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Designing for Divorce:  
New Rituals and Artifacts for an Evolving World

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Doha, Qatar

May 2017

Approval certificate for Yang Soon Ju for the thesis project entitled Designing for Divorce: New Rituals and Artifacts for an Evolving World.  
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# 1. Abstract

Our interactions with objects build cultural codes, reflecting lifestyles, values, and identities beyond functional expectations. With open connectivity in the contemporary consumer environments, we have access to homogenized material cultures not only for daily activities but also for ceremonies and rituals to mark important events, such as birth, marriage, and death. What will happen to our cultural codes and diverse traditions when various cultural norms meet, exchange, clash, hybridize, and evolve?

In this research, globalized material cultures were investigated to discover metaphoric comparisons, to formulate conceptual frameworks, and to develop informed design, which can address evolving cultural conditions appropriately, in comparison with commercialized goods.

Considering we often ritualize sequential stages of life course or challenging events, but rarely divorce, I explored the socio-cultural norms of marriage and divorce in the current social construct to anticipate globally evolving divorce phenomena.

My thesis focused on relatively unknown material cultures in ritualizing divorce by combining speculative design with semiotic, hybrid, idiosyncratic approaches to communicate desirable future scenarios for the emerging multi-cultural context. This research aims to explore how artifacts and rituals can help people cope with transitional events and how design practices can provide meaningful and reflective material cultures.

## **Key Words:**

Material Culture, Divorce, Socio-Cultural Norms, Multi-Cultural Context, Marriage, Speculative Design, Contemporary Consumer Environments

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### 3. Introduction

On a recent autumn trip to Japan, I was struck by how certain, collective elements of Japanese culture embrace Halloween, which is markedly different and unique from how it is celebrated elsewhere. All of Tokyo was dressed up in Halloween motifs, such as jack-o-lanterns, colorful designs of ghosts, and candies. A variety of Disney character-driven costumes in Tokyo Disneyland with popular Western songs demonstrated an adoption of Halloween in Japan. Japanese Halloween is a secular and commercialized celebration, unlike ancient Celtic Halloween customs, which originated from celebrations of the autumn harvest, New Year festivals, and acted as a reminder or foreboding death.<sup>1</sup> Japanese Halloween, like Christmas and Valentine's Day have been adopted globally. This new cultural activity in Japan, launched by Tokyo Disney's Happy Halloween just over a decade ago, became such a lavish, communal festival expressed through costumes.<sup>2</sup> The participants were not only the youth but also children, families, and seniors. Halloween, an ancient European seasonal ritual, came to contemporary North America, through the immigration of Europeans around the mid 19th century. This evolved in America as a children-friendly activity on a secular, communal level.<sup>3</sup> This relatively low-key event has become globalized as an important socio-cultural economic phenomenon with exponential market growth over the last two decades.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to clear indications of contemporary secular Halloween activities having deviated from its Celtic origins,<sup>5</sup> Queen Victoria's white wedding ritual dress

1. Rogers, Halloween From Pagan Ritual to Party Night
2. Moon, "Since When Was Halloween so Popular in Japan?"
3. Rogers, Halloween From Pagan Ritual to Party Night.
4. McKechnie and Tynan, "Halloween in a Material World."
5. Ibid.

in Japan and Italy gave me an insight to think more analytically about globalization. The fact that the white wedding, a once-new event, became a global ritual is clear evidence of cultural globalization. Having seen window displays of white wedding gowns in Torino, Italy reminded me of traditional Italian wedding dresses that once used to be traditional, like attire in Korean,<sup>6</sup> Singaporean, Japanese,<sup>7</sup> and Qatari culture.<sup>8</sup> Although wedding cakes and toasting with a glass of wine aren't strange scenes to non-Westerners like me, it was still unexpected to see newlywed couples wearing white wedding dresses and black tuxedos at their wedding banquets near the Harajuku district, Tokyo. Additionally, the way international hotels were used as wedding venues instead of traditional venues, indicated emerging influences of the Western cultures and homogenization in ritual cultures.<sup>9</sup>

Other than the global emergence of Halloween and wedding rituals, another interesting aspect of cultural globalization is hybridization. I notice hybridization in my children, simply by analyzing the way they consume food, clothing, and other commodities related to events, ceremonies, and rituals. Their material cultures are evident of cultural shifts in comparison with those of my grandmother, especially due to the fact that my children grew up abroad and experiencing multicultural activities.

Blurring cultural identities can be observed not only in my children, but also in many people who have an exposure to globalized contexts with boundless travel and internet connectivity. Consequently, their cultural identity has become multilayered.<sup>10</sup> Multilayered hybridization is especially apparent in multicultural contexts, like Doha, Singapore, and Dubai.

6. Foster and Johnson, *Wedding Dress across Cultures*, 2003.

7. Van Bremen, *Ceremony and Ritual in Japan*.

8. Ismā'il Al-'izzī Al-Wahhābī, *Qatari Costume*.

9. Foster and Johnson, *Wedding Dress across Cultures*, 2003.

10. Moore, "Confused or Multicultural."



Globalized contexts create a generation of sophisticated cross-border population or global nomads, including Third Culture Kids (TCKs) like my children.<sup>11</sup> This raises questions such as: how can material culture in the global marketplace reflect certain cultural identities in the emerging contemporary context? what innovative processes can be adapted to develop a diverse and reflective cultural heritage or signifiers for multicultural communities? and how do these processes become mutually supportive of global or local systems for evolving cultures?

Experts in tourism and events, Jennifer Liang and Warwick Frost, argued that traditional events, rituals, and identities are being challenged due to the trend of homogenization in an increasingly globalized environment.<sup>12</sup> They mentioned in their text, *Rituals and Traditional Events in the Modern World*, that the performance of rituals through events are related to the formation of not only the historical events but also one's role in society, which are part of building a seemingly fixed, but fluid identity. With industrialization and urbanization, communal societies rapidly evolved into larger and more complex nation states. Accordingly, as new nation states were developed, new events, rituals, and traditions were appropriated. Often, these were organized and promoted with the purpose of affirming national identities and the authority of rulers and governments.<sup>13</sup>

Through my research, I explored the roles material cultures play in our evolving transnational identity and in the emerging contemporary context of open interconnectivity. Particularly, my interest leaned towards homogenized material culture within the context of birthdays, weddings, and funeral rituals. The way

11. Pollock, *Third Culture Kids Growing up among Worlds*.

12. Liang and Frost, "Rituals and Traditional Events in the Modern World."

13. *Ibid.*

Liang and Frost considered iconic events as sharing or building new communal or national identities. This is similar to what my research explores in order to address evolving ritual behaviors in a contemporary social context, and how the globalized world consumes emerging tangible and intangible cultures for evolving rituals to symbolize important events in our lives.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, it is meaningful to investigate how contemporary consumer environments will shape cultural heritages through globalization in the future, in order to better analyze the present. Although this research touches on many subjects and topics related to sociological or anthropological aspects of rituals or cultures, it is not intended to explain these aspects. It is primarily an exploration of how global rituals could be designed with a focus on material culture in the globalized landscape as design components.

14. Ibid.

## 4. Background

### 4.1. Literature Review

In a heavily globalized contemporary context, not only daily commodities but also material cultures around ceremonies or rituals, such as birthdays, weddings, and funerals have become much more homogenized, with Western influence.<sup>15</sup> Material cultures, such as clothing and artifacts, are closely studied as they are related to cultural identities, lifestyles, values, gender, class, and nationality.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, the recently increasing interconnected consumer environment challenges traditional rituals and ceremonies.<sup>17</sup> In this research, rituals or ceremonies in the contemporary society were analyzed as ways of defining cultural identities, reflecting consumer behaviors, and examining contemporary material cultures that reflect social and cultural norms and symbolize important events in our life cycle.<sup>18</sup>

In interconnected societies, the numerous choices in lifestyles allow the individual to form their self-identity, according to fashion study scholar Margaret Maynard in her book *Dress and Globalization*.<sup>19</sup> Maynard emphasizes in the text that the consumption of cultural goods, like clothing conducts important roles in shaping constantly evolving personal identities. According to her theory, everybody participates in ongoing or systematic cultural conversations. Like many sociologists and anthropologists emphasize,<sup>20 21 22</sup> throughout this transitory-social process, individuals negotiate “who I am and who I become.” This exploration is seen as the process of subjectivities that cultures create, entailing identities such as gender, nationality, and

15. Maynard, Margaret, *Dress and Globalisation*.

16. Barnard, Malcolm. *Fashion Theory*.

17. Liang and Frost, “Rituals and Traditional Events in the Modern World.”

18. Lynch, Annette, *Dress, Gender and Cultural Change*.

19. Maynard, Margaret, *Dress and Globalisation*.

20. Hall, Morley, and Chen, Stuart Hall.

21. Edward T Hall, *An Anthropology of Everyday Life*.

22. Cohen, “Culture as Identity.”

class as well as forming social relations with objects.<sup>23</sup> Styling, adoring, and fashioning the body is a fundamental part of subject formation by shaping, sustaining, and shifting, which is related to continuous self-identity shifts in the changing world.<sup>24</sup>

The reconstruction of global capital that occurred in the 1980s, which resulted in vast transnational production and outsourcing, is one factor that contributed to a major rethinking of transformational identities.<sup>25</sup> Before the mid-twenties, the popular perception of a nation had still been a largely homogeneous community, framed by a shared history, language, culture, and economy. However, globalization began to challenge this concept, when geopolitical boundaries gave way to the transnational flow of capital and commodities. The blurring boundaries of nations currently intersect in complicated ways with other subject positions, such as ethnicity, gender, and social class, within and beyond the nation of origin. Simultaneously, this realization leads to understandings of diverse cultures within nations as well as ethnic belongings across nations, which are often associated with events, rituals, and ceremonies.<sup>26</sup>

Rituals create important aspects of culture that are not only seemingly self-driven, but rather heavily impacted by social and political insights. Rites of passage mark different stages of social life that include birthday, coming of age, marriage, and death. These transformations are often incorporated with changes in sociocultural status. Thus, life-cycle rituals are announced publicly to identify a member of the society and accept new members as a part of the society.<sup>27</sup> Applied human science scholar Annette Lynch said that all cultures use rites of passage into adulthood to transform and reinforce

23. Paola. Antonelli, Talk to Me.

24. Maynard, Margaret, Dress and Globalisation.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

27. Bell, Catherine, Ritual : Perspectives and Dimensions.

political and cultural norms, regarding gender roles specific to distinct ethnic groups.<sup>28</sup>

Religious studies scholar Catherine Bell theorizes rites of passage as rituals to mark inevitable physical orders into cultural recognitions, which form values and ideas. She claims that the way of regulating physical orders and of naturalizing cultural orders embraces conceptual orders of cognition and experience.<sup>29</sup> These orders become integral parts of personal identity, social organization, and cultural tradition. Material artifacts like dress, as a visible expression are often a vehicle used to express the notion of appropriate roles for men and women.<sup>30</sup> According to Lynch, recent analysis of rituals has suggested that culture is transformed or restructured to fit changing social, economic, and political realities while a significant role of rituals is to display essential guiding principles of a cultural group.<sup>31</sup> Overall, this theorization of rituals appears to be very important to understand any ceremonial actions as a backbone of deconstructing or designing ceremonies that are always associated with tangible (food, artifacts, and space) or intangible (music, communal acts, and shared values) cultures. This seems to be apparent, especially, in order to understand certain ceremonial behaviors.

Considering certain ceremonial behaviors being associated with consumption of certain tangible and intangible cultural goods, it is important to note that industrialization has changed the intimate relationship between production and consumption. Far fewer people make commodities, although everyone consumes them, including basic necessities, such as clothing, food, and shelter. In the book *Fashion and Cultural Studies*, Textiles and

28. Lynch, Annette, *Dress, Gender and Cultural Change*.

29. Bell, Catherine, *Ritual : Perspectives and Dimensions*

30. *Ibid.*

31. Lynch, Annette, *Dress, Gender and Cultural Change*.

clothing scholar Susan B. Kaiser conveyed William Raymond's theory that consumers happened to be channels for product flows.<sup>32</sup> In this framework, consumers became the market in the structured systems of industrial production. With the widespread distribution of goods, consumption is perceived as a process of human desires for promise, pleasure, and power, which is promoted by advertising through transnational media.<sup>33</sup> Distribution is seen as a contradictory concept between dispersing and dividing, becoming an economic and cultural network between material and representational elements. In a fashion process of social influence, material movement is considered as fundamental.<sup>34</sup> The philosopher Bruno Latour suggests a material-semiotic network that maps consumers and materials to be considered together.<sup>35</sup> Cultural studies scholar Stuart Hall describes the concept of representation as a process that not only represents an idea or reality that exists, but also constitutes our understanding of the world. Through cultural media such as advertising, we experience images, stories, and sounds that frame our understanding of what is authentic or natural: what we desire, what we want, and what we need. Media art and design scholar Joseph Hancock addresses this concept by explaining how branding strives to add symbolic values to all kinds of real products by fostering or fulfilling fantasies in this transnational contemporary context.<sup>36</sup> In this mechanism of production, distribution, and consumption, it is crucial to notice that new cultural materials have been added to traditional rituals and have contributed to shifts of ritual activities, representational artifacts, and cultural identities.

