

# Personal Perspective On The Generation Conflict In Chinese Culture Through Contemporary Art And Education In The Form Of Fabric Art Installation

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** This paper examines generational conflict in Chinese families through contemporary art practice, focusing on emotional and cultural tensions arising from the interaction between traditional familial expectations and shifting generational values. It aims to contribute to installation-based art research by demonstrating how personal memory can be transformed into an immersive visual experience that addresses broader sociocultural dynamics.

**Method:** The study adopts a practice-based research methodology through the creation of a fabric installation titled *The Neglected Room*. Drawing on the author's childhood experiences and family history in the textile industry, the installation employs translucent polyester curtains, ambient lighting, and sound to construct a spatial environment that reflects the fragile boundaries between privacy, exposure, and emotional distance within family relationships.

**Findings:** Audience engagement revealed strong sensory and emotional responses, with viewers reflecting on their own experiences of generational relationships and personal boundaries. The installation effectively communicated intergenerational conflict and activated personal memory through material and spatial interaction.

**Implications:** This research demonstrates how textile-based installation art can serve as a methodological and conceptual tool for investigating sociocultural issues. It contributes to contemporary art discourse by providing a model for integrating personal narrative, materiality, and spatial design within culturally grounded artistic research.

**Keywords:** Generation Conflict, Chinese Families, Fabric Installation, Contemporary Art, Privacy, Filial Piety, Intergenerational Dynamics

## 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background and Rationale

The meaning of the term generation has changed with time since it was based on a biological concept, whereas it has gained a multidimensional meaning that incorporates historical, cultural, and social life. Instead of merely referring to the lineage of life throughout the ages, it implies the collective experience, values, and identities that make one generation and another different. The concept of generation in sociological and cultural work emphasises the influence of shared experiences on worldviews and attitudes in particular historical situations. As Xu (2022) notes, the notion of Generational differences comes more as a result of the sociocultural difference, where the characteristics of various cohorts are based on their sociocultural attributes. The above view helps highlight the fact that generational identity is not simply individualised by age but also by the unique cultural and social processes that affect people in their formative stages of life.

The process of creating generational identity in China has been highly influenced by political changes and economic reforms that have taken place in the country. Multiple generations of people have grown and lived with very different social circumstances since the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949. The people who were born during the 1940s-1960s witnessed the Cultural Revolution and the prolonged material shortage that exposed them to the collective discipline and commitment to traditional values. The generation of people born in 1960-1980 has been raised during the appearance of new economic reforms and the one-child policy, which increased the parents' demands and the new emphasis on education and social promotion. Concurrently, individuals who were born in 1990-2000 have grown in the fast globalisation of China, enjoying technological advancement and exposure to other cultures of the world. This contact led to individualism and multiplicity of views that do not always coincide with those of their parents and grandparents (Li, 2019). As a result, the concept of generational tension has emerged as one of the significant social processes that shows deeper negotiations between collective duty and individual liberty in Chinese families.

These generational differences are also enhanced by traditional cultural structures. The Chinese social tradition has been very focused on the Confucian notion of the concept of Harmony and Unity, whereby intergenerational solidarity and stability are maintained. In this context, filial piety is regarded as a moral pillar; the compliance of the younger generation is usually assessed by how much it complies with the values and expectations of older people (Sun, 2015). Nevertheless, such demand for conformity often contradicts the wish of the young generation to be individual, express themselves, and have independence. The existence of such ideological differences leads to emotional and psychological struggles, especially in the family environment, where children have a right to choose, and the parental authority collides with the children. Consequently, the concept of generation conflict in modern China is a social and very personal problem between the traditional and the modern identity, which is inherent.

### Research Objectives

This study aims to explore generational conflict in Chinese families through contemporary art practice by translating sociocultural theory and personal experience into artistic research. The first objective is to examine intergenerational tension as a cultural and emotional phenomenon, providing the conceptual foundation for the study. The second objective is to realise this inquiry through the creation of a fabric-based installation, *The Neglected Room*, in which material, space, light, and sound operate as research outputs that visualise privacy, surveillance, and emotional distance. The final objective is to present the installation in an exhibition setting and evaluate audience engagement as evidence of the artwork's

capacity to stimulate reflection and dialogue on generational relationships. Following are the objectives of the research:

1. To investigate the issue of generation conflict and establish it as the central conceptual framework for the development of an artwork reflecting this theme.
2. To carry out artistic practice by creating original works and designing an exhibition space that supports and enhances the presentation of the artworks.
3. To present the artworks through an exhibition format, thereby raising public awareness of generational conflict and prompting critical reflection on the issue among viewers.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Generation Relationship in Chinese Sociological**

Sociologically, the sociological aspects of the Chinese population allow the generation relations to be closely affected by the demographic changes and the overall social changes. Such transformations have created major restructuring of the family models, which affect the way generations interrelate with each other in the home. The late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have seen population mobility, urbanization, and industrialization, which have led to the replacement of the traditional extended family structures (in most cases grounded on clans) by the smaller nuclear family structures. Such restructuring also changed the type, content, quantity, and level of generational relations between families (Wang, 2021).

This change is especially evident in the capital settings in terms of parenting. Generational conflicts take place in everyday lives as the grandparent and parent generations clash, mainly in the caregiving approaches and their educational beliefs. Nevertheless, such conflicts can be seen not as an open conflict, but as an internal negotiation of power, responsibility, and authority between the family members (Xiao, 2016). Moreover, these dynamics are complicated by the comparison between the rural and urban environments. Rural households are more focused on duty, emotional attachment, and interdependence, whereas urban households are putting more emphasis on personal space, autonomy, and individual choice (Liu, 2017). These contextual aspects prove that both social frameworks and domestic processes are involved in a collective process of defining the logic and manifestation of generational relations.

