

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 became 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

Drawn by me



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

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**.

Dragon and phoenix pattern seen on ancient clothing



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



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"

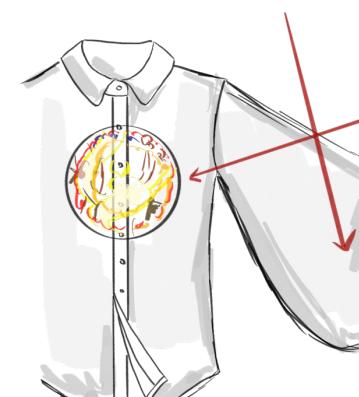
Idea Development

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

Drawn by me

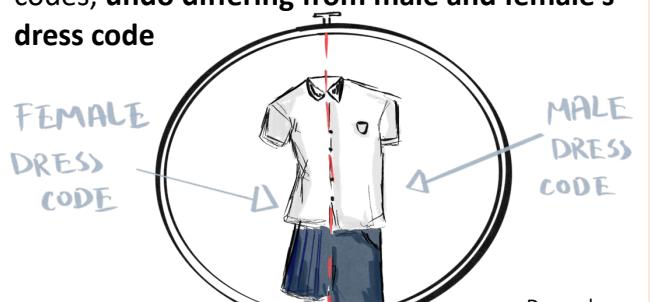


<http://www.luanishi.com/a/201703/14712.html>
→ Dragon robe that symbolizes absolute power were made for male only
→ the inequalities that female has suffered in a Patriarchal society

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**



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

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**



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Decision: Idea 2

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

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



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

2) Embroidery



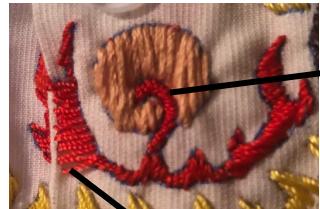
<http://seattlechinesetimes.com/2014/02/13-23-30-37/>

3) Printmaking



<https://www.deviantart.com/scalptruth/art/Carved-Dragon-for-truth>

Choice of threads



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



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

Choice of colors



<http://english.eastday.com/26.html>



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

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

Experiment of embroidery



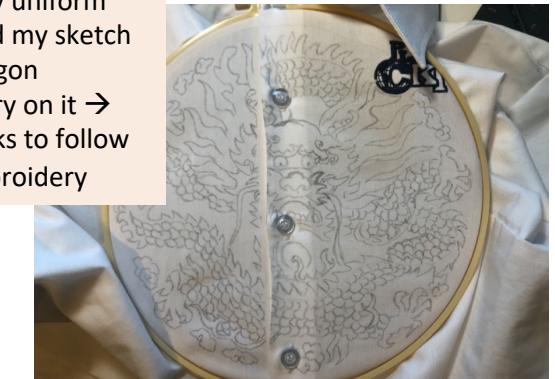
<http://www.nipic.com/show/4890471.html>

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

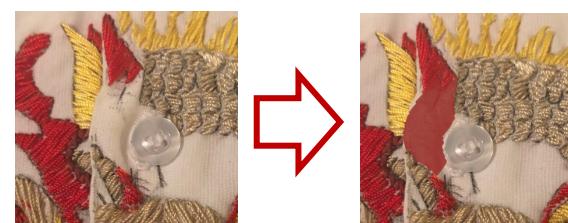


I measured the middle area of my uniform and traced my sketch of the dragon embroidery on it → trace marks to follow while embroidery



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 wont 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

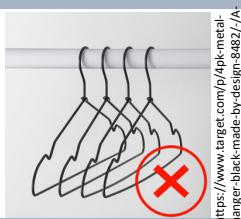
+ve: stabilizes the uniform and has a form of human wearing it



<https://www.esmod-editions.com/sizes-48-man-sewing-fashion-mannequin-22x2627604674FGtngID=1>

2) hanger

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



<https://www.target.com/p/40k-mntr-hanger-black-made-by-design-848277A-5318663>

Irony of Foot binding

Ways to apply



Combining the idea of foot binding to my uniform shoes:

→ The idea of foot binding is 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

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

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



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 different 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 robe

- Dragon robe is the specific clothing made for emperors in Ancient China and signifies absolute power for male → I want to denounce the idea of female being "less significant" 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

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



How I overcome

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