32. Kaiser, Susan B., *Fashion and Cultural Studies*.

33. NV atCEPImperial, *Consumerism*.

34. Kaiser, Susan B., *Fashion and Cultural Studies*.

35. *Ibid.*

36. *Ibid.*

In the circuit of material culture, visual representation is seen to suppress the materiality of production because consumers focus on the image rather than socio-cultural, economical, and environmental impacts, including product quality and labor. Consumers fantasize on what they can become with the help of the goods that they buy.<sup>37</sup> However, in terms of garment consumption, different regulations from various cultures restrict or prescribe what not to wear and what to wear. Thus, individuals in a globalized world often find themselves regulated by multiple cultural discourses that might contradict one another, giving them ambiguous norms about what to wear or what not to wear.<sup>38</sup>

Differing regulations make clothing a distinctive indicator for certain material cultures of a society. Dress historian Lou Taylor supports the notion of materials, for example specific garments, being able to signify social hierarchy, consumer behaviors, and cultural meanings to wearers, communities, and nations, both in the past and in the present.<sup>39</sup> Taylor thus emphasizes different approaches in researching and theorizing dress and fashion history, which are part of important material cultures. According to Taylor, dress is conceived of as carrying one's life experience, which creates historical, cultural significance. His theory on garments influences approaches to dress codes into a more interdisciplinary direction with the aspects of material culture having social, economic, and historical features.<sup>40</sup> Reflecting these theories, the multicultural nature of our contemporary societies is important to address in order to provide meaningful alternatives to homogenized material cultures through current economic and

37. NV atCEPImperial, Consumerism.

38. Kaiser, Susan B., Fashion and Cultural Studies.

39. Taylor, Lou, "Fashion and Dress History: Theoretical and Methodological Approaches."

40. Ibid.

political networks.

Material culture approaches in fashion allows one to speculate hierarchies of the past and present; histories of making, manufacturing, and trading; as well as indicating cultural meanings of specific garments to different times and spaces, according to Kaiser. The materiality of dress can also pertain to a certain culture, in terms of fabric, sewing, trimmings, and accessories. Thus, for a transnational context, Kaiser's study model that combined fashion studies with cultural studies was crucial as an alternative for simple, linear, and fixed ways of thinking about everyday fashion. Kaiser compared fashion as "custom for a time" and a culture as "custom over time." It is interesting to note that both fashion and culture has a concept of custom, which is a habitual or usual practice for either an individual or a community. Custom is seen to also closely relate to cultural studies, especially in the concept of habitus, the routine cultural practices that are embodied in everyday life. Kaiser argues that both fashion and culture simultaneously undergo continual change and continuity. Fashion, like culture, is both a social process and a material practice.<sup>41</sup> Due to the nature of fashion and culture being a social process and a material practice, the way massive economic expansion of globalization influences our choices of material cultures cannot be overlooked. Notably, choices of material cultures are viewed as a crucial catalysis to share their meanings as well as to shift our lifestyles and cultural behaviors in the globalized context.<sup>42</sup>

Globalization in terms of distribution isn't a new thing. However, globalization in the aspect of cultural communication has become a recent focal point of

41. Kaiser, Susan B., *Fashion and Cultural Studies*.

42. Prasad, Rajeshwar, "Globalization, Culture and Women's Development."



interest to many scholars. Visual culture scholar Malcolm Barnard argues that globalization allows us to communicate in order to overcome cultural differences that are based on different values and to share meanings based on shared values. According to Barnard, although shared values are necessary for communication to occur, we must be aware that cultural diversities disappear or are reduced if too many values are shared.<sup>43</sup> Additionally, he argues that this cultural dominance is conceived as a negative aspect, as this leads to homogenized global culture where no longer distinct, separate cultures exist.<sup>44</sup>

This phenomenon is described as cultural imperialism by sociologist Diana Crane. Cultural globalization can transmit or diffuse across national boundaries. Crane argues that American media products, through Hollywood and TV networks, continue to dominate the global markets, attracting the largest international audiences. This dominance has led to a homogeneous, uniform culture, being permeated by Western capitalistic values. Considering the extensive interconnectedness of the world beginning with the worldwide economic crisis of 1968-71, which began in America, globalization in this thesis largely implies Westernization and Americanization.<sup>45</sup> Thus, the process of Americanization becomes far more influential when the fundamental concepts of other national identities are remodeled to mimic American images, permeating indigenous consumer values.

In contrast, Barnard raises a question of how original culture and local culture are related to invading culture, hybrid culture, or “glocalized” culture, which is essentially a globalization of local cultures. He pinpoints how fashion becomes a way

43. Barnard, Malcolm, *Fashion Theory*.

44. *Ibid.*

45. Maynard, Margaret, *Dress and Globalisation*.

of communicating identities and how fashion plays a role in globalization. Both globalization and globalized fashion are conceived as examples of communication, that is, the interaction between different cultural values. Therefore, what we wear, hold, and look at, constructs and shares a certain meaning. He argues that globalization does not cause the dominant culture to consume the subordinate culture, but is rather a known reception of change in culture.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, unlike cultural imperialism that is often sourced from Western civilization, cultural networks or flows imply altering transmission processes, which suggests that receivers of cultural influences may also be the influencers.<sup>47</sup> More sophisticated and transnational multi-cultural contexts stimulate ways to mutually support local customs and conditions.<sup>48</sup>

In this increasingly globalized context, rituals like birthdays, weddings, and funerals share transnational cultural acts and artifacts, just like other mass-distributed commodities. The uniformity in birthday rituals and objects is often noticeable in the consumption of Western round cakes, candles, and cone-shaped hats, with the same birthday melody across the globe. The well-known white wedding dress and the wedding march are good examples of the Western cultural markers on rituals, which are diminishing the traditional rituals and customs of other cultures.<sup>49</sup> More evidence of Westernization is exhibited through cake cutting and the commercialization of hotels as a wedding venue.<sup>50</sup> Black Western suits have become more common as a dress code for funerals,<sup>51</sup> which were once more diverse in their forms and materials.<sup>52</sup> This homogeneous global market phenomenon clearly indicates

46. Barnard, Malcolm, *Fashion Theory*.

47. Crane, "Culture and Globalization."

48. Liang and Frost, "Rituals and Traditional Events in the Modern World."

49. Foster and Johnson, *Wedding Dress across Cultures*, 2003.

50. Foster and Johnson, *Wedding Dress across Cultures*, 2003.

51. Condra, *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Clothing through World History*.

52. Barnard, Malcolm, *Fashion Theory*.

a strong impact of globalization on material cultures around ceremonies and rituals in the interwoven contemporary environments.

## 4.2. Precedent Studies

Humans as social beings share common languages and values, which express communal cultures and cultural identities using symbols through tangible and intangible cultures (clothing, architecture, objects, music, food, ceremonies, and rituals). Traditional, pre-industrialized societies tend to signify clearer social identities and hierarchies in appearance using available materials.<sup>54</sup> In the emerging contemporary context of open borders and ideas together with internet connectivity, our transnational identity is evolving and plays important roles in our daily life. Arguably this emerging influence is a departure from

traditional societal systems and is losing cultural diversities in the process of modernization.<sup>55</sup> Correspondingly, individuality has become more apparent.<sup>56</sup> Thus, one can claim globalization has disconnected people from their various historical, cultural heritages including traditional ceremonies, events, and rituals.

The first two precedent studies demonstrate a loss of culture in the discourse of modern civilization. Hussein Chalayan, a fashion designer, uses historical elements to make a statement about cultural loss (figure 1).<sup>57</sup>

In his runway show, *Passatiempo*, he showcased two dissolving, water-soluble garments to express cultural loss, referring to Cuba's turbulent history.<sup>58</sup> This is reflective of his intention to create awareness about cultural changes. He uses fashion to express hybridity and cultural

53. Scardi et al., *Aware*.

54. Maynard, Margaret, *Dress and Globalisation*.

55. *Ibid*.

56. Scardi et al., *Aware*.

57. Dazed, "Hussein Chalayan Talks Making Dresses

58. *Dissolve on the Runway*."

Figure 1. Chalayan, Hussein. Hussein Chalayan Talks  
Making Dresses Dissolve on the Runway, 2016.  
<http://dazedimg.dazedgroup.netdna-cdn.com/466/azure/dazed-prod/1140/3/1143962.jpg>.



loss, by combining installation design/art and technology, and fusing narratives that combine elements of past, present, and future.<sup>59</sup>

British-Nigerian artist Yinka Shonibare talks about the history of many different cultures including Africa, Indonesia, the Netherlands, and Britain, in order to show ambiguous origins of various cultural markers. These histories and cultures are becoming mixed. This

designer provides a venue in order to reveal the complex undertones of how various cultural interchange come about.

These three headless model sculptures in figure 2, with their identities removed, are dressed in Victorian-upper-class-style dresses cut from African material.<sup>60</sup> The key material Shonibare uses in his work is the brightly colored “African” fabric, which in actual fact is revealed as Dutch wax-printed cotton. According to Shonibare,

59. Chalayan, Chalayan Spring/Summer 2016 Pasatiempo.  
60. Alexa, “The Three Graces.”

Figure 2. Shonibare, Yinka. The Three Graces, 2001.  
<https://s-mediacacheak0.pinimg.com/564x/d5/cf/ba/d5cfba29f56d2f210c3338999522a410.jpg>.





its mistaken African origin is significant as it acknowledges and provides evidence of ‘culture’ as an artificial construct. Merging cultural styles in this truly globalized fabric of the African continent, which uses designs from Indonesia, being produced and distributed by the Dutch and the British, indicate the continued and perpetual cycle of hybridized, cross-cultural, as well as trade of both goods and ideas.

Another precedent that illustrates a great symbolic significance of a modern identity shift is Meschac Gaba’s 2006 *Perruques-Architecture* with braided sculptures, made out of synthetic hair (figure 3).<sup>61</sup> This reveals the colonial burden, age, marital status, social status or religion with jewelry and decorative patterns.<sup>62</sup> These headwear sculptures represent a hybridization of two very

Figure 3. Gaba, Meschac. *Perruques-Architecture*, 2006. <http://arttattler.com/Images/Europe/England/London/Royal%20Academy%20of%20Arts/Aware/05-key-13-gaba-high-res-10849.jpg>.

61. “Designaware. “Designaware. Accessed April 10, 2016. <http://arttattler.com/designaware.html>

62. Vitra Design Museum. “Making Africa.” *Making Africa*. Accessed April 15, 2016. <http://makingafrica.net/2015/04/featured-workmeschac-gaba-perruques-architecture/>

different forms - traditional braiding art and modern architecture, as a metaphor for the endless potential of a global community culture.<sup>63</sup>

The next two precedents discuss the impact of globalization on consumerism. Firstly, Alicia Framis through *100 Ways to Wear a Flag* (figure 4) talks about how globalization influences our cultures. She attempts to raise awareness on globalization

and how the extensive Chinese production is making a homogeneous market of objects.<sup>64</sup>

Chinese contemporary conceptual artist Ai Weiwei presented a vast sculptural installation of over 100 million porcelain replicas of sunflower seeds to make people reconsider how they engage with the society and geopolitics of cultural and economic exchange.<sup>65</sup>

63. Scardi et al., *Aware*.

64. *Ibid*.

65. Etherington, "Sunflower Seeds 2010 by Ai Weiwei."

Figure 4. Framis, Alicia. *100 Ways to Wear a Flag*, 2007. <https://vhfn.files.wordpress.com/2010/02/alicia-framis.jpg>.





The way that a massive number of people handcrafted such an extensive number of sunflower seeds in China, provokes the 'Made in China' global phenomenon (figure 5). Letting people walk on top of the sunflower seeds contrasts with the precious nature of the material and its complex production process. Through this interaction, Ai Weiwei states that individuals are vulnerable and negligible in the globalized consumer network. This metaphoric representation is derived from Ai Weiwei's experiences of sharing sunflower seeds as a popular Chinese street snack and of lacking in freedom during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) in China. The propaganda figure of Chairman Mao Zedong is represented as the sun while sunflowers represent the people, turning towards him. The engaging nature of this installation perfectly connects us

Figure 5. Ai, Wei Wei. Sunflower Seeds, 2010.  
[https://static.dezeen.com/uploads/2010/10/dzn\\_Sunflower-Seeds-2010-by-Ai-Weiwei-5.jpg](https://static.dezeen.com/uploads/2010/10/dzn_Sunflower-Seeds-2010-by-Ai-Weiwei-5.jpg).





to our individualistic, transformational contemporary world.<sup>66</sup>

The following three studies address a metaphoric function of material objects including clothing to signify relationships between the individual and the society. Firstly, Marie-Ange Guilleminot pinpoints multifunctional aspects of clothing, as an important resource in an increasingly mobile world that makes garments portable enough and more easily adaptable to life in constricted spaces.<sup>67</sup> Her work is inspired by cultural tradition, living memory, and healing. In her work *Kimono Memories of Hiroshima* (figure 6), subjective and historical memory is expressed in a series of garments, having pattern shapes of the victims' garments that she found in the photographs of Hiromi Tsuchida, on to the traditional Japanese garment, the Kimono.

Netherlander artist Mella Jaarsma,

Figure 6. Guilleminot, Marie-Ange. *AWARE – Art Fashion Identity*, 2010.  
[http://www.ma-g.net/blog/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/3\\_MAG-kimonos-back.jpg](http://www.ma-g.net/blog/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/3_MAG-kimonos-back.jpg).

66. Ibid.

67. Scardi et al., *Aware*.

who has been active in Indonesia, addresses heritage transmitted by a lifestyle as well as expressive, symbolic aspects of society through fashions, rituals, traditions, languages, customs, and food. Her works challenge two primary symbols of individual and social identification (who influences and who is influenced) through the whole context of clothing and habitat as seen in *Shelter Me* (figure 7).<sup>68</sup> A series of movable shelters were built in one-

person size as a minimal garment and architectural construction for protection with a roof. These forms were made out of wood, zinc, flexible bark, and tattoo images in a Chinese temple structure or a curtain shelter with Iranian digital prints. These represent transportable common beliefs on individuals through trade and current global migration.

