

This research reimagines literati traditions to reframe and resist negative cultural narratives about unmarried Chinese women. The derogatory term 剩女 (shèng nǚ)/Leftover woman is applied to unmarried, often well-educated women over the age of 27 who choose to pursue academic careers at a time in their life traditionally associated with commitments to marriage and childbearing (Aiston et al., 2025). In exercising a decision to remain unmarried, these women depart from traditional attitudes (Aiston et al., 2025; Liu et al., 2024) and consequently, find themselves framed pejoratively in both social media and government policies.

The presentation employs illustration, moving image footage and poetry reading to discuss work associated with this denigration. In my artistic practice, 诗中有画, 画中有诗 (painting in poetry, poetry in painting) is employed to produce large silk prints that reference traditional Chinese scholarly forms. The doctoral thesis draws inspiration from artistic treatments of identity within the Song dynasty concept of 文人 literati (specifically the work of female poet Li Qingzhao).

Methodologically the study constitutes a practice-led inquiry inside which iterative cycles of practice and reflection shape research outcomes. The study employs a range of methods including ink painting, digital manipulation, prototyping, poetry writing and material experimentation to create the silk prints and contextualising catalogues. The significance of the study lies in its contemporary rethinking of connections between women's literati scholarship and artistic expression. The project also contributes to emerging academic discourse relating to 剩女/Leftover women because it draws on embodied artistic scholarship to offer a nuanced, contestation to pejorative framings of Chinese women's independence.

### Keywords

Communication design, literati tradition, poetic writing, silk, 剩女 (shèng nǚ – Leftover women).

### References

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