



Comparative Study

By Don Mai

This comparative study focuses on Jason Yi, a local Milwaukee artist, and Andy Goldsworthy, an international artist. The comparisons will include cultural significance, interpretation of function and purpose, and analysis of formal qualities. Three selected artworks of Jason Yi are *Move a Mountain*, *Terraforming*, and *A Fragile Permanence*. Jason Yi's artworks are inspired by landscape to show the connection between human and its physical world using utilitarian objects. His works will be compared and contrasted to *Stones House*, *Garden of Stones*, and *Cairn at Penpont* by Andy Goldsworthy, whose works revolves around the theme of ephemeral as he works with natural materials and races against time. The methodology used in this comparative study include reviewing primary and secondary sources to formulate interpretations about the selected artworks. Although Jason Yi is a local Milwaukee artist and Andy Goldsworthy is an international artist, they both share similarities and differences in the cultural significance, interpretation of function and purpose, and analysis of formal qualities.

Evaluation of Cultural Significance of Jason Yi

Jason S. Yi lives and works in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, United States. His works vary from photography, video, sculpture, multimedia and interactive installations. Yi explores culture, time and history, which were inspired by his architectural education. His works are mainly investigations of physical existence through combinations of natural and man-made forms and images to comment on the societal construct.

Yi incorporates utilitarian materials to portray landscapes and reflect images of society by mending and wrapping colored duct tape, folding chairs, wood, aluminum foil, and others. By doing so, Yi deliberately uses unnatural materials to impersonate the irregularity of the natural forms.

Those practical materials are reused and re-configured to project the romantic beauty of the landscape as an emphasis on the coexistence of human beings and the natural world. Jason Yi developed his inspiration toward natural built environment with their ability to influence and reflect conditions of our society through his interest in landscape from his father, who was an artist that mainly worked on traditional Asian landscapes.



<http://www.jasonyi.com/a-fragile-permanence.html>

https://www.beloit.edu/campus/museummondays/?story_id=339809

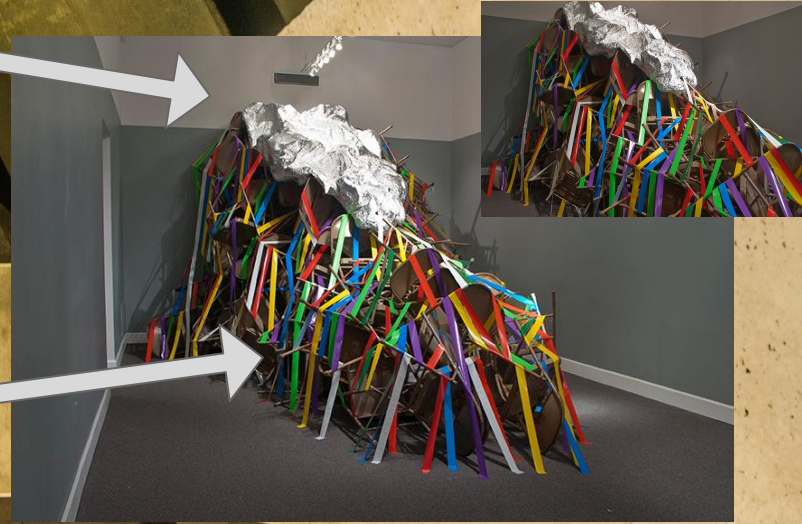
<http://www.jasonyi.com/terraform---lawrence-university.html>

Interpretation of Function and Purpose

Move a Mountain was constructed by Jason Yi and his team with utilitarian materials such as tables and metal folding chairs, which were bound with rolls of colorful duct tape and topped with reflective foil. As a result, Yi created a mixed assemblage by transforming the objects into an imitation of an organic form.

The structure seems to be securely stationed, however it still embodies an essence of chaos and unpredictable **movement** shown through sharp **lines** and **edges**. *Move a Mountain* was inspired by the appreciation of landscapes that he has gotten from his father.

