the day" to the public in Vienna theatre. It took the form of a small theatre performance in which the actors are the patients themselves. Under the influence of stimuli generated by events in scenes related to the patient's psychiatric problems and by the reactions of the acting partners, the patient involuntarily remembers their forgotten traumatic experiences, thus freeing themselves from distressing symptoms: "Repetition in the illusion makes patient free from his disease" (Leutz, 2007, 204).

Repressed emotion can be sequentially brought to conscious awareness for resolution through re-experiencing specific incidents and fully expressing the resulting pain, gradually bringing them into conscious awareness, thus resolving them. Therefore, I decided to use Healing Inscape as an emotional vessel. Within Healing Inscape, I will use artistic metaphor techniques, such as symbolic art, to recreate scenes where I have been hurt. This allows me to confront the repressed emotions, accept them, understand them, and ultimately release them.

Symbol

The religious statues symbolize authority for me. While they evoke feelings of oppression and fear, I recognize the love and care behind the elders' actions. Using religious statues represents the elders' presence in my mind, influenced by the religious atmosphere of my hometown (Guan Jiang Shou).



Symbol & Memory

This scene is based on a recreation of an argument I had with my family, as each argument brings me mental stress and negative emotions.

*The **Red Tentacles** symbolize the blood ties with family members.*

*The **Flames** symbolize intense arguments.*

*The **Dancing Skeleton** symbolizes how, during arguments, other relatives and friends, without understanding the full context, rush to take sides and express their viewpoints.*

*The **Sealed Baby Head** symbolizes the influence of Authoritarian Filial Piety (AFP) culture, where younger generations often lack the opportunity to express their true thoughts during arguments. They are simply expected to be taught by their elders and absorb their viewpoints, rather than encouraged to think independently.*

Figure 9: Yulin Yao (2024). Recreate scenes with artistic metaphor

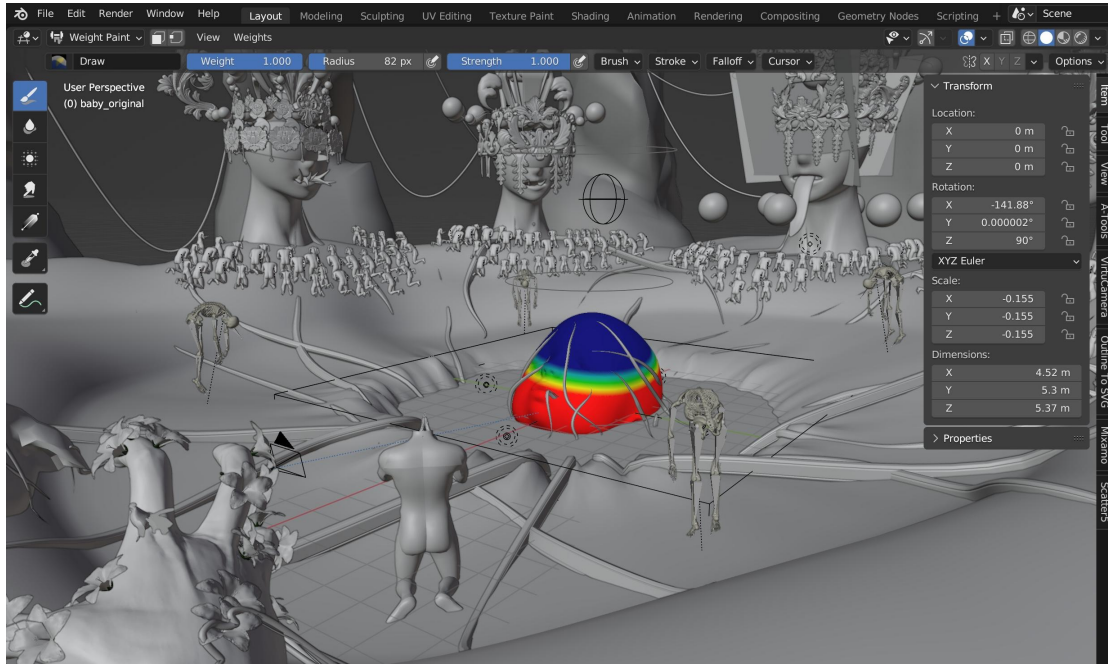


Figure 10: Yulin Yao (2024). Building scenes with 3D software



Figure 10: Baidu (2024). Guan Jiang Shou¹⁰

6.2. Spiritual vessel: Visionary art

Visionary art itself is a form of documentation, and I can use Healing Inscape as my melting pot. Every inspiration gained from spiritual vision can be transformed into

¹⁰ **Guan Jiang Shou**: The "Guan Jiang Shou" is a local folk troupe originating from Taiwan. It features actors portraying the generals who guard the Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha. Legend has it that these two generals were originally evil spirits causing harm to humans but were later convinced by the teachings of Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha to become his protectors, tasked with safeguarding the people. They once used violence to counter violence. Wikipedia. (2011). Guan Jiang Shou. Wikipedia.org; Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. <https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E5%AE%98%E5%B0%87%E9%A6%96>

visual art and added to the existing Healing Inscape. As Healing Inscape gradually enriches, I can also gradually see a more complete inner world and glimpse into my soul.

