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Abstract

This thesis discusses some of the current dilemmas faced by women in East Asia. Women from different life backgrounds may make different choices when faced with life paths, but whether they choose to pursue a career or return to the family, there are potential pitfalls and no easy paths left for them.

In the first part, the paper explores gender issues from a global perspective, the road to gender equality for women in Asian countries lags far behind that of the Nordic countries and has a long way to go. This thesis then analyses the situation from within the East Asian countries themselves and discusses the historical and social reasons for this situation.

In the following section, some examples of the three East Asian countries are specifically expanded. In the past decade, China, Japan and South Korea have sparked a huge debate on gender issues. On the one hand, some traditional concepts of patriarchal society are gradually disintegrating in such a change, and on the other hand, the women themselves are under great pressure and suffering from this change. The road ahead of them is not an easy one, but it is a necessary one for women's liberation.

JIN AND MING

An Intergenerational Study of the Roles of Women in East Asia

by
Yanyi Liu

B.F.A Sichuan Fine Art Institute, 2012

Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts in Illustration

Syracuse University

May 2022

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Acknowledgments

The topic of feminism is something I've always wanted to talk about, but without Professor Rebecca Xu's reminder, I would have missed out on this valuable topic, and I am very grateful for her participation in my interview and her comments on my animation, which helped me sort out a lot of problems that I couldn't see. Thanks to Professor Marty Blake, without her patient supervision and help, a lazy person like me could not have finished this thesis. Thanks to Professor Ginnie Hsu, she has given me a lot of reference materials related to my thesis, and I learned a lot of knowledge about animation from her class, which is why I want to continue to explore animation in my graduation work. Finally, I would like to thank our female ally, Professor Frank Cammuso, who gave me a lot of creative ideas, and I love the idea of doing an interview that he suggested so much!

Thanks to the 16 women I interviewed, they are the bravest and strongest people.

Thanks to my mother, I think I understand you better now.

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Introduction

In recent decades, many women have begun to make their voices heard in public debates. These discussions on topics of gender have brought about not only social progress on gender issues but also the growing problem of online misogyny. Many of the gender issues that our mothers had to deal with, our daughters will still have to face. It is hard for me to say that our times are changing in a good way because there are many new problems that are constantly emerging. All the issues are becoming increasingly complex. I often wonder if the feminism written in those books, the feminism that appears in the news media, the feminism that comes out of men's mouths, the feminism that women persuade men to believe in, and the feminism that women encourage in each other, are they all really the same thing ?

As a woman born and raised in Asia, for many years I was convinced that our society had equality between men and women as the mainstream media claimed. In retrospect, this was very strange: on the one hand, I was convinced of the equal rights and freedoms that men and women already had in my time; but on the other hand, I feel the need to reflect on some absurd mainstream discourse and social phenomena: the baby girls who were abandoned during the one-child policy period might be about my age, and the older relatives told me that it was okay for girls to have bad grades because it is more important to marry the right person in the future. With the development of some gender affirmative action in Asia in recent years, more and more women are aware of

the injustice brought to them by the social environment they live in, and once women's consciousness is awakened, they can no longer turn a blind eye to the reality.

When I settled in the United States two years ago, I was very happy to call my mom and urge her to buy a dishwasher and dryer when she renovates her new home. These two household appliances are so convenient, and they save me a lot of time. I am very surprised why such very basic household appliances have not been popular in China until today. According to the research, the invention of the dishwasher is much earlier than the washing machine, kitchen ventilator, and other common household appliances. However, the current use rate of dishwashers in Western countries is as high as 70%, and the rate in China is only 2.5%. I do not think such a result is determined by the difference in consumption levels between China and the United States. As a Chinese woman who grew up in Chongqing and lived and worked in Shanghai, most of the families around me own at least one or more gaming consoles (PS Station, Switch, or Xbox), but I have hardly seen any Chinese families using dishwashers and dryers in their homes. Of course, you can say that our lifestyle habits resulted in such a consumption habits, but what kind of a society would lead to such consumption choices? I don't think this will be a society that respects women and the results of women's household work.

