

Fashioning Chinese History:

Chinese Fashion Archives in the Twenty-First Century

Submitted for the Degree of
<PhD> / <School of Humanity> / <Doctor of Design History>
At the Royal College of Art

2024

Mo Shi

© [Mo Shi] [2024].

This thesis is copyright material and no quotation from it may be published without proper acknowledgement.

Copyright Statement

This thesis represents partial submission for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy/ Master of Philosophy at the Royal College of Art. I confirm that the work presented here is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

During the period of registered study in which this thesis was prepared the author has not been registered for any other academic award or qualification. The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.

Abstract

Key words: Fashion, Archive, History, China, the 21st Century

What is an archive? Canadian archivist Terry Cook portrayed the archive as a ' "house of memory" ', and through it, 'society may be nursed to healthy and creative maturity'.[1] British archivist Louise Craven suggested that archives represent identity, heritage and culture.[2] However, the functions and purposes of an archive are not fixed - they are malleable and transmutable. A fashion archive is one type of archive possessing the major features that Cook and Craven described, yet in the fashion industry it plays several differing roles. China can be considered a relative latecomer within the competitive global fashion market, as it first developed into a major manufacturing centre in the 1980s. It's only since the mid-1990s that Chinese brands have started to encompass more elements of the global fashion industry, and within this new environment fashion archives are steadily developing.

This project addresses the archive, and asks the following main research questions: What is a fashion archive in China? And how do Chinese fashion professionals understand history through their archives? These questions lead to an investigation of how Chinese fashion professionals are writing their own history through the creation and use of archives. This research will unveil how Chinese fashion professionals understand history through fashion industry practice, based on the analysis of their methodology of creating history and historical records through their activities.

This project will use interviews with a broad selection of Shanghai fashion professionals

1 Terry Cook, "What is Past is Prologue: A History of Archival Ideas since 1989, and the Future Paradigm Shift", *Archivaria*, The Journal of the Association of Canadian Archivists 43 (Spring 1997), 17-63 (pp. 18).

2 Louise Craven, ' From the Archivist's Cardigan to the Very Dead Sheep: What are Archives? What are Archivists? What do They Do?', in *What are Archives? Cultural and Theoretical Perspectives: A Reader*, ed. by Louise Craven (Oxford: Routledge, 2017), p. 8.

to unravel the definitions and roles of fashion archives within the contemporary Chinese fashion system, leading to an understanding of the conditions within which fashion archives are emerging in China. This reevaluation of the nature of the archives may help to reveal the logic of history and memory-making in the Chinese fashion system.

Table of Contents

COPYRIGHT STATEMENT 2

ABSTRACT 3

LIST OF FIGURES: 8

LIST OF TABLES: 17

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 18

INTRODUCTION 20

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES 23

CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE 27

LITERATURE REVIEW 28

Archive in Western critical theories 29

Practical archive theories 33

HISTORICAL CONTEXT 42

Fashion archives in Europe 42

Fashion archives in China 54

DEFINITION OF THE ARCHIVE IN MY RESEARCH 63

RESEARCH AREA: THE CHINESE FASHION CAPITAL SHANGHAI 65

RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES 67

The development of Interview methods 68

The method of Interviewee selection 72

Participant Observation and reflexivity 75

Designing the interview questions 78

Fieldwork and interview sample size and process 81

THE STRUCTURE OF THIS THESIS 85

FINAL REMARK 87

CHAPTER ONE: WHAT IS A FASHION ARCHIVE IN CHINA? 89

CONTEMPORARY CHINESE FASHION 92

Contemporary Chinese society and the fashion industry 92

Chinese Fashion and Orientalism 100

The Chinese fashion system 102

ARCHIVE STUDY IN CHINA 106

ARCHIVES IN CHINA (SINCE THE 1990S) 110

WHAT DO THE YOUNG FASHION DESIGNERS CALL AN 'ARCHIVE' IN CHINESE? 116

Where did the participants first encounter an archive?....122
Chinese fashion archives categories....124
A fashion designer's archive....125
Archives in manufacturing (Or, 'factories')....129
Archives in the retail environment....133
Archives in new business models....137
How has my research affected the use of 'archive' in Shanghai?....141
Conclusion....145
CHAPTER TWO: MATERIALITY IN THE CHINESE FASHION ARCHIVE....147
Materiality and the fashion archive....149
The space and location....151
Independent designers....154
Large scale fashion companies....162
Materiality and the role of the fashion archive....173
Material as historical evidence....173
Material as collective memory....184
Conclusion....204
CHAPTER THREE: GATEKEEPING AND CHINESE FASHION ARCHIVES....208
Fashion system and Field....211
Gatekeeping, gatekeeper, gate and field....215
Digital archive....220
Fashion boutiques as gatekeepers in Shanghai....223
The appraisal method of Labelhood....238
The function of Labelhood's archive....243
The future of the Labelhood digital archive....252
The Chinese fashion system and gatekeeping....256
How fashion designers' archives play the role as gatekeeper....258
Shushu Tong and Archive....259
Conclusion:....265
CHAPTER FOUR: COMMERCIALIZATION OF ARCHIVE FASHION....269
Revisiting the value of the archive in fashion business....272
Second-hand/vintage/archive/Grail....275

NINON STUDIO AND NEW BUSINESS MODELS FOR THE ARCHIVE 282
The emergence of Ninon Studio *283*
Social media and promoting the archive *293*
The changes in Ninon Archive's business plan *301*
The New Ninon Archive and its exhibition *303*
From Ninon Archive to CoFI *319*
CONCLUSION 322
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION 325
APPENDIX 1 332

List of Figures:

Introduction:

Figure 0- 1: Photocopy of the only two 'designer file' scrapbooks that Ying Pei used to borrow from LCF Library, now kept in LCF archive. These two books are about British lingerie designer Janet Reger. [Source: image taken by LCF assistant librarian Alice Dowhyj, November, 2023.]..... 21

Figure 0- 2: Photo of archive room in Yingpei Studio office in Shanghai. [Source: Image taken by Mo Shi, Jan, 2021.]..... 22

Figure 0- 3: Photo of mood board in Yingpei Studio office in Shanghai. [Source: Image taken by Mo Shi, Jan, 2021.]..... 22

Figure 0- 4: Photo of Dior Heritage. [Source: Photo by Xavier Granet https://wwd.com/feature/dior-milestone-archive-christian-dior-john-galliano-raf-simons-10997278/] 47

Figure 0- 5: Top floor of McQueen flagship store in London holding exhibition 'Rose'. [Source: https://wwd.com/fashion-news/fashion-scoops/alexander-mcqueen-debuts-roses-exhibition-bond-street-1203381425/]..... 51

Figure 0- 6: Inside Metersbonwe's museum in Shanghai, with exhibition of garments from Qing Dynasty. [Source: https://m.jiemian.com/article/5787052.html]. 59

Chapter One

Figure 1- 1: Left side image: at bottom of the text including archive POP-UP store.....144

Figure 1- 2: Right side image: Fiu Gallery defined what is archive through using Japanese buyer boutique store they collaborated for INNERSECT exhibition as example. [Source: Fiu Gallery WeChat public account,

November, 2019]. 144

Chapter Two

Figure 2- 1 Shanghai map (designer studio location) [Source: Created by Mo Shi, September 2023.] 155
Figure 2- 2: Photo of archive room in Yingpei Studio office in Shanghai. The white cardboard boxes stored past season samples, the black plastic boxes stored textile samples [Source: Image taken by Mo Shi, Jan, 2021.] 157
Figure 2- 3: Photo of archive room in Yingpei Studio office in Shanghai. Multiple white cardboard boxes and black plastic boxes been put in order on the left side. [Source: Image taken by Mo Shi, Jan, 2021.].....157
Figure 2- 4: Photo of sample collection in Yingpei Studio office in Shanghai. [Source: Image taken by Mo Shi, Jan, 2021.] 158
Figure 2- 5: Photo of sitting area of Roundface's office in Shanghai. [Source: Image taken by Mo Shi, Jan, 2021.].....160
Figure 2- 6: Photo of the display area in Roundface's office in Shanghai. [Source: Image taken by Mo Shi, Jan, 2021.] 160
Figure 2- 7 Shanghai map (factory) [Source: Created by Mo Shi, September 2023.] 162
Figure 2- 8: Photo of a corner in the Sandriver factor. [Source: Image taken by Mo Shi, Feb, 2021.] 163
Figure 2- 9: Another area of Sandriver's factory with large machine and computer installations. [Source: Image taken by Mo Shi, Feb, 2021.] ...164
Figure 2- 10: Xiuling Guo's office desk in factory and her notebooks that recorded data for spinning machine in factory. [Source: Image taken by Mo Shi, Feb, 2021.] 164
Figure 2- 11: Map of Shenzhen and its distance to Hong Kong. [Cropped from

Goggle map, May, 2023.] 165
Figure 2- 12 Shanghai's distance to Hangzhou and Guangdong province. [Cropped from Goggle map, May, 2023.] 165
Figure 2- 13:Map of the location of Zhongshan [Cropped from Goggle map, May, 2023.] 167
Figure 2- 14: Photo of Vintage and Republic's office in Zhongshan, Hui Zhan and I sat in left area in the photo during the interview. The café bar locates at where the man with white t-shirt standing. [Source: Photo by Vintage and Republic, October, 2019.] 170
Figure 2- 15 Photo of the angle of the Zhong Shan office ground floor. [Source: Photo by Vintage and Republic, October 2019.] 170
Figure 2- 16: Photo of the second floor furniture workshop room [Source: Photo by Vintage and Republic, October 2019.] 171
Figure 2- 17: the Vintage and Republic's archive room. [Source: Photo taken by Mo Shi, February, 2021.] 171
Figure 2- 18: the Vintage and Republic's sample room. [Source: Photo taken by Mo Shi, February, 2021.] 172
Figure 2- 19: A corner of the products archive collection. [Source: Photo taken by Mo Shi, February, 2021.] 172
Figure 2- 20: Vintage and Republic products with 'Made in China' sign and print in the 1980s style. [Source: Photo taken by Mo Shi, February, 2021.] 173
Figure 2- 21: Xiuling Guo's 90s notebook with weave code and styles. [Source: Image taken by Mo Shi, February, 2021.] 176
Figure 2- 22: Another Xiuling Guo's 90s notebook with instruction on sewing and measurements. Through the cover, [Source: Image taken by Mo Shi, February, 2021.] 177
Figure 2- 23: Early textile sample in Xiuling Guo's office in Sandriver's factory. [Source: Image taken by Mo Shi, February, 2021.] 177
Figure 2- 24: Textile sample in the designer team's office in Sandriver's factory.

[Source: Image taken by Mo Shi, February, 2021.].....178
Figure 2- 25: the Roaring Wild sample collection. [Source: Photo taken by Mo Shi, February, 2021.].....181
Figure 2- 26 : One of Binggan's personal collections in the company's sample collection. [Source: Photo taken by Mo Shi, February, 2021.].....181
Figure 2- 27: The garment bag has information of the brand's name, product information and its condition. [Source: Photo taken by Mo Shi, February, 2021.].....182
Figure 2- 28: Photo of Roaring Wild 2018A/W collection [Source: Roaring Wild Wechat account, https://weibo.com/1770439040/4291729781540956?wm=3333_2001&from=10DC293010&sourcetype=weixin&featurecode=newtitle&s_trans=1680890551_4291729781540956&s_channel=4.].....182
Figure 2- 29: sportwear, military outfits and a bus conductor's ticket purse. [Source: Photo taken by Mo Shi, February, 2021.].....187
Figure 2- 30: archive pieces in the archive collection, including raincoats Zhan showed me during interview. [Source: Photo taken by Mo Shi, February, 2021.].....188
Figure 2- 31: Photo of Vintage & Republic bestseller military coat, posted by its official Xiaohongshu account with title '中国人血脉崛起的人生衣服！'(the lifetime clothes rising the blood of Chinese people!). [Source: Xiaohongshu Platform, https://www.xiaohongshu.com/explore/658900bf000000000700a566].....189
Figure 2- 32: Photo of Vintage & Republic newly opened café in Beijing. [Source: Photo by Vintage & Republic, February, 2021.].....190
Figure 2- 33 : Vintage & Republic product with slogan '自己动手丰衣足食' (procure ample food and clothing through our own labour). [Source: Photo taken by Mo Shi, February, 2021.].....191

Figure 2- 34: The red armband belongs to a militiaman in the railway office, with number 0055. [Source: Photo taken by Mo Shi, February, 2021.] 193
Figure 2- 35: Photo of the Red Flag Farm package. [Photo taken by Mo Shi, 10 February 2021.] 194
Figure 2- 36: Details of the marks on denim trousers. [Source: Photo taken by Mo Shi, February, 2021.] 196
Figure 2- 37: Photo of book The Vintage Showroom: An Archive of Menswear. The example in this book has similar feature and emphasis as V&R's archive. [Source: Photo taken by Nick, https://welldresseddad.com/2015/12/18/review-the-vintage-showroom-an-archive-of-menswear-by-gunn-luckett/.] 198
Figure 2- 38: Photo of inner page of Red Flag Farm harvest event in 2022. See the Vintage & Republic canvas shoes on right page, participant wearing hat with Chinese word of Red Flag Farm on it. [Source: Photo taken by Yesheng Laoma, Weibo platform, https://weibo.com/1882942343/4836108888445028?wm=3333_2001&from=10DC293010&sourcetype=weixin&s_trans=1680890551_4836108888445028&s_channel=4] 199
Figure 2- 39: Photo of inner page of Red Flag Farm harvest event in 2022. See the Vintage & Republic mugs with brand logo at bottom image. These four photos show a banquet table of the event. [Source: Photo taken by Yesheng Laoma, Weibo platform, https://weibo.com/1882942343/4836108888445028?wm=3333_2001&from=10DC293010&sourcetype=weixin&s_trans=1680890551_4836108888445028&s_channel=4] 200
Figure 2- 40: Upper images are Vintage and Republic's Taobao and TMall shops (. Below image is a Taobao store with the same name as Vintage and Republic's Chinese name. See the shop's name from left top of each image. [Source: Cropped from Taobao App by Mo Shi, May, 2023.].....203
Figure 2- 41: Similar products in both stores, left is VR, right is the same name

store. [Source: Cropped from Taobao App by Mo Shi, May, 2023.].....204

Chapter Three

Figure 3- 1: the transformation of power in different field. [Image created by Mo Shi, March, 2023.].....213
Figure 3- 2: Image from Kurt Lewin's work describe how groups reach the goal. 218
Figure 3- 3: Three founders of Labelhood, Charles Wang (left), Tasha Liu (middle) and Lang Nan (right). [Source: https://m.jiemian.com/article/410072.html].....225
Figure 3- 4: The current structure of management level in Labelhood. [Source: Cropped from Chinese commercial inquiry platform Tianyancha 天眼查.] 226
Figure 3- 5: Labelhood Shanghai store at Fumin Road. [Source: Photo by i-D VICE.cn, https://www.heavenraven.com/2018/07/03/labelhood-nan-lang-the-flocks/.].....229
Figure 3- 6: Labelhood Guangzhou store. [Source: Photo by Courtesy, https://wwd.com/feature/shenzhen-and-guangzhou-chinas-must-know-southern-powerhouses-1203700599/.] 230
Figure 3- 7: Image of XC273 store in October 2022. [Source: Photo by Chao Yun Lo, https://wwd.com/business-news/retail/three-new-local-stores-launch-during-shanghai-fashion-week-1235366028/.].....236
Figure 3- 8: Outside look of R130 store, [Source: Photo taken by Mo Shi, May, 2023.] 237
Figure 3- 9: Display at the entrance of R130 store. [Source: Photo taken by Mo Shi, May, 2023.].....237
Figure 3- 10: (Left) Labelhood digital archive page, front page listed designer in alphabetical order. [Source: Cropped from WeChat by Mo Shi, March,

2023.] 246
Figure 3- 11: (Right) Brand list in alphabetical order the Vogue Runway app. [Source: Cropped from the Vogue Runway App by Mo Shi, March, 2023.] 246
Figure 3- 12: (Left) The page of brand Shushu Tong in Labelhood online archive. [Source: Cropped from WeChat by Mo Shi, March, 2023.] 247
Figure 3- 13: (Right) The page of designer on Vogue Runway, e.g. Sting Goya[Source: Cropped from the Vogue Runway App by Mo Shi, November, 2023.] 247
Figure 3- 14: (Left) The introduction page Shushu Tong in Labelhood archive. [Source: Cropped from WeChat by Mo Shi, March, 2023.].....248
Figure 3- 15: (Right) Runway review of brands in Vogue Runway App, e.g.: NO.21. [Source: Cropped from the Vogue Runway App by Mo Shi, March, 2023.] 248
Figure 3- 16: Uma Wang ss22 collection[Source: Photo by Courtesy Alessandro, https://wwd.com/fashion-news/shows-reviews/gallery/uma-wang-rtw-spring-1235363791/.].....255
Figure 3- 17:Shushu Tong 2022 Spring/ Summer collection. [Source: Photo by Courtesy, https://www.harpersbazaar.com/uk/fashion/shows-trends/a38147225/shushu-tong-shanghai-fashion/.] 255

Chapter Four

Figure 4- 1: Inside Brain and Suga's rental place, the archive collection and the silver background they use as cataloging background. [Source: Photo taken by Mo Shi, January, 2021].....292
Figure 4- 2: One conner of the room with piles of clothes. [Source: Photo taken by Mo Shi, January, 2021.].....293
Figure 4- 3: 11 videos in Suga's Bilibili channel. [Source: Cropped from Bilibili

website by Mo Shi, May, 2023].....296
Figure 4- 4: Blacksuga's 抖音 Douyin （also called Tiktok in English）account. [Source: Image cropped by Mo Shi, May, 2023.].....297
Figure 4- 5: Photo of Ninon Archive's exhibition in Xiansuo. The name of the exhibition on left side wall. [Source: Photo provided by Brain, May, 2023.] 305
Figure 4- 6: The new Ninon Archive space and the exhibition. [Source: Photo provided by Brain, May, 2023.].....306
Figure 4- 7: Photograph at the Palais Galleria fashion museum in Paris. [Source: Photo by Annabel Wlston, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/18/t-magazine/fashion-house-archives-inspiration.html].....309
Figure 4- 8: French influencer visits Dior heritage archive. [Source: https://www.filigranearchives.com/en/news/archival/dior-heritage-archives-et-fashion].....310
Figure 4- 9: (left) Mr Dior in House of Dior studio wearing white lab coat. [Source: https://www.harpersbazaar.com/it/bellezza/make-up/a42483000/chi-era-mitzah-bricard-musa-dior-dedica-la-sua-nuova-collezione-make-up/].....310
Figure 4- 10：(right) Yves saint Laurent in House of Dior wearing white coat. [Source: https://media.vogue.it/oldstaticized/en/news/encyclo/designers/s/yves-saint-laurent].....311
Figure 4- 11: The Maison Martin Margiela team in 2008, with an empty seat for Martin Margiela. Photographed by Annie Leibovitz, *Vogue*, September 2008. [Source: https://www.yahoo.com/lifestyle/martin-margiela-own-words-tells-133000265.html?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly9sZW5zLmdvb2dsZS5jb20v&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAI_Uhf3PWYOUnK2DerlnD3P91NRTaEm2J5xgAI520LldkuF-

Usa_tiD3X_JYYUmARZaqa5OV2cMDK6RfWejv3JCwP6r4IBtAFzhQFzu4kU
NiRsfVxLBFhiPT2VyVA2k3WRkUa8A1BlVcvY9iFNbh6oxZj8GMtc94f5NU
A_nlStQG] 311
Figure 4- 12: Inside the Ninon Archive Room, Suga open the archive shelves. [Source: Image cropped by Mo Shi from Suga's video in her Bilibili account, May, 2023.] 312

List of Tables:

Table 1: Classification of archive institutions in China [Source: created by Mo Shi, September 2023]. 111

Table 2: diagram of participants answer regarding to interview question: Do you know the word archive? [Source: created by Mo Shi, September 2023] 117

Table 3: the number of participant use each Chinese terms [Source: Created by Mo Shi, September 2023] 118

Table 4: the list of Chinese terms refer to archive been used by participants [Source: Created by Mo Shi, September 2023] 119

Acknowledgements

Over the course of my PhD study, I have received intellectual support from a number of individuals. It is my pleasure to be able to thank them here.

Firstly, thank you to my supervisors, Sarah Cheang, Sarah Teasley, Catherine Dormor and Josie Kane for their exchange of ideas and knowledge and engaging with the topic, as well as for their generosity of their time and enthusiastic dedication to helping me shape, improve, and complete this project.

I would like to acknowledge the principal institutions and private companies that I received assistance from for my research: Donghua University, China National Silk Museum, Guangzhou Academy of Fine Art, Contemporary Fashion Institution, Labelhood, Vintage and Republic, Sandriver, Roaring Wild, STAFFONLY and Ying Pei Studio. I would also like to thank the archivist and librarian in the London College of Fashion archive for their generous support and help.

This thesis has benefited greatly from discussions and exchanges with Professor Xiangyang Bian, for providing insightful knowledge about the Shanghai fashion industry; Professor Yangbo Wu, for providing opportunities to connect with the Guangzhou fashion industry; Dr Tianyi Song, for her kind support on sharing unpublished official reports about the Shanghai fashion industry; He Shan, curator at China National Silk Museum, who kindly allowed me to use the internal library; and Dr Yuangui He, Professor at Guangzhou University of Foreign Studies, for sharing her insights and knowledge of the Chinese economy.

I am grateful to my former course leader and teacher Professor Shaun Cole and Professor Amy De la Haye, who both supported me to shape the ideas behind this research; Jane Pritchard, curator of Dance at the Victoria and Albert Museum; Tara Tierney, former colleague at Net-a-Porter; Dr Natascha Radclyffe-Thomas and Dr

Francesca Bonetti for their support with my research.

I would like to thank Tasha Liu, co-founder of Labelhood, for her kind support and generous help to introduce Chinese fashion designers; Brain La and Suga Zhang, for their openness to be my long-term participants; Xiaoyu Wang, Ying Pei, Shimo Zhou, Une Yea, for introducing Shanghai based fashion designers and sharing their insightful knowledge of the Shanghai fashion industry; Nicole Xu, former staff at Showroom, and Sue Guo, SKP buyer director, for introducing Chinese designers and providing generous support in interviews; Yaning Shi, director of R130, for her kind support and share her insight knowledge of the nature of buyer boutique in Shanghai.

I would like to offer special thanks to Daniel Widdicombe for dedicatedly reading all my writing and providing support throughout this project. Thanks to Elody Guo, Xinyu Ren and Sally Cheung for sharing their personal expertise and insightful knowledge of the fashion industry in China. Dr Yang Chen (Sol), Dr Amanda Zhang, Dr Leren Li, Dr Amy Hetherington and Viviane Yao, Huicui Miao who supported my research in numerous ways, including sharing their invaluable intellectual insights and providing many helpful personal introductions.

Introduction

Ying Pei is a Chinese fashion designer who began her studies at the London College of Fashion (LCF) in 2013. Her first experience with a fashion archive was at the LCF Library, which inspired her to establish her own archive when she started her own business in Shanghai, after graduating with a Masters Degree in 2015. During my interview with Ying Pei, she told me that she used to borrow the 'designer file', which she recognized as part of the archive collection from the College's library. However, as a fashion history student who studied at the same period with her in LCF, I never encountered this collection.

In order to understand exactly what she described to me and to discover the connection between the LCF archive - the source of her inspiration - and the reality of her own archive she created in China, I revisited the LCF Library to examine the original archive collection in 2022.

I discovered that the 'designer file' she had borrowed was actually a collection of clippings and scrapbooks of fashion reports from newspapers and magazines put together by hand by a librarian each season (Fig 0-1). Sometime after Ying Pei borrowed from the designers' file they were removed from the library and are now stored in the LCF archive rooms, due to copyright issues which prevented the collection from gaining a wider audience after digitization. Although this LCF 'designer file' archive collection is discontinued, the impact of the concept of using fashion archives to support study and research while creating new collections was still crucial to the extension of Ying Pei's own career.

Ying Pei is a typical example of one type of participant in this PhD research project, particularly those participants with overseas study experience who then returned to mainland China to begin a business (Fig 0-2). Some of them encounter fashion archives in universities but have a rather blurred impression of them. Many also

had experience working in UK or European fashion houses; experience which led them to gain a clearer image of what the fashion archive represents within the Western fashion system. On the other hand, designers who have studied and worked solely in mainland China may have a different understanding of the archive, with regards to what to collect, how it should be preserved and even why it should be preserved.

Through exploring the status of both groups' understanding of archives this project aims to answer the following main research questions: What is a fashion archive in mainland China? And what does a fashion archive mean in the Chinese context?



Figure 0- 1: Photocopy of the only two 'designer file' scrapbooks that Ying Pei used to borrow from LCF Library, now kept in LCF archive. These two books are about British lingerie designer Janet Reger. [Source: image taken by LCF assistant librarian Alice Dowhyj, November, 2023.]



Figure 0- 2: Photo of archive room in Yingpei Studio office in Shanghai. [Source: Image taken by Mo Shi, Jan, 2021.]

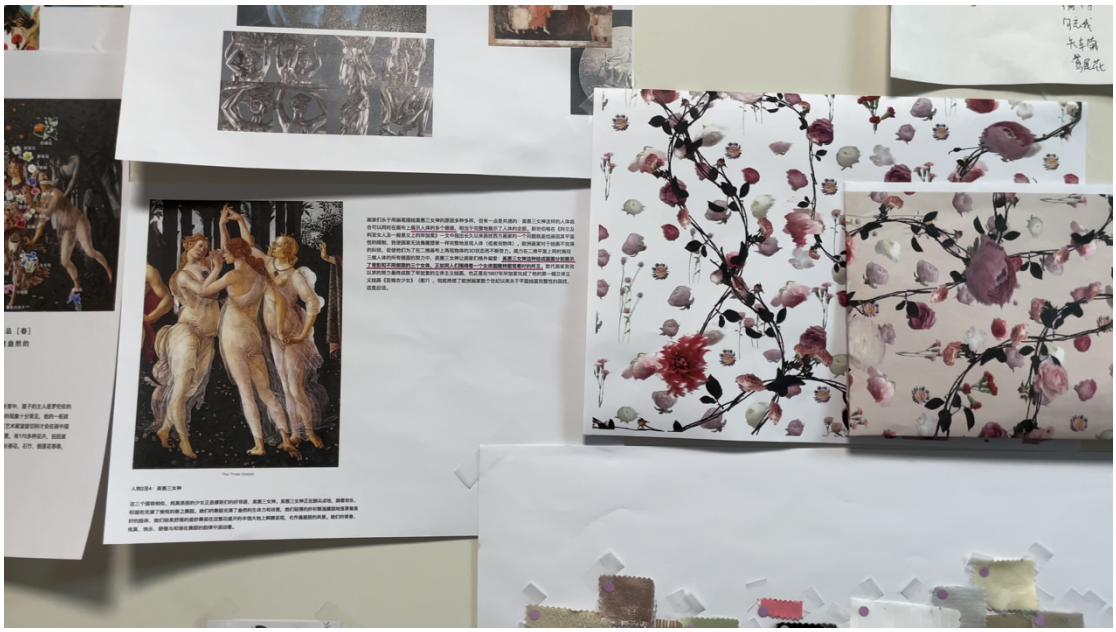


Figure 0- 3: Photo of mood board in Yingpei Studio office in Shanghai. [Source: Image taken by Mo Shi, Jan, 2021.]

Research objectives

This project centers on the current condition of Chinese fashion archives founded since 2000 and based in the Chinese fashion capital, Shanghai, or those involved in Shanghai Fashion Week. Therefore, this research has a specific focus on corporate fashion archives rather than State archives such as museum archives or archives belonging to the domestic education system, which are normally directly influenced by the State's power. It is also an investigation of the way Chinese fashion professionals write history, which reveals their understanding of history through their own fashion archives. Through this investigation and the analysis of its findings, this thesis further examines how power impacts the framework of the fashion archives in the Chinese fashion system, the significant value of fashion archives in the Chinese fashion industry, and how archives connect the past, present and future of China.

Given the complex historical and cultural background of China, it is essential to first identify a definition of an archive as well as support an open understanding of the nature of fashion archives in China. The direct translation of the English word 'archive' does not fully cover the definition of archive in Chinese, which is 档案 'dang'an' in official usage.[3] The word dang'an is not commonly accepted by professionals in the Chinese fashion industry to refer to an archive, as it is seen to have a strong connection with State power in the Chinese context. At the same time the English word 'archive' has been adapted in China as a commercialised marketing term in the niche contemporary fashion market to enhance perceived value when compared to vintage fashion.

[3] Archive. Def.1. Xin Niujin Yinghan Shuangjie Da Cidian 新牛津英汉双解大词典(The New Oxford English-Chinese Dictionary App version) (Shanghai: Shanghai Haidi Digital Publishing Technology, 2023); "档案 Dangan". Def. 1. Xiandai Hanyu Cidian 现代汉语词典(Contemporary Chinese dictionaries 7th edition App version) (China: The Commercial Press: 2023)

This research considers using a relatively broad definition of the archive – namely, materials collected for a certain purpose and organized in a certain order. This definition allows for an examination of various types of fashion archives in China. Importantly, even when participants do not explicitly consider their collections as archives, this inclusive definition provides flexibility for them to reconsider the meaning and value of archives. Because it is equally as important to identify absence as it is to establish presence.

In order to further investigate the nature of Chinese fashion archives it requires an extension beyond pure terminology. Fundamental questions about "why, what and how" arise, echoing the insights of French philosopher Derrida's discussions regarding the 'death drive', which unravels the motivations that drive humans to collect – rooted in a fear of loss.[4] A fear of loss of the evidence that defines our identity, our journeys and our life. An archive collection thus satisfies the need to write the history of its owner as a way of counteracting the fear of loss. However, in this research, some of the 'death drive' might come from the fear of losing out in the competitive fashion market.

Building upon the death drive concept, this research further explores the power entangled in the wider cultural environment that impacts Chinese fashion professionals as they conduct their archival practices. The entangled power, which appears in every step of creating an archive, is one of the key points of analysis in this project. As the French philosopher and historian Michel Foucault suggested, histories 'do not come about of themselves, but are always the result of a construction of the rules…'.[5] The rules are affected by the political system, cultural tradition and social ideology, which together weave a complex power

[4] Jacques Derrida, 'Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression', *Diacritics*, 25.2 (1995), 9 <https://doi.org/10.2307/465144>, p. 13.
[5] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, (Oxford: Routledge, 2002), p. 28.

system. Chinese fashion archives that store fragments of Chinese history were formulated under the power of the rules.

This theory of power leads to an investigation into the impact of educational background and social ideology on fashion professionals' understanding about history, either as a type of historical evidence, a memory of society or a functional business tool. Taken in combination with the analysis of physical material in the archives in the selected case studies in this research, they reveal the significant external power that shapes the framework of Chinese fashion archives. Within this framework, the location of the archives, the inherent space within the archive, and the selection and exclusion of materials in the established archives all provide insight into the appraisal methods of fashion archives in China.

In order to create a suitable sample range for this research, I have selected forty-two cases that cover both those professionals with an overseas background and those with a China-only background. The selected archives therefore represent individuals with a Western educational background - from both Europe and North America - as well those from the Asian education system, including both mainland China and Japan. These cases cover fashion business types including independent designers, large scale companies and retail businesses. By asking a set of designed interview questions I explored the participants' understanding about the archive, the way they use it and their archiving process in daily work. Two additional field work trips to selected archive cases has additionally provided valuable physical information for a deeper insight into the nature of archives in China.

By building and using their archives, Chinese fashion professionals are creating their own perspective of history through fashion. Each archive also reflects how the creators position themselves within the history they present, as well as changes of social ideology in the historical environment. Specific archive cases have been selected, such as Sandriver, Roaring Wild and Vintage & Republic, to

demonstrate how Chinese professionals are connecting the past with both present and future through their archives. By utilizing their archives these professionals are not only creating new fashion products but also redefining the value of history through their own lens of Chinese historical understanding.

The case study of archives created by a gatekeeper, as evidenced by the significant example of Labelhood in this research, examines how the gatekeeper adapts the rules within the Chinese fashion system to gain power, then formulates the archive to harness the power of the 'violence' that Derrida identified, to support the gatekeeper's position.[6] The archive 'violence' is demonstrated through the appraisal method, which depending on the gatekeeper's position and purpose excludes certain information and forces existing information into a certain sequence to create a certain history. This process of creating the archive reveals how the gatekeeper uses the archive as a tool to create a certain history and display its power in order to support its position in the fashion system.

Moreover, distinct from corporate fashion archives, there is the case study of Ninon Archive Studio (which recently changed its name in 2022 to Contemporary Fashion Institution, or CoFI). Ninon is a personal archive that was established based on a new business model – archival fashion. This case study reveals the potential for commercializing a fashion archive in the digital age, and this personal archive also demonstrates an individual perspective of writing history.

Through examining and analysing the primary information from the above case studies, this project identifies the power and violence generated inside and outside Chinese fashion archives, unpacking the logic of the formulation of the archive in both physical and digital formats. These analyses demonstrate how Chinese fashion professionals understand history through fashion archives, which

[6] Jacques Derrida, p. 12.

reveals the meaning of the fashion archive in the Chinese context.

Contribution to Knowledge

The concept of the fashion archive has not previously been explored within the arena of the Chinese fashion industry. This research introduces new knowledge to the archive research field, as it is based on the features of Chinese fashion companies' archives, which differs from other fashion archive research which is mainly focused on non-profit institutions such as museums or educational institutions. Also, following the growth of interest in fashion archives throughout the fashion industry, now is the time to further analyse and understand fashion archives, in order to understand the variety of frameworks within the field, and define the concepts for future development.

This research offers a redefined definition and concept of 'archive' within the context of the Chinese fashion system, through examining diverse types of fashion archives in China and exploring the influence of the educational systems in both China and the West, as well as taking into account cultural and political backgrounds. This conceptual reframing contributes original insights to archive research in both China and the West, which will also provide an opportunity for professionals in the Chinese fashion industry to reconsider the value of archives and history. The analysis of the impact of the educational system in the West and China acknowledges the impact of cultural communication on Chinese social ideology, which provides a significant angle from which to understand the development of the Chinese fashion archive.

The second half of this thesis further identifies and unravels the roles of specific fashion archive cases within the Chinese fashion system, taking into account the relationships and tensions between China's political situation, its rapid economic growth, and the Chinese approach to understanding its history. This section of the

research reevaluates the value of archives, explores diverse approaches to understanding history and reveals the logic of history and memory-making in the Chinese fashion system. These findings provide a wide range of possibilities and multiple angles for both researchers and fashion professionals in China to understand the value of archives as a way of writing history.

This reevaluation of the nature of the archives could encourage the development of fashion archives in the industry, which will support fashion professionals to use fashion archives to connect past, present and future. Through this research, the fashion archive as a memory-making process finds its position in the Chinese fashion system.

Literature Review

An analysis of the condition of fashion archives in China first requires an understanding of the role, the function and the attributes of the archive itself. Through the long arc of its history the archive has progressed from being a tool used by the dominant political power of the day – as a means of writing official histories – to a mechanism that records the memories of general social activity and an individual's life.[7] Based on this change and the development of technology in the new century, the new paradigm of archives then moves on to a 'focus on the context, purpose, intent, interrelationships, functionality, and accountability of the record, its creator, and its creation process, wherever these occur'.[8] Over time, the archive has played multiple roles within human society, raising numerous questions over its fundamental logic and attributes during its various stages of development.

[7] John Ridener, *From Polders to Postmodernism: A Concise History of Archival theory.* (Duluth: Litwin, 2009), pp. 97-99.

[8] Terry Cook, "What is Past is Prologue", 17-63 (p. 49).

Although China has already established modern archive research based on the practice of historical research from the Republic of China in 1912 to the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Chinese critical theory of archive has not been so fully developed. Also, according to contemporary Chinese textbooks, the development of Chinese archives as a subject was accompanied by the support of Western critical theories.[9] Thus, in this literature review I will first be focusing on the critical theories from the Western archive research field. Then the focus will progress on to practical archive theories in China.

Archive in Western critical theories

Many publications on archives attempt to analyse the essence of the archive: the relationship between the archive and history, and the rules and power that emerged from the written history stored in the archive. Many researchers suggested that the concept of the archive was born as a tool to carry rules and power through the writing of history. Science historian Elizabeth Yale, author of *The History of Archive*, emphasises the similarity between archive history and book history, suggesting that the archive originally began with the invention of writing, and its importance can be seen in the Renaissance period, where archives recorded the changes in the society for the regime.[10] Following the development of human society and technology, the archive has grown into a storage of power, where controlling information and history has always been recognized as part of a central regime's core power. As Yale described:

> In particular, recent work in the history of archives has revealed them to be crucial sites for the exercise of political power: archives are a key technology of rule. From sixteenth-century Spain to early twenty-first century South Africa,

[9] Feng Huilin and Zhang Jizhe ed, 冯惠玲 and 张辑哲, *Dangan Xue Gailun* 档案学概论 (An Introduction to Archival study), China: Remin University of China, 2006; Jin Bo 金波, *Danganxue Daolun* 档案学导论 (An Introduction to the Archive Study)(Shanghai: Shanghai University, 2018).
[10] Elizabeth Yale, 'The History of Archive: The State of the Discipline,' In *Book History*, Vol.18 (2015), pp.332-333.

> archives stood at the heart of the empires, nations, commercial companies and religious orders, instructions that have defined the modern world.[11]

Yale also suggested that, due to the new technology of sharing information and changes of social ideology since the Cold War, these powerful archives started to build a strong relationship with ordinary people, by helping the general public to establish ownership and understand their own cultural background with historical evidence. The discussion of the relationship between power and archives in the late 20th century Europe underwent a modern 'archival turn', when Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault's theories laid out implications for archives with further definitions in the critical theory of 'field'. Just as Foucault suggested, to understand and break the rules and systems of power we need to first 'tear away from them their virtual self-evidence, and to free the problems that they cause' .[12] In this research project, understanding the power constructions that formulate understanding of archives in China is a crucial step before further exploration.

Derrida's theory explores the complex relationship between archive, history, identity and violence. His concept about the 'death drive' well explained that collecting an archive is actually a human instinct.[13] The instinctive need to keep traces of one's existence drives human beings to collect during their lifetime. The collection is driven by the human instinct which very often reflects one's life path. In another way, we could call it one's 'history'. Based on Derrida's theory, the archive thus supports individuals in their use of collected memories to confirm their identity.

But Derrida's concept of 'violence' in the archive provides an essential tool for a critical approach to archives, one which could challenge the history and memories

11 Elizabeth Yale, p. 333.
12 Michel Foucault, p. 28.
13 Jacques Derrida, pp. 13-15.

guarded by the archives. At the same time, it transformed the archive from simply a record of history to a container of power.[14] Inside the archive, the collection has been organized into a certain order, to represent a certain type of history, and a certain part has been excluded. All of these follow the rules that are formed based on the purpose of this specific archive. The visitors who enter the archive are exposed to a history that is manipulated by these rules. The visitors are unconsciously controlled by the 'violence' of these rules. As Derrida argued, the violence in the archive forced the audience to accept the archive as the only truth.[15] This is the violence and power of an archive.

Once those with access to the archive start to learn of the existence of its violence, - which controls the way of seeing, the way of knowing - then the archive could be challenged, as could the power that controls the archive.[16] The challenges triggered by archive violence highlight fundamental questions about the archive and power. Even though the displayed power contains fragments of past history, it still triggers questions such as: who has the authority to build an archive? Who decides what should go into the archive? Then, moving on to the contents of the archive, what kind of history does it create, and how does this history affect the audience? How does the perspective of the audience and the archive interact? And what is the impact of the result of this interaction?

All of these questions on the archive are related to the power generated in the archive, power which may have existed before the archive was established and may also last after the archive disappears. This power emanates from the germination of the concept of creating the archive together with the conduct of all the activities carried out within the archive, power which is brought out by the participants from the archive. It is fluid and can be transformed into multiple

[14] Ibid, p. 13.

[15] Ibid, p. 50-51.

[16] Carolyn Steedman, *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History* (Manchester: MUP, 2001), p. 2.

formats.

With regard to the power, Foucault's work provided another analytical tool for researchers who endeavour to deconstruct the elements of power in the archive. Foucault's concept of the archive examined the relationship between power, discourse, knowledge and the archive itself. He argued that archives are not neutral and objective. Instead, archives are formulated based on a system and rules that were created by the owners.[17] Regarding this opinion, both Derrida and Foucault suggested archives largely represent the owner's interest and knowledge and are shaped by their subjective selective process. But Foucault emphasises that the archive belongs to a larger system of knowledge production that is implicated in the power relationship. In the case of Chinese fashion archives, Foucault's theory could support the exploration of a broader analysis of the power system in Chinese society.

In contemporary society, the Occident-centered concept of archive power is facing newly emerging social issues, such as decolonization. Even though the archive is a place that connects the past and the future, it is a question of having to archive under conditions in which archiving has itself become an archival problem. Some researchers have tried to solve this problem. African-American academia and writer Saidiya Hartman tried to find the 'possibility to exceed or negotiate the constitutive limits of the archive', to overtake the limitations of the archive as a selective history that is influenced by subjective appraisal methods.[18] By using the idea of 'what could have been', Hartman rearranges the extremely limited archive materials about an enslaved girl to try to test these possibilities against the limits of the archive. She used her own research and cultural background to reconsider the story that had been neglected by the original archive owner.[19] But she clarified

[17] Michel Foucault, pp. 28-29.
[18] Hartman, Saidiya. Venus in Two Acts*, Small Axe, Number 26,* 12.2 (2008), p. 11.
[19] Ibid, pp. 10-11.

that she failed to solve the problem and, as a result, suggested that critical reading was the current possible solution. In the same vein, a research project focused on China and fashion could be considered as another way to decolonise a Western-centric fashion industry and archive research field.

Practical archive theories

The English word 'archive' encapsulates a long history. The word originally appeared in ancient Greek government writings, originally as 'Arkheion' - a format of document to record the administrative events of the time – and this became the origin of the English word archive.[20] There has been significant self-reflexive research about Western archive practice, such as *The Dutch Manual* that was written by a group of Dutch archivists about their practice in the Netherlands during the 19th century. The Manual is one of the first that brought wide recognition to the importance of original order and records of the creator's voice.[21] The Manual set up the early model of archival management rules. Following these roots, the British archive theorist Sir Hilary Jenkinson's *A Manual of Archive Administration,* published in 1922 after World War I, emphasised the custodial role of the archivist in controlling the origin and ownership of the archive collection. In order to productively increase the efficiency of the archive process under pressure from the Empire's administrators, Jenkinson reduced consideration of the subjective and emphasized the value of the objective over all other approaches in his theory.[22] In 1957, American federal archivist Theodore Roosevelt Schellenberg published *the Modern Archives: Principles and Techniques* which focused on multiple methods of records management based on the writer's background. He introduced a highly efficient appraisal method of government-owned archives from the management perspective.[23]

[20] Jacques Derrida, p. 9.
[21] John Ridener, pp. 21-23
[22] Ibid, pp. 41-42.
[23] Ibid, p. 69.

