

Yilin Tong

IP Thesis Paper

re-Contour

[Introduction]

When looking into 5000- year Chinese history, there are objects, voices and scenes haunting my mind that is shrouded in darkness and silence. They scattered along the history of China; they represented different cultural, social issues and the unenlightened side of human; at the same time, they foreboded the subsequent revolution and necessary progression of China; and they dissolve in the river of Chinese history. Those objects-Black Gauze Cap, Braid, Posters in Cultural Revolution (known as the Period of Red) and the Lotus Shoes-generously offered me inspirations and became the origination for this collection. Large jewelry sculpture are made to shorten the unbridgeable distance between now and past and innovate the intimacy character jewelry has already possessed. Revisiting the scenes (object, people, gesture, atmosphere) benefits me significantly in terms of understanding what had happened in the past, directs me to constantly redraw the contour of those scenes while redefining new visions beyond those pieces: the lines gently implement new gestures to body, yet brutally evokes our resistance to social inequality on various levels such as gender, kinship, politics, as well as potential improvements in today.

[Contextual Background]

These four objects arose in history for a reason and represented different aspects of the society, the country and the thoughts in the past.

Black Gauze Cap, were worn by male governors in ancient China, represents power and social status. Those who were given these caps, also received restrictions. The officials had to lower their heads in front of emperor and submit themselves to the rule of supreme power. They didn't gain much freedom of speech, and they lost their lives when they lost the cap. The Cap exposes the gender inequality in ancient China and the hierarchy of social classes and power.



(the image of preserved Black Gauze Cap)

The posters in Cultural Revolution (Period of Red) in China had consistent style of aesthetics and gestures. The characters confidently chin up and look up high, strongly holding objects high and tight in a uniform way. The color is bright and warm, mostly red, in high saturation and contrast, the fonts are convincingly large and the slogans never failed to rhyme. The positive postures of those characters, the brainwashing slogans and the unified style of the posters reveal the fact that governor set the restriction and unification in words and propaganda in order to solidify power and control the whole country in the turbulent time of China. The loss of freedom in both speech and mind slowed down, or even reversed the progression of the whole society and the citizens, nonetheless it didn't stop people's longing for bright future.



(The poster from Cultural Revolution period of China)

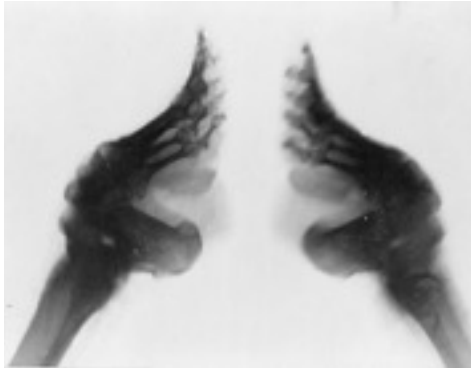
Chinese people used to save part of their hair for their whole life and they take this as important as their lives. The Movement of Cutting Braid at the late Qing Dynasty was placed on the hope of entering the era of new China, while it was also a move for the new government to claim their power. In order to implement such a movement, the law regulated that all the males had to cut their hair or chop off their heads. The braid did represent the inrooted Feudal and uncultured thoughts, however, the movement itself also carry out another ruling power of bureaucratism, the restriction in freedom and the supreme of enforcement.



(left: The drawing depicts the Movement; right: the preservation of the braids)

Foot binding was originated since Song Dynasty to achieve the beauty of feet defined by males. In order to fit into small shoes, females were forced to bind their feet to only three inches long since young. The foot binding process caused permanent injury to females physical health, expropriate females' ability to work and walk, and forced them to be appendage of males. The

inequality in both gender and social status were brutally conducted in foot binding and lotus shoes.



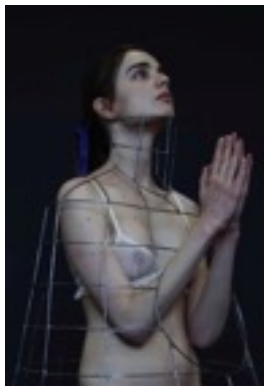
(left: The X-ray of foot-binded feet; right: the Lotus Shoes)

Recalling the Metal Tie piece I made before, I used only line as the main essence in that jewelry piece. I'm intrigued with the power of line, which not only contour the structure, but also take away the attention from the distracted texture and pattern the tie usually had. Wire comes to mind to be the potential material.



(Metal Tie I made in previous project)

When researching into other work in art field, Ren Kurosawa and Jennifer Crupi's work both utilize wire element and build a constraint atmosphere. In Ren Kurosawa's work titled "The Curious Girl, The Guilty Girl, The Good Girl", I saw the interaction between body and the steel wire. The purity and power of lines wrapped around the body and apply restriction to body gestures, fully represent the restricting lifestyles of the catholic faith.