The concepts of origin, **culture**, and history played a crucial role in the creation of *Move a Mountain*. By using man-made objects to create a natural form, Yi is commenting on the relationship between perception and the physical world. Furthermore, Yi named the piece “Move a Mountain”, which suggests a sense of impossibility and absurdity.



***Move a Mountain* by Jason Yi (2012)**

548cmx396cmx320cm

installation at Wright Museum of Art Beloit, Wisconsin

https://www.beloit.edu/campus/museummondays/?story_id=339809

Interpretation of Function and Purpose

Terraforming usually gets installed at site to show audience the process of constructing the organic form. *Terraforming* is a structure that is in **unity** within its environment by embracing the negative space of the room and springing upward toward the ceiling.

Yi's landscape-inspired, *Terraforming*, is asymmetrical with rough **lines** and sharp edges; however, the distorted **form** is approachable as the pointy edges are wrapped with plastic. The installation breathes life into this organic form with a sense of **movement** as it rises to the rafters.

The installation is made from discarded folding chairs wrapped in three miles of red plastic, which works as a shield, holding the armature of the piled chairs. His work explores the concept of minimalism with the use of humble materials, however it also embodies the drama and magnificence of the natural elements that they symbolize.

Terraforming could be seen as a portrayal of human existence on earth. Specifically, Yi is describing the ways human interact with the world through the man-made materials. The piece provokes a sense of detachment in human culture by using unconventional art medium to give form to an organic structure.



Terraforming by Jason Yi (2015)
Size vary

Installation at Wriston Art Center, Wisconsin

<http://www.jasonyi.com/terraforming--lawrence-university.html>

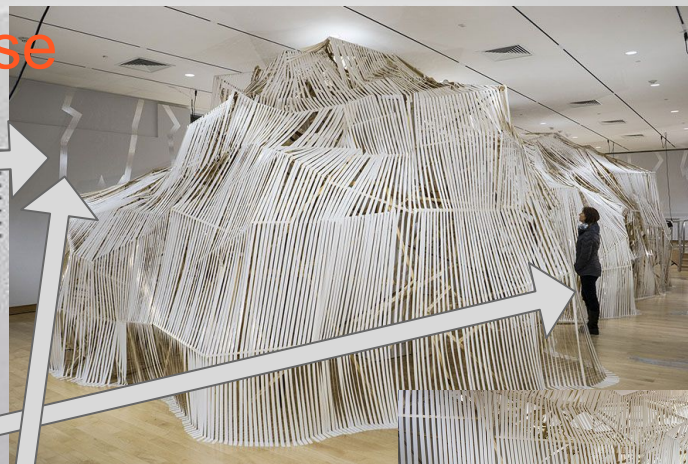
Interpretation of Function and Purpose

A Fragile Permanence is a mountainous installation made of wood and tape, which took up most of the spacious exhibition room. Yi and his team incorporated wood, white duct tape, Mylar tape, peg boards, and bubble wrap foil in this installation to form a model of a mountain and lighting.

The process of creation was open to the audience to come in and talk to Yi and his team about the process. Similarly, the installation is inviting to the audience with many entrances to approach the installation. Yi wants the audience to interact with the piece and experience the grand scale of the installation.

Similar to Yi's other work, *A Fragile Permanence* has layers of analysis that are hidden under the aesthetic view of the work and the common materials. The materials give allusion to his landscape-inspired installation and create **contrast** between the synthetic and organic form. The reflective tapes offer the audiences a distorted image to bring awareness to one's physical presence in the piece.

A Fragile Permanence is a metaphor for Yi's history and relationship between his homeland Korea and America. This installation is similar to others, an inspiration of landscape from his father. The title "A Fragile Permanence" suggests the ephemeral physical existence of mankind on this earth.