Gender in Global Perspective

From a global perspective, the Nordics are undoubtedly the most advanced region in terms of gender equality issues. Although the five Nordic countries are latecomer capitalist countries and the women's movement emerged later than in Britain, France, and the United States, it has grown considerably faster than these countries. More than 50 percent of Finland's diplomats are women, and in 2000, they had the first female president in Finland's history. In 2020, the Finnish government announced plans to give all parents the same parental leave in order to motivate fathers to spend more time with their children. Iceland is the first country in the world to introduce legislation guaranteeing equal pay for equal work. As women began to take power, they slowly advanced gender equality in the Nordic countries

However, in most parts of the world, there are still many difficulties in achieving gender equality between men and women. Take the United States as an example, the first wave of feminism fought for women's property rights and the right to vote, ultimately granting women the right to vote in developed countries in the 20th century. Although women in the United States gained the right to vote in 1920, employment discrimination persisted until forty years later. Why did the patriarchal society of that time not allow women to work? The rationale was simple: by "settling" women into the home, there would be someone to do the housework, someone to do the laundry and cooking, and someone to raise the children. During World War II, with men at war, women in the United States took on a variety of jobs, including traditionally male jobs such as

machinists and factory workers. After the war ended, they were urged to return home and resume their traditional roles.

With the rise of the second wave of feminism in 1950-1960, the argument was more subtly replaced with: women are noble and pure so they shouldn't go out and should leave these dirty jobs to men. This view is consistent with some of the traditional dogmas of female oppression in East Asian societies.

Disintegration of the traditional Asian family structure

In a traditional Asian family, the wife always plays the role of taking care of the family and children. Asian girls often receive the message from the elders that doing housework is a woman's job, men are expected to be brave and protect women, and women should be obedient and lovable. According to Chinese anthropologist and sociologist Fei Xiaotong's theories¹, Western families are primarily a reproductive and emotional organization, leaving the rest of its duties to other specialized social groups. In contrast, Chinese families are not only responsible for reproduction, but also bear political, economic, and religious roles, making it a complex business. In the performance of the reproductive role, Chinese society has specific cultural guidance and control, such as the belief of "raising children to care for the elderly in the future", which links the birth and rearing of new members to the family and social continuity. Influenced by Confucianism, the Chinese in the old times believed that women who

¹ Fei Xiaotong, (November 2, 1910 – April 24, 2005), Chinese anthropologist and sociologist, he was also noted for his studies in the study of China's ethnic groups as well as a social activist. Author of 'From the Soil'.

were not educated and stayed home to take care of their families were women with high moral integrity. As a result of this feudalism, the status of women in East Asia has been considered inferior to the male. In Japanese, there is a term called Yamato Nadeshiko², which represents the image of the ideal woman in Japanese culture and is often used to express praise for a brilliant Japanese woman. It is pointed out that this term implies a woman who is perfect at housework and childcare while maintaining perfect beauty and youth.

Traditional Asian cultures believe that the family is extremely important, but in today's society, the concept of family is increasingly being weakened. The prerequisite for the continuation of the family is marriage, so traditional Chinese marriage is not only about two people, but also about the whole family. Chinese legends have many stories similar to Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, because marriage is not only a contract of love between young people, but also a trade-off between two families for future material security. To some extent, this traditional concept of the family provides some support for maintaining social stability. As China's economy has improved, it is rare for generations to live together. Moreover, women's increasing education and economic independence have had an impact on traditional family values. Data shows that the more educated a woman is, the more likely she is to choose not to marry. In feudal society, women were economically attached to their families and could not live independently, whereas nowadays, they are educated enough to have a stable career and income and do not

² Yamato Nadeshiko (やまとなでしこ / 大和撫子), Yamato: Japanese female name, Nadeshiko: Dianthus superbus.

need to be dependent on men or families anymore, and with the influence of Western feminist ideology, are more likely to choose not to marry.