Moreover, visionary art can bring energy to viewers. Visionary art often contains vibrant colors, intricate patterns, and symbolic imagery that can evoke powerful emotions and stimulate the imagination. According to Azul DelGrasso (2022), viewers may experience a sense of awe, inspiration, or spiritual connection by engaging with visionary art. The unique and imaginative nature of visionary art can awaken evoke energy, provoke thought, and inspire viewers to explore the depths of their own consciousness (Azul DelGrasso, 2022).

Therefore, Healing Inscape can not only serve as a spiritual vessel for the artist, but also transmit energy to the audience and achieve spiritual communication.

7. Limitation

While the concept of 'spiritual vision' is widely debated in academia across disciplines such as religion, philosophy, art, and psychology, there is no widespread consensus on its existence. Some religious and philosophical traditions suggest that spiritual experiences, including 'spiritual vision,' can be achieved through practices like meditation or prayer. However, these experiences are often subjective and challenging to empirically validate using scientific methods.

As a result, the effectiveness of artworks created by previous artists in leading individuals to spiritual vision cannot be guaranteed for everyone, including my own artistic practice. Given its subjective nature, different individuals may have diverse experiences when encountering the same artwork, leading to variations in the depth of connection formed.

Nevertheless, it's worth noting that exploring spiritual experiences and the subconscious may have positive implications for emotional trauma therapy and personal growth. Long-term research by psychologists like Jung (1960), Stanislav Grof, and Hal Zina Bennett (2006), as well as Wilber (1999), suggests that spiritual visions may facilitate emotional release and foster psychological growth and recovery."

8. Conclusion

I realized that the key to escaping the dilemma and avoiding the cycle of stagnation lies in cultivating self-awareness and fostering independence. Without achieving psychological separation and developing an autonomous identity, young Chaoshan adults remain vulnerable to the constraints of Authoritarian Filial Piety (AFP), hindering their ability to cultivate independent self-awareness.

With this understanding, I embarked on an internal quest for solutions and explored innovative approaches to art therapy, which has the potential to enhance self-awareness and offer the possibility of overcoming the dilemma. In my art therapy practice, I introduce a novel concept: integrating spiritual vision to deepen self-awareness. Through visionary art, incorporating elements of dreams and consciousness, my Healing Inscape serves as a catalyst for spiritual exploration. It applies catharsis principles to address suppressed emotions and functions as a spiritual vessel for the artist, while also transmitting energy and facilitating spiritual communication with the audience.

9. Future plan

Since my practice now is tailored to my own personal circumstances, although it has had positive effects for me, I need more experimental samples to validate its effectiveness. Therefore, I plan to promote my work to a wider audience and invite those interested in my new art therapy approach to join my project. I will create personalized Healing Inscape for them based on their individual situations and test the therapeutic effects. Additionally, I plan to collaborate with professional psychologists to conduct experiments and improve the Healing Inscape project based on their suggestions.

The long-term plan is to integrate Healing Inscape into a game connected with artificial intelligence (AI), allowing everyone to create their Inscape with the assistance of AI. Players can use Inscape as a tool solely for enhancing self-awareness, venting emotions, or even recording thoughts. Moreover, they can publicly share their Inscape, connect with groups facing similar psychological challenges, or seek advice and support from others without feeling isolated. This initiative aims to raise awareness of mental health.

10. Ethical dimensions of the research

10.1. Cultural respect

A large number of religious elements are used in the visual practice only as a form of visual expression. There is no intention to desecrate local religious and cultural beliefs.

10.2. Treatment safety

The artistic therapy approach of visual practice involves recreating scenes of psychological trauma to confront them. Care must be taken in the method of recreation to avoid causing further psychological harm.

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Appendix

Interview verbatim

Interview 1

Name: Jianyi Huang (female)

Age: 25 | Work: Unemployed | City: Jieyang (Chaoshan) | Interview date: 5-2-2024

Yao: I remember you went to college in Guangzhou? Why are you back in Jieyang now?
我记得你大学是在广州读的?为什么现在回揭阳了?

