

# Textiles

## Aim:

- Cast away gender stereotype
- bring awareness to inequalities of female in a Patriarchal society

## Inspiration: Significance of my personal experience

- Almost all schools in Hong Kong have a uniform dress code where boys must wear trousers and girls must wear dresses or skirts → became **quit a bother to me who would prefer wearing trousers where it allows me to move around freely** in school + not to mention **having to wear short skirts under a low temperature** in winter

- Only by the dress code we are giving in normal day life, it reflects the gender norms and stereotype that still exist in nowadays.
- The close mind of girls having to dress feminine and boys having to dress manly → **continues to play a big part of gender stereotyping** and has become a **restriction for people to dress the way they want.**

← **My school's uniform code for both Winter and Summer**

## Media: Textiles

- The issue of gender norms and stereotypes could be preformed in both ancient and modern days' **dress code** given
- I would create a piece through textiles to **change the current dress codes given to genders and to emphasize the irony of standards in a Patriarchal society**

## History Significance (Chinese Culture)

### Dress code #1: Dragon robe

- In the history of China, dragon and phoenix are the traditional animals that symbolize auspiciousness.
- Both dragon and phoenix is neither male or female
- However, it slowly became a tradition that **dragon represents male** and **phoenix represents female** because **dragon always came in first and phoenix as second** in all aspects
- Dragons that symbolises more power are likely to be seen on the emperor clothing and phoenix is seen on the empress or concubine's clothing.
- Its reflects **how serious the Patriarchal society (male-dominated society) was in the history of China** even through the dress code they had

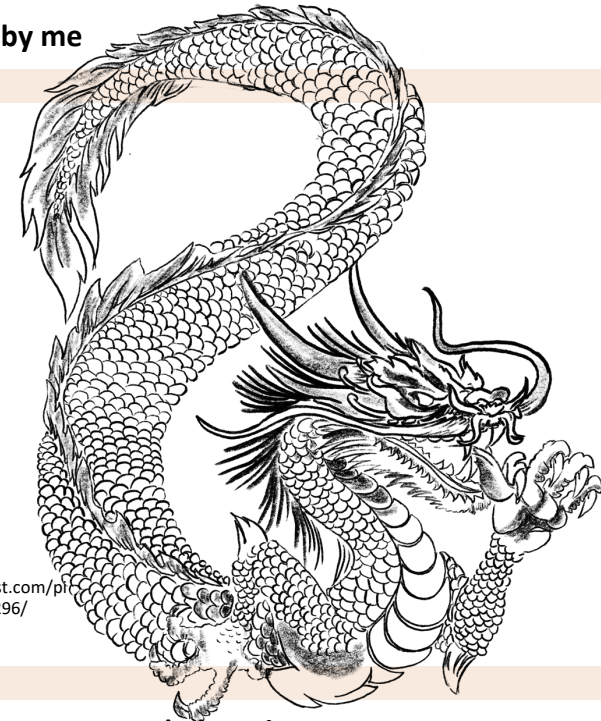
### Dress Code #2: Foot binding

- Foot binding "was the custom of applying tight binding to the feet of young girls to modify the shape and size of their feet." (Wikipedia)
- became popular since the Song dynasty where women need to bind their foot small to be **classified as "beautiful"**
- However, the action of foot binding "**limited the mobility of women** and result in **lifelong disabilities** for most of its subjects." (Wikipedia)
- Shows how female were **force to obey to a lot of rules and standards in the Patriarchal society.**



<https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2020/02/lasting-damage-foot-binding/606439/>

