

## Title

*'Humanscape' in Geopoetics- Visual Diagnosis of Reclaimed Landscapes by Walking*

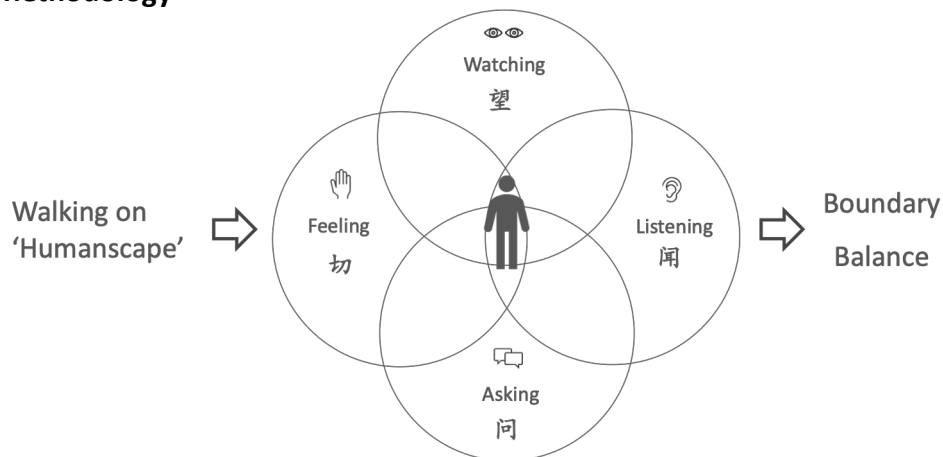
## Introduction

This practice-based artistic research employs diagnostic methods of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)- "Watching, Listening, Asking, and Feeling"- to represent artificially manufactured landscapes. By applying multi-sensory perspectives of "seeing"<sup>1</sup>, this project creates a new terminology 'Humanscape' and tries to represent it through photographic language with my "earth writing"<sup>2</sup> experiences inspired by geopoetics studies. Rather than asserting the lands are "sick", it illuminates how nature and 'Humanscape' permeate and disrupt each other, exploring the potential openness of the habitable land and wilderness. The whole exploration is rooted in my intimate and intuitive walks in reclaimed landscapes in China and Europe. The artworks focus on the tensioned boundary and dynamic balance between 'Humanscape' and deserts, mountains, and sea. Through intervening in humanly regulated environments, this project depicts landscapes with film and aerial photography, electron scanning, moving images, cyanotype prints, and sounds.

## Research objectives

- Conducting walks along coastlines, ring roads, and mountains altered by humans that also connect to the vast nature, trying to document the landscapes with multiple mediums guided by Traditional Chinese Medicine framework and geopoetics.
- To coin and define the terminology 'Humanscape' with visual (photographic) depictions through walking experience. Developing a set of methodologies to investigate a place aesthetically and artistically.
- Testing different perspectives and techniques of "seeing"- Create a comprehensive body of artworks which integrates large format photography, aerial photography, scientific scanning, cyanotype prints, and physical objects (stones) as the representation of 'Humanscape'.

## Methodology



<sup>1</sup> Looking with the eyes; discerning visually; understanding after reflection or from witness.

<sup>2</sup> Magrane, E. et al. (2020) *'Geopoetics as route-finding', in Geopoetics in practice*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, pp. 1–13.

Walking: Since the mid-nineteenth century, given the background of the development of photography, walking started to become a method of art as a basic form of body movement.<sup>3</sup> This set of methods shows the development of walking practice today with shifts in context, perspectives, and technology. I try to walk on the cusp of artificial land or manufactured features and nature.

- **Watching:** I use film and digital cameras to photograph the landscape I encounter from eye level. Meanwhile, the drone takes aerial photographs in permitted zones/districts. It will work as a part of my body and vision extension, offering perspectives that challenge vernacular angles. The combination of eye level and overview indicates perspective shifts in seeing.
- **Listening:** The sounds are recorded in the transitional area between artificial sites and natural elements (e.g., sea wave hits the edge of artificial land) to show the “interaction/ dialogue” between nature and manufactured sites. It examines if people could perceive places with sound as an invisible symbol to represent the ‘Humanscape’.
- **Asking:** This process doesn’t expect a detailed answer to a specific question or a direct narrative. I will “ask” through interaction with the ‘Humanscape’. The communication between me and the ‘Humanscape’ will be written down as verbal descriptions in accordance with geopoetics practice. This is also an exemplification of how the environment stimulates one’s thinking rather than giving correct answers based on facts, which has the potential to keep dialogues open with observation and reflection.
- **Feeling:** I feel the ‘Humanscape’ by touching the landscape with hands. Camera-less cyanotype prints are used to “feel the pulse” of tides, snow, vegetation, and winds... As the cyanotype prints fade as time goes by, the images will never remain the same every moment. This also represents the fluidity of time and its impact on what remains. I also pick up stone samples which is the raw incrustation forming lands and buildings. By sending them through the electron microscope, the scape of the tiny stones could be enlarged on massive scales and details.

While separated above for clarity, these four methods overlap and happen simultaneously when exploring the sites to get a comprehensive overview of a place.

## **Contributions**

### **The new perspective of seeing the landscape with TCM**

The creative combination of TCM with visual research compares the landscape to the human body, unveiling fresh insights and cultivating the perception of ‘Humanscape’ by employing TCM as an exploring method in diagnosing the balance and boundary of the landscape. This research illuminates the intricate interdependencies between human beings and the natural environment, while synergistically integrating the existing knowledge in landscape expedition, TCM, and artistic research.

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<sup>3</sup> Solnit, R. (2007) *Wanderlust: A history of walking*. London: Verso Books.

### **The concept of 'Humanscape' for future studies**

Apart from the disputable Anthropocene<sup>4</sup>, this project tries to define 'Humanscape' from a visual perspective. "Human-" suggests the subjective initiative imposed on nature ambitiously by humans. 'Humanscape' could be regarded as the embodiment of humans' expectations and imagination towards nature which counteracts nature's evolution in the following ways:

- Mass new habitable lands created from nature;
- Scattered artificial signs which indicate human activities to access nature that can be connected to a larger scape;
- The human-oriented perspective of seeing and organising landscape;
- Landscape composed by and consisting of humans;
- The interconnection between humans and the environment we live in, originated from "Unity of Heaven and humanity"<sup>5</sup>.
- ...

### **Visual Documentation**

Photographic archives of temporary and real-time situations of the sites under the context of human intervention and environmental and climate shifts.

### **Summary**

Replying to this open call, this project experiments with innovative models of the methodological framework and the terminology in depicting the specific landscapes I encountered during walks. My personal walking experience and human gaze into the landscape examine how models orient photographic practice for me as a wanderer, researcher, and artist. By using a variety of images, I also approach and investigate boundaries of visual language in deciphering the landscape visually, verbally, and even emotionally.

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<sup>4</sup> Crutzen, P.J. (2002) 'Geology of mankind', *Nature*, 415(6867), pp. 23–23. doi:10.1038/415023a.

<sup>5</sup> An ancient Chinese philosophical concept that also guides TCM.