Professor Zhou Xiaohong (2001) proposed another concept of these dynamic changes, namely the concept of Cultural Feedback, which is also referred to as reverse socialisation. The theory presents a unique paradigm of assessing how the relationship between generations has changed in times when society is changing at a high rate. Cultural feedback can be defined as an activity whereby young generations pass the information, values, and cultural beliefs onto the old ones- the opposite of the time-honoured, top-down process of socialisation. This happens on two major planes: first, the younger generation brings the older one on board new skills, especially as far as digital technologies are concerned; second, they become the bearers of new cultural values and international views. In the first years of the Reform and Opening era of China, the worldview of the older generation was still mostly shaped by the traditional socialist beliefs, and the younger generation was facing a rising exposure to foreign thought and culture. The difference in cultural orientation between the generations was the foundation of reverse transmission, wherein young members of the family impacted the beliefs and practices of their seniors.

The theory not only emphasizes the dynamic change in the role of the generations in modern China, but also offers a culturally specific perspective through which one can view the changing power relations within families. It questions the traditional perspective of a one-way generational relationship

and, in its turn, demonstrates a more open-ended and mutual pattern of interrelationship. The interpretation of these changes will be critical in placing the issue of generation conflict in the Chinese households contextually, especially when it overlaps with emerging family structures, modern technologies, and redefined systems of values.

## **2.2 Generation Conflict from Chinese Filial Piety**

The Chinese folklore is strongly based on the Confucian ideology; thus, the notion of Filial Piety is highly valued by the Chinese traditional culture. Conventional filial piety stipulates the need to be respectful, obedient, and attentive to the parents, and this is what has formed the basic system of generational relations within Chinese families since ancient times up to the present day (Han, 2016).

In terms of modern cultural studies, the so-called Dual Filial Piety Model (DFPM) assumes that traditional filial piety is not such a monolithic phenomenon but, conversely, can also be divided into two types, namely, Reciprocal Filial Piety (RFP) and Authoritarian Filial Piety (AFP). This theory explicates the emotional complexity that is close but strained in nature, which defines generation relationships in Chinese families in modern times, and this is a distinctive aspect of the modern Chinese family relationships (Yeh and Bedford, 2003).

Filial piety also demonstrates variations across urban–rural contexts and gender differences: both AFP and RFP scores are significantly higher among rural respondents compared to urban ones, and males score significantly higher than females in AFP. Moreover, early adulthood represents the peak of RFP and the lowest point of AFP (Li, 2020). Another study on the relationship between adult children and generation conflict further found that younger adult children (aged 20–40) experience stronger generation conflicts compared to middle-aged children (aged 41–65). Higher RFP beliefs are associated with lower levels of generation conflict among younger children. The frequency of receiving parental life care shows a positive correlation with generation conflict, whereas the frequency of receiving emotional support demonstrates a negative correlation (Chuang, 2019).

## **3. Research Methodology**

The theoretical and practical background to this study is found in the analysis of the chosen modern art projects, which indicates not only the conceptual focus of intergenerational conflict but also the technical tools used in *The Neglected Room*. To derive a consistent idea on how Chinese artists visualise and perceive family strife, generational power, and emotional space, these projects are analysed in terms of two approaches: works with conceptual relevance and works that exhibit similar material or spatial presentation.

### **3.1 Generation Conflict in Chinese Contemporary Art**

#### **3.1.1 Suit (Zhao Zhao)**

Zhao (2016) began his installation *Suit* with a family dispute that became the source of the conceptual base of his work. The artist had bought a Dolce and Gabbana suit valued at almost 100,000 yuan, and this move not only elicited a furious response from his father but also a sense of doubt among his mother. His father responded with a ten-thousand-word treatise on the wastefulness, and his mother made a near duplicate of the suit with barely 30 per cent of the money. The pricey suit, with its handmade replica by a mother, and the handwritten essay of a father are arranged side-by-side in the last exhibition, and they

form a visual conversation of the conflicting values of three generations (Figure 1).



**Figure 1: *Suit* [Installation]. Zhao Zhao, 2016. Tang Contemporary Art (retrieved online)**

The installation makes an average family conflict inside a home a visual exploration of the family order and ideology. The contrast of the two suits, one of material aspiration and the other of frugality, is an indication of contrary social attitudes influenced by varying historical experiences. The father, in his essay, placed as a written moral critique, once again, asserts paternal authority and reflects Confucian demands of restraint and filial obedience. In the meantime, the replication by the mother becomes a manifestation of love, patience, and quiet meditation in the family patriarchal relations.

In such a setup up Zhao reveals the conflict between old virtues of hard work and humility and the way the new generation seeks personal taste and self-identification. The suits act as literal clothes and symbolic representations of cultural identity. This physical resemblance of theirs with different concepts reflects the conflict between generations deeply rooted in our daily life, visible yet still emotional. The installation is another example of the use of material objects to describe psychological distance in familial relations, which will be followed later in *The Neglected Room*, where the cloth also reflects the memory, the tension, and the emotional surveillance.

### **3.1.2 Thread (Danwen Xing)**

Danwen Xing shows a poetic reflection of mardless emotions of mother and daughter in the two-channel video installation *Thread* (Xing, 2018). In one of the screens, the mother of the artist is portrayed as knitting a sweater in repetitive, purposeful movements, and in the other, the daughter, in the same sweater, is traversing space with the sweater loosening up until she is left naked (Figure 2). This two-fold projection creates a visual and emotional conversation between care and resistance, protection and liberation.



**Figure 2: Thread [two-channel video]. Danwen Xing, 2018. danwenX (retrieved online)**

The process of knitting by the mother can also be understood as a means of caring and protecting, as a symbol of the parental desire to protect and support. The way the daughter unravels at the same time symbolises independence, rebellion, and a willingness to re-establish inherited values. Intercutting of the two actions also stresses the sense of both separation and continuity: although the threads join the figures within space and time, they also document the gradual loss of control and dependence.

The visual language of Xing does not involve a confrontation. Rather, it is subtly rhythmic, based on the aesthetics of household work and feminine experience. The language of touch, of cloth and needle, creates a crucial emotional dictionary, which appeals to the Chinese cultural ethos of gentle insubordination, a bargaining by persistence, not by outright defiance. The use of touch and repetition and the bodily movement in the work help the audience to simultaneously experience intimacy and tension, and how intergenerational love cannot be unrelated to control.