Drawn by me



<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/483362972476620296/>



**Dragon and phoenix pattern seen on ancient clothing**



Drawn by me

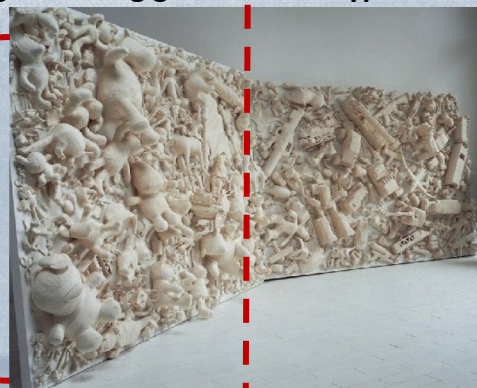


# Artist Study

## Lin Tianmiao "Boy and Girl"

- Lin Tianmiao is a contemporary Chinese installation artist and textile designer that creates art that **judges existing gender stereotypes in this society**

The left side of this installation piece is statues of **teddy bears / stuff animals and dolls** → toys that are often categorised for **"girls to play"**



<https://curiator.com/art/lin-tianmiao/boys-and-girls>

The right side of this installation piece is statues of **legos, airplane models and mini trucks** → toys that are often categorised for **"boys to play"**

However, Lin decided to uncategorise them by putting them in the same wall and with the same colour → **Judges how the society "teaches boys to never cry and girls to be soft"**

## Initial Ideas

### Idea 1

Creates an **embroidery piece** where half is our male uniform and half is our female uniform → creates the sense of combining two dress codes, **undo differing from male and female's dress code**



### Idea 2

Inspired by how Lin uncategorised gender norms, I would want to create **textile piece** that **combines dress code from each gender into one**



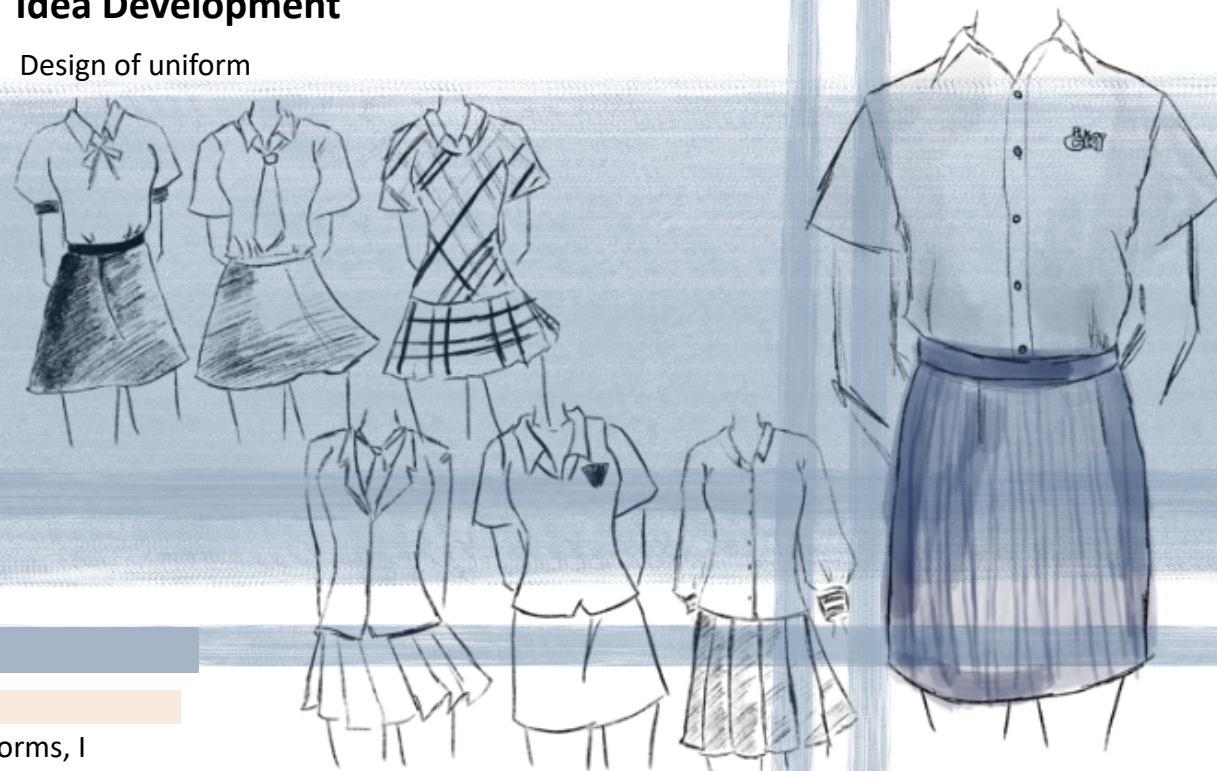
**However**, there is still an actual line that differs two dress codes in the middle