Each of these milestone archive practice theories were strongly influenced by the time period and new technology that changed the scenario of the archive working format. Contemporary archive theory is also moving forward due to the development of social ideology and technology, such as the computer and the Internet. The archive in this new era has gained more roles. Canadian archivist Terry Cook suggested that the archive is a "house of memory" ', and through it, 'society may be nursed to healthy and creative maturity'.[24] Terry Cook's macro-appraisal archive theory suggests that the appraisal process should place emphasis on the original purpose of creating the record, including why, where and how the records were created. The focus is on the function and structure of the record, rather than the content itself. This means that as one analyses the archive, one of the essential inspection points is the surrounding environment which could affect the formulation decisions and process of an archive, an influence which is largely considered as the social and culture environment. But all of these practical theories about archives were developed within an Occident-centred culture background. Considering that this project concentrates on the archive in the Chinese fashion industry, the development of Chinese archives research requires detailed discussion.

If the invention of writing is the beginning of the archive, then in that respect China has a very long history of developing its archive system. Wu Baokang, one of the pioneer archive researchers in contemporary China, explained in the 1980s that there were two opposing schools of thought regarding the condition of Chinese archive studies; one held that the Chinese have a long history of using archives as part of the study of history, starting from the Shang Dynasty (BCE 1600 – 1046) when the oldest known form of Chinese writing, Oracle bone script, was invented. But the other view suggests that due to its feudal system China never actually had

[24] Terry Cook, "What is Past is Prologue", 17-63 (p. 49).

archives, nor was there a subject called archive studies.[25] The feudal system did not support the existence of archiving, rather, it only supported documenting.

In the seminal Xin Hua Chinese dictionary the English word 'archive' is translated as *dang'an* (档案), which essentially meant 'documents and material saved under categories for future reference'.[26] This word first appeared in the late Ming dynasty to early Qing dynasty (1628-1700).[27] Wu quoted his colleague Zhang Wode's 张我德 suggestion, that the first Chinese archive appeared in 1925 after the establishment of the Forbidden Palace Museum, due to the influence of the 'bourgeoisie'.[28] This was because the feudal society did not need archive nor archivist, it only required documents and clerical workers.[29] Wu combined these two opinions and suggested that China did indeed have extensive practical experience of using archives but had not established the academic discipline of archival studies.

Wu's work is full of the characteristics of the period; as a researcher he nearly lost all of his research work during the Cultural Revolution. On the back of that experience, he followed the Party line, stating that 'only the archival work performed after the establishment of new China counts as archival work', and 'Chinese archive studies only took a real leap forward after the creation and formation of Communism'.[30] From the research I have done, it is not clear whether Wu's comments stemmed from a sincere belief in Communism or if he just bent to the prevailing political environment. But his work and these statements clearly reflect the condition of Chinese archive studies during the

[25] Wu Baokang 吴宝康, *Lun Xinshiqi Dangan Xue Yu Dangan Shiye* 论新时期档案学与档案事业(Archival Science and Archival Undertaking in the New Period), Chinese Archive Publication, 1997, pp. 2-3.
[26] "档案 Dangan". Def. 1. *Xiandai Hanyu Cidian* 现代汉语词典(Contemporary Chinese dictionaries 7th edition App version) (China: The Commercial Press: 2023).
[27] Wu Baokang 吴宝康, *Lun Xinshiqi Dangan Xue Yu Dangan Shiye* 论新时期档案学与档案事业(Archival Science and Archival Undertaking in the New Period), p. 3; Jin Bo 金波, p. 30.
[28] Wu Baokang 吴宝康, *Lun Xinshiqi Dangan Xue Yu Dangan Shiye* 论新时期档案学与档案事业(Archival Science and Archival Undertaking in the New Period), p. 3.
[29] Ibid, p. 3. Republic of China (1912-1949) is the period considered as a capitalist society, compared to the communist society of the following People's Republic of China.
[30] Ibid, p. 5.

1980s.

Wu's work also suggested that the turbulent history of war in China and the tectonic upheavals of continuous political revolution are probably some of the reasons China did not establish the discipline of archive studies.[31] Despite this, the archive still played a role in the revolution to support the Communist Party victory and propaganda promotion after New China was established in 1949. During the Chinese Civil War (1927-1949), Chairman Mao had already recognized that the revolution required archived documentary support in order for society to comprehend social conditions prior to the Communist take-over and to formulate policy. According to Chinese archive researcher Jin Bo, Chairman Mao gave the order to collect archival documents when he passed through villages and cities during the Long March.[32] He was also involved in collecting, documenting and writing the history of the Red Army and Chinese rural society. The chaos caused by the civil war meant that the emerging archive of New China was rudimentary, but the Communist Party did gather history and memories in the archives to support the revolution and to build the future on top of the ruins of the past.

According to Wu's work, it is clear that the new regime recognized the function and power of an archive. Wu pointed out how Premier Zhou Enlai (Head of Government from 1949 to 1976) in particular took archives seriously. He quoted Premier Zhou saying that government archives needed to be able to serve the current Communist revolution, and to serve to create a new 'experience of revolution'.[33] Premier Zhou argued that the research work of the current historical archive should override past historical archives. The current historical archive should serve the revolution, Communism and the future.[34] The

[31] Ibid, p. 5.
[32] Jin Bo 金波, pp. 150-151.
[33] Wu Baokang 吴宝康, *Dangaxue Lilun yu Lishi Chutan* 档案学理论与历史初探 (*A Preliminary Study of Archive Theories and History*), (China: Sichuan Science Technology Publication, 1986), pp. 73- 100.
[34] Ibid.

framework of the archive, which represented the history and memory of the new Chinese society, was hugely affected by the new political environment. In 1958, during the Great Leap Forward period, some local governments were desperate to follow the leadership's instruction and so created archives, as they believed this might please the leadership. Thus local government started an archive creation movement *daban dang'an* "大办档案", putting in a huge effort to create archives. However, those archives were too contrived, and included numerous fake and useless records.[35] Furthermore, it is well known that China attempted to eradicate the past during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). During this period, due to the promotion of the "Break the Four Olds" campaign, large amounts of past Chinese social memories and artifacts were destroyed.[36] Wu Baokang, who started his archival research career from 1957, was also unable to escape from this disaster. Fortunately, he was one of the archive researchers who physically survived the Cultural Revolution and returned to his work in 1978. However, he lost all his work records made during the Cultural Revolution, with the exception of two pieces of his early work, which provided a basis for him to continue his research of the archive.

Wu's research of the Chinese archive is definitely imbued with a deep understanding of the times. His work showed how Chinese society tried to reconstruct its fractured history after the civil war and the ten destructive years of the Cultural Revolution. Ultimately, it reflects how Chinese society at that time understood history through archive work and how this understanding was constantly impacted by the regime's attitude. As Wu described it, before 1957, part of the mainstream of archive study in China was focused on the negation of the archival work of the Nationalist Party, which lost the civil war in 1949.[37] This mainstream thinking was impacted by the political environment of the time and

[35] Ibid, p. 99.
[36] Four Olds including: old ideas, old culture, old habits and old customs.
[37] Wu Baokang 吴宝康, *Lun Xinshiqi Dangan Xue Yu Dangan Shiye* 论新时期档案学与档案事业(Archival Science and Archival Undertaking in the New Period), p. 5.

was used to reduce the prestige of the previous regime.

However, some Chinese researchers considered this use of Chinese archives as too narrow and attempted to adjust the direction of research. Unfortunately, they were censured as supporting the previous regime, leading to a wave of criticism which reached a peak during the Cultural Revolution.[38] Only after 1978, when the new generation of Chinese leadership finally terminated the Cultural Revolution, did this type of criticism fade. Instead, academics within the field of Chinese archive study began to re-evaluate and even over-state the achievements of pre-1949 Chinese archival work. There is a possibility this kind of over-stated reaction was a response to the corrective process (called Boluan Fanzheng 拨乱反正 in Chinese) after the Cultural Revolution.[39] This shifting of views – regarding the assessment of the value of the archive and suitable archive research methods – reflects how external power manipulated society's view of previous archives and its view of history.

One of Wu's valuable contributions to the field is in recognizing the critical importance of giving recognition to the status of Chinese archival study. During all of these changes to the understanding of "Chinese archive", as Wu described, there are multiple layers of how to understand the role of the archive in China in the 1980s. Firstly, the archive itself, no matter what is inside the archive, is seen as a representation of past history, and the way it is manipulated represents the attitude of the regime. The archive is a pawn used in political struggles. When post-war New China came into being, one aspect of archival research focused on how to define the archival work of the previous regime, representing the new regime's attitude towards the previous regime. The other aspect of archival research was based on understanding the archive as a representative of the entirety of past

[38] Wu Baokang 吴宝康, *Dangaxue Lilun yu Lishi Chutan* 档案学理论与历史初探 (*A Preliminary Study of Archive Theories and History*), pp. 1-2.
[39] Boluan Fanzhen, literally "eliminating chaos and returning to normal", was a period of history in China when Deng Xiaoping led a national process aiming to correct the mistakes of the Cultural Revolution.

Chinese history. Acceptance of the archive became the collective affirmation of Chinese history. This affirmation is associated with the national pride in China's long history and cultural heritage, which provided strong support for nationalism and patriotism in contemporary Chinese society. And today, in China, sometimes nationalism and patriotism blend into simple expressions of loyalty to the Communist Party. Thus, the archive is like one of the bonds that assists in binding them all together. I will actually use the Chinese fashion archive as an example to explain this in later sections.

Moving into the twenty-first century, the study of archives has shifted within a more diverse environment due to globalization and China's opening up. Discussion and research about using archives in administrative work has steadily grown. Although archive researchers Huilin Feng and Jizhe Zhang argued in *An Introduction to Archival Study* that there are 'hundreds of definitions' of the archive, they are mainly viewed from two different perspectives: 'direct descriptions' and 'abstract revelations'. A typical direct description definition of the archive is that 'an archive is a kind of '*wenshu*' 文书, '*wenjian*' 文件 or '*wenshu cailiao*' 文书材料.[40] The meaning of '*wenshu*' and '*wenjian*' both refer to official documents or letters with content related to political functions; '*wenshu cailiao*' adds the indication of physical material to the documents or letters. However, this definition has clear limitations and makes the mistake of defining the relationship between 'written' and 'archive'.[41] A written document is not the subject of the archive, rather it forms a transformational relationship with the archive. The 'abstract revelations' definition appeared later and was based on the direct description definition. It has covered more modern formats of archives

[40] Fen Huilin and Zhang Jizhe ed, 冯惠玲 and 张辑哲, pp. 4-5. "文书 Wenshu". Def. 1 & 2. Xiandai Hanyu Cidian 现代汉语词典(Contemporary Chinese dictionaries 7th edition App version) (China: The Commercial Press: 2023); "文件 Wenjian". Def. 1 & 2. Xiandai Hanyu Cidian 现代汉语词典(Contemporary Chinese dictionaries 7th edition App version) (China: The Commercial Press: 2023); "材料 Cailiao". Def. 1 & 2. Xiandai Hanyu Cidian 现代汉语词典(Contemporary Chinese dictionaries 7th edition App version) (China: The Commercial Press: 2023)

[41] Fen Huilin and Zhang Jizhe ed, 冯惠玲 and 张辑哲, pp. 4-5.

including information, historical records, original records, memory tools and other abstract concepts related to archives. This definition focuses on the fundamental role and value of archives and is more suitable for the complicated and diverse contemporary environment. To summarise, the archive's substantial features are that it is an original record of societal life.[42]

It is clear that, as Chinese archive researcher Jin Bo admitted, Chinese archive culture is strongly rooted in its politically-framed cultural background. The development of Chinese archives was strongly influenced by the Communist regime. For instance, from 1996 to 2010, the National Archives Administration of China issued the *Enterprise Archive Declaration and Registration Method* (企业档案申报登记办法) to standardize company archives in China, enhance the management work of the archive of enterprises, master the general information related to the registration and administration of enterprise legal persons, and serve the development of the government-planned commoditised economy.[43] Feng and Zhang outlined the conditions of business archives based on this document: a company wanting to have an officially approved archive must be a large-scale enterprise; the company needs to have the ability to maintain an archive; and the company archive must become an internal department of the enterprise. The department's main function would be to collect and manage the company archive collection, and it mainly serves the company, but at the same time must serve society as well.

Following the growing trends of a society requiring the collection and use of social memories, Chinese archives have gone beyond focusing on the revolution and the regime's requirements. Jin Bo called this process "cultural self-awareness", which means that people live in a specific cultural and historical circle, and by understanding its history one can understand the advantages and disadvantages

[42] Fen Huilin and Zhang Jizhe ed, 冯惠玲 and 张辑哲, pp. 4-5.
[43] Ibid, p. 88.

of this cultural circle.[44] Archives are required in order to understand history, but it is necessary to understand the subjective features of an archive before we can become self-aware. The subjective point of view of archives is formulated under the influences of geography, society, politics, economics and culture. Jin Bo suggested we should compare archives based multicultural perspectives, to absorb the advantages and clarify the disadvantages, and by way of this cultural comparison process one could avoid 'self-centred archival delusion'.[45]

In Chinese academic publications, the definition of archives is largely based on the governmental record collections and libraries. Digital and physical documents are the main referenced objects. Due to this limitation, in the following Chapter I will further discuss whether Chinese corporate fashion archives are considered to be a proper *dang'an* in the current context. It is also important to avoid any misconception: the lack of a unified understanding of fashion archives certainly does not mean that archives are non-existent in the Chinese fashion industry. Similarly in Europe, before the concept of fashion archives became popular in the European fashion industry after World War I, fashion houses had already developed the habit of collecting information and evidence of their history and everyday work routines. For example, Worth is one of the leading fashion houses that has a large body of fashion archive material from before World War II that survives in various museums to this day.[46] At that time, the fashion archive was not a major research topic in the field, and the definition of it was as blurred as the current situation in China. But this does not alter the fact that Worth's archive has significant value in terms of recording history and collective social memories.

---

44 Jin Bo 金波, p. 190.
45 Jin Bo 金波, p. 192.
46 Amy De La Haye & Valerie D. Mendes, *The house of Worth: Portrait of an Archive*, (London: V&A, 2014), pp. 28-30.

Historical context

The following section will introduce the established fashion archives in the world fashion capitals, then compare them with the current public situation of Chinese fashion archives. This comparison again answers a prerequisite question 'Does China have fashion archives?' by providing clear examples, leading to further discussion regarding the current status of Chinese fashion archives. It also reveals the nationalistic influence of State power, in terms of restoring accepted history to strengthen national identity and commercialising cultural heritage. The responses of participants to this question are also captured. Also, the core values and function of European fashion archives have had an initial influence on Chinese fashion professionals who had overseas study and work experience. Thus, it is necessary to understand the wider background to fashion archives.

Fashion archives in Europe

The role of the fashion archive in the fashion industry is crucial and critical. On one side, the focus on the value of the archive has been ever-increasing in major fashion houses. Part of this focus developed naturally due to the benefit of having an in-house reference collection to inspire the design team. The other area of growing attention came from the marketing side. Fashion brands in the twenty-first century have mastered the skill of promoting the brand's history and heritage to add immaterial value to its brand and products. An archive is the house of evidence to support this type of marketing strategy. One of the obvious results is in the second decade of the twenty-first century where many established iconic fashion companies in the four fashion capitals, Paris, Milan, London and New York, have all built their archives to different levels. This type of archive could provide material for business-related operations or provide information for research purposes in public archives after the specific business is concluded. The example

of the House of Worth is a significant case study I will further explain below.

However, the other potential area is the archive as a long-term historical record. An archive needs time to accumulate and then formulate a collection with full functionality. The process costs money, space and labour. Not every corporation can afford this and might wait until the timing is perfect to use it to its maximum effect. This economic constraint could persuade some fashion corporations to instead create a simpler version of an archive, which is still valuable in terms of creating value for the brand, but with considerably less overall impact.

Due to this economic dilemma that many fashion corporations face, it is highly likely there have been more unidentified fashion archive collections that were eventually dissolved than ones that were preserved after their organisations collapsed. It is possible, however, to capture the development of fashion archives and their value through their use in numerous fashion journals and publications. According to fashion historians and curators Amy De la Haye and Valerie D. Mendes, the House of Worth is one of the early haute couture houses.[47] The founder, Charles Fredrick Worth was named the Father of Haute Couture by Diana de Marly – the author of a book of the same name – and started his business in Paris in 1858.[48] After he passed away in 1895, his sons Jean Worth and Gaston Worth continued his business until the house closed in 1956. Mendes suggested that the photographic collection contained in the House of Worth's archive 'appears to be the earliest surviving large-scale evidence of a leading couture house', which partially proves that Worth's archive could be considered one of the earliest identifiable fashion archive examples in Europe.[49]

According to Mendes, after the decision to close House of Worth was made by the

47 Amy de la Haye & Valerie D. Mendes, p. 28.

48 Diana de Marly, *Worth: Father of Haute Couture*, London: Elm Tree Books, (1980).

49 Amy de la Haye & Valerie D. Mendes, p. 28.

then-owner House of Paquin, the chairman and director of Worth (London) approached the Victoria & Albert Museum (V&A) to discuss the possibility of making a donation. The V&A's curator and dress historian James Laver went to Paris to decide on whether to accept the collection, and to decide on how to divide the collection. According to his records, the archive collection included abundant materials from 20,000 original designs for dresses, drawing and fashion plates to photographs of garments on models, as well as materials detailing the daily business operations (for instance account books including sale receipts and client correspondence). The scale and breadth of material in this archive was likely accumulated through the everyday business activities of a fashion house over the course of nearly a century. Part of this enormous collection was kept in the V&A Museum after Laver brought the entire collection back to London in August 1956.

The collection not only recorded the heyday of the House of Worth, but reflected the many significant influences that the House brought to the European and American fashion industries; influences such as the use of models for distribution and the founding of a recognizably branded label.[50] This archive illustrates how a fashion corporate's archives supported the business and recorded the social history as well, as it contained lavish information within these materials for future research.

Art historian Mary Frances Gormally suggested that the House of Worth contributed towards promoting French leadership in fashion, textiles and commerce, which assisted in establishing the current elevated status of French fashion.[51] However, there is no direct evidence of whether the House of Worth's archive ever influenced other fashion brands in Europe to create their own archive. Currently there are no similar-scale fashion houses that have shut down and

[50] Ambassador E-J Scott, *'House of Worth: Portrait of an Archive'*, (2014). <https://costumesociety.org.uk/blog/post/house-of-worth-portrait-of-an-archive > [accessed 3rd February 2023].

[51] Mary Frances Gormally, 'The House of Worth: Portrait of an Archive', *Fashion Theory*, 21.1 (2017), 109–26 <https://doi.org/10.1080/1362704X.2016.1179400>, p. 112.

donated their entire collection to show what was kept in fashion archives of this scale. Many fashion houses have been bought by fashion groups during the last two decades: for instance, LVMH gained ownership of Dior, Givenchy and Fendi, Kering owns Balenciaga and Gucci, and their fashion archives have been inherited by these large companies before opening to the public.

In Paris, after LVMH purchased Dior in 1984, Director of LVMH Bernard Arnault decided to expand the brand and celebrated the brand's 40th anniversary with an exhibition named 'Homage to Christian Dior, 1947-1987'.[52] Due to the demand of this business strategy and task of preparing for exhibition, the house of Dior then established its formal archive department in 1987, called Dior Heritage.[53] There is no clear evidence to prove if the House of Dior possess an established archive but certainly the House has kept its own collection but not to the same scale and level as Dior Heritage.[54]

The 40th anniversary exhibition was held in the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris (MAD). MAD, which belongs to the Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs (UCAD), is located in the heart of the city of Paris, in the southern wing of the Louvre. The predecessor of UCAD, the L'Union Centrale des Beaux-Arts Décoratifs, hosted the earliest known public exhibition of dresses in France in 1892, and henceforth began to collect historic fashion pieces and accessories. Its collection reached 63,000 pieces by 1981 and it opened the exhibition space in the MAD in 1986. It now houses one of the most important fashion collections in France, dating back to the Third Republic. Along with the other collection from Palais Galleria, together they form France's most important historical fashion collections.[55]

---

[52] Leah Faye Cooper, 'How Christian Dior Pioneered 75 Years of Feminist Fashion', *Vanity Fair*, 2022 <https://www.vanityfair.com/style/2022/07/christian-dior-feminist-fashion> [accessed 15 November 2023].

[53] *EFHA2019-13 Soizic Pfaff, The Archives Department to Dior Heritage*, (2020). https://vimeo.com/410254423 [accessed on 17th Aug 2022].

[54] Robb Young, 'Guardians of History: At Christian Dior', *The New York Times*, 8 November 2010, section Fashion <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/09/fashion/09iht-rdior.html> [accessed 26 September 2023].

[55] Maude Bass-Krueger, 'Fashion Collections, Collectors, and Exhibitions in France, 1874–1900: Historical

For a fashion house to host an exhibition in such a significant location of French fashion signifies that the fashion house has been recognized as a significant figure in fashion history, at least by French society. In 2017, after three decades, the vice president of international communications at Christian Dior Couture, Olivier Bialobos, announced that Dior Heritage's new building would be located in Central Paris next to Dior's headquarters at 30 Avenue Montaigne, in a 9,700 square foot building which used to be a showroom.[56] It has preserved twenty-five thousand pieces of accessories and clothing, as well as tens of thousands of digitized documents including photos, sketches, collection plans, press releases and newspaper clippings. The published interviews and limited video about this archive collection have revealed the architectural style of the building, with clean lines and black and white colours (Figure 0-3) - a style first revealed as the Dior runway background in Fall 2018 Couture, which Bialobos described as a modern version of Dior. Bialobos suggested the mission of Dior Heritage is first to conserve, second is to grow the collection and third is to document it. The activities include preserving the already extant Dior archive collection, buying new pieces, searching for existing Dior pieces belonging to museums or private collections, conducting interviews with people knowledgeable of Dior or those who have collaborated with Dior, and in sum searching, collecting and documenting all the information relating to the House of Dior.[57]

Imagination, the Spectacular Past, and the Practice of Restoration', *Fashion Theory*, 22.4–5 (2018), 405–33, (p. 406).

[56] *Léna Situations visits the Dior couture workshop| Vouge Paris*, (2020). <https://www.filigranearchives.com/en/news/archival/dior-heritage-archives-et-fashion> [accessed on 8th February 2023].

[57] Joelle Diderich, Dior Milestone: Heritage Brand, *WWD* (2017) <https://wwd.com/feature/dior-milestone-archive-christian-dior-john-galliano-raf-simons-10997278/ > [accessed 8th February 2023].



Figure 0- 4: Photo of Dior Heritage. [Source: Photo by Xavier Granet https://wwd.com/feature/dior-milestone-archive-christian-dior-john-galliano-raf-simons-10997278/]

One way of looking at all of these activities is that they are part of a process of preserving the evidence of Dior in order to create the history of Dior through multiple angles. This leads to one major objective: creating cultural and historical value for the House of Dior. On the other hand, this is a way of recording the history of society through fashion, as it is encompassed by the House of Dior. The touring fashion exhibition that celebrated the 70th Anniversary of Dior in 2017, 'Christian Dior: Designer of Dreams', is a significant result of Dior Heritage. The exhibition is not just a great opportunity to market the brand, it also underpins Paris and France as the centre of the Western fashion system through displaying Dior as the major example. Dior Heritage is a live modern example for fashion houses who are looking for leadership in how an archive could function.[58] It also became one of the most influential archive examples due to its strong promotion

[58] Robb Young, Guardians of History: at Chritian Dior, *The New York Times*, (2010). <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/09/fashion/09iht-rdior.html> [accessed 8th February 2023].

along with the exhibition. In Chapter four, I will further discuss its influence on the case study.

Italy is also considered to be an important fashion centre in Europe. Italian fashion researcher Federica Vacca's work on fashion heritage and corporate archive curatorship added more perspectives to understand the function of the fashion archive and its position between the field of fashion business and historical heritage. [59] From the 1990s, Italian brands began to realise the economic benefits that historical context could bring to their brands. In Florence, two significant Italian brands, Salvatore Ferragamo and Gucci, established museums and started to display their respective archive collections in May 1995 and September 2011.

According to Vacca, archive collection in the Italian fashion industry were first assembled to capture the 'historical soul of the company' and was mainly for internal use to bring the creative team inspiration. This is the major relationship between the fashion corporation itself and its archive. A fashion corporation's museum or archive functions as a platform to display this relationship to create the narrative and history for the brand. The archive collection is an interpreted collection of the creative process. When the archive pieces are displayed in the museum it turns into a new product and the recounting of the story of the brand subsequently creates a new value for the brand.[60] This further step, to use archive collections as content resources for marketing promotion and using the power of history and knowledge to transform the archive products into a historical witness, is the crucial step for the archive to gain a fundamental position in a profit-oriented corporation.

---

[59] Federica Vacca, 'Knowledge in Memory: Corporate and Museum Archives', *Fashion Practice*, 6:2 (2014), 273-288 (pp. 275-276).

[60] Ibid, p. 282.

Similarly in Dior, this entire process matured when the new Dior Heritage gallery *La Galerie Dior* opened in spring 2022 in Paris. Currently, this new gallery displays a simple version of the 70th anniversary exhibition 'Christian Dior: Designer of Dreams'.[61] There are reproductions of the signature exhibition displays, which were first shown at MAD, including the iconic rainbow colour Dior recreated in 3D-printed petites mains' gestures which are displayed across the entire wall around the spiral staircase, and the wall of white paper patterns of Dior's iconic showpieces. These two displays have also been used in other Dior store locations, for instance the Dior store in London's Harrods department store. This has successfully introduced customers to a new brand image and connected it with location, history and imagination of a magnificent dream.

In contrast to Continental Europe, in the United Kingdom established British fashion brands that could be considered representative of Britain fashion over different decades, such as Burberry, Vivienne Westwood and Alexander McQueen, have all established their own archives, though mainly for internal use. However none of these brands have built an established corporate-owned museum in the same manner as the Italian fashion houses. Naming these three fashion brands does not imply that all other fashion corporations in the United Kingdom lack archives. But these leading examples do help us consider the relationship between preserving history and the archive's function as a strong support for corporates to gain cultural capital in the competitive marketplace.

While working as an archivist on the jewellery collection and the coordinator of the Fashion GPS system in the Vivienne Westwood archive before commencing my PhD research, I had a chance to observe the archive system and experience the daily work routine of a fashion corporation archive.[62] Vivienne Westwood is a

[61] 'La Galerie Dior', *Galerie Dior* <https://www.galeriedior.com/en/> [accessed 6 January 2024].
[62] Fashion GPS is a digital system tool for event management, sample inventory tracking & data asset management. It was founded in 2006 in New York and the Vivienne Westwood company uses it as an archive system. 'Fashion GPS® Background', *Launchmetrics* <https://www.launchmetrics.com/fashion-gps-background> [accessed 25 December 2023].

rather small-scale fashion company when compared to such as Burberry, with its long history as a global luxury brand or Alexander McQueen, which was acquired by global luxury Group Kering. But the function of Westwood's archive collection is similar to the previous Parisian examples: it supports the brand image through internal use and external exhibitions and publications. The archive system is deeply connected with the production schedule and naturally formulated in annalistic style. Ideally, all the archive items have a unique barcode in the company's internal archival system, recording the item's information and status. In the everyday work routine, the archive collection's function is focused on supporting the company's operation. The design team would borrow items from the physical archive or search for information in the internal archival system. The marketing team would bring in and send out archival items to different showrooms or photo shoot locations to create content for promoting the brand. Through circulating the archive collection between different departments, the brand's accumulated information is shared and inherited. The Vivienne Westwood archive sometimes sends out signature designs to certain museums based on a suitable request, but the brand itself has not curated individual exhibitions for many years.[63]

In 2019, Alexander McQueen moved forward by opening up a space on the second floor of its flagship store in London to display selected items from its archive collection, ranging from design inspirations to photographs and samples showing the manufacturing process of each signature showpiece, and most importantly, the original garments.[64] These small exhibitions included one or sometimes a few McQueen original showpieces, then demonstrated how creative director Sarah Jane Burton created the new 'McQueen' collection based on the original concept.

[63] 'A COLLECTOR'S STORY: A Private Collection of VIVIENNE WESTWOOD', *The Bowes Museum* <https://thebowesmuseum.org.uk/exhibitions/a-collectors-story-a-private-collection-of-vivienne-westwood/> [accessed 25 December 2023].
[64] Lexi Fadina, Alexander McQueen Opens Exhibition in its Flagship Store in London, *the Glass Magazine*, (2019) <https://www.theglassmagazine.com/alexander-mcqueen-opens-roses-exhibition-in-its-flagship-store-in-london/> [accessed 18 Aug 2022].

For instance, in 2019, the exhibition 'Rose' was featured with one of McQueen's most recognizable looks from the spring show in 2007 (Fig 0-4). The exhibition displayed the original showpiece (however not the true original in this case, because the original showpiece was decorated with fresh flowers, and for preservation reasons the archive replaced all the flowers with fake flowers), and included how Sarah Jane Burton had developed new cutting and draping techniques based upon the concept of Rose, and also how she created her own version of the 'new McQueen' while still maintaining the connection with the signature McQueen silhouette. It is clear and obvious that exhibitions such as this are attempting to demonstrate how new directors have successfully continued the brand's DNA and even pushed the brand into a more modern and more accessible path for general audiences.



Figure 0- 5: Top floor of McQueen flagship store in London holding exhibition 'Rose'. [Source: https://wwd.com/fashion-news/fashion-scoops/alexander-mcqueen-debuts-roses-exhibition-bond-street-1203381425/]

When the role of archives evolved from serving the hierarchy or corporate profitability to become individual or educational institutions, the function of archives was extended. In many European and North American countries, one of

the significant roles archives played was to become part of the education system. Fashion archives are a small subset of general historical archives that exist in many fashion institutions and corporate headquarters. Most fashion archives that exist in institutions, colleges and museums are also known as a 'teaching collections' were mainly built based on a public educational purpose, although they function in various other ways.

For example, in the London College of Fashion there are a range of archives which serve as an important teaching collection for the students, staff and public. [65] The Collection claims to contain material that reflects the full fashion cycle, from the beginning of concept of design through the process and production, as well as the final products and marketing promotion materials. Not only are historical garments included, but there is also a shoe collection and a makeup products collection, as well as a long list of books, magazines, sketches and photos related to design.

The Cordwainer College Archive collection in LCF, which contains 650 shoes from 1780 to the present day, was originally built by Cordwainers Technical College, then moved to LCF in August 2000 where the Cordwainers courses in footwear and accessories continue to be taught. Although the collection mainly focuses on British-designed women's shoes, it still covers some men's footwear and a few for children. This special teaching collection covers different types and brands of shoes, as well as several unfinished samples and cuts to specifically kept as a teaching tool. The Collection is not only an active teaching tool itself, but itself also records the history of how a shoe collection can work.

The LCF womenswear archive collections contain several collections of dresses from the 1920s to the 1990s. One of the highlights of the collection, donated by the

[65] UAL, 'LCF Collections and Archives', *UAL*, 2023 <https://www.arts.ac.uk/students/library-services/special-collections-and-archives/lcf-collections-and-archives> [accessed 31 December 2023].

Korner Family, contains day and evening couture garments and other ready-to-wear garments, as well as accessories, underwear and homemade items. The collection provides a vivid example for students and staff to learn about the lives of women life during that period. It also provides examples of cutting techniques, textile or print design and design styles. Another highlight is the Woolmark Photographic archive collection, which contains photographs of couture and ready-to-wear womenswear and menswear from 1940 to the 1970s. The collection is described as an 'extensive collection' on the LCF website. It serves many purposes, including to provide evidence to support other physical archive collections or to offer inspiration for audiences as well.

Another collection that LCF holds is the Mary Quant Make-up Collection, a special collection considering the high popularity of the brand and the difficulties of preserving these types of products. This collection covers an interesting part of the 1960s fashion history. The services of this college archive collection include delivering workshops, resources and support for teaching and studying.[66] The students from LCF who have access to this archive must follow specific instructions on how to use the collection. By doing so, the students learn the framework of the archive and the rules in the archive room, and more importantly learn the meaning of an archive to support their creation, which may affect the students' understandings of what an archive is. Thus, the definition of the fashion archive for students who studied in these institutions will extend from and moves between educational institution and industry which builds the foundation of the corporation's fashion archives, as discussed.

Fashion archives in educational institutions show students what is selected for an archive, and how to use and manage an archive. But fashion corporation archives carry more layers of meaning than just focusing on education. The main goal of

[66] UAL 'LCF Collections and Archives'.

these corporate self-owned archives is to create profit for their owners. For instance, in the UK fashion brand Vivienne Westwood, the archive collection team works closely with the marketing and creative teams to produce content to generate revenue.[67] According to the shoe designer Xiaojing Fang, who graduated from the RCA in 2014 then started to work in Vivienne Westwood, the design team was always reviewing the brand.[68] When the designer begins to plan a new collection with a new theme, one of their important design steps is to go through the archive collection to find what pattern, detail, colour or shape they want to use again or use as base on which to develop.

One of Vivienne Westwood's signature designs during 1993 to 1994 used the oil painting the Rape of Europa as a print on corsets and other garments. Adapting oil paintings then became part of Vivienne Westwood's design language. The Rape of Europa then appeared on many other products. Xiaojing Fang said they found a bag with the print in the archive which then inspired the shoe design team to create a shoe collection with the print, which successfully hit in the market in 2019. Later in 2021, the print came back again on a range of products. This method and purpose of using the archive is actually a process of educating the company staff and preserving the brand's identity, which is a common way to maintain the archive collection in a virtuous circle in a profit-oriented company.

Fashion archives in China

As these examples demonstrate, since the late 1980s, European corporations have augmented the role and functionality of their fashion archives to increase their brand's competitive advantage, and these changes have been increasingly impactful since the turn of this century. Fashion archive studies has been widely used in Western education, especially in view of the historical Euro-centric fashion

[67] Personal work experience.
[68] Xiaojing, Fang, WeChat conversation interview. "(London, 19 February 2023).

industry, but by contrast has not been very common in China. Hong Kong as a city with a strong colonial cultural influence and a significant position in the Chinese fashion history, attempted to achieve the change from 'Made in Hong Kong' to 'Designed in Hong Kong' during the 1990s.[69] This is a shift that Shanghai also experiencing now, so it could be considered as a reference point for the development of the fashion industry in mainland China, as well as for fashion archives.[70]

Anne and Ben Peirson-Smith used Hong Kong as an example to explore the role of the fashion archive. They suggested that the expected role of a government-funded fashion archive was to preserve local history, educate local residents and support the transformation of the local fashion industry.[71] Although Hong Kong had 150 years of colonial history under the UK, the local fashion industry has not yet seen any comprehensive fashion archives except for supplementary content for museum collations, due to the conscious or unconscious devaluation of records management in colonial or postcolonial ideology in Hong Kong.[72]

The Peirson-Smiths's case study on the Fashion Archive resides in the Hong Kong Design Institute (HKDI) in the Tseung Kwan O campus and is aimed at collecting and preserving the physical fashion collection that is considered to represent Hong Kong fashion. The Fashion Archive has to fulfil 'the need for a new post-colonial or de-colonial identity politics to "liberate it from the reified colonial past (the so-called collective memory) and the commercialized future (more shopping malls)." '.[73] Based on Peirson-Smiths's analysis, the Fashion Archive at HKDI has managed to provide a broader approach to understanding historical changes in

[69] Wessie Ling, 'From "Made in Hong Kong" to "Designed in Hong Kong": Searching for an Identity in Fashion', *Visual Anthropology*, 24.1–2 (2011), 106–23 (p. 110) <https://doi.org/10.1080/08949468.2011.526535>.
[70] Anne Peirson-Smith and Ben Peirson-Smith, p 281; Tiziana Ferrero-Regis and Tim Lindgren, 'Branding "Created in China": The Rise of Chinese Fashion Designers', *Fashion Practice*, 4.1 (2012), 71–94 (p. 72) <https://doi.org/10.2752/175693812X13239580431342>.
[71] Anne Peirson-Smith and Ben Peirson-Smith, p. 280-281.
[72] Ibid, p, 281.
[73] Ibid, p, 284.

Hong Kong under the influence of its historical colonial background and helped to educate its citizens, resulting in shaping new understanding of local culture through fashion. These achievements reflected the four archive paradigms ' "from juridical legacy to cultural memory to societal engagement to community archiving" ' that Terry Cook has suggested.[74]

According to Peirson-Smith and Peirson-Smith, in practice there are generally four categories of fashion archives: corporate fashion archives; heritage archives; academic fashion archives; and digital online archives.[75] As they suggested, the growing interest for creating a fashion archive is based on the nature of fashion as a special community of practice within the creative industry, and it requires a 'primary source to provide evidence for creative inspiration and preserve the memory for a range of users representing social value, cultural value, collective memory, education value, or national and local identity'.[76] For local government-funded fashion archives, such as the Fashion Archive in HKDI, the material in local fashion archives can be evaluated as 'approaching new ways of telling a fashion brand story or a national fashion story', as the Hong Kong government was aiming at economic growth, and the local fashion industry sought to rebuild its identity in the global fashion system. My research concentrates on fashion archives belonging to corporates which were formulated without the direct influence of State power. The value of these archives places first emphasis on supporting the profit growth of the company and then on social and cultural values. Some also reflected the collective memory of mainland China, which has many differences from Hong Kong.

In mainland China, Shanghai introduced a serious of policies to encourage the

74 Peirson-Smith and Peirson-Smith, 274–98 (p. 291). Terry Cook, 'Evidence, Memory, Identity, and Community: Four Shifting Archival Paradigms', *Archival Science*, 13.2–3 (2013), 95–120 (p. 116) <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-012-9180-7>.
75 Peirson-Smith and Peirson-Smith, p. 280.
76 Anne Peirson-Smith and Ben Peirson-Smith, p. 280.

growth of the creative industry from 2005 onwards.[77] However, due to the long-term devaluation of personal expression through fashion (ie. the impact of the Cultural Revolution) and an emphasis on fashion manufactory instead of fashion creation (during the Opening-up period), very few fashion houses in China have publicly showed the intention to create their own collections. Many of the established Chinese fashion corporations may have a collection, which on the surface performs a very similar function as an 'archive' seen in established European fashion archives. Additionally, as my fieldwork in Shanghai confirmed (see discussion in Chapters Two and Three), information about these collections is not shared with the outside world, due to untold or uncertain business reasons and the blurred definition of the concept of archives in China.

On the other hand, established Chinese fashion corporations have shown more interest in building 'museum collections' instead of sharing their archive collections. Similar to the concept of the archive in Chinese, the museum in Chinese represents the authority and orthodoxy with a strong connection to the power of the State.[78] Also, due to the social ideology related to nationalism and social responsibility, owning a museum created a brand image with a contribution to local and national culture, which is another way to shape the identity as the Guo Huo wave in the contemporary Chinese fashion market.[79] In another aspect, this type of museum could play the role as a political tool for corporates to gain benefits from the government.[80]

---

[77] (19 banben) Shanghai Shishang Chanye Baogao Xiuzheng Ban- Hebing Ban（19 版本）上海时尚产业报告修正版-合并版 Shanghai Fashion Industry Report Revised edition - Consolidated edition (unpublished Donghua University, 2019), p. 22.

[78] Dongxu Qin, 'From Government Management to Board Governance: The Development History and Practice of Board of Trustees in Chinese Museums, a Comparative Analysis of Museum Boards in China and the US', *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 37.4 (2022), 401–17 (p. 407) <https://doi.org/10.1080/09647775.2021.1954982>.

[79] Karl Gerth, pp. 258-266.

[80] Wang Ge 王歌, 'Guanyu Minyin Bowuguan zai Dnagxia Fazhan Zhilu de Sikao – Yi Meite Sibangwei Bowuguan Weili 有关民营博物馆在当下发展之路的思考——以美特斯邦威服饰博物馆为例 (Reflections on the Current Development of Private Museum – Using Metersbonwe Fashion Museum as Example)', *Zhongguo Bowuguan Xiehui Di Liu Jie Huiyuan Daibiao Dahui Ji Fuzhuang Zhuanye Weiyuan Hui Xueshu Huiyi Lunwen Ji* 中国博物馆协会第六届会员代表大会暨服装博物馆专业委员会学术会议论文集 (Proceedings of the Sixth Member Congress of the Chinese Museum Association and the Academic Conference of Costime Museum Professional Committee), 2014, pp. 40-43.

In China, established fashion museums that belong to Chinese fashion corporates present another perspective of the situation of hidden Chinese fashion archives, as occasionally, these museums will display small parts of the internal company archive collection for public consumption. Under these circumstances, although the general public cannot access the internal archive, through the corporate museums we can discover the attitude of the corporation in preserving fashion history and using fashion history as a business tool which may also reflect on their internal archive collection. Although, sometimes, the 'history' is focusing on history of China instead of history of the corporation itself, for instance, in the museum of Shanghai-based Chinese fast-fashion giant Metersbonwe.

Metersbonwe was founded in 1995, and by 2007 annual sales had reached 3.2 billion RMB (US$ 475million), and it was publicly listed in 2008.[81] At its peak period around 2012, it owned 5,220 stores all over China. This giant fashion corporation opened its museum in 2005 in its headquarters in Shanghai. However, this museum is not a museum presenting the brand's creative process as previously discussed, but a museum to create a brand image in relation to nationalism and civic virtue. The president of the company, Jianchen Zhou, decided to start this project based on an academic trip he made to the UK in 2003.[82] According to news reports related to Metersbonwe's museum, Zhou went to Cambridge to attend an academic conference, and during some free time he drove with friends to visit manors and museums around the UK. He soon noticed that many museums have Chinese artifact collections, which spurred his concern about China's loss of national treasures.

---

[81] *Sannian kuisun 12yi, "chudai guochao" zhongchen "shidai de yanlei"*? 三年亏损 12 亿，"初代国潮"美特斯邦威终成"时代的额眼泪"？ (Three Years Losses 1,2 Billion, "the First Generation of Guochao" Finally Became "the Tears of the Era"?) (2022) <https://www.163.com/dy/article/HERGVLB205179L72.html> [accessed 12th Feb 2023].

[82] Xial ling Liu 刘晓玲, 'Meite Sibangwei de Fushi Bowuguan 美特斯邦威的服饰博物馆(Metersbonwe's Fashion Museum)', *Guoji Guanxi* 国际关系(PR Magazine), (2009. 03), pp. 46-47.

Thus in 2004, the company sent a research team to the Zhejiang, Yunan and Guizhou areas in Central and South China to collect local ethnic traditional costumes. They also searched the vintage and cultural relics market to collect historical garments and objects.[83] Based on this research team's work, the museum has assembled a collection similar to the fashion museum of the Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology and part of the fashion museum in Donghua University.[84]



Figure 0- 6: Inside Metersbonwe's museum in Shanghai, with exhibition of garments from Qing Dynasty. [Source: https://m.jiemian.com/article/5787052.html].