***A Fragile Permanence* by Jason Yi (2014)**

installation at Madison Museum of Contemporary Art
<http://www.jasonyi.com/a-fragile-permanence.html>

Analysis of Formal Qualities of Jason Yi



Yi's works incorporate many utilitarian materials that are non-aesthetic and conventional mediums in art. His works requires conceptual analysis that push beyond the materials themselves. All of the mediums are being used in **unity** and to support the armature of the installations.

All three installations are 3-D structure with organic **forms**, sharp **edges**, and **lines**. They show **movement** as they rise above from the floor to the ceiling as a representation of mountain or a metaphor for life growing from mother earth.



Yi also paid attention to the use of **color** in his installations. There is a clear **emphasis** on the vibrant use of color (or lack of) in his works. The colors create a **contrast** between the aluminum foil, red plastic wrap, white duct tape and the exhibit floor.



One other aspect of Yi's works is the use of **negative** and **positive space** within and around the installations. Yi uses mediums such as tapes, chairs, woods and pipes to fill in the negative space and form a positive space. All three installations have sharp and pointy edges that give a sense of danger and chaos, however they could be poetic and adventurous due to the mountainous landscapes that the edges are referencing.

There is a consistent contrast between industrial and organic form representing the industrial world and the environment. It is inspired by Yi's theme that comment on the coexistence between natural environment and humans as environmental have power to transform landscapes and affect human lives, however humans' activities also leave footprints in nature.

Evaluation of Cultural Significance of Goldsworthy

Andy Goldsworthy is a British artist. He primarily works natural materials ranging from snow, ice, leaves, rocks, flowers, twigs, etc... to produce playful, ephemeral artworks.

Upon completion, Goldsworthy captures his artworks with a camera before they decay or being washed away by elements. Rather than focusing on the materials and the concepts, Goldsworthy primarily focuses on the process of playing and creating to give an emphasis on the creation and decay of life.

His artworks are dependent on the surrounding of the space, which can give a partial story of how they came to be. Goldsworthy displays and compliments the energy and the space around the materials for their existence and placement are just as important as the main subjects themselves.

Goldsworthy incorporates elements in nature such as movement, growth, light, and decay in his works. The most important aspect of his works is the transient value of his materials as they will grow and decay. The hidden significance of his works lay behind the process of creating as there are much to learn about oneself and the physical world through the interaction with nature.



Interpretation of Function and Purpose

Stone Houses is an installation on top of the roof of the Metropolitan Museum of Art inspired by the Central Park and its architectural setting.

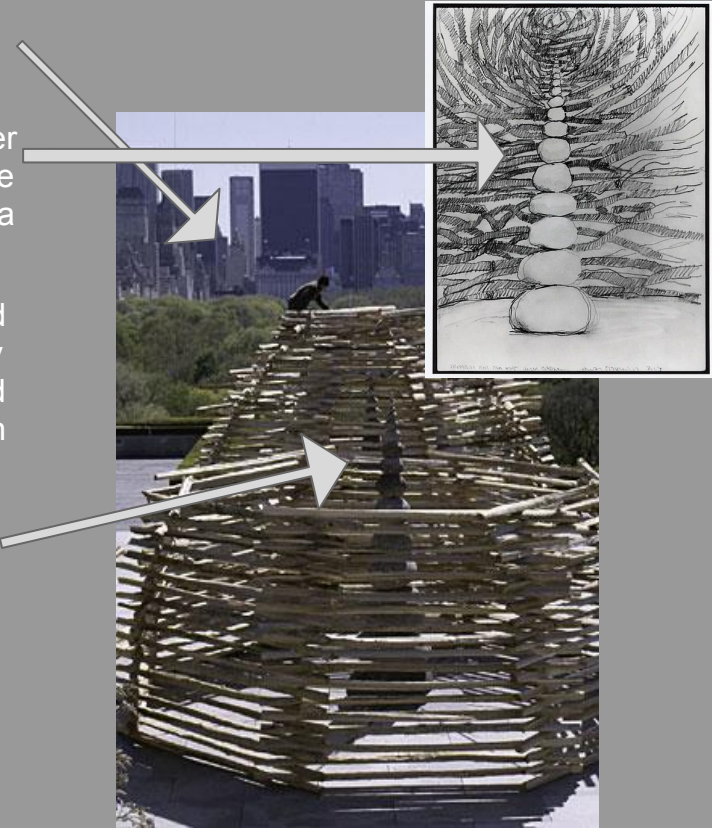
The armature of the house is made up of woods stacked up together surrounding a column of balanced granite stones. *Stone Houses*' armature takes up a large amount of negative **space** on the roof with a offering of a counterpoint of perspective to the city.