### Decision: Idea 2

→ It better conveys the concept of **undoing gender norms** and have significance for the **concept of "gender" in ancient China times**

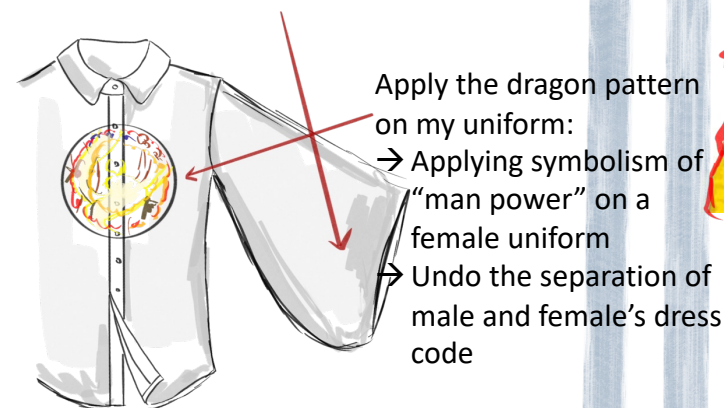
## Idea Development

Design of uniform



### Design for the top

Combine the silhouette of a dragon robe and my uniform: → Redesign of the sleeves



Apply the dragon pattern on my uniform: → Applying symbolism of "man power" on a female uniform → Undo the separation of male and female's dress code



→ Dragon robe that symbolizes absolute power were made for male only → the inequalities that female has suffered in a **Patriarchal society**



# Process and Media Experiment (1)

## Methods to apply two dress codes together

### Combine the silhouette of both dress codes

I brought the exact same fabric with my uniform for the redesign of the sleeves:



I hand drew the silhouette of a dragon robe on the fabric

Then unpicked the threads that connects the original sleeves

At last I sew the redesigned sleeves on and created the **silhouette a traditional dragon robe** → with large sleeves

### Ways to combine the dragon pattern with my uniform

#### 1) Painting

**+ve:** could create details with varieties of colors  
**-ve:** is hard to paint on fabric stably



<https://huaban.com/pins/9866071/>

#### 2) Embroidery

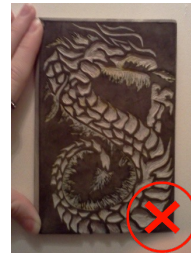
**+ve:** most tradition way of creating the pattern of a dragon  
**+ve:** also could create really small details if skilled enough



<http://seattlechinesetimes.com/2014/02/13/2014-02-13-23-30-37/>

#### 3) Printmaking

**-ve:** is hard to create details and lack of varieties of color choices  
**-ve:** the print effect on fabric might be faded by a little



<https://www.deviantart.com/scarlet-truth/art/Carved-Dragon-for-2014-02-13-23-30-37>

### Choice of threads



**Thick threads:** could not portrait small details → used to embroidery on larger areas without details

**Thin threads:** could portrait small details → used for creating the dragon scale and other small details



### Choice of colors

<http://english.eastday.com/english/e/cosht/ta4038626.html>



I implied the colors that often appears on a traditional dragon robe

**Main colors:** Yellow / Gold / red / baigde / dark brown  
→ These are somehow the colors that symbolizes luck and happiness in traditional China

