GREEN + WHITE = PINK

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For my parents, my family, friends and professors who supported and shared this journey with me.

For the little girl who used to play with plasticine.
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My thesis seeks to explore the unknown forces that are constantly shaping our lives. I am intrigued by the intangible connections that link people, objects, and places together, and how they manifest across space and time. As a ceramicist emphasizing both interiority and tactility, my work will dissect layered ideas of closeness and disruption in order to reveal a nuanced understanding of how we exist in perpetuity with what can't be seen. I wish to explore this topic through carefully directed installations that emphasize intimacy and engagement within audience members. Through inspiration from my past experience, childhood memories, as well as my Chinese cultural background, to create an immersive environment using clay as a narrative tool, with interactions between physical objects becoming symbolic representations of the powerful bond that exists regardless of distance.
Thesis Elements Catalog

◊ Chrome-Tin Pink
◊ Mirror Frame & Dowry
◊ Dragon & Phoenix
◊ Orchid
◊ Thorns
◊ Needles & Threads
◊ Magnet
◊ Dot of Red
◊ Acrylic Ball/ Degrading
CHROME - TIN PINK

My art practice intend to explore the relationship between tangible materials and intangible ideas. The “pink glaze” is an essential part of my artistic practice, providing a perfect echo for the concept I am working with. The Ceramics term “Chrome-Tin Pink” refers to specific ratios of Chrome Oxide and Tin Oxide that create distinct shades of pink in a glaze recipe. By removing the Chrome Oxide from the recipe and firing it separately with a glaze containing Tin Oxide, a unique artistic transformation is created. When the colors of green and white come together in this combination, they form an ethereal pink that shifts in depth depending on their placement during firing. If placed relatively far apart during the firing process, a pale hue appears; yet when closely united, more vibrant shades can emerge ranging from warmer pinks to burgundy-reds at the center.
Green + White = Pink

Before Firing (circular tile hanging)

After Firing (deep pink spots appears)
Green + White = Pink

Before Firing (pointy tile hanging)

After Firing (deep pink spots appears)
Before Firing (pointy tile closely placed)

After Firing (White hue appears around the nearest center)
Before Firing (thorn coated with Chrome Oxide slip then sprayed glaze over)

After Firing (smooth pink gradient around the thorn)
MIRROR FRAME & DOWRY

My thesis work encompasses the essence of a family heirloom that has been cherished by my family for over half a century. Taking inspiration from a walnut wood dresser that my great-grandfather gifted to my grandmother on her wedding day, I crafted a large ceramic “mirror frame”. The dragon and phoenix embossments on the wood dresser represent my family’s cultural identity and traditions, which I wanted to convey through my work. The central vase is a representation of myself, and the overall piece evokes a feeling of being able to affect without needing to touch. This work holds a special place in my heart as it symbolizes my past, identity, and the home that I carry with me, wherever I go.

The tradition of giving “Jiazhuang”, or dowry, in Chinese culture dates back to ancient times. It is a custom where the bride’s family provides a variety of gifts and belongings to the groom’s family upon the daughter’s marriage. While the dowry tradition has evolved over time, it still remains an important part of many traditional Chinese weddings till today.
In Chinese culture, the dragon and phoenix are two of the most powerful and auspicious symbols, often representing yin and yang, or balance and harmony.

Dragon:
- Power, strength, and good luck
- Associated with the Emperor and the imperial family
- A symbol of fertility
- Represents the male energy of yang in the yin-yang duality
- Considered as one of the four sacred animals in Chinese mythology along with the phoenix, tortoise, and unicorn.

Phoenix:
- Beauty, grace, and prosperity
- Associated with the Empress or queen and the feminine energy of yin in the yin-yang duality
- A symbol of rebirth and resurrection, as it is believed to rise from the ashes after death
- Often depicted with peony flowers, which represent peace and prosperity
- Considered as one of the four sacred animals in Chinese mythology along with the dragon, tortoise, and unicorn.

In Chinese wedding culture, the dragon and phoenix are significant symbols that represent marital harmony, balance, and prosperity. They are often used together in wedding ceremonies and decorations to symbolize a successful and happy union.