The work also has technical and conceptual elucidation towards this study. The fabric used by Xing both figuratively and literally proves that clothing can mediate the expression of emotion in art. Her enacted disintegration motivated translucent curtain use in *The Neglected Room*, in which visibility and vulnerability also interact. The two works are changing personal memory to a sense experience that evokes compassion and reflection on the limits of the influence of family.

### **3.1.3 Touching My Father Series (Dong Song)**

Song series *Touching My Father* gives a long-term investigation of intimacy, loss, and reconciliation between a father and a son. The trilogy is three video and performance pieces made throughout a period of over 10 years. In the former (Song, 1997), the artist transfers a virtual image of his hand onto the body of his father using mediated technology via digital projection, and artificial physical contact is simulated. In the second (Song, 2002), made following the death of his father, Song employs his real hand to feel the cold body and captures the video. The third (Song, 2002-2011) depicts the artist fondling the water surface, in which the image of his father blinking and disappearing (Figure 3).



**Figure 3 Touching My Father Series [video and performance]. Dong Song, 1997-2011. Artron (retrieved online)**

These repeated movements make out an emotional line of estrangement and acceptance. Through the motif of touch as a physical and symbolic form of communication, Song can turn the intimate act of mourning into a societal one regarding the topic of intergenerational connectedness and connectedness. The work shows that a person can only reconcile with parental authority by not confronting it but by engaging in ritualized recollection and embodied empathy.

The contrast between the physical presence of the father and his spiritual reflection of the father reflects the instability of memory and the way the filial attachment remains. The series of photos, the motionless body, the photographed hand, and the flowing water imply that family ties do not cease when a person is no longer in physical contact, instead developing into psychological and spiritual spheres. In this way, Song expresses a Chinese view of continuity between generations, a view that combines emotional instability with cultural sensitivity.

Methodologically, the combination of personal documentation, performance, and video expressed in Song is very close to this study. The Touching My Father series shows that the functioning of personal memory and emotional experience could be used as artistic information, and viewers can interact with personal accounts of families through multisensory perception. This practice directly conveys the conceptual design of The <sup>7</sup> Neglected Room, where spatial environment, light, and sound are employed to create a reflection on generational surveillance and emotional inheritance.

### **3.2 Fabric in Installation Art**

In the preceding section, the author analyzed artistic projects addressing the theme of generational conflict within the Chinese cultural context. The author concludes that selecting a symbol capable of

embodying generational relationships as the medium for artistic creation is essential for effectively conveying this subject.

For the author, 'fabric' emerges as the material most suitable for expressing generational bonds. This choice stems not only from the parents' decades-long involvement in the textile industry, which shaped the author's childhood environment, but also from the material's inherent capacity to carry deep personal memories and generational connections. According to Claire Bishop (2005), fabric, as a medium, is often utilized in installation art because of its ability to evoke both personal and collective histories, allowing for a direct engagement with viewers' senses and memories. As per the findings of art historian Michael Fried (2008), fabric installations can create an immersive environment that blurs the boundary between object and subject, facilitating a more profound interaction between the work and its audience. Additionally, fabric can embody themes of transformation and change, as discussed by Rosalind Krauss (1999), who examines how materials like fabric in art carry a temporal quality that connects personal histories with larger societal shifts.

Building on this selection, the author will investigate installation art projects that employ fabric as their primary material. The analysis of these works will help expand the expressive possibilities of fabric installations, providing both technical and visual references for subsequent creations.

### 3.2.1 Home Within Home (Do Ho Suh)

Do Ho Suh's Home Within a Home (Suh, 2013) is a site-specific installation of considerable scale. At the core of the exhibition is a full-scale, translucent fabric replica of the traditional hanok house in which Suh was raised. Surrounding this is a replica of the three-storey terraced house in which he lived during his student years in Providence, Rhode Island. All spaces are contained within the museum environment. (Figure 4).



**Figure 4 Home Within Home [installation]. Do Ho Suh, 2013. Wallpaper (retrieved online)**

The installation is constructed from a single-color, refined, translucent polyester fabric resembling organza, suspended on a steel framework. This imparts a ghostly quality, blurring the boundary between the work and the gallery space and symbolizing the indistinct relationship between

physical matter and the memory of thought. Viewers can move through the spaces, creating an immersive experience. The translucency of the polyester also allows audiences to observe both interior and exterior simultaneously, symbolizing the enduring nature of the artist's memories of his former home despite his absence (Ezadpanah et al., 2024).

The artistic practice of Suh focuses on the translucency of one medium, which practically submerges the traditional distinctions between the object, the observer, and the gallery. The artwork is in perfect harmony with its surroundings which gives it a physical touch as well as a spiritual touch. Additionally, the painter asks his audience to access his inner recollections and memories by journeying and looking, which creates an emotional echo. The combination of this dual sensory and psychological involvement with the poetic nature of translucent materials provides the creative inspiration to the author

### 3.2.2 Le milieu est bleu (Ulla Von Brandenburg)

In her work, the German artist Ulla von Brandenburg often uses spacious fabric constructions to form an arched space reminiscent of a curtain corridor.

Going through these spaces, viewers get a feeling that they find themselves in between semi-closed walls, moving into a realm that is at the same time open and mysterious. The fabric installations created are not only immersive experiences, with the combination of colour and material, but also make people think about what the medium is and to reconsider the sense of space boundaries. (Figure 5).



Figure 5 Le milieu est bleu [installation]. Ulla Von Brandenburg, 2020. Art Viewer (retrieved online)

Von Brandenburg has noted how fabrics are used to cover and redefine the traditional museums white cube system, as well as create an atmosphere that implies access to a different space. In such spaces, there is a blurring of interior and exterior, which compels viewers to redefine their roles and understand the essence of boundaries differently (Von Brandenburg, 2021).