Although women appear to have more options, the fact is that according to surveys, the percentage of Chinese women in the labor force has been declining from 1990 to 2010.³ A large part of the reason for this phenomenon is that the new family structure makes young people and older people no longer live together. As more young and middle-aged women live apart from their older parents, older parents will inevitably assist their daughters less in the areas of grandchild care and housekeeping, which will lead to an increase in women's household work time and a decrease in market labor supply.

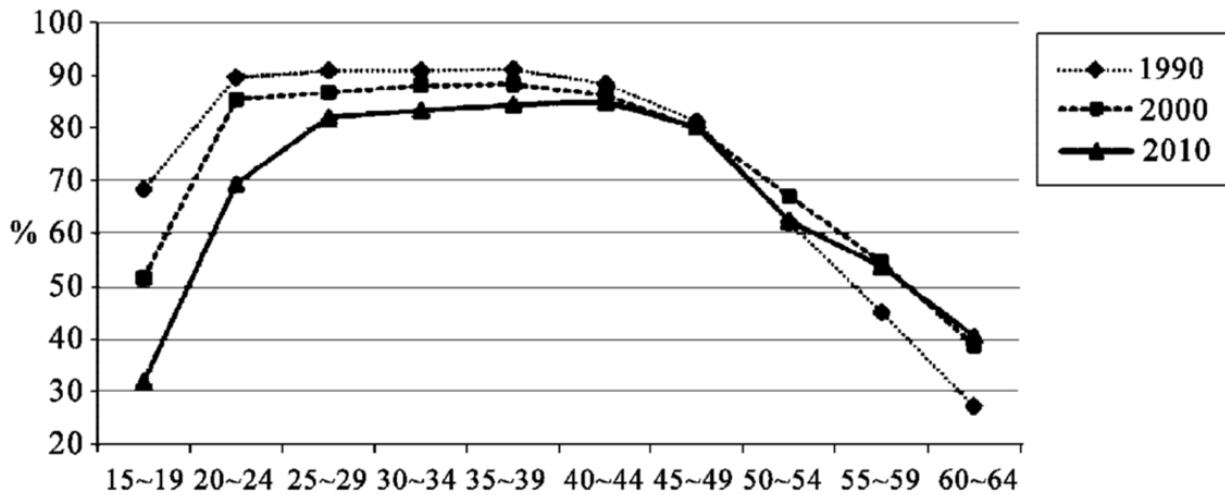


Figure 1. Female Labor Force Participation Rate by Age in China, 1990, 2000, and 2010 (x-axis: Age; y-axis: Participation Rate)

According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2021, the gender equality ranking of each country in East Asia is not very positive. Korea, Japan, and

³ ceicdata.com/en/indicator/china/labour-force-participation-rate, China Labour Force Participation Rate

China ranked 102, 107, and 120, respectively. The chart shows that women have relatively high levels of education in these countries, but very low levels in political participation. In most cases, Asian women play a marginal role in political participation. we see little representation of women in the political arena. Patriarchy is the source of sexism, it is difficult to achieve a real equality between men and women in a country where women do not have a relatively fair share of political rights. In addition, the research points out that the time needed to achieve global gender equality has increased from 99.5 years to 135.6 years due to the impact of the COVID-19.⁴ The industries in which women are most often employed are the most vulnerable to the epidemic the male unemployment rate is 3.9% and the female unemployment rate is 5%, and they also have the added stress of caring for their families. As social care facilities have shut down, the burden of caring for families, children and the elderly has fallen more heavily on women's shoulders, increasing the pressure on women and reducing their productivity; data from LinkedIn also shows that as the job market recovers, women are slower to re-enter the workforce and less likely to enter leadership positions in several industries, causing gender equality in this field to regress by two years.⁵