Lastly, Korean fabric artist Kim Sooja treats stitched clothing as a symbolic

68. Ibid.

Figure 7. Jaarsma, Mella. *Shelter Me*, 2005. [http://www.gayafusion.com/images\\_upload/200604100538070.shelter-me-1.a.jpg](http://www.gayafusion.com/images_upload/200604100538070.shelter-me-1.a.jpg)



material, while combining Eastern and Western traditions. She rearranges elements of Korean culture into metaphors for the universal human condition.<sup>69</sup> In *Bottari Tricycle* (figure 8), she transformed the traditional Korean bedcover into a sculptural and symbolic tool. Through an installation of *Mirror Woman* (figure 9), she used clothes bundles, which have stories of birth, loving, and death, are presented as *Bottari*. Bottari conveys

physical and metaphorical essence of life, of location, and dislocation. Sooja raises awareness of the present, complex dynamics of geopolitics, and the goods we consume in the current global system by stitching scraps of fabric and clothing that belonged to her ancestors.

69. Ibid.

Figure 8. Kim, Sooja. *Bottari Tricycle*, 2002.  
[http://trishclark.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/09\\_Kimsooja\\_Mumbai-A-Laundry-Field\\_Installation-view\\_Continua-Gallery.jpg](http://trishclark.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/09_Kimsooja_Mumbai-A-Laundry-Field_Installation-view_Continua-Gallery.jpg).





Figure 9. Kim, Sooja. Mirror Woman, 2002.  
[http://www.kimsooja.com/images/texts/mirror\\_woman\\_blum2.jpg](http://www.kimsooja.com/images/texts/mirror_woman_blum2.jpg).

The following precedent studies are more specific to ritual studies: one individual, religious ritual design, one secular, individual or collective global celebrations. Bosnian-Austrian architect, historian, and artist Azra Aksamija examines the building of mosques as an expression of cultural, religious identity building in the globalized context.

In her artistic works, such as “Frontier Vest” and “Nomadic Mosque”, objects were created to perform religious rituals in stages (figure 10 and 11). A contemporary

vest design “Frontier Vest” is made for the transformational space project that lets the wearer worship either the Jewish, Christian, or Muslim religion in public.<sup>70</sup> The garment can be used as a tallit (a Jewish prayer shawl) or as an Islamic prayer rug. Through the constant metamorphosis of the vest, a religious space can be created for a short period before being dissolved and re-defined when the garment metamorphoses. This Frontier Vest was inspired by the nomadic life of the Bedouin, representing a useful

70. Ibid.

Figure 10. Akšamija, Azra. Frontier Vest, 2007. <http://www.dwutygodnik.com/public/media/image/59c65266.jpg>.





Figure 11. Aksamija, Azra. Nomadic Mosque, 2005.  
<http://www.azraaksamija.net/wp-content/gallery/nomadic-mosque/nomadicmosque.jpg>.

garment for a contemporary refugee. With this hybrid vest, the artist indicates not only the differences but also the common roots and traditions that connect the three monotheistic religions. This metaphor demonstrates her expression on her multi-cultural hometown of Sarajevo and interest for the lives of minorities or migrants all over the world. The way she designs clothing as quasi-architectural body coverings is interesting to compare with transcultural processes in contemporary ceremonies and rituals. Particularly in “Nomadic Mosque”, her design of a black business suit for women acts as an agency anywhere to become a religious ritual artifact, being converted into a headscarf, prayer rug, and the Tasbeeh (beads to support prayers).<sup>71</sup>

71. Ibid.



The most common element of the standardized Western wedding ceremony, is the white wedding dress. It was worn by Queen Victoria in the first half of the 19th century and still remains as a global wedding artifact today (figure 12).<sup>72</sup> Diverse cultural wedding garments, artifacts, space, and music, which were once unique in both ritual acts and material cultures, have been transformed into this global white wedding ceremony with well-known Mendelssohn' Wedding March. This demonstrates how a totally new ritual with foreign ritual acts and artifacts became disseminated into other cultures and common as if its own over times, eventually forming a new tradition.

The divorce ceremony of a Japanese couple reported by BBC is an example of a rising phenomenon being shaped into a ritual.<sup>73</sup> Reporter Nakao Yuriko's video,

Figure 12. First Coast Weddings. Wedding Dress, Queen Victoria, 1840.  
<https://www.firstcoastweddings.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Queen-Victoria1.jpg>

72. Foster and Johnson, *Wedding Dress across Cultures*, 2003.

73. Camara, *Divorce Ceremonies in Japan "on the Rise" after Tsunami*.

originally recorded for Reuters' news agency (video still in figure 13), presents the relatively unusual divorce ritual.<sup>74</sup> This divorce ritual includes new symbolic acts and artifacts by smashing rings with a frog hammer and having specific dress codes such as a black suit, a necktie, a hat, and a daisy-yellow dress with elaborated details at the back.<sup>75</sup> Divorce has been discouraged in many countries throughout different times, although there were some records of

divorce rituals in ancient Chinese culture and Judaism practices varying methods. Nevertheless, divorce has become a global phenomenon in the contemporary social construct, which influences the larger demographic, having various consequences. However, there is lack of social context to accept these changes. Therefore, this research explores the divorce phenomenon with a new, cultural, and ritual design approach.

Figure 13. Nakao, Yuriko. "Divorce Ceremony in Japan," 2011.  
[http://s3.reutersmedia.net/resources/r/?m=02&d=20110705&t=2&i=452853257&w=780&fh=&fw=&ll=&pl=&sq=&r=2011-07-05T193416Z\\_01\\_BTRE7641ID700\\_RTROPTP\\_0\\_JAPAN](http://s3.reutersmedia.net/resources/r/?m=02&d=20110705&t=2&i=452853257&w=780&fh=&fw=&ll=&pl=&sq=&r=2011-07-05T193416Z_01_BTRE7641ID700_RTROPTP_0_JAPAN).

74. "Divorce Ceremonies Pick up in Japan after Disaster."

75. Reuters, Japan's "Divorce Ceremonies" up.





## 5. Investigation

Along with reviewing all these aforementioned theories and examples, I carried out preparatory investigations combining speculative, semiotic, and hybrid design approaches. This exploration was to achieve conceptual frameworks and metaphorical comparisons, which can define and clarify evolving cultural conditions around the world. Design in this research is used as a catalyst to understand new behaviors and material cultures in the present and for a collective desirable future.<sup>76</sup>

### 5.1 Far Food

I investigated the situation of food import in Qatar to examine contemporary consumer environments. My observation and research demonstrated that heavy dependency on import in Qatar indicated lack of self-sustainability. All economic activities relevant to food import and export are globally interconnected with various international networks, for example, the World Trade Organization. I was curious about the future material cultures of minorities in Qatar if current globalization continues.

Based on my observation and research on global nomads including Third Culture Kids (TCKs), I discovered that they shared transnational hobbies, such as food, sports, games, and online activities, in addition to having social interactions through ceremonies such as Valentine's day, New Year Eve, and Christmas. Their cultural identities were transformational, enjoying mobility and flexibility. TCKs shared diverse food and dining cultures, with exposure to multicultural contemporary contexts with open borders. Hybridization

occurred with evolving dining cultures, being accelerated through franchised items, such as widespread fast foods and beverages.

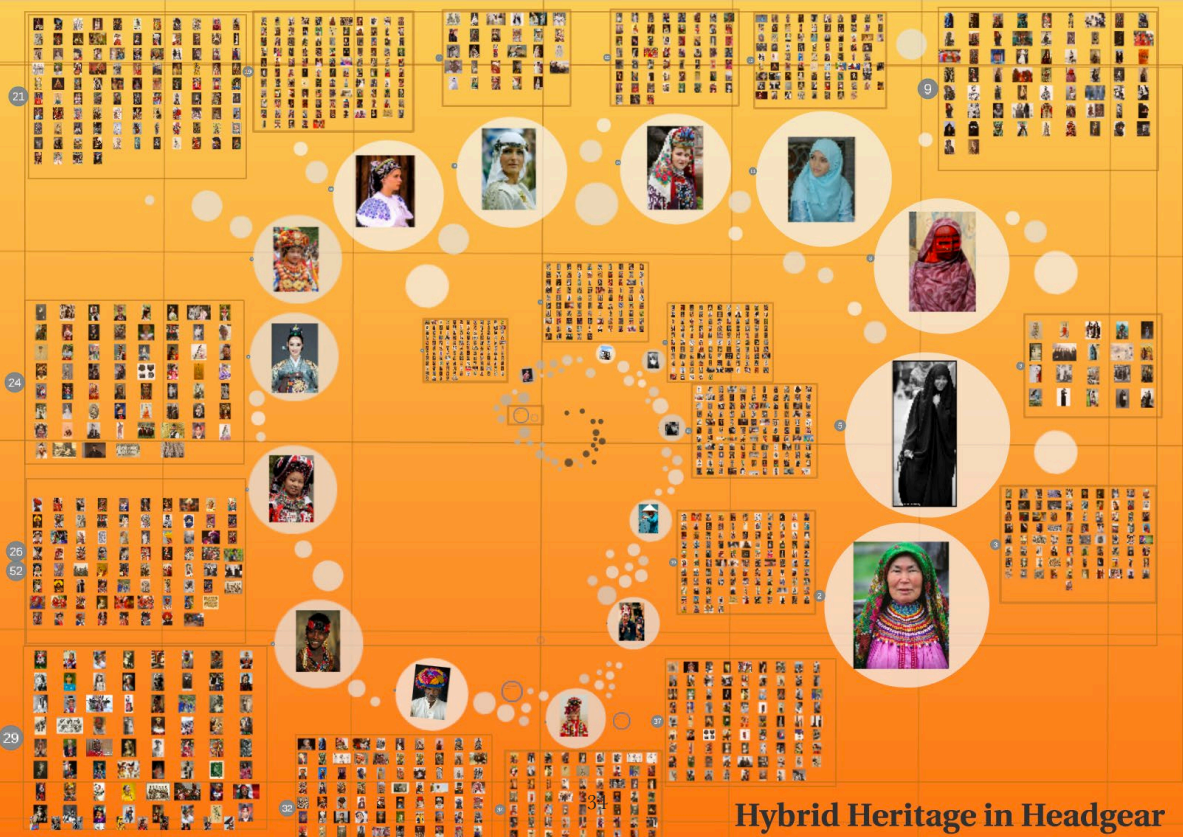
I speculated upon these findings using a set of conceptual dining tools intended to speak about evolving material cultures that our interconnected society faces. This portable kit contains various cultural dining tools, such as chopsticks, a fork, a spoon, a spoon fork, and food grabbers in finger sizes. This design aims to convey evolving dining cultures of the future global nomads, reflecting their hybridized cultural identities (figure 14).

76. Dunne and Raby, *Speculative Everything*.



Figure 14. Far Food Project

Figure 15. Hybrid Heritage in Headwear



# Hybrid Heritage in Headgear

Change and Manner of putting around the head

## 5.2 Research on Historical and Cultural Headwear

With increased interconnectivity over the turn of the 21st century, how have our material cultures evolved globally? As one of the most influential preparatory projects, my investigation on the historical, cultural headwear gave me clearer insights on globalization and evolving material cultures (figure 15). For this research, I analyzed over 2,000 images of historical and cultural headwear in the world. They were sorted into 19 categories, depending on methods of wearing and their form. Each category was then divided based on their usage: ceremonial, religious, daily, and secular.

Most cultural headwear was utilized in important ceremonies, for instance, cultural weddings and religious performances. Similarities in headwear from different places also suggested socio-economic, political interactions that influenced cultural hybridization.

Analysis on wedding headwear in terms of form, embellishments, color, and materials illustrated a loss of diverse material cultures and an increasing homogenization due to globalization.<sup>77</sup>

This preparatory research demonstrated that objects change and adopt new symbolic and meaningful relationships through transnational and social interactions. In this way, objects are blended into existing individual and communal identities. Similarities tie in how new artifacts with certain forms and functions can be fundamental parts of new rituals to symbolize important event in our lives.

