



Chia Yen Gan

Statement of Purpose

Google Global Education Evangelist, Jaime Casap, advocates that we shouldn't ask kids what they want to be when they grow up but what problems do they want to solve. As a double major with concentrations at both ends of the spectrum, his words resonate strongly with me because I could never say if I wanted to be an architect, sociologist, designer, artist, engineer or anything with complete certainty. However, I have always known what I wanted to accomplish, a blend of urban planning, art, architecture and sociology; to create spaces, surroundings and atmospheres to make one feel at home with the space. In fact, when researching graduate programs I tried to explain to my professors that the degree title didn't matter, more important is what will I be able to learn and make in the time I am in school.

Growing up as the youngest daughter in a quasi-orthodox family, my world ceased to be black and white. My parents were divorced yet conservative, with a feminist mom who still insists to abide with cultural traditions and opinionated yet obedient siblings. I was raised trilingual and was sent to english schools that taught me western philosophies of individuality and outer-world dependency and then to chinese schools who emphasized repeatedly the importance of filial piety and the interconnectedness of all beings. It wouldn't be surprising that I grew up to be in a constant state of monachopsis- a subtle and persistent feeling of being out of place.

In my art practice I create these mind spaces, translating my mental space and state into the tangible, physical or sense-able. Hoping that through performance, installation or objects I can allow others to glimpse into my world where turbulence and calamity co-exist. There isn't a dedicated medium or style because my work is not controlled by functions of mediums but created through the thoughtful placement or use of material whose goals are singular.

I plan to expand my art practice to not just reflect emotions in spaces but to create these spaces such that they reflect back to affect emotions. I intend to create spaces where no one would feel out of place. To create schools are not only functional in the most basic sense but to take into consideration the acoustics and ambience because as Julian Treasure indicated through his bestselling books and years of research- sound affects us physiologically, psychologically, cognitively and behaviorally all the time. If we are taught to consider this in critiques as artists; why is it being forgotten when creating schools, homes, hospitals; when planning neighborhoods, cities and parks?

I want to make works of installations through sounds, interior architecture or lighting that allows one to feel excited to learn in schools; to feel peacefulness and calamity in libraries and sanctuaries. People could start to see hospitals as places for healing and regeneration, instead of feeling sterile and uncomfortable. Playgrounds and preschools designed to consider not only safety, but the also the psychology of children's mind. Being able to cater to their understanding of their worlds such as Takaharu Tezuka's kindergarten in Japan where play and danger work together in harmony. There is no scale in which I would prefer to work in, I could work as small as a counseling room in a high school or large as an entire city planning project, the goal is the same: to create a feeling-conscious space.

Perhaps in the end I will never feel like I belong completely to a label, or a place or a school of thought. I am an artist, an economist, a tinkerer, an educational activist, a wanderer, a learner, a maker, a lost soul who is passionately in love with the search. And as I think about the future it may seem hazy, but I am confident and optimistic because I have learnt to celebrate my oddities; to embrace the unknown courageously, not knowing where life will lead just that I'll get there somehow.