

Entwined Origins: Presence

This project begins by retracing my heritage as a Thai-Chinese descendant. I always felt like my Chinese roots were there, but only partially, as a third-generation descendant. I cannot speak Chinese like my Grandma; I attend Chinese rituals and events but do not know the depth of their significance. My roots have faded through distance and time.

Therefore, this project is about rediscovering and honouring both my Chinese and Thai cultures using sophisticated Chinese knot techniques to represent the interweaving culture that remains in me. To honour part of my Thainess, I take colour from traditional pha-sin textiles and Thai florals. Growing up, I always saw malai (Thai floral garland) everywhere, whether they were offered to Buddha, god, or elders as a symbol of respect. As the intricate malai resembles a knot with its weave-like quality, it further connotes the union of two cultures within me.

In my research journey, I found that both cultures adapted their traditional clothing, mimicking aspects of the West whilst keeping only the essence, such as the Chinese qipao knot buttons, mandarin collar, and openings. Meanwhile, Thailand still cherishes the traditional pha-sin textile from the North. Hence, this collection is about keeping that essence alive in presence rather than nostalgia. Retain and reimagined in modern form.



Bangkok's Chinatown originated in the Rattanakosin era (1782-1851), where Chinese traders came to inhabit areas such as Thonburi or now Bangkok which was founded by King Taksin who's father is Teochew Chinese. Allowing the Chinese community to be established east of the river due to numerous Teachews migrations.

Since the east bank was made the capital city of Rattanakosin later in 1782, the Chinese had to move to the south of the river which became Sampheng which became the city's major trading hub. As Thai-Chinese trade prosper, the Chinese community also grows substantially. At this stage, Thailand's economy was driven by Trade with China.

Chinese who paid tax would have a string knotted around their wrist which is sealed with an official wax stamp. This is called "phuk pi".

