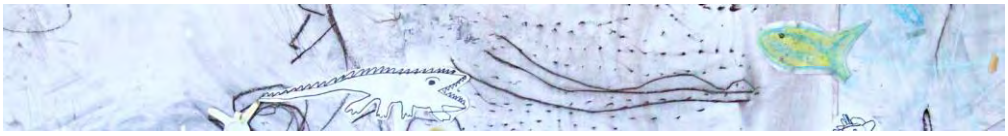
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Dancing with Lines and Plants

Shanqian(Michelle) Li

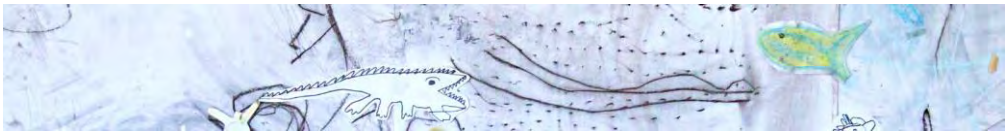
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Artist Statement

In Dancing with Lines and Plants, Michelle Li, as a composer, engages with the blind contour drawing and enters the meeting place where the drawing dances with the music of a Chinese traditional instrument named Guzheng. While the lines meet with the music, the music seems to offer another life to the lines and the marks, as the lines bounce off their movements and rhythms, jumping toward, stepping over, and pausing in still.

The space of the paper and the ways of lifting hands are hopeful pauses that dwell and think with what is happening in that moment. When drawing with the grains on the leaves, I always lift the pen as I carefully look at and touch the grains on the leaves again. The pause in the music draws me to think not only how the grains live on the leaves but also how the grains relate to each other, to the branches, and to other leaves. The ways that the pen and fingers rest upon a piece of paper and the ways how instrument plays its melody, cross boundaries to transform the known and unknown into paper and music. The music, drawing, and questions in the video are to research the connections among lines, music, the leaves, the movement, and the plants. The acts of drawing and playing the music offer a provocative place for researching, co-creating, and re-knowing the leaves and their relations with others.

My work relies on unusual angles. For example, the blind contour drawing and the music are not just dancing with my body through slowly tracing, lining, weaving, and doting on the paper and instrument. Instead, drawing and playing the instrument are processes that correspond to each other, to the movement, the plants, the river, the raindrop, and the leave's voice. While working with the complexity of this dance with plants and lines the video moves beyond the songs and the image itself and shifts toward the relationships with the drawings, plants, and others responding to the happening stories.

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