The practise of von Brandenburg inspired the author to think more about the use of fabric to form spatial experience. Using textiles as a channel, she invests them with a veiling role and power to

lead the audience in their movement, therefore, restructuring the routes and form of the exhibition space. The audience is presented to a never ending interplay of inside and outside, like one is in a world where boundaries keep moving and redefining. This method accentuates the natural attributes of fabric to the expression of the so-called effect of boundary that can give a lot of insight into how the author investigates the topic of generational conflict in the family.

## **4. Results**

### **4.1 Creation Inspiration**

There are two primary sources of inspiration of the creativity of the author: the members of the core generation and his own experience. Parents were also fabric curtain designers, having worked more than 30 years, which makes such fabrics a fourth member of the household, which has been present during the upbringing of the author. In the childhood, a room was used to store the large rolls of fabric, which further minimised the already limited living space. As such, the author did not have a personal bedroom and was often visited by people who were not members of the family, in a house that doubled as a workplace. This long-lived lack of privacy created an atmosphere of being watched all the time and the psychological stress. These experiences in the childhood developed into the main driving force behind the author to write about issues of generational clash and the problem of personal privacy.

### **5.2 Creation Concept**

The Neglected Room investigates the theme of intergenerational family conflict through a mixture of autobiographical reflection and space design. The key idea is based on the early years in the life of a painter, spent in a family where a textile enterprise was run from home. In this context, curtains, which were professionally made and always present, were more than mere decorations. They symbolized physical divisions and emotional fences, conditioning the artist's understanding of privacy and surveillance at home. According to art theorist and historian Chambers (2020), materials such as fabric in domestic settings can represent both protective barriers and oppressive forces, often defining the boundaries between private and public spheres within the family structure.

Reinventing the curtain as a conceptual tool, the installation challenges its traditional use of providing concealment. Instead, semi-transparent fabrics are employed to reveal, rather than safeguard, symbolizing the fragile and often ineffective boundaries in human relationships within the family. This reimagining of fabric as a medium of transparency aligns with theorist Rosalind Krauss's (2000) concept of the photographic trace in art, where the material of an object becomes an imprint of presence, revealing as much as it hides. By using semi-transparent fabrics, the installation visually embodies the tension between exposure and concealment, questioning the role of physical boundaries in family dynamics.

The installation takes the shape of a bedroom, evoking privacy, which is paradoxically observed from the outside. This paradox represents the conflict between the desire for solitude and the reality of constant surveillance within the family unit. This dynamic is discussed in the works of Michel Foucault (1977), particularly in *Discipline and Punish*, where he examines the ways in which surveillance structures within the family and society shape individual behavior and emotional states. The installation's use of space as both a retreat and a site of observation reflects Foucault's analysis of power and control in intimate environments.

By employing carefully crafted materials, lighting, and spatial contrasts, the work creates a sense of immersion that visualizes the emotional distance, psychological pressure, and ambiguous

privacy often felt in traditional family interactions. The aesthetic of openness and disclosure encourages the audience to reflect on their personal interactions with generational power, emotional containment, and the definition of physical closeness. Through the spatial metaphor of personal memory, the work mediates between individual experience and broader sociocultural commentary on privacy and control within the family. This exploration of boundaries and surveillance draws upon Judith Butler's (2004) work on performativity, where the negotiation of identity within the family unit is not just a private act, but a performance shaped by the visibility or invisibility of one's actions and emotions.

## 5. Discussion

The author's work is conceived as an experiential Installation titled *The Neglected Room*. This chapter is divided into four sections, each detailing a different aspect of the creative process underlying the work.

### 5.1 Creation Sketch

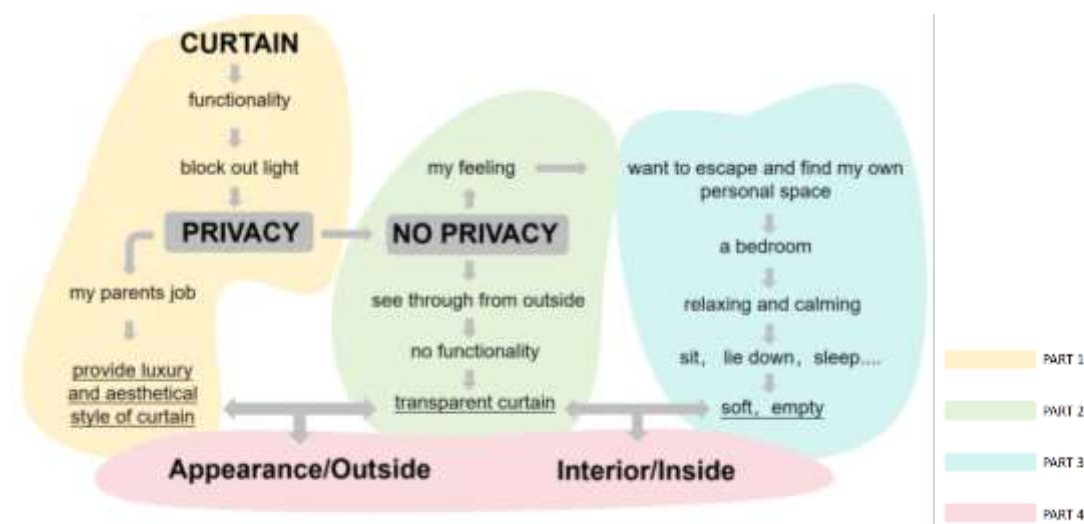
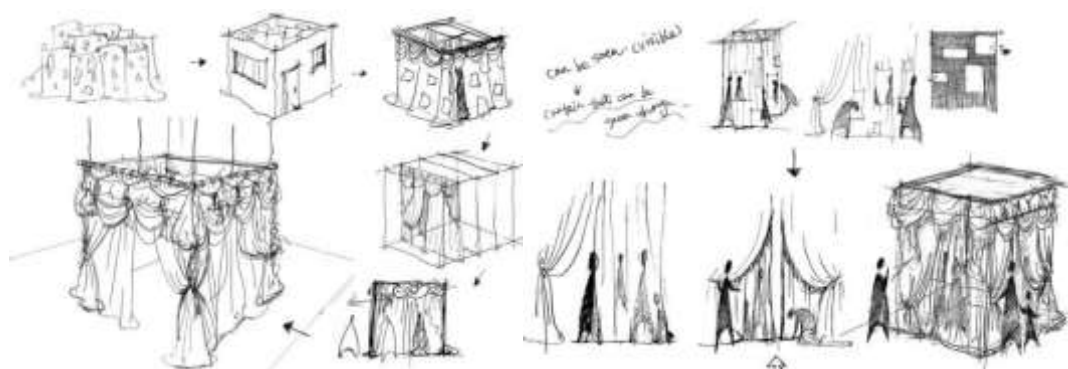