77. Maynard, Margaret, *Dress and Globalisation*.

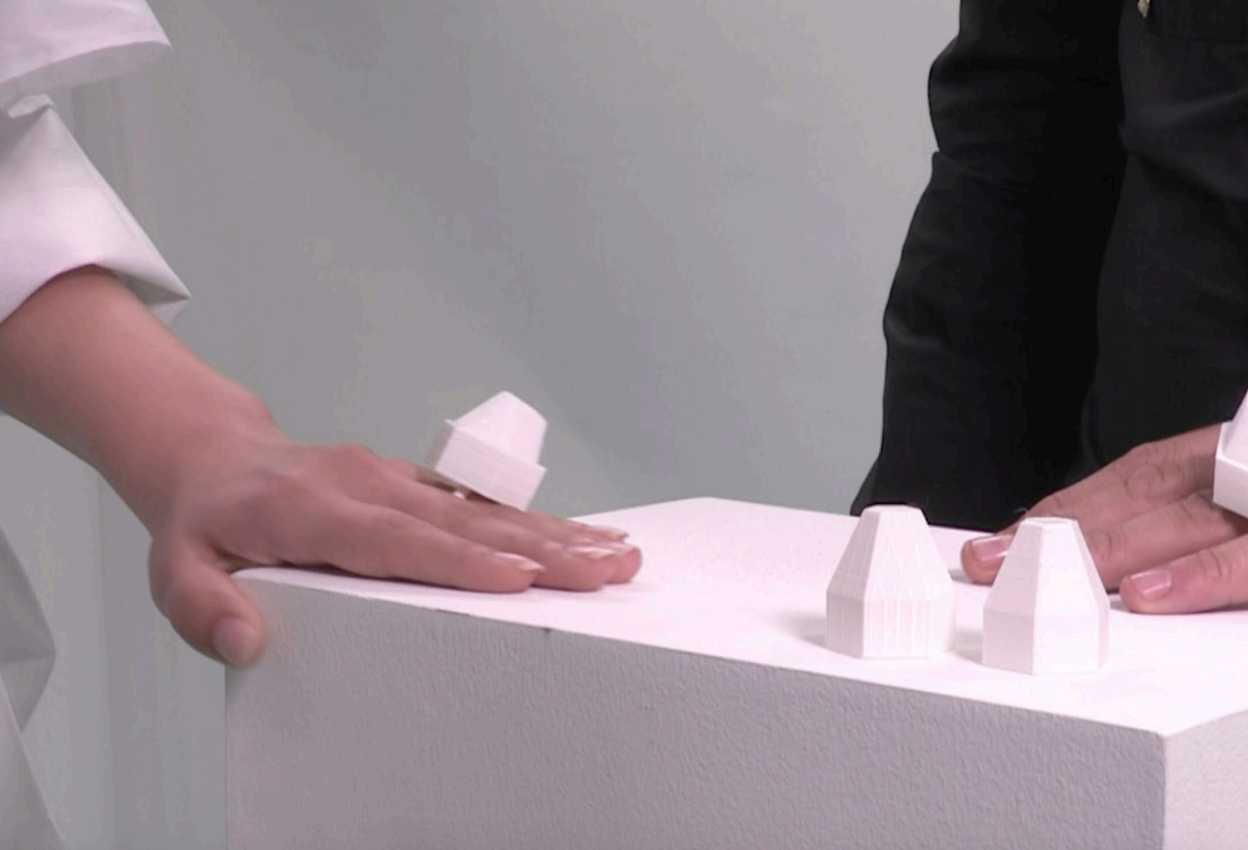


Figure 16. Video Still from Salt Wedding Ceremony  
<https://vimeo.com/202626695>

### 5.3. Designing a Hybrid Wedding Ritual

To communicate new meanings of objects in multicultural societies, I explored the wedding ritual. This project redesigned the current domination of the commercial and marketable aspects of wedding cultures, to create new artifacts and ritual acts, using hybrid and semiotic design approaches. These design approaches were intentionally idiosyncratic in order to address the nature of hybridity and diverse cultural codes in multicultural contexts.

During this design process, I realized that traditional wedding traditions were transformed into hybridized rituals in most cultures. After analyzing various wedding cultures, I created a futuristic salt wedding ceremony combining other traditional wedding artifacts, like salt, which often served as a reminder of bitterness and was

thought to ward off evil spirits. I designed a new ring, which contained molded salt, to allow interactive ritual acts (figure 16). This new ritual design enabled me to consider how marriage rituals can be evolved in more distinctive, secular, and meaningful ways.

#### **5.4. Evolving Ritual Practices in my Family**

Based on previous explorations on hybridization, I questioned how objects could reflect transformational identities amongst generations in my family. Subsequently, I evaluated the traditional relevancy of objects for birthday celebrations, wedding ceremonies, and funerals that reflect multiple generations. In evaluating the changes in material cultures seen through generations, I organized our ritual practices and gathered my family's wedding photos, which were held internationally over the 20th century.

Both my husband and my maiden family have over 4,000 years' long family tree records that started in ancient China. Both our families have continuously been practicing birthday rituals, wedding ceremonies, and funerals. However, the ways of engaging in these ceremonies and rituals have drastically changed, reflecting our cultural conditions. For example, my grandmother celebrated in more traditional ways: for birthdays with a bowl of seaweed soup and Korean rice cakes and for ancestor memorials with special types of dishes on a low table in a specific manner. Photos of my grandmother's wedding weren't available, so I relied on historical records to conceive my grandmother's wedding. Until the early 20th century, traditional Korean wedding ceremonies were predominant with symbolic wedding

gowns and headwear forms.<sup>78</sup> These traditional Korean gowns were replicas of medieval dress codes for kings and queens of Korea.<sup>79</sup> For funerals, Koreans used colored-silk for the deceased and white linen for mourning garments with specific forms of headwear.<sup>80</sup> The change in funeral garments in Korea was influenced by economic and political interactions with Japan in the early 20th century and Western countries particularly America in the postwar years. Analysis on my family's material cultures over generations reveals new material cultures and rituals, which are reflective of evolving socio-economic and cultural conditions.

78. Foster and Johnson, *Wedding Dress across Cultures*, 2003.

79. *Ibid.*

80. *Ibid.*

## 5.5. Evolving Ritual Practices in the World: Wedding, Birthdays, and Funerals

I investigated how globally common ceremonies, which mark transformational phases in people's lives, through the use of artifacts. These important events in our lives were organized chronologically with its material cultures and ritual acts, in addition to evolved traditions (figure 17). Material cultures that are correlated to historical rituals show and articulate how rituals were once a new phenomenon that became traditional over time.

For example, current birthday rituals are rooted in old birthday beliefs, especially from ancient Romans, the Greeks, and the Egyptians. Romans celebrated birthdays for friends and families with having cakes, wearing white robes, and burning incenses to mark the start of things that was an important dynamic for the agricultural society.<sup>81</sup> The Greeks celebrated the birthday of the goddess of the moon with candlelights on moon-shaped cakes, similar to the Egyptians' celebration for their pharaohs as gods.<sup>82</sup> The early Christians and the ancient Jews often considered birthday celebrations as pagan practices.<sup>83</sup> Diverse wedding material cultures and ritual acts existed before the white wedding

ritual was popularized. Funerals were elaborated in many countries varying material cultures, color codes, and ritual acts, which have been homogenized. Through these ritual practices, collective identities are shaped to enhance communal bonds in society. These rituals were not purely to mark individuals' transformation, but rather to enforce as socio-political constructs, aiming to confining individuals to their roles in society.<sup>84</sup> Therefore, as contemporary societies are getting more individualized and transnational, new forms of rituals are inevitable. Thus, in order to explore new ritual acts and artifacts that can reflect new societal behaviors, I chose divorce, which hasn't been formally ritualized, unlike death that is provided with a mechanism of dealing with changes. Especially, divorce is not only a Western phenomenon,<sup>85</sup> but is on the rise in many countries including Qatar,<sup>86</sup> Saudi Arabia,<sup>87</sup> Korea,<sup>88</sup> Japan,<sup>89</sup> and China.<sup>90 91</sup> However, divorce still remains taboo today. Considering the globally increasing divorce phenomenon that impacts the larger demographic directly and indirectly,<sup>92</sup> ways of dissolving marriage could be treated differently, and possibly as a new ritual in the same manner as marriage rituals.

81. Bond, "The History of the Birthday And The Roman Calendar."

82. Luling, "This Is Why You Get To Celebrate Your Birthday Every Year."

83. Waters, "BIRTHDAYS: PAGAN/OCCULT ORIGINS & THE HIGHEST OF ALL HOLY DAYS (HOLIDAYS) IN THE SATANIC BIBLE | SermonAudio.com."

84. Bell, Catherine, *Ritual : Perspectives and Dimensions*.

85. Carroll, "Top 10 Countries with Highest Divorce Rates in the World."

86. Khatri, "Highest Divorce Rate."

87. Beiter, "Divorce Rates Skyrocket in Saudi Arabia."

88. Onishi, "Divorce in South Korea."

89. "Divorcee Marriages Hit Historic High."

90. Kai, "Calling It Quits: Divorce Rate Jumps 6% - China - Chinadaily.com.cn."

91. QING, "Divorce Is on the Rise in China."

92. Plunkette, "World's 10 Most Divorced Nations - TheRichest."

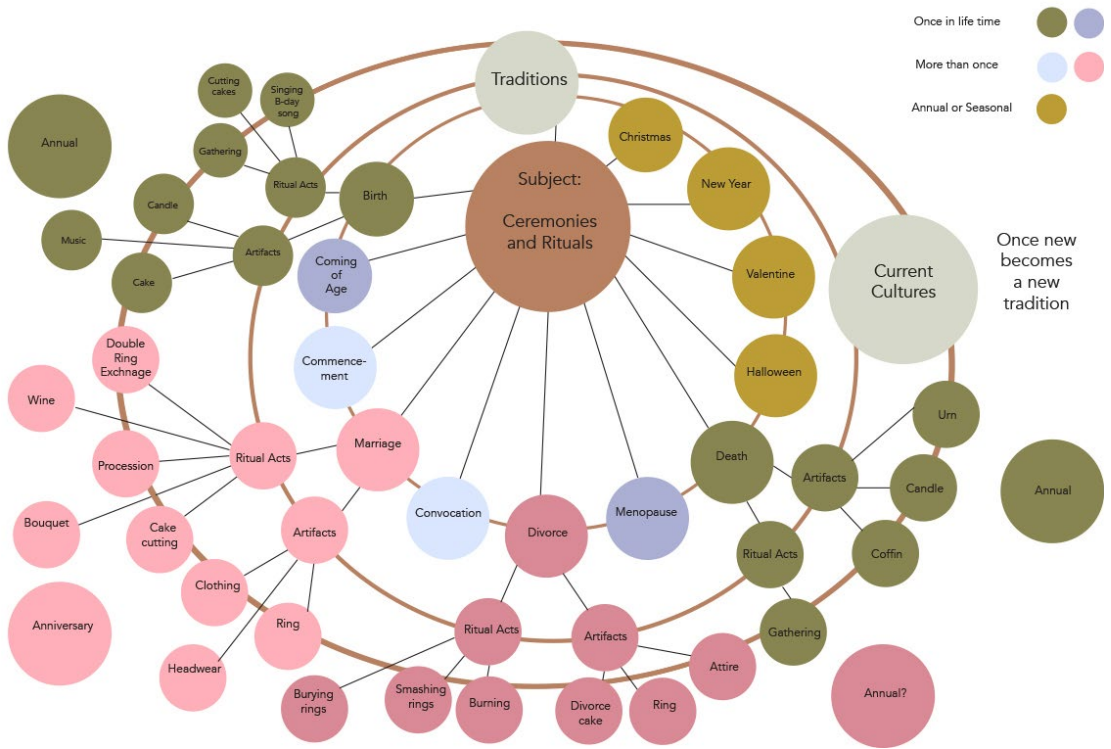


Figure 17. Analysis on Common Ritual Practices



## 5.6. Social Construct of Marriage and Divorce

To reflect divorce phenomena and its social construct, I analyzed and deconstructed marriage systems in a timeline, with consideration of cultural, social, political, and legal notions (figure 18). Types, benefits, consequences, and processes surrounding marriage were categorized. Divorce was analysed, but as a part or result of marriage, rather than as a separate entity.

Marriage is a contract, signifying a lifelong commitment, often with forced gender inequity, heterosexual, and monogamy models.<sup>93</sup> Marriage is commonly known as a natural, social, economic, legal, political institution. Its fundamental purposes are viewed as sexual expression, reproduction, and emotional intimacy, in addition to serving a basic purpose of socialization.<sup>94</sup> The current patriarchal model of marriage has been practiced over several thousands of years as a political, social institution.<sup>95</sup> This model was developed when the average life span was about 25% to 50% of what it is today. Lifelong marriage was created estimating a 10 to 30 year timeframe at the most.<sup>96</sup> However today, unlike before, marriage can last over 50 years, due to expanded life

expectancies.

Marriage and family therapist, Liza Shaw, argued that in the contemporary context, marriage has design flaws because humans have evolved physically, without follow up with social change.<sup>97</sup> Besides, social psychologist Dr. Eli Finkel pinpointed reduction of intimate social interactions in American society, which makes healthy marital bonds and flexible roles in marital relationships important.<sup>98</sup> Both sociologist Dennis Hiebert in the book *Sweet Surrender* and Mary Sarah Harper in her social work thesis argue that rising divorce phenomenon and socially acceptable marriage alternatives like cohabitation are reflective of such societal shifts placing more values on individuals'

93. TEDx Talks, Cancel Marriage.

94. Harper.

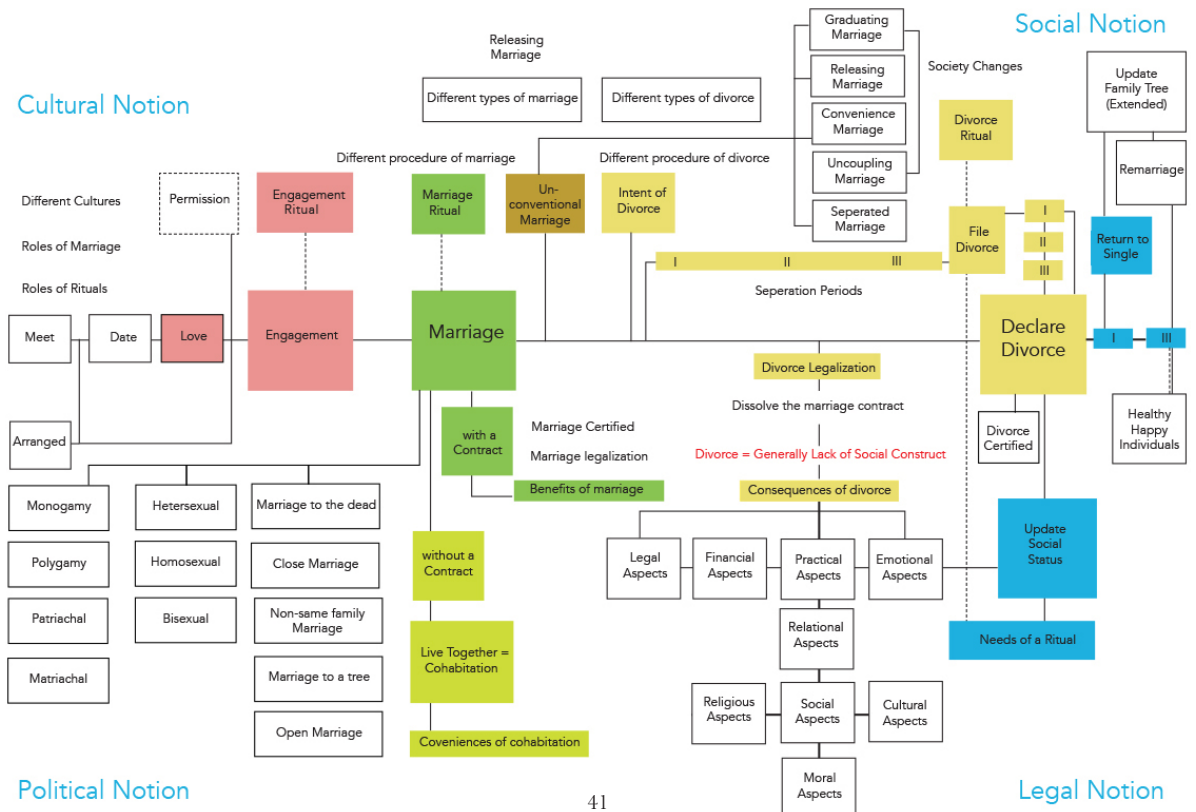
95. TEDx Talks, Marriage 2.0 -- a System Update for Lifelong Relationships | Liza Shaw | TEDxHickory.