⁴ time.com/5951101/global-gender-gap-135-years/

⁵ weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2021/

China

rank **107**
out of 156 countries

score **0.682**
0.00 = parity
1.00 = parity



	2006 score	2021 score
Global Gender Gap Index	63	107
Economic participation and opportunity	53	69
Educational attainment	78	103
Health and survival	114	156
Political empowerment	52	118

Japan

rank **120**
out of 156 countries

score **0.656**
0.00 = parity
1.00 = parity



	2006 score	2021 score
Global Gender Gap Index	80	120
Economic participation and opportunity	83	117
Educational attainment	60	92
Health and survival	1	65
Political empowerment	83	147

Korea, Rep.

rank **102**
out of 156 countries

score **0.687**
0.00 = parity
1.00 = parity



	2006 score	2021 score
Global Gender Gap Index	92	102
Economic participation and opportunity	96	123
Educational attainment	82	104
Health and survival	94	54
Political empowerment	84	68

Figure 2. The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report (China, Japan, Korea), 2021.

New generation's Choice

For the younger generation, due to the impact of multiculturalism and increased level of education, their gender perceptions may be more open, and the younger generation of women are becoming more independent in their lives. The awakening of Asian women's consciousness has allowed them to pass through one narrow door after another and begin to squeeze into fields that have long been occupied by men, like construction engineers or pilots. Many women know that they need to work harder, break stereotypes and fight for a voice. As women in the workforce, they not only have to face the problem of overlapping childbirth and career advancement, but also have to break the invisible workplace ceiling imposed on them by the patriarchal society. Decades ago, aggressive girls were seen as a less positive image of women, and the female characters promoted in films were more likely to be Yamato Nadeshiko types like Yukiko⁶ or women who always showed positive emotions like Rika Akana⁷. But today, many girls growing up in urban families are no longer kidnapped by traditional moral judgment.

⁶ Yukiko, Female role of the movie 'The Makioka Sisters', the third Makioka sister; thirty and unmarried, shy and retiring.

⁷ Rika Akana, Lead role of 'Tokyo Love Story', She is a girl who always shows a bright smile and seems no negative emotions.



Figure 3. The Makioka Sister (1983) , Director: Kon Ichikawa, Actress: Keiko Kishi, Yoshiko Sakuma, Sayuri Yoshinaga, Yuko Kotegawa

On Nov. 7, 2021, Wang Yaping became the first Chinese woman to walk in space. As one of the first 10 women selected for the Chinese astronaut training program, she received a lot of media attention and public support. On Nov. 7, 2021, Wang Yaping became the first Chinese woman to walk in space. As one of the 18 reserve astronauts selected in 2020, Wang Yaping is the only woman among them. She received a lot of media attention and public support. On the other hand, one of the reasons she was selected as a woman was because she was married, according to statements by officials at the time "married women would be more physically and psychologically mature",⁸ yet they were concerned about the negative effects of space travel on women's fertility. In the official media campaign, it was also highlighted that special

⁸ new.qq.com/omn/20210622/20210622A03F8M00.html

makeup was prepared for her so that she could stay beautiful in space and that her five years old daughter was staying at home waiting for her. (No one cared if the two male astronauts who went into space with her were beautifully dressed and how they managed their family responsibilities).



Figure 4. Wang Yaping (b.1981) , the second Chinese woman in space, and the first Chinese woman to perform a spacewalk.