Figure 6 Concept and Logical Framework. The Author, 2024

In the initial design logic of the work, fabric-the artist's fourth family member- functions not only as the most familiar everyday object in the domestic environment, but also as a central symbolic element in the creative practice. The importance of cloth here is two-fold. On the one hand, it can be used as a practical material, which fulfils practical functions of blocking light and providing privacy; on the other hand, it can be regarded as an aesthetic medium, which conveys luxury and artistic value thanks to the attention to the form and material. This twofold meaning is linked to the professional experience of both the parents of the author, emphasizing the ancient duality of the concepts of functionality and aesthetics that predetermines the presence of the curtains in the traditional domestic environment. (Figure 6-Part1)

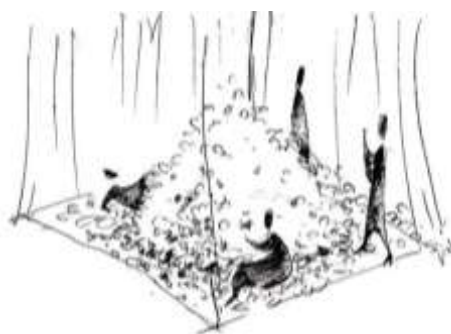
The meaning of fabric changes within the framework of personal developmental experience of the author. The extended lack of a private bedroom during childhood coupled with a semi-public character of the household where visitors were regular further diminished the privacy aspect making the conventional screening role of curtains invalid. Consequently, the idea of a room with transparent curtains becomes one of the key metaphors of the work as it shows the paradoxical state of being both looked at and forgotten. This metaphor does not only serve the purpose of highlighting the conflict between the person and the family but it also gives us an important point of entry into the discourse of

generational conflict and lack of privacy. (Figure 6-Part2)(Figure 7).



**Figure 7: Concept Creation Sketch. The Author, 2024**

As a part of this particular conception, the author contrasts the rich and ornate curtain designs with the calm and simple blank spaces, respectively the foreign and domestic worlds of the piece. The aesthetic values and socialised characteristics of the parents, determined by their professions, are transferred by the external space, and internally, the psychological aspirations of the artist become a manifestation of the internal space. To create the mood of calmness and relaxation the artist mounts in the bedroom heavy white cotton that is surrounded with clear curtains and collects a significant number of remnants of the thread used in the creation of the curtains. These threads run into rippling heaps on the floor, thereby providing the visitors with a light and soft feeling when entering the place, thus, allowing them to feel relaxed and calmed down on a physical level. Meanwhile, the overall whiteness of the image physically supports the feeling of calm, innocence, and emptiness. (Figure 6-Part3)(Figure 8).



**Figure 8 Creation Sketch about Interior. The Author, 2024**

It becomes clear that the inner and outer space is characterised by the radical expression of the form and experience. The excessive decoration of the exterior serves as a symbolic expression of the generational norms and traditions, but the gentleness and whiteness inside represent the desire of the individual to be independent and calm. This paradoxical contrast creates both a visual and sensorial dichotomy, thus the clash between the family gaze and the need of privacy of the individual in generational relationships. (Figure 6-Part4)

In short, the conceptual logic of the work is developed in three consecutive layers starting with the functional utility of fabric curtains, moving to their metaphoric metamorphosis, and ending in the contrast between the outside and the inside space. This structural design grounds the work on the personal

memory and experience of the author, but, at the same time, brings it to a higher plane of exploration of generational conflict and privacy issues in families.

## 5.2 Curtain Material and Style

### 6.2.1 Curtain Material

In terms of material selection, the author ultimately chose a 70% transparent polyester fabric after comparative experimentation with various options. This fabric exhibits excellent shaping properties, capable of simulating the layered effect and rich pleating characteristic of traditional heavy fabric curtains. Additionally, it offers a pure, light, and ethereal sensory quality. By strategically manipulating the fabric layers, the author can control visual transparency, thereby reinforcing the conceptual notion of ‘privacy loss’ within the work. (Figure 9)



**Figure 9 Curtain Material and Experiment. The Author, 2024**

### 6.2.2 Curtain Style

The curtain style draws inspiration from classic European courtly aesthetics, specifically the drape called ‘Austrian Valance’(or ‘ Waterfall Swag’). Distinguished by elaborate, multi-layered folds, this style was particularly popular among China’s middle-to-upper-class households in the early 21st century. The design reflects the author’s childhood environment and embodies the aesthetic sensibilities cultivated through the parents’ professional experience. Furthermore, it functions as a visual reference for China’s millennial generation. In this way, the curtains operate decoratively rather than merely as a backdrop, while simultaneously symbolizing memories tied to the author’s personal perspective. (Figure 10-11)



Figure 10 'Austrian Valance' Curtain. Drapery Avenue (retrieved online)



Figure 11 Curtain Style in Work. The Author, 2024

### 5.3 Lighting Design

The lighting in *The Neglected Room* was intentionally minimized to support the conceptual focus on privacy and psychological withdrawal. The gallery was darkened entirely, with all artificial lighting turned off and windows covered in thick black fabric to eliminate natural light. This deliberate absence of external illumination allowed visitors to experience a visual detachment from the outside world, reinforcing the shift from public to private space.