Huang: Yes, I actually like Guangzhou very much. I even did an internship in Guangzhou before.
是的,我其实很喜欢的广州的。之前还在广州实习过。

Yao: Don't you like working in Guangzhou?
是不喜欢在广州工作吗?

Huang: I like it, I even enjoyed my internship in Guangzhou, and I even had the chance to become a full-time employee. But because my mom didn't agree with me to work in Guangzhou, I came back.
我喜欢,甚至很享受在广州实习的时候,甚至有转正的机会。但是因为我妈妈不同意我在广州工作所以我回来了。

Yao: Do you regret not staying in Guangzhou?
那你会因为没有留在广州而感到遗憾吗?

Huang: Yes, but I have no way. My mom just didn't agree with me staying in Guangzhou and I had to listen to her...
会的,但是我没有办法。我妈妈就是不同意我呆在广州,我不得不听她的话...

Yao: But it's your life. You have the right to make the choice you want.
可是是你的人生,你有权力做出你想要的选择的。

Huang: I don't know, I just can not do it. I can't convince my mom, I don't even dare to tell her what I really think.
不知道,我就是不敢。我说服不了我妈妈,甚至不敢跟她提起我的想法。

Interview 2

Name: Changfeng Liu (male)

Age: 25 | Work: Numerology Planner 命理规划师 | City: Shanghai | Interview date: 10-2-2024

Yao: That's a pretty unique career you have, what exactly do you do?

你这个职业很特别啊,具体是做什么的?

Liu: Helping people plan their careers based on psychology combined with **Ba-Zi**.

以心理学为基础,结合Ba-Zi帮助人们规划他们的事业。

Ba-Zi: The Four Pillars of Destiny, as known as "Ba-Zi", which means "eight characters" or "eight words" in Chinese, is a Chinese astrological concept that a person's destiny or fate can be divined by the two sexagenary cycle characters assigned to their birth year, month, day, and hour.

Yao: Is this related to religion and spirituality?

这跟宗教和灵性相关的?

Liu: Kind of. It's similar to tarot cards in Western countries.

有些相关。其实就像西方国家的塔罗牌。

Yao: I remember your major in college wasn't in this field, right?

我记得你大学时候的专业并不是这方面的?

Liu: Yes, I studied engineering mechanics.

是的,我是学的工程力学。

Yao: Did you pursue both bachelor's and master's degrees in that?

还可以本硕连读是吗?

Liu: Yes, but I gave up. It wasn't a field I was passionate about; it was my parents' choice.

They thought it would lead to a stable job, but I just couldn't muster the interest.

是的,但是我放弃了。本来也不是我喜欢的专业,是我父母帮我选择的。因为容易找到一份稳定的工作吧,但我实在提不起兴趣。

Yao: Do your parents support your current job now?

那现在你的工作你的父母支持吗?

Liu: Far from it, they don't understand it at all, and they don't even want to try.

They just say it's a cult... And they had a big fight with me for giving up engineering mechanics.

别说支持了,他们不理解,也根本不想去理解。他们只会说这是邪教...而且当时放弃读工程力学也跟他们大吵了一架。

Yao: I can understand. They probably saw it as giving up a stable future.

可以理解。毕竟在他们看来是在放弃一个稳定的未来生活。

Liu: Exactly, they think whether I like engineering mechanics or not doesn't matter as long as it provides a job.

But I can't find happiness in it, and I don't want to spend the rest of my life that way!

是的,他们认为喜不喜欢工程力学根本不重要,只要能提供一份工作就好了。但是我真的感受不到开心,我也不希望往后余生都这样度过!

Yao: How's your relationship with your parents now?

你现在跟你父母关系如何?

Liu: We don't really keep in touch. Every time we talk, it ends up in an argument, with no understanding from either side.

They still expect me to return to the engineering field and find a job there.

不怎么联系了。反正一打电话也是吵架,互相不理解。他们仍然在期望我回到工程力学的行业里寻找一份工作。

Yao: Do you like what you're doing?

你喜欢现在的工作吗

Liu: Yes, I think I've found the meaning of life. Part of it...

是的,我觉得我找到了人生的意义,部分意义吧

Interview 3

Name: Yijie Lin (male)

Age: 30 | Work: Businessmen | City: Jiayang (Chaoshan) | Interview date: 14-2-2024

Yao: I heard you're getting married, congrats!
听说你要结婚了, 恭喜!

Lin: Thanks.
谢谢。

Yao: How did you decide to get married? Did you meet someone you love?
怎么下定决心要结婚了, 是遇上爱的人了吗?

Lin: Well, yes and no. I really like her though.
是也不是。我挺喜欢她的。

Yao: And then?
然后呢?