According to an article published in a collection of articles on Costume and Historical Cultural Artistry and Development in the The Sixth Representative Assembly Meeting of the Chinese Museum Association and Costume Museum Industry Committee Study Meeting (服装历史文化技艺与发展——中国博物馆协会第六届会员代表大会暨服装博物馆专业委员会学术会议论文集), the museum's aim is to

[83] Ibid.

[84] *Fangzhi Fushi Bowu Guan* '纺织服饰博物馆' Textile and clothing Museum in Shanghai Donghua University <https://web.dhu.edu.cn/mtc/> [accessed 31 December 2023]; *Mingzu Fushi Bowu Guan* '民族服饰博物馆' National Costume Museum in Beijing Institution of Fashion Technology <http://www.biftmuseum.com/> [accessed 31 December 2023].

preserve Chinese national garments, cultural inheritance and promote national culture.[85] For the corporation, the museum's function is aimed at using a traditional historical collection to stimulate the development of creativity and support the company in entering the international fashion market.[86] This is similar to the function that European fashion corporation set for their internal archive collections. As a fast fashion brand with such ambitions regarding its museum, there are no records showing the Metersbonwe museum has ever displayed its own business archive collection. But according to Wang Ge, the museum has received numerous awards and titles from government sectors, including being awarded the Patriotic Education Base of Shanghai Pudong New Area in 2013, and becoming a member of the Shanghai Education Commission External School Union in 2014.

In 2021, Metersbonwe reported the closure of more than 60% of its stores, delays in payment of staff salaries, and the sale of properties and store locations. The building housing its museum is one of the properties being that sold. Therefore, the museum is also closed, but there are no reports about the whereabouts of the museum collection.[87] Although it is worth considering that because Metersbonwe is a fast fashion brand, it may not own a fashion archive like the one Dior has, which functioned both as a corporate fashion archive and a heritage archive. But the aim and function of Metersbonwe Costume Museum reflects the attitude of the manufactory-oriented local fashion corporates towards fashion material as a type of historical evidence or creative inspiration; their products are separated from cultural heritage, a fact which will also affects the framework of their archive.

Another example is Chinese lingerie brand Aimu (爱慕), which was founded in

85 Wang Ge 王歌, pp. 46-47.
86 Ibid, p. 40.
87 '*Meite Sibangwei Mai Le Ziji De "Fushi Bowuguan", Shi Shenme Nanzhu Le Laopai Fuzhuang Qiye* 美特斯邦威卖了自己的"服饰博物馆"，是什么难住了老牌服装企业 (Metersbonwe Sold its "Fashion Museum"-What Has Caught Out the Old Fashion Enterprise)', *Meng Ma Caijing* 蒙马财经, (2021). <https://www.sohu.com/a/455004232_120426849> [accessed 12 Feb 2023].

1993 and established its museum in 2008 in its head office in Beijing.[88] The museum is a platform for interpreting the brand image, as well as a venue to hold external art exhibitions.[89] According to one Aimu employee, there is another museum that focuses on displaying the brand's history.[90] However, there is no public information on the existence of any Aimu archive collection. I would suggest if there is a museum set up to share the brand's history, there must be an 'archive', although it may not use this term at this moment, but is extant somewhere in the corporation to preserve the evidence of its history.

Aimu's museum director Jianhong Pan stated that the original aim of opening this museum was to create an artistic atmosphere for the company in order to inspire the design team and facilitate the development of the brand.[91] However, an Aimu employee who participated in this project felt that the designers rarely visit the external exhibitions. The founding of the museum was largely based on the founder's love of art.[92] This museum reflected another situation that established fashion corporations using limited archive material to conduct external communication. But the emphasis of the museum is still not about the brand's history.

According to news reports and published articles, these two examples of Chinese fashion corporate museums both place emphasis on preserving or displaying external collections instead of their own collections. The current situation for Chinese fashion archive collections is being hidden away from the public and

[88]'Aimu Meishu Guan Shi Zhounian Yaoqin Zhan: Zai Wutuo Bang Zhishang Yu Gudao Hejie 爱慕美术馆十周年邀请展：在乌托邦之上与孤岛和解 (The Ten Years Anniversary Invitational Exhibition of Aimer Museum: Make Peace With Isolated Island Beyond Utopia)', *Xinlang Shoucang* 新浪收藏, (2018) <http://collection.sina.com.cn/ddys/2018-07-09/doc-ihezpzwu2350499.shtml> [accessed on 18th Aug, 2022].

[89] Aimer Museum official site <http://www.szaimer.com/page/bwg/index.php#page2> [accessed 18th Aug 2022].

[90] Xiaoxiao Wang, WeChat private conversation interview about the Aimu Museum, WeChat, 28 August 2022.

[91] 'Yu Wenhua Tongxin Aimu Meishu Guan Shi Zhounian 与文化同行爱慕美术馆十周年(In Company With Culture Aimer Museum Ten Years Anniversary)', *Shishang Beijing* 时尚北京（2018.9） <https://www.fx361.com/page/2018/0919/4249688.shtml> [accessed 18th Aug 2022].

[92] Xiaoxiao, Wang, WeChat, 28 August 2022.

researchers, or even neglected by the founders of the brand. At this moment, the value of using the archive as a marketing tool to create a narrative and complete historical context surrounding the brand has not been fully discovered. The approach of these two examples also reveals that there is a gulf between the social contexts in which fashion archives and history are handled in China and Europe. Thus, this research project aims to examine the factors involved in understanding fashion archives in China, as well as discovering the existing value and potential value of fashion archives in China.

British historian Raphael Samuel's concept of history as " 'a social form of knowledge' " has been broadly influential in the field of history studies, though public historian and archivist Victoria Hoyle pointed out that Samuel considered that the archive serves a specialist audience rather than the general public.[93] However, she also argued that this definition has been largely affected by the emergence of digital technologies, namely that diverse information channels 'are making archives more public than ever'.[94] Similarly, Chinese public history researcher Nan Li claimed that in the last two decades public history in China 'sprang up' due to the technological revolution, mainly the rise of the internet.[95] As scholar Michael Ng-Quinn argued, national identity functions as a tool to unify the population, and this burgeoning of multiple perspectives of history has led to a deterioration of the State-accepted view of national identity.[96]

Li further pointed out that current Chinese public history has shifted to emphasise the function of heritage, which is highly related to the 'China Dream'.[97] According to Li, many public history projects have been funded by the Government displaying obvious 'national interest'.[98] The history preserved by the regime's

93 Victoria Hoyle, Editorial: archives and public history, *Archives and Records*, 38:1 (2017), 1-4 (p. 1).
94 Ibid.
95 Nan Li, 'Public History in China: Past Making in the Present', in *What is Public History Globally?*, ed. By Paul Ashton and Alex Trapenznik (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), pp. 95-110 (pp. 95-96).
96 Ibid, pp. 97.
97 Ibid, pp. 97, 102.
98 Ibid, p. 101.

power has been used to form a recent wave of soft power 'which manifests in three strategic venues: political values, culture and foreign politics'.[99] But the public is looking for a 'new path for individual and collective belonging'.[100]

In China's highly politically centralized environment the freedom of the individual to preserve and create history, and their confidence to feel entitled to do so, has been depressed. The requirement for a grand national narrative very often eclipses the individual's needs. But as Li suggested, in contemporary China, the lineal concept of history has been broken by a new mode of historical change due to a grassroots entitlement spawned during the digital age and a lack of 'methodological thinking and systematic analysis'.[101] In this project, the history that has been recorded by the selected multiple types of Chinese fashion archives reflects the time, the culture, the society, and the people through multiple individual perspectives. In this way, the fashion archive joins in to support the expansion of this new mode of historical change and is becoming part of this historical moment as well.

Definition of the Archive in my research

In this PhD research project, I have utilised a comprehensive definition of an archive, drawing from the insights of archive researchers Sue Breakell and Wendy Russell:

… 'Materials that have been created by individuals, groups or organisations during the course of their life or work and deemed to be worth keeping permanently for the purpose of research and as evidence of the functions and responsibilities of their creator'.[102]

---

[99] Ibid, p. 103.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Ibid, p. 106.
[102] Sue Breakell and Wendy Russell, *The Materiality of the Archive: Creative Practice in Context*, 1st edn (London: Routledge, 2023) <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429262487>, p. 1.

In this project, any type of collection that has been sorted in a certain order by the organiser, for a certain purpose and kept in a certain space, could be qualified as an archive. The broad archive definition draws from both English and Chinese understandings of the term.

Shanghai, acknowledged as the fashion capital of China, is a focal point in this research. This title is partially supported by the success of Shanghai Fashion Week, participation in which I have used as an auxiliary criterion for participant selection. Furthermore, the physical location of archives in Shanghai and spatial arrangement of these archives hold significant relevance to this study. Thus, the archives examined in this thesis belong either to Shanghai-based fashion companies or to Shanghai-based individuals, and neither are expected to play the same roles as the archive cases in Peirson-Smiths' research, such as supporting the transformation or development of the local fashion industry.

Discussion of the location and space of archives, which serve as containers of archived materials, the materiality within these containers plays another important role in providing evidence for this thesis's analysis. It is crucial that this project allows a wide variety of materiality to be considered as part of the archive collection. The categories of fashion objects in the archives include not just clothing, but also jewellery, bags, shoes, hats and other accessories. It also encompasses the important creative processes used to create all of these objects, including textile samples, sketches, and experimental pieces, as well as digital archives. This broad definition has reduced the imposition of restrictions on the participants' imagination and understanding of what a fashion archive is in China.

The primary attribute distinguishing Chinese corporate's fashion archives from those in Europe lies in the power manipulating the archives. As outlined above: the historical background and education system in China prioritizes the collective

over the individual. Furthermore, centralization of State power and the heavy influence of a planned economy have shaped the Chinese fashion system within a social ideology with less cultural confidence and cultural self-awareness. Fashion archives formulated within this context represent a distinct situation compared to the Western corporate fashion archives. Thus, this research project not only aims to explore and analyse the unique attributes of Chinese fashion archives but also aims to rebuild cultural confidence through fashion and energise the industry with a deeper appreciation for the values of individuals in relation to archives and archiving.

Research area: the Chinese fashion capital Shanghai

Before selecting cases for this research, I selected Shanghai as my main target area. Shanghai has been the fashion capital of China for long time. Since 2000, its fashion industry has developed at a rapid pace. As Shanghai Fashion Week and the market matured, Shanghai became the main attraction for fashion brands and young Chinese designers, not just nationally but also globally. It is claimed by the researchers from Donghua University that the transformation of Shanghai Fashion Week has been considered as a clear sign that the contemporary Chinese fashion industry is blossoming. [103] The Shanghai Municipal government introduced Shanghai Fashion Week in 2003 as part of the Shanghai International Fashion Culture Festival. In the beginning, there were only a handful of fashion shows each season, and the major highlights were global fashion designers who had been invited or sponsored to join the Fashion Week. By 2021, more than 200 brands had taken part in Shanghai Fashion Week, and over 800 fashion companies participated in the event's showrooms.[104]

[103] (19 banben) Shanghai Shishang Chanye Baogao Xiuzheng Ban- Hebing Ban（19 版本）上海时尚产业报告修正版-合并版 Shanghai Fashion Industry Report Revised edition - Consolidated edition (unpublished Donghua University, 2019), p. 210.

[104] Zhang Xiaoming 张晓鸣, '*Shanghai Shizhuang Zhou Yueju Quanqiu Shishang Chanye Zhishu Disi Wei* 上海时装周跃居全球时尚产业指数第四位(Shagnhai Fashion Week Moved Into the Fourth Place in the Glocal Fashion Industry Index)', Sohu 搜狐 (2021) <https://www.sohu.com/a/459071998_120244154> [accessed August 8 2022]

During the early stages of the development of the fashion week, Beijing Fashion Week and Shenzhen Fashion Week were also competitors with Shanghai Fashion Week. All of them were striving to compete for the role as the Chinese fashion capital. During this period, the reports on fashion week quite often included Beijing and Shanghai Fashion Week together. Then in 2012, Shanghai Fashion Week moved to an upmarket city centre location called Xin Tian Di (新天地), and collaborated with ENK International, the leading trade show company based in New York. Together, these two created the new Mode Shanghai textile exhibition, along with other events, exhibitions and activities.[105] This arrangement resulted in most of the attention shifting to Shanghai Fashion Week. Later on in 2014, ENK International ended their participation in Beijing Fashion Week-related business. These changes further supported Shanghai in becoming China's fashion capital.

According to a 2022 McKinsey report about the Chinese fashion industry, since 2015 the industry entered a period of rapid growth and high-quality development.[106] The report highlighted that Shanghai, as the fashion capital, has provided a continually improving business environment for young fashion designers. These developments led to a change in the flow of fashion professionals into China. Originally, many overseas Chinese fashion students were targeting work in large fashion companies overseas or to start their own brand abroad, to be followed by a return to the mainland Chinese market with the added aura of having had foreign success. However, in recent years numerous students altered their plans and decided to return straight back to Shanghai to start their professional careers.[107] Since the 2000s, research into the Chinese fashion industry has been gradually enriched. From fashion history scholar Karl Gerth's

[105] Bruni Joly, *ENK Creates Joint Venture with Mode Shanghai*, 10.22 (2012) <https://uk.fashionnetwork.com/news/enk-creates-joint-venture-with-mode-shanghai,519872.html#fashionweek-paris-balenciaga> [accessed on 5th March 2023].
[106] *Maiken Xi 2022 Zhongguo Shishang Chanye Baipi Shu* 麦肯锡 2022 中国时尚产业白皮书(McKinsey 2022 Chinese Fashion Industry White Paper), p.23.
[107] Anja Aronowsky Croberg, p. 302.Gemma A, Williams, Fashion China, (London: Thames & Hudson, 2015), p. 8.

China Made, published in 2004, to *Styling Shanghai* in 2020, the chronological order of these publications reflects that the early interest about the Chinese fashion industry was generally focused on manufactory centres and distribution channels such as Guangzhou and Hong Kong, and then gradually moved to the transformation of the fashion city Shanghai, which has gradually emerged as the fashion capital of China.[108]

In terms of fashion archive research, we have seen how researchers Peirson-Smith and Peirson Smith analysed how the fashion archives in Hong Kong attempted to use the memories they stored to educate and inspire the local fashion industry.[109] The Peirson-Smiths' research is focused on the government-funded museums and fashion archive collections in Hong Kong, examining their collaboration with local communities, as well as its relationship with the development of the local fashion industry. My research, in contrast, is centred on mainland China and Shanghai in particular, and focuses on the fashion company's archive and personal fashion archives within new business models. This part of the Chinese fashion archive has not been explored by scholars and consequently will bring new knowledge on the wider conditions that have accompanied Shanghai's fashion capital status.

Research methodologies

This investigative research builds on previous qualitative research models applied in the interdisciplinary areas of design history and archive research. Design history is a discipline that 'constitutes a rich material and fertile ground for cultural history', which provides flexibility to adapt cross-disciplinary methods and theories during the research.[110] It explores the interplay between material, design and society through our everyday products, such as fashion products. I will

[108] Karl Gerth, p. 37; Christopher Breward & Juliette MacDonald ed, *Styling Shanghai*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2020).
[109] Anne Peirson-Smith & Ben Peirson Smith, p. 280.
[110] Kjetil Fallan, *Design History: Understanding Theory and Method*, (London: Bloomsburg, 2013), p. viii.

explore Chinese fashion archives with multiple types of fashion products and operational information of fashion corporates. The focus is on analysing the purpose, appraisal process and function of the archives, with the intention to understand how Chinese fashion professionals write their own history through these archives. In order to understand how fashion professionals contribute to their own historical narrative and position themselves through archives, this research project combines research methods including interviews and fieldwork.[111]

The development of Interview methods

Qualitative research is characterized by a variety of philosophical orientations and approaches.[112] As a research approach, it is quite flexible, providing researchers who want to explore and understand society and human behaviours ample room to analyse the collected data. Interviews and observations have been used as the main methods of this project, which are the common qualitative research methods in terms of engagement with the primary sources. The interview has been particularly important, as the project aimed to collect and analyse the situation of Chinese fashion archives asking fashion professionals about their understanding and practices, in other words, focusing on the individuals.

Various types of interview methods, such as structured interview or semi-structured interview, group interview or one-on-one, could lead to different results.[113] In this project, all the interviews were conducted in Chinese, however the core topic of the interviews – the 'archive' - is an English word. This term is open to interpretation in the Chinese language. In order to fully receive the

[111] Juliet Corbin & Anselm Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, 4th Edition (London: Sage, 2008), pp. 6-10.
[112] Sharan B. Merriam, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* (San Francisco: Josey Bass, 2016), p. 19.
[113] Steve Mann, 'Research Interviews: Modes and Types', in *The Research Interview*, by Steve Mann (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016), pp. 86–113 <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137353368_4>.

information that participants were sharing, and also allow each participant to express their own opinion about 'archive', I needed to select the semi-structured interview as the main interview method because it allows more dialogue between the researcher and the participants to clarify and explore the Chinese terms regarding 'archive'.

Some researchers have debated ' the relative use of interviewing as a form of data gathering and the degree to which it can reveal "facts" or truth about an area of research interest'. [114] But researchers also argue that this method permits researchers to follow the lead of the interview participants, without prescribing a framework for the information provided.[115] This is appropriate considering the current understanding about archive in China is so highly subjective. In this research, the semi-structured interview provides both the researcher and participants with more flexibility to explore and discover the surrounding environment of a topic, in this case the Chinese fashion archive, including the specific business model used, the overall market environment or the owner's personal background and preferences.

Regarding the selection of interview methods, face-to-face interviews would have been ideal, as solely relying on oral records can cause misinterpretations or distortions due to the lack of visual reference as support. Unfortunately, my data collection period coincided with the peak period of COVID-19 in 2021. When I came to conduct the interviews, I had to make multiple changes to ensure a smooth interview process with the aim of gathering the most suitable information under varied and changing circumstances. Compelled by these adverse circumstances, I decided to divide my interviews into two groups: the first group to capture a broad array of information before shifting the focus onto a second

[114] Darla Hatton MacDonald and others, 'An Interview Methodology for Exploring the Values That Community Leaders Assign to Multiple-Use Landscapes.', *Ecology and Society*, 18.1 (2013) 1-13 (p. 4) <https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-05191-180129>.
[115] Ibid, p. 5.

group of specifically chosen participants.

Also, due to the influence of the pandemic and related travel difficulties, most interviews were conducted through internet calls. The primary software applications used were WeChat, as this is the communication platform every participant is familiar with and finds easy to react instantly to. For long-term observation cases I added other software including Zoom, Lark and Tencent Conference to increase the convenience for participants.[116] None of the participants brought up any concerns about censorship while choosing interview platforms. A flexible semi-structured interview method could quickly adapt to these communication channels.

Although valuable, interviews require extended communication time and depend on the interviewer's ability to establish a rapport, which is not always smooth or possible when the interviews are conducted in an online environment.[117] So I also selected a group of important cases with which to conduct face-to-face interviews, which provided me more opportunity to observe the participant's reaction to interview questions. The face-to- face interview also increased the snowball effect of referrals for finding new participants.

All the interviews were conducted in Chinese, and also recorded and transcribed in Chinese. I constantly took notes in a notebook during the interviews to write down keywords, sort the time sequence and mark highlighted information with my own thoughts. These notes were mainly related to the main research questions and sub-questions. The participants' data and my initial analysis together formed a landscape of the current situation of Chinese fashion archives. However, I did not use a coding system to transform the data, as my methodology did not involve

[116] WeChat: Common Chinese communication APP; Zoom was not widely used by many participants before COVID; Lark: newly developed office software, good tool for recording transcription; Tencent Conference: Chinese online meeting software, more common than Zoom in China.

[117] Anna Bryson & Sean McConville, *The Routledge Guide to Interview: Oral History, Social Enquiry and Investigation*. (Oxford: Routledge, 2014), pp. 13-21.

computer-aided analysis, but instead focused on the design history method of interview analysis.

Each participant and their archive were categorized into four different archive categories. The original categories were based on their business models and major distribution channels (based on target customer and market, fashion companies will select suitable distribution channels) which affected the production chain and the development of the company. This framework of a fashion company type directly shapes how and where a fashion company would store their archive collection, and what is considered as valuable history for the brand.

I asked all the participants to describe their archives in Chinese during their interviews, and identified that the participants used various ways to describe the word 'archive' in Chinese. This finding reflects the key theme in this research project: the complex terminology connected to the concept of the archive and uncertain definitions of what an archive is in the context of Chinese history. The results of the analysis of archive categories in Chapter One then led to further exploration of space, location and materiality of these archives in Chapter Two.

Within their categories, I further analysed the uses and values attributed to archives, using the interview recordings and any additional notes. I also revealed the current status and functions of Chinese fashion archives through the participants' archiving process. This archiving process included factors that I would pay particular attention to including the following components: 1) the original purpose that prompted the participants to start to collect. This reflects the archive owner's aims, which determine the original or major function of the archive; 2) the elements that influenced the decision-making of collecting and sorting out the order of storing items. This reflects the realistic situation of these archives which affects the function the archive can fulfil; 3) how the participants re-use the materials in their archives and the result of the re-use and recreation

process of archive materials. This part reflects how archives can create a cycle of writing history.

Based on this information I further analysed what the participants considered the meaning of their archives to be and what possibilities these Chinese fashion archives represent. I also added follow-up interviews with major participants due to new questions emerging during the process of analysis, or to seek further details to clarify the situation of each archive.

The great majority of interviews held with Chinese fashion professionals were conducted in Mandarin Chinese, except for the use of certain English words or names. After selecting the main relevant conversations in each interview, I then translated these paragraphs into English by using the NetEase Youdao dictionary and ChatGPT and checked the translations for accuracy.

This research project received approval from the RCA ethics committee. I completed an ethics training course in RCA and complied with research ethic guidelines, including the use of information and consent forms for interviewees and participants in the projects.

The method of Interviewee selection

As discussed above, my research focusses on business archives rather than the State archive, such as the museum archives or archives belonging to the domestic education system, which are normally controlled by the government in China. I have selected archives that gave access to the perspectives of multiple fashion professionals.

All qualitative research approaches involve a degree of subjective analysis and

observation, and individual fashion archives cannot represent or cover the entirety of the Chinese fashion industry. But as this research will show, inferences across the industry can be made from the interviews and findings that have been uncovered.

The selection of interviewees was based on a few standards: the first was Shanghai Fashion Week as one of the criteria for inclusion in this study. Brands who participate in the Shanghai Fashion Week runway show have already reached the standard to be considered one of the representative brands in the industry. Another reference point was the selection process of the major showrooms in Shanghai, since these showrooms appraise fashion brands by market orientation.

During the process of searching for interviewees, owing to the snowball effect, an interaction with one participant often led to being introduced to another participant.[118] However this could potentially result in sample repetition, as the participants would potentially recommend interviewees with similar backgrounds. In order to increase the variety of samples and gain diverse information regarding the understanding of fashion archives, I have added other criteria such as different cultural and educational backgrounds, as well as company scale and product types, to balance the result of this research.

The selected interviewees include individuals with diverse educational backgrounds, including those from overseas (Europe, North America and Japan) and those from a local Chinese educational background. Please refer to the appendix for the full list of interviewees. These interviewees cover businesses with differing longevity, from those recently founded to those with over ten years of operations. They feature different sales channels, from focusing on online Taobao shops to bespoke orders.

[118] Anna Bryson & Sean McConville, pp. 58-61.

Established fashion professionals in China are the ones who have gained a certain level of recognition and business success in the field. The key interviewees regarding independent designers include Yutong Jiang for Shushu/Tong, Peng Cheng for Cheng Peng, Une Yea and Shimo Zhou for STAFFONLY and Ying Pei for Yingpei Studio, who represented the wave of overseas fashion students gaining success in the mainland Chinese fashion market. This wave has gradually reshaped the fashion market since 2010. Their archives also reflect the strong influence of their Western education, which may lead to new definitions of the archive in Chinese. Binggan from Roaring Wild and Hui Zhan from Vintage and Republic reflect the other possibility, namely that of locally educated professionals who have established fashion brands in China. Their archives reflected more local memory-making processes. Another case study for Chapter Three is Tasha Liu, who co-founded Chinese leading buyer boutique Labelhood, who provided a completely different angle on the use the archive and understanding history through fashion.

Despite this variety, certain industry aspects are missing from my list; for instance, I was unable to make direct contact with any of the large-scale fashion groups in China, and only three participants who had previously worked in this type of fashion group would agree to share their information with me, hence this research does not extend the sample variety beyond emerging Chinese fashion brands. Secondly, it has been difficult to find fashion companies that have a history longer than ten years in Shanghai. Uma Wang, who founded her brand in 1996 and is currently based in Shanghai, accepted my interview request when I was in Shanghai conducting my fieldwork. But due to ongoing COVID-19 restrictions the meeting was later postponed. Thus, this project research focuses on the new Chinese fashion brands from 2000 up to the present day, those based in Shanghai and that attend Shanghai Fashion Week, or those based in other cities but who also attend Shanghai Fashion Week, while mainly focused on the brands they sell

in their own shop or in buyer's boutiques. All of these types of fashion archives emerged within my definition of the fashion archive.

Additionally, there were some special participants that emerged during the research process, including personal archive collectors based in Shanghai with unusual backgrounds who have developed a new business model. They make up another group of participants who are also strongly influencing the development of the Chinese fashion industry. It also should be noted that personal collectors are not necessarily fashion designers; they are individuals who collect fashion-related items based on their personal interest and passion. The personal collections included in this research do not directly contain current Chinese fashion designers' work, although they are also based in Shanghai. But these personal collector's appraisal methods and archive collections reflect certain aspects of understanding fashion in a Chinese context. Moreover, how personal collectors operate their archives could create new historical angles for their audience, thus affecting the industry's understanding of history through fashion. The key case study in this area is Brain and his partner and girlfriend, Suga, from Ninon Archive (Chapter Four).[119]

Participant Observation and reflexivity

A common approach in the research of Design History is the adoption of mixed methodologies.[120] In this research, to supplement the interviews, I have also used a mix of participant observation (PO) and researcher reflexivity methodologies to conduct research.

[119] Brain is the real name the participant decided to use (not Brian). According to Suga, Brain once bought a T-shirt from Jun Takahashi with a slogan on it says: Brand new brain. This slogan is also the participant's WeChat name. Suga's name came from K-pop start Suga (Min Yoon-gi), who belong to one of the popular boy band BTS.

[120] D J Huppatz, 'Introduction to Methodology: Virtual Special Issue for the Journal of Design History 2018', *Journal of Design History*, 33.1 (2020), 25–40 (p. 36) <https://doi.org/10.1093/jdh/epy021>.

In this research project, my personal relationship with the participants had a strong impact on sample selection and information collection. Self-reflexivity supported me as a researcher to identify my personal opinions and beliefs, and helped me to acknowledge the changes that researchers undergo during the research process and how these changes affected my own research process.[121] Based on an understanding of the influence of the researchers' own subjectivity, this methodology also helped me to accept myself as a researcher being a dynamic component that was actively affecting the outcome of the research.[122]

My study and work experience in China and the UK has allowed me to observe the development of the Chinese fashion industry over a period of more than 17 years during which time I have accumulated personal connections in the field in both nations. My training in the field of art history and sociology related to fashion led me to focus on the relationship between archives and history, and how archives work in the larger power system. Combined with my practical experience in archive projects, my self-reflexivity was affected by insights drawn from my of understanding of the archive as a system that works in real life. All of these elements supported me to establish a personal perspective to conduct the research and self-reflexivity on this research topic.

The PO methodology is also particularly applicable to one pair of participants, Brain and Suga. It allows the researcher to become involved in the participant's daily activities and interact with the participants to create an impact, which became an important part of my research.[123] I was not only able to closely observe how Brain and Suga are working with archives over an extended period of time, but I have also been able to and manage and understand my impact on these

121 Erlinda Palaganas and others, 'Reflexivity in Qualitative Research: A Journey of Learning', *The Qualitative Report*, 22.2 (2017), 426-438 (p. 426) <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2017.2552>.
122 'The Importance of Reflexivity in Qualitative Research', *Delve*, 2022 <https://delvetool.com/blog/reflexivity> [accessed 6 May 2024].
123 Natasha Mack and others, 'Participant Observation', *Qualitative Research Methods - A Data Collector's Field Guide,* (Washington: United States Agency of International Development, 2005), pp. 16-17.

participants over the past 3 years. During this process my role was not just one of a pure researcher but also as an advisor and a participant myself in this pair's activities.

But the flexibility of PO also causes limitations for this methodology, as the researcher may lose an objective view or inadvertently impact on other participants, as well as generating a larger volume of data.[124] The result of this is that it is important to bring in reflexivity as a supportive methodology to blend with PO to balance observer bias and fully use the data collected during the PO process.

Reflexivity is a methodology that positions the researcher as an active part of the social world of the research area. The researcher's position is actively challenged during the research process. These challenges and their influence is form part of the research findings.[125] Some may argue that a researcher's personal subjective perspective will create limitations, or that it might considered as unprofessional to emphasise observations of a personal nature.[126] But this perspective also provides insights and knowledge of particular study areas and opportunities for smaller groups and individuals to join the conversation.[127] In this project, the mixed methodology supported my exploration of Chinese fashion archives, assisting me to concentrate on the value of small businesses instead of the regimes' power. In this manner I could unveil the significance of small fragments of history through the discovery of these corporates' fashion archives and create space for them to join the conversation.

---

124 Natasha Mack and others, pp. 16-17.
125 Palaganas and others, p. 426.
126 Ibid, p. 427.
127 Francisco M. Olmos-Vega and others, 'A Practical Guide to Reflexivity in Qualitative Research: AMEE Guide No. 149', *Medical Teacher*, 45.3 (2023), 241–51 (p. 248) <https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159X.2022.2057287>.

Designing the interview questions

An established archive has a pre-determined role and positioning set up to serve its original purpose. This positioning reflects the archive's perspective, while the role explains how it should be used. The archiving process provides further details of how and why an established archive is constructed piece by piece. The archiving process includes the collection, appraisal, preservation and use of the archive collection to write and often rewrite history. Each person in process may have a different understanding of history even if they come from the same cultural and educational background. This diversity allows those involved in this process to add their own particular perspective into the history-making process. The interview questions that I used were therefore designed to offer individuals the opportunity to share their understanding of archives, and in turn to review their impact on the framework of the archives.

Test interviews also affected the final decision regarding the interview questions. One of the significant outcomes of conducting pilot interviews was the need to include questions on the definition of archive in Chinese language in the main batch of interviews. Another notable result was designing the flow of the interview to create a more relaxed environment, which could help give participants more confidence to express their own feelings and open up on the topic. Thus, I redesigned the interviews to start with participants talking about their own background, experiences and achievements, to create an enjoyable environment but also to better understand the relation of background to archive definition.

After asking the participants to describe their background, I asked where they first encountered the English word 'archive'. Some of the participants with study experience overseas had already come across 'archive' during their studies. But some participants would ask me for more information, as they were not sure what an archive was, and they wanted a better understanding prior to delving into the

rest of the questions. From this point, as the conversations began, it was not just about the participants answering my questions, but more importantly it was the fact that we were having a conversation about their understanding of fashion archives, extended to how they themselves would compose history through these archives. In addition, since there was no direct metaphrase or word in Chinese that represents the idea of the word 'archive' as in English, it was important to listen to the interviewees, to discover how they personally described an archive.

The list below lays out the logic in designing the flow of the interview questions (please find the interview questions in appendix):

1. The first group of questions focused on what the interviewees called their archive. This is a question about terminology and definition. The English word 'archive' does not have an exact translation in Chinese. By recording how each participant first encountered the word 'archive', and what their understanding about the word was, where this understanding came from, and what each participant now calls their archives in Chinese – all of this could reflect how they define 'archives' more generally within their working environment and cultural background.

2. The second group of questions was: what do participants keep in the archive, and what is their appraisal process like? Through these questions, I came to understand what was important to them, what they saw as worth preserving, and this then led to the question regarding what the purpose was in creating an archive. This purpose actually reflects the individual or company's own understanding of the archive. Then I asked what the format of the archive was. Was it purely digital, or a mix of formats? Digital and physical archives generally have different appraisal and collection processes. The method of appraisal and collection affects what the collector can store in the archive and how the collector uses the archive collection, including how they design the

order of the archive, how they search for items in the archive collection, and how they transfer the archival information to others. In addition, the order of the collection would affect others' understanding of the archive collection and how they approach the archive, and hence the archive's potential social impact.

3. The third question was to ask how the brand/designer/collector started to collect their archive collection. This question encouraged participants to think about the junction when they believed they should start to remember something, to write down something for the future or preserve it for another purpose. Every archive may build a base for very different purposes; this purpose is the original idea of building the framework of the archive. This question also links to the first question. This was an opportunity to dig deeper into the participant's mind, to discuss what was the original motivation, and what is the motivation now (if it has changed). For designers, after a few fashion seasons or a few years of work, the framework of the archive might have evolved as their work has. There could be some limitations during the actual operation of building an archive, thus the archive might have gradually changed into another format. These details can add more information about the participant's understanding of fashion archives and lead into the next question.

4. The fourth question was originally: How do they use the archive? After understanding how the participants believed or imagined the archive should be presented, we would discuss the details of how to appraise, collect and use the archive, and reconsider whether the archive needs to have certain functions. If yes, what is the function of the archives? Through this group of questions and its connection with the first group of questions, the definition of the word 'archive' and the framework of the participant's archive became clearer. Also, I sometimes asked the participants to summarise how they used

the archive before the final open-ended question. This gave the participants a chance to consider if they had missed any details, while freely talking about different subjects during the conversational process.

5. The last open-ended question was: Do you have a future plan for the archive? If so, what is the plan? This question asked the participants to imagine what their ideal archive is, or how would they want to develop the existing archive; for instance, to increase the value of the archive. This question enabled me to discover how Chinese fashion archives fit into the wider ambitions of the participants and also gave them a chance to rethink what an archive means for them.

Due to the way the interview questions were designed, the interviews very often developed into a conversation which encouraged the participant to think about the archive from the perspective of anthropology and ethnography. During and after the course of these interviews, or in the follow-up interviews, I noticed some participants had embraced my definition of the fashion archive and re-evaluated the importance of the archive, or that their latest archive practice contained some reflections of my research topic. Thus, I became aware that my project might unintentionally affect the participants' future understanding of and attitudes towards the archive, hence potentially disseminating such understanding into the Chinese fashion industry.

Fieldwork and interview sample size and process

The research for this thesis was conducted between 2019 and 2022. I selected forty-two samples by using the snowball sampling method for the accumulation of primary data.[128] Through requesting additional candidate nominations from

[128] John Dudovskiy, 'Snowball Sampling', *The Ultimate Guide to Write a Dissertation in Business Studies: a Step Approach (6th Edition*), <https://research-methodology.net/sampling-in-primary-data-

the first group of interviewees, I successfully built-up a wider social network amongst Chinese fashion designers based in Shanghai. The first group was made up of twenty-six participants, who were mainly selected from amongst my university friends (14 out of 26) who studied at London's fashion universities from 2011 to 2014, while another smaller group (5 out of 26) were introduced by Chinese university friends, the rest were from various channels such as online communication or family friends.

Due to the impact of chain referral in snowball sampling theory, the archive cases I first approached were focused on the emerging designers who had overseas study experience. This was then expanded to include entirely China-based designers and other formats of fashion business, with assistance from gatekeepers such as Tasha Liu and introduction from other participants. This extension provided wider variety of the Chinese fashion archive to form a more diverse understanding of the archive in this research.

One of the most significant impacts on the sampling process was COVID-19. The turmoil in the market caused by the pandemic created existential uncertainty about the future of the brands in view of the pressure of surviving in that environment. The fashion archive aimed at creating profit for the corporation is generally focused on the long-term game. Hence the pandemic caused some potential participants to change their attitude towards archives, as an archive requires time and money to build up. While facing the challenging market upheaval during the pandemic, four emerging fashion brands were less receptive towards investing in archival projects, which resulted in less interest in accepting interviews related to archives, including Yirantian Guo, one of the first group of University of Arts London (UAL) graduates who entered the Chinese fashion market through Labelhood.

collection/snowball-sampling/> [accessed 9th March 2023].

Apart from the changing attitude in the fashion industry, another challenge was to plan face-to-face interviews during the pandemic. In order to collect primary source information and better understand the real environment of physical archives in China I added fieldwork trips to the participants' offices and warehouse within the limitations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic from March 2020 to April 2021. To make better use of time during the great uncertainty created by the pandemic I had to divide my interviews into two parts in order to gain as much information as possible while travel was still difficult. The first set of interviews were conducted from London using the Chinese social app WeChat. These interviews gave me a firm foundation for comprehending the Shanghai fashion industry and connecting individual designers to form a broader social network inside the industry, which supported me in arranging in-person interviews and planning fieldwork in Shanghai. However, due to the COVID-19 situation, only 4 out of 26 of the first set of interviews could provide me with the immersive benefit of actually experiencing their archive.

After the first set of interviews, I was able to take a fieldwork trip to Shanghai in order to uncover more first-hand detail about the Chinese fashion industry. During the fieldwork trip I utilised methodologies from anthropology and ethnography to analyse the material and space in the physical archive, and to examine whether the physical archive matched the descriptions in the interviews, as well as other details the participants may not have been able to express during the interview, and also to examine my own feelings and experiences in these archive. This trip provided physical evidence and personal experience to answer the sub questions such as 'Where are the fashion archives located?' and 'How are people using fashion archives in China?'.

I created a list of five participants from the first group of WeChat interviews to plan a face-to-face meeting or interview and another list of five Shanghai-based

participants who had indicated an interest in participating in my research. Then I planned two initial fieldwork trips to Shanghai. The first trip was conducted in January 2021 when travel between China and other countries were under strict pandemic control. I had to go through two weeks quarantine in a local Chinese hotel before I could travel with a COVID-pass around China. At that time, compared to other cities in China, the Shanghai area was functioning as normal without any signs of an impending lockdown.

During this trip I visited Pei Ying's womenswear archive and jewellery designer Jiaya (Wendy)'s studio, and conducted interview with designers such as Une Yea from STAFFONLY. I also interviewed managers from retail fashion concerns, for instance Cheng Qin from Warehouse and Tasha Liu from Labelhood. I also managed to meet my long-term observation case study pair, Brain and Suga, twice as well as visit their archive at that time.

The second round of fieldwork visits was conducted in February 2021, when I approached twelve target participants and visited with seven of them, including Kangkang from L'ELEMENTO, Xiuling Guo from Sandriver, and Yehua Fan and designers from Vintage and Republic who took me to their office. I also interviewed Haizheng Wang and Jiangyu Tong from Shushu/Tong, although these meetings were conducted in cafes.

After the first field trip to Shanghai, once I noticed the limitations of my sample range I then started to specifically target those who represented a different educational background or a different business type. In between these two Shanghai trips, based on the need to extend variety, I conducted interviews in Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Zhongshan with Himm from Fussed, Binggan from Roaring Wild and Hui Zhan from Vintage and Republic. Fussed has recently started to join Shanghai Fashion Week, where one of the founder's Japanese educational background brought in new insights. Roaring Wild has participated in Shanghai

Fashion Week for a long time, while Vintage and Republic has two offices; the Shanghai-based office is focused on designers while the Zhongshan office is focused on production, as it located near the factories. These two interviews were both conducted in their offices, thus I had a chance to see their archives. In sum, the overall list of participants covered as great a variety of backgrounds and genres as I could achieve within a fairly limited time period and within the constraints of the ongoing pandemic.

These interviews and fieldwork trips provided me with a particular view of the current status of Chinese fashion archives. Although I tried to include the greatest variety possible, the limitations of my social network, added to the COVID restrictions in place, meant that I was not able to make as broad a survey as I initially desired. I therefore chose to focus on designers born in the 1980s to 1990s who have been in the industry for up to 10 years, as well as a few more recent start-up designers. These interviewees reflected how this generation of Chinese fashion designers - who have been directly or indirectly influenced by the 'opening-up' period and globalization - understand fashion and history. During the period I conducted the research, mainstream emerging designers in the Chinese market were also largely in this age range. However, I also have had the opportunity to approach a few designers born earlier than the 1980s. While their examples do not form the main body of this research, they do contribute to an understanding of the evolution of China from being a purely manufactory centre to including the creative industry and branding awareness in the fashion industry.

The structure of this thesis

The first Chapter of this thesis asks what a fashion archive can be in China in relation to the development of archive theories in China and the Chinese definitions of the 'archive'. The comparison of each Chinese word that appeared

during my data collecting process that corresponds to the English word 'archive' is essential to discover how Chinese fashion professionals understand archive and history in a variety of ways. This chapter forms a foundational understanding of young fashion designers' archives in Shanghai that leads to an exploration of the different types of archives that currently exist in the Chinese fashion industry.

In the second Chapter, I focus on using the fieldwork and interviews of selected fashion archive cases as evidence to examine the material space and artefacts of Chinese fashion archives. The fieldwork in Shanghai allowed me to experience the space and location of some participants' archives. Also, the face-to-face interviews in the participant's offices provided an opportunity to discover what is kept in the archive and what is the order or method of storing the collection. All of these primary sources contributed to insights into what material is considered important in modern Chinese fashion archives and supported analysis of the appraisal methods of these Chinese fashion archive and the histories they have written. The first and second Chapters are closely associated so that they can provide an overall blueprint of the current situation of Chinese fashion archive and address the overall research questions of this thesis from a macro-perspective.

The third Chapter focuses on gatekeeping theory and the function of archives in the cultural field of Shanghai fashion. The first case study is retail fashion company Labelhood, a gatekeeper in the Chinese fashion industry, and a review of its methodology of building its digital fashion archive. This digital archive is not an individual fashion designer's archive, but rather a collection of numerous fashion designers together. Its appraisal methods demonstrate the function of the archive as a gatekeeper's tool and a way of displaying power. The function and role of this particular archive reveals the current Chinese fashion system and new possible models for a commercial fashion archive. Additionally, gatekeeper theory could explain the self-reflexivity inside emerging fashion designer's archive, which provides a positive impact on creative inspiration.

Chapter Four is the case study of a personal fashion archive, Ninon archive (which changed its name to Contemporary Fashion Institution, or CoFI, in 2022), which I have followed during its development in forming a new business model in Shanghai between 2019 to 2022. The analysis of this archive case revealed a new trend in the niche fashion market called archive fashion (archival fashion) and its status within the Chinese fashion industry.[129] This archive is not just a new perspective for understanding history, it is also becoming a new business model in the marketplace. This Chapter explores how the role of the archive has changed and how the Chinese fashion industry understands history through this use of the archive.

The conclusion section of this thesis lays out the key findings and discusses potential future research questions on the fashion archive in the Chinese context.