Soft, diffused light emanated solely from within the installation, filtered through the translucent curtain fabric. This subtle illumination was not merely functional but symbolic, suggesting fragility, emotional exposure, and a quiet interior world. A neutral white color temperature was chosen to simulate

the familiar tone of domestic lighting, reinforcing the bedroom setting without introducing emotional bias through color.

Rather than using lighting as a technical feature, the design positioned light as an integral conceptual element, guiding perception, evoking memory, and supporting the installation's broader themes of introspection, vulnerability, and the blurred boundaries of personal space.

#### 5.4 Audio Design

A minimal sound looping installation was quietly installed in one corner of the gallery and helped to add to the ambience of the exhibition. The music itself was also deliberately minor, heard only during the periods of general silence, thus compelling the listener to listen without dominating the visual elements. This method enabled the audio to be used as a background layer, which prompted the viewers to enjoy the work on a more sensual level without necessarily concentrating on it.

There were four elements of sound in the composition: sewing machine, humming and cutting fabric, uneven footsteps, and the murmuring of a person who was asleep. These stratified sounds alluded to the soundscape of the childhood residence of the artist, where the scenes of domesticity and the scenes of textile production frequently intermingled. The installation did not use sound as ambience; instead, the sound was used to create emotional memory and spatial ambiguity. The game of the public and private sounds corresponded with the conceptual orientation of the piece- emphasizing blurred lines, surveillance, and the clash between personal space and family presence.

### 6. Exhibition Venue Design

The work, entitled *The Neglected Room*, will be exhibited within an enclosed gallery space and will be the sole piece displayed within that space.

#### 6.1 Exhibition Venue Dimensions and Basic Facilities

7.1.1 The exhibition hall measures approximately 13.5 meters in width, 10.5 meters in depth, and 5 meters in height. The artwork is positioned at the centre, with dimensions of 3 × 3 × 3.5 meters. (Figure 12)

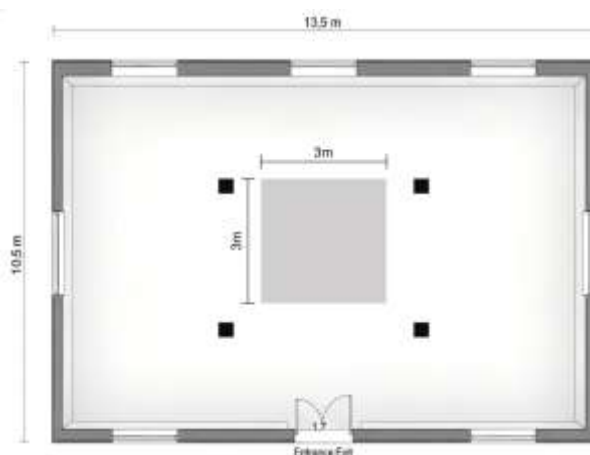


Figure 12 Exhibition Venue Layout. The Author, 2024

7.1.2 All lighting fixtures in the hall remain turned off, and the windows on the entrance side are covered with black fabric.

## 6.2 Audience Entrances/Exits and Activity Routes

7.2.1 Audiences may use only the designated entrance/exit, which faces the artwork directly.

7.2.2 Audiences can view and experience the artwork from any position within the space. They are guided to remove their shoes before entering the interior of the artwork, an essential component of the interactive experience. (Figure 13)

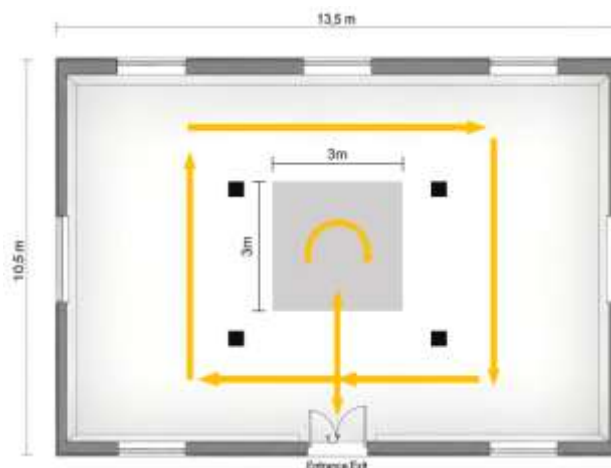


Figure 13 Audience Activity Routes. The Author, 2024

## 7. Art Exhibition: The Neglected Room

The Neglected Room was an art exhibition that took place at the First-Floor Art Gallery, Faculty of Fine Arts, Chiang Mai University, 20-27 November 2024. The design was an experiential spatial installation that addressed the theme of intergenerational tension, privacy, and psychological limits. Visitors would enter via a hidden door, all the windows were covered with black cloth, and natural light and outside noises could not penetrate in. This brought about an immediate isolation from the external world and created a shift to a more reflective, closed space. According to art theorist Miwon Kwon (2004), such installations can be understood as efforts to reframe the boundaries of public and private space, challenging the viewer's expectations and engagement with the surrounding world.

When entering the gallery, the audience was welcomed into a fabric room that was made in the center of the gallery. The floor size (3 × 3 meters) was similar to an average bedroom, but the vertical height was increased to 3.5 meters, which is much taller than the proportions in interior design. This increased height made the views upward, contributing to a feeling of suspension or elevation. This spatial manipulation aligns with the analysis of space in art by Henri Lefebvre (1991), who discusses how the alteration of spatial dimensions can provoke emotional responses and challenge one's relationship to their environment. In conjunction with diffused interior light, it produced a surreal and almost divine atmosphere that tenderly separated the visitors from the environment (Figure 14). This setting sought to recreate a sense of emotional deprivation of the domestic environments people were used to, which supported the theme of psychological alienation. The use of fabric, as explored by art historian James Elkins (2001), serves to embody both a physical and emotional boundary, creating a space that not only encloses the viewer but also emphasizes the separation between personal experience and external reality.