## Experiment of embroidery



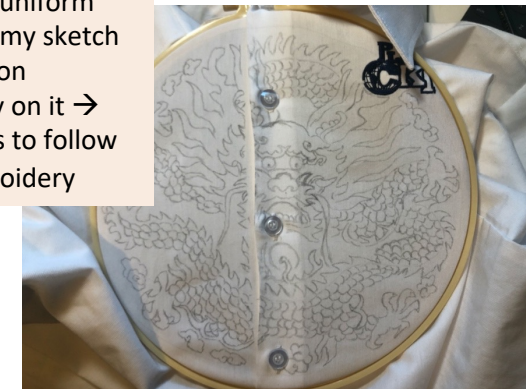
<http://www.nipic.com/show/4890471.html>

Reference photo I found from the internet → actual embroidery pattern from Ancient China

Sketch I drew: the design of the dragon embroidery based on the reference photo I found → detailed



I measured the middle area of my uniform and traced my sketch of the dragon embroidery on it → trace marks to follow while embroidery



### Refinements:

Because of the button that originally belongs to the uniform, it is impossible to embroidery through the fabric near the area around the buttons  
→ **So I decided to use fabric paint to cover up the blank area as it won't be obvious**





# Process and Media Experiment (2)

## Experiment of the bottom skirt

Creates template with my actual uniform skirt



The fabric is rather hard for me to sew therefore it took more time than I expected



→ I create templates using my original uniform skirt

→ Cut them out with the transparent PVC, then I sew them together to create the skirt

## Ways to exhibit

### 1) Mannequin

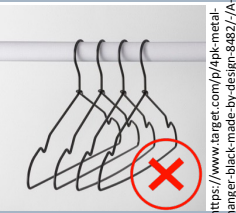
+ve: stabilizes the uniform and has a form of human wearing it



<https://www.esmod-editions.com/sizes-48-men-sewing-fashion-mannequin-c2x2627604676GfugID=1>

### 2) hanger

-ve: since the shirt and skirt is separated, a hanger couldn't hand them both at the same time



<https://www.target.com/p/4pk-metal-hanger-black-made-by-design-8482/-/A-53186632>

## Irony of Foot binding

### Ways to apply



Combining the idea of foot binding to my uniform shoes:

→ The idea of foot binding it to forcefully bind your foot as small as possible because people in Ancient China **claim females with small feet "beautiful"**  
→ Highlights the **irony of genders having to fit in societies' standards** even if it will physically harm their bodies

The size of my current uniform shoes at the age of 17 → **audience could imagine having to forcefully fit their feet** in the small shoes → **visually see the pain**



→ I got my shoes I use to wear back in primary and match them with our IB uniform

# Evaluation

## Significance of uniform

→ I decided to redesign my uniform as a **symbol of rebellion against the difference in dress code between male in female** → coming from my own personal preference who wishes school would allow us to wear pants to school  
→ Reflects how most schools in Hong Kong have different dress codes for difference genders

## Significance of transparency

→ Transparency gives the audience **a sense of insecure** as its "see-through", reflects the unwillingness of myself wearing the skirt to school  
→ Also resembles plastic that gives the effect of "breathless" under **all the standards society have given to genders**

## Significance of the dragon rope

→ Dragon robe is the specific clothing made for emperors in Ancient China and **significates absolute power for male** → I want to **denounce the idea of female being "less significance"** by combining my **female** uniform and the design of a dragon robe in Ancient China

## Significance of tiny shoe

→ The tiny shoes that matches with the uniform reflects the idea of foot binding in Ancient China  
→ **Play the role as an irony to society both in the past and now by giving different standards to different genders** → which somehow became harm and pressure

## Challenges

Challenges		How I overcome	
After putting my piece on the mannequin, as the skirt is transparent, we could see that the hem of the shirt seemed to be too long		I decided to cut the edge of my skirt and resew the hem of it	
I was not able to embroidery areas around the buttons		I decided to use fabric paint to color in the blank areas and it was successful as it wasn't obvious	