96. Ibid.

97. Ibid.

98. TEDx Talks, The Marriage Hack.

Figure 18. Chart of Marriage and Divorce



happiness rather than communal or collective well-being.<sup>99 100</sup> According to sociologist Hiebert, individuals' dignity, rights, and liberty were rising notions by various social theories that originated from the Enlightenment conception of the 18th century, which ironically traces even further back to the Christian doctrine.<sup>101</sup> Hiebert emphasized that the Protestant Reformation speeded up this individualistic attitude. According to both sociologists, these rising individualistic attitudes in the course of modernity have gradually weakened marriage. Additionally, both lack of social integration and increased mobility drive couples as isolated social units.<sup>102</sup> To update the social construct for marital relationships, a contemporary approach is necessary, especially in consideration with the globally increasing aging population.<sup>103</sup> Therefore, not only ways to make healthy marital bonds but also their appropriate withdrawals become more crucial. Former journalist, Israeli Knesset member, TV anchor, and activist, Merac Michaeli, urges that the existing marriage system is an outdated and unevolved concept for the contemporary society.<sup>104</sup> She emphasized the necessity of culturally appropriate alternatives by examining history and the traditional roles of men and women.

To explore appropriate alternatives and how these traditional gender roles have been placed, I investigated this history of divorce practices. Although governments tend to provide benefits and rights to encourage marriage, divorce has historically been increasing with new forms of marriage and divorce. Unlike marriage, divorce has been discouraged. It accompanies a long, hectic, and complex procedure. For example, the Philippines have no divorce procedures in place. Time consuming procedures demonstrate that the marriage

99. Dion and Dion, "Individualistic and Collectivistic Perspectives on Gender and the Cultural Context of Love and Intimacy."

100. Harper.

101. Hiebert, *Sweet Surrender*.

102. *Ibid.*

103. TEDx Talks, *The Marriage Hack*.

104. TEDx Talks, *Cancel Marriage*.

contract is rigid and restricted. Dissolving the marriage contract varies by culture, religion, and country. Historically most Catholic Christian practices ban divorce,<sup>105</sup> whereas Islam allows divorce only if mentioned obligations in Quran are fulfilled.<sup>106</sup> If a woman files a divorce, one obligation involves returning dowry.<sup>107</sup> It is easier for men to file for divorce, as they just recite the divorce call three times, whereas women have to file for a divorce consent.<sup>108</sup> Judaism allows only men to file a no-fault divorce, where-in a formal letter of divorce is prepared in a particular format in a religious space. Many countries have been legalized divorce regardless of their religious practices.<sup>109</sup>

Starting in Russia, no-fault divorce was legitimized during the 20th century in many countries.<sup>110</sup> Before no-fault divorce became common, divorce was usually only granted due to faults, for example, adultery, abandonment, and abuse.<sup>111 112</sup> This history of granting a fault divorce added to the taboo of divorce, together with various impacts including emotional, economic, legal, and relational dilemma.<sup>113</sup>

Over time, reasons for divorce have changed from the fault base, such as infidelity and abuse, to the no-fault basis, such as growing apart, basic unhappiness, and incompatibility.<sup>114 115</sup> Due to restricted marriage and divorce systems as a whole, different formats of marriage and divorce have been formulated, such as open marriage, cohabitation, graduating marriage, and uncoupling.<sup>116 117 118 119 120 121 122</sup> These types of marriage have been seen as alternatives to the current divorce system. Open marriage, which allows open relationships, is still controversial, but is getting more common in some Western countries like Finland and Sweden, spreading to the USA.<sup>123</sup>

105. Bethanne Kelly. Patrick, *An Uncommon History of Common Things*.

106. Nahda S. Salah, *Costumes and Customs from the Arab World*.

107. Abu Saud, *Qatari Women, Past and Present*.

108. Beiter, "Divorce Rates Skyrocket in Saudi Arabia."

109. Plunkette, "World's 10 Most Divorced Nations - TheRichest."

110. Emery, *Cultural Sociology of Divorce an Encyclopedia*.

111. "An Overview of No Fault and Fault Divorce Law."

112. Coltrane and Adams, "The Social Construction of the Divorce 'Problem.'"

113. "An Overview of No Fault and Fault Divorce Law."

114. Hawkins, Willoughby, and Doherty, "Reasons for Divorce and Openness to Marital Reconciliation."

115. Herald, "Reasons for Divorce Have Changed since '50s in South Korea."

116. "Is Open Marriage a Fast Track to Divorce?"

117. "Do Open Marriages Work?"

118. CNN, "Graduating from Marriage in Japan."

119. Yang, "Graduating from Marriage without Divorce."

120. Kang, "'Graduation from Marriage' - Good or Bad for Happy Golden Years?"

121. Biblicalgenderroles, "The 2 REAL Reasons Divorce and Cohabitation Rates Are so High."

122. News, "Video."

123. Bartal, "Nordic Reach."

<sup>124</sup> Cohabitation is often considered as a trial or practice marriage and sometimes recognized as a practical marriage without the legal bonding. Cohabitation is similar to the concept of a starter marriage in the aspect of a trial marriage, but different in the aspect of legal bonding. The starter marriage was common before the proliferation of cohabitation and known as a dissolved first marriage that lasts five years or less without children at young ages.<sup>125</sup> Increased rates in both cohabitation and starter marriages demonstrate changes in societal attitudes

about marriage and divorce.<sup>126</sup> The concept of ‘graduating’ marriage became more apparent in Japan a decade ago and recently in Korea. ABC news recently broadcasted an uncoupling ceremony of a married couple instead of divorce in the USA. Both graduating and uncoupling are partly practices of divorce while keeping marriage for legal and financial benefits. Most of all, divorce significantly impacts family relationships, as being extended and complicated. Based on my research, I found that divorce needs to be addressed differently.

Figure 19. Key Component of the Most Common Western Marriage Ritual

124. Coughlin, “The Relationship ‘Rule’ 1 in 5 Americans Are Breaking.”

125. Mintle, “The Reality of Starter Marriages.”

126. Schupack, “‘Starter’ Marriages.”



## 5.7. Two Become Two in the Context of Divorce

This project was executed to define ways of two divorcees becoming healthy individuals, especially because divorce processes accompany not only legal and relational consequences but also emotional stress. Thinking of ritual acts as a form of communicating new stages of life, even with simple actions, for example, tossing a tassel in a graduation ceremony or a wedding vow, ritual acts for divorcees are necessary to lessen emotional remorse in transition, to reestablish roles, and to ease the transition into the life after divorce.

To build the details of divorce rituals, key components of marriage rituals were deconstructed and analyzed in consideration of semiotic and cultural notions in the multi-cultural context (figure 19). This process was to create new artifacts and new ritual acts that can lead emotional release so that these process can empower divorcees.

### 5.7.1. Key Components of Marriage Rituals

Firstly, one key marriage ritual element is a ring exchange. The perfect-circle-shaped ring has been a symbol of marriage since ancient Egypt, and has evolved through ancient Rome and early Christian era, with varying materials, designs, and their meanings.<sup>127</sup> This perfect circle represents everlasting love bonding and belongings in the marriage context.<sup>128</sup> Typical ways of men proposing to women with a ring support patriarchy, by demonstrating men's dominant call for marriage. Especially, the Jewish wedding

rites of a single ring ritual symbolizes the man's wedlock on the woman.<sup>129</sup> However, this single ring ritual was replaced by the double ring ritual, which illustrates how rituals are open to change.

The next symbolic element is the code of attire that reinforces gender roles with contrasting colors of black and white. This white Western wedding dress for the bride symbolizes purity, virginity, and wealth. The black mourning attire began from the mid 19th century during Queen Victoria's mourning for her husband.<sup>130 131</sup> This became a court dress code and more popular as an official dress code.<sup>132</sup> Marriage rituals were celebrated in a grand manner in most cultures, leaving unique cultural markers, which were slowly influenced by the Western white wedding ceremony. In the modern wedding ceremony, attires mimicked those

127. "The Origins of Wedding Rings And Why They're Worn On The 4th Finger Of The Left Hand."

128. Ronnberg, Martin, and Archive for Research in Archetypal Symbolism, *The Book of Symbols*.

129. Westbrook, "BBC - Religions - Judaismism."

130. Meyer, *Little Black Dress*.

131. "Mourning Dress | British | The Met."

132. Condra, *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Clothing through World History*.

of the King and the Queen of England in their styles and colors. This is similar to how traditional Korean newlywed couples dressed up in elaborated dress codes of the King and the Queen during the medieval period in Korea for the once-in-a-lifetime wedding event. These practices visually represent the ‘merits’ of marriage with other social, financial, and political ‘benefits,’ in enforcing marriage contracts. The fact that the white wedding style with black tuxedo were initiated by Queen Victoria’s lifestyle demonstrates cultural colonization, hybridization, Westernization, and homogenization, under the umbrella of globalization.<sup>133</sup>

Another essential element is the white veil for the bride and a necktie for the groom. Culturally, veils signify protection and marriage status having a very ancient custom, which dated back to the Old Testament.<sup>134</sup> Veiling women was not only a religious practice, like in Christian and Muslim countries, but also a social practice as symbols of honor, like in Korea during the medieval period as well as Persia during the pre-Islamic tradition.<sup>135</sup> The white veil is a symbol of purity and virginity for marriage.<sup>136</sup> In the case of a wedding ceremony, the veil is originally associated with protecting the bride from evil spirits.<sup>137</sup> Lifting the bride’s veil has political and social implications, showing the bride’s belonging to the groom. This demonstrates the current patriarchal gender inequity.

In contrast to the submissive nature of the veil, a necktie for the groom symbolizes virility, reinforcing the masculine nature with its arrowed-shape downward toward the male genital.<sup>138</sup> This male-oriented item was found in both numerous terracotta soldiers known for the Qin dynasty of China from 210 BC and in Trajan’s column from the Roman Empire

133. Crane, “Culture and Globalization.”

134. Abu Saud, *Qatari Women, Past and Present*.

135. *Ibid.*

136. Bethanne Kelly. Patrick, *An Uncommon History of Common Things*.

137. *Ibid.*

138. KAYA, *Dictionary, Dreams-Signs-Symbols*.

towards the end of the first century.<sup>139</sup> However, neckties were popularized in the 17th century after Croatian soldiers wore as part of their uniforms during 30-year war for France. The design details of neckties emerged over years, which was originally not only decorative but also functional to tie the top of the jacket.<sup>140</sup> A necktie has become a transnational item for business and official dress codes, being associated with material success and people in a position of responsibility.<sup>141</sup> Its knot is often compared with noose or slipknot of a rope, symbolizing obligation of the wearer.<sup>142</sup> Dynamic independent scholar Chuck Stewart in his book *Homosexuality and the Law* remarked Mark Strage's comments on wearing a necktie as being a distinct element in rite of passage for many boys.<sup>143</sup> According to Stewart and Strage, a necktie is a symbolic clothing to differentiate gender and indicate status.<sup>144</sup>

Stewart noted the concept of both Strage and Laver on the form of headwear being associated with sexual characteristics and women's liberation.<sup>145</sup> Stewart interpreted women's greater liberation is correlated to the fact that most men in Western countries had stopped wearing variations of top hats except for vocational purposes by the end of the twentieth century.<sup>146</sup> A symbolic traditional headwear for men similar to a top hat, Gat, disappeared from daily wear around the turn of the twentieth century. In Western societal conventions, hats often represents the roles, unique self-expression, and individual personality of the wearer accompanying practical purpose of protecting the head.<sup>147</sup> Adornment of headpiece with diverse materials and embellishments are common practices for numerous rituals including wedding and religious rituals to signify the importance

139. Bethanne Kelly. Patrick, *An Uncommon History of Common Things*.

140. "The Origins of the Neck Tie."