Shiori Ito, a former journalist interning for a local television station in Tokyo, was invited to a sushi bar for a drink one Friday night in 2015 by Noriyuki Yamaguchi, the Washington bureau chief and biographer of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, where she was drugged by Yamaguchi and then taken to a hotel and raped. Afterward, Shiori Ito did something that Japanese women almost never do: she told everything without reservation. When Ito decided to go public with her accusations and expose Noriyuki Yamaguchi 's behavior, she was met with public humiliation and hate mail. Although the global MeToo movement has inspired women around the world to speak out about their allegations of sexual assault, the response in Japan has been quiet. Undeterred, Ito visited institutions that believed she had failed and met with other women who were too scared to speak out. Shiori Ito said, “I know if I didn’t talk about it,

this horrible climate of sexual assault will never change.” In the United States, the large number of sexual misconduct cases have shaken Congress, Hollywood, Silicon Valley and the news media has attracted national attention; however, Shiori Ito's story is a stark example of how sexual assault is still a taboo subject in Japan. Here, few women report rape to the police, and even when they do, few suspects are arrested or prosecuted. In an interview, Noriyuki Yamaguchi said, "How should I put it? As soon as the wine was put in front of her, she (Shiori Ito) gulped it down." On the TV show, Noriyuki Yamaguchi laughed as he spoke, and the two male hosts beside him followed suit, "It's nothing wrong with that, but I thought to myself, "This girl can really drink!" Yamaguchi continued, "She got herself so drunk, and I had to go back to work at the hotel. She said she'd leave her at the station, but is that really a good idea? Leaving a drunk person at the station?" "I had no choice, no choice at all, so I took her back to my hotel." The rape allegations against Noriyuki Yamaguchi did not affect his work in Japan, but he resigned under the pressure of online public opinion for publishing a controversial article. Four years later, on December 28th, overcoming many difficulties such as ambiguous police attitudes and difficult evidence collection, Shiori Ito finally won the case. As a result of this case, the government established Japan's first foundation to support victims of sexual crimes (although the funding was far from adequate); 41 rape crisis centers were established nationwide (although the number is actually very small). For the first time in 110 years, the country finally amended its century-old sexual assault-related laws, increasing the statutory minimum sentence for

rape from three to five years and recognizing, for the first time, that men can also be the accusing party in sexual assault crimes.⁹



Figure 5. *Japan's Secret Shame* (2018) , Director: Erica Jenkin, BBC Documentary about Shiori Ito, the woman who shocked Japan with a public allegation of rape in a country where sex crimes are rarely discussed.

In the fall of 2019, the discussion of women's plight in Korea was in another frenzy. The source of this frenzy was the release of a movie adapted from a best-selling novel: *Kim Ji-young, Born 1982*. Kim Ji-young was a character written by Korean author Cho Nam-joo¹⁰. According to a survey, the most common name for Korean women born in 1982 is "Kim Ji-young". She lives an ordinary life: going to school, working, getting married, leaving work, staying home to look after her children She is like a train that always travels in a set track, with no possibility of crossing the line. After the birth of her child,

⁹ [inf.news/en/world/696147e8c21f49e2c5ca72b747078b09.html](https://www.inf.news/en/world/696147e8c21f49e2c5ca72b747078b09.html)

¹⁰ Cho Nam-joo, South Korean feminist author, former television scriptwriter, her novel *Kim Ji-young, Born 1982* became a hotly debated bestseller in South Korea when it was published in 2016.

her previous life history was sealed. From that point, she was left with only the identity of a mother, becoming a transparent person in society. Her life is bland and unexceptional, like an appendage that cannot exist on its own. She is the sister of her brother, the wife of her husband, the mother of her children, the daughter-in-law of her in-laws, the subordinate with a blurred face in the eyes of the company leaders, only not herself. In fact, this is the authentic life path of many Asian women. She is one and all. According to publishers, 78% of the books' purchases were made by women born between 1989 and 1999. Korean women in this age group are at a crossroads: Career, marriage, childbirth, and the irreconcilable conflict between the three. On the Korean book scoring site NAVER, the average score given after viewing by women was 9.46, while for men it was 1.76.¹¹ Just one day after the film's lead actress, Jung Yu-mi, announced her decision to take the role, she received tens of thousands of negative comments on social media sites. Some people threatened that the movie would be the "end of her career as an actress".