The Central Park covering with woods is surrounded by the buildings around the park, whereas the *Stone Houses* is made up of stones surrounded by woods. This is a metaphor for trees holding together the landscape and nourishing it. Goldsworthy wants to reveals the bigger picture of the human existence on earth.

The stones are collected by Goldsworthy from Scotland. They are being protected by American woods, which is a **symbolism** for the cross-cultural connection between his homeland, Scotland, and America.

The stones within the armature is the hidden power of the house. The stones are stacked in a pyramid style, which is a metaphor for transgenerational with each stone stationing and supporting the smaller ones.

The installation also contains a sense of simplistic beauty contrasting with the unpredictabilities of nature through the spacious negative space inside surrounded by the loosely stacked woods. Goldsworthy's work conveys the counterbalance within the installation through geometric **shape** and balanced **form** to show the vulnerability of existence.



Stone Houses by Andy Goldsworthy (2004)

18 feet in height and 24 feet in diameter

<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/493217>

<https://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2004/andy-goldsworthy/photo-gallery>

Interpretation of Function and Purpose

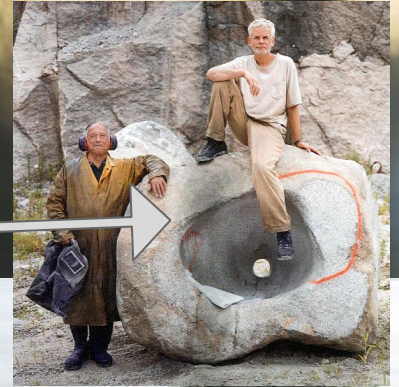
Garden of Stones is an installation of 18 boulders at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York City created in 2003 to dedicate to the memory Holocaust victims.

In Hebrew tradition, the number 18 represents life and stones are often placed on graves as a symbol of remembrance. The stones are melted using flame torch method, and the bottom of the rocks are openings to the ground that will allow the trees to grab toward the earth.

Goldsworthy then selected *Quercus Prinoides*, a species of dwarf oak that will grow up to 12 feet tall. These installations are usually being placed outside in the yard to expose the trees through the elements, thus showing the determination for survival and revival every springtime.

The *Garden of Stones* memorial is a tribute to the hardship, struggle, and survival experiences by Holocaust victims. *Garden of Stones* displays a contrast between ephemeral and perennial, between young and old, and between the unforgiving and pliable.

Garden of Stones shows how nature comes to survive in unforgiving places. Goldsworthy's work evokes a sense of miracle where nature can survive in uninhabitable places like rocks. The act of filling the stones with soil represent the burial ceremony as each stone become a tomb; the artwork becomes a mixture of life and death.



Garden of Stones by Andy Goldsworthy (2003)

range from 3 to 6 feet in height and weigh up to 13 tons

<http://contemporaryarttruck.blogspot.com/2011/05/andy-goldsworthys-garden-of-stones-at.html>

<https://www.montistonesculpture.com/about/>

Interpretation of Function and Purpose

The Cairn is in installation on a farm in Scotland. Goldsworthy chose this location because it has a close relationship to family. However, Goldsworthy has one concern for creating an artwork that his children will grow up and witness because he was self-conscious that his children might not be proud of his craftsmanship.