141. KAYA, Dictionary, *Dreams-Signs-Symbols*.

142. *Ibid.*

143. Stewart, *Homosexuality and the Law*.

144. *Ibid.*

145. *Ibid.*

146. *Ibid.*

147. Ronnberg, Martin, and Archive for Research in Archetypal Symbolism, *The Book of Symbols*.



of spirituality, status, and the collective identity.<sup>148</sup> Therefore, both neckties and headwear forms can be used as symbolic ritual artifacts to differentiate evolving gender roles and changing status.<sup>149</sup>

Other main features include the procession and handing over the bride. The procession is a common ceremonial act through history. However, this particular act of walking down the aisle in the wedding is derived from Western religious practices, which became a largely secular, ceremonial component and a global cultural marker. The act of handing over the bride to the groom by her father is a patriarchal feature, implying ownerships. Men are the house holders, possessing women and property in the small social unit of a family. Family names of married women are changed in many societies – notable exceptions include Arab and Korean cultures. Even the old English definition of husband is householder and owner, demonstrating patriarchy.

### 5.7.2. Design Process of Ring Ritual

As a way to reflect dissolving marriage, either practically or emotionally, I defined divorce rituals as a metaphoric reverse to the white wedding model, based on deconstructed components of marriage. Subsequently, I designed the romanticized ring to be reflective of higher divorce rates and evolving relationships (figure 20 – 23). Thus, designs can be more functional and reflective of realistic relationships, which should be cherished by effort rather than by legal restrictions.

As a prototype, the ring design was modified with a mechanism of opening, which is suggestive of different relationships including engagement, marriage, and divorce, rather than imposing 'perfect' circle to signify everlasting contract (figure 22 and 23). This new ring design is aimed to provide

148. Ibid.

149. Stewart, *Homosexuality and the Law*.

a mechanism of a 'healing' or 'therapeutic' function for the participants. An interactive ring ritual is visualized in a video (figure 23).

Figure 20. Ring Design Process



*image*



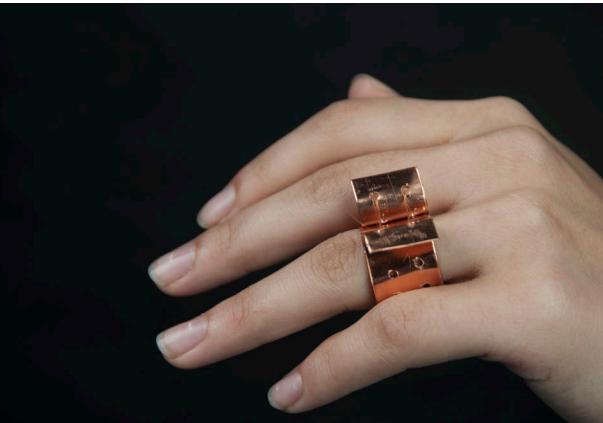
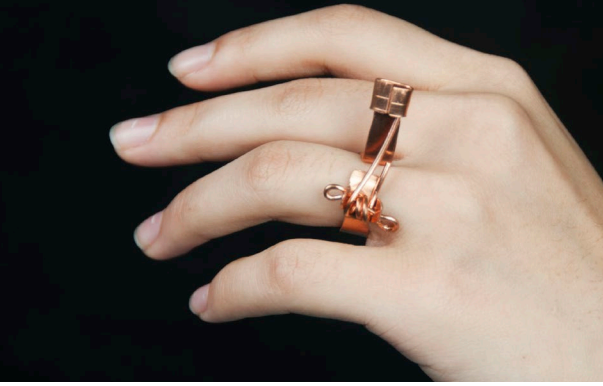


Figure 21. Ring Prototypes for Marital Bonds

Figure 22. Final Ring Prototype for Divorce Ritual





Figure 23. Video Still from Divorce Ring Ritual  
<https://vimeo.com/202643652/settings>



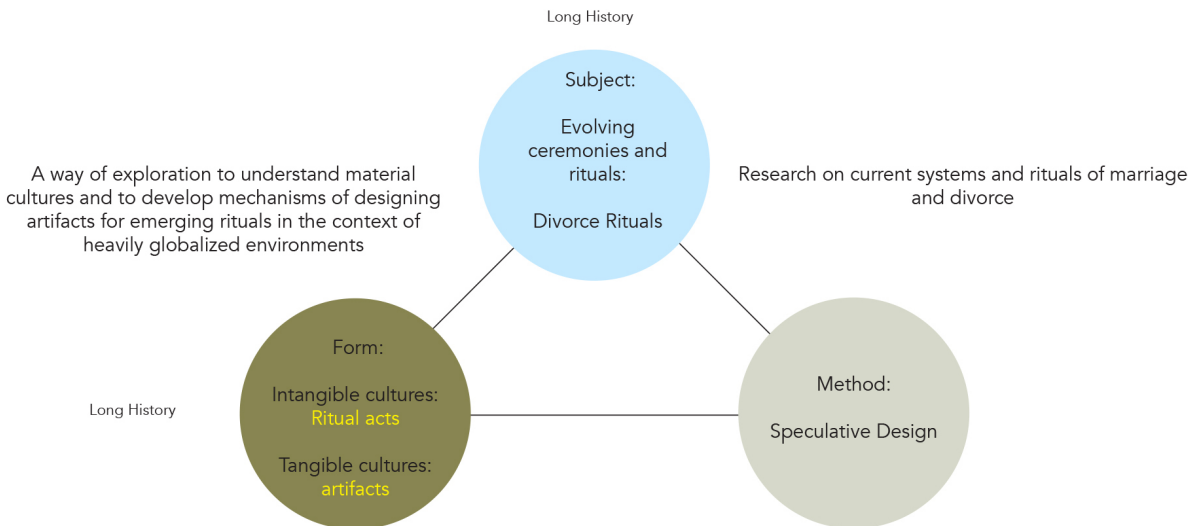
## 6. Outcomes

This session will address the final design development of divorce artifacts and rituals. I developed speculative scenarios as a way to explore material cultures that are reflective of new societal behaviors combining hybrid, semiotic, and idiosyncratic design approaches (figure 24).

### 6.1. Key Components of Divorce Rituals

In developing the structure of divorce rituals, key components of divorce were organized (figure 25). In addition, objects were designed to utilize them as active agencies facilitating therapy to bring closure, to ease changes, and to heal the undesirable experiences.

Figure 24. Thesis Research Structure



How can this evolving divorce ritual culture in the global context be designed to represent multicultural identities ?

## Separation/Divorce Trip

Divorce Attire (White, Black, Blue, Plus), Headwear, Necktie

Silent Ceremony

Disengaging Ring exchange,  
Untying knots on Garments  
Transform Headwear and Necktie

Walk Away  
Separate Procession (No Holding Arms),

Banquet, Divorce cake,

Divorce party

Divorce Shower

Figure 25. Key Components of Divorce Ritual

## 6.2. Precedents of Divorce Artifacts and Rituals

I researched what kinds of current artifacts signified the act of divorce and their usage in these rising rituals. As shown in figures 26-33, some artifacts are suggested to express acts of divorce, surfacing in Japan,<sup>150</sup> Korea, China,<sup>151</sup> Canada,<sup>152</sup> and America.<sup>153</sup> Ritual acts

150. Reuters, Japan's "Divorce Ceremonies" up.

151. CBS News, Divorce In Japan.

152. Bokma, "With This Ring, I Thee Divorce."

153. News, "Video."



involving rings are the major activities expressing emotional cleansing and closure, by smashing, throwing, tossing, hanging, and burying them. These negative ways of releasing inner pressure are also observed in other artifacts and activities, such as designs of cakes and tearing wedding photos.<sup>154</sup> Rising divorce cultural practices include the ‘divorce hotel’ in the Netherlands.<sup>155 156</sup> Liu Wei’s report on a divorce ceremony,<sup>157</sup> which was a tragic comedy by Chinese film director Feng Xiaogang, revealed black dress codes for divorcing couples in the same manner as the wedding ceremony. Overall, all these acts function in order to update relational status and express a new stage of life.

### 6.3. Needs of Divorce Rituals

By deconstructing key elements of marriage in globalized Western weddings, I noticed that the most common marriage practices relate to customs in Christian, Jewish, and even the ancient Roman weddings.<sup>158</sup> Although ritual practices evolved to accommodate social and cultural changes, hidden gender inequity remains consistent. To address this gender

154. Balfour, “The Red Hot Business of Divorce Celebration.”

155. News, “Divorce Hotel.”

156. Balfour, “The Red Hot Business of Divorce Celebration.”

157. Wei, “To Laugh or Cry?”

158. Meyers, “Christian Marriage and Funeral Services as Rites of Passage.”



Figure 26. The couple hold a hammer together to smash the ring to symbolise the end of their five-year marriage  
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/japan/7822356/Tokyo-sees-rise-in-divorce-ceremonies.html>



Figure 27. Chinese Woman Holds "Divorce Ceremony" to End Marriage  
<http://www.chinawhisper.com/chinese-woman-holds-divorce-ceremony-to-end-marriage/>



Figure 28. Chinese Woman Holds "Divorce Ceremony" to End Marriage  
<http://www.chinawhisper.com/chinese-woman-holds-divorce-ceremony-to-end-marriage/>



Figure 29. Couple's 'Uncoupling' Ceremony Releases Them from Marriage, Without Getting Divorced  
<http://abcnews.go.com/Lifestyle/couples-uncoupling-ceremony-releases-marriage-divorced/story?id=26738485>

Figure 30. The wedding Ring Coffin can put your failed marriage in its final resting place, Jist Enterprises, NBC News  
[http://www.nbcnews.com/id/18078590/ns/business-small\\_business/t/creepy-ring-thing-dearly-divorced/#.WN6iihK-GM6g](http://www.nbcnews.com/id/18078590/ns/business-small_business/t/creepy-ring-thing-dearly-divorced/#.WN6iihK-GM6g)



Figure 31. A bride dragging a groom is one of Elite Cake Celebration' most popular divorce cakes  
<http://www.bbc.com/news/business-29896411>



Figure 32. The Guillotine Divorce Ring  
<http://fashionablygeek.com/jewelry/the-guillotine-divorce-ring/>

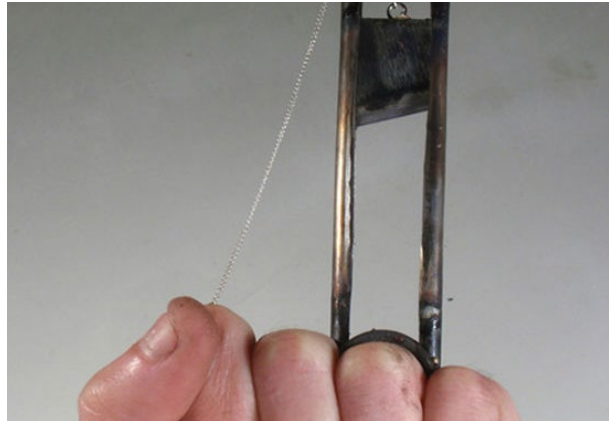


Figure 33. A couple, played by Sun Honglei and Yao Chen, holds a divorce ceremony, Feng Xiaogang' show  
[http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/life/2010-12/21/content\\_11733885.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/life/2010-12/21/content_11733885.htm)



inequity, it is important to note changing gender roles in the contemporary society and to redesign artifacts accordingly. Thus, in addition to defining divorce as a reverse to marriage, the divorce ritual concept was constructed to reflect evolving gender roles and to provide more meaningful cultural codes for multi-cultural contexts of contemporary society. The intention of ritualizing the divorce is to provide a mechanism of coping with the transitional moment through ritual acts and artifacts like how funerals function; providing a gathering place to share thoughts, to deal with grief and recognize new status to move forward.<sup>159</sup> Ultimately, this research is intended to address how society could support divorce, as it does for marriage.

159. "BBC - GCSE Bitesize."

## 6.4. Design Development of Divorce Ritual Artifacts

This section includes the documentation of design processes for the artifacts and ritual scenarios. The design components of the ring, the garment, and the headwear were designed with emphasis not only on function but also on socio-cultural codes for divorce rituals. To enhance releasing interactions, I used a modular design concept to add and unfasten components so that the participants can experience cathartic releasing and transforming ritual acts to mark changes in their lives.