¹¹ book.naver.com/bookdb/book_detail.nhn?bid=18005090



Figure 6. Kim Ji-young, born in '82 (2019) , Director: Do-young Kim, In the movie, Kim Ji-young, played by Jung You-mi, suffers from mental illness after a long period of depression and struggle

This kind of online comment is actually very popular in East Asian societies. According to Japanese scholar Chizuko Ueno's¹² definition, "misogyny" is a consciousness in which men place women as objects, "otherize" them, and treat them with contempt in order to maintain their own subjectivity and superiority. In the anonymous online space, misogyny forms a rather dominant narrative framework - "men as victims" vs. "women as perpetrators and exploiters", with the former serving hard and defending their country, and the latter settling for pleasure and demanding women's rights. The opportunity for the feminist movement to fully emerge in the real space was a murder case that occurred in 2016. A woman in her 20s was murdered by an unknown male in a bathroom located in a shopping street near Exit 10 of Gangnam Station, and the reason for her murder was, "because she was a woman." This incident brought to the

¹² Chizuko Ueno, Japanese sociologist feminist. Her work covers sociological issues including semiotics, capitalism, and feminism in Japan.

surface the misogyny that had long been lurking in cyberspace. After the incident, posters and messages from the public calling for confronting the misogyny were posted in front of Gangnam Station Exit 10, and feminism went from online to the streets, spreading from elite discussions to popular issues. The novel *Kim Ji-young, born in '82* was published at this time.



Figure 7. *Misogyny* (2018) , Chizuko Ueno, This book uses feminist theory to analyze various contemporary social phenomena in Japan.

Asian women in these examples are experiencing a historical period of awakened feminist consciousness, and they appear to have a relatively progressive field of dialogue on gender issues and a critical awareness of the patriarchal system that reaches into all groups and classes of society. Patriarchal society is a long-standing structure that permeates all areas of literature, art, law, and politics. Within this system, women are objectified and reduced to reproductive machines and servants of men and

the family, and any additional exercise of potential and assertion of freedom is seen as a threat to the social order. The so-called gender equality in recent Asian societies, on the other hand, actually makes women take on as much work in the workplace, while in the family they are required to take on the dual role of wife and mother, leaving them under deep pressure from the double burden of career and family.

The Story of Jin and Ming



Figure 8. Jin and Ming (2022) , Yanyi Liu, Digital, 25 x 32 in.

In China, Jin and Ming are very common names just like Kim Ji-young in Korean. Jin means *today* in Chinese, and Ming indicates *tomorrow*. As a mother and daughter, their

fate and the problems they each have to face are symbolic of the dilemmas that many women have to face in life.

In traditional gender narratives, a woman like Jin is often promoted as a positive image: a well-groomed woman who does most of the household work, performs well in caring for the family and raising children, and ideally has a suitable job to supplement the household (this ideal job usually would be a nurse, a basic education teacher, or a service industry worker). Typically, childbirth is not a choice for them, but an inevitable stage of life guided by national government decisions. In December 1982, China started the One child policy¹³, it adopted a constitution that stated that "Both husband and wife have the duty to practice family planning," and families that did not cooperate may have their homes destroyed, their property confiscated, and women forced to be sterilized. Today, forty years later, the state is suddenly encouraging couples to raise three children. The reason for this shift has nothing to do with women reclaiming their bodily authority, but rather because China's population is aging, and the government is concerned about the negative economic impact of continued family planning. In addition, there are difficulties in China if a woman like Jin wants to skip the marriage step and choose to be a single mother. For thousands of years, men have been the head of the traditional family, and single women are discouraged from having children on their own in China, where men are free to freeze or donate their sperm to sperm banks without restriction, but single women are prohibited from having their eggs frozen, and they are not eligible for the benefits society provides for fertility policies.

¹³ One child policy, one birth per family rule, The rationale for implementing the policy was to reduce the growth rate of China's enormous population. It was announced in late 2015 that the program was to end in early 2016.