Final Remark

While this research is centred on China, I also want to highlight the unusual nature of the current political environment. A China-centred domestic ideology has spread unexpectedly into all levels of Chinese social ideology. This celebration of separation or decoupling from the world in various cultural and political aspects in China was particularly intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, it is imperative to recognize that such separation may risk isolation regarding future development of history and culture. Therefore, this research not only aims to explore the unique definition of Chinese archives, but also to encourage communication between Chinese archive studies and the global academic

[129] Archive fashion (archival fashion): a niche fashion marketing focusing on selling and buying a particular group of fashion designers from the 1980s to 2010s, mainly avant-garde fashion designers and street style fashion designers. Including Raf Simons, Helmut Lang, Martin Margiela, Rei Kawakubo's Comme des Garcons et cetera. Condé Nast, 'Why Everyone Makes Such a Big Deal about Archival Fashion', *British GQ*, 2023 <https://www.gq-magazine.co.uk/article/what-is-archival-fashion> [accessed 3 January 2024].

community.

Chapter One: What is a fashion archive in China?

In order to understand what a fashion archive might be in China; we need to first understand the status of contemporary Chinese fashion, including the relationship between Chinese society and the development of the Chinese fashion industry; as well as the influence of the Western fashion industry, and the fashion system formed within this environment. Then, based on this more complete backdrop we can come back to the individuals to understand how they use the Chinese language to define: what the word archive means in Chinese.

This Chapter thus explores the terminology of the word archive in Chinese, examining the different Chinese terms that have been used to represent the word archive within the Chinese fashion industry. In doing so it raises the question of why fashion professionals decide to use these words and what is it that these words are reflecting. This is an exploration that contributes to the future communication of archive research between China and the English language-centered archive research field. Based on the analysis of these terms and evidence from my interviews, I have further categorized the Chinese fashion archive into four different categories: fashion designer's archives; archives in fashion manufacturing; archives in the retail environment; and archives with a new business model. When introducing each category I detail several representative cases. This Chapter thus forms a foundation for further analysis and exploration in the following chapters and addresses the key research question of what fashion archives are in mainland China.

At the beginning of this research project, archive theories in English language books suggested multiple layers of meanings for the word 'archive' from both the theoretical and the practical perspectives. The theoretical perspective of the archive is related to violence and power, as well as the subjective imagination that

Foucault and Derrida both discuss.[130] The practical perspective of the archive, according to Terry Cook and Louise Craven, focuses on the appraisal process and creating manuals, reflecting the ideology of the period and society.[131] Since the object of my study is the contemporary Chinese fashion industry, it follows that Chinese archive theory must form an important part of this study. In Chinese archive studies, the English word 'archive' does have a literal translation in Chinese: '*dang'an*' (档案) which means 'file'.[132] This is a word which is widely used in State related institutions, and which is considered as the primary translation regards to 'archive'.[133] But in the current context in both languages, the Chinese word does not include all the same meanings and functions as the English word of archive.

The use of different terms reflects distinct definitions of physical items. As Christine Tsui similarly explained, the English word 'fashion' has been translated as '*shishang*' (时尚).[134] However, the meaning of the English word fashion is not exactly the same as the Chinese word shishang, which has caused various ambiguities and misunderstandings. Hence the different meanings of the word archive in Chinese and English need to be clarified before we go into deeper analysis. While these two words may share some common ground, a deeper analysis reveals differences rooted in cultural and political backgrounds. Unpacking the nuances in the meaning of the term 'archive' in both languages is crucial to untangle the power and tension contained in the meaning of the term.

The English word 'archive' encapsulates a long history. Apart from tracing back to the source of its origin in Greek, the word in a contemporary context has

130 Michel Foucault; Jacques Derrida.
131 *'All Shook up': The Archival Legacy of Terry Cook*, ed. by Terry Cook and others (Chicago, Illinois] : [Ottawa, Ontario: Society of American Archivists ; Association of Canadian Archivists, 2020).
132 "档案 Dangan". Def. 1. Xiandai Hanyu Cidian 现代汉语词典(Contemporary Chinese dictionaries 7th edition App version) (China: The Commercial Press: 2023).
133 Feng Huilin and Zhang Jizhe ed, 冯惠玲 and 张辑哲, *Dangan Xue Gailun* 档案学概论 (An Introduction to Archival study), Beijing: Renmin University of China, 2006, pp. 4-6.
134 Christine Tsui, '"Fashion" in the Chinese context.' *Modern Fashion Traditions: Negotiating Tradition through Fashion*, M Angela Jansen and Jenner Craik (eds), (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).

developed multiple layers of meaning.[135] According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word 'archive' is defined as a collection of historical documents or records providing information about a place, institution or group of people. This is the basic meaning of the term archive, though this definition has developed in form following the shifts of political environment, technology and academic study.

In the Xin Hua Chinese dictionary, the English word 'archive' is translated as *dang'an* (档案), which means documents and material saved under categories for future reference. Chinese archive scholars Huilin Feng and Jizhe Zhang argued that *dang'an* has a strict definition. For example, a library could not count as an archive, because it has intrinsic differences from an archive.[136] According to the People's Republic of China's archive standard, 档案工作基本术语[Basic Terminology of Archival Work], the definition of archive is '"any form of valuable historical records that directly [is] formulated during the state agency, social institution and individual's social activities" '. But what is valuable? Who can define the value? These are the unspoken rules. Huilin Feng and Jizhe Zhang further defined archive in the academic field as ' "concrete information that is clear and unambiguous through the use of the original records which [are] directly formulated during the previous social practice activities of social institution or individuals"'.[137]

Based on this definition of the word archive in Chinese, when considering the meaning of archives, we can take account of Canadian archivist Terry Cook's suggestion that the archive is a mirror, reflecting the society that created it.[138] The process of creating archives reflects how society writes history, and archive practice methods reveal how society understands history. If so, when focused on the area of the fashion archive - positioning it within the contemporary Chinese fashion industry - understanding the Chinese words representing archives is a

135 Jacques Derrida, p. 9.
136 Feng Huilin and Zhang Jizhe ed, 冯惠玲 and 张辑哲, pp. 4-6.
137 Ibid, p. 6.
138 Terry Cook, "What is Past is Prologue" 17-63 (pp. 18-19).

fundamental step to answering the main questions.

This Chapter draws on interviews I conducted with forty-two fashion professionals in China, using interview questions designed to help untangle how the English word 'archive' has been adapted by Chinese fashion professionals. The analysis will trace the participants' encounters with the word 'archive', to explore the influence of their historical and educational backgrounds on their use of the term. If the participants have translated the word, how did they decide which word to adapt; if not, why? And what word have they decided to use instead? Has the Chinese terminology for 'archive' been widely accepted by fashion professionals in China? I will unfold the current situation of Chinese fashion archives from this perspective. The terms that participants used to define their archive thus reflect current Chinese understanding history through fashion from the point of view of young design professionals.

Contemporary Chinese Fashion

Contemporary Chinese society and the fashion industry

When delving into the history of the Chinese fashion industry, the deep impact that politics in China has had on its social ideology must be borne in mind. China has been a significant export country since the Silk Road was established during the Han Dynasty (207 BC - 220 AD), with traditional products such as porcelain and silk being the mainstay of China's reputation.[139] It reached a peak period during the late Ming Dynasty to the early Qing Dynasty (late 16th Century to early

[139] Xinru Liu, *The Silk Road in World History* (Oxford University Press, 2010) pp. 4-8; Valerie Hansen, *The Silk Road: A New History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 14-16; Susan Whitfield, *Silk, Slaves, and Stupas* (California: Univ of California Press), pp. 20-28.

18th Century) beginning from the Longqing Emperor's Reopening (1567).[140] Although in the modern period, the Opium Wars (1840s - 1860s), the Civil War (1927 - 1949) and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) caused short-lived and deep damage to the Chinese economic system and its export trade, since 'Opening Up' in the 1980s, together with the broad development of manufacturing, the export of daily necessities has increased rapidly.[141] Amongst export product classifications, fashion stands out, as the contemporary international fashion industry sought to achieve nonstop seasonal growth with China rising to the challenge to supply that growth, starting with the establishment of the Special Economic Zone in Guangdong province in 1984.[142] During the 1990s, China also became a perfect location for cheap labour and materials for the fast-fashion industry.[143] However, the result of this growth is that China has gained quite a different international reputation compared to its previous one of refinement when it exported porcelains and silk.

For many decades, 'the factory of the world' nomenclature has been applied to China.[144] But the emergence of the Chinese contemporary fashion industry seems to indicate a turning point in this perspective. In the third decade of the twenty-

---

140 Rui D'Avila Lourido, Chinese Fashion Crossed the Oceans in the Wake of the Portuguese Trade with China, During the Late Ming and Early Qing Dynasties, *Face to Face: the transcendence of the arts in China and beyond*. *Historical perspectives*, (2014), pp. 355-356; Ivy Maria Lim, 'From Haijin to Kaihai: The Jiajing Court's Search for a Modus Operandi along the South-Eastern Coast (1522-1567)', *Journal of the British Association for Chinese Studies*, 2 (2013), 1-26 (p. 20); Angela Schottenhammer, *Characteristics of Qing China's Maritime Trade Politics, Shunzhi Through Qianlong Regns, Trading Networks in Early Modern [East Asian Maritime History, 9].* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 2010), pp. 101-154 (p. 103).

141 Zhou Wei 周卫, *Yapian Zhanzheng dui Zhongguo Jindai Shehui Jingji Fazhan de Yingxiang* 鸦片战争对中国近代社会经济发展的影响（The influence of the Opium War on the social and economic development of modern China）, *Chnabai Jounal*, (2007.05), pp137-138; Michel Oksenberg and others, *'The Cultural Revolution: 1967 in Review*', (The University of Michigan Center for Chinese Study, 1968) pp58-60; *Dan Li, 'The Economic Effects of Civil War: Evidence from Chinese National Railroads, 1906-1923'* (2007) unpublished manuscript.

142 Nellie Chu, 'The Emergence of "Craft" and Migrant Entrepreneurship along the Global Commodity Chains for Fast Fashion in Southern China', *The Journal of Modern Craft*, (9:2 2016), p. 194; 'Is China's Growth Model a Threat to Free-Market Economics?', *The Economist* <https://www.economist.com/open-future/2018/06/13/is-chinas-growth-model-a-threat-to-free-market-economics?giftId=dcc1990c-d122-4bf7-bdaf-a025376e8693> [accessed 23 December 2023].

143 Nellie Chu, p. 195; 'Made in China?', *The Economist* <https://www.economist.com/leaders/2015/03/12/made-in-china?giftId=cf3e0c56-7544-4aee-8d79-99c36fe4c9fe> [accessed 23 December 2023].

144 'China Will Continue to Dominate World Production', *Investopedia* (2022) <https://www.investopedia.com/articles/investing/102214/why-china-worlds-factory.asp> [accessed 16 December 2023].

first century, the Chinese fashion industry is now made up of a world leading fashion manufactory system and growing brand consciousness, accompanied by the emergence of multiple creative talents.[145] Shanghai, as the fashion capital in China, had a market size of almost 150 billion Chinese Yuan (21 billion USD) in 2016.[146]

Large fashion firms and groups have formed in the Yangtze River delta area (close to Shanghai), such as ICICLE group, JNBY and Fosun Fashion (rebranding as Lanvin Group in 2021 after acquired a controlling stake in Lanvin in 2018), part of giant conglomerate Fosun International.[147] The second and third generation independent designers such as Ma Ke, Wang Yiyang and Uma Wang and their brands are still active in the market.[148] And Shanghai-based buyer boutique Labelhood is the key platform for emerging young designers, bringing in new Chinese talents and their brands like Shushu Tong, Chen Peng, Angel Chen, Rui, Pengtai and many other emerging designers. This momentum has led to the formation of an active and competitive ecosystem in the Chinese fashion industry. But the rapid development of the Chinese fashion industry remains enveloped by the contradictions between state power and freedom, collectivism and the market economy, and patriotism and identity in Chinese society.

---

145 *Maiken Xi 2022 Zhongguo Shishang Chanye Baipi Shu* 麦肯锡 2022 中国时尚产业白皮书(McKinsey 2022 Chinese Fashion Industry White Paper)(McKinsey & Company eBook, 2022), p.23.

146 (19 banben) Shanghai Shishang Chanye Baogao Xiuzheng Ban- Hebing Ban（19 版本）上海时尚产业报告修正版-合并版 Shanghai Fashion Industry Report Revised edition - Consolidated edition (unpublished Donghua University, 2019), p. 33.

147 Lily Templeton & Hu Denni, 'Icicle Co-Founder Ye Shouzeng Inducted Into France's National Order of Merit', *WWD*, (2023) <https://wwd.com/fashion-news/fashion-features/icicle-cofounder-ye-shouzeng-inducted-france-national-order-of-merit-shanghai-carven-1235512851/> [accessed 16 December 2023]. Denni Hu, 'How to Build a City, According to JNBY', *WWD*, (2023) <https://wwd.com/business-news/retail/jnby-ooeli-sept-weekend-1235784253/> [accessed 16 December 2023]. Miles Socha, 'Eric Chan Named CEO of Lanvin Group', *WWD*, (2023) <https://wwd.com/fashion-news/designer-luxury/lanvin-group-new-ceo-chairman-executive-change-1236028252/> [accessed 16 December 2023].

148 Laurie Burkitt, 'What China's Fashion Trendsetters Are Wearing', *Wall Street Journal*, (14 November 2012) <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887324556304578118891337284014.html> [accessed 16 December 2023]. Nyima Pratten, 'Ma Ke on Being a Clothes Designer, Not a Fashion Designer', *WWD*, (2018) <https://wwd.com/feature/ma-ke-on-being-a-clothes-designer-not-a-fashion-designer-1202718154/> [accessed 16 December 2023]. 'Uma Wang | BoF 500 | The People Shaping the Global Fashion Industry', *The Business of Fashion* <https://www.businessoffashion.com/community/people/uma-wang> [accessed 16 December 2023]. Christine Tsui, *China Fashion: Conversations with designer*s, (London: Berg, 2010), pp. 175-176.

In *China Made*, Karl Gerth discusses an important period of modern China's consumer culture.[149] His book covers the period from the Opium War (1840s) to the beginning of the Chinese Civil War (1940s), during which time there was a short blossoming period for Chinese manufacturing, like a brief revival of past glories. Karl discusses the history of the development of Guo Huo (国货, or 'national products') during that period.[150] The core concepts of Guo Huo at that time were nationalism and anti-imperialism, fashion being used as one of the main expressions of these concepts, resulting in joining the creation of the myths of 'national political/territorial integration and economic integration' during the Republic of China period (1912-1949), which formed a very important part of the Chinese fashion industry history.[151] When we compare the spirit of Guo Huo with the approaches adopted by the current emerging fashion leaders in China, they both hold a similar attitude, which reflects how the Chinese want to position themselves in their relationship with other cultures. The need to prove the independence of their own culture and gain respect from others is a remnant of the collapse of cultural confidence at the end of the late Qing Dynasty.

This social ideology has also influenced the practice of archives research in modern China. During the 1920s and 1930s, a wave of enthusiasm for 'Guo Xue' 国学 or 'nation studies', resulted in historians concentrating on rediscovering Chinese history.[152] Archive research provided essential evidence to support the new discoveries made during the Guo Xue wave, which led to the development of archive practice theories in contemporary Chinese culture.

But fashion, as an industry that is highly relevant to personal expression, has faced

---

149 Karl Gerth, *China Made: Consumer Culture and the Creation of the Nation*, (Harvard University Asian Centre, 2003).
150 Karl Gerth, pp. 246-249.
151 Karl Gerth, p. 247. Antonia Finnane, *Changing Clothes in China: Fashion, History, Nation* (London: Hurst, 2007), pp. 95-99; Yuan Ze and Hu Yue 袁仄 and 胡月, *Bainian Yishang* 百年衣裳 (A Hundred Years of Clothing) (Hong Kong Open Page Publishing, 2011), pp. 108-114.
152 Jin Bo 金波, *Danganxue Daolun* 档案学导论 (An Introduction to the Archive Study)(Shanghai: Shanghai University, 2018), p. 141.

more difficulties in its development in China. As fashion scholars Christine Tsui and Antonia Finnane outline, due to its political needs China has implemented strict control over freedom of expression, especially during the Culture Revolution period (1966-1976), or in other words 'the fashion forbidden period'.[153] The influence of the Culture Revolution, such as centralization of state power, collectivism and patriotism, is still deeply rooted in current Chinese social ideology, which affects all of China's cultural industries as well as the development of the fashion industry. Many of the survivors of the Cultural Revolution are now middle aged or older and are the ones who rebuilt the contemporary Chinese fashion industry from the 1980s onwards.[154]

Chinese fashion editor and researcher Juanjuan Wu pointed out that during the first decade of the twenty-first century, when the Chinese luxury fashion market was growing rapidly, the international market paid a great deal of attention to Chinese consumers.[155] Wu also noticed there was ideological confusion amongst Chinese consumers on the question of national identity.[156] Chinese citizens are brought up in a contradictory environment, where national pride and national inferiority stand side by side. Its citizens have been educated to celebrate the overall superiority and glory of Chinese traditional culture and history, yet they also consistently remember and repeatedly broadcast the historical national humiliation by foreign powers over the hundred-year period from the first Opium War in 1840 to the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949.[157]

From early 19th century up to the present day the impact of this contradictory social ideology has blended with the development of Guo Xue, and other similar movements over various time periods. More recently, since 2000 two new

153 Christine Tsui, *China Fashion: Conversations with designer*s, pp. 15-17; Antonia Finnane, p. 228; Juanjuan Wu, *Chinese Fashion: From Mao to Now*, (Oxford: Berg, 2009), pp. 1-3.
154 Christine Tsui, *China Fashion: Conversations with designer*s, p. 26.
155 Juanjuan Wu, pp. 163.
156 Ibid, pp.103-106.
157 Ibid, p. 120.

movements have emerged - Guo Chao（国潮 national trend）and Xin Zhong Shi (新中式 New Chineseness). This social cultural background led to the emergence of multiple approaches to reflecting traditional Chinese culture and understanding history. For example, nostalgia became an approach to deconstruct certain periods of history. In the wave of Guo Chao and Xin Zhong Shi, fashion brands evoked the collective memories of certain periods by adapting the representative elements into new designs, although often concentrating on advocating the aesthetic only. In this way, fashion actually recreates a nostalgic understanding of the period. More importantly, in the highly centralized Chinese society, nostalgia is strongly connected with nationalism. It is commonly understood by Chinese citizens that some sensitive and controversial elements of Chinese history are not allowed to be displayed or discussed in public space. This also applies to fashion design.

Another main contradictory ideology deeply rooted in Chinese education is the strong desire to be more internationally respected by foreign nations, even to the extent that it has nowadays developed into a kind of 'political correctness' in contemporary Chinese culture. On one side, this desire has spread into all sorts of culture related industries. For instance, most Chinese relate winning an Oscar, a Nobel Prize or an Olympic medal to an expression of their great patriotism.[158] Chinese citizens have been educated to believe that hosting the Olympic Games is a way to demonstrate the power of contemporary China. The 2008 Olympic Games was a perfect showcase for such Chinese patriotism. In *Chinese Brand Culture to Global Brands*, Wu Zhiyan, Janet Borgerson and Jonathan Schroeder used the Beijing Olympics Opening Ceremony as a case study to analyse how China

[158] Juanjuan Wu, p. 120; Wu Zhiyan, Janet Borgerson and Jonathan Schroeder, *From Chinese Brand Culture to Global Brands*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 105-109; Zhang Xudong 张旭东, Moyan shi Tongxiang Dangdai Zhongguo Wenxue de Menhu 莫言是通向当代中国文学的门户 Mo Yan is the gateway to contemporary Chinese literature in '*Wenhua Zijue Pianlun: Qimeng Zhuyi de Zhengzhi Weiji yu Lunli Weiji*', '文化自觉片论：启蒙主义的政治危机与伦理危机'（A Discourse on Cultural Self-Awareness: The Political and Ethical Crisis of Enlightenment）Wenhua Zhengzhi yu Zhongguo daolu (Shanghai: Shanghai Renming Publisher, 2015), pp. 423-427.

constructed a new brand to illustrate the 'Modern China myth' of 'non-discrimination, peace and the psycho-physical improvement of human beings'.[159] And this need to rebrand China is again related to anxiety around Chinese identity. Fashion, as a way to express personality and identity, interacts with this anxiety, and has been unable to escape the urgent expectation and desire within China of wanting to be respected, recognized and admired by other cultures.

Wu also analysed the phenomenon around 2000, when an influx of international luxury brands entered the China market, and Chinese designers went overseas to try to seek recognition from the mainstream European fashion capitals. Designers from Liu Yang to Ma Ke, who emerged during the 1990s, all attempted to add numerous elements from traditional Chinese culture into their designs.[160] These attempts reflect how Chinese fashion designers tried to reconnect themselves to traditional Chinese culture. However, Chinese designers still worry that their designs 'will only add another form of originality and exoticism to Western fashion but will not be a dominant force in global fashion'.[161] Thus the second generation of designers has changed strategy to focus on expressing individual creativity, which has led to a new approach to connecting with world culture.[162] This uncertainty and insecurity is mainly derived from the ideological contradiction of understanding Chinese history, culture and fashion that Wu pointed out. Many of the active contemporary Chinese fashion designers grew up in this ideological environment and, as such, their designs reflect how they understand Chinese history and Chinese culture.

In *Chinese Fashion Industry: An Ethnographic Approach,* Chinese American anthropologist Zhao Jianhua analysed the 'Chinese fashion industry as a cultural

159 Wu Zhiyan and others, pp. 105-109.
160 Juanjuan Wu, p. 144.
161 Ibid, p. 153.
162 Ibid, p. 153.

system'.[163] He analysed the impact of the rapidly changing Chinese economic situation on Chinese fashion, thus reflecting the cultural changes in Chinese society. The unique social and structural constraints that Chinese fashion industry professionals face is one of Zhao's main focuses of analysis. Because 'it's through their dealings with the social and structural constraints as well as opportunities unique to the Chinese context that Chinese fashion designers (and other professionals) come to define the "Chinese-ness" of their profession'.[164] It took Chinese society a long time to form the social status and understanding of what a fashion designer is. Meanwhile, in order to break the stereotypical thinking about Chinese fashion designers, this new generation of designers need to and are eager to prove their capability to the outside world. This adds further evidence to Wu's arguments about how Chinese fashion reflects the contradictory ideologies of Chinese society.

Yet more recently, as Anja Aronowsky Cronberg was conducting research in Shanghai in 2016, it became apparent that in the wake of increasing globalization, Chinese designers have grown in number, while the complex background of these 'Chinese designers' leads to an even more complicated assessment of their nature.[165] As most of the Shanghai-based 'Chinese fashion designers' have an overseas education background, what aspect are they looking at when they examine their position as a 'designer': a 'Chinese designer' or their 'Chinese-ness'?[166] At the same time, some of the designers who have global business plans are not only considering their identity inside China, but also in the global market. Cronberg suggested that while the Western fashion system expects Chinese designers to represent Chinese culture, the designers she encountered in Shanghai were '…reluctant for their aesthetic to be pegged as 'Chinese', as '…to be seen as

[163] Jianhua Zhao, *The Chinese Fashion Industry: An Ethnographic Approach*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 158.
[164] Ibid, p. 156.
[165] Anja Aronowsky Cronberg, ' "There will never be a Chinese Fashion": Staking a Claim for Shanghai as a Fashion City', *Styling Shanghai* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), p. 298.
[166] Ibid, p. 289.

a 'Chinese designer' would be reductive and anyway wouldn't reflect… the complexity of Chinese cultural history'.[167]

The way in which these designers position themselves - both consciously and unconsciously - affects how they use fashion to express their understanding of the world. Similarly, if these designers want to establish an archive that potentially records the history of their business and creative activities, their positioning will affect how they decide what to keep in the archive, and what to ignore. Because an archive is the reflection of the times - its appraisal process is hugely influenced by the owner and creator's background. Their background includes what education they received, the political environment that they grew up in, what technology was available for use at that time, and crucially, their ideological understanding of themselves in those times. The framework of an archive is tied to each designer's or brand archivist's understanding of their or the brand's position through ideological approaches to history. Thus, questions in this research project about Chinese fashion archives need to take into consideration the impact of the characteristics of contemporary China and the globalization experience of young designers in China.

Chinese Fashion and Orientalism

To accompany the "China Chic: East Meets West" exhibition in the museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology ("FIT") in New York in 1999, curator Valerie Steele and history professor John S. Major edited and published a book with the same title.[168] The first part of this book attempts to outline the changes in Chinese fashion during the 20th century, in order to argue against the western colonial theory that described Chinese fashion as never changing. Through a selection of

[167] Anja Aronowsky Cronberg, p. 306.
[168] Valerie Steele and John Major, *China Chic: East meets West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), p. vii.

articles from authors including Hazel Clark, Dorothy Ko, Verity Wilson, Antonia Finnane and Martha Huang, the edited collection attempted to present a new perspective, an understanding of Chinese history and society through modern Chinese fashion, as demonstrated by the influence from the East to the West and also from the West to the East. They raised questions about the challenges faced by both Western and Eastern societies in understanding Chinese culture and Chinese fashion. Not only was Western Orientalist exoticism problematic, Steele also quoted Antonia Finnane, who argued that when the Chinese try to analyse their own fashion there is 'a sense of dislocation from history and …. a desire to be reconnected with it', which emphasizes the confusion inherent in Chinese ideology.[169]

Finnane went on to discuss this confusion in more detail in her own book, *Changing Clothes in China*.[170] She focused on trying to answer the question 'what should Chinese women wear?', hence connecting fashion with Chinese national identity, and reflecting on 'what fashion means in the Chinese context'. At the same time, she noticed that this was a question that Western scholars had not been concerned with in the 1990s. This is because fashion had for a long period been recognised as predominantly Western. Europe and America were distinguished from 'the others', which were 'China, India and Islam' within the Orientalist context. But Finnane explored Chinese fashion history as an individual fashion system, pointing out the changes in Chinese fashion and its relationship to the dynamic situation of Chinese political movements, and thus arguing against the Orientalism understanding of Chinese fashion.

International attention to Chinese fashion reached a pinnacle when the New York Metropolitan Museum announced a fashion exhibition in 2015 entitled "China:

169 Antonia Finnane, pp. 292-294.
170 Ibid.

Through the Looking Glass".[171] It was curated from the contemporary North American perspective of Chinese fashion, which led to criticism from certain parts of the media that the exhibition perpetuated the colonialist and orientalist theories previously applied to Chinese fashion. The online fashion report and critical website *Business of Fashion* (BOF) questioned if this exhibition was represented by 'the excessive manipulation of business interests, the lag of information and asymmetry of the communication between West and China, or the emptiness under the skin of this fancy industry's thriving and flourishing situation'.[172] The author was critical of the fact that apart from one gown made by Chinese contemporary couture designer Guo Pei, the most modern piece in the exhibition that actually came from China was the Mao suit from the Cultural Revolution period. There was a forty to fifty year time gap present when Andrew Bolton, the Curator-in-Chief of the Costume Institute, tried to express this 'Chinese fantasy'.[173] The exhibition in its entirety featured almost no contemporary Chinese fashion. In reality, a large number of emerging Chinese fashion designers, from the 1990s to the mid-2010s, took part in defining what is contemporary Chinese fashion. It is the fashion archives of this missing period that my research project is focused on.

The Chinese fashion system

Questions about Chinese fashion archives and Chinese fashion history also need to be examined within the new context of a Chinese fashion system formulated by political policy, the economic environment and prevailing education system which Antonia Finnane, Jianhua Zhao, Juanjuan Wu and Yating Jin have examined in their

171 *China Through the Looking Glass* ed. by Andrew Bolton and Asam Geczy, et al (New York: Yale Press & Metropolitan Museum, 2015), p. 12.
172 Ma Muyuan 马牧原, 'Op-Ed| Daduhui Bowuguan "Zhongguo" zhan: Xifang dui Zhongguo Yishu de Huanjue' 大都会博物馆"中国"展：西方对中国一书的幻觉 (Met "China" Exhibition: West illusion on Chinese Art), *Business of Fashion* (2015) http://cn.bussinessoffashion.com/articles/news-analysis/op-ed-met-china-exhibition-west-illusion-on-chinese-art.cn [accessed 31 March 2020].
173 *The First Monday in May*, dir. by Andrew Rossi (Conde Nast Entertainment. 2016) [accessed 1 September 2021].

works.[174] Finnane suggested 'a difference more salient to the fostering of design talent may lie in education'.[175] She compared Japan's educational orientation to China's, arguing that Chinese fashion students have less flexibility and space to discuss the 'government confirmed' historical attitude in public. She pointed out that Chinese designers are forced to court dangerous 'controversy' if they are to develop a 'more interesting and diverse range of approaches to their history', thus 'enabling them to turn their cultural heritage to a good account on the catwalk'. This comment resonates deeply with this thesis, identifying the origins of numerous problems inherent within the Chinese cultural industry, and Finanne's work in this field provides a stimulating perspective from which to consider the Chinese fashion system.

In the recently published *Fashion Theory* journal, independent researcher Yating Jin supported Zhao's theory of multiple fashion systems within the modern fashion industry phenomenon, and their interactive force with global fashion systems.[176] Jin put fashion into the wider creative industry category and emphasized the crucial influence of policymakers. A significant impetus for political intervention in China has been aimed at extending the demand of the domestic market. For instance, since 2005 the Shanghai municipal government has released a collection of policies to stimulate the development of creative industry and expand domestic demand.[177] As a result of these policies, the market focus has gradually shifted from imported fashion brands to domestic fashion brands. The arguments made by Tiziana Ferrero-Regis and Tim Lindgren in their work about how China tried the branding "created in China" also support

[174] Antonia Finnane; Juanjuan Wu; Jianhua Zhao, 'Local Productions, Global Connections: Making Fashion in China', in *Fashion in Multiple Chinas*, ed. by Wessie Ling and Simona Segre Reinach (London: I.B.TAURIS, 2018); Yating Jin, 'A Mechanism of the Chinese Fashion System', *Fashion Theory*, 26.5 (2022), 595–621.
[175] Antonia Finnane, p. 294.
[176] Yating Jin, 2022, p. 615.
[177] (19 banben) Shanghai Shishang Chanye Baogao Xiuzheng Ban- Hebing Ban（19 版本）上海时尚产业报告修正版-合并版 Shanghai Fashion Industry Report Revised edition - Consolidated edition (unpublished Donghua University, 2019) p. 21-27.

Jin's position.[178]

Jin used Shanghai as an example, similar to Wu's analysis of the development of Shanghai as a fashion city, where most contemporary Chinese fashion designers are currently located.[179] These scholars consider that the fashion system in Shanghai is maturing steadily, with a notable exception being fashion-specific education. The Chinese industry currently lacks fashion professionals' support in areas such as marketing, merchandising, retail and high-standard manufacturing.[180] Although Jin suggested that this new form of fashion system should be 'linked into a national innovation system' to 'achieve synchronization across each industrial aspect', high-level control from policymakers raised certain concerns about what level of involvement the regime could have in the decision-making of free expression through fashion, as well as the framework of a fashion corporation's archive.

The complex interactive relationship between Chinese fashion systems means that the process of defining Chinese fashion will likely fall outside of the Western understanding of what fashion is. As part of the ongoing globalization trend, China does not just import Western culture, it also exports Chinese culture. In Chinese fashion scholar Christine Tsui's book, she recorded fashion insiders' voices describing the struggles of the local fashion industry, and she linked the past history of Chinese fashion design to the present.[181] Tsui's division of three different generations of Chinese fashion designers provides clues on how Chinese fashion has evolved since the 1980s. From the initial direct use of traditional symbols in design to the later expression of the spirit of Chinese culture through cutting and material, the dynamic flow of Chinese fashion design reflects a linear progression of ideological change. Tsui's interviews were conducted prior to 2011,

178 Tiziana Ferrero-Rogis and Lindgren, Branding "Created in China": The Rise of Chinese Fashion Designers, *Fashion Practice*, 4:1 (2012), pp. 72-73.
179 Yating Jin, p. 609.
180 Ibid.
181 Christine Tsui, *China Fashion: Conversations with designer*s.

while Cronberg's interviews in 2016 added a different scene to the panorama of contemporary Chinese fashion designers.[182] The complex background of the new wave of designers has led to a redefinition of both Chinese fashion and Chinese fashion designers, and also reflected that the Chinese fashion system has turned from emphasizing the industrial manufactory to the creative industry, but it has not yet resolve the cultural conflict between China and the West, and the inner contradiction with social ideology.

Fashion scholar Segre-Reinach argued that China is trying to build cultural confidence through fashion, yet this 'should be seen not as a reaction to Western fashion,… but as a new configuration for contemporary fashion in China', which also demonstrates the significance of centering emerging young Chinese designers in new research on Chinese fashion.[183] This suggests that Chinese fashion is slowly walking out of the haze it has been in since the century of national humiliation began in the nineteenth century, and that its citizens are developing the ability to reposition Chinese fashion in Mainland China as part of their own organic culture. This means that contemporary Chinese fashion designers can largely or even solely focus on the Chinese fashion system and domestic market demand, rather than continue to compare themselves to European or American fashion designers or attempt to gain attention and recognition in the international market.

While it is impossible to escape from state power in the Chinese style market economy, the Chinese fashion industry is using government power to pave a new path to absorb overseas Chinese talents back into the mainland, building the new Chinese fashion system with a mix of Western knowledge and Chinese ideology. Thus, the fashion archives created by contemporary Chinese fashion designers

[182] Anja Aronowsky Croberg.
[183] Simona Serge Reinach, The Identity of Fashion in Contemporary China and the New Relationships with the West, *Fashion Practice*, 4:1(2012), pp. 64.

could be formulated within their own framework, without the need to simply copy the established Western fashion houses or institutions.

Archive study in China

As stated at the beginning of this Chapter, in China the word 'archive' has been officially translated into the Chinese word dang'an. Dang'an may not be the first word that represents 'archive', but it has been recognized as the correct translation by both the Oxford and Cambridge English-to-Chinese dictionaries. According to archive academic Jin Bo, Professor of the Department of Library Information and Archive at Shanghai University, the word dang'an first appeared at the end of the Ming Dynasty and the beginning of the Qing Dynasty (1628-1700). The earliest written appearance was in 1638 in a record by the early Qing emperor. The officer who first used the new word *dang'an* '档案' to describe government documents did so in an official government record.[184]

Then, in 1707, in Yang Bin's *Liubian Ji'lue* (柳边纪略), the author used the etymological method to explain the origin of dang'an. Yang Bin analysed the Chinese word *dang* (档), stating that it had the wood radical *mu* (木) on the left side, thus the origin of 'dang' must be related to human activities using wood. Due to the features of archives in ancient China, early documents were recorded on strips of wood. Documents written on wood which had been stored for many years would be called dang'an. In the authoritative *Kangxi Dictionary* (康熙字典, KangXi Zi'dian) of 1710, it explains that dang is a kind of wooden shelf for storage use.[185] The other early Qing Dynasty dictionary, named '*Zhengzi Tong*' (正字通), explained the original meaning of 'an' (案) was a low wooden table or a type of document that is formulated during the handling of events.[186] So, the two words

[184] Jin Bo 金波, p. 30; Feng Huilin and Zhang Jizhe ed, 冯惠玲 and 张辑哲, pp. 43-44
[185] Jin Bo 金波, p. 30
[186] Ibid.

‘dang’ and ‘an’ both relate to the features of government office work. When they are connected together, becoming the word dang’an, they represent the original meaning of an archive. This meaning is similar to the Greek word ‘archeion’, as well as the original function in the government as records on wood.

However, through my interviews, I discovered there are many other Chinese words that are used to represent the archive in the participant’s everyday work. Dang’an is not necessarily the common Chinese word the participants would use to describe their archive. This, in a way, reflects the fact that in the Chinese fashion industry, fashion insiders and professionals do not have a common understanding of what an archive is and what the functions of the archive are. One of the reasons for this situation is the very different perspective of archives presented in academic research and in the education system in China and Europe.

In China, the practice of archives began comparatively early, and were used by the regime to consolidate their dominion and power. The early practice of using archives in China started in the Xia, Shang and Zhou Dynasties (BCE2100-1600 , BCE1600-1046, BCE1046 – 256) due to the regime’s administrative requirements during those periods.[187] Since then, the Chinese early practice of archives gradually developed through the changes of dynasties. Because these practices are concentrated on governmental and empirical requirements, the methodology of the practice first absorbed the principles of Taoism and Confucianism theory, which are the theories that had a strong influence on Chinese emperors during the Eastern Zhou Dynasty (BCE 770-256), as well as the future emperors and Han cultural roots.[188] This theoretical influence also affects the way that history was written. According to records, the father of Chinese historiography Sima Qian 司马迁(Western Han Dynasty, BCE 206-CE 23) frequently used the governmental archive records to assist his writing of *Records of the Grand Historian*, also known

[187] Feng Huilin and Zhang Jizhe ed, 冯惠玲 and 张辑哲, pp. 21-24.
[188] Jin Bo 金波, p. 134.

as *Shiji* 史记 in Chinese, which is known as the first historical record and one of the foundations of Chinese culture.[189] But the well-known background of Sima Qian completing this fundamental historical record was that he was condemned to castration by Emperor Wu partially due to his having what was deemed to be an overly subjective attitude when writing the history.[190]

Later on, the Tang Dynasty (618-907 AD) court historians such as Liu Zhiji 刘知几, also conducted research and produced his work *Shitong* 史通, which was based on the Tang Dynasty's archive.[191] He developed a method to divide history books and historical materials, as well as how to appraise information through archives. Sima Qian and Liu Zhiji both made tremendous contributions to Chinese history and culture. However, they did not help to develop a systematic archival theory, for as historians they still focused on using archive practice as a method of processing historical material for their research.

On another front, since the Han Dynasty, one of the main objectives of many dynasties was to establish a centralized system of governance.[192] In order to support this political purpose, the main function of a Chinese government's archive was to serve and protect the emperor and the regime's power. This system remained in place until the fall of the Qing Dynasty (1912) and up to the start of the Second World War (1939), which was followed by a pause in the development of Chinese archives.[193] The original direction of archive practice and theory was overturned during these earth-shaking changes in Chinese society in the first half of the twentieth century, after which a new archive practice and archive theory began to emerge in modern China.

---

189 Ibid, p. 136.
190 Ban Gu 班固, Sima Qin Zhuan 司马迁传, The Biography of Sima Qian, *Hanshu 汉书 Book of Han* (Beijing: Xinhua Shuju, 2012).
191 Jin Bo 金波, pp. 137-138.
192 Ibid, pp. 139-140.
193 Ibid, pp140-159; Wu Baokang 吴宝康, *Dangaxue Lilun yu Lishi Chutan* 档案学理论与历史初探 (*A Preliminary Study of Archive Theories and History*), pp. 155-157.

The most pre-eminent archive researchers prior to 1949 were Liang Qichao 梁启超 and Fu Sinian 傅斯年, while more recently the archive academic Wu Baokang 吴宝康 was honoured in 1990 as a Pioneer of Archive Studies of the People's Republic of China.[194] He provided the framework and practices in contemporary Chinese archives, as seen through the lens of Chinese communism. Wu's work, 档案学理论和历史初探[A Preliminary Study of Archive Theories and History], described the relationship between Karl Marx, Vladimir Lenin, Chairman Mao 毛泽东, Premier Zhou Enlai 周恩来 and other Chinese politicians, and set out to prove the importance of archives in Communist revolutionary history.[195] Wu pointed out how Premier Zhou Enlai (Head of Government from 1949 to 1976) in particular took archives seriously. He quoted Premier Zhou saying that government archives needed to be able to serve the current Communist revolution, and to serve to create a new experience of revolution.[196] Premier Zhou argued that the research work of the current historical archive should override past historical archives.[197] The current historical archive should serve the revolution, Communism and the future. Through Wu's work it is clear that the early Chinese Communist politicians were aware of the importance of the archive and paid much attention to the relationship between archives and history. The archive could provide crucial support to the new regime to clarify the new system's power dynamic. This further established the general understanding in China that the definition of an archive was a tool for government.

Wu Baokang is one of the archive researchers who survived the Cultural Revolution, and afterwards was fortunate to rediscover his primary research material. His research method is imbued with a deep understanding of the times.

194 Jin Bo 金波, 2018, pp. 143-144.
195 Wu Baokang 吴宝康, *Dangaxue Lilun yu Lishi Chutan* 档案学理论与历史初探 (*A Preliminary Study of Archive Theories and History*), pp. 73-100.
196 Ibid, p. 97.
197 Ibid, p. 98.

His work demonstrated how Chinese society tried to reconstruct its fractured history after the civil war and the ten destructive years of the Cultural Revolution. Ultimately, it reflects that at that time Chinese society understood history to be a political tool to support leadership in terms of gaining power to govern the society in the newly formed unstable country. According to the statement from the leadership of the regime, they understood the importance of controlling information in the archive, and were keen to fully control the history. Since then, every turn of strategy of the Chinese national archive has directly reflected how the regime wanted to collect history, write history and use this history. Even the fake records found in the archive are actually telling the truth of the period: as there was a period when superficial ideology overrode anything.

Archives in China (since the 1990s)

According to Feng and Zhang, in contemporary China, the conceptual classification of archive types consists of four layers. First is the official archive 公务档案 and the private archive 私人档案, divided based on ownership, but they also have some overlap areas; the second layer is the historical archive 历史档案 and current archive 现行档案, the former serving a spiritual cultural function, the latter supporting the practical function; the third layer is the documents archive 文书档案, technical archive 科技档案 and professional archive 专门档案, which have all been widely adapted by social activities in China; the final layer is the archive created after the founding of the People's Republic of China, including revolutionary history archives and former regime archives.[198] These archives are divided based on the historic timeline. The multiple classification methods seem to provide more varied possibilities for understanding history in the modern Chinese society, but the power from the regime can also tracked.

[198] Feng Huilin and Zhang Jizhe ed, 冯惠玲 and 张辑哲, pp. 14-18.

Before the Reform and Opening Up period (1978-present day), under the communist society's planned economic system, corporations were designed as part of the government system. After Opening Up, many companies still belonged to the system and their established archives were still strongly affected by the governmental archive system. Feng Huilin and Zhang Jizhe added that in order to standardize the corporate archives outside the system, in 1996, the National Archives Administration of China issued the "Enterprise Archive Declaration and Registration Method"(企业档案申报登记办法). Through this new regulation, the emerging capitalist corporations could be standardized to follow the communist owned corporate's archival system.[199] (Please see table 1 to view the archive institution types that have been introduced by Feng and Zhang.[200] The enterprise archive qualified as part of the internal archive institution.)