But as an artist, Goldsworthy believes that sometimes one will make a bad art and will have to live with it because it is just a part of the natural process. For this project, Goldsworthy wanted to make the perfect form using eyes and hands, however he came to realize that the installation can only come as close as it can get to perfection without being perfect

The installation from afar seems to be floating on top of the hill, which give the Cairn a symbolism as the guardian of the village. There is a **unity** and **balance** between the rounded belly of the cairn and the rounded hill.

After a number of seasons, the cairn seems to be adapting to its environment and fits right in. The conceptual idea of this piece is the relationship between the lives of the local and their next generations with nature, and how they interact with the artwork. In contrast to his ephemeral art style, *Cairn at Penpont* is rather perennial by withstanding seasons after seasons and guarding the town.



**Cairn at PenPont by Andy Goldsworthy
Scotland, 2000**

<https://allan-devlin.photoshelter.com/image/I0000O73E2kJ2z6A>
<http://arbyjim.blogspot.com/2010/05/andy-goldsworthy-part-i-risk-and.html>

Analysis of Formal Qualities of Andy Goldsworthy

Andy Goldsworthy's works consist of performance art, ephemeral art, and photography. His works are strictly created using natural medium such as snow, ice, leaves, rocks, flowers, twigs, etc...

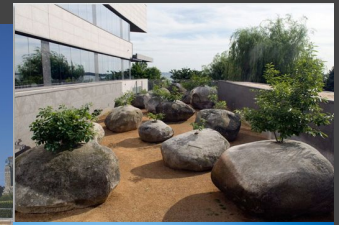
Goldsworthy's works are sculptures and installations that are ephemeral as he has to work against time. The concepts of natural process of life and decay inspire Goldsworthy's works.

There is a sense of detachment to his works because he knows that the moment it is finished, he will have to leave it to continue its natural state of growing or decaying. The energy and **space** around the materials of the work are important to Goldsworthy because by rearranging the position of the natural materials, Goldsworthy is actually playing with the **space** and energy within and around the materials. Most of his works take on organic **forms** that coexist in **harmony** with the surrounding but stands out for its mystery and magical appearances. Goldsworthy creates a sense of order in the disorder nature to attract the audience into questioning the stories behind these artworks.

With *Stone Houses* and *Cairn*, Goldsworthy tried to achieve the most perfected **shape** by eyes and hands; although he was never able to achieve perfection. He knew his limitations, nonetheless, his works do contain a sense of symmetrical **balance**. Goldsworthy's works are important because they bring appreciation to the aesthetic of the natural world through interaction between humans and nature.



Comparing Cultural Contexts



Jason Yi

- Local artist from Milwaukee
- Inspiration of landscape gotten from his father
- Former architectural education and experience inform the psychology of spatial understanding and conceptual decisions
- Works vary from photography, video, sculpture, drawing, multimedia and interactive installations

Both

- Art professor
- Works include photography
- Display installation and work in gallery across the world
- Inspiration of art is interpersonal
- Use uncommon materials such as utilitarian and natural objects

Andy Goldsworthy

- International artist from Scotland
- natural materials to produce unique temporary artwork
- Made a monument for the Jewish Heritage Museum to honor the victims of Holocaust
- Made his first installation or structure of cairn in Scotland, a place where he grew up, Penpoint
- Worked in a farm at the age of 13.
- studied fine art at Bradford College of Art (1974–75)

Comparing Formal Qualities



Jason Yi

- Organic **form** that represent mountain or life that has risen from mother earth
- Form has organic **shape** with sharp **lines** and edges.
- **Texture** is in contrast with the sharp lines, it could be smooth
- Use **contrast** to create **emphasis** between the surrounding and the structure

Both

- Focus on **form** taking **shape**.
- **Harmony** with environment and its surrounding
- Large scale installations in nature and exhibits
- **Negative** and **Positive space** are important. Negative space supports the armature, while positive space form a mountain