Figure 9. Jin and Ming (2022) , Yanyi Liu, Digital, 25 x 32 in.

Also, we all know that once a woman becomes a mother, she will experience a systematic detriment in her career (motherhood penalty). While working mothers are considered less competent than non-mother employees among colleagues performing the same tasks, fathers do not have to face this prejudice. During the planned economy¹⁴, workplaces provided many facilities for childbirth, such as paid maternity leave, canteens, nurseries, childcare centers and other social benefits, and much of the "motherhood" work was transformed into a public responsibility. However, with the

¹⁴A planned economy is a type of economic system where investment, production and the allocation of capital goods takes place according to economy.

development of the market economy, workplaces and government departments have gradually withdrawn from "motherhood", and the responsibility of raising children has shifted more to the family or to the market with the family paying for the care.

So, as a new generation of women, has Ming's existence become better?



Figure 10. Jin and Ming (2022) , Yanyi Liu, Digital, 25 x 32 in.

For the younger generation, the traditional model of marriage is slowly losing its appeal, but there doesn't seem to be a new model of life for them to follow. Because of young

people's extremely low fertility intentions and the rising divorce rate every year, the Chinese government has started from this year to require couples in some regions to take a divorce test before they get divorced: the higher the score the couple gets in this test, the more difficult it will be for them to get a divorce immediately.

There is also a lot of obvious gender discrimination in the Chinese job market for women who want to pursue a career. Even for female students who are still in high school, they have to pay more if they want to compete with men for admission to the same major. Across China, far more women than men are admitted to undergraduate programs. However, some university majors are specified to be male only (military, aerospace), while some majors that appear to be more female (broadcasting, nursing) will have a 1:1 quota system. Therefore, women need to score more than 100 points more than men (total score on the college entrance exam is 750) to get into the same majors.

Women like Jin and Ming may have chosen different paths in life. But in the context of a patriarchal society, they don't know where the real exits are, where to have a possibility of a new life. It is easy to recognize the disadvantages of a kind of life and even resist it, but the difficult part is how to move on with our own lives. There is no alternative life that tells you that if you don't want to live the life you have today, there are still other options. There is no existing answer and we have to create one. The answer is not simple like making money, not having children, focus on your career, but an answer that we do not yet know.

Development of the Visual Thesis

The entire visual thesis consists of 2 parts: a series of illustrations and a video.



Figure 11. Jin and Ming (2022) , Yanyi Liu, Digital, 25 x 32 in.



Figure 12. Jin and Ming (2022) , Yanyi Liu, Digital, 25 x 32 in.

Jin and Ming are the two characters in the illustrations, representing two generations of East Asian women who have to go through different problems as the protagonists of their respective eras, but whose plight is very similar in the context of East Asian patriarchal society. Ming is Jin's daughter, who seems to have more options and better access to education and work resources than her mother, but she can still clearly feel that there is a glass ceiling in the system that she cannot break.

In the choice of colors, I used relatively simple colors to present this subject. People often use pink and blue to differentiate genders, but I think women can be both pink and blue, and they can be all the colors they want to be.

For the video, I interviewed 16 Asian women from different backgrounds, many of them are similar to Jin or Ming in age, and they are also someone's mother or daughter in social relationships. In the interviews, each of them talked to me for a long time about the difficulties they encountered in their lives, and as a woman, I was able to empathize and understand them very well. Because of the time limit, I ended up editing about 8 minutes of audio into the final video and animated it.

