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This illustrated paper draws on fieldwork conducted in China between November 2025 and February 2026. The study considers how a contemporary travelogue might combine poetic writing, typography, photography, and illustration to convey experiences of interstitiality. Interstitiality refers to a condition of existing between states: between past and present, the familiar and the transformed, and what a place has been and what it is becoming (Bhabha, 1994). In this study, interstitiality may be understood as a spatial, temporal, and cultural experience that China's accelerating urban transformation makes newly visible.

The research draws on Chinese and Western frameworks of time, place, and cultural identity to reconsider the travelogue as a poetic medium through which threshold experiences can be explored. A foundational reference is the work of Xu Xiake (1587–1641), whose travel writings are recognised for their close observation of landscape and experiential approach to travel (Strassberg, 1994). The research extends this tradition into a contemporary context, investigating how a designed travelogue might give form to experiences of time and place beyond documentary or analytical representation.

Graphically and poetically, the project attends to abandoned structures, transitional urban landscapes, and everyday environments where traces of the past remain embedded in the present. Particular attention is paid to unoccupied spaces marked by absence, stillness, and gradual transformation.

The study contributes a poetic, designerly framework for understanding interstitiality as both a cultural condition and a medium of reflection. Drawing on the integration of poetry and painting in Chinese artistic traditions (Ho, 1991), it proposes a contemporary form of representation for articulating experiences at the threshold between memory, perception, and place.

In this presentation, I will demonstrate how poetic writing, mixed-media imagery, and book design communicate interstitial experiences through a contemporary travelogue, showing how visual storytelling expands contemporary understandings of interstitiality.

Keywords

Cultural identity, Embodied inquiry, Interstitiality, Poetic writing, Time, Travelogue

References

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