Andy Goldsworthy

- Works are ephemeral as he works against time
- **Balance** between the medium and its natural surrounding
- Organic materials with incorporation of curvy **lines**
- **Emphasis** through **color** and **form**
- There is no **contrast** as the materials are found within the environment

Comparing Function and Purpose



Jason Yi

- Notions of culture, time and history.
- Investigation of our terrestrial existence
- Re-imagined landscapes that reflect conditions of contemporary society
- Coexistence of human beings and the natural world.
- Minimalism

Both

- Coexistence of human and environment
- Complementing the landscape
- Commenting the relationship between society and nature
- Explore the harmony between two forces of nature
- Appreciation of the physical world by bring back curiosity

Andy Goldsworthy

- Ephemeral
- Emphasis on the concept of time
- Connection with the natural world
- Acceptance of decay
- Relation between Our modern world and nature
- Coexist in harmony with the environment but stands out for its sense of mystery and magical

Comparing Material and Conceptual



Jason Yi

- Use humble utilitarian **materials** to recreate landscapes
- Inspired by architectural and his father's interest in **landscapes**
- Focuses on **Minimalism** as the meaning lies beyond the **quality** and **property** of materials
- **Interpersonal** history with homeland and America

Both

- **Sculpture** and installation
- Use photography to capture their works
- **Coexistence** between human and natural world
- Bring back appreciation to nature and curiosity to the coexistence between humans and nature.

Andy Goldsworthy

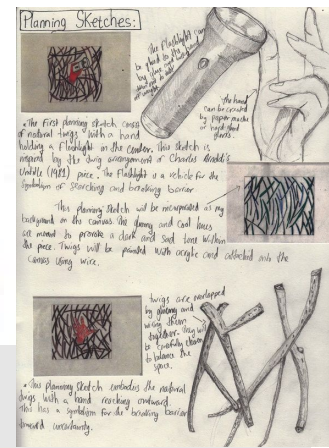
- **Ephemeral** materials that are found in nature
- Detachment from the process of decay
- Emphasis on letting go
- Photography is a huge part of the process
- Beauty within nature
- Concept of natural process such as growing and decaying

Analysis of Formal Qualities in Own work

Hammer is a mixed media piece combining painting, ephemeral, and assemblage art. This piece is inspired by Charles Arnaldi and Andy Goldsworthy, depicting two hands stretching through a barrier of twigs painted in vivid colors. I chose to incorporate Arnaldi's vibrant colors on sticks and Goldsworthy's medium to give line and form to the canvas. In this piece, I put emphasis on demonstrating the expression of tone and symbolism using colors and wood to create an abstract mixed media and explore the boundaries between sculpture and painting.

In the process of producing *Hammer* (right), I used the elements of Arnaldi and Goldsworthy's style. From my research, I've found that Arnaldi's work is a mixture of painting and assemblage art. Therefore, I explored his style with the incorporation of natural materials similar to Goldsworthy. With the sticks, I used similar vibrant colors to paint them and secured them onto the canvas. In contrast, the canvas is painted with short brushstrokes of cool and neutral colors such as green, blue, brown, and black. Arnaldi's stick artworks are often random and chaotic, so I emulated this asymmetrical principle in my piece by haphazardly combining sticks together to create an armature; consequently, this allowed me to introduce my own touch into the work with the hands stretching out.

While the colors and sticks are inspired by Arnaldi and Goldsworthy, I added a pair of hands stretching out from the canvas through the armature of sticks as symbolism. The colorful and chaotic stick artwork by Arnaldi shows the juxtaposition between life and death, so I further amplify this contrast by using two set of colors on the sticks and the canvas, which is a juxtaposition between convention and invention. While the colorful sticks resemble a happy and hopeful mood, the cool canvas and chaotic placement of the sticks represent a dangerous and depressed state that lies underneath. The hands are the metaphor for breaking this barrier and venturing toward the unknown.