### 6.4.1. Corresponding to Double Ring Exchange Ritual

The earlier prototypes of ring designs were modified to mirror evolving marital relationships including divorce. Thus, in the final design development of the ring, a more layering system was developed using a 3D modeling software, Rhino (figure 34 and 36). The ring and its components were 3D printed through the company Shapeways in order to experiment various symbolic materials, such as silver, rubber, and ceramic (figure 35 and 37). The layers are intended to symbolize the years of marriage, which is open to change when it is inevitable. This acts as a reminder of its importance. This design is adjustable to signify each decade of anniversary, up to the 50th anniversary

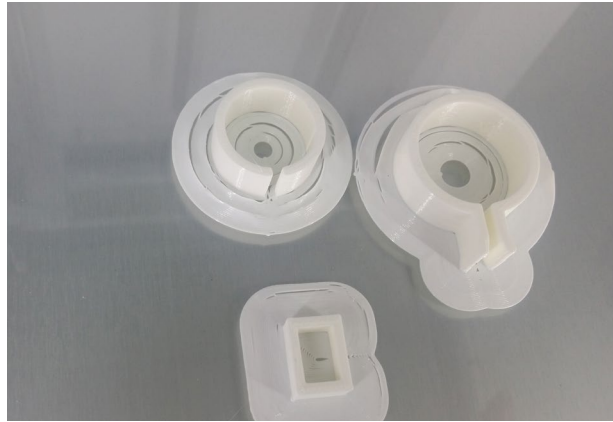
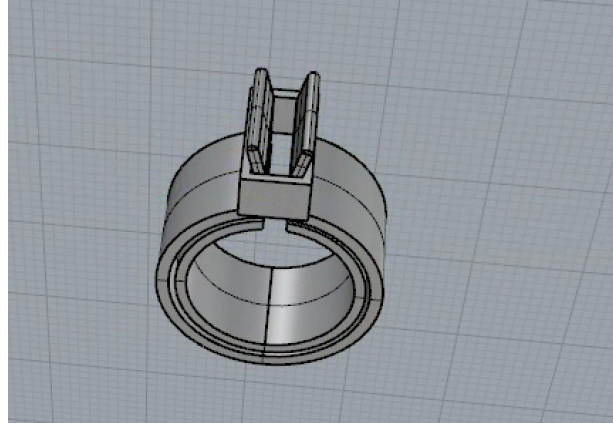
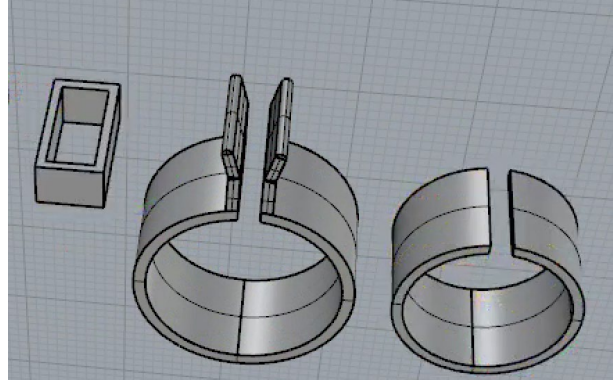


Figure 34. Design Phase I: Ring Design Process I (Prototype)



Figure 35. Design Phase II: Ring Design Process II (3D Printed in Silver)



(figure 36 and 37). A cap was added to mark the fifth year of marriage after the first cap of signifying marriage bonding and before the 10th anniversary. This can act as a reminder of the fragile period of the first five years of marriage.<sup>160</sup> Even if there are no children involved, divorce can still be stigmatized with its harsh reality, both mentally and socially. In the case of dissolving marriage, this cap can be replaced with a black cap or a white cap to symbolize the status of divorce for healing or embarking on a new beginning, respectively (figure 35). This exploration was intended for “One size fits all” that would fit the various stages of marriage, both engaging and disengaging the relationships.

160. Schupack, “‘Starter’ Marriages.”

Figure 36. Design Phase III: Ring Design Process I (Prototype)





Figure 37. Design Phase IV: Ring Design Process II (3D Printed in Silver)



#### 6.4.2. Corresponding to White Wedding Dress and Black Tuxedo

Reflecting contemporary gender roles, I designed a genderless color code by mixing black and white. Both color codes also symbolize birth and death in many cultures. I added blue denim, because it is a genderless symbol and a globalized cultural marker. One of the Western marriage customs, from an Old English rhyme of the 19th century, suggests incorporating four objects that are old, new, borrowed, and blue to the bride's wedding outfit. These are considered as tokens of good luck for the important transition. The old represented continuity, the new offered optimism for the future, the borrowed symbolized happiness, the blue meant for purity, love, and fidelity. The concept of this custom coincides with my divorce concept on a symbolic level. Correspondingly, I reinterpreted

Figure 38. Divorce Ritual Garment Prototype



these four elements into black for healing and initiation,<sup>161</sup> the white for newness and separation,<sup>162</sup> the borrowed as representative of social interaction or continuity, and the blue for comfort (denim) and connectivity as a global cultural marker. The interactive act of detaching layers of garment parts using buttons and button loops is added to release emotional adversities, inspired by reversing ‘tying the knot’ from the Western cultural norm by divorcee themselves (figures 38-43).

In addition, cultural diversities can be expressed according to ways of adding design elements as a modular design mechanism depending on the divorcees’ cultural identities. These alternatives can support more meaningful artifacts that can be customized for multi-cultural contexts.

161. Ronnberg, Martin, and Archive for Research in Archetypal Symbolism, *The Book of Symbols*.

162. *Ibid.*





Figure 39. Final Divorce Ritual Garment in Process



Figure 40. Divorce Ritual Garment Construction with Buttons and Button Loops

Figure 41. Layers of Divorce Ritual Garment with Buttons and Button Loops



Figure 42. Final Divorce Ritual Garment for Men





Figure 43. Final Divorce Ritual Garment for Women





Figure 44. Divorce Ritual Headwear Prototype I  
(Transformed from a Necktie)

### 6.4.3. Corresponding to Veils and Neckties

To address gender inequity in veils and ties, headwear forms have been redefined to function as neckties. Headwear for women transforms into a necktie, which

is a symbolic dress code for men (figures 44-47). This necktie for men transforms into a headwear piece (figure 47). To imply transformable or blurring gender roles with divorce, a hybrid artifact among a headwear, a collar, and a necktie can be



Figure 45. Divorce Ritual Headwear Prototype II  
(Based on a Modular Pattern of a Necktie)

optional. These transferable artifacts were designed to signify changes in their spousal roles.



Figure 46. Final Version of Divorce Ritual Headwear  
(Transformed from a Necktie)



Figure 47. Final Version of Divorce Ritual Headwear  
(Based on a Modular Pattern of a Necktie)

## **6.5. Design Development of Divorce Ritual Acts**

### **6.5.1. Corresponding to Procession**

Instead of Mendelssohn's Wedding March during the procession, a silent ceremony with a short declaration is added to the divorce ritual. The reason for the silent ceremony, which is the key element in an annual ritual known as the Silent Ceremony for the Lord Mayor of London,<sup>163</sup> is to enhance introspective elements to the divorce ritual.

### **6.5.2. Corresponding to handing the bride's hand to the groom**

The political and social implications of handing over the bride, such as patriarchal ownerships and hidden gender inequities were addressed by designing ritual acts in a mutually respectful manner. Roles of women in the contemporary society have changed drastically in comparison to their traditional roles: staying at home and raising children. Increased female householders including single moms are evident of the changing roles of women.<sup>164</sup> Some Western families tend to keep women's maiden names and combine their surnames for those of their children. Therefore, in my ritual design, I designed equal ritual acts to reflect these societal value shifts in women's roles.

### **6.5.3. Corresponding to lifting the veil of the bride**

Similar to the political and social implications of handing over the bride to the groom, the hidden gender inequity and patriarchal belonging signified in the act of lifting the bride's veil is resolved symbolically through a self-performance of lifting away their roles as husband and wife using a new headwear form that can be transformed into a necktie.

163. Hardach, "Unseen City."

164. Francese, "What's a Typical Household Look Like?"

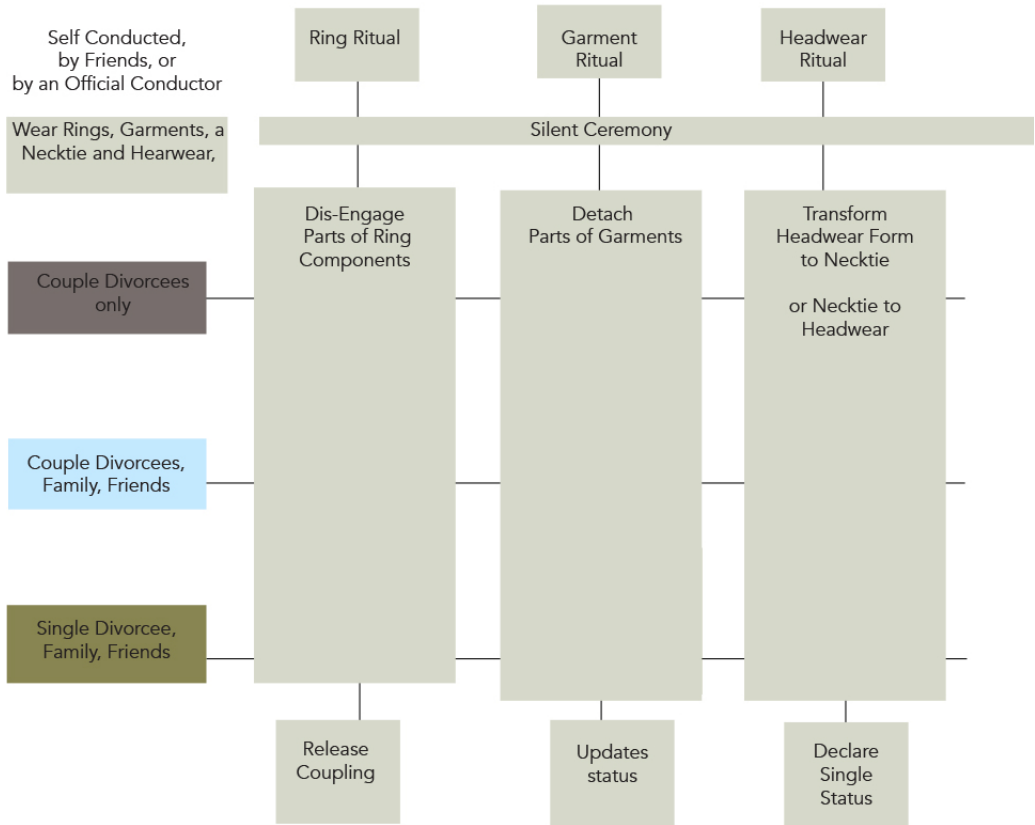


Figure 48. Divorce Ritual Types

## 6.6. Design Development of Divorce Ritual Scenarios

Overall, divorce ritual acts in figure 48 are designed in a silent ritual format with three new artifacts, which have components of releasing, such as disengaging, detaching, and transforming based on modular design system as described earlier. Releasing design components provide symbolic mechanisms to recover emotional well-being, to overcome challenging transitions, and to update their social status with their social circle to move forward as healthy

individuals (figures 62-72). All these three new ritual components can be combined for various divorce ritual types per tastes to express individuals' cultural codes.

### 6.6.1. Divorcees Only

For this scenario, I designed a couple-oriented ring ritual, for divorcees only. This is meant for both divorcees in order to demonstrate mutual respect, agreement to move forward, and blessing each other (figure 49-52 and figure 67). The mechanism of many layers in the ring implies different stages of marriage which can also be dissolved at any stage. Depending on length of the marriage, the number of the ring layers can be varied. For example, figure 49 includes

engagement, marriage, 5th anniversary, 10th anniversary, and 20th anniversary. The ring assembling in figure 50 symbolizes a stage of marriage at the 30th anniversary, whereas figure 51 is a sample of ring that can be built up to 50th anniversary. As ritual acts, the layers of ring component can be taken by each divorcee from their soon-to-be ex-spouse (figure 52). Disengaging rings after 20th anniversary and 50th anniversary are presented in figure 53 and 54.

Figure 49. Divorce Ritual Prototype I: Ring Type I

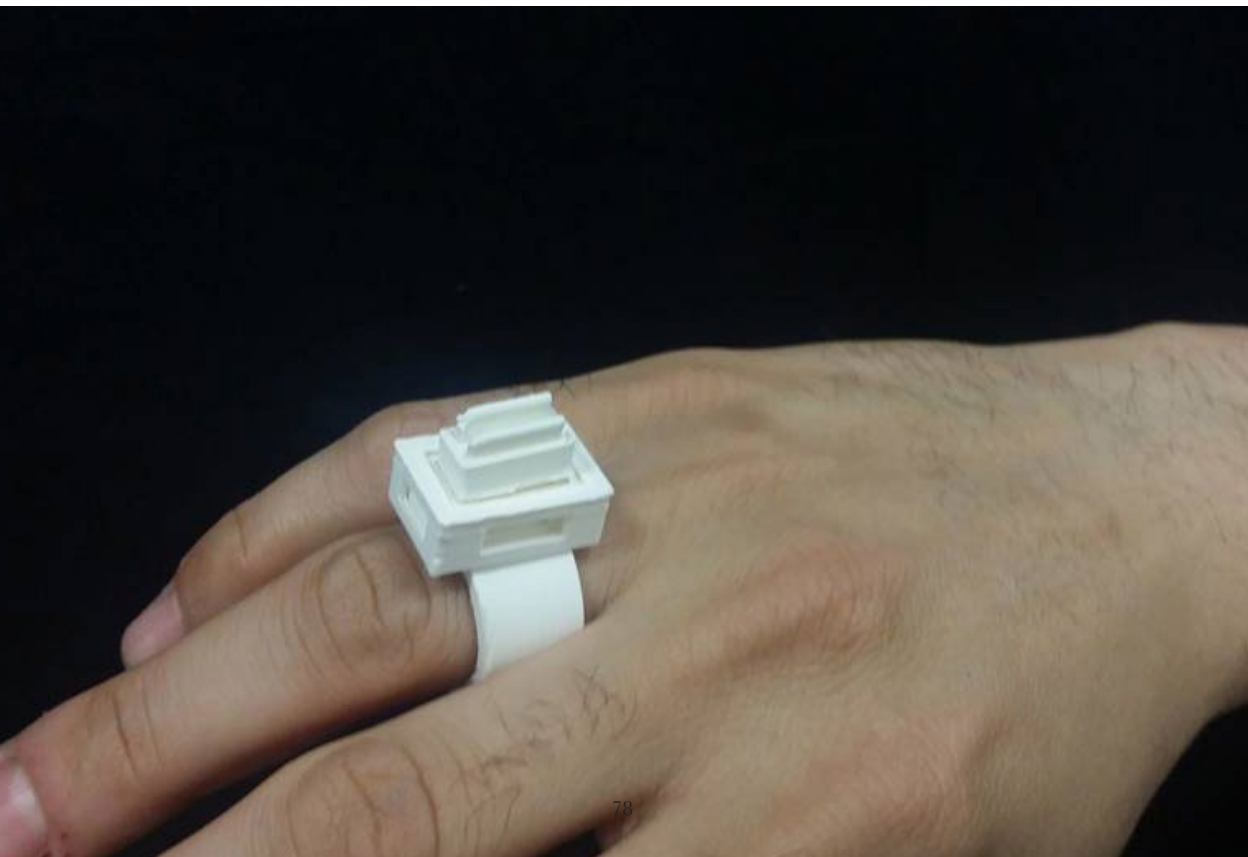




Figure 50. Divorce Ritual Prototype I: Ring Type II





Figure 51. Divorce Ritual Prototype I: Ring Type III

Figure 52. Divorce Ritual Type I: Ring Type II (3D Printed in Silver) for Couple Oriented