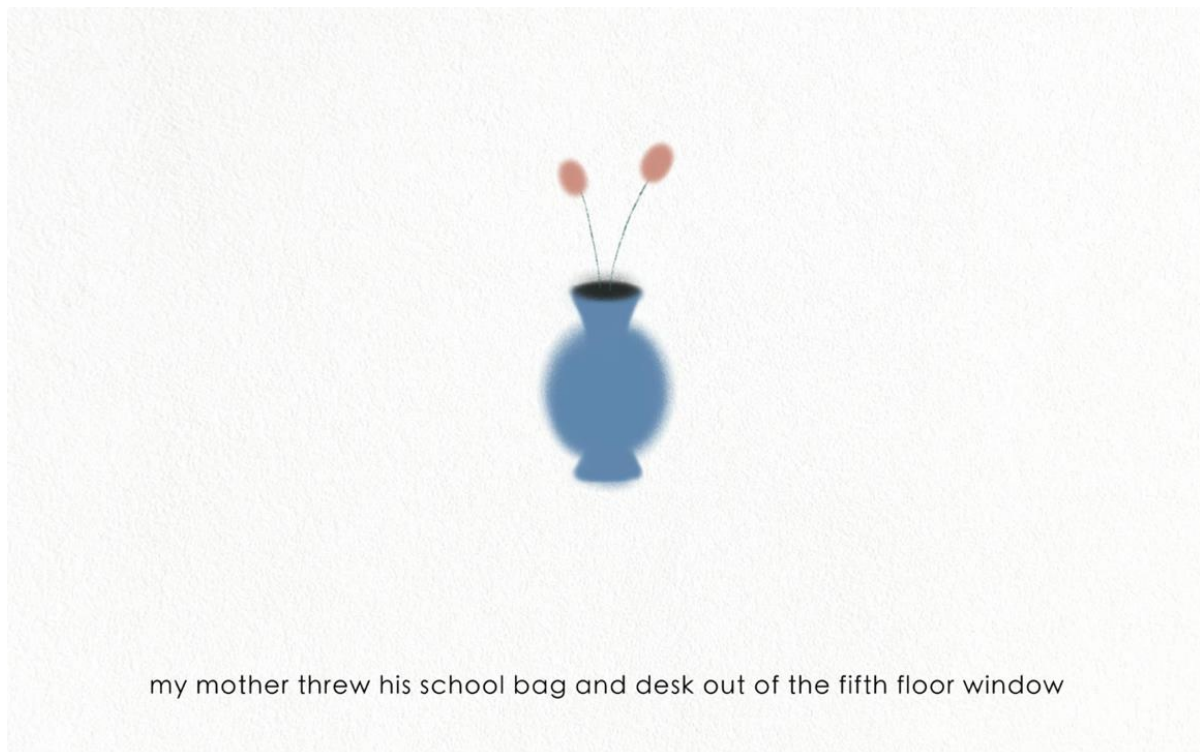


Figure 13. If You Listen You Can Hear—Interview with 16 Chinese Women (2022) , Yanyi Liu, Video (Screenshot).

Conclusion

Gender issues have been widely discussed in Asian societies in the last decade, especially in China, where gender is one of the few sensitive topics that can still be openly discussed and has sparked various levels of discussion on various platforms. While doing my research, I also reorganized my relationship with my mother: my parents divorced before my college entrance exams, and until then, I had always felt a bit detached from my mother because she did not play a caring role in the family as traditional Chinese mothers do. As a child growing up in a traditional family I didn't accept it (I didn't understand that fathers should have the same family responsibilities). But as I grew older I came to understand my mother, and she eventually became a model of an independent woman in my mind. Just as Jin and Ming had to face some hardships together, I grew closer to my mother in the process of fighting against this social injustice.

Drawing Jin and Ming's story was an exploration of my own gender identity, and I often had to face the same struggles Jin and Ming had to face as I grew up. The trap of consumerism, the dilemma of housework, the choice of childbirth, and the glass ceiling of career advancement are problems that every woman may encounter. When my gender consciousness was still unclear, I didn't think I was oppressed by a patriarchal society, but just because more and more women are making their voices heard and opening my eyes to the injustice of gender issues in life, I felt I should also use Jin and

Ming's story to make my voice heard and help women have more choices in their own life paths.

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