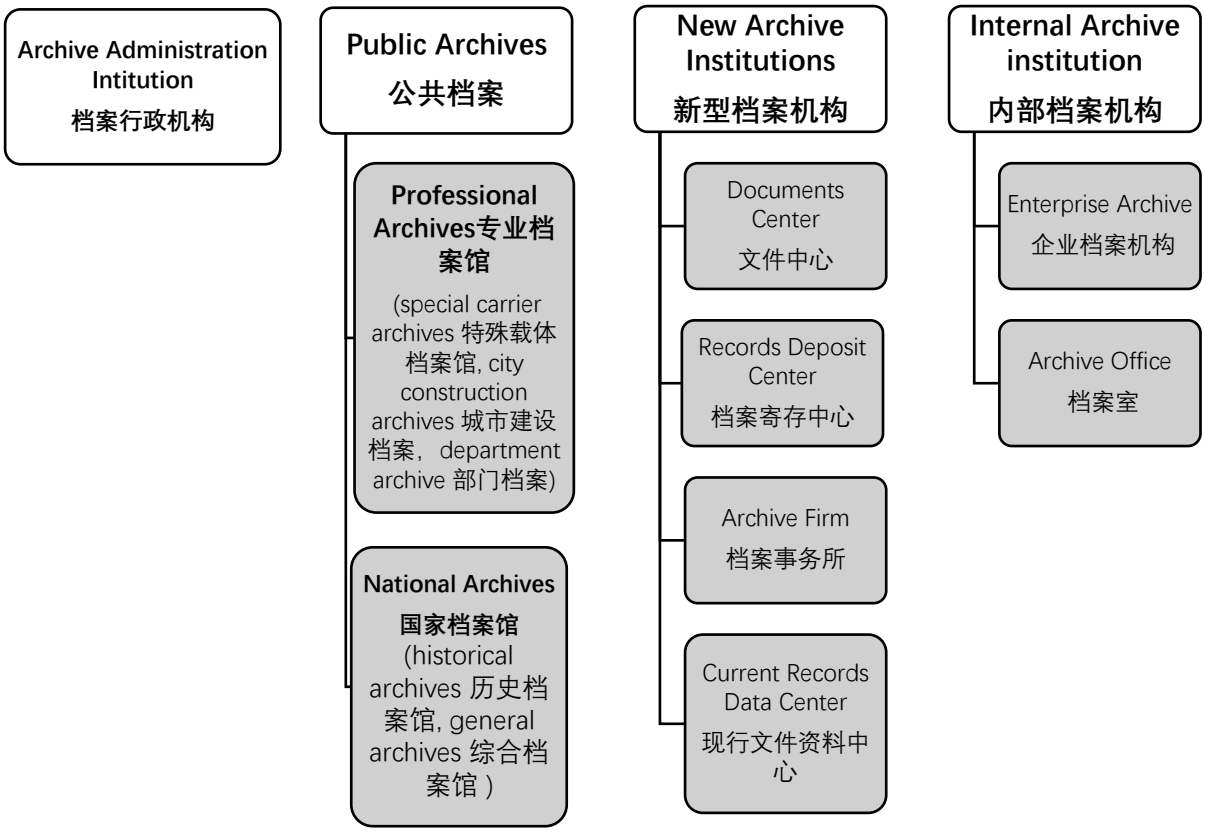


Table 1: Classification of archive institutions in China [Source: created by Mo Shi based on Feng and

[199] Ibid, p. 88.
[200] Ibid, pp. 83-91.

Zhang (2006), September 2023].

Through the table, it is obvious to see that most of the archive related departments are associated with government. Thus, the general impression of the word archive –"dang'an" in Chinese, sounds very 'official'. In addition to the aforementioned classification, my research delves into the exploration of archives that belong to private corporates or institutions, forming outside the State system and regulations. Even so, the traditional definition of dang'an still plays a significant role in shaping their imagination about the archive.

A number of participants that I approached, particularly the ones who had received a domestic Chinese education, mentioned that they believed only museums or official government departments had the right to own a "dang'an".[201] This reflects the questions thinkers such as Foucault, Derrida and Steedman have raised concerning the reality and 'violence' of archives from the philosophical perspective of understanding the meaning of them. These main questions about the archive philosophy include discussions about the 'death drive' and 'archive violence' in the introduction.[202]

In China, these philosophical perspectives have had limited influence on the archive framework, as any type of challenging to the regime's power will encounter great difficulty in fitting into the Chinese communist society. This was particularly so after the Culture Revolution; in order to stay safe and continue their research, scholars who worked on Chinese archive theories tended to focus on practice, for instance library sciences and new technology data analysis, rather than developing philosophical theory. In the textbook Jin Bo edited, he not only listed traditional Chinese archive theories from the Shang Dynasty (BCE 1600 - 1046) to the Ming Dynasty (1368 - 1644) as previously described, but he also

[201] Freya, interviewed by Mo Shi about Tingtang's archive, WeChat, 1 June 2020.
[202] Jacques Derrida, pp. 13-14.

described in detail how at the end of the Qing Dynasty and the beginning of the Republic of China historians used archive research methods to sort out historical material.[203] Those historians included Liang Qichao (1873 - 1929), Fu Sinian (1896 - 1950) and Gu Jiegang 顾颉刚 (1893 – 1980). Their practice methods combined the methods of traditional Chinese historians and the influence of European natural science and sociology, reflecting the character of the period of *Eastward spread of Western learning* 西学东渐 (late 19th century to early 20th century).[204] However, their focus on using archive research to assist historical research has not resulted, so far, in the archive becoming an independent subject in academic studies in China. And at the same time, they have not yet formulated a Chinese-style philosophical theory for the archive.

When Jin Bo introduced China to the theories of modern archives from Europe and North America, he made a passing reference to the philosophical perspective, such as that of French philosopher Foucault (1926-1984).[205] And he pointed out the post-modernism influence on the development of archive theories, which led to a wave of Western critical thinking bringing in the subjective angle of understanding history through archives into China.[206] However, the regime's powerful political influence in this textbook cannot be over-emphasized.[207] Further to this, Wu Baokang's work, as previously discussed in the Introduction and this Chapter.[208], raised the question of whether this subjective angle could find the foundation to grow in China.

As Jin Bo admitted, Chinese archive culture is strongly rooted in its politically framed cultural background, a situation for which he used the phrase *'guan benwei*'

---

[203] Jin Bo 金波, pp. 133-144.
[204] Xiong Yuezhi 熊月之, Xixue Dongjian yu Wanqing Shehui 西学东渐与晚清社会 The Eastern Spread of Western Learning and Late Qing Society, (Shanghai: Shanghai Renming Publisher, 1994).
[205] Jin Bo 金波, pp. 167-169.
[206] Ibid.
[207] Ibid, pp. 150-152.
[208] Wu Baokang 吴宝康, *Dangaxue Lilun yu Lishi Chutan* 档案学理论与历史初探 (*A Preliminary Study of Archive Theories and History*), pp. 73-103.

(官本位) to describe, meaning official oriented or official-centric.[209] And this focus on governmental requirements has slowly expanded more recently to public requirements as well. Jin Bo called this process Cultural Awareness or Cultural Self-consciousness（文化自觉）.[210] This concept first appeared in the second Sociological Anthropology seminar in Peking University in 1997, expounded by Fei Xiaotong (费孝通).[211] Professor Fei is a pioneer Chinese sociologist and anthropologist who has explored the concept of Cultural Awareness in the last decade of his career, laying the foundation for the development of Chinese cultural studies.[212] The concept means that people live in a specific culture and historical circle, and by understanding its history one can understand the advantages and disadvantages of this cultural circle.[213]

The reason Fei raised this concept is because his research was conducted during the period in which China felt a strong impact from the West and residents were facing rapid changes in society (1930 -1980). Adapting new knowledge and connecting with the new world has led to the struggle of 'Can modern Chinese continue to maintain their original cultural identity? Or do we have to identify with Western culture?'.[214] Cultural Awareness is a concept that encourages people to understand and accept the difference between cultures. Fei used this as a basis to explore the equal dialogue between different cultures, which also led to another concept 'Cultural Confidence'（文化自信）, which was set down in the document regarding the development of socialist culture by reforming the cultural system in the 6th Plenary Session of the 17th Central Committee in 2011.[215] Cultural

[209] Ibid, p. 180.
[210] Ibid, pp. 190-199.
[211] ' Fei Xiaotong 费孝通, Shenme shi Wenhua Zijue 什么是文化自觉？ What is Cultural Awareness?' - 人文精神 - 中国改革网 (Renwen Jingsheng - Zhongguo Gaige Wang), (2021) <http://m.chinareform.net/index.php?m=content&c=index&a=show&catid=48&id=39268> [accessed 19 December 2023].
[212] Fei Xiaotong, 费孝通, Cong Fansi Dao Wenhua Zijue he Jiaoliu, 从反思到文化自觉和交流(From Reflection to Cultural Consciousness and Communication)(Beijing: 水木清华 Shuimu Qinghua, 2020.9) pp. 58-62.
[213] ' Fei Xiaotong 费孝通, Shenme shi Wenhua Zijue 什么是文化自觉？ What is Cultural Awareness?'; Jin Bo 金波, p. 190.
[214] ' Fei Xiaotong 费孝通, Shenme shi Wenhua Zijue 什么是文化自觉？ What is Cultural Awareness?'.
[215] Liu Fang 刘芳, Dui Wenhua Zijue he Wenhua Zixin de Zhanlue Kaoliang 对文化自觉和文化自信的战略

Confidence means 'a country, a nation or a political party has a heartfelt respect towards its own ideals, beliefs, doctrines and excellent cultural traditions', which further suggested the importance of China-centred culture and political party focus.[216] This concept became an official slogan to defeat the contradiction ideology that has influenced Chinese society since the late Qing Dynasty.

When Jin adapted the Cultural Awareness concept in archive study, he suggested it reflected that Chinese archives have developed multiple functions; apart from supporting the party, they also support ordinary people's lives in modern China.[217] The controversial part of this is that the one party dynamic power system has not changed in China, it is still highly centralized and in a one-way system. Under these circumstances, who can supervise this change and balance the power between the regime and ordinary people? This contradiction is reflected by Chinese sociologist Zhang Xudong's 张旭东 argument regarding the inner contradictions of Cultural Awareness in China, where he suggested that the muddled definitions between self, collective, country and political identity caused difficulties in transforming China from a 'national state' to a 'civilized state'.[218] The tradition of neglecting the individual while emphasising collective and State power is rooted in Chinese ideology towards history and culture. Thus, it is necessary to expose the unsolved problem of this contradiction while attempting to understand the importance of subjective features and the significance of the individual influence of an archive before we can become truly culturally self-aware in the archive field.

A subjective point of view of archives is formulated under the influences of geography, society, politics, economics and culture. Jin Bo suggested one should

---

考量(Strategic considerations of cultural self-awareness and cultural self-confidence), (Shanghai: Zhuanti Yantao, 2012), p. 8.

[216] Ibid, p. 9.

[217] Jin Bo 金波, p. 191.

[218] Zhang Xudong 张旭东, '*Wenhua Zijue Pianlun: Qimeng Zhuyi de Zhengzhi Weiji yu Lunli Weiji*', '文化自觉片论：启蒙主义的政治危机与伦理危机'（A Discourse on Cultural Self-Awareness: The Political and Ethical Crisis of Enlightenment）Wenhua Zhengzhi yu Zhongguo daolu (Shanghai: Shanghai Renming Publisher, 2015), pp. 270-271.

compare them based on the other's cultural perspective, to absorb the advantages and clarify the disadvantages, and by way of this cultural comparison process one could avoid a self-centred archival delusion.[219] For instance, absorbing the theory of public archives – just as Terry Cook quoted, 'archives are of the people, for the people, often even by the people'[220] – could be a new direction for Chinese archive development.

What do the young fashion designers call an 'archive' in C hinese?

The research conducted by Jin and Wu demonstrates that the field of Chinese archive studies and practice is potentially at a critical juncture.[221] While the direction of encouraging archive researcher's cognition about the archive has gradually appeared in the field, what has happened in the field of the fashion industry itself? In this section, I explore how my participants used Chinese words as the equivalent the English word 'archive' during the interviews. This analysis aims to reveal how the terminology utilized by Chinese fashion designers reflects their ideological approach to archiving, and the current situation of Chinese fashion archives. Then I will move on to discuss several cases in depth that reveal the background and reason for each term identified, showing how archives are conceptualized in the contemporary Chinese fashion industry.

During the interviews, after asking the participants to introduce themselves in order to confirm their basic background information, the first following research question was asked of all participants: Do you have an archive and what do you call it (or anything similar to an archive) in Chinese? Not all the participants could

[219] Jin Bo 金波, p. 192.
[220] Terry Cook, "What is Past is Prologue", 17-63 (p. 30).
[221] Jin Bo 金波, 2018; Wu Baokang 吴宝康, *Dangaxue Lilun yu Lishi Chutan* 档案学理论与历史初探 (*A Preliminary Study of Archive Theories and History*).

answer this question; 23 out of 42 participants did have a Chinese name by which they referred to their archive, but 9 did not actually have a proper name (word) by which to call their archive. Four of them felt surprised that I had even asked this question.

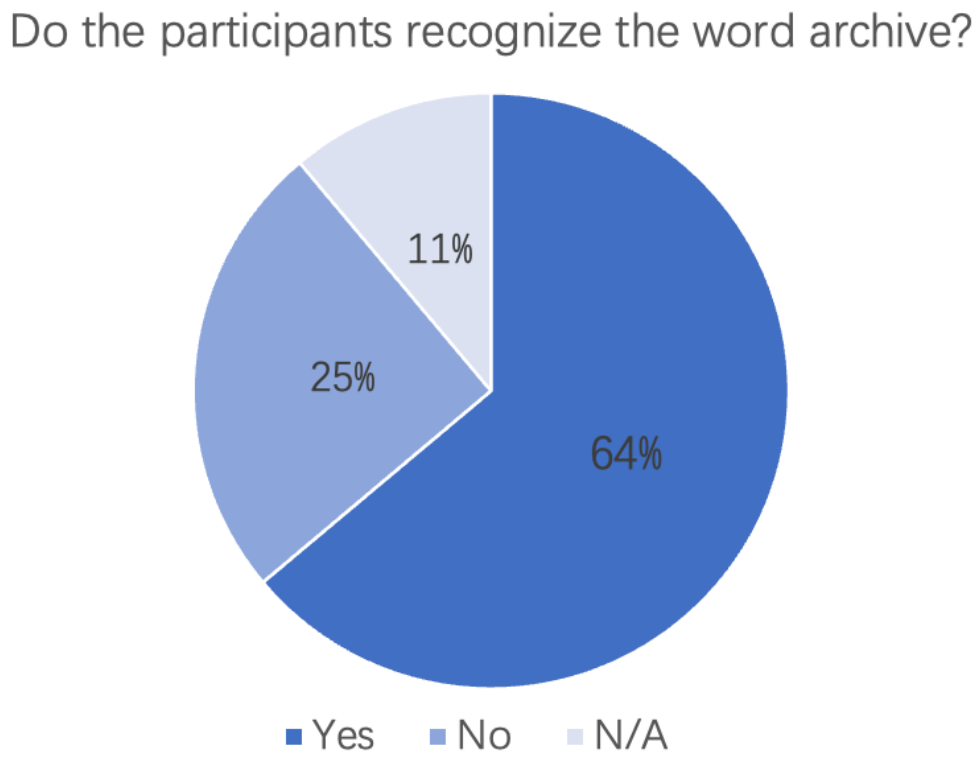


Table 2: diagram of participants answer regarding to interview question: Do you know the word archive? [Source: created by Mo Shi, September 2023]

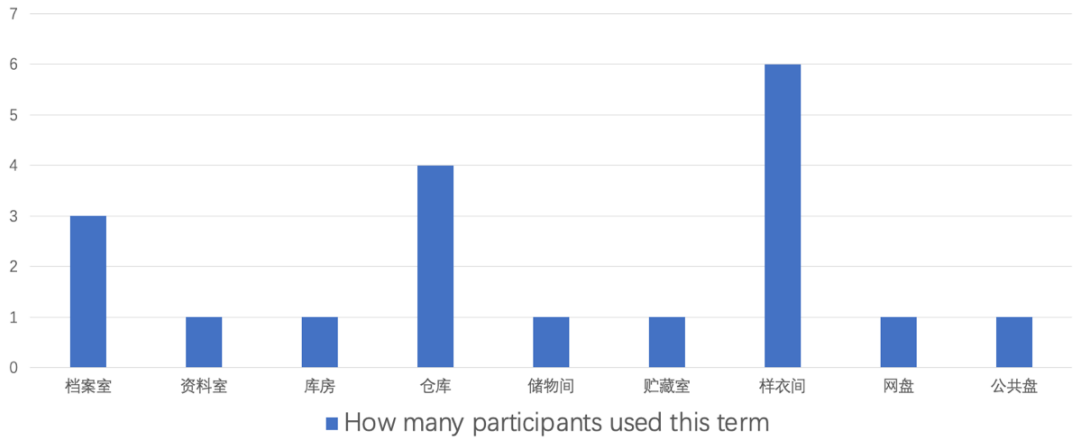


Table 3: the number of participants using each Chinese term [Source: Created by Mo Shi, September 2023]

Please see listed below the Chinese terms that participants used to refer to their archives.

Chinese Term	Pin Yin Romanisation	English meaning
档案室	Dang an shi	Room for documents/files
资料室	Zi liao shi	Data/information room
库房	Ku fang	Storage for collected items
仓库	Cang ku	Warehouse
储物间 贮藏室	Chu wu jian Zhu cang shi	Storage room
样衣间	Yang yi jian	Room of garment sample
网盘	Wang pan	Online hard drive
公共盘	Gong gong pan	Public hard drive

Table 4: the list of Chinese terms refer to archive been used by participants [Source: Created by Mo Shi, September 2023]

On the one hand, the Chinese terms the participants used to describe their archives outlines the function of the archive collection or the space, and on the other hand the terms relate to how the participant or the participant's company positions the archive.

For instance, *dang'an shi* (档案室) and *ziliao shi* (资料室) both mean 'a space that contains data'.[222] But dang'an shi focuses more on paper documents and files, while ziliao shi refers to data itself.[223] In a ziliao shi, the format of the data could

[222] Freya, WeChat, 1 June 2020.
[223] "档案 Dangan". Def. 1. Xiandai Hanyu Cidian 现代汉语词典(Contemporary Chinese dictionaries 7th edition App version) (China: The Commercial Press: 2023); "资料 Ziliao". Def. 2. Xiandai Hanyu Cidian 现代汉语词典(Contemporary Chinese dictionaries App version7th edition) (China: The Commercial Press: 2023).

be slightly more varied, however it still focuses on the text more than physical materials. These are the words most commonly used in government offices and companies. Because of the political overtones of those words, their potential hidden meaning relates to a formal and official environment. Companies with a longer history or at bigger scale tend to prefer to use these two words to describe their archive. For instance, Broadcast (播), established in 1999, called their archive collection *Dangan Guan* (档案馆).[224] In the context of Chinese, *guan*(馆) means a place for cultural or sports activities, it also indicates a larger space than *shi*(室), while shi means a room.[225] Choosing to use such a name to call their archive corresponds to the scale of the company, as Broadcast is one of the leading fashion companies in Shanghai, owning five brands with 1100 shops and more than 1700 employees.[226] In addition, dang'an is the word that is currently used in Chinese archive studies, but this only focuses on documents, cultural relics and digital data archive subject areas, instead of expanding the meaning of it to cover all sorts of materials found in an archive.

In contrast, two words, *kufang* (库房) and *cangku* (仓库) both refer to a space that collects largely physical items.[227] *Kufang* is a word we often see in museums. One of the main examples is the Palace Museum of the Forbidden Palace in Beijing, where all the warehouses in the museum are called *kufang*. Thus, the impression given by *kufang* is a place that houses a collection of precious art works. However, *cangku* is a word that is widely used in everyday life. A supermarket would call the storage warehouse for their products a *cangku*, as would a factory where they keep their manufactured products. The meaning of this word is a place that stores

---

224 Wenqi Wu, interviewed by Mo Shi about Broadcast's archive, WeChat, 28 August 2022.

225 "馆 Guan". Def.4. Xinhua Zidian 新华字典, (Xinhuang Dictionary 12th edition App version) (China: The Commercial Press: 2023); "室 Shi". Def.1. Xinhua Zidian 新华字典, (Xinhuang Dictionary 12th edition App version) (China: The Commercial Press: 2023).

226 'About Ribo' <http://www.ribo-group.com/about.html>[accessed 20 March 2022].

227 "库房 Kufang". Def. 1. Xiandai Hanyu Cidian 现代汉语词典(Contemporary Chinese dictionaries 7th edition App version) (China: The Commercial Press: 2023); "仓库 Cangku". Def. 1. Xiandai Hanyu Cidian 现代汉语词典(Contemporary Chinese dictionaries 7th edition App version) (China: The Commercial Press: 2023).

various items, and the value of these items could vary greatly as well. Similarly, *chuwujian* (储物间) is a place where you could store anything, but implies a rather smaller space compared to *cangku*. And *chuwujian* suggests somewhere more homely, for example you could say you have a *chuwujian* in your home or office that stores household cleaning products or sundries. The value of the items in a *chuwujian* would likely be lower than in a *cangku*. Because most of the time a *cangku* relates to manufactured products, which have a certain potential sale value. But items in a *chuwujian* do not contain that same implication.

Yangyi jian (样衣间) is probably the only word that refers to garments within the meaning of the actual Chinese characters, however *yangyi* (样衣) means a garment sample, which is not a completed work, so the value of it is uncertain. *Yangyi jian* could refer to just a space for storing unfinished products. It does not imply that the stored sample has sufficient value to be presented as a reference example for the brand or company.

Although all the above words appeared in some participant interviews, 9 out of 42 of the participants did not actually give their archive a name. One of the reasons is likely that they are young designers, who only have one or two years of working history, so their archive collections have not been systematically ordered into one space as yet. Unlike the established fashion archives in Europe, it is difficult for them to come up with a descriptor to name where they house their works. They could say "would you get me something from the archive?", but instead, they all said they would just tell their colleagues which collection they needed, and then their colleagues would simply go fetch it.[228] Furthermore, some designers said that they just had a hanging rail of samples, in other words a prototype of an archive collection. For smaller pieces of design such as some fashion jewellery and accessories, the designers did not have a physical archive in-house, for instance

[228] Lulu, interviewed by Mo Shi about her studio archive, WeChat, 2 September 2020.

the newly founded jewellery brand Roundface.[229] They have numbered all their wax mould samples in the production studio to save transportation time instead of keeping them in the design studio. Roundface's team only needs to communicate with the production studio online to change small details based on the numbered photos of wax moulds. This type of information can be stored online. So this type of new designer will just call their archive a *wangpan* (网盘) or *gonggong pan* (公共盘), words which mean an online or web-based drive, a space that houses all their digital data.[230]

Through the varying terms all the participants used to describe their archive, I noticed that there were two main ways to refer to an archive, either based on what was inside the space, in terms of what kind of materials, or based on the actual functionality of the space. There is not a word that could capture both of these two meanings yet identified.

Where did the participants first encounter an archive?

I divided all the answers to this question into several categories during the course of the interviews. Firstly, where did the participants first encounter the word 'archive'. This may be significant as their first impression might affect their understanding of 'what is an archive?'. Eight of these encounters occurred while the participants were studying overseas. The local education system and living environment has an influence on what kind of archive meaning came to their minds. These eight participants who had overseas study experience described how they first heard or saw an archive in their university classes. Ying Pei, who I introduced at the beginning of this thesis is one example.[231] Five participants who

[229] Jiaya (Wendy), interviewed by Mo Shi about Roundface's archive, WeChat, 3 September 2020.

[230] Zouhui Zhang, interviewed by Mo Shi about ZUGZAG's archive, WeChat, 2 September 2020.

[231] Ying Pei, interviewed by Mo Shi about Ying Pei Studio's archive, WeChat, 7 September 2020.

had work experience in fashion companies in London said they first saw fashion archives when they were working for those companies.

Museums were another important resource; one designer mentioned he saw the word archive in the description of a museum collection. Apart from these educational exposures to archives, fashion designer Cee Cee mentioned she first came across archives in Dries von Noten's flagship shop in Paris, where there is a book on display which introduces Dries von Noten's personal archive collection.[232] That is where she got the idea of what an archive should look like. However, another designer Gary, who graduated from Parsons, said he did not encounter the archive during his fashion education or his relevant fashion industry experience.[233] Instead, he first saw an archive when he used Tumbler, as there is a function where you can use the word 'archive' to search through the website's history. But all of these paths to understanding the word archive happened outside of China and fell under a certain structure of archives, based specifically on the Western definition.

In mainland China, a separate group of participants, who did not have overseas educational experience, encountered archives in another way: two of the participants asked me what an archive was when we began our conversation.[234] They showed great curiosity about this topic. When I asked them to recall if they had ever seen this word before, they said they never had, but they checked the dictionary and tried to understand the meaning of an archive through their conversation with me. So, this is a group of fashion professionals that have never encountered the English word of archive in their entire lives or careers.

Then there was another group of participants who had experience working in

---

[232] Cee Cee, interviewed by Mo Shi about Fun Affair's archive, WeChat, 9 September 2020.

[233] Gary, interviewed by Mo Shi about Keh Form's archive, WeChat,5 November 2020.

[234] Lulu, WeChat, 2 September 2020.

locally developed fashion brands. Through them, I found fashion brands such as Zug Zag or ICICLE, where they had already established their own fashion archives.[235] For example, the Shanghai-based fashion brand ICICLE underwent rapid growth and bought French fashion house Carven in 2018. But their archive is only for internal use and is not open to the public or to Chinese fashion researchers according to my contact in Chinese academia.[236] Although they may not call it an 'archive' in Chinese, the function of it is still similar to the commercial fashion archives in Europe and North America. In addition, one of the participants worked as a PR manager for Chinese bag brand Zesh, which used to supply bags for Longchamp and had established a high standard archive system in their factory, which is a slightly different framework from the commercial fashion archives of European and North American fashion brands.[237] As China is a manufacturing centre for the global fashion industry, its factory system is an essential part of the Chinese fashion industry. The example of archives in fashion factories may open a new page to understanding the question of what a Chinese fashion archive is, because of the strong manufacturing base in China and the dominance of this sector within the overall image of China as a producer of fashion.

Chinese fashion archives categories

In this research, I collected information from forty-two participants, through online WeChat interviews, questionnaires and face-to-face interviews. These included designers of menswear, womenswear and accessories. As we have seen, terminology was a problem which I encountered while I was trying to communicate with the participants in Chinese. This communication problem was used to shape the above analysis of what Chinese words are used by Chinese fashion professionals to refer to the corresponding English word archive.

235 Zouhui Zhang, WeChat, 2 September 2020.
236 Xiangyang Bian, private conversation with Mo Shi, Shanghai, Donghua University, January 2021.
237 Xiaoyu Wang, interviewed by Mo Shi about Zesh's archive, WeChat, 6 September 2020.

According to the analysis, it is possible to categorize four types of archives to summarize my findings. In the following paragraphs I have divided examples into four different types based on its creators' purpose of collecting and appraising: fashion designer's archives; archives at manufacturers; archives in retail environment models; and archives in new business models. Through these categories we can examine how the specific background of each archive type has shaped the archive's purpose, framework and format, setting a foundation for exploration of materiality in Chapter Two.

A fashion designer's archive

My interviews revealed that most participants (38 out of 42 in total) had assembled a collection of materials in physical or digital format that corresponded to the word 'archive' in English. Therefore, when I asked them what their impression of an archive was, their reply was a mix of their understanding of 'archive' and their physical experience of using the collection. For fashion designers, the main impression came from the following channels: overseas daily life and education, and both China and overseas work experience.

An important part of this impression is based on the UK fashion education system, which I discussed above. One of their principal impressions was that the archive is a resource for research reference.[238] The other part came from museums; two participants mentioned they first noticed the word archive in museum exhibitions.[239] These two examples give the impression that an archive's main function is related to education, which means the archive collection should meet certain standards and it must contain certain features above and beyond those of just a product. But this understanding of the archive is actually different from a

[238] Ying Pei, WeChat, 7 September 2020.
[239] Fengyi Tan, interviewed by Mo Shi about Fengyi Tan's archive, WeChat, 3 September 2020; Steven, interviewed by Mo Shi about Nume's Archive, WeChat, 27 April 2021.

fashion company's working archive and confused the participants. Some participants doubted whether they, as individuals, had the right to say their collection is an archive collection, or if they had not yet started a collection, whether that future collection would qualify as an archive collection.[240] This is just as Foucault suggested, that knowledge was formed under the structure of power. When the participant is not certain about what power they have, then they are not sure if they have the right to define the knowledge or declare they own the knowledge.

For the other group of participants, their impression of fashion archives was moulded through exposure to another system of archive knowledge: from fashion brands based in the UK, Europe or North America. While they were working for fashion brands in these areas, or studying fashion brands, they gradually learnt the function of a commercial archive or a working archive in the fashion industry. Chinese menswear brand STAFFONLY's two founders suggested that one of the main functions of a fashion archive is to preserve the DNA of a brand.[241] They would ask their new employees or internship students to learn the culture of the brand by using the archives.[242]

The founder of another womenswear brand Ying Pei Studio, who was introduced at the beginning of the thesis, has a similar background with STAFFONLY. Ying Pei told me when she first decided to sort out the archive collection, she actually hired a team of house organisation workers to help her put everything into the right boxes. This cost her about twenty thousand Chinese yuan (~US$ 3,100) and three days' work with the team, including giving instructions to the team on how to fold the garments or roll the fabrics. Ying Pei declared she tended a little bit towards obsessive-compulsive behaviour in wanting to keep the environment organised,

240 Lulu, WeChat, 2 September 2020; Zouhui Zhang, WeChat, 2 September 2020.
241 Shimo Zhou, interviewed by Mo Shi about STAFFONLY's Archive, WeChat, 14 June 2020; Une Yea, interviewed by Mo Shi about STAFFONLY's Archive, Shanghai, 22 January 2021.
242 Shimo Zhou, WeChat, 14 June 2020.

thus she and one of her designer friends both mentioned her archive as a reflection of her self-styled OCD behaviour, a trait which was also mentioned by STAFFONLY's founder Une Yea when she talked about Ying Pei's archive during our interview.[243]

Another group of Chinese designers did not have any overseas study experience when they first encountered fashion archives in local fashion companies. Their impression of an archive consisted of a combination of historical archives, which are for reference use, and branding. The main functions are similar to the archives built by those designers who had overseas study experience. But these participants expressed more interest in the question of 'what is an archive?'. They wanted to discuss the definition of the word and the concepts behind it. Currently in China, there is a complex attitude in the case of learning from the West in the fashion industry. In one way, as discussed in the introduction chapter, the sensitive attitude towards national humiliation since the Opium War has triggered internal solidarity in modern Chinese society. In another way, yearning for advanced culture triggered the opposite attitude, which is to learn from the West in order to motivate industrial progress. These contradictory attitudes have led to a rather complex cultural environment, especially in cities like Shanghai. Some young designers based in Shanghai showed great curiosity and desire to gain new knowledge of the European and North American fashion industries through participation in my interviews.[244] .

For instance, two of the participants I interviewed at the beginning stage of my research, Lulu and Zhang Zuohui, are both young designers who studied in China. At the beginning of the interviews, they both said that they were not sure if they could help me, because they did not think they had an archive for their brand.[245]

[243] Une Yea, private conversation with Mo Shi, Shanghai, 22 January 2021; Ying Pei, WeChat, 7 September 2020, private conversation with Mo Shi, Studio, Shanghai, 22 January 2021.
[244] Lulu, WeChat, 2 September 2020; Zouhui Zhang, WeChat, 2 September 2020.
[245] Ibid.

Lulu said when my contact contacted her and told her a PhD researcher wanted to hold an interview about fashion archives, she accepted because she wanted to learn about what an archive is during the interview.[246] Zhang Zuohui first related an archive to storage, and began to talk about how he kept his product collection and some of the difficulties he faced in keeping them in good condition.[247] He then quickly recalled that the fashion company ZugZac where he previously worked actually did have an archive system, and he then started to share his experience as a designer in that company and his use of that archive.[248] As he described it, ZugZac's system of using the archive and storing the collection was quite disorganised. Large collections of samples would go straight to the sample sale instead of to the archive. The designer team would focus more on the use of archive to improve efficiency of reproduction reduce communication cost between the factory and designers. The designer team also would pay more attention to preserving the online hard drive, which stored most of the digital information including each season's inspiration, the digital creative process and production process, and the large amount of campaign images, rather than the physical product.

According to Zhang Zhuohui, he paid visits to the archive collection storage location but was not clear on where to find collections from past seasons. He also pointed out that his boss took the digital archive quite seriously and wanted to build a proper IT system for the digital archive. Similar information also came up in other participants' interviews, even those with experience working in established fashion group such as ICICLE.[249] It is clear, then, that archives do exist in established Chinese fashion corporations, and these entities recognize the significance of their archive department.

246 Lulu, WeChat, 2 September 2020.
247 Zouhui Zhang, WeChat, 2 September 2020.
248 Ibid.
249 Xiangyang Bian, private conversation, Donghua University, January 2021.

In noting the significance of overseas education and training in the participant's conceptions of the archive, the possibility of multiple models for the fashion archive should be considered, beyond just the Euro-American fashion systems. Apart from European, North American or mainland Chinese fashion education systems, how would other fashion education systems, for instance in Japan, introduce fashion archives to their students? I reached out to the Guangzhou-based fashion brand Fussed, a brand originally started as a Taobao-based brand, with products focused on the high street fashion market.[250]

In 2017, Fussed started a second line with higher prices and more creative design details. Fussed participated in Shanghai Fashion Week for two consecutive seasons and then decided to focus on the online shop channel rather than the fashion show showroom channel. One of the founders graduated from Bunka Fashion College in Tokyo.[251] But based on his answers, it seems that the archive did not feature in his classes at Bunka. He learnt the word archive through purchasing fashion products.[252] He pointed out that the word "archive" is rather popular around menswear brands, especially the ones that focus on vintage and streetstyle.[253]

Archives in manufacturing (Or, 'factories')

The archive category I analysed above are derived from the perspective of a fashion business founder or designer – they are directly involved in creating, collecting, appraising and using the archive, and the framework of this type of archive is small and personal. But there is another category of archive in the fashion industry; those archives as held by the textile manufacturers. These

[250] The Chinese version of Amazon and eBay.
[251] Bunka Fashion College, 文化服装学院 is Japanese school specializing in fashion design and related disciplines. More details in https://www.bunka-fc.ac.jp/en/.
[252] Ginger & Himm, interviewed by Mo Shi about Fussed's Archive, Guangzhou, 17 February 2021.
[253] Ibid.

archives were built based on textile factory production needs and have their own logic that differs from the designers' archives. The designers' archives focus on the information related to the creative process, while the factory archives focus on the information related to the production technology. I had the chance to visit the latter type of archive in China, although not in central Shanghai, but rather in larger Shanghai, located in Jinshan District, which is a factory district of Shanghai.

One of the factory-type archives I contacted was at the cashmere brand Sandriver. Sandriver is a brand which grew out of the Max Mara manufacturer in the 1990s. After 10 difficult years of transition, it moved away from the old manufacturing system and was re-born as an Inner Mongolian-based cashmere fashion brand. The founder of Sandriver is Guo Xiuling; she started as a textile worker in the early 1990s.[254] Her understanding of fashion has come through the factory system, which is very different from the creative fashion system. Thus, the archive system at Sandriver has been influenced by the manufacturing process. Guo Xiuling said she even kept her work diary from the 1990s, which recorded machine data.[255]

This example is a representative sample due to the huge amount of foundry factories in China, as original brand founders rarely had a creative fashion education background. Their archiving habit and framework is based on their everyday factory work. The collection of data is the main focus point of the factory system archive. In today's highly digitized factory, all of these operations can be done by the computer system. Archiving the physical clothing is not an essential part of this type of archive, because for them, technique is the key point. As long as the digital code of creating certain waving is available, the factory could produce very similar products easily. Besides, all the early products were made for overseas luxury brands which are not representative of Sandriver today as it has transformed itself into a brand emphasising cashmere product that are

[254] Xiuling Guo, interviewed by Mo Shi about Sandriver's Archive, WeChat, 31 January 2021.
[255] Ibid.

Chinese made and designed. This is possibly why Guo Xiuling only kept some textile samples in order to refer to the weave methods and a pile of notebooks and diaries that recorded her early work on the factory machines.

Another brand that began with a strong connection to the manufacturing chain and has a special archive collection is Vintage & Republic. Vintage & Republic is a fashion brand inspired by both Japanese vintage and Japanese American casual style, which is called Amekaji (阿美卡基 in Chinese，アメカジ in Japanese). This is a style that reflects the Japanese fantasy vision of an American outdoor lifestyle. It became part of the popular culture of Japanese society and influenced other Asian countries.[256] Vintage & Republic took this inspiration from Japanese Vintage shops and adapted the style of Chinese worker's outfits and uniforms, creating another version and another analysis of this casual ware trend.

Vintage & Republic has four founders; all have similar work experience in a Chinese fashion brand called Metersbonwe.[257] This start gave them a strong connection with the manufacturing chain and a deep understanding of the Chinese fashion market. But they soon realized that the fast fashion system of Meters/bonwe did not suit their own expectation of fashion. Over the years, they took inspiration from Japan, Eastern Europe and Russia, and collected Chinese garments that had been exported to these areas. According to Hui Zhan, through collecting they discovered that products made in China from the 1950s to the 1980s were actually of great quality, which Zhan believed broke the stereotype that China only produced cheap quality products since it became the Factory of the World.[258] Vintage & Republic believe the products from this period represent another different Chinese fashion taste which has since been forgotten.[259] After

[256] W. David Marx, *Ametora: How Japan Saved American Style*, New York: Basic Books, 2015, pp. 168-172.
[257] Metersbonwe: Chinese fashion brand founded in 1995. In 2007, the company operating 1800 stores and over 5000 employees and reached exceeded 4 billion RMB retail sales. Official website < https://www.metersbonwe.com/>
[258] Hui Zhan, interviewed by Mo Shi about Vintage & Republic's Archive, Zhongshan, 3 February 2021.
[259] Hui Zhan, Zhongshan, 3 February 2021; Huihui, private conversation with Mo Shi about Vintage and Republic, Shanghai, February 2021.

gradually collecting garments from the 1950s to the 1980s, they decided to recreate some techniques and features from these designs.

For instance, they selected a particular style of woven cotton and special colours that are no longer used. This way of using an archive collection, to collect the memory of a particular period's manufacturing methods, and to reuse these materials to recreate a modern version of Chinese fashion style, also blended with Asian popular culture from Japan - interestingly this popular culture is an interpretation of the American casual style. My visit to the archive of Vintage & Republic opened up another perspective to demonstrate how a Chinese fashion brand could use their own Chinese own and culture to create fashion.

Another very interesting feature I noticed from the early interviews came from my meeting with a bespoke menswear maker, Judy Fan who set up her own brand in China in 2014.[260] Judy Fan told me that she mainly uses digital patterns nowadays. There is no need to keep paper patterns anymore. It is not just easier for them to save and collect data in digital form, but it also ensures quicker communication with pattern makers and factory. They only need to change numbers in the system and the machine in the factory or studio can set to work immediately.

This technology-centric collection is slightly different from Sandriver's data code collection with regards to the way it has been recorded and the types of machinery employed. But they do share similarities in the influence of factory-based machine technology. Fashion brands which have a strong bond with factories tend to choose an archive method that is suitable for factories to improve work efficiency instead of preserving the history of the brand. Due to this situation, the name they used to describe physical archives are the words easy for factory workers to understand, such as *yangyi* 样衣.

[260] Judy Fan, interviewed by Mo Shi about Judy Fan's archive, WeChat, 3rd September 2020

Archives in the retail environment

The archive not only exists in the creative or production areas of the Chinese fashion industry, the terminal of the industrial chain – retail – could also adapt the concept of archive to support profit generation. Two different cases represent two possible directions.

Between 2019 to 2021, Shanghai Fashion Week was dominated by four major fashion Showrooms: Cube Showroom, OnTime Showroom, Labelhood Showroom and Shi Tang (时堂) Shanghai Showroom.[261] These were the major platforms to present Chinese fashion brand to the wider market. After years of operating, each showroom has developed a different character and reputation. Shi Tang Shanghai was a boutique trade show focusing on high-end fashion designer brands. Each Shanghai Fashion Week it held a 4-day fair, attracting around 5000 fashion buyers to approach brands. It has also opened a designer outlet store called the Warehouse by Shi Tang, selling the past season's collections from both internationally famous fashion brands and Chinese local fashion designers.[262]

When I first entered the Warehouse in spring 2020, I noticed the way they displayed their products, which strongly reminded me of archive storage, because all the designers' collections were closely hung on rails. Each rail has the introduction to the designer, including their name, where they come from and their background. Thus, for customers who are not familiar with new Chinese fashion designers, this is an opportunity to learn about them. In this way, the whole shop looks like an educational archive and functions like a primary resource as well.

[261] Fashion showrooms are a type of trade show, normally hold during fashion weeks. Many fashion brands will sign to specific showrooms in different areas of countries in order to get good resource of fashion buyers. Sometimes the quality of a showroom will decide emerging fashion brands market.
[262] 'About Showroom', <https://www.showroomshanghai.com/#page5> [Access on 30th October 2023].

More interestingly, when I interviewed the manager of the Warehouse, Qin Chen explained how they collected data for their major digital archive. The manager drew a broad picture of a future retail environment, showing a new perspective on how to use customer data archives to improve retail performance.[263] Qin Chen previously worked as a buyer and had her own boutique. Therefore, her framework for archive knowledge was based on how to capture customers and understand them, especially through the use of big data analysis and new technology methods. She used the WeChat membership system to collect customer's information after they decided to make a purchase, but she also included other useful information, such as how the customer made their purchasing decision or why they made one decision but not another.[264] Qin Chen wanted to cover all of the customer's behaviour in order to fully analyse how and why they made a purchase (or not) of particular products, with a view to sharing this information with designers or brands to improve their performance.[265] The expansion process of e-commerce in China has accelerated during the COVID-19 period, while the advantages of traditional bricks-and-mortar retailers have been heavily shrinking. This data collection system could work, servicing like a mini Taobao shop platform, but in retail form. All of these possibilities are based on the data base, which the manager herself suggested could be called an 'archive' using in English word, adapted from our conversation.

Labelhood is another retail case, a pioneer founder of the Chinese fashion buyer boutique, started to compile archives in 2018. Their archive collection is mainly digital, founder Tasha Liu used the VOGUE Runway website as a reference while discussing the targeting audience issue.[266] Their archive has collected all the

263 Qin Chen, interviewed by Mo Shi about The Warehouse by Shitang's Archive, Shanghai, 18 January 2021.
264 Ibid.
265 Ibid.
266 Tasha Liu, interviewed by Mo Shi about Labelhood's Archive, WeChat, 2 December 2023; Condé Nast, 'Fashion Shows: Fashion Week, Runway, Designer Collections', *Vogue* <https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows> [accessed 27 December 2023].