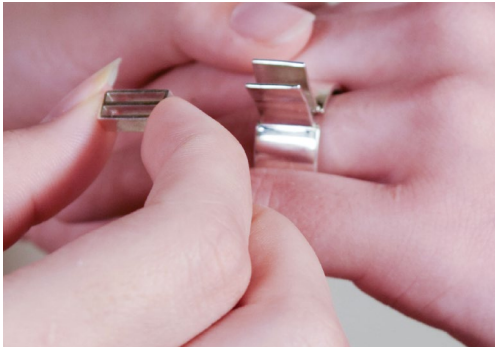


Figure 53. Disengaging Ring After 20th Anniversary, Silver





Figure 54. Disengaging Ring After 50th Anniversary, Silver

### 6.6.2. Divorcees with Family and Friends

This ritual is the most ideal type with a close circle of witnesses in support of the divorce. Just as marriage is shared, I designed this ritual wherein the divorcees communicate their changed status. Earlier prototypes of ritual garments and acts, which focused more on symbolic and emotional releases, are featured in figure 55-57. Thus, in this ritual design, I chose a modular based garment design using buttons and buttons loops (figure 65) not only to provide interactive ritual acts to help divorcees and relevant people cope with this transitory event but also to make the garments to be functional. These metaphoric, catalytic interactions of releasing knots using buttons and button loops in the final version garments are added to bring a sense of formal conclusion and to symbolize their re-birth and re-entry into the society with new status.

Figure 55. Divorce Ritual Prototype II: Divorcing Couple Oriented





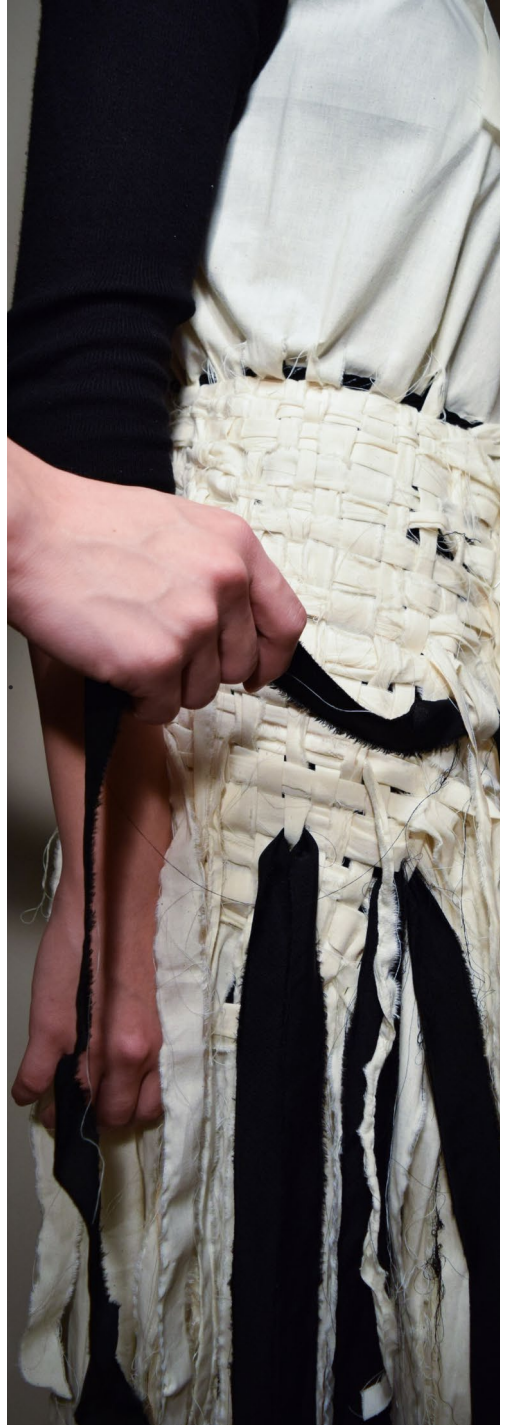


Figure 56. Divorce Ritual Prototype II: With Friends



Figure 57. Divorce Ritual Prototype II: With Families



### 6.6.3. One Divorcee with Family and Friends

This ritual was designed to include close families and friends even if only one spouse wants to hold a ceremony to declare a closure and re-entry into an untethered life. For this scenario, undoing this interchangeable headwear is proposed to declare a new role and can be seen in figure 58 and 59 as early prototypes. The final version is featured in figure 72.

This can be applied for a couple-oriented headwear ritual in order to incorporate mutual respect and signify different roles from a husband and a wife (figure 60 and 61). Figure 70 also demonstrates a couple-oriented headwear ritual.

Figure 58. Divorce Ritual Prototype III: Headwear



Figure 59. Divorce Ritual Prototype III: Necktie

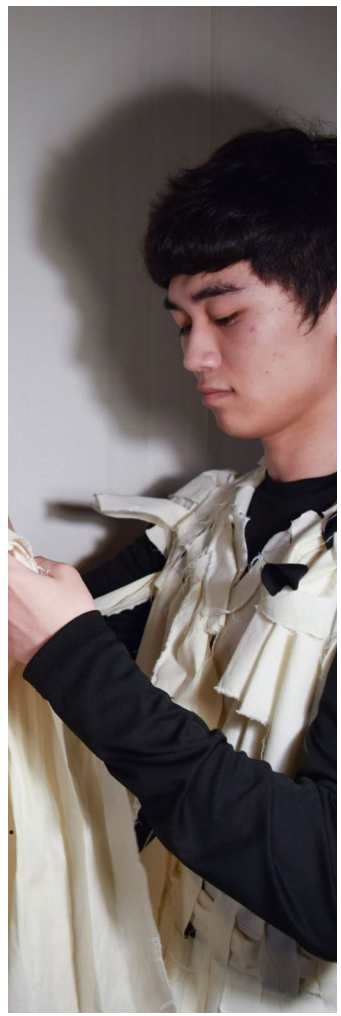


Figure 60. Divorce Ritual Prototype III: Couple Oriented (Headwear form into Necktie)



Figure 61. Divorce Ritual Prototype III: Couple Oriented  
(Necktie into Headwear)





Figure 62. Divorce Ritual Type III: Couple Oriented  
(Headwear Form into Necktie)

Figure 63. Divorce Ritual Type III: Couple Oriented  
(Necktie into Headwear Form)





Figure 64. Divorce Ritual Type II with Final Garments:  
Couple Oriented







Figure 65. Divorce Ritual Type II with Final Garments:  
Couple + Community

Figure 66. Divorce Ritual Type II with Final Garments:  
Single





Figure 67. Divorce Ritual Type I with Final Rings: Couple Oriented





Figure 68. Divorce Ritual Type I with Final Rings: Couple + Community

Figure 69. Divorce Ritual Type I with Final Rings: Single





Figure 70. Divorce Ritual Type III with Final Headwear Form and Necktie: Couple Oriented







Figure 71. Divorce Ritual Type III with Final Headwear Form and Necktie: Couple + Community

Figure 72. Divorce Ritual Type III with Final Headwear Form and Necktie: Single



## 7. Conclusion

We often perform various rites of passage in our lives, including birthdays, marriages, and deaths to communicate changes in individual and social identities and cope with the transitions. As discussed, rituals are designed as ways to both communicate an individuals' transition into new societal roles and responsibilities and to reinforce cultural values and norms. However, divorce, which involves changes in status and roles both individually and socially, hasn't been formally ritualized yet. The purposes of this research is to draw attention to socio-cultural significance of divorce through the design of speculative rituals and artifacts. Rituals have the potential to help people cope with significant transitions in their lives. This is significant as increased divorce rates continue to impact a large demographic around the world.

According to traditional social norms, divorce has been considered as taboo, often stigmatized and associated with failure. In contrast, increased divorce and cohabitation rates are clear evidence of societal value shifts in marriage. This has resulted in the development of socially acceptable alternatives which emphasis an individual's happiness over the collective well-being.<sup>165</sup> Even if marriage is an intimate, civil, individual, and secular matter by its nature, I noticed current cultural norms of marriage are correlated to several contemporary social constructs from marriage being a legal, financial, political institution. This is further compounded by a society that is less interactive, more individualistic, and more mobile. Subsequently, divorce needs to be addressed more appropriately at the societal level.

New approaches are crucial due to the consequences of divorce that commonly include children, sophisticated step family structures, and general instability as a social unit during and after the process.

Considering the criticality of divorce and its influences on a larger demographic worldwide, key elements of the globalized wedding ceremony were analyzed to find reflective processes in designing appropriate material cultures that can ritualize this global divorce phenomenon. Explorations on key elements of marriage rituals indicated diverse dimensions of historical, Western religious traditions and illustrated gender inequity. For example, these included the handing over the bride to the groom by the father of the bride through the procession, lifting the veil by the groom, and the single ring ritual component to wedlock the bride by the groom. Therefore, it was necessary to explore material cultures that can communicate evolving gender roles. Consequently, I deconstructed social and cultural norms of marriage. I noted that the rigid and symbolically permanent marriage contract has been reinforced by artifacts and ritual acts which in turn strengthen gender roles and communicate new responsibilities in the society.

Through the deconstruction process I defined the concept of divorce as a reverse to marriage. I designed a series of rituals and artifacts with functional and symbolic mechanisms of disengagement, detachment, and transformation. These artifacts including rings, garments, and accessories, can help people experience new divorce ritual acts of releasing in order to cope with relational changes, to heal emotional loss, to bring closure, and to update new status individually and socially. Thus, people can move forward

with the help of therapeutic and symbolic interactions through designed divorce rituals, such as divorcee couple only, single divorcee only, as well as the most ideal type of divorce ritual including both divorcees, family, and friends. These artifacts and ritual acts facilitate mechanisms to enable representative cultural codes even if the individuals are liberated from local tradition and have an exposure to heavily globalized contexts.

Future research will be conducted in analyzing not only birthday and burial rituals but also other transitional changes in our lives. The aim of this future study will be to initiate rituals as therapy in order to provide critical views and to create meaningful alternatives in future cultures. In addition, it will be interesting to explore material cultures that are related to public events, holidays, and celebrations, particularly in Qatar, Dubai, and Singapore to investigate any emerging social norms, as they have highly globalized cultures.

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# 10. Exhibition Documentation

Yang Soon Ju

Designing for Divorce:  
New Rituals and Artifacts for an Evolving World

Our relationships with objects have evolved over time. We have created, used, and discarded objects for various purposes. As our relationships with objects evolve, we create new rituals and artifacts. This project explores the design of new rituals and artifacts for an evolving world. It focuses on the design of new rituals and artifacts for divorce, a significant life event. The project explores the design of new rituals and artifacts for divorce, a significant life event. The project explores the design of new rituals and artifacts for divorce, a significant life event.

**Disengaging Ring**

The purpose of this ritual is to signify the uncoupling of the participants.

**Couple Only**

Divorcing couple removes elements of rings, together.

**Couple + Community**

Divorcing couple removes elements of rings with community.

**Single + Community**

One divorcee takes elements of rings by oneself.

**Detaching Garment**

This ritual serves to update the participants new relational status.

**Transforming Headwear + Necktie**

This ritual is a self declaration where participants identify themselves into a new social role.



## Yang Soon Ju

Designing for Divorce:  
New Rituals and Artifacts for an Evolving World

Our relationships with objects have evolved over time. We have created, used, and discarded objects for various purposes. As our relationships with objects evolve, we create new rituals and artifacts. This project explores the design of new rituals and artifacts for an evolving world. It focuses on the design of new rituals and artifacts for divorce, a significant life event. The project explores the design of new rituals and artifacts for divorce, a significant life event.

A **Divorce**, similar to a wedding, is a transitional moment. However, it is not a final one. It is a moment of transition, a moment of change. It is a moment of transition, a moment of change. It is a moment of transition, a moment of change.

RESEARCH ASSISTANT  
DESIGNER  
DESIGNER  
DESIGNER  
DESIGNER  
DESIGNER

**Disengaging Ring**

The purpose of this ritual is to signify the uncoupling of the participants.

**Couple Only**

Divorcing couple removes elements of rings, together.



**Couple + Community**

Divorcing couple removes elements of rings with community.



**Single + Community**

One divorcee takes elements of rings by oneself.



**Detaching Garment**

This ritual serves to update the participants new relational status.

Divorcing couple take turns to take off parts of garments.



Family and friends can detach parts of garments with couple.



Family and friends can detach parts of garments with single.



**Transforming Headwear + Necktie**

This ritual is a self declaration where participants identify themselves into a new social role.

Divorcing couple removes their own headwear or necktie then transforming them into a necktie or a headwear form.



Divorcing couple take off their own headwear form or necktie and turn them into a necktie or a headwear form with the community.



Single divorcee removes a headwear form or a necktie and turn it into a necktie or headwear form in front of family and friends.









