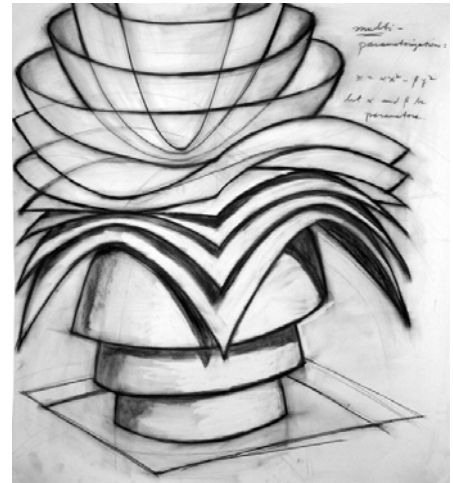


## Some Words About My Work at the Karl Hofer Gesellschaft 2008

By Lun-Yi Tsai  
Berlin, Germany

### Processes & Representations

My art is predominantly concerned with the process of abstraction, the primary means by which we make sense of our experience of reality. The study of mathematics serves as a model for this process: the usually automatic thought processes that take place everyday are made conscious in mathematics. The rigor of mathematical proof necessitates careful observation of each mental step. This slowing down of thought provides an opportunity for awareness of the very process of abstraction.



In order to understand my art, it is important to distinguish the notions of graphing and visualization from that of representation. Most all of what may be termed “mathematical art” falls into the category of graphing and visualization. The most prominent examples of this type of art are the colorful images of fractals, which are generated by inserting equations into computer programs. My work is not to be confused with mathematical art.

Although graphs and visualizations appear in the body of my work, the central thrust of my art is the representation of abstract concepts and the process of abstraction itself. Representation is a larger and more ambiguous concept. It is the attempt to illustrate ideas (notation) in a manner (often inaccurate and sometimes not completely correct) that is conducive to their further development. Representation is a creative step.

Algebraic geometer Aravind Asok explains:

“To many people, [the mathematical] process consists of the formal manipulation of algebraic equations or the writing of proofs in plane geometry. While mathematicians often do write proofs, study geometry and perform formal manipulations, they don’t usually study ideas that are explained in a few lines. On the other hand, mathematicians often do use elementary pictures to guide their investigations and motivate their proofs.”

These “elementary pictures” contain in them certain essential features of a given theorem or idea; as such they are much more meaningful than, say, graphing the projection of an n-dimensional hypercube onto a 2-dimensional plane. Curiously, the same images or diagrams are often used in very different contexts. This suggests a common underlying mathematical structure, which motivates the modern viewpoint that it is not the objects one studies that truly matter, but the relationships among them.

If this process of synthesizing what is grasped into a representative picture were relevant only in the domain of mathematics, my art would only be a portrayal of a very limited, albeit rich and profound, human experience. My conviction is that this process of abstraction (so clearly exemplified by mathematics) is at the heart of all descriptions of reality whether they be in literature, visual arts, music, mathematics, philosophy, natural or social sciences. Abstraction is the quintessential and definitive human process.

Any given painting or drawing of mine is the representation of an idea or collection of ideas. As such, it is both summary and development. Its main purpose is to open a space to allow for further understanding and evolution on the basis of what has already been accomplished. Each work captures in mid-flight the arrow of creativity, and is a metaphor for the process of abstraction itself in whose stillness lies ceaseless change and perpetual movement.