Chinese fashion designers - not just those who have appeared in Shanghai Fashion Week – as well as those items stocked in the Labelhood store. As one of the 'gatekeepers' of Shanghai Fashion Week, Labelhood has the ability to help new designers gain more exposure through Fashion Week. This benefits both the shop and the designer. In their online archive (which they call *dang'an guan* 档案馆) , these new designers' images are displayed, as well as the links and addresses of where to purchase the brand. These links and addresses do not just relate to Labelhood, they also include other buyer boutique details, boutiques who may in fact be Labelhood's competitors.

Tasha is one of the founders of Labelhood. Her background is in advertising, branding and marketing.[267] Before she began her fashion business, she worked in an Ogilvy advertising company and wrote articles for magazines. Her ability to find young fashion talent has been well demonstrated in the market. In the interview, Tasha pointed out that she is interested in the relationship between the designer's personality, which may change over time, and the brand's identity. She wanted to discover the talent of the designers and observe how their enthusiasm will mould them and the brand over a long-term period.[268] When she approaches or select brands for Labelhood, she is focusing on reflections on current society, as well as diversifying Mainland China's fashion market.[269] From 2011, Labelhood has grown to become the most recognisable buyer boutique for Chinese fashion brands. It has four stores across China, and one T-Mall store on the Taobao website.[270] Labelhood also collaborates with Taobao, acting as the e-commerce backstage system for some Chinese fashion brands, for instance in logistics and storage. Labelhood is now not only a buyer boutique, but the company also invests in young Chinese fashion brands and owns equity in these brands. It has also

[267] Tasha Liu, interviewed by Mo Shi about Labelhood's Archive, WeChat from London, Shanghai, 27 January 2021.
[268] Ibid.
[269] Ibid.
[270] Tmall: formerly Taobao Mall, is a Chinese-language website for business-to-consumer online retail, spun off from Taobao, operated in China by Alibaba Group. It is a platform for local Chinese and international businesses to sell brand-name goods to consumers in Greater China.

become part of the official Shanghai Fashion Week starting in 2014, and opened their own showroom and show schedule in 2016.

Based on this business framework, Tasha hopes that the role of the Labelhood digital archive will reflect customer behaviours and record changes in the taste of Chinese society.[271] She said that if we were to come back to check the archive in ten years, we may be able to notice the main trends driving Chinese fashion.[272] For example, Tasha pointed out that most recently the juvenile girlhood style has become popular in mainland China; through this fashion trend, how should we understand the status of Chinese society? [273] She considers this trend is a reflection of the typical Chinese aesthetic regarding women's beauty but through the lens of the period.[274]

As a well-known gatekeeper in the Chinese fashion industry, Labelhood's archive certainly has the power to compel the audience to trust and accept the reality it has created. This 'archive violence' might indeed be part of the function of this archive.[275] I have discussed 'archive' violence in the Introduction chapter, and in the sense that Derrida intended, all archives inherently impose a level of violent force on the archive visitors. As Labelhood participated as a gatekeeper of Shanghai Fashion Week and has strong connections with Government official power, it is to be expected that its archive violence would be more influential. On the other hand, if the company wants to maintain its position in the field for the longer term, an ability to influence the writing of the history of the industry would certainly be beneficial.

271 Tasha Liu, Shanghai, 27 January 2021.
272 Ibid.
273 Ibid.
274 Ibid.
275 Jacques Derrida, p. 13.

Archives in new business models

During the research process, I encountered some cases that used the English word 'archive' differently from independent designers or factory focused fashion business. They have adapted the concept of archival fashion into the Chinese fashion market, raising a new trend in the niche market, which mixes the commercialization approach with the archive definition.

One of the leading fashion retail platforms - Farfetch - claimed that 'Archival fashion' is a new term which probably emerged around 2015, and although it also focused on the reselling of old clothes, it is different from 'vintage fashion' in many ways.[276] One of the essential conditions in defining vintage fashion is the era of the fashion. Commonly, the main era for vintage fashion is considered to be the period before the 1990s, as each decade has recognizable significant style and fashion items.[277] But archival fashion is mainly focused on the era from the 1990s to early 2000s, the period when multiple fashion trends emerged in the same market.

Farfetch claims that the determination of which 'brand is a "key archival fashion brand" is completely dependent on your tastes and interests'.[278] In the market of archival fashion, there is a list of particular fashion brands recognized by the sellers and buyers as having archive value.[279] Included are Helmut Lang, Raf Simons, Maison Margiela, Dries van Noten, some Vivienne Westwood, Jean-Paul Gaultier and Hedi Slimane's Dior.[280]

---

276 Stephen Yu, 'An Introduction to Archival Fashion' *Farfetch*, 4.6 (2020)<https://www.farfetch.com/style-guide/trends-subcultures/archive-clothing-and-archival-fashion-brands/> [accessed 26 September 2023]; Condé Nast, '10 Grails From The Golden Age Of Men's Fashion That You Can Still Wear Right Now', *GQ*, 2020 <https://www.gq.com/story/archival-fashion-grails> [accessed 27 December 2023].

277 Julie McColl and others, 'It's Vintage Darling! An exploration of vintage fashion retailing', *Journal of The Textile Institute*, 104:2 (2013), 140-150 (pp. 141-152).

278 Stephen Yu.

279 Lily Rimmer, 'The Glass Archival Fashion Collectors Series – David Casavant: Raf Simons and Helmut Lang - The Glass Magazine', (2021) <https://www.theglassmagazine.com/archival-fashion-collectors-series-david-casavant-and-raf-simons-and-helmut-lang/> [accessed 26 September 2023].

280 Stephen Yu.

Farfetch is not the first online retail platform to use the term 'archival fashion', but it was one of the fashion retailers that noticed the trend in the niche market and adapted it as a promotion tool. Through adding 'archive' as a type of cultural value to energize the website's second-hand market, Farfetch spread this concept to the larger fashion market. Fashion journalism attributes the start of the popularity of archival fashion to celebrities such as Kanye West, who wore a 'Riot! Riot! Riot!' bomber jacket from Raf Simons AW01, thereby creating a massive response in the streetwear trend.[281] Afterwards, pop stars and celebrities such as Kim Kardashian, Rihanna and rapper Drake were all spotted wearing this jacket. This pushed the resell price of this particular piece to 30,000 US dollar in 2020.[282]

Raf Simons was considered one of the most desirable fashion brands in the market of archival fashion as numerous reports and articles referenced this jacket as one special influence in the archival fashion trend.[283] The brand itself also joined this trend, reproducing 100 pieces garments from its own archive naming 'Archive Redux'.[284] The success of Raf Simons has been recognized as the major starting point of the trend of 'archival fashion'. Following the boom of social media led by YouTube, Instagram and TikTok, more and more influencers began sharing knowledge about high-end fashion brands.[285] This trend is also having an impact

[281] Kevin Vergeer, 'An Introduction- And the Meaning of Archival Clothing', *Sumunage*, <https://www.sumunage.com/an-introduction-and-the-meaning-of-archival-clothing/> [Access on 27th March, 2023]; 'What Is Archival Fashion', *The Miami Student* <https://www.miamistudent.net/article/2022/02/what-is-archival-fashion> [accessed 27 December 2023].

[282] 'The Timeless Appeal of Archive Fashion: Access Fashion's Archives.' <https://www.trussarchive.com/editorials/the-timeless-appeal-of-archive-fashion-access-fashions-archives-with-truss> [accessed 27 December 2023].

[283] Nast, '10 Grails From The Golden Age Of Men's Fashion That You Can Still Wear Right Now'; 'What Is Archival Fashion' ;'The Timeless Appeal of Archive Fashion'; 'The What, When, Why, and How of Archive Fashion', *ThriftCon*, 2023 <https://thriftcon.co/blogs/education/the-what-when-and-how-of-archive-fashion> [accessed 27 December 2023].

[284] 'Raf Simons Reissues 100 Archive Pieces | SHOWstudio' <https://showstudio.com/news/raf-simons-reissues-100-archive-pieces> [accessed 26 September 2023].

[285] Is the Internet Ruining Archive Fashion?, *Hunger,* 15.12(2022) <https://www.hungertv.com/editorial/is-the-internet-ruining-archive-fashion/> [Access on 27th March, 2023]; Kristen Bateman, 'How TikTok Is Fostering A New Generation Of Fashion Archivists' <https://www.refinery29.com/en-gb/2021/07/10556351/archive-fashion-tiktok-trend> [accessed 27 December 2023].

on the Chinese fashion market.

The first buyer boutique case I interviewed was Old Lyric based in Shanghai. It first started as a vintage shop, although the owner and founder Kian and his wife believed the shop to be more than just a vintage shop, because it focused on archival fashion, which was still an emerging idea around 2013. Kian studied at the London College of Fashion and moved back to Shanghai in 2011. While working in a fashion company for two years, he started to have experience of buying 1980s and 1990s Belgian and Japanese designer's early collections from overseas.[286] He did this for his own interest and for reference use during work, however sometimes he would get more than one piece of a particular design he liked.[287] While keeping his own collection, he decided to sell the extra pieces to some selected customers and called the remain collection of products his archive collection. For him, an archive is something he can offer to other customers as a product, however the customer needs to either be able to fit into the only size of the particular piece of garment, or also want to collect this item for their own collection or reference purposes, or for other unidentified reasons. This is not a shop that faces a mass audience, but rather it focuses on a particular type of like-minded audience that can understand Kian and his wife's fashion language.[288] In effect, you could say they are similar to a group of art dealers except they are dealing with fashion pieces, which they consider are as valuable as artworks. Kian and the other 'collectors' are communicating through Kian's archive collection.

Turning an archive into a new business model – monetising it, essentially – would seem to be quite an attractive proposition at the moment. More than one buyer boutique I interviewed had started to pay attention to collecting archives. Ninon Archive is another studio that sells archive fashion in multiple channels, including

[286] Kian, interviewed by Mo Shi about his personal archive, WeChat, 27 October 2020.
[287] Ibid.
[288] Ibid.

through WeChat, providing pieces to other physical stores or pop-ups in physical stores. But now it has turned into a team focusing on just fashion archive projects. Brain and Suga, two of the six founders of Ninon Archive Studio, moved the company from Hangzhou to Shanghai, along with their own hundreds personal archive collection, seeking new opportunities to start their own business.

Brain's original idea about starting an archive was inspired by American collector David Casavant, who is a star stylist as well and who used his own archive collection to dress up singers or celebrities.[289] In the beginning, Brain wanted to transplant this new business model into China, but he soon realized that the way Chinese celebrities work with stylists was very different to what he originally imagined.[290] Brain explained that celebrities' agencies control what celebrities should wear, and that is mostly driven by how to gain the most profit from every look, rather than what is more stylish or what is trendy.[291] Thus, without enough capital to compete with other fashion brands, Brain decided to find another way to promote his archive collection and find a new business model.[292]

One of the ideas he had was to help Chinese fashion brands by sorting out their archives, to build clear and strong brand stories.[293] He has proposed this idea to the founder of Labelhood, Tasha Liu. Brain believed that Labelhood, as the sponsor of many brands, needed an archive. However, he received negative feedback, which was contrary to my interview experience with Labelhood. Brain said Tasha did not think it was the right time for young Chinese designers to begin having

---

289 Brain, interviewed by Mo Shi about the Ninon Archive Studio, WeChat, 11 November 2020.

290 Ibid.

291 Regarding to this opinion I had some private conversation with fashion photographer and fashion stylist for Chinese TV dramas. The photographer pointed out that what general celebrities or stars will wear in photo shoot are not decided by themselves, but mainly decided by who sponsor this photoshoot. Because without the sponsors the photoshoot may not even happen. The stylist said what the actors or actress wear are mainly based on the director and stylist team. The main point is to serve the story rather than be a fashionable character. But still, many brands try to pay the stylist team privately in order to get more chance to expose to the market.

292 Brain & Suga, interviewed by Mo Shi about the Ninon Archive Studio, Shanghai, 25 January 2021.

293 Ibid.

archives.[294] But in my conversation with Tasha, I asked her if she thought Chinese designers should build their own archive, and she had answered yes.[295]

After analysing both Brain and Tasha's interview I realized both Brain and Tasha have a set idea about what a fashion archive is. It is not something that only stores and sorts orders based on a particular purpose – it is much more than that. For example, Brain commented that he would not collect a designer's commercial line. For instance, only Raf Simons from 1995 to 2005 was worth collecting, because they are not overly 'commercial work'.[296] Additionally, Brain would like to collect works that are recognized by museums - the online image collection of Costume Institute of MET was his reference for selecting archive pieces.[297] He admires the concept that fashion has been recognized as an artwork, and planned to define his collection as a leading fashion archive collection through using his pieces to curate exhibitions. However, in Tasha's mind, the archive's function is to serve Labelhood's business model and support its position as the Chinese fashion gatekeeper. In addition to these two paths of understanding archives, this new business model that Brain is following and the commercialised understanding of the archive is leading a challenge against the traditional archive models in both the West and China, and will form the focus of analysis in Chapter Four.

How has my research affected the use of 'archive' in Shanghai?

Before and during my PhD research period, I talked with many friends in the fashion industry about my research project. I noticed that the word 'archive' has appeared in some friends' activities afterword. For instance, in June 2019, I met

[294] Brain & Suga, Shanghai, 25 January 2021.
[295] Tasha Liu, Shanghai, 27 January 2021.
[296] Brain & Suga, private conversation with Mo Shi about Ninon Archive, Shanghai, 20 January 2021.
[297] Brain, interviewed by Mo Shi about the Ninon Archive Studio, Lark, 15 September 2023.

Qinrun Yu who is the co-founder of Fiu Gallery in Shanghai, which is a popular art gallery located in the heart of Shanghai fashion district Yu Yuan Road. It's famous for holding exhibitions of young artists with creative and highly interactive curation, which has led the gallery becoming a photogenic attraction and a hot topic online.[298] For instance, this type of gallery would attract those who like to post photos about fashion and art lifestyle on the platform Red（小红书）. In order to understand Shanghai as the fashion city in China, I planned my trip in the city to see as many fashion-related sites as possible. When I met Qinrun Yu we discussed her business as as part of my exploration of the city. I also shared part of my research concept with her.[299] We discussed my research plan and experiences in the archive area. Qinrun Yu showed great interest in the archive and said she didn't realise that the word archive had such meaning.

From October 2019, I noticed the word 'archive' started to appear in the Fiu Gallery's articles and posters about their new exhibition.[300] The gallery had two exhibitions which collaborated with two overseas fashion archive boutiques, one from Melbourne called Dot COMME, famous for its collection of Comme des Garcons; the other exhibition was held in December 2019 and featured a collaboration with the Japanese partner famous for collecting Japanese fashion designers' work called EMPTY_ _M and SKOLOCT. (Fig 1-1 & 1-2) Both exhibitions used the English word 'archive' and Chinese 'Dang'an Guan'（档案馆）in their

[298] When search in the platform Red, it appears has more than 700 post about this gallery. The gallery's official red account has 12,000 followers. 'Fiu Gallery 飞呦画廊 • 小红书 / RED', 小红书 <https://xiaohongshu.com/user/profile/5e4414b6000000000100142c> [accessed 27 December 2023].

[299] Qinrun Yu, private conversation with Mo Shi, Shanghai, 8 July 2019.

[300] Fiufiu, '"ARE YOU DREAMING"展览延长 | 一次性看到 250 件川久保玲是怎样的体验？',(Exhibition extension | What is it like to see 250 pieces of Rei Kawakubo at once?), WeChat public account platform <http://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?__biz=MzI2MDIxMzEwNw==&mid=2247485156&idx=1&sn=b10a2e97ca9ed41d13742ebddbd5df05&chksm=ea6c56f8dd1bdfeeec320a46a928096ee0d857b7cf9610439bdd0c17a212a1593df3c5af7591#rd> [accessed 27 December 2023].; Fiufiu'"ARE YOU DREAMING"展览 | 像川久保玲一样做个"反叛者"', (Exhibition | "Be a Rebel like Rei Kawakubo"), WeChat public account platform <http://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?__biz=MzI2MDIxMzEwNw==&mid=2247485157&idx=1&sn=e944ff328b25f61acaa649c165759b6f&chksm=ea6c56f9dd1bdfef5d2387be71f0afa21a63a9d5a38db286610e4685796dcf256cc9919c4c45#rd> [accessed 27 December 2023].Fiufiu '我们带着珍贵的 Archive 和硬核联名，强势登陆年度潮流大展 INNERSECT' ('With our precious Archive and Hardcore joint name, we have entered the annual trend Show strongly INNERSECT) WeChat public account platform, <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/xqAWZ4ZAtEdZ593y9lR7lw> [accessed 27 December 2023].

article. These two exhibitions both emphasised 'collect for sale' rather than 'collect for preservation'. Archive is a word they used to distinguish that their products are more 'historied' and 'valuable' than other vintage shops, relying on cultural background to add higher value to products.

The exhibition collaboration with Dot COMME was an exhibition of collected works or an archive POP-UP store. On the last day of the exhibition, the collector Octavius La Rosa held a talk. According to an article by Fiu Gallery the talk explains the background of Dot COMME and defines the value of archive pieces in the fashion industry, as well as talking about Comme des Garcons and introducing the exhibited pieces.[301] All the exhibited pieces in this exhibition would be sold at the end of the exhibition. The other exhibition collaboration with EMPTY_ _M was not held in Fiu Gallery's location, but at another trend trade show call INNERSECT. In an article about this collaboration, Fiu Gallery described they 'brought the valuable archive' to the exhibition.[302] The collection included 70 pieces of treasured archive pieces from 1992 to 2010's Yoji Yamamoto, Comme des Garcons, Number(n)ine, Issey Sports, Phenomenon and Junya Watanabe. Moreover, there are another 24 pieces of archive re-created pieces, designed by the founder of buyer boutique SKOLOCT, Tsuyoshi Nakano, which joined the exhibition and were available for purchase.

[301] "'ARE YOU DREAMING"展览 | 像川久保玲一样做个"反叛者"', (Exhibition | "Be a Rebel like Rei Kawakubo").
[302] '我们带着珍贵的 Archive 和硬核联名，强势登陆年度潮流大展 INNERSECT' ('With our precious Archive and Hardcore joint name, we have entered the annual trend Show strongly INNERSECT).



Figure 1- 1: Left side image: at bottom of the text including archive POP-UP store.

Figure 1- 2: Right side image: Fiu Gallery defined what is archive through using Japanese buyer boutique store they collaborated for INNERSECT exhibition as example. [Source: Fiu Gallery WeChat public account, November, 2019].

I have contacted Qinrun Yu to understand if our discussion has had any influence on her decision to use these words.[303] She replied claiming that her understanding about the archive was blank until she had a conversation with me. Our conversation formed her first impression about archive and *dang'an*. But she cannot recall the details about making an exact decision regarding the above articles. However, this word's appearance in Chinese fashion business still reflects

[303] Qinrun Yu, private conversation on WeChat, December 2023.

that the concept of remembering history through fashion has established its path to encounter audiences in China. Since then, more and more stores or brands used archive in their name. The magic and the power of this word has been used in various fashion businesses, and the word itself has been reshaped by these users.

Conclusion

This first Chapter has outlined the current definitions and uses of Chinese fashion archives in Shanghai. It has revealed the problematic understanding of the translation of English word 'archive' to Chinese word 'dang'an' and numerous other Chinese words during practice. Through my analysis of the history of the Chinese word dang'an and the history of the development of Chinese archival study, it is evident that the Chinese archive has grown out of its own cultural roots and carries its own meaning in Chinese. Also, when we consider the academic environment of archives and fashion in China, it is clear that the typical fashion archive in Europe does not match an understanding of dang'an in Chinese due to the Chinese political and cultural background, and this actually gives Chinese fashion professionals the freedom to develop multiple new formats of the archive that are suitable for the Chinese fashion industry.

The evidence demonstrates the impact of the individual's education background and work experience on understanding what an archive is . The influence of the Western education system on the emerging designers who had oversea study experience is significant. The participants from the local education system were influenced by the Japanese culture of collecting and archiving and formed their early impressions about the meaning of fashion archives under this influence. This suggested that the fashion archive can also seem like a relatively new concept in the Chinese context, with its current definition highly influenced by foreign elements.

However, as the research unfolded, Chinese designers were actively developing various types of archives based on a broader understanding of the term in the new century. This multiplicity in archive creation hinted at a more diverse way of writing history within the Chinese fashion landscape. According to this finding, I recognized that while it was initially perceived as a foreign concept, was finding roots in the Chinese context, as it needed to fit into the Chinese social ideology and power system in practice. So far, this research has demonstrated that China has the capacity to construct its own multiple types of fashion archives based on the Chinese fashion system. Potentially, my research involvement also has had an impact on advancing archive studies within the field of the fashion industry in China.

In order to further define the Chinese fashion archive, in this Chapter I have categorized Chinese fashion archives into four major types, based on their creators' understanding of the archive and the purpose of building an archive. Although the archive is a way to reflect collective memories, the exploration of dividing the categories proved the strong impact of individual historical journeys on the definition of the archive in the Chinese fashion industry. It also guided the analysis of the space and location in Chapter Two, which further revealed the influence of the State's political power on the planned economy, as well as providing a foundation for case studies in Chapters Three and Four.

Chapter Two: Materiality in the Chinese fashion archive

Building on the groundwork laid in the previous Chapter, which focused on tracing the history of the term 'archive' and establishing the definition and meaning of archive as a word used in both Western and Chinese culture, this Chapter delves into the materiality of Chinese fashion archives. I lay out changes in the field of archive studies in China, as well as the current situation of fashion industry archives in Shanghai in order to further understand what is held in Chinese archives and the conditions in which things are kept. Based on this exploration, I aim to answer the following questions: 1. What physical archive collections are contained within the actual archive? 2. Why and how have they been preserved? 3. And accordingly, what appraisal method has been revealed?

For this second Chapter, I have selected six examples from amongst the ones I physically visited. These field work visits provided me with opportunities to examine what participants had described in words and experience the physical archive atmosphere. Prior to this research project, I gained five years of experience working in the leading physical archives and digital archives in the United Kingdom belonging to leading museums and established fashion corporates. But I have never previously had a chance to visit any Chinese fashion archive collection. According to my work experience in the United Kingdom, archives represented a material method of writing history and storing memories, as well as commonly serving as inspirations for the fashion industry.[304] The habit of repeatedly returning to physical objects to seek references and inspiration accelerated the growth of archives in Western fashion companies.[305] But what is the situation for Chinese fashion archives?

[304] Before I start my PhD research project, I volunteered and worked in various archives in museums and fashion companies, including Victoria & Albert Museum (2014-2020), Net-a-Porter(2015-2016),and Vivienne Westwood (2017-2018).
[305] Federica Vacca, pp .273-288.

The location and space of the fashion archives I visited was also important. As well as deciding what material to keep in the archive, the owners need to decide where to keep them. Generally, this decision is largely based on the business strategy of the brand. In reality, the strategy and any supportive local government policy will affect decision making when selecting which city to set the brand up in and where to rent office space and will affect decision about how to store an archive collection. From this perspective, appraisal methods are affected by certain pragmatic conditions.

Aside from these pragmatic decisions, the archivists' imagination also plays an important role in deciding what material will be stored in the archive. The first encounter with the archive and the ideal image of archives are an important part of understanding how Chinese professionals understand the archive and history, and how these guides them to create the current collection. In addition, these factors are also accompanied by social ideology concerns as I have discussed in the two previous Chapters, such as: is my memory worth preserving? Or, can my memory count as part of society's collective memory? Or even more fundamentally: is it worth preserving memories at all? This was especially relevant during the highly challenging circumstances of the pandemic, which caused some participants in my study to adjust their decisions regarding materiality in their archives. As Freya pointed out, mere survival is the main target, while Tasha Liu discontinued the digital archive project.[306]

Guided by this set of questions we can explore approaches to storing, appraising and utilizing the materials in the archives in specific locations and spaces in Shanghai. This Chapter demonstrates the cultural value of the archive collection as a means of bridging the historical gap, the present and the future, and provides insight into the ways in which fashion archival materials are used to enhance

[306] Freya, WeChat, 1 June 2020

understanding of the intersection between archive and history.

Materiality and the fashion archive

Philosopher Richard Rorty claimed that there have been three significant changes in the history of Western philosophy since medieval times, from 'things' to 'ideas' in the 17th to 19th Century, and then to the 'linguistic turn' in the 20th Century.[307] Fashion studies is a world full of layers of the signifier and signified, with a focus on how language and images played an important role in affecting and formulating our understanding of fashion.[308] Fashion scholar Yuniya Kawamura suggested that 'Fashion is not visual clothing but is the invisible elements included in clothing', while explaining the concept of fashion and the relation of fashion to sociology.[309] Although fashion has been recognized as something more than physical material in the current studies, physical material, such as dress, is still the crucial carrier of fashion.[310]

Material culture study is one of the most prominent influences in design history research, in which the material designed for everyday life can be analysed through consumption, marketing, production, social identity, history and culture.[311] By using this approach, physical fashion materials preserved in archives based on individual purposes provide significant evidence of social ideology. Just as Entwistle argued that 'dress, as both a social and personal experience, is a discursive and practical phenomenon'.[312] Dress is understood as the social order that creates a phenomenon called fashion. Following her argument, Rocamora and

307 Agnes Rocamora & Anneke Smelik. ed, *Thinking Through Fashion: A Guide to Key Theories*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2019) pp. 11-14.
308 Paul Jobling, Roland Barthes: Semiology and the Rhetorical Codes in Fashion, in '*Thinking Through Fashion: A Guide to Key Theories'* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019) pp. 132-144.
309 Yuniya Kawamura, *Fashion-ology*, (New York: Berg, 2005), p. 4.
310 Lou Taylor, *The Study of Dress History*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 72-74.
311 Kjetil Fallan, Design History: Understanding Theory and Method, (London: Bloomsbury, 2010) pp. 35-39.
312 Joanne Entwistle, The Dressed Body, *Body Dressing*, (Oxford: Berg, 2001), p. 35.

Smelik argued that the new materialism in fashion studies is a turning back to refocusing on the 'matter and material' instead of the 'text and textuality'.[313] The focus on materiality of fashion archives in this Chapter stems partly from positioning the research in design history, while the new materialism in fashion study supports a focus on physical objects as well as words and images.

Fashion products as a type of everyday material when they are on the body could be considered as a type of social practice, adding social meanings to the body.[314] However, once the dress leaves the body and has been collected in the archive, the social meaning a dress carries loses its embodied context, and turns into solitary evidence of other information. This information could be analysed in multiple ways by the users of the archive and could be applied to other functions based on the archive creator's need. Thus, one of the crucial approaches used to analyse the materials in fashion archives is to understand the nature of corporate archives. As fashion scholar Lou Taylor suggested, the contemporary material culture is incontestably connected with consumption culture in contemporary society.[315] In this research when fashion as an object has been collected for corporate archives, the emphasis is on commercial production - the manufactory sample reference and the marketing strategy - rather than symbolic or cultural and historical background. Thus, the analysis of an emerging fashion brand's appraisal methods should place emphasis on an object-centred approach to marketing strategy in consumption culture.

In comparison to Entwistle and Taylor's emphasis on the important of dress as the main materiality for their research, it is important to point out here that dress is only a partial part of the archive in my research. Within my research cases, the physical materials included all ranges of materials that were created during the

313 Agnes Rocamora & Anneke Smelik. ed, p. 11-14.
314 Joanne Entwistle, The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory, (Malden: Polity Press, 2000), p. 20.
315 Lou Taylor, pp. 72-75

designer's working process which they decided to keep, from inspiration to sketches, from test pieces to production, promotion, marketing and selling. Textile samples, design sketches and unused test samples take up large spaces in the archives. All of these materials record the movements of the designer and their team during their daily work routine. The exploration of a wide range of other types of materials formulates a comprehensive understanding regarding the importance of materiality in corporate fashion archives.

By focusing on the materiality, through examining what is in the archives, whether intentional or not, this Chapter reveals how archives preserve the memory of certain geographical areas, certain social groups and certain time periods, and the meaning of materiality in both creative process and the marketing promotion with in the fashion industry.

The space and location

Emerging fashion brands based in Shanghai are also targeting the energetic environment of the market, as well as the support and convenience of the manufacturing industry, from local area and surrounding cities such as womenswear in Hangzhou, menswear in Ningbo, shoes in Wenzhou and textiles in Shaoxing, which together form one of China's most important economic areas, the Yangtze River Delta area. These cities are all in Zhejiang Province and a suitable distance from Shanghai, ensuring rapid product delivery time, for instance next day delivery, while at the same time the factories' pollution would not affect Shanghai's environment. The location of the office of new fashion brands in Shanghai are also affected by supportive local government policy. Some of them are based in government-supported urban industrial parks, cultural creative parks, or fashion street block areas. These areas provide office space with reduced

rental prices which can help to reduce the risk and cost for newly founded fashion brands to start their business in Shanghai. The whole city itself is also attractive to emerging designers due the success of Shanghai Fashion Week, which was discussed in the Introduction.

In the market, each fashion company has their marketing strategy, targeting suitable customers with suitable products. Sometimes the strategy is derived from the products, and sometimes the products are derived from the strategy. Western fashion marketing research tends to divide fashion brands into categories such as fast fashion, high street brands and luxury brands.[316] But this method of categorisation is not suitable for the current Chinese market. There is no established Chinese luxury brand in China equivalent to the European fashion houses with more than a hundred of years of history, which allow the archive to preserve substantial materiality over a sustained time period. On the other hand, as the original production source for global fast fashion, China has a complicated low price fashion market. In the current Chinese market, one of the main indicators to determine the strategy of a fashion brand is the distribution channel. There are three major channels in China right now: online sales mainly on the website Taobao, physical shops such as shopping malls or buyer boutiques. The channel each brand selects is highly relevant to the company's brand image and business goals, reflecting the targeted customer group and future strategy.

Independent designers and large-scale fashion corporates both share the objective of maximizing profits, and as such these two groups of participants have overlapped in the online market, although with a focus on different types of physical shops. The independent designers must seek solutions that provide start-up brands with more opportunity to survive. They emphasize online channels and buyer boutiques, as these distribution channels are more flexible and lower cost,

316 Harris Posner, *Marketing Fashion: Strategy, Branding and Promoting*, London: Laurence King Publishing, 2015) p. 13.

which better suits their target customer. In contrast, the large-scale fashion corporations emerged during the time period when there were no online stores in the Chinese market, which generally required them to have chain stores in suitable locations.

Through contrasting the two groups of participants, independent fashion designers and large-scale fashion corporations, I will explore what format of archives each group has kept, how the material has been preserved and used, and further what the relationship is between the location and the business strategy of each type of participant? Based on the above questions, I have chosen a wider range of fashion archive cases in order to reflect more variety of the Chinese fashion archives.

Before I planned my fieldwork trip to China, I have conducted 26 interviews through WeChat from the 15th to the 27th of December 2020. From these interviews I selected five participants for office or archive visits, in addition to another five potential participants who intended to accept my face-to-face interview request. One criterion for this list was based on participants who were showing positive interest in the concept of archive, the other was based on their availability and if they owned an archive and were willing to show it to me.

These five participants covered three different types of brands including menswear, womenswear and accessories (the other two participants are personal archives which will be analysed in Chapter Four), and as a result I determined to visit their offices in Shanghai. The brands were: jewellery brand Roundface, menswear brand STAFFONLY and womenswear brand Pei Ying Studio. While the majority of emerging Chinese fashion brands are based in Shanghai, there are two other fashion brands, Roaring Wild and Vintage and Republic, who attend Shanghai Fashion Week that have established their archives near the manufacturing centre in Guangdong province, south China. I conducted a visit to

their offices after the first Shanghai trip. Regarding Vintage and Republic, I have conducted another visit to its Shanghai office in my second fieldwork trip in Shanghai. These are the samples that make up this Chapter.

Independent designers

The definition of 'independent designer' (独立设计师) in Chinese has the same meaning as in English, to describe fashion designers who founded their company by themselves, but are not sponsored by other large fashion business. Because most independent designers perform multiple roles in their studios, they are simultaneously the designer, the manager and the boss, while in terms of the archive specifically, they also act as the archive manager.[317] They are involved in the whole process of building their archive, making decisions about where to store the collection and how to appraise and preserve the collection. As young brands, their archives are following and representing the intention of the founder closely.

The three independent fashion designers' offices are marked in the map of Shanghai city centre (Fig 2-1). STAFFONLY and Roundface are located in offices converted from residential space, while Ying Pei Studio is located in an office building surrounded by residential buildings. These locations are ideal high price-performance ratio choices for start-up fashion designers to work in a convenient location.

[317] Shimo Zhou, 'The Explore of the challenges facing the Chinese fashion industry in multiple contexts', Guangzhou Academy of Fine Art, December 2019.

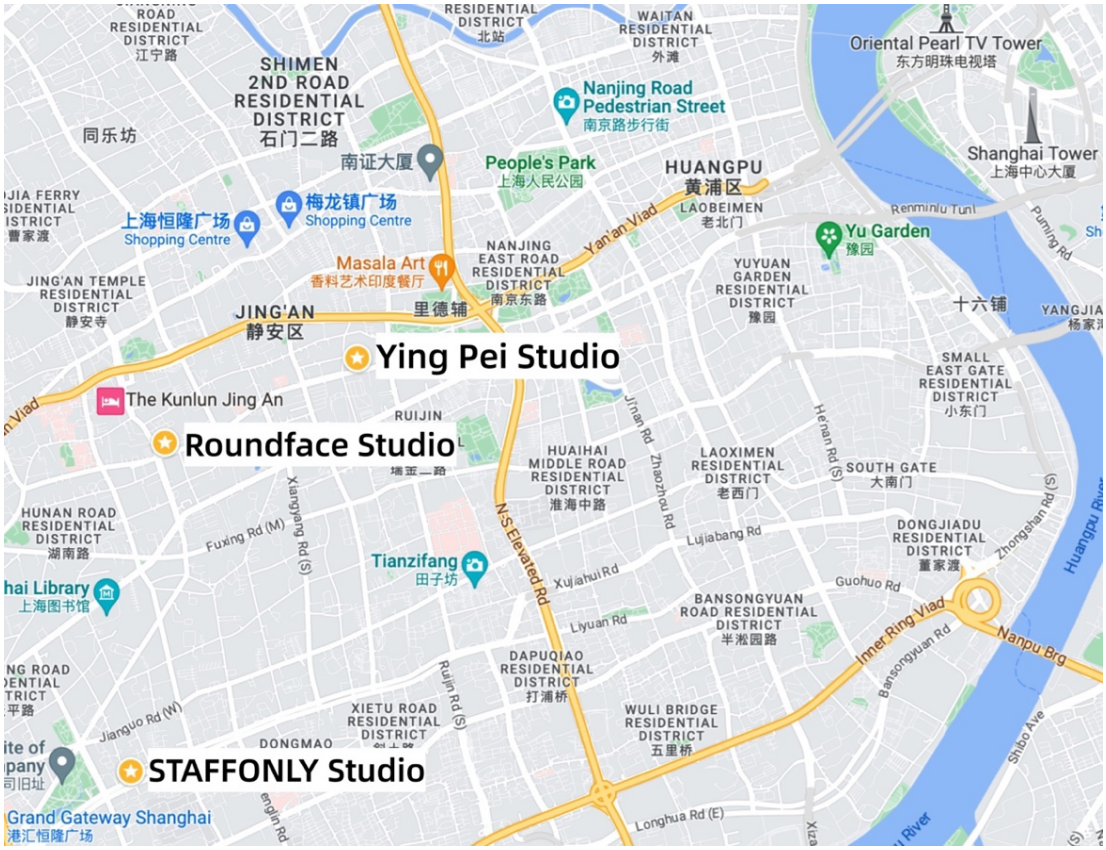


Figure 2- 1 Shanghai map (designer studio location) [Source: Created by Mo Shi, September 2023.]

Ying Pei was chosen because in view of her personal interest in archives which I outlined in the Introduction and Chapter One. No other participant has told me they have made a similar disbursement in order to focus on sorting out their archive.[318] Her decision to invest money and time on her own archive, and her attitude towards keeping records of her design process, results in her archive beginning to take shape earlier than other participants. Her view and goals of what is a fashion archive and what function she wanted her archive to achieve is not typical in China, but her position as a 'typical' young fashion designer with overseas study experience add variety to the independent designer's archive.

She described that after they moved to the new office, under her instruction, the team folded clothes and rolled up fabrics, as well as labelled boxes.[319] She has

[318] Ying Pei , WeChat, 7 September 2020.
[319] Ibid.

organized all the previous seasons' archive collections into boxes and put them in order in one room (Fig 2-2 and 2-3). A separate sample collection, which will be sent to photo shoots or influencers if needed, is hung on rails in another room and eventually some of them will go to the archive collection (Fig 2-4). Ying Pei is separating her archive collection based on their function, having created a "pre-archive" collection and a permanent archive collection. This is mainly because of her working habit; she chooses the more popular products or the ones that could best represent her brand identity to go into the archive collection. She also organized a collection of buttons and zips according to product numbers that could help her quickly refer to previous production for the whole team.[320] The whole archive is operating under her aim of enhancing work efficiency, thus the whole collection is displayed in an airy and bright space, with many sections openly accessible to the office, making it easy for employees to access and see them. However, it has very minimal focus on preserving the history of the brand.



[320] Ying Pei, private conversation with Mo Shi, Shanghai, May 2023.

Figure 2- 2: Photo of archive room in Yingpei Studio office in Shanghai. The white cardboard boxes stored past season samples, the black plastic boxes stored textile samples [Source: Image taken by Mo Shi, Jan, 2021.]



Figure 2- 3: Photo of archive room in Yingpei Studio office in Shanghai. Multiple white cardboard boxes and black plastic boxes been put in order on the left side. [Source: Image taken by Mo Shi, Jan, 2021.]



Figure 2- 4: Photo of sample collection in Yingpei Studio office in Shanghai. [Source: Image taken by Mo Shi, Jan, 2021.]

The reason for selecting STAFFONLY is based on its brand type as well as the scale and format of its archive. These two brands were founded in the same period. The founders know each other when they studied in the UK. Both Ying Pei and Shimo Zhou, one of the founders of STAFFONLY, graduated from London College of Fashion. The other founder of STAFFONLY Une Yea was also aware of Ying Pei's archive, and mentioned how tidy her archive was during the interview.[321]

[321] Une, Yea, Shanghai, 22 January 2021.

The STAFFONLY archive is a single room, seemingly more like a hidden storage space, roughly 3 to 4 square meters in area. The whole collection has been stored in labelled boxes and put on the shelves in chronological order. The collection includes show pieces, textile samples, unused samples and show installations. The collection is not like the Ying Pei Studio which is open to the office, but rather it is hidden and dark, lying separate in a small corner with a door leading from the outside office. But the brand has carefully stored material that represents the unique moments of the brand. Neither of the founders of STAFFONLY were satisfied with the space but they were not able to expand it based on current circumstances. I will discuss more about STAFFONLY later in this Chapter.

Another example is newly founded Jewellry brand Roundface. The brand's office is located in a hidden residential area within a row of houses that have been separated into flats. The founder Jiaya rented the ground floor as her office and showroom (Fig 2-5 and 2-6). According to her, she did not have an in-house archive, as a result of the production method of her product and the short history of the brand as discussed in Chapter One.[322] Contrasting with Ying Pei Studio and STAFFONLY, most of the Roundface archive is in digital format. Because of this strategy, the office only displays few samples which can be used to convert the room into a showroom if needed, for instance during Shanghai Fashion Week. In contrast with the other two brands, this office is clean and tidy, and has been decorated to reflect Roundface's brand image, with the flexibility of having multiple functions an effective way to save costs. But each of these office locations reveal certain indicators which bolster the argument regarding the geographical selection criteria of independent designers in Shanghai.

[322] Jiaya (Wendy), WeChat, 3 September 2020.



Figure 2- 5: Photo of sitting area of Roundface's office in Shanghai. [Source: Image taken by Mo Shi, Jan, 2021.]



Figure 2- 6: Photo of the display area in Roundface's office in Shanghai. [Source: Image taken by Mo Shi, Jan, 2021.]

These three brands selected the location based on a suitable rental price and transportation. I also found out that current neighbours or late comers who have taken over the office location are also emerging designers. STAFFONLY's neighbour in the same building is Yirantian Guo, another fashion designer who graduated from LCF and founded her own brand in 2014.[323] The brand had a long-term collaboration with Labelhood and is considered as one of the young Chinese brands successfully introduced to mainland China by Labelhood. Ying Pei Studio's office was taken over by Fengyi Tan, who graduated from RCA in 2015.[324] She is also one of the participants I interviewed through WeChat phone calls. Roundface's office has a neighbour who is also a participant in this study, a fashion jewellery brand named L'ELEMENTO which concentrates on Chinese aesthetic jade jewellery design.[325] The founder studied in Rome and Florence and started her own brand in 2018.

In contrast to the independent designers who move their offices quite frequently, the next section explores the larger scale fashion corporates who have more stable locations and spaces. How does this affect the question of what these Chinese fashion designers have collected and preserved in their archive? How did they use these materials for their creative process and marketing promotion? And what does their appraisal method reflect with regard to their way of preserving history, writing history, and creating history?

[323] Une Yea, Shanghai, 22 January 2021.
[324] Ying Pei, private conversation, May 2023.
[325] Jiaya (Wendy), WeChat, 3 September 2020..

Large scale fashion companies



Figure 2- 7 Shanghai map (factory) [Source: Created by Mo Shi, September 2023.]

There were three larger-scale fashion companies in three different cities in China I visited during my fieldwork trips from December 2020 to April 2021. During this period, I conducted two fieldwork trips to Shanghai, one trip to Shenzhen and one trip to Zhongshan.[326]

The factory and office of Cashmere brand Sandriver is situated in a factory area of Shanghai, while menswear brand Roaring Wild just moved into a new office in Shenzhen's new CBD in south China, and the office of Chinese retro-style brand Vintage & Republic are located in the village of Zhongshan, also in south China,

[326] Shenzhen: City of Guangzhou, one of the four biggest tier one cities in China; Zhongshan: City of Guangzhou, home of Sun Yat-sen, also named after him since 1925.

which is situated near the factory they use, and Shanghai respectively. Each of the above brands selected locations that reflect their brand image and their history, a thought process which I will explain in the following paragraphs. Through analysis of their history of development and current business strategy I will examine why, where and how they built their archives.

Sandriver's head office is based in a factory area (Fig 2-8) due to its history as an out-sourced production factory from the 1990s.[327] The brand began with computer-controlled weaving of cashmere, and a location convenient to connect with the city centre was considered less important than the scale of the factory, in contrast to the independent designers I have visited above. The Sandriver archive preserved the notebooks of knit machine programmes and fabric samples for reference use. The founder of Sandriver kept all of these in her office in the factory.[328] However, these materials have not yet been put into order in a given space. According to my definition, which is already quite broad in order to give the Chinese fashion archive more conceptual space, this collection is still not yet an established archive collection.



Figure 2- 8: Photo of a corner in the Sandriver factor. [Source: Image taken by Mo Shi, Feb, 2021.]