Hammer by Don Mai, 2017
25cm x 91cm x 91cm

Analysis of Formal Qualities in Own work



Destination by Don Mai, 2017
42 cm x 27 cm x 19 cm

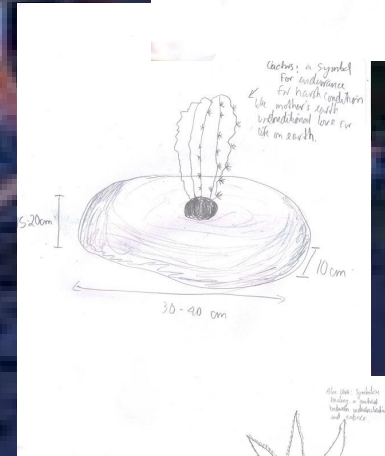
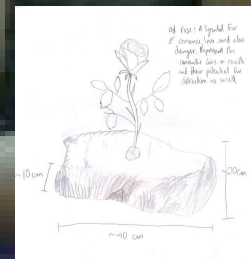
The temporary installation (left) is inspired by Andy Goldsworthy. I emulated the structure of the installation using a rock, however, to express my personal choice, I chose to plant the Aloe vera as a symbolism for healing and harmony.

Before producing the piece, I experimented with various methods to make a hole in the rock. I tried using an electric drill and metal bits to drill a hole into the rock. However, the metal bits were not tough enough to puncture the rock. Next, as a last resort, I experimented with a hammer and a 1" x 8" x 7/8" metal chisel.

The chiseling method was able to take bit by bits out of the rock; however, it was laborious and painstaking, and to make a hold of at least three centimeters would take weeks. Nonetheless, I went with this idea and worked on making a hole of one a half centimeters in diameter and three centimeters deep.

Destination focuses on the vehicles, inspired by Andy Goldsworthy, as symbols to demonstrate the contrast between the ephemeral and the timeless. Goldsworthy's *Garden of Stones* is a memorial for the victims of Holocaust, while my piece is a commentary on the state of existence. *Garden of Stones* embodies the Hebrew tradition from the collection of 18 boulders, whereas *Destination* is a metaphor for the life flourishing on a grain of sand in the vastness of the universe. While showing the impossibility and ephemerality of life, *Destination* shows hopeful and empowering perspective on existence.

Last but not least, I incorporated the aspect of photography that Goldsworthy uses to my work. I had to pay close attention to the setting around my piece to bring emphasize to my installation but also provide a sense of harmony among my piece and the surrounding. Then, I chose to photograph the piece on top of the brown leaves to show the juxtaposition between the ephemeral and perennial.



Comparisons and Connection: Myself and Jason Yi

Similarities

- They all embody organic forms from natural materials or utilitarian objects depicting organic shapes.
- The lines are haphazard, and the edges are sharp showing the unpredictability of nature.
- Space is an important component to the works that allows the installations and mixed media to give a positive space with energy gathered from the negative space.
- All three share an overarching theme on the commentary of human existence.

Differences

- My works incorporate natural materials, while Jason Yi's works utilize mainly utilitarian materials.
- Yi's natural forms depicting landscapes are inspired by his father's paintings.
- Yi's installations are grand, which allow audience interaction with his work and explore the positive and negative space created by the armatures.
- My works use specific features such as the Aloe vera in *Destination* and the hands in *Hammer* use symbols, while Yi's use movement and form as symbolism



Destination by Don Mai, 2017



Hammer by Don Mai, 2017



Terraforming by Jason Yi



A Fragile Permanence by Jason Yi



Move a Mountain by Jason Yi

Comparisons and Connection: Myself and Andy Goldsworthy

Similarities

- The main component of the artworks is stone/rock, which is used as a symbol for strength, stability, and support.
- All three discuss the overarching theme of human existence and relations.
- All three are ephemeral artworks that incorporate natural materials such as wood, stones, and trees.
- The emphasis is focused on the space around the artworks to further amplify the significance of the installations.
- Three artworks show a contrast between the ephemeral and perennial using the wood and stones.