**Figure 14 Appearance Effect of *The Neglected Room -1*. The Author, 2024**

The four curtain panels used in the exterior of the room were all the same, and in the shape of Austrian valances. These curtains were made in a symmetrical fold fitted with flowing drapes to mimic the flow of water on the floor. The most extravagant decoration was towards the apex, and the vertical lines were gently rounded by tiered waves. Although they were decorative, these design selections were also alluded to the personal history of the artist, as they grew up in a family where both of their parents were employed in the curtain design industry (Figure 15). Native values and aesthetic codes that are passed over to generations were shaped by the use of traditional forms of curtains.



**Figure 15 Appearance Effect of *The Neglected Room -2*. The Author, 2024**

These choices of materials were core in both form and meaning. The structural system of the room was made of 70 per cent polyester, which is transparent, which was to provide structural integrity to the room in addition to supporting visibility and light diffusion. The surface was covered with a layer of lace and tassel trimmings, which gave it texture and details without overwhelming the transparency. The cloth was drawn together in the four corners and formed into soft, sleeve-like draperies that formed a visual softness that obscured hard edges (Figure 16). The combination of classical decoration and transparent materials created the visual contrast between the tradition and evanescence - the reflection of the emotional conflicts between the generational expectations.



**Figure 16** Curtain Details of *The Neglected Room*. The Author, 2024

The interesting spatial choice was the fact that there was no traditional furniture in the room. Rather, the floor was covered with towels of cotton towels and bits of thread used in making the curtains. This spatial arrangement was inviting and inviting the viewer to sit, lie, and take a break in physical comfort, and hinting at themes of nurturing and vulnerability. The application of textile waste as a structural interior feature in stressed and disposable ways was also underlined- especially compared with the lavish exterior curtains (Figure 17). This interior layer signified what is concealed or lost under the appearance of things, which appeals to the emotional detachment commonly experienced in family setups.

The contrast metaphor was also applied in the conceptual space rather than in visual design. The rich curtain exterior denoted the performance of the society and transfer of the generations, whereas the inner scattered remnants represented the inner emotional residue that was not recognised. Such contrast highlighted one of the key themes: the gap between the outward appearance and the inner life, and such opposition is commonly enhanced in the realities of a classic family structure, where the interests of the individual are subordinated to the standards of conformity.



**Figure 17 Interior Effect of *The Neglected Room*. The Author, 2024**

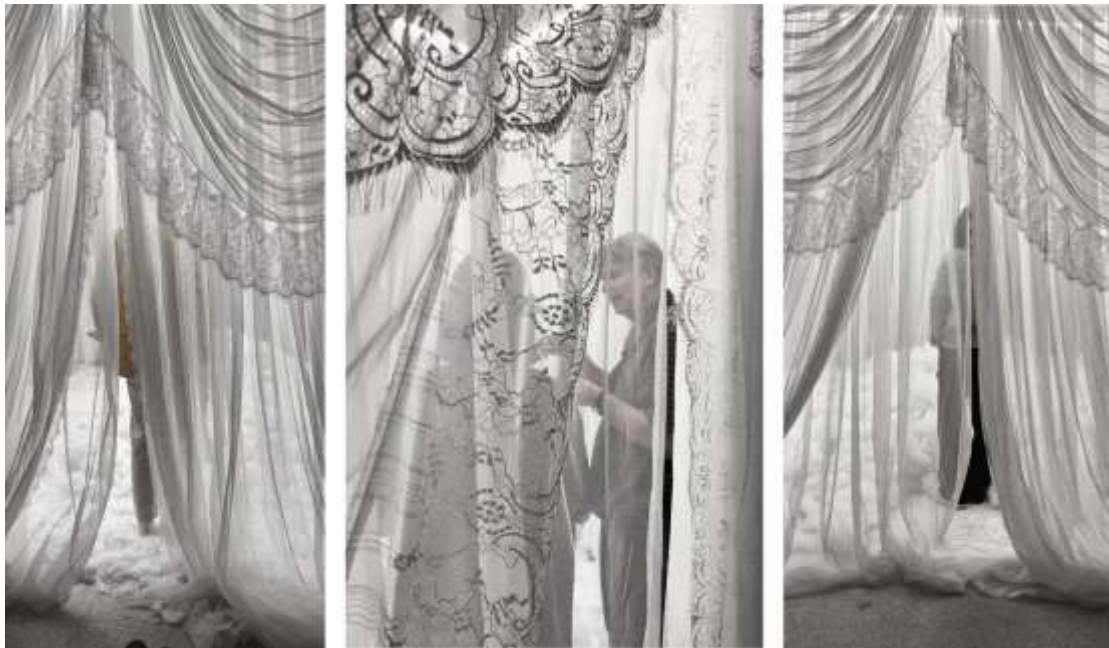
One of the most peculiar aspects of the installation was, perhaps, its visibility play. The inner room was on the transparent fabric, and the light was regulated; thus, the people on the outside of the room were able to see what was inside the room and see the people inside the room clearly, whereas individuals in the room were oblivious to the observation (Figure 18). This gave an illusion of one-way visibility that created a small psychological tension. Only after going out, many come to know the exposure after looking back. This was an experiential awakening that made one think about surveillance, power, and control of the generation, the same feeling as one feels that they are always being watched in authoritarian family structures.

The installation erased the line between personal and social conduct as the audience shifted between the position of the viewer and that of the viewed. This artificial ambiguity promoted self-reflection and a feeling of exposure, and asked participants to consider their personal comfort levels with exposure and introspection (Figure 19). The garment was, therefore, more than a physical barrier; it was symbolic as well, with an entrance point between emotional openness and hiddenness. It was a parenthesis of the literal material, and figurative of family limits, fluid, flexible, yet enclosing.

The Neglected Room not only provides a visual experience, as it does through its spatial design, material use, and conceptual layering, but it also provides a lived experience. Not only were the visitors witnesses, but they were participants in a system that reflected generational tension and emotional repression. All the details, such as the height and fabric, light, and floor texture, were designed to encourage self-reflection and sensual experience. By doing so, the work took the discussion of family dynamics beyond the psychological space into the spatial space through art being a tool to process and ask questions about the boundaries separating self and inherited identity.