Lin: Mainly because I'm turning 30, you know? It's about time I got married.
主要是我也30岁了, 年龄不小了, 也该结婚了。

Yao: Age shouldn't be the reason to get married, though...
年龄不应该成为结婚理由吧...

Lin: Yeah, I know, but all my friends and relatives around my age are already married,
I just feel like I'm lagging behind.
但是我身边跟我同龄的亲戚朋友都结婚了, 我总感觉比别人慢了一步。

Yao: Why compare yourself to others, especially when it comes to a big life event like marriage.
Everyone has their own pace.
为什么要和别人比较呢, 特别是结婚这种人生大事, 每个人都有自己的节奏。

Lin: Yeah, I know. But my parents keep pushing me to get married. You know my family's into business,
and I'm their only son. I need to find someone quickly, get married, have a son to inherit the family business.
而且我爸妈也总催婚, 我压力好大。你也知道我家里是做生意的, 我爸妈只有我一个儿子。
我得尽快找个人结婚生子, 生个儿子好以后让他能继承家族生意。

Yao: What do you think about it?
你自己是怎么想的呢?

Lin: I don't know, honestly. I just follow what my parents say. I don't want to argue with them.
At least now that I'm getting married, they'll be quiet for a few days, and they won't keep calling me a loser...
我不知道, 反正听我爸妈的话就行了, 我也不想去反驳他们。至少我现在结婚了, 他们会安静几天吧, 至少不会老说我是个废物了...

Yao: Yeah, but they might start pushing for a grandchild next, especially a grandson.
可能他们接下来会催生了, 而且是必须要生儿子。

Lin: I know, I know. Let's not talk about it. Just thinking about all this stresses me out!
我知道我知道, 别说了。我想到这一些就好烦!

Interview 4

Name: Yuqi Zhu (female)

Age: 28 | Work: Teacher | City: Jieyang (Chaoshan) | Interview date: 16-2-2024

Yao: Remember you studied in Europe, what made you decide to come back to Jieyang and become a teacher?
记得你在欧洲留学过,怎么决定回揭阳当老师呢?

Zhu: Yeah, I got my Master's in Europe, and as soon as I graduated, I came back to China.
My parents wanted me to come back to hometown and become a teacher.
是的,我在欧洲读硕士,毕业就立马回国了。我爸妈还是希望我回家乡当个老师。

Yao: Why did they want you to come back and be a teacher?
他们为什么希望你回家乡当老师呢?

Zhu: Because being a teacher is stable. And it leaves more time to focus on finding a guy to marry.
因为当老师稳定简单。而且有更多时间把重心放在找个男人结婚了。

Yao: Finding a guy to marry? Why do you think that way?
找个男人结婚?为什么你会怎么想

Zhu: My parents always say you should do certain things at certain ages.
At my age, if I don't find a guy to marry soon, they think I'll be too old
我爸妈跟我说什么年龄就该干什么事。我现在这个年龄再不找个男人结婚就老了。

Yao: What do you think about it?
你怎么想的呢?

Zhu: Me? I haven't really thought about it. Teaching is alright, I guess, but I wouldn't say I love it.
As for marriage, I'm actually quite worried.
我?我自己还真没想过。当老师也就还行,谈不上多喜欢。至于结婚,我其实很害怕。

Yao: What are you worried about?
你在害怕什么?

Zhu: I have a good friend who's already married and has her first kid.
But her mother-in-laws keep pressuring her to have two more kids.
It's putting too much stress on her, she's even showing signs of depression.
I'm afraid I'll face the same pressure if I get married.
我有一个朋友已经结婚了和生了第一个小孩。但是她的婆婆还一直要求她再生两个小孩。
给她太大的压力了,她都有些抑郁倾向了。我害怕我结婚也会遭受这种巨大的压力。

Yao: Have you talked to your parents? Tell them not to pressure you to get married.
你跟你爸妈聊过吗?让他们别给你催婚的压力。

Zhu: I'm too scared to. They also think having kids is a woman's duty.
Honestly, I'm also worried if I rush into marrying someone just because of my age,
instead of marrying someone I love, I won't be happy in the future.
我不敢。他们也觉得生孩子是女人的义务。我也是担心如果因为年龄,而匆忙找一个男人结婚,而不是找一个相爱的人结婚,未来应该也不会幸福。

Yao: Maybe you should find a chance to talk to your parents about your concerns.
或许,还是要找个机会跟爸妈聊一聊你的担忧。

Zhu: I want to, but you know how my parents are, they're pretty conservative and serious. I'm still afraid of them.
我也想,但你也知道,我爸妈比较保守严肃,我还是很怕他们。