

## The Peach Blossom Spring – the paradox of paradise

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Animated installation and text  
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108 trees made from plastic bags, flyers, receipts, papers, collected during a residency at the Bamboo Curtain Studio in Taipei, Taiwan, 2014.

Table fans, lamp, sculpture pedestals.

*I wanted to create a landscape in which time had seized. In which the impermanent had become immortal. But if there is no reference to time, then what is the difference between the ephemeral and the immortal? I brought back the element of time into the landscape, although only temporarily.*

*How could time both stand still and move forward at the same time?*

*It became a landscape breathing from a respirator, kept alive in artificial ways.*

A few years ago I started writing a story for an animation. A story about a lion who sets out on a journey through different Nordic forests. The journey takes the lion between light green birch trees to dark and heavy spruce forests - from lightness to darkness and then back again - back to the same place where the walk began, a place that has now changed as a result of the trip, the experience. A similar walk, I had experienced myself many times, both in reality and in my thoughts; where physical places are associated with different emotions, states of mind. I was not quite finished with the story yet. I did not know the place where the story would begin nor end, how the site would change over time. This happened to be during spring. The trees had just begun to turn green, the fruit-trees blossom. And in all this beauty, my mother suddenly died. I could not grasp the picture - death and life at the same time - and where had my mother gone? I finished writing the story. It would begin and end right there, in the blossoming garden. A place where life and death meet.

A year later, I went to Taiwan as a resident artist. There I came in contact with another story - a tale from China from 400 AD, about something related - a journey, a personal searching and a forest of blossoming trees. In this story they were blossoming peach trees instead of Swedish apple and cherry trees as in my story. It did not matter. The blossoming trees represented the beautiful but short-lived and a desire for an eternal and earthly paradise. At the same time, in Taipei I found myself in a new place, with new routines. I began to familiarize myself with the city, creating new habits. I started to gather all receipts, newspapers, flyers and small plastic bags that I got when buying something at markets, streets, bakeries, shops. Materials that I did not know what to do with- unwanted precisely because of their inability to change, decompose and die. When I one day looked through all that I have collected, I recognized the the colors, the subject. It was the story of the Peach Blossom Spring.

The Peach Blossom Spring  
by Tao Yuanming

In the Jin Dynasty, during the *Taiyuan* era (376 - 397), there lived in Wuling Commandery a fisherman. One day, he paddled upstream and lost track of how far he had gone. Suddenly, he came upon a forest of peach blossoms stretching for several hundred paces along both banks of the waterway. There were no stray trees mixed among them. There was a fresh and pleasing scent of fragrant grass. Fallen peach blossoms were scattered about in abundance. Amazed at the sight, the fisherman pressed ahead. He wanted to make his way to the end of the forest. The forest ended at the headwaters of the stream, whereupon he arrived at a mountain. There was a small cave in the side of the mountain. It seemed as though light was emitting from it. He abandoned his boat and went inside.

At first it was extremely narrow, allowing for only one person to squeeze through. After walking another twenty or thirty paces, he suddenly exited onto an open clearing. The land became flat and broad. Houses were neatly arranged in rows. There were fertile fields, beautiful ponds, mulberry trees, bamboo groves and the like. Pathways crisscrossed the fields, and one could hear the intermingled sounds of chickens and dogs. There were people walking back and forth, busying themselves with planting crops. The clothing of the men and women was unlike anything he had ever seen. Old and young alike seemed happy and contented. When they saw the fisherman, they were all shocked and asked him where he had come from. He answered each and every one of their questions.

They brought him home with them, setting out wine, killing chickens, and preparing food in his honor. When the other villagers heard about the fisherman, they all came to ask him about where he had come from. They told the fisherman that their ancestors had fled the chaos of the Qin Dynasty, and had led their wives and fellow villagers to this isolated area. No one had left since. As a result, they had become completely cut off from the outside world. When asking about the name of the current dynasty, it became apparent that they did not know about the Han Dynasty, much less the Wei or Jin Dynasties. As the fisherman told them in great detail the news from the outside world, they all sighed in despair. More people invited him to their homes to drink and eat. He stayed on for a few more days before taking his leave.

As he was departing, some of them said to him, "No need to tell outsiders about us." He then left and found his boat, retracing his path and putting up markers as he went. When he arrived at the Commandery headquarters, he paid a formal visit to the Commandery governor and told him what had happened. The Commandery governor then sent people to retrace the fisherman's steps. However, they got lost while looking for the markers that the fisherman had left behind and were unable to find the trail. Liu Linzhi (style name *Ziji*) of Nanyang was man of refinement. When he heard about this story, he cheerfully made plans to go look for the village. However, he died of an illness before he got his chance. After that, nobody made any further inquiries.

From Classical Chinese Literature: v. 1 From Antiquity to the Tang Dynasty  
*An Anthology of Translations* by John Minford, Joseph S M Lau.

## The Paradox of Paradise

We do not know where it is  
We are there but we don't know we are there  
We think we know where it is, but it is the wrong place  
We know where it is but we cannot get inside  
We have been there but we do not know how to find our way back  
We arrive there but we arrive there too late  
We are there now but it lasts too short