(Ren Kurosawa, “The Curious Girl, The Guilty Girl, The Good Girl”)

Jennifer Crupi’s “Ornamental Hands” shows another great example of using lines to force hands into specific posture in relation to the body, which eliminates all the handy functions hands obtain and opens up the possibility in thinking the relationship between hands and body.



(Jennifer Crupi, “Ornamental Hands”)

[Methodology]

After reading into more artworks and exploring the metal wire, line transcends other elements to be the most concise and effective expression in my design. Not only affected by the previous project “Metal tie” and my obsession with line itself, but also the line effectively brings all the attention to the contour of the object. The contour expresses a seemingly inexistent object, a transparent object, along with the fact that those objects disappeared in history to follow the progression in both the country and civilization.

After deciding on the objects that I will take on reference for my design, I started to make sketches and experimental prototypes. In the process of sketching and prototyping rough models, I generated the shape of the final product and decided on the steps, materials and some supplementary pieces to manufacture the pieces. Sketches really help me to tidy my ideas and formalize my designs. Prototyping foresees the potential problem I have to solve in construction



and some necessary adjustments to the final design. For example, for the Neck Up piece, I prototyped a simple model so that I could easily see the fitting on body. This process helps me to decide on the gauge of brass wire, the length, the angle of each intersection, and the method of connection; In the Braid, I prototyped in thinner gauge of wire, then take the measurements of angle and length as references to make a more reasonable size of joints in rhino 3D modeling. By 3D print four different designs of joints to test with the brass wire prototype, I select a more proper joint that conveys the rigid style in this design; In the Shoe, I measured my own feet and drew the sketch of the design that fits into the numbers and mark tubes of where the wire could possibly go through smoothly. Based on the measurements, I started the 3D modeling process which visualize the final product before even see the actual object. After solving the trivial difficulties to achieve the model as I designed, the model improves after each revision and struggling.

Clear resin is another material I chose as supplement material besides the brass wire. There are three reasons I chose this material: First, I want to make the contour of the object, the brass wire, the only visually present material to be seen. Second, 3D printing prototypes is a more technological and more convenient method in nowadays, and also has higher manipulability compared to traditional molding and casting resin, and easier adjustments in computer. Third, when I compare the expense of 3D clear resin material to the price of a desired block of acrylic, the price is more reasonable. The clear resin is used in the joints in Braid, used as the foundation for the Shoe and the wearing part for Hat.

Besides utilizing the 3D modeling and print, I also further explored and practiced on the jewelry techniques in constructing the wire frame. In doing the bench work with the brass wire, I learned to file the joint spot to fit with the ends of wire better; I learned different polish methods that works better with wires, and practiced on soldering technique with those handful third-hand tools.

[Creative Work]

For the exhibition, I painted a dense red square to frame all my pieces and attract the attention into the square. My pieces lie on shelves that are designed and mounted to be in different heights and spaces for a better visual display: having enough space for shadow to lay on and also the better position to view in person. For example, the Neck Up piece and the Braid piece are placed nearly the same as viewers' neck level and the Hat is much higher for audience's imagination of wearing it to flow. The Shoe is placed high since the wire wrapped around and through should gain more attraction than the shoe itself. Next to the red square, it's another

square that filled with photographs of each individual piece placed on body, with a mostly gray tone and a shade of redness.



(The image of the exhibition display)

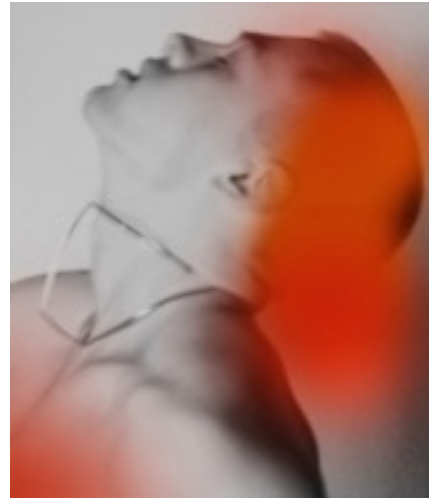
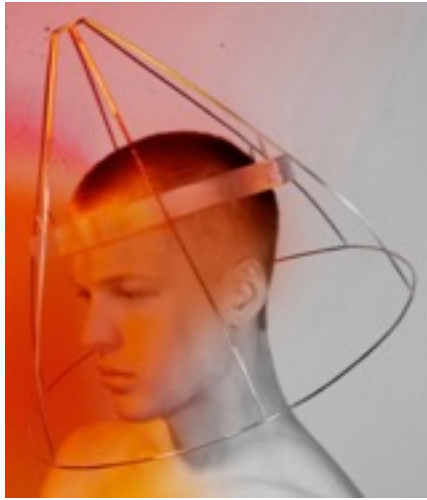
- Hat

Black Gauze Hat was a bureaucratic symbol for officials (males only) representing their power and social status. However, those in the Hat had to lower their heads in front of imperial power. When constructing the 3D printed transparent piece with wire, I intended to make the form to be shifted. The shape and weight implies a bending-forward inclination in Hat to empower a constantly nodding down gesture. The lines hover over the face blurs his identity and block his view.