**Figure 18 Visual Effect of Looking Outwards from Within *The Neglected Room*. The Author, 2024**



**Figure 19 Visual Effect of Looking Interior from Outside of *The Neglected Room*. The Author, 2024**

Finally, as visitors traversed the gallery, faint auditory phenomena persisted, seemingly emanating from the gallery's depths. The rhythmic hum of an old sewing machine continued, its clatter punctuated by the rustling of hands stroking and grasping fabric. On occasion, the moment of fabric being cut could be discerned acoustically, as scissors lifted from the table, then lowered with a crisp metallic clang. The sounds of footsteps were heard, seemingly coming and going, with intermittent pauses, as if an unseen figure were approaching in silence. Should the audience focus intently on the auditory stimuli, they would perceive the faintest yet constant sound: slow, drawn-out snores intertwined with the aforementioned noises. The author intends that these auditory elements facilitate a nostalgic recollection of the audience's childhood residences, thereby engendering an immersive experience characterized by the dissolution of conventional boundaries between private and public domains. (Figure 20)



Figure 20 Audio Design in *The Neglected Room*. The Author, 2024

**8. Exhibition Feedback**

The Neglected Room exhibition caused varied reactions among people throughout its tenure. The two sources of audience feedback were informal on-site observations and interviews, and written remarks in the exhibition guestbook. These reactions showed different interpretations, emotional reactions, and surprising actions that enhanced the knowledge about the way visitors interacted with the work.

**9.1 Most Visitors Were Surprised by the ‘One-Way Visibility’ Between Inside and Outside**

Many of the visitors responded vehemently to the unidirectional aspect of the visibility of the installation. Out of the fabric room, the audience could see all the activities going on inside the fabric room, and those inside were not aware of being observed. Many different guests entering and leaving the installation several times have tested this effect. The experience brought back the issue of the dynamics of vision and being seen and cast doubt on the issue of public versus private space, which the theme of surveillance in the family setup explores in the work.

**9.2 Some Visitors Engaged in Activities Inside the Room Beyond the Author’s Expectations**

Within the installation, there were those who visited the installation and engaged with the materials in a manner that was not intended by the artist. Instead of considering the space as meditative or intimate, several guests used the space in a light-hearted way, touching the cotton, re-arranging the remnants of the thread, or participating in the games that reminded them of their childhood. Although these activities were contrary to the initial idea, they demonstrated the capacity of the installation to invite physical

interaction and unplanned emotional outbursts

### **9.3 Some Visitors Offered Alternative Interpretations of the Work's Concept**

The reactions of visitors were quite different, and most of them were consistent with the key ideas of the artist. Others have interpreted the difference between the glitzy curtain appearance on the outside and the bareness on the inside as allegorical of curated lives, like those that appear on social media, where slick surfaces cover up emotional deadness. These new interpretations focused on the conceptual openness of the work and its ability to stimulate various individual associations and social-cultural commentary.

### **9.4 Some Visitors Expressed Their Understanding of Generation Conflict in Guestbook Entries**

The Guestbook feedback consisted of musings about family dynamics, autobiographical accounts of family conflict, and the reaction to the work as an emotional experience. Visitors also reported that the installation made them realise dynamics that they had not explored in their own families before. These entries meant that the artwork not only conveys a message but also acts as a stimulus to introspection and discussion.

### **9.5 A Small Number of Visitors Unconsciously 'Carried' the Work Beyond the Exhibition Space**

The unintended exchange of small scraps of fabric occurred. Other visitors went away with the installation with the cotton or thread attached to their garments unwillingly. Despite not being planned, this physical trace expanded the presence of the work outside the gallery, representing the way in which emotional and generational traces continue to be left throughout daily life. It turned into an unintentional metaphor of the legacies of family structures.

## **9. Conclusion**

This study proves that the installation art of fabric-based installation can be effective in the context of generational conflict and its articulation. The project is based on both sociological theory and personal experience to put forward the idea of tension between generations, not as an abstract form of ideas, but as a psychological and spatial state of living. Using fabric, in this case, the translucent curtains, as the main medium, the installation creates the concept of privacy as a metaphorical barrier, both vulnerable and imposed at the same time.

In *The Neglected Room*, the last work, the research inquiry was successfully converted into an immersive, experience-based form. The impressiveness of the idea and its clarity were validated by the comments of visitors at the exhibition. Numerous spectators considered the experiences in their own families, which means that the theme touched upon emotionally and culturally. Play of visibility/invisibility, which was the focus of the space in the work, provoked a valuable response and gave an opportunity to think of the tension between autonomy and surveillance in the relations between generations.

Regarding the artistic deliverables, the project shows how artistic decisions made regarding the materials, spatial organisation, and sensory features can be integrated to externalise inner emotional realities. Use of fabric was no longer a purely ornamental tool but a tool of story, as a means to create a recollection and metaphor in the mind of the observer.

In general, the study met its main objectives: exploring the subject of the generational conflict in a culturally specific manner, creating a unique artistic reaction, and encouraging the community to interact with the topic in a way that will promote its interest in the issue through holding an exhibition.

The project provides a useful and theoretical framework of personal narrative, sociocultural analysis, and spatial art practice integration in dealing with modern family dynamics.

### Limitations of the Study

This study is subject to several limitations. First, the research is grounded in a practice-based methodology and draws heavily on the author's personal experiences, which may limit the generalisability of its findings beyond similar cultural or familial contexts. Second, audience feedback was collected primarily through qualitative observation and informal responses, rather than structured empirical methods, which restricts the ability to quantify impact or compare responses systematically. Additionally, the exhibition was presented in a single institutional setting, and viewer interpretations were influenced by cultural background and individual experience. Finally, the focus on fabric-based installation may limit applicability to other artistic media or methodological approaches.

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