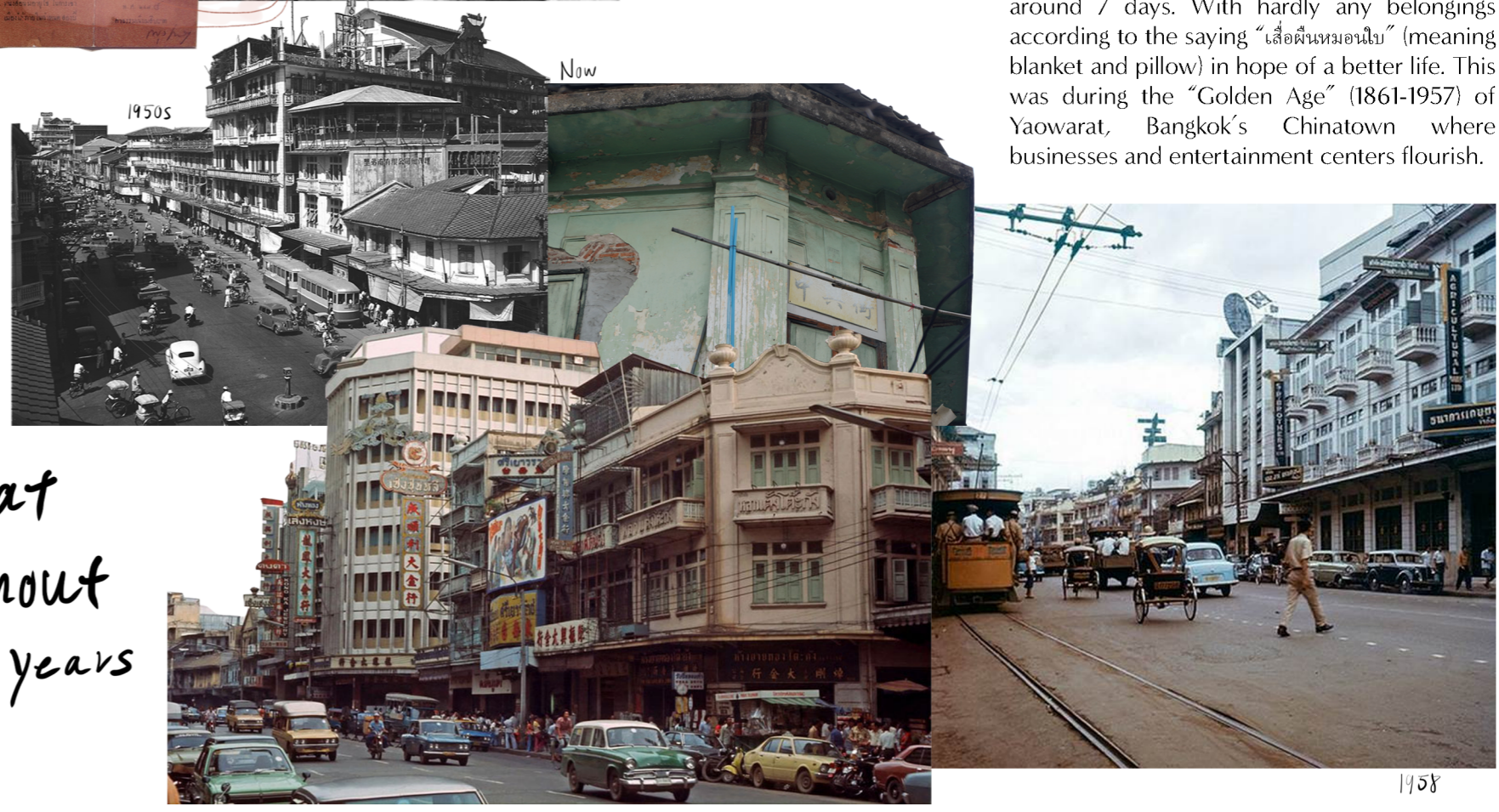


Journey to Siam



Famine due to natural disasters, uncultivable lands and the Anglo-Chinese Opium War was the reason why many Chinese fled during the Qing dynasty.

With the use of steamships from 1857, many Chinese soar to Thailand. My grandfather was one of them who migrated from Shantou, China during the 1940s. His journey to Bangkok took around 7 days. With hardly any belongings according to the saying "เสื่อผืนหมอนใบ" (meaning blanket and pillow) in hope of a better life. This was during the "Golden Age" (1861-1957) of Yaowarat, Bangkok's Chinatown where businesses and entertainment centers flourish.