- Neck Up

In Cultural Revolution period of China, the restriction and unification in words and propaganda make all people head up high. The loss in freedom of minds and the solidifying in

power underlie a struggling society full of laggards who were either unconditionally devoting to the darkness or painfully longing for bright future. My design fits tightly with the under chin and the collarbone, not only stretches the neck upward to represent the iconic posture of that period, but also makes people take break from fast paced life nowadays, retrospectively and ironically.



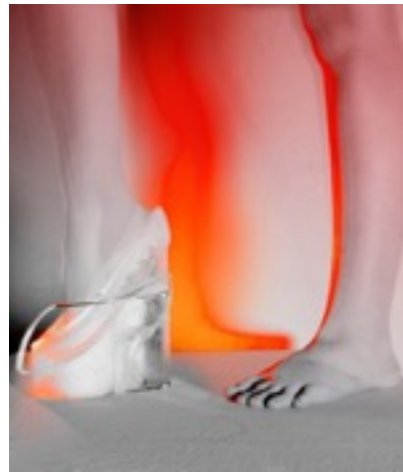
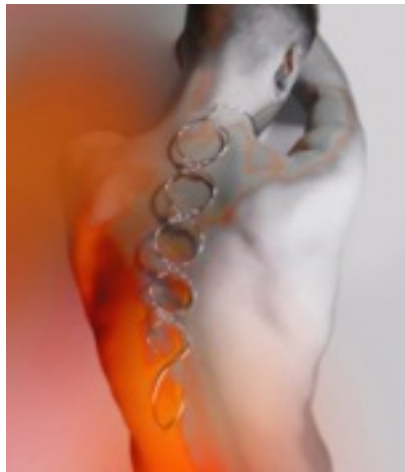
(left: the photograph of “Hat”; right: the photograph of “Neck Up”)

- Braid

The government forced Qing citizens to chop off their life long braid to render its success of accomplishing the revolution of new era. The braid from the history represents the inequity in power, the restriction in freedom, inrooted Feudal. I used brass wire to create fitful outlines of the braid and used 3D printed joint to connect them in each end. Designing the joint to have small sphere on them, to have a more intimate touch with the spine on the back. The contour of braid in my design reminds people of the already-chopped-off tangible braid as well as the metaphysical one growing even longer and deeper in mind now.

- Shoe

Foot binding using lotus shoes was known for achieving the morbid aesthetics of males, which represents the inequity in both gender and social status in ancient China: depriving females' ability to work and walk, making them an appendage to males. The contour of lotus shoes hover over and intercross the contemporary high heel shoe in my design. Such juxtaposition might resonate with those who consider high heel as a restriction offending feminism. Nonetheless, the lotus shoes no longer constrains but becomes a weightless decoration to the independent and tough females.



(left: photograph of “Braid”; right: photograph of “Shoe”)

[Conclusion]

Using brass wire to outline the contour of the objects in Chinese history, this collection depicts vanishment, emptiness and the supreme power of enforcement. By reshaping the form, reconstructing the the framework and employing transparent media, this collection gently implements new gestures to body, yet brutally evokes our resistance to social inequality on various levels such as gender, kinship, politics, as well as our regret for the unenlightened dynasties.