[327] Xiuling Guo, WeChat, 31 January 2021.
[328] Field trip in February 2021.



Figure 2- 9: Another area of Sandriver's factory with large machine and computer installations. [Source: Image taken by Mo Shi, Feb, 2021.]



Figure 2- 10: Xiuling Guo's office desk in factory and her notebooks that recorded data for spinning machine in factory. [Source: Image taken by Mo Shi, Feb, 2021.]

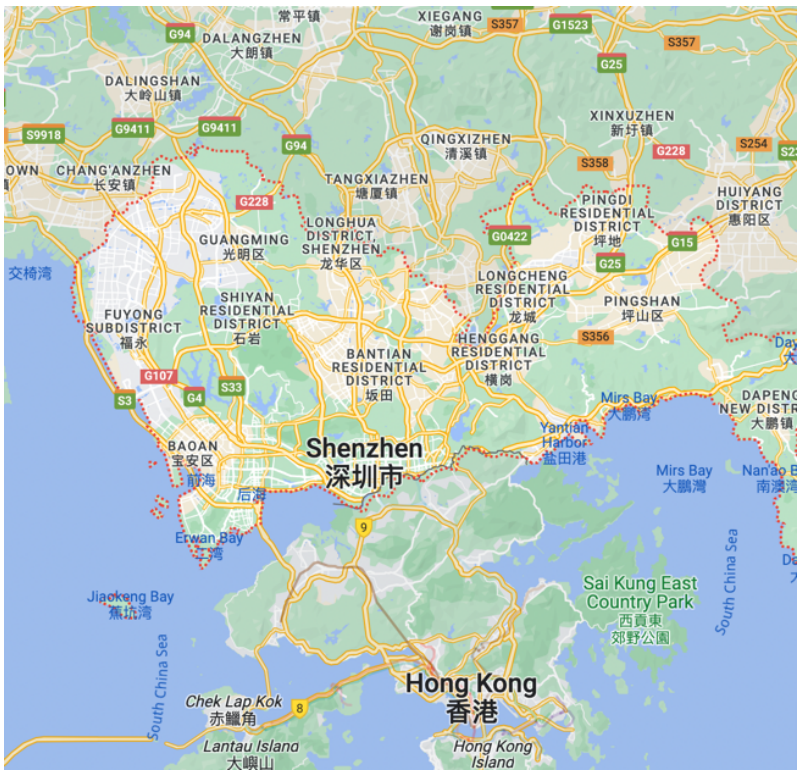


Figure 2- 11: Map of Shenzhen and its distance to Hong Kong. [Cropped from Goggle map, May, 2023.]

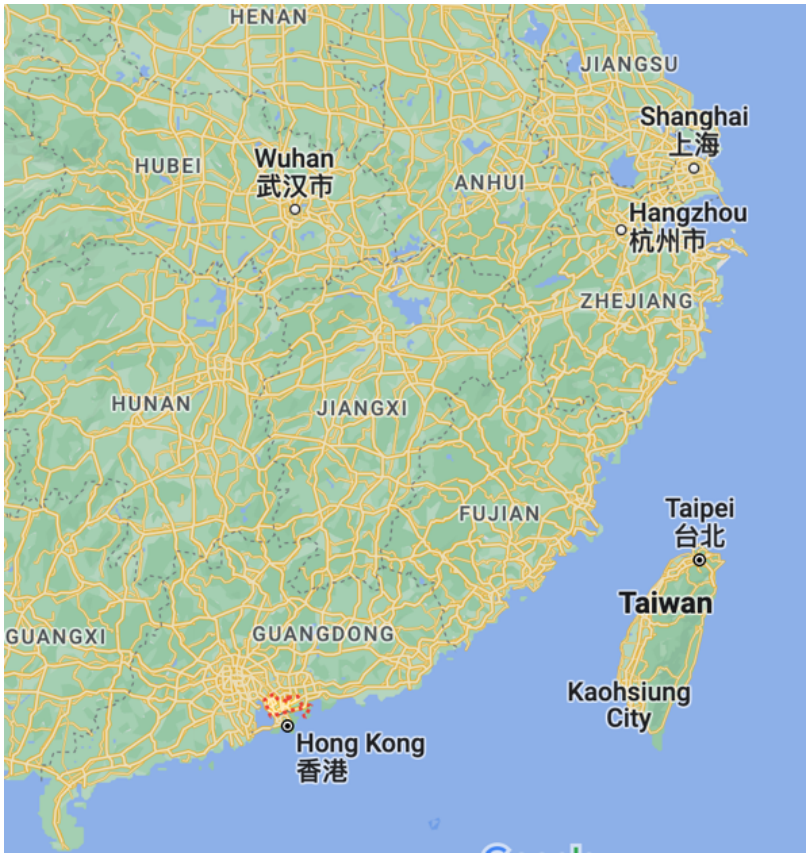


Figure 2- 12 Shanghai's distance to Hangzhou and Guangdong province. [Cropped from Goggle

map, May, 2023.]

Roaring Wild is a brand which had just celebrated its ten-year anniversary when I visited their office in Shenzhen in early 2021 In the Chinese fashion industry, a ten-year history is a clear milestone of a brand's success. During the COVID-19 lockdown period, mainland China implemented rigorous control of the country, reminiscent of a period of wartime, with countless retail businesses being affected by the sudden shutdown.[329] But conversely, in the winter 2020, soon after the first wave of the COVID epidemic was under control due the strict quarantine policies in first-tier cities in China, the market revival brought opportunities for Chinese fashion brands. Binggan, who is one of the founders of Roaring Wild, told me that they seized the moment and rented a new office at a preferential price.[330] The new office is located in the new CBD area in Shenzhen, with a professional reception in the lobby, an electronic entry system and a surrounding environment populated by many high-end restaurants.

The company archive is located in this office next to the design director's office (the participant would rather call it a sample room (*yangyi jian)* instead of an archive – please see the index for 'archive' translated into different Chinese words and their meanings). According to Binggan, this room is also used as the room for livestreaming.[331] In the *yangyi jian*, there are two tiers of rails on both sides of the wall. The entire collection has been hung on rails in seasonal order. This collection mainly includes the samples from previous seasons, but the participant managed to find a few pieces, which he acknowledged could be called archive pieces, which were from his personal collection.

[329] *Jinqi Sisheng Fen Duodi Yiqin "Zhanshi Zhuangtai", Hanyi Shi Shenme*?'近期四省份多地宣布疫情"战时状态"，含义是什么？ (What does the recent declaration of a 'state of war' in four provinces mean?)-新华网 (the Xinhua News Agency)' <http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2021-01/05/c_1126947929.htm> [accessed 30 November 2023].
[330] Binggan, interviewed by Mo Shi about Roaring Wild's Archive, Shenzhen, 19 February 2021.
[331] Ibid.

Compared to the other fashion brands' office I visited during this trip, Roaring Wild's office and *yangyi jian* has more space and is presented in a modern style (Fig 2-20). This archive represents one type of the possible examples of many established Chinese fashion brands with offices located in first tier cities.

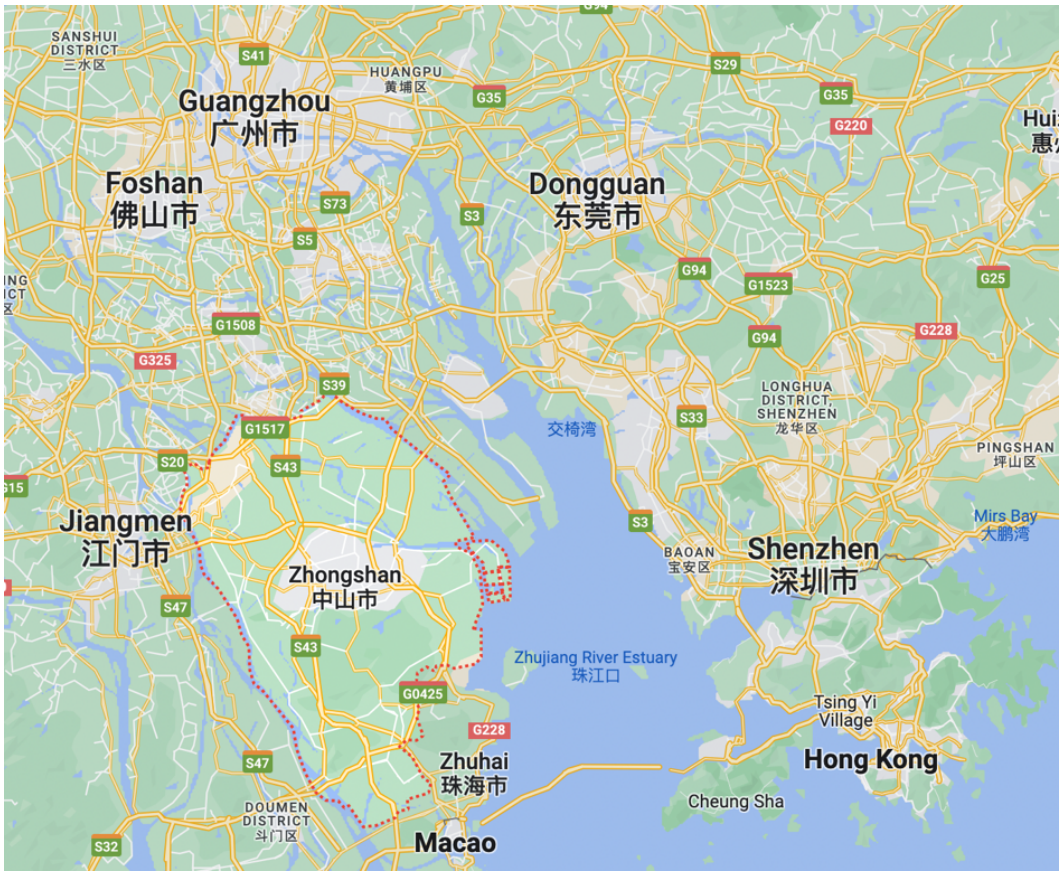


Figure 2- 13:Map of the location of Zhongshan [Cropped from Goggle map, May, 2023.]

Vintage and Republic is a contrasting example to Roaring Wild. The brand was founded in 2014 and currently has two offices, one in Shanghai, the other one in Zhongshan, Guangdong province.[332] I have visited both sites and talked with company founders at both offices. The main participant Hui Zhan is one of the founders of the brand and a resident in the Zhongshan office. As the one in charge of production, one of the reasons he stays in Zhongshan is due to its convenient location facilitating cooperation with the factories around this area.[333]

[332] According to Hui Zhan, the company was founded in 2014. Hui Zhan, Zhongshan, 3 February 2021.
[333] Hui Zhan, Zhongshan, 3 February 2021.

The office building is located in a rural village; from the outside it looks like a normal Chinese village house, however, inside is a well-designed nostalgic style office, with a high celling office area and a small café bar (because one of the founders' hobbies is making coffee), as well as a well-organized eco-friendly warehouse for online stores on the ground floor. The interior design and the furniture in the office room reminded me of my childhood environment in the 1970s to 1980s. For instance, the style and material of the light-hangings on the ceiling, the red star on the wall, the style and colours of the chairs the employees were sitting on, as well as the outfits the employees were wearing. (Fig 2-14 and 2-15). The images were shared by Zhan. They reflect how the founders of Vintage & Republic implant their understanding of the Chinese nostalgic aesthetic into the origin of their design – the lifestyle-inspired working environment.

The second floor includes a simple makeshift photoshoot area, a furniture workshop room, a sample room and an archive room. But during daily work, the sample collections and archive collection are referred to as *yangyi* 样衣 and *yuanban* 原版 internally.[334] The word 'room' is not considered necessary to be used to indicate the location and space that stores the collection, as the expression is targeting the material itself, a nomenclature which is considered more effective during work operations.

The *yuanban* (archive) room is opposite the *yangyi* (sample) room, with one tier of rails along three walls, with the entire *yuanban* collection hung on these rails. (Fig 2-17) This *yuanban* collection does not include their own products but is a collection of vintage 'Made in China' garments which is their source of inspiration. The collection of products is kept in the *yangyi* room, and it seems that Hui Zhan is not planning to combine those two collections as yet.

[334] Hui Zhan, Zhongshan, 3 February 2021.

The whole building is representative of the brand's character; a combination of a strong atmosphere of a lifestyle of nostalgia combined with well-organized working details. An illustration of this was Hui Zhan describing that earlier in the year (2021) during the period when all indoor activities were cancelled due to COVID, they successfully hosted a camping and harvest rice event in Red Flag Farm in Jiangsu, Taizhou, with their friends who are photographers and journalists.[335] Together they worked to harvest the rice while enjoying coffee and music in the field. The successful outcome of this event led to the company deciding to arrange this outdoor activity annually. All those interested in the concept were welcome to join the camping and harvest activity.

He further described that the rice grower at Red Flag Farm is professor Wang Cailin 王才林, who is famous for improving the taste of rice.[336] Wang's research direction followed famous Chinese rice specialist Yuan Longping, nationally praised as the 'Father of Hybrid Rice' who helped the Chinese survive during the previous decades of population explosion.[337] However, Zhan claimed Yuan's rice is less tasty than Wang's. Although Vintage and Republic is adapting the Maoist ideology to bring life back to countryside, this time the aim is not to suffer but to enjoy life imbued with a nostalgic style, a Chinese style utopia that could evoke nostalgic emotions. But Zhan never use the word nostalgia during the interview, he used Fu Gu (复古, means return to the old/ancients), equivalent to the English word vintage, to represent the brand's style.

335 Ibid.
336 Hui Zhan, Zhongshan, 3 February 2021;
'Cong "Chibao" Dao "Chihao", "Nangeng Zhifu" Wang Cailin Daohua Xiangli Zhumeng' '从"吃饱"到"吃好", "南粳之父"王才林稻花香里逐梦行'(From "eat enough" to "eat well", Wang Cailin, the father of Nanjing, pursues his dream in DaoHuaxiang Li)-中新网 Chinanews.com' <https://www.chinanews.com.cn/sh/2022/06-18/9783225.shtml> [accessed 29 December 2023].
337 Shellen X. Wu, 'Yuan Longping (1930–2021)', *Nature*, 595.7865 (2021), 26–26 <https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-021-01732-2> [accessed 29 December 2023].



Figure 2- 14: Photo of Vintage and Republic's office in Zhongshan, Hui Zhan and I sat in left area in the photo during the interview. The café bar locates at where the man with white t-shirt standing. [Source: Photo by Vintage and Republic, October, 2019.]



Figure 2- 15 Photo of the angle of the Zhong Shan office ground floor. [Source: Photo by Vintage and Republic, October 2019.]



Figure 2- 16: Photo of the second-floor furniture workshop room [Source: Photo by Vintage and Republic, October 2019.]



Figure 2- 17: the Vintage and Republic's archive room. [Source: Photo taken by Mo Shi, February, 2021.]



Figure 2- 18: the Vintage and Republic's sample room. [Source: Photo taken by Mo Shi, February, 2021.]



Figure 2- 19: A corner of the products archive collection. [Source: Photo taken by Mo Shi, February, 2021.]



Figure 2- 20: Vintage and Republic products with 'Made in China' sign and print in the 1980s style. [Source: Photo taken by Mo Shi, February, 2021.]

Materiality and the role of the fashion archive

Material as historical evidence

Fashion scholar Marco Pecorari suggested that materials which have been preserved in archives, even ephemeras, have two layers of value.[338] One is the original value the material holds when it is still being used as an inspiration; the other layer is after the material has completed its original task, namely what information has been recorded and how this material has been appraised and preserved by the institution. In the previous Chapter, I suggested that the archive, as a type of record, is essential in preserving evidence for societies, communities

[338] Marco Pecorari, *Fashion Remains: Rethinking Ephemera in the Archives*, London Bloomsbury, 2022, pp. 2-3.

and the individual, which all correspond to the second layer of value that Pecorari suggested. This applies irrespective of the materiality of the public fashion archive, such as the fashion archive in Hong Kong that Peirson-Smith explored, or in the archives in private firms, for instance in the examples I listed above, which are like ephemeras in the fashion industry.[339] They are all a type of evidence of the material remains of a national fashion history. More importantly in this Chapter, there is a strong emphasis on practical function of fashion archive correspondent to the focus of material culture studies and design history approach.

STAFFONLY's fashion archive mainly contains a large number of used and unused samples, past season show pieces, as well as a small collection of Catwalk stage decorations. According to one of the founders, Une Yea, the style of the design has less variety than womenswear because the brand is a menswear brand. She suggested that every season's new product features a slight change from the original style. The process of each season slowly adding detail to the original design should formulate a clear family tree of this particular style.[340] However, currently the material that has been collected has just been stored mechanically without any analysis, and as such is not yet in a form that can support the brand in demonstrating its brand identity.

The continual increase in new samples and show pieces has caused chaos in the archive. According to another founder Shimo Zhou, it was particularly difficult to decide whether to preserve the catwalk stage decorations, as they put in a lot of effort to create each season's catwalk props which represent that season's concept. In the end, due to the large scale of the props and the limited space in the archive, the props are normally replaced in the archive after one or two seasons.

The archive in Ying Pei Studio also places emphasis on the order of materials, as

[339] Peirson-Smith and Peirson-Smith.
[340] Une, Yea, Shanghai, 22 January 2021.

Ying Pei herself considered that the key to improving work efficiency is to clearly mark the collection and place it in the correct order.[341] She is not only spending extra time and money to sort out the archive collection of major samples, but also paying attention to the details. For instance, she has established a collection of all the buttons she used in previous seasons, in order to improve the speed of production process. She also aiming to expand this operation into other types of garment accessories, for instance labels and zips. For her, the archive is a collection of materials that can help her survive in the competitive fashion market. These two young emerging fashion designers' archives thus reflect one perspective of the development of Shanghai's fashion industry.

Similarly, what Xiuling Guo has kept represents what she considers as the key materials to support Sandriver's business. While visiting her office, we walked past a large designer team office, with rich materials of images, textile and sketches forming a mood board on the wall (Fig 2-25). After we walked into Guo's office, she first searched for her notebooks and diaries from the bottom of the bookshelves in her office. She showed me her detailed notes of machines codes and her sketches of how to achieve certain affects through weaving wool yarn in a certain sequence (Fig 2-22 and 2-23). While I was checking the notebooks, Guo found a cashmere textile sample book of different colours and textures. According to her this sample book is from 'at least ten years ago' (Fig 2-24).

Although Sandriver has not put these materials into a certain order, it is clear these materials perform the function of a reference and inspiration for production or the creative process. When we looked at her notebooks together, Guo said the technique of cashmere spinning has not changed very much in the last thirty years, and so these notes can still provide a good reference for her current design and production.[342] These materials were like ephemeras scattered in different corners

[341] Ibid.
[342] Xiuling Guo, private conversation in Sandriver factory, Shanghai, February 2021.

in her office. But the history it recorded was significant in providing evidence for Shanghai as a manufacturing centre in the past. And combining these materials from the past with the new materials in the designer's office, the evidence may indicate the change of the Shanghai fashion industry towards a creative approach. But currently, due to the lack of collection, cataloguing and preservation, the materiality could not demonstrate a consistent history.

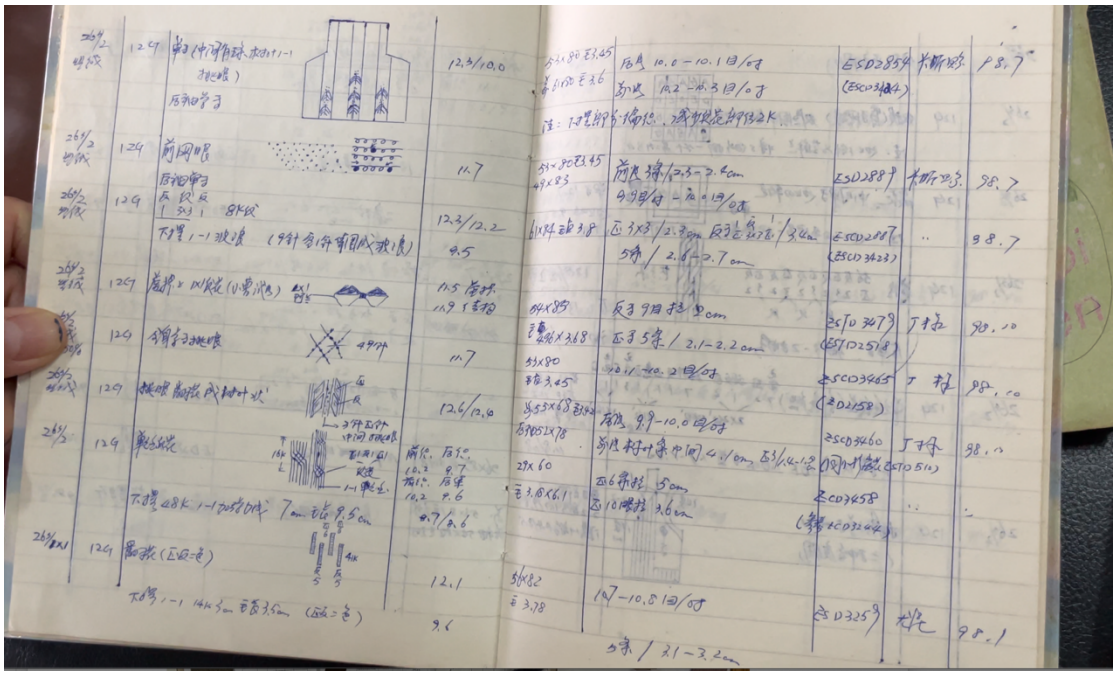


Figure 2- 21: Xiuling Guo's 90s notebook with weave code and styles. [Source: Image taken by Mo Shi, February, 2021.]

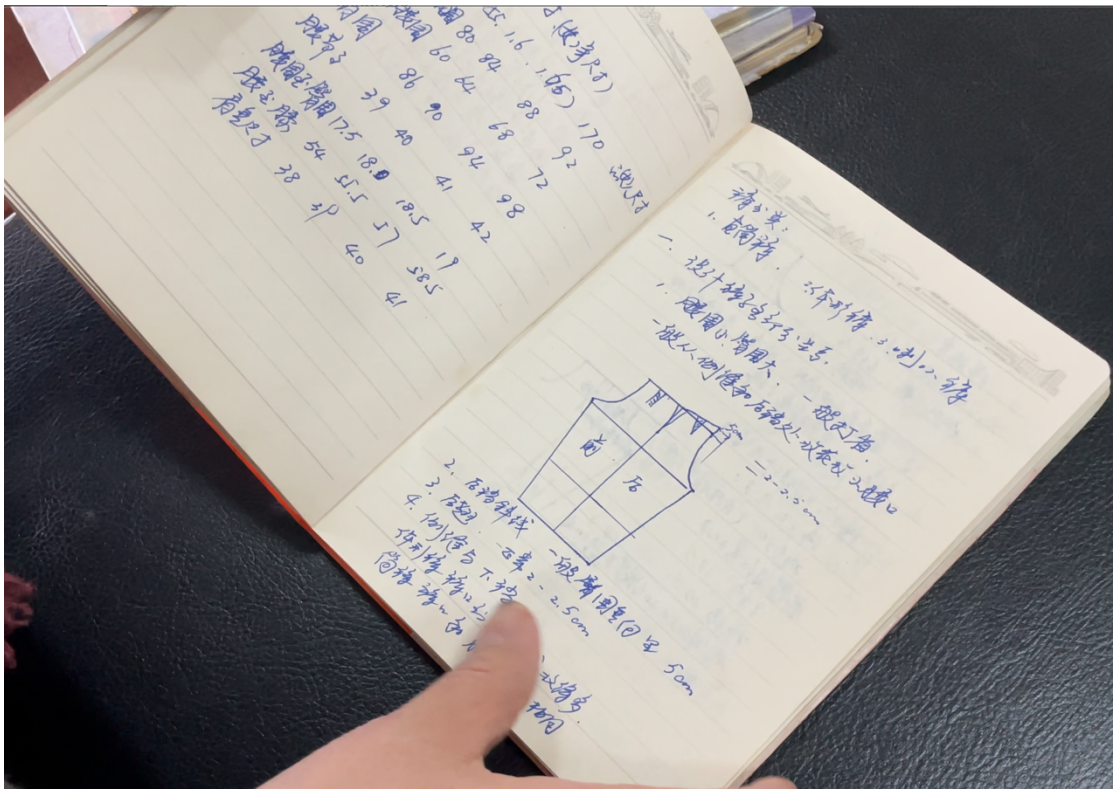


Figure 2- 22: Another Xiuling Guo's 90s notebook with instruction on sewing and measurements. Through the cover, [Source: Image taken by Mo Shi, February, 2021.]



Figure 2- 23: Early textile sample in Xiuling Guo's office in Sandriver's factory. [Source: Image taken by Mo Shi, February, 2021.]



Figure 2- 24: Textile sample in the designer team's office in Sandriver's factory. [Source: Image taken by Mo Shi, February, 2021.]

The other two large scale fashion corporates who have around ten years of history showed more discipline in collecting materials, however, the founders' attitudes towards archives, collecting and history are quite different. The most clear difference was that while Zhan from Vintage and Republic naturally used the word archive, at Roaring Wild the participant Binggan preferred to use the word *yangyi jian* to refer to the material collection.[343] Even though the company's material collection performs a very similar function to that of the fashion brand archive collections I encountered in UK fashion corporates, Binggan suggested he has another standard for 'archive' when I asked him the first research question: does his company has an archive.[344]

The physical material collection Roaring Wild has collected and preserved in the office includes large number of samples of previous seasons and the current

343 Binggan Shenzhen, 19 February 2021.
344 Ibid.

season (Fig 2-26). While going through the *yangyi jian*, Binggan also showed me a few pieces that came from his early personal archive but were now mixed with the *yangyi* collection(which he just described as 'belonging to myself' or 'what I collected' without a specific term to generalise them).[345] These few pieces all came from Japanese avant-garde street-style designers, such as Undercover by Jun Takahashi and BAPE (A Bathing Ape) by Nigo (formerly known as Tomoaki Nagao). These designers were regarded as the pioneers of the street style fashion trends in Japan in the 1990s who became known throughout Asia and even worldwide.[346] He also shared his experience of collecting Japanese vintage jeans when he was in high school.[347] Binggan's own collection reflected the fact that the fashion trends in China, especially the rapid developing coastal areas, for instance cities like Shenzhen, were deeply influenced by Japanese popular culture around the turn of the century.

Binggan explained that he used to think of these early influential pioneers as 'gods', and as such he expended a huge effort and amount of money to collect their work.[348] When Binggan described 'gods', he used the Chinese word '神' *shen*(god) and '神话'*shenhua* (myth)to represent the influence of these pioneers. He said:

> for me, maybe a certain designer used to be the enlightenment or something, I would more or less have a myth about him/her, or more or less I have praised the classic collection.[349]

But Binggan further summarised: 'imagine you are visiting a temple (*chao sheng* 朝圣) in the spirit of pilgrimage, but when you arrive in front of the temple (*miao*

345 ibid.
346 'Jun Takahashi | BoF 500 | The People Shaping the Global Fashion Industry' <https://www.businessoffashion.com/community/people/jun-takahashi> [accessed 29 December 2023]. 'Japanese Menswear Still Rules. Here's Why.', *The Business of Fashion*, 2019 <https://www.businessoffashion.com/articles/news-analysis/japanese-menswear-still-rules-heres-why/> [accessed 29 December 2023].
347 Binggan, Shenzhen, 19 February 2021.
348 Binggan, Shenzhen, 19 February 2021.
349 Ibid.

庙) you find that it just a collapsed temple; there must be a sense of disappointment or disillusionment -how would you deal with it? But this kind of breaking sometimes is a good thing.'[350].

He added that at the current stage he believed that he needs to stop tracing other pioneers' paths in order to push Roaring Wild into becoming a mature brand. Also, since he began his own brand, the myth and the radiance of the divinity of these pioneers has gradually faded. His understanding of fashion production and marketing has quickly grown with the development of his own business, and he realised that some of the designs that used to amaze him are just some easy tricks.[351] As he said: 'street style is all about attitude rather than the product itself', and the brands he formerly respected have lost their vitality.[352] This attitude changing process caused changes regarding his understanding about archive. What he used to think was worth preserving he now feels has faded in meaning because of the 'collapse of the temple'. This is why he prefer to call the material collection in his company *yangyi jian* instead of archive.

[350] Ibid. (When he described this thinking process, he indicates his relationship with the famous role models fashion designers he used to worship, who have led him to today's career.)
[351] Ibid.
[352] Ibid.



Figure 2- 25: the Roaring Wild sample collection. [Source: Photo taken by Mo Shi, February, 2021.]

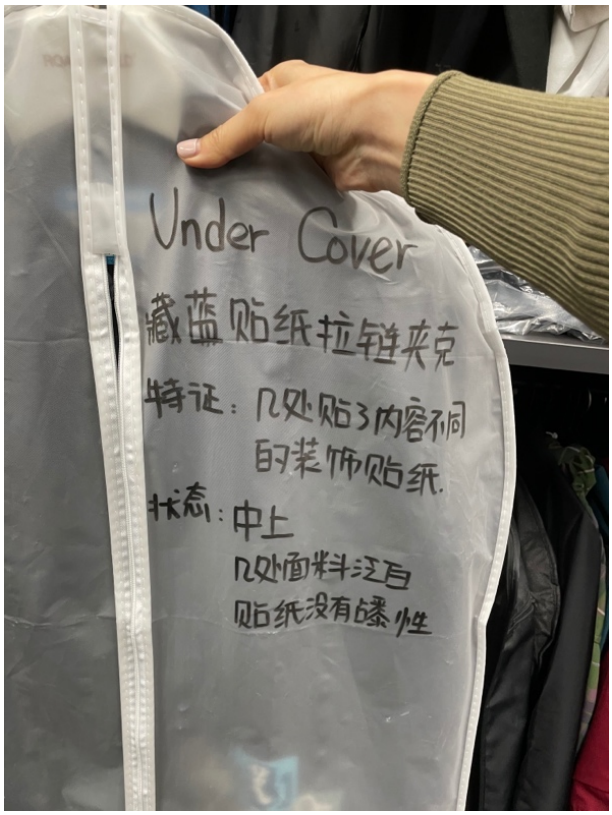


Figure 2- 26 : One of Binggan's personal collections in the company's sample collection. [Source: Photo taken by Mo Shi, February, 2021.]



Figure 2- 27: The garment bag has information of the brand's name, product information and its condition. [Source: Photo taken by Mo Shi, February, 2021.]



Figure 2- 28: Photo of Roaring Wild 2018A/W collection [Source: Roaring Wild Wechat account, https://weibo.com/1770439040/4291729781540956?wm=3333_2001&from=10DC293010&sourcetype=weixin&featurecode=newtitle&s_trans=1680890551_4291729781540956&s_channel=4.]

According to Kjetil Fallan, design history texts of the 1980s were very much focused on creating individual geniuses and heroes, especially with regard to designers in Europe and the US.[353] Fallen argued that design is not art, but design history has 'been largely presented as an art history of design', and did not 'study design in a different manner than studying art' until late 1990s.[354] Especially industrial design, which is a subject that requires functions that fit into everyday life. Fashion as a type of design product originally was designed to support its user's daily routine.

Nancy Troy argued, since the development of couture industry, fashion has built a strong connection with art compared to the other design categories in order to survive in the competitive market and raise the value of fashion products.[355] So, while the discipline of design history has developed beyond the concept of gods and geniuses, in the fashion industry praise of design geniuses is still extant. Creating a god has been proved as an effective way to promote the brand and manage the market through giving the customers a target to follow and a dream to chase; each generation is creating their new gods. Binggan's personal collection reflected the reality that the younger generation needs idols and guidance when they first enter a new field.

According to Binggan, this *yangyi* collection had strong impact on the early stage of Roaring Wild's development.[356] Thus, the archive reflected how this 'god' and 'myth' phenomenon had an effect on the Chinese fashion industry and fashion archive practice. Binggan sensed the violence and power of an archive (which in Binggan's case is his *yangyi* collection), and did not want his creativity to be constrained in a set framework. His 'breaking the myth is a good thing' remark and his actions in referring less to the *yangyi* collection are all indicative of his desire

353 Kjetil Fallan, 2010, pp. 1-2.
354 Ibid, p. 7.
355 Nancy J, Troy, Couture Culture: A Study in Modern Art and Fashion, (UK: the MIT Press, 2003), pp. 30-36.
356 Binggan, Shenzhen, 19 February 2021.

to stop being limited by the archive.[357]

Based on Binggan's ideology change, the Roaring Wild *yangyi* collection reflects the history of Chinese fashion as initially being influenced by overseas fashion 'gods', then by breaking through the rules of power from the international fashion system, as well as the violence of the archive system, moving into the process of paving its own path in Chinese fashion system. This reflection not only echoes the materials in Sandriver's head office, but also the Vintage and Republic archive collection in the later section. But another point worth noting was that Binggan also mentioned that after he became part of the fashion industry, understanding what fashion means as a job or a business, he even took on a similar role to the fashion 'gods' that he has broken before. Although he admits that this did not occur intentionally and he felt embarrassed by it [358] So while a new system will always replace an old system, the power and violence will still be generated by and within the system.

Material as collective memory

Due to the focus on fashion company archives, most of those I approached had a similar aim and target: to benefit the creator, the brand and the company. However, through the interviews I noticed that some of the participants had realized that, after the archive had taken shape, the meaning of the archive collection might extend beyond the creator's control and could be analyzed from various angles, in the process formulating its own impact. A fashion company archive could preserve a collective memory of a certain period, instead of just playing an internal role as a design inspiration. Vintage and Republic's archive is such an example.

[357] Binggan, Shenzhen, 19 February 2021.
[358] Ibid.

Both brands are trying to find their own position within current Chinese youth culture, although Vintage and Republic is progressing in another direction compared to Roaring Wild. Instead of focusing on overseas-influenced trendy fashion, Vintage & Republic are aiming to recreate a Chinese utopia lifestyle through using a nostalgic lens to process collective memories of the 1980s.

The brand was founded in 2011 but the real business started in 2014.[359] Before production started at the end of 2014, Zhan and his colleagues spent a long time searching for samples and ideas in order to form the aesthetic of the brand. Japanese vintage shops and the way they cultivate historical memories had a strong impact on Vintage and Republic.

Zhan frankly acknowledged that they had a long experience of going to Japan to find inspiration since the time they were working in Metersbonwe.[360] However, instead of being attracted by the Japanese avant-garde street-style fashion designers like Roaring Wild was, they immersed themselves in the Japanese vintage style. Hui Zhan said they were fascinated to see vintage clothes in Japan, bearing the mark of the previous owner's life experience.[361] Based on this concept, Vintage & Republic decided to conduct further research about clothes in 'distress' but rooted in the Chinese context.[362]

During our interview, Zhan also further discussed the way Japanese vintage shop preserve history, and revealed this impact on his understanding of history, memory, and archive. He said the vintage shops in Japan were not just for clothes, they also included other objects, for instance there were vintage vinyl record shops, vintage furniture shops or anything that the shop owner was interested

[359] Hui Zhan, Zhongshan, 3 February 2021. According to Zhan, before the end of 2014, the founders were doing small development projects, buying yangyi and sort out information, as well as thinking about the brands name. Thus, he said the real start was 2014 in the interview.
[360] Ibid.
[361] Ibid.
[362] Ibid.

in.[363] Shop owners with great taste were sometimes experts in a niche area; this is one of the key elements required to build a good vintage shop, although their appraisal and preservation process is based on their subjective taste. For Hui Zhan, these shop owners are actually archiving memories and the history for the world.[364] This comment revealed what Vintage & Republic want to do for Chinese history.

By 2021 this brand had already strived to redefine the beauty of 1980s Chinese aesthetics for 10 years. Based on this aim, Vintage & Republic's archive accumulated large amounts of 'Made in China' products, with categories ranging from various types of clothing to shoes, bags and small accessories (Fig 2-29). Hui Zhan proudly showed me a raincoat (Fig 2-30) that was made in China in the 1980s and exported to Russia and Eastern Europe. He argued that made in China does not mean poor quality; in fact the raincoat is actually evidence of clever design and good quality with the special aesthetic of that period.[365] And this type of aesthetic is the quintessence of Vintage & Republic. Here Vintage republic using their archive as evidence to prove that Made in China can actually mean great quality, and as a brand they would like to further prove this concept.

[363] Ibid.
[364] Hui Zhan, Zhongshan, 3 February 2021.
[365] Ibid.

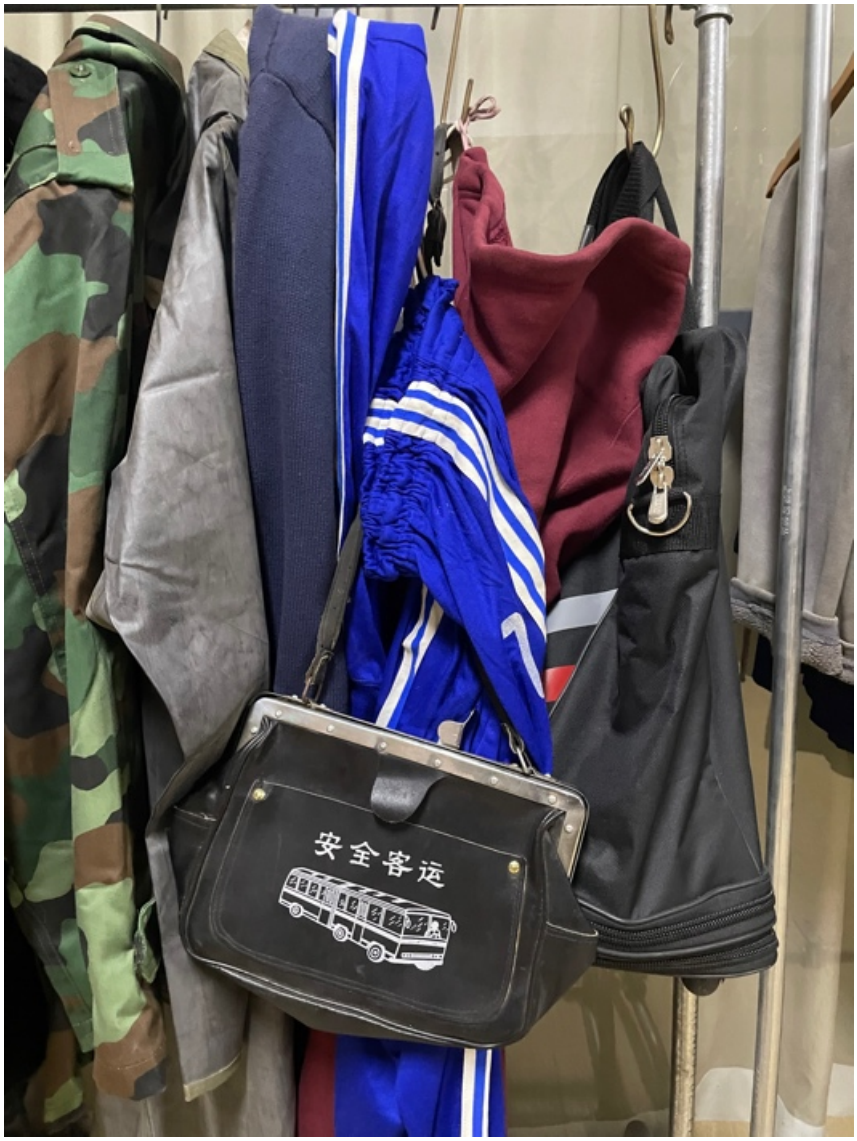


Figure 2- 29: sportwear, military outfits and a bus conductor's ticket purse. [Source: Photo taken by Mo Shi, February, 2021.]



Figure 2- 30: archive pieces in the archive collection, including raincoats Zhan showed me during interview. [Source: Photo taken by Mo Shi, February, 2021.]

Vintage & Republic's archive has reflected the brand's understanding of preserving history and memories through cultivated Chinese heritage memories and transformed these memories into design details, new textiles, style of garments and even lifestyle products and events. The brand has the determination to transform the memories and history into a full package, not just the look of single products but an entire holistic concept. The products and events reveal the strong nostalgia aesthetic and nationalism vibe of this concept, including recreating the military coat which became one of the bestsellers of the brand (see Fig 2-31), as well as the newly-opened nostalgic utopia lifestyle concept café (see

Fig 2-32). However, when I tried to ask Zhan about why they decided to recreate the military coat, and what the intention was behind it, Zhan said the brand would not explain anything related to politics and that they would leave space for the public to discuss or imagine. This attitude reveals how sensitive citizens are when approached on controversial topics. Not all history that has been recorded in the archive and used in fashion design is open to discussion.[366] Within this situation, the nostalgic utopia style could be considered as a way to recreate memory, turning the focus away from unmentionable history to rediscover the time period's aesthetic.



Figure 2- 31: Photo of Vintage & Republic bestseller military coat, posted by its official

[366] Hui Zhan, private conversation with Mo Shi, WeChat, December 2023

Xiaohongshu account with title '中国人血脉崛起的人生衣服！'(the lifetime clothes rising the blood of Chinese people!). [Source: Xiaohongshu Platform, https://www.xiaohongshu.com/explore/658900bf000000000700a566]



Figure 2- 32: Photo of Vintage & Republic newly opened café in Beijing. [Source: Photo by Vintage & Republic, February, 2021.]

Slogans are one of the key design points that Vintage & Republic used on products such as t-shirts and knitwear, ones that could evoke consumers memory and a sense of nostalgia. While I was visiting the brand's sample room, I noted that one of the highlights of the product detail is found inside their most popular products such as t-shirts or sweatshirts, where there is a slogan on top of the label which reminds the customers of the 1980s. Inside most of their white t-shirts there is a

slogan that reads '自己动手丰衣足食' (procure ample food and clothing through our own labour), while inside the collection of sailor's striped shirts there is another slogan, '大海航线靠舵手' (navigating the ocean depends on the helmsman) (Fig below 2-33).



Figure 2- 33 : Vintage & Republic product with slogan '自己动手丰衣足食' (procure ample food and clothing through our own labour). [Source: Photo taken by Mo Shi, February, 2021.]

Although these two slogans are quoting directly from historical political propaganda content, reminding the audience of that period when communist propaganda slogans and posters were seen everywhere across the country, yet they are now presented in an interesting way in Vintage & Republic's design.[367] The slogans they have selected deliberately use less controversial political language (compared to slogans for the One-child Policy, the Great Leap Forward

[367] 'Mao Slogans | Chinese Posters | Chineseposters.Net' <https://chineseposters.net/themes/mao-slogans> [accessed 30 December 2023]; Wang Ying, 王莹, [Baige Shunjian shuo Bainian] 1943, "Ziji Dongshou, Fengyi Zushi" '【百个瞬间说百年】1943，"自己动手，丰衣足食"-新华网 Xinhuag Wang' <http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2021-04/20/c_1211117729.htm> [accessed 30 December 2023].

or the Cultural Revolution) and are very familiar to most Chinese.[368] Additionally, the way they have adapted it in product design, putting the slogan inside the collar, also brings a small surprise instead of a direct impact. These adjustments have turned the propaganda slogan into a trigger for nostalgia. Although I have not been able to find a physical material in the archive room with this slogan to prove a direct connection, there is still a distinct connection between these products with their slogans and the archive collection. This is because the archive collection contains the memory related to the same period when the slogan was popular.