Yaowarat throughout the years

1958

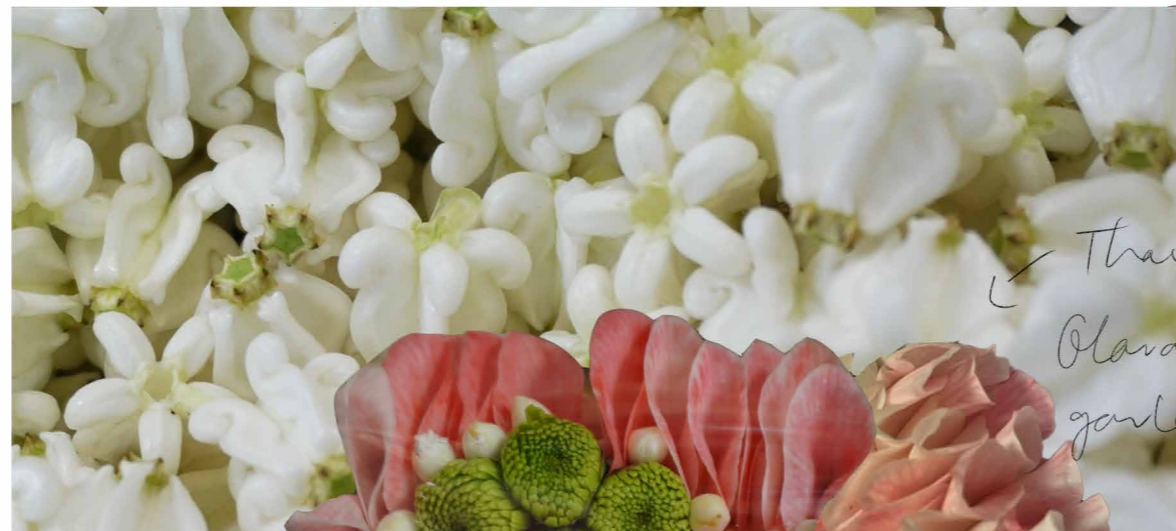
1970s

I found Chinese knotted decorations and ornaments in the streets of Yaowarat especially during the Chinese new year. This led me to delve into the history of them. Ornamental knots can be seen dating back to the Chou Dynasty as rope belts, and the Han Dynasty as waist sashes. During the Qing Dynasty, knots were most popular, adorning jewellery, garments, furniture and other objects regardless of one's social status. After the Cultural Revolution in China (1912), the art form of knotting nearly died out.