Differences

- *Garden of Stones* has a cultural significance with the 18 boulders to symbolize life.
- Goldsworthy also incorporate stone balancing in *Stone Houses* (2004) to represent the cross-cultural relationship from his homeland and America.
- The Aloe vera in *Destination* is a symbol for the healing that has helped this earth to be habitable for life to exist.
- Goldsworthy's installations are grand, which help to reinforce audience interaction and allow the viewers to explore the space and energy that have been changed in addition to the artwork



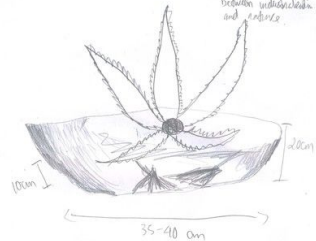
Stone Houses by Andy Goldsworthy, 2004



Garden of Stones by Andy Goldsworthy, 2003

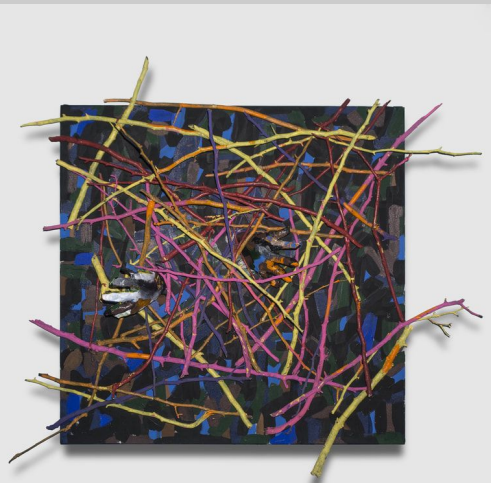


Aloe Vera: Symbolizes healing, a symbol of protection, endurance, and rebirth.



Destination by Don Mai, 2017

Comparisons and Connection: Myself and Andy Goldsworthy



Similarities

- Three artworks embody the complexity of many layers that show the sophistication of creating, however still reveal the simplicity through the medium.
- The form and lines are created from organic materials that together create a sense of harmony to the artworks.
- All three artworks provide a rough texture and stimulate the audience's imagery to engage and explore the artworks.
- The process of decaying is an important aspect of the artworks that emphasizes the transient properties of nature.



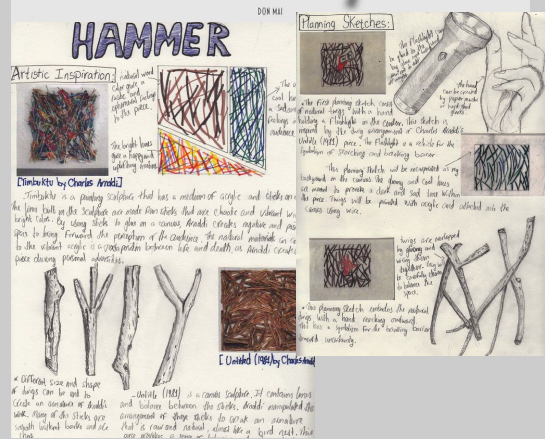
Cairn at PenPont by Andy Goldsworthy
Scotland, 2000

Differences

- My work incorporates vibrant colors in a chaotic manner to establish an amateur that acts a barrier in my concept.
- Goldsworthy's installations show a significant attention to the symmetrical balance to establish order in the pursuit of perfection.
- My work is a mixed media piece that blurs the line between painting, sculpture, and ephemeral art.
- Goldsworthy's works mainly focus on the art of creating and working with the surrounding space, while my piece is a social commentary on convention and invention.



Stone Houses by Andy Goldsworthy, 2004



Hammer by Don Mai, 2017