- **Wedding invitations:** The dragon and phoenix are often featured on wedding invitations as a symbol of a blessed and harmonious union.
- **Bridal attire:** The bride might wear a traditional red wedding dress (qipao) embroidered with dragon and phoenix motifs, symbolizing the harmonious fusion of the couple.
- **Wedding decor:** The wedding venue may be adorned with images or sculptures of dragons and phoenixes, or feature them in other decorative elements like table centerpieces, banners, and backdrops.
- **Wedding ceremony:** During the tea ceremony, the couple may use a tea set adorned with dragon and phoenix designs, symbolizing their hopes for a harmonious and prosperous life together.
- **Wedding gifts:** The newlyweds may receive gifts featuring dragon and phoenix motifs, such as jewelry, porcelain, or artwork, as a symbol of good fortune and blessings for their marriage.
IN CHINESE CULTURE, THE ORCHID IS REVERED AND SYMBOLIZES WEALTH, POWER, AND FORTUNE. IT WAS A PREVALENT SIGHT AT MY GRANDFATHER’S HOME, WITH VISITORS CONSTANTLY BRINGING POTS OF ORCHIDS TO SHOW THEIR RESPECT. EVEN AFTER SEVEN YEARS OF HIS PASSING, THE MEMORY OF THOSE TIMES SPENT AT HIS HOUSE REMAINS FRESH IN MY MIND.

Orchids are known for their graceful and elegant appearance, with slender stems and delicate flowers. Their natural charm and poise make them a symbol of sophistication.

In ancient China, the orchid represented friendship and loyalty. It was often exchanged as a gift between friends or given as a sign of respect to elders and teachers.

The orchid’s ability to thrive in remote and secluded environments symbolizes the noble and virtuous character of a person who remains true to their principles despite adversity.
I’ve always been intrigued by the concept of duality, I find myself drawn to objects that possess two distinct sides. I believe that nothing in life is simply black or white, good or bad, but rather, all things possess a shade of ambiguity. The allure of these objects is born from the fact that they are not easily defined or categorized. Instead, they require a level of contemplation and understanding that is often overlooked in the quest for simplicity. These objects, much like life itself, are complex and multifaceted, leaving behind a lingering sense of curiosity and intrigue. For me, it is within this grey area where true beauty hides.

Thorns often symbolize pain, suffering, and protection in various cultures and religions. In a poetic context, thorns can symbolize various themes and emotions, often representing the dual nature of beauty and pain or the coexistence of love and suffering.

Thorns serve as a natural defense mechanism for plants, protecting them from predators. In poetry, they may symbolize the need for self-preservation or the barriers people create to guard themselves from emotional harm.

They are often associated with roses, which are symbols of love and beauty. In context of my thesis work, thorns can represent the pain and challenges that sometimes accompany love and relationships, emphasizing the idea that beauty can be intertwined with suffering.

The beauty of love lies in its contradicting nature; it can bring both joy and pain simultaneously. I think this notion is beautifully symbolized by thorns, the painful but necessary elements of a rose. To emphasize this sweet burden of love, I decided to put gold luster on the thorns, bringing attention to their significance in the name of love. It also emphasizes the depth of feelings and emotions one is willing to endure for the sake of love.
The intangible but undeniably magical connection between people fascinates me. It is this connection that brings meaning to our existence and enables us to navigate the world around us.

Embodied in each thread is the memory and energy of the experiences they represent, and I find it fascinating to delve into their intricate webs. Through my thesis work, I have sought to infuse these threads with symbolic meaning, to shed light on the invisible yet ever-present connections that exist between us. It is through these ties that I believe we can understand ourselves, our place in the world, and the ways in which we are all interconnected.

The needle aspect, for me, can encompass a wide range of meanings. It may symbolize the delicate balance between pain and pleasure, or the fine lines that connect seemingly disparate ideas or cultures. To me, the needle is a meaningful and multifaceted concept, one that invites exploration and reflection.
In this particular piece, I used magnet as a tool to add an element of attraction and a touch of magic. The vessel was designed in two separate parts, complete with a lid that could be opened and closed. By fusing the magnet’s attraction with the pink glaze, I was able to create a unique aesthetic that speaks volumes to audiences.

Magnets are known for their ability to attract and repel objects based on their magnetic polarity. In poetry, they can symbolize the powerful pull of attraction, desire, or passion between individuals.

As magnets have two poles, north and south, that attract or repel each other based on their polarity, they can symbolize the concept of opposites and duality in life. This can include the balance between light and dark, love and hate, or any other contrasting elements that coexist within the human experience. It operates through invisible forces that can’t be seen but can be felt. This can symbolize the mysterious and intangible aspects of life, such as emotions, intuition, or spirituality, that influence our actions and decisions.
My Chinese given name, “Yidan,” holds great significance to me. Gifted to me by my father when I came into this world, the name simply means a dot of red. Born in February when winter slowly gave way to the first signs of spring, my name has always been a reminder of the unique role I play in the lives of those around me. I’ve come to cherish the significance of my name, and in my thesis work, I have incorporated its essence as a symbol of my true self.
The acrylic ball in my works is a multifaceted symbol that evokes bubbles, water drops, streams of thoughts, and emotions of longing. It infuses an overall dream-like quality to the artwork that captivates the viewers. I have used hook eyes to firmly and securely position acrylic balls on the wall, and my placement design enhances the sense of the degradation of identity while simultaneously creating an everlasting connection.