white
crown
flower

Colour

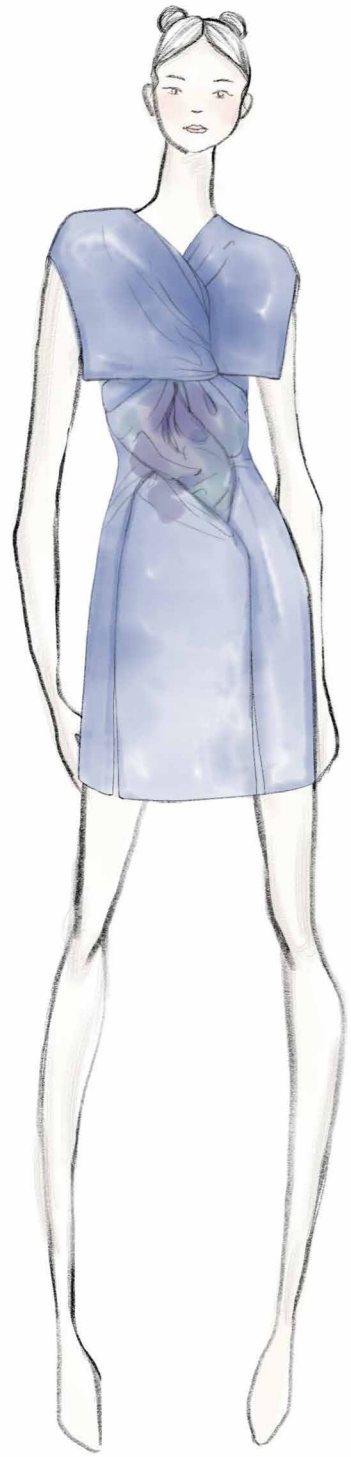


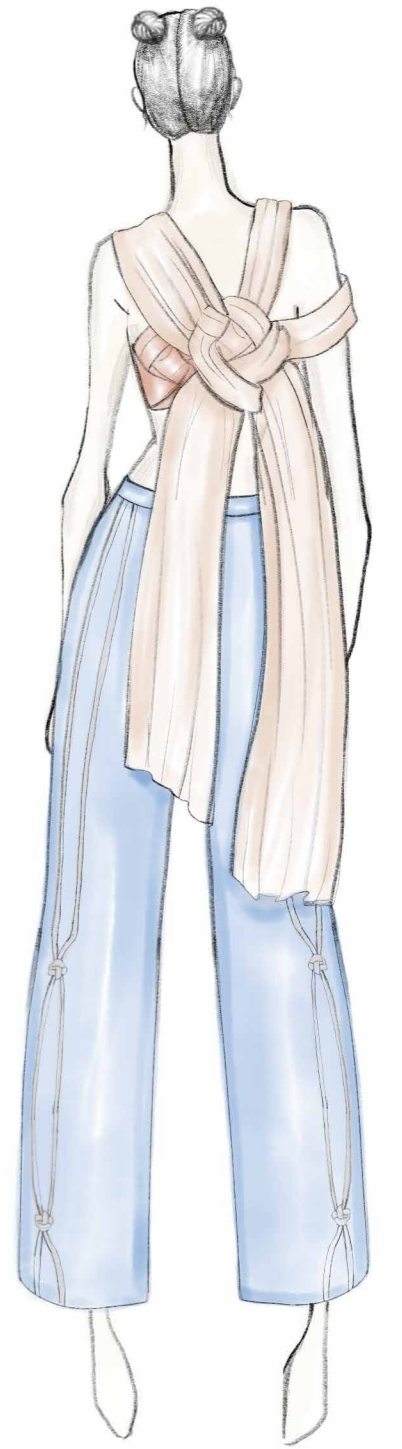
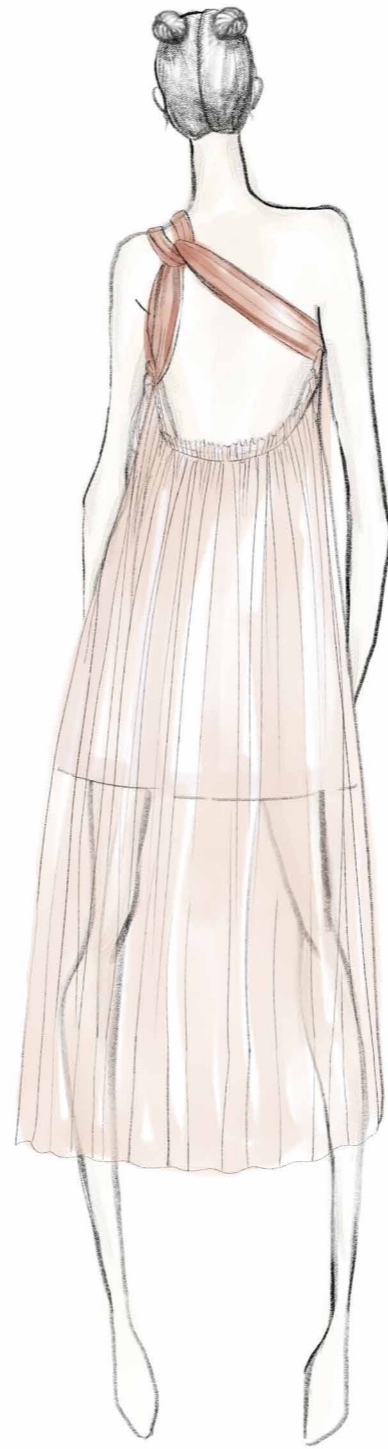
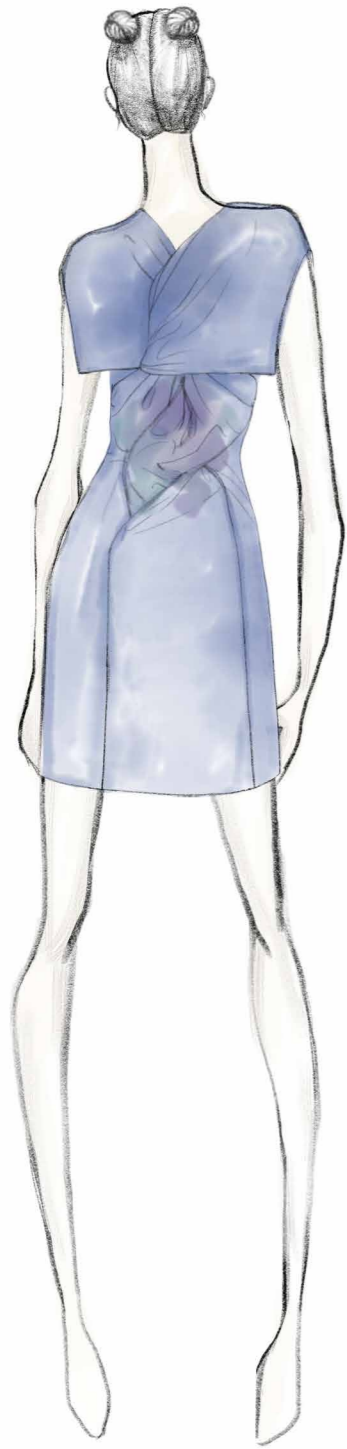
Thai
floral
garland



Chinese style
painting in
Thai temple







Look 1 - Entangled Knots Dress









Look 2 - Entwine Knotted Mini Dress







Look 3 - Encircle