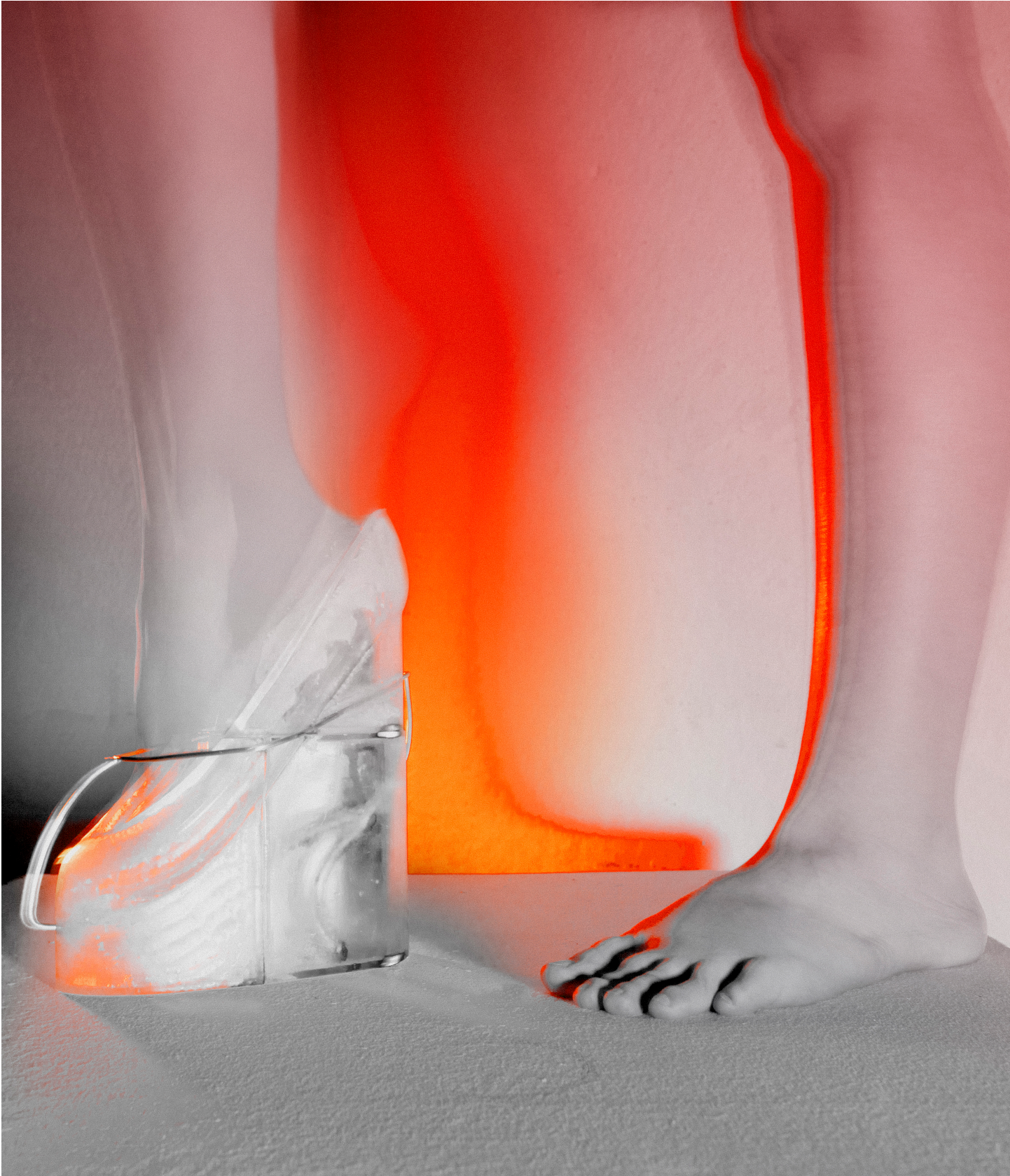
In this Project, the most important thing I learned is interpreting the information and transforming my ideas into a proper art media. Among all the pieces, Neck Up leads the conversation since this piece extends the horizon beyond the evident literal image. It portrays a posture that appeared in posters, the posture symbolizes a specific uncivilized period of time and the posture embodies a positive attitude toward life. I would continue work on this thesis to expand my research for more work like Neck Up. Working as a jewelry designer would not confine my increasing interest in redefining the contemporary meanings and forms of jewelry.











YILIN T O N G

SKILLS

Rhino, Grasshopper, ZBrush,
3D print, LaserCut,
Illustrator, Photoshop, Web Design,
After Effect, Finalcut

Software

Drawing, Weaving, Fabric Print,
Hand& Industrial Sewing,
Patternmaking, draping

Craftsman -ship

Casting, Soldering, Enamel, Lathing
Stone Setting, Etching, roll print, etc.

Jewelry/ Metal

Fully think of the relationship between
human& space, sense, psychology.
Working on interactive installation
that utilizes only transparent material

Install -ation

Good at marketing and
promoting events, utilizing connections

Event Planning

INTEREST

Fashion/
Fabrication/
Jewelry/ Accessory/
Sculpture/ 3D Design/
Installation/ Site Design/

EDUCATION

Stamps School of Art & Design, University of Michigan

Bachelor of Fine Arts

Ann Arbor, MI
2013 Sep - present

University of the Arts London, Central Saint Martins

Jewelry Design

London, UK
2016 Jan - Mar

Parsons The New School

Summer Intense Study - Sewing and Construction NYC
2015 June

Yonsei University

International Summer Program

Seoul, Korea
2014 June-July

AWARD

Guy Palazzola Award

EXPERIENCE

Working Experience

Marketing Manager at Midnight KTV

Ann Arbor, MI
2014 Sept - present

Intern at Xiao Apparel Studio

Wenzhou, China
2015 May

Jewelry Design Intern at Bliss Lau

New York, NY
2016 Jul-Aug

Jewelry Design Intern at Xr Studio

New York, NY
2016 July

Organization Leadership

President, Chinese Undergraduate Student Association

President, Founder, Michigan Wolves Basketball Team

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