In an eternal dance, the connection lingers, never to fade into the abyss.
Green + White = Pink
PROCESS DOCUMENTATION
MIRROR FRAME BONE STRUCTURE
SCULPTURE MAKING PROCESS

Leather hard

Before bisque

After glazing
wheel Throwing
Green + White = Pink
Dora Chen

Green + White = Pink

Five Poisons, 2022
Ceramic, thorn branch
71"x18"x10"
The title of this collection of work, “Five Poisons,” has been inspired by an intriguing myth in ancient Chinese culture that revolves around the five most poisonous animals. These animals, centipede, scorpion, snake, toad and gecko, have been considered symbols of death and danger. However, I have given my own twist to the myth by swapping the last two animals with those that frequently appears in my father’s paintings - spider and bat.

What captivated me the most was the remarkable significance that Chinese people gave to these animals. Despite their toxicity, they are believed to possess profound meaning and symbolism. This can be seen in their frequent appearance in patterns and paintings in China, as well as in the creation of jewelry design elements.

There is a Chinese idiom that translates to “the law of physics dictates a rebound.” It means that, in the physical world, any action will produce an equal and opposite reaction. This principle comes from Newton’s Third Law of Motion, which states that for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. In Chinese culture, this idiom is often used figuratively to suggest that a person’s actions or behavior can have unforeseen consequences or ramifications.

The phenomenon of extremes reversing their course is a fascinating concept that can be observed in various aspects of life. The transformation of the representation of five poisonous animals is a prime example of this phenomenon. From being regarded as deadly and dangerous to become objects of admiration, these creatures have undergone a complete reversal of their status.

The transformation of them from symbols of danger and negativity to objects of admiration and beauty begs the question of what is the “right” way to understand them. This shift carries a profound impact on human relationships and interactions as well, highlighting the power of perspective. Which is the reason I created this series.
As a student at RISD, I have had the unique opportunity to work with real animal specimens from the nature lab, allowing me to engage with my subject matter on a level of intimacy that cannot be replicated in textbooks or images. As a ceramic artist, this invaluable experience provides me with a unique opportunity to create sculptures that resemble the intricacies of the natural world. By studying real-life subjects up close, I am able to draw inspiration from their anatomical features and craft pieces that accurately represent the subtle curves and contours of the living creatures I encounter.
Spider Vase Sculpting Process
In Chinese culture, the presence of a spider, especially in the morning, is considered a good omen, signifying that happiness and wealth will come to the household. This belief stems from the fact that spiders usually construct their webs at night, so seeing one in the morning suggests that it has brought luck overnight. The way spiders patiently wait for their prey to become trapped in their webs symbolizes patience and strategic thinking. These qualities may be represented by the spider in traditional Chinese paintings.
Snake Vase Sculpting Process
In Chinese mythology, snake deities and spirits are often considered protectors of sacred spaces, such as temples and homes. Snakes are believed to ward off evil spirits and bring good luck to those they protect. It is also associated with yin energy in Chinese culture, representing feminine qualities such as intuition, patience, and sensitivity. This connection to yin energy links the snake to the moon and water elements, reinforcing its mystical and mysterious nature.
Scorpion Vase Sculpting Process
While scorpions may have a fearsome reputation in Chinese culture, their symbolic meanings also encompass a range of positive attributes that highlight their strength, courage, and protective nature.
Centipede Vase Sculpting Process
Centipedes are considered powerful protectors in Chinese culture, believed to ward off evil spirits and negative energies. They are often associated with guarding sacred spaces, such as temples and homes, as well as offering protection to individuals who carry centipede amulets or talismans.

The centipede's many legs are often seen as a symbol of balance and harmony, representing the ability to maintain equilibrium in different aspects of life.
Bat Vase Sculpting Process
The word for “bat” in Chinese is pronounced “fú,” which is a homophone for the word “blessing” or “fortune.” In Chinese traditional watercolor paintings, bats often appear as elegant and auspicious symbols, bringing good fortune, happiness. Bats are sometimes depicted in groups of five, representing the Five Blessings – longevity, wealth, health, love of virtue, and a peaceful death. This grouping emphasizes the bat’s role as a harbinger of good fortune and happiness in various aspects of life.
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And Then There Were None, 2023
Ceramic, gold luster, wood
34"x31"x5"
Green + White = Pink
Dora Chen
Green + White = Pink
Green + White = Pink

Dora Chen
Green + White = Pink
Dora Chen
THANK YOU