For instance, while walking around the archive room, I happened to see a bus conductor's bag stand out of a group of khaki, olive green and navy raincoat and military uniforms, which triggered a memory about my childhood, when we did not have any electric ticket machines in the bus and we needed to buy them directly from the conductor. Another item that caught my eye was a red armband(Fig 2-34), which read: 通化铁路分局民兵第 0055 号(Tonghua Railway Administration People's Militia Number 0055). The word *minbing* (民兵 'people's militia') evokes a sense of a particular period, a word which will cause any Chinese person to think of the specific historical context. As the Vintage & Republic founder team and I from the 1980s generation, we share specific nationwide childhood memories due the prevailing political environment in China at that time.[369] It is no doubt that certain slogans or names evoke stronger memories than others due to certain historical events. But due to each individual's family background and undisclosed political position, words like *minbing* may cause different reactions (and in my case it's a negative reaction). Due to the existence of the range of complex emotions concerning the red armband and the word *minbing* in the collective memory, these elements only appeared in the archive collection, as far as I observed, and not in any Vintage & Republic designs.[370]

---

368 '11 Slogans That Changed China', *BBC News*, 26 December 2013, section China <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-24923993> [accessed 30 December 2023].

369 Hui Zhan, Zhongshan, 3 February 2021.

370 According to Zhan's interview, the font design or textile sample could have been the reason it was retained in the archive.



Figure 2- 34: The red armband belongs to a militiaman in the railway office, with number 0055. [Source: Photo taken by Mo Shi, February, 2021.]

During the interview, I attempted to steer away from the topic of nationalism or politics, just in case raising these topics led to a sensitive situation. But in Vintage & Republic's design, the red flag and slogans of 1980s communist propaganda can be seen everywhere. This could simply be due to the brand wanting to focus on bringing back the 1980s aesthetic. During that period, it was hard to avoid this kind of signifying. What Vintage & Republic's design team do is redefine its essence

by incorporating iconic symbols from specific eras with new materials, aiming to evoke nostalgic memories of their customers' childhood or youth. An example of this is when Hui Zhan showed me one of their products – a recycled paper-made aluminium lunch box (Fig 2-35) – which my parents and I used to use in school or at work. The recycled paper-made lunch box is used to store a collaboration product with Red Flag Farm, which is a bag of rice grown on the farm and a t-shirt from Vintage and Republic. This combination brought attention to the rural lifestyle utopia that the brand advocates, with a hint of the nationalism and collective memories to evoke a nostalgia vibe.



Figure 2- 35: Photo of the Red Flag Farm package. [Photo taken by Mo Shi, 10 February 2021.]

Besides the Farm harvest event I mentioned previously, the way Vintage &

Republic aim to bring the rural life into their design details is also reflected in another archive piece that Zhan showed to me during after our interview. This was in 2017 when they designed a batch of jeans and donated them to several Tibetans as a donation project to poor labour workers. Once the clothes had been worn by the Tibetan recipients for a year or two, they collected the clothes back and sent new clothes to the same recipients (Fig 2-36 for the original Tibetan-worn jeans, according to Zhan the products inspired by the old jeans are also collected in the archive). From this process they discovered that the worn-out clothes had different marks on them which reflected the recipients' lifestyles. For example, they received clothes from someone who took yaks out to pasture, and from another who dug up Chinese caterpillar fungus, and from other professions.[371] All their clothes had differing parts that were worn out. Based on these lived examples and the brand's original aesthetic, the design team transformed these marks into their products, and created clothes with marks and worn-out details. Hui Zhan said 'these clothes are part of our body and experience life with us', that is why the brand style is always tinged with a certain level of distress.[372]

Zhan further provided another example with textile developments. Zhan explained that they will purchase new vintage materials for the archive collection based on their future production needs.[373] Some vintage textiles fit their requirements but are not available anymore, so they will re-develop them with their textile suppliers in order to recreate suitable products for their collection. The crucial part of design is that the new creation needs to keep the Vintage & Republic aesthetic style and also must satisfy the current Chinese customers and market. These projects reflect that archive materials with collective memories can provide inspiration for multiple types of design details.

371 Hui Zhan, Zhongshan, 3 February 2021.
372 Ibid.
373 Ibid.



Figure 2- 36: Details of the marks on denim trousers. [Source: Photo taken by Mo Shi, February, 2021.]

The combination of the above understanding about aesthetics, culture and life resulted in the archive collection of Vintage & Republic. The appreciation of the value of history and collective memories has led Vintage & Republic to consider transforming the archive collection into a book. Zhan said that since no one has done a similar collecting and preserving job, they would like to share their resources with the newcomers to the fashion industry.[374] Although this publication has been paused due to busy work associated with physical stores and other events after my interview with Zhan, this plan of publication was the origin of the opportunity for me to meet Vintage & Republic.[375]

[374] Hui Zhan, Zhongshan, 3 February 2021.
[375] Hui Zhan, WeChat, December 2023.

I came across Vintage & Republic when I met Elaine, the editor of the book about Vintage & Republic archive collection at that time, in my interview meeting with Une Yea.[376] Elaine is Une Yea's friend, and she joined our conversation that day. The editor told me the idea was inspired by a book published by a British vintage shop called Vintage Showroom, which has listed three sections in its collection of vintage clothes, including sportswear, militaria and workwear, from earlier European, American and Asian sources up to the 20th Century[377] (Fig 2-37). The focus of this book has certain overlapping fields with what has been preserved by Vintage & Republic. However, during his interview, Zhan did not cite any major European vintage culture as his early inspiration.[378] When Zhan talked about the book by Vintage Showroom, his deepest impression was of the technique and capability to collect and to divide the collection, and the method of gathering information from the collection to create a printed book.[379]

Although there has been a pause in the plan to use Vintage & Republic's archive to create a fashion history book and contribute to the fashion industry and fashion history writing. Vintage & Republic still managed to print small booklets about their events, such as the Red Flag Farm harvest (Fig 2-38). I found a few photos of the 2022 Red Flag Farm harvest booklet on Weibo, posted by a Beijing photographer, which displayed a rural lifestyle utopia interspersed with Vintage & Republic's products (see canvas shoes and mugs with brand logo in Figure 2-38 & 2-39).[380] The Vintage & Republic products presented in these booklets are products that could deeply evoke nostalgic emotion, for instance the white vans-style shoes, the plates and mugs. These are the items that were widely used in

376 Elaine, interviewed by Mo Shi about Vintage and Republic's archive and STAFFONLY's archive, Shanghai, 22 January 2021.
377 Douglas Gynn & Roy Luckett, *The Vintage Showroom: An Archive of Menswear*, (London: Laurence King Publisher, 2015).
378 Hui Zhan, Zhongshan, 3 February 2021.
379 Ibid.
380 Yeshen Laoma 野生老马, Qu Hongqi Nongchang, Luying Qiuge. '去红旗农场，露营秋割. (Go to Red Flag Farm, camp and harvest) - 微博 Weibo'
<https://weibo.com/1882942343/4836108888445028?wm=3333_2001&from=10DC293010&sourcetype=weixin&s_trans=1680890551_4836108888445028&s_channel=4> [accessed 30 December 2023].

China in the 1980s, then gradually replaced by international brands and contemporary products. In this way the cultivated historical collective memories presented in the Vintage & Republic style of aesthetic have finally emerged.



Figure 2- 37: Photo of book The Vintage Showroom: An Archive of Menswear. The example in this book has similar feature and emphasis as V&R's archive. [Source: Photo taken by Nick, https://welldresseddad.com/2015/12/18/review-the-vintage-showroom-an-archive-of-menswear-by-gunn-luckett/.]



Figure 2- 38: Photo of inner page of Red Flag Farm harvest event in 2022. See the Vintage & Republic canvas shoes on right page, participant wearing hat with Chinese word of Red Flag Farm on it. [Source: Photo taken by Yesheng Laoma, Weibo platform, https://weibo.com/1882942343/4836108888445028?wm=3333_2001&from=10DC293010&sourcetype=weixin&s_trans=1680890551_4836108888445028&s_channel=4]



Figure 2- 39: Photo of inner page of Red Flag Farm harvest event in 2022. See the Vintage & Republic mugs with brand logo at bottom image. These four photos show a banquet table of the event. [Source: Photo taken by Yesheng Laoma, Weibo platform, https://weibo.com/1882942343/4836108888445028?wm=3333_2001&from=10DC293010&sourcetype=weixin&s_trans=1680890551_4836108888445028&s_channel=4]

The significance of Vintage & Republic's archive collection lies between the blend of collective memories and nationalism, and how these two have been

commercialized through the brand's nostalgic perspective. Although this is not something new, it is rare to see such detail regarding the creative approach, the production process, and the final presentation. This is a reflection of the strongly rooted national pride fostered in Chinese society, which is caused by the insistence on nationalistic education in China and the contradiction ideology I analysed in the Introduction. While talking about their products Zhan and his colleague showed their sense of mission to rediscover the beauty of 'Made in China' products from the 1980s.[381] Their archive thus focuses on preserving the national history of the period they consider has been misunderstood, a period giving a fuller and more diverse account of Chinese fashion history. By preserving and referencing this archive, Vintage & Republic have exemplified the importance of materiality in physical archives and created an example of how collective memories could be derived from the physical archive and used in the fashion industry.

China experienced waves of nationwide lockdown during the pandemic from the end of 2020 until 2022. This was also a special time for the nostalgia of rural life and nationalistic revival. According to Hui Zhan, many latecomer fashion brands attempting to copy Vintage & Republic's approach.[382] For instance, when I first searched for its Taobao store, I typed the name into the browser and a store with that name appeared in results. I automatically thought that would be the Vintage & Republic store, not just because of the same name, but also because the styles appeared similar. When I opened the online store, it was selling cotton t-shirts as the main product. But Hui Zhan told me that was not their store.

Then, I realized the only difference between them is Vintage & Republic uses the traditional Chinese 'one'(壹), but the other store uses a simplified Chinese 'one'

[381] Hui Zhan, Zhongshan, 3 February 2021. Huihui, Shanghai, February 2021.
[382] Hui Zhan, Zhongshan, 3 February 2021.

(一)[383] (Fig 2-40). However, they used similar signs or slogans that were commonly popular in modern Chinese culture and Vintage & Republic's product is nearly double the price of the other store (Fig 2-41). This has the potential to cause serious damage to Vintage & Republic's market share. I also noticed, apart from this same store name, that there were a few other stores using similar keywords, including 国棉 (national cotton) and 厂 (factory). All of them had similar styles to Vintage & Republic. But among all the stores in Taobao, Vintage & Republic's original store has the longest history more than 10 years, while the other store has only operated for 6 years.

Hui Zhan even said that sometimes these latecomers would buy directly from Vintage & Republic as their reference. As a brand focusing on quality, they were not worried about these followers, and instead they are happy to see this trend became popular. He said what he could not bear was those latecomers who bought their products to use as a reference and then send the clothes back for a refund afterwards.[384] The competitive Chinese fashion market and Hui Zhan's utopian attitude, seen in the Vintage & Republic lifestyle, forms a sharp contrast.

[383] According to Zhan, the reason to use traditional Chinese 'one' 壹 is because it looks more beautiful, without other reasons. He said: 我们一般不太去解释…不提政治，也不回避人们生活中的政治需求，可以提炼背后有趣的那部分 (We don't usually explain it…we don't mention politics, nor avoid the political needs of people's lives, you can extract the interesting part behind it.)
[384] Hui Zhan, Zhongshan, 3 February 2021.

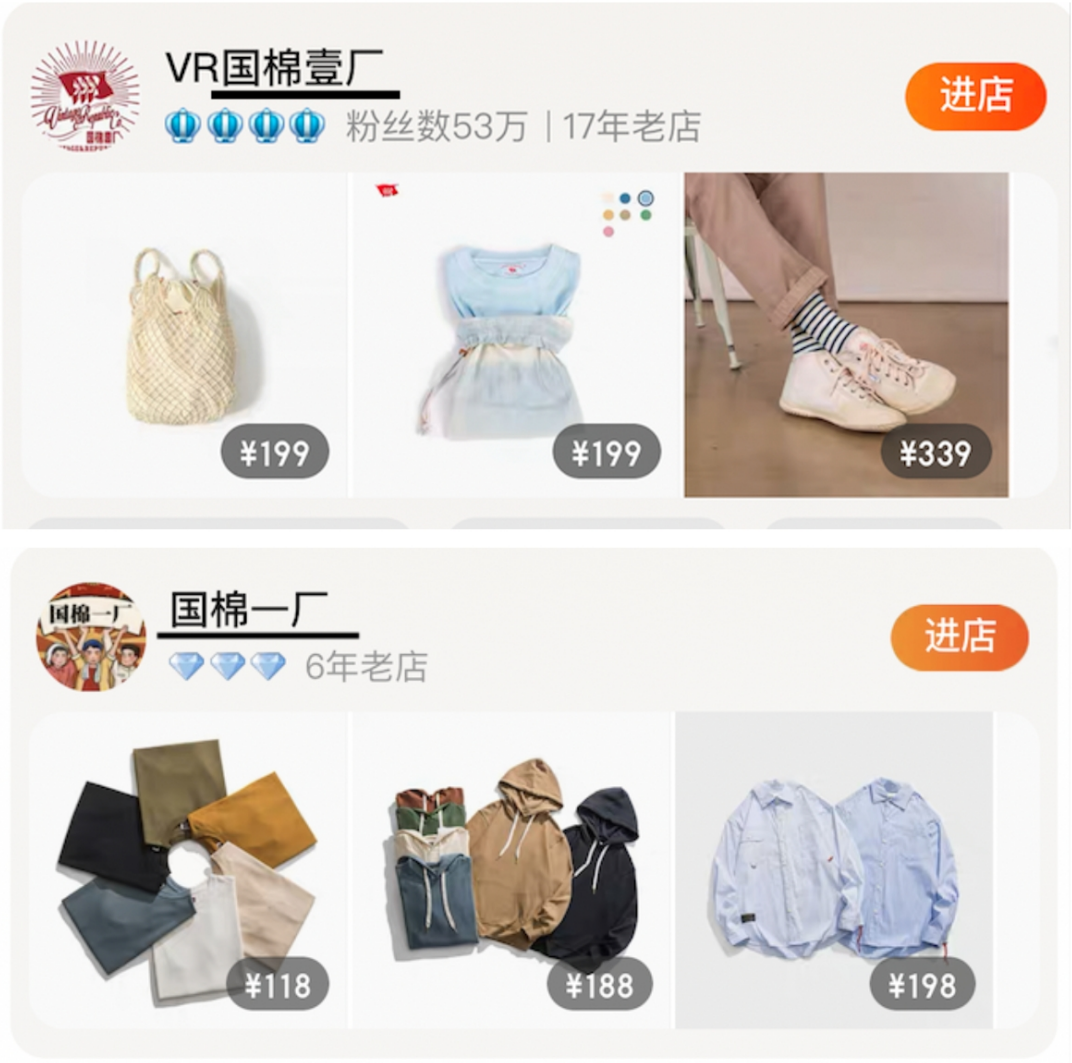


Figure 2- 40: Upper images are Vintage and Republic's Taobao and TMall shops (. Below image is a Taobao store with the same name as Vintage and Republic's Chinese name. See the shop's name from left top of each image. [Source: Cropped from Taobao App by Mo Shi, May, 2023.]



Figure 2- 41: Similar products in both stores, left is VR, right is the same name store. [Source: Cropped from Taobao App by Mo Shi, May, 2023.]

Conclusion

When I began my fieldwork journey, I kept a key question in my mind: Can we determine the relationship between fashion archives and history in China, by way of examining the materiality of the archive collections? During the process of research, my understanding and definitions of archives first moved into new areas of terminology and power systems, as I concluded in the previous Chapter. In this Chapter, the fieldwork experience provided evidence of how Chinese professionals are utilizing archives in their everyday work through giving space to physical objects and working with them. The process reflects that the new and rapidly developing Chinese fashion industry is in the process of discovering its own relationship with the archive that preserves collective memories of China, as well as records the transformation of Chinese social ideology and the fashion

industry.

This Chapter explores selected examples of Chinese fashion archives from their location to their space, and then their material collections. The location of independent designer studios and offices is sometimes affected by local government policies which indicate the involvement of the regime's power. But location choice is more directly influenced by the business strategy and perceived cost performance. These influences directly impact the inside space of fashion archives.

Shanghai in particular is popular for young designers who have overseas study experience, such as STAFFONLY Ying Pei studio and Roundface. The city's strong political aim to drive economic investment into being a fashion capital has resulted in the rapid development of the fashion industry. In particular the success of Shanghai Fashion Week has created an attractive platform for this aim to be achieved. This, coupled with the city's open-minded character and international environment, has provided a safe domain for young emerging talent to adapt to the new market environment. In this case, these designers' archives also reflect how they tried to find a suitable customer range and gradually grow their businesses. However, their archives are generally small and filled with a lot of uncertainty, just like the overall condition of their business. As a result, STAFFONLY's archive will reduce previous seasons' items to free up more space for the next collection, while Ying Pei Studio is actively increasing efforts towards creating their archive which is unusual amongst the cases that I have encountered.

The materials collected by independent designers with less than 10 years history reflect the strong urgency to survive in the competitive market and an emphasis on the exploration of their brand position. The other group of larger-scale fashion corporates with more than 10 years history and locally educated founders, have archives that reveal the transformation of the Chinese fashion industry, to

different degrees reflecting the unresolved contradiction ideology outlined in the Introduction.

Sandriver is a local Shanghai-based production-turned-fashion company founded in the 1990s. Although it did not establish a material collection with a certain prescribed order, the rich materiality contained in its head office still unveils the history of Shanghai transforming from a manufactory centre to a creative centre.

Fashion companies in Shenzhen or Zhongshan are in locations that are closer to production centres. This type of business is targeted at growing to the larger scale of a high street fashion business. Roaring Wild and Vintage & Republic represent this type of fashion brand, with both establishing archives containing large numbers of product and reference samples. Both brands reveal the influence of overseas fashion culture and fashion systems on the Chinese fashion industry, particularly from Japan. But their archives which record the development of these brands reflect how they discovered their own path in China.

Binggan's attitude of introspection about the influence of history is evidenced by his using the archive as a mirror to reflect his self-examination of his career. His decision to break through the limitations caused by belief in 'gods', 'myths' and overseas fashion systems, indicates that the Chinese fashion industry is building its own fashion system through these young emerging designers.

Vintage & Republic has a strongly defined core concept of using the archive as an inspiration for the brand from the very beginning. They are attempting to re-construct society's understanding about history and collective memories by means of the contemporary Chinese Utopia-style lifestyle that they depicted through their nostalgic products and lifestyle events. Their archive provides another perspective of the transformation of Chinese fashion. Instead of moving away from 'Made in China', the archive provided inspiration from collecting 'Made

in China' materials and supported the transformation of it into 'Designed by China' with a strong nostalgic vibe in the contemporary Chinese context.

The crucial question about what's included and excluded in the archive involves gatekeepers, which leads to Chapter Three. The archive is generated within the power system, but it can also support people in gaining the position as gatekeeper. While the physical archives in this Chapter also face the challenge of space and location, the digital archive seems limitless and plays an important role in gatekeeping.

Chapter Three of this thesis concentrates on the gatekeeping theory and archives. I have selected two cases to explore how fashion buyer boutiques develop and consolidate their gatekeeper position by using digital archives, and how other designers use archives to control their own information flows. These cases enrich the value of the fashion archive in China and reveal how different fashion professionals understand archives and history.

Chapter Three: Gatekeeping and Chinese fashion archives

Archives as a collection of information are further explored in this Chapter to reveal how this information is used to benefit a fashion business in meeting challenges and creating new opportunities. Currently there are some organizations within Chinese fashion industry that try to use archives to explore new possibilities in their fashion business. The cases I have selected for this Chapter reflect how buyer boutiques and Chinese fashion brand, who has either digital or physical archives, use the information in the archive to perform various acts of "gatekeeping" within the Chinese fashion industry. Bourdieu's field theory and Lewin's gatekeeping theory are fundamental tools to uncover the capital and power in the Chinese fashion field, as well as the forces and relations between the players such as buyer boutiques, fashion brands and the market. This Chapter examines the impact of gatekeepers' methods and conditions of appraisal on Chinese fashion professionals, and what histories have been included and excluded in the archive.

The two cases selected in this Chapter represent differing industrial roles and perspectives in the Chinese fashion industry. Their archives thus perform differing functions in response to their business strategy and position in the field. The first case is a digital archive belonging to Chinese leading buyer boutique Labelhood and its co-founder Tasha Liu. The second case is a physical archive created by high-profile emerging fashion brand Shushu Tong, which was discovered by Labelhood in 2014, officially launched in 2015 by entering the market through the

Lane Crawford project 'call out for the next new'.[385]

The Labelhood buyer boutique is one of China's most famous buyer boutiques that focuses on promoting local Chinese fashion designers.[386] Its digital fashion archive is the major case in this Chapter. Following ten years of development the boutique has become part of the Shanghai Fashion Week official calendar, holding fashion shows for their contracted Chinese fashion designers. At the same time, Labelhood conducts a fashion showroom and logistical business for fashion designers. Its business scale covers many key parts of the fashion industry; thus, it has the power to play the role as a gatekeeper in the industry. The way Labelhood understands and uses archives can reveal the role and value of archiving in one area of the fashion system within the Chinese fashion industry.

As the co-founder of Labelhood, Tasha Liu was listed in the BoF 500 as one of the most important figures driving the Chinese fashion industry forward.[387] She oversees two divisions within Labelhood: fashion retail and marketing. As Tasha explained, any designer who wants to collaborate with Labelhood, would specifically connect with her.[388] She is therefore a key example of how a fashion boutique founder plays a gatekeeping role in the Shanghai fashion field.

Labelhood gained 'the Buyer boutique' position in the industry through a number of activities, many of which involved Tasha: in 2013, Labelhood brought eleven brands to the London-hosted fashion show Design in Shanghai; in 2014 she held an event titled '*Dongliang Yiri*' (栋梁一日 One day in Dongliang), focusing on Chinese designers; in 2015, Labelhood collaborated with Lane Crawford in hosting

[385] Tiffany Ap, 'Lane Crawford's Creative Call Out to Offer $25,000 in Prizes', *WWD*, 2020 <https://wwd.com/feature/lane-crawford-call-out-2020-makers-movement-1203676324/> [accessed 5 December 2023] ; 'Calling For The Next New: The Finalists | Lane Crawford' <https://www.lanecrawford.com/discover/calling-for-the-next-new-the-finalists-53400015-20150603> [accessed 4 January 2024].
[386] Anja Aronowsky Croberg, p. 289.
[387] 'Tasha Liu | BoF 500 | The People Shaping the Global Fashion Industry', *The Business of Fashion* <https://www.businessoffashion.com/community/people/tasha-liu> [accessed 4 January 2024].
[388] Tasha Liu, Shanghai, 27 January 2021.

the Creative Call Out prize to introduce emerging Chinese designers to the market; in 2016, the company turned this into a platform to nurture new talent, by expanding the scale of '*Dongliang Yiri*' by transforming it into Labelhood Pioneer Fashion & Art Festival, including events such as a fashion show, popup shop, fashion exhibition, live stream, round table lecture and Labelhood market; in 2017, Labelhood entered TMall, connecting online and offline retail; and in 2018, it set up the Labelhood Youtopia platform to recruit fashion lovers from high school and university, and this new blood had opportunities to take part in the festival events. Continuing on, in 2019, Labelhood and S.F Express together inaugurated a two thousand square meter warehouse which achieved an uninterrupted operational process 24 hours a day and 7 days a week; in the same year, Labelhood started to develop the wholesale channel by opening their own showroom; and in 2020, due to COVID-19, Labelhood collaborated with TMall in starting an online fashion week.[389] Step by step, through its retail and marketing strategy, Labelhood gradually accumulated the power to control new players entering into the fashion field. Although Tasha was involved in this transforming process of Labelhood, considering she is the co-founder, her power has likely been balanced by other founders. She always emphasised during the interview that Labelhood's mission was to create a 'community' in the industry, and close teamwork within Labelhood reflected this philosophy.[390]

The other case study of this Chapter is Shushu Tong. The brand has been one of the most popular womenswear brands since 2019, following its 2015 establishment in Shanghai.[391] It has led the trend of the *Shaonüfeng* (少女风 maiden or teenage girl style) in the Chinese fashion market. The founders of this

[389] Jie Zhou and others, 'Research on the Development Mode of Fashion Select Shop under the New Retail Format: Take LABELHOOD as an Example', in *2021 2nd International Conference on Electronics, Communications and Information Technology (CECIT)* (presented at the 2021 2nd International Conference on Electronics, Communications and Information Technology (CECIT), Sanya, China: IEEE, 2021), pp. 1069–74 (p. 1071) <https://doi.org/10.1109/CECIT53797.2021.00190>.

[390] Tasha Liu, WeChat, 2 December 2023.

[391] Jessica Davis, 'Why You Need to Know about Shanghai Fashion Label Shushu/Tong', *Harper's BAZAAR*, 2021 <https://www.harpersbazaar.com/uk/fashion/shows-trends/a38147225/shushu-tong-shanghai-fashion/> [accessed 4 January 2024].

brand Liushu Lei and Yutong Jiang are both strongly influenced by their British fashion education. As one of the fast-emerging brands, their archives demonstrate a ways of understanding archive gatekeeping and its feedback system and effects in industry, which is different from Labelhood as a buyer boutique and business platform.

Fashion system and Field

In Bourdieu's field theory, fashion and French haute couture played an important role in showing how the space of the cultural field operates and its power relations.[392] In the field, the established players try to use the three elements of capital: economic, social and cultural, to maintain their position as well as to demonstrate their power by accepting or rejecting certain newcomers.[393] As Jessi Streib suggested, this theory has often been used to explain class reproduction, which been adapted by gatekeepers to 'turn neutral cultural difference into "cultural capital" and reproduce inequality'.[394] Newcomers need to fight to gain capitals and power which may involve re-defining the rules, rules which in the field of fashion for instance, can be recognized as 'perceived' legitimate taste, trend and aesthetic. This dynamic flow could be adapted to other cultural practices in sociology studies to represent a 'social microcosm'.[395] Rocamora further analysed Bourdieu's field theory as follow: 'the microcosm formulated by the power relations between the force of conservation and force of transformation, and the state of these power relations at a particular historical time determines the structure of the field at that time'.[396]

---

[392] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction*, (Oxford: Routledge,1984 repr. 2010), p. 229-230, 276-277.
[393] Pierre Bourdieu, 'THE FORMS OF CAPITAL', in Richardson, J.ed, *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (1986), Westport, CT: Greenwood, pp. 241–58.
[394] Jessi Streib and others, 'Class and the Cultural Styles Applicants Present to Gatekeepers', *Poetics*, 86 (2021), 101513, pp. 1-2.
[395] Pierre Bourdieu and Loïx J.D. Wacquant, *An invitation to reflexive sociology*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007) p. 97.
[396] Agnes Rocamora, 'Pierre Bourdieu: The Field of Fashion', *Thinking Through Fashion: A Guide to Key Theories*, Agnes Rocamora & Anneke Smelik. ed, (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), pp 233-250 (p. 234).

In Bourdieu's theory, culture is both material and symbolic; fashion, as an example, exists in its field as a material – a product – and carries seasonal symbolic meaning. When distributed across the fashion market, it represents the relative positions of power of all the players in the field of fashion. In *Distinction*, the logic of the formulation of habitus and the similar taste cause by it could also be applied to analyze the process of generating fashion trends and their symbols, which represent the trends of a particular class and time in history.[397] In this Chapter, the case study of Labelhood will adapt this analytical method to demonstrate how the fashion archive that writes history through a particular perspective sits in the field of cultural relations of contemporary Chinese fashion. This process has also revealed the power dynamic within the Chinese fashion industry.

The fashion archives which store fashion materials that carry the symbolic meaning of a particular time in history could be considered to house the power relations of that period. The power is generated through collecting these materials, which is a process of recording history and social memories. During the collecting and recording activities, the archive is actively making decisions about what to include and exclude, based on the gatekeeper's rule. In the case of Labelhood, while making decisions, it also exerts power over the field, which further consolidates its gatekeeper's position. After recording the history selected by the gatekeeper, the history demonstrates the perspective of the gatekeeper which will continue to generate power through controlling the visitor's information.

In the case of fashion brands, the power is generated through the transformation of the power from selected materials with established cultural capital, to new products or other types of activities (events, store decoration and all sorts of marketing campaign activities) to create a dynamic cycle of power. According to

[397] Pierre Bourdieu, pp. 165-171, 238-239.

Tory, in the early 20th century, established fashion houses that compete with other players in the field of fashion needed to strengthen and enrich the brand in order to gain dominant power in the field. Use of other formats of culture, including paintings, sculpture, architecture, literature, film and music contribute to developing symbolic meaning and providing a legitimate identity that enables fashion items to be equated to higher cultural production.[398] These methods still have been widely used in fashion marketing and promotion, but the space shifted from a private couture house to a museum-level exhibition in order to create a brand image to attract larger target customers in the contemporary market.[399] In the fashion archive, brands can recreate stories of products, and relate products to reference resources, thus formulating a strong connection between the brand and other higher cultural productions.[400]

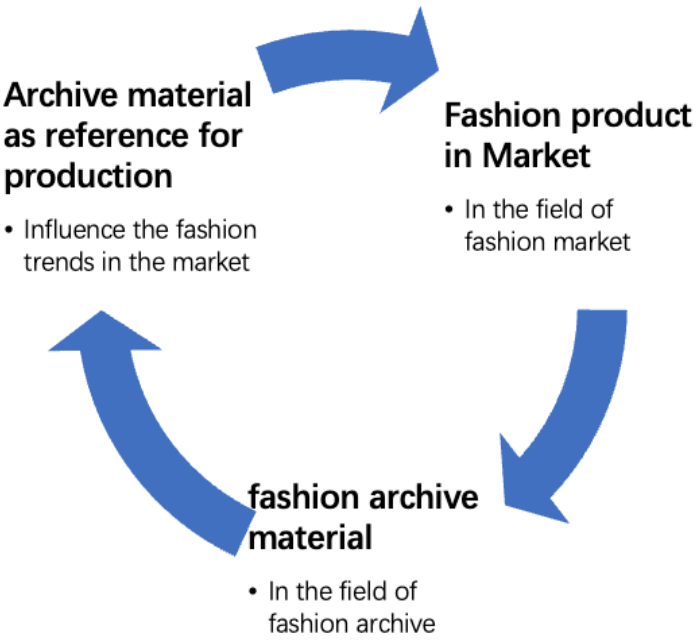


Figure 3- 1: the transformation of power in different field. [Image created by Mo Shi, March, 2023.]

398 Nancy J, Troy, pp. 35-38.
399 Federica Vacca, pp. 274, 278-279.
400 Ibid.

In the case of Labelhood's archive, this transformation process is reflected through turning the power of the emerging Chinese fashion designer's market into its own power, which contains both social capital and cultural capitals. Shushu Tong is one of the objects collected by Labelhood' archive, and as a result the brand also gained power through being identified as a 'Chinese fashion designer' in the field. Although this is not the only source for Shushu Tong to gain power, as mentioned before, the bond between Shushu Tong and Labelhood has been very impactful since 2015. The brand's archive, through the selection and collection of its own products, and referring to its own creation to create new products, also put its own power into a new dynamic cycle.

Alongside this, the fashion archive can be an agent that elevates the value of the brand while providing reference and evidence, as well as being able to distinguish itself from brands that lack archive support. Archives that record the history and memories of society could be considered as a type of cultural capital. Also, due to the rule of its creators, corporate archives normally provide evidence to prove the importance of its creator, an approach which positions the brand in relation to culture and society, hence enhancing its social capital and cultural capital.

In the large field of fashion in China, Shanghai has gained the position as the most important player. Inside Shanghai, there is a smaller field which has been gradually constructed by established local fashion brands, fashion design newcomers from all over the world, showroom companies, buyer boutiques targeting Chinese fashion and government owned fashion week platforms. All of these players formed the new fashion field with new rules in Shanghai. Different institutions or brands could apply the archive's functions in multiple ways to achieve their purpose of writing history to benefit themselves.

Gatekeeping, gatekeeper, gate and field

In the previous Chapter I analysed examples of independent designers and large-scale fashion corporates to explore what materials have been collected by the brands, as well as what frameworks and appraisal methods they have reflected. Through these decisions made by the archive owner or founder, we can identify one of the main functions of archive: the materiality of fashion archive provides solid physical evidence which is used to support the archive owners in multiple ways and benefit the company. In this Chapter, the two stated cases will demonstrate how these pieces of evidence result in archives playing an important role in the gatekeeping process.

Social psychologist Kurt Lewin is one of the early pioneers who used the concept of 'gate' and 'gate keeper' to analyse social communication channels. He indicated that certain areas within a channel may function as a gate. This gate is governed either by impartial rules or by gate keepers. The gate keeper could be an individual or a group 'in power', able to make the decision between what is "in" and "out".[401] This theory was expanded during the digital age by Jane B. Singer and Karine Barzilai-Nahon. Singer's research focuses on the influence of the internet on news gatekeeping. She used the example of online news during the 2020 United States election to identify the role of news editors as gatekeepers and their relationship with political democracy. But her research still concentrated on the traditional media appraisal process in which editors are the main gatekeepers.[402] Barzilai-Nahon expanded the gatekeeping theory with the concept of Network Gatekeeping. She established definitional vocabularies in her Network Gatekeeping theory in order to normalise this subject within virtual communities. This led to a discussion on the new framework of the gatekeeping process in cyberspace. This framework

401 Kurt Lewin, 'Frontiers in Group Dynamics II. Channels of Group Life', *Social Planning and Action Research,* 1(1947), p. 143-153.
402 Jane B. Singer, 'Stepping Back from the Gate: Online Newspaper Editors and the Co-Production of Content in Campaign 2004', *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 83(2), 2006, pp. 265-280.

could be applied to most communities on the Internet.[403] These investigations are both focused on the content distribution side and the management side of information communication. But in the current web environment, the gatekeeping process on the audience side is also crucial. While different channels can divide different types of audience, the audience who join the communication process are playing a role as a gatekeeper to create an echo chamber for their own circles.[404]

Both Bourdieu' and Lewin's field theories are focused on analysing human behaviours and changes. However, Bourdieu focused on the broad spectrum of social changes in creating cultural production. Lewin, who had been influenced by Gestalt psychology, used the example of the American housewife as a gatekeeper of the family's food habits to explain gatekeeping in everyday life. He concentrated on individuals and group's social behavior and used it to reflect the social changes in communities. Burnes and Cooke later summarised the field as: 'an intricate set of symbolic interactions and forces that, depending on their valence (strength), can either reinforce or change their behavior'.[405]

Lewin also pointed out that it is important to identify the gate keeper who control the gate in the channel. If one is planning to change the individual or group's behaviours, the main concern would be how to educate or change the gate keeper.[406] In order to educate or influence the gate keeper, Lewin developed the theory of 'field' - one of the key concepts called 'life space' - in which the behaviors take place. In the previous chapter, among my case studies, the educational background or work experience of designers or archive founders also crucially influence how the participants understand history and archives (see Chapter

[403] Karine Barzilai-Nahon, 'Toward a Theory of Network Gatekeeping: A Framework for Exploring Information Control', *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 59(9), 2008, pp. 1493-1512.
[404] Audience Gatekeeping in the Twitter Service: An Investigation of Tweets about the 2009 Gaza Conflict, file:///Users/moshi/Downloads/Audience_Gatekeeping_in_the_Twitter_Serv.pdf [accessed 13th April 2022].
[405] Bernard Burnes & Bill Cooke, 'Kurt Lewin's Field Theory: A Review and Re-evaluation', *International Journal of Management Reviews*. 5(2013), pp. 408-425 (p. 412).
[406] Kurt Lewin, pp. 143-153.

Two). Similarly, in this Chapter, I will apply this theory to analyse how the educational and work background directed the participants to make decisions about archives.

In Lewin's theory, the life space of an individual's social field has a stage of "idea" (Figure 3-2).[407] In order to reach the 'goal' in this life space, the individual needs to have clear but flexible step plan. During the process, one's goal needs to fit in social needs and gain support from multiple aspects of the field. Thus, Lewin acknowledged in his work that generally a feedback system emerges to generate a balanced steering direction. The feedback process is linked by three entities: the position of the target, the sense 'organ' and the action 'organ'.[408] In Lewin's theory, 'the action organ is continuously steered toward the goal with the help of the sense organ which "seeks" to eliminate divergences between action and goal'. Lewin believed the reason the field needs to have a feedback system is because it provides information and direction to judge the situation, and based on that the field could "learn" and 'leads "automatically" to a correction of actions or a change of planning". Thus, the field could stay in a healthy condition for a longer period. While analysing Chinese fashion archives I found that these attributes of the gatekeeping process played an important role to maintain the function of the archive or to accomplish the purpose of the archive.

[407] Ibid, pp. 145-149.
[408] Ibid, p. 148. during the war over time a multitude of self-steering guided missiles were developed for use during wars, goal-seeking machines which can reach their target with a remarkable degree of precision. Basically, these goal-seeking machines have two components: one is equivalent to a sense organ, perhaps a radar eye; the other is an action organ, for instance, a gun which shoots bullets.

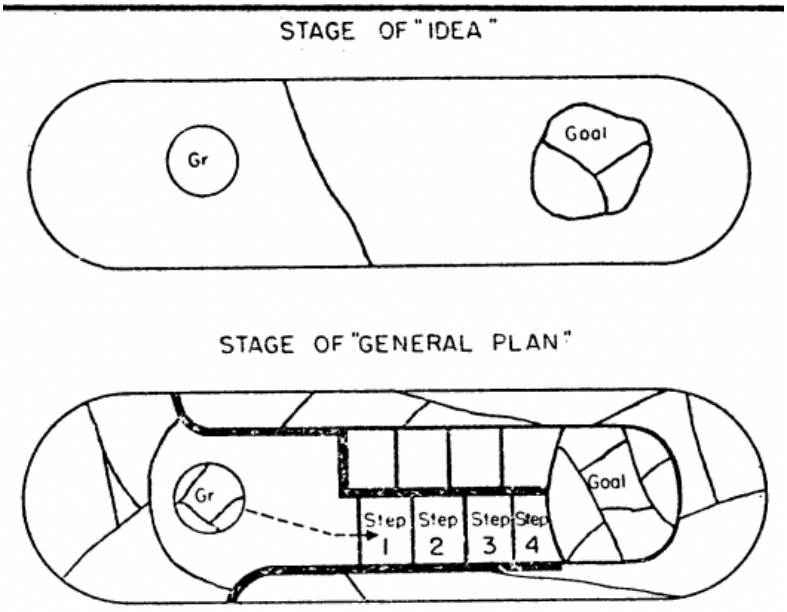


Figure 3- 2: Image from Kurt Lewin's work describe how groups reach the goal.[409]

In the channels of social life, Lewin suggested they do not have a simple starting point and ending point, it is a circulating system. In the feedback system, different areas of activity and channels of information and decisions keep circulating and influencing each other. He also suggested that because of this feedback system, the system 'shows some kind of self-regulation'. This system Lewin described could use to reflect on the archive in the digital age.

Public digital archives are a popular format for public museums, who want to attract and reach more audiences. However not many corporations are willing to release their internal information to the public this way due to the risk of losing the brand's core value. But most corporations have internal digital archives which also have an internal 'feedback system'. In this chapter, what is special about the case study of Labelhood's archive is it is a corporate owned public digital fashion archive. How this fashion archive displays the gatekeeper's choices, and how it proves the gatekeeper's power in the public communication area will demonstrate the real function and role of the archive as a gatekeeper's tool. For instance, the

409 Kurt Lewin, p. 149.

founders of Labelhood, as the gatekeeper that influenced the appraisal method of its digital archive, also keeps learning from the feedback (professional committees) and corrects their directions while gatekeeping the entry of emerging Chinese fashion designers. In the case study of Shushu Tong, its feedback system includes the founders' social network for instance close friends, long-term customers and current or ex colleagues. Compared to Labelhood this feedback system may suggest that the founders considered personal emotions as an important part of the archive appraisal method.

But there is also limitation of Lewin's gatekeeping theory. Information scientist Barzilai-Nahon suggested that traditional gatekeeping theories only focused on a uni-directional, top-down process which misrepresents gatekeeping in a network context. She also suggested the major focus remains on the gatekeepers rather than the mutual containment relationships between networks and information, the gatekeepers and the gated (the entity subjected to gatekeeping), and their impact on the circulation of information.[410] In China, from fashion week which is controlled by a government-owned company to the fashion education in public universities, the foundation and emergence of the Chinese contemporary fashion industry has been highly affected by the impact of the highly-centralized political and educational systems. The internet boom and availability of overseas fashion education has reduced the impact of this 'single channel' environment. However, the firewall and cyber police continue to gatekeep information flows within China.

In Barzilai-Nahon's theory of Network Gatekeeping, it pointed out that the gated also have the ability to produce information. This ability creates a circulation system affecting both the gated and the gatekeeper. They will continually gauge each side's reactions and feedback to the information and react in turn to these reactions and feedback, just as Lewin suggested in the gatekeeping feedback

[410] Karine Barzilai-Nahon, 2008, pp. 1493-1512.

system. At the same time, although individuals generally enjoy freedom of self-expression on the Internet, thus creating information, most information production is limited to certain major sites and controlled by the design and policies created by gatekeepers. Based on this situation, Barzilai-Nahon indicated that the ability to produce information may also produce power. How to separate political power and information production is highly important in today's cyberspace.

Digital archive

In Chapter One, the analysis of the terminology 'archive' in English and Chinese led to the pressing need to define 'archive' outside of the Western context. Thus, in this Chapter, I focus on analysing the main features and functions of the Chinese definition of an archive, that is created by Chinese society. As art historian Charles Merewether suggested, the archive functions 'as the means by which historical knowledge and forms of remembrance are accumulated, stored and recovered'.[411] Archives not only preserve the past, but also construct a certain version of this past by including certain objects while excluding others. This appraisal process is the crucial point of creating subjective personal history. Researcher Joanna Zylinska added that more and more individuals started to join this history creating process and provided inspiration for multiple purposes. What an archive could present in the end is based on the law in the archive created by the creator, which is also the archive violence Derrida identified in his work.[412]

In this thesis, the fundamental feature of an archive could be applied to various types of materials that have been collected and preserved in a certain order, and

[411] Charles Merewether, 'Introduction: Art and the Archive', in The Archive: Documents of Contemporary Art, ed. By Charles Merewether, (London: White Chapel Gallery, 2006), pp.10-17 (p. 10).
[412] Joanna Zylinska, 'On Bad Archives, Unruly Snappers and Liquid Photographs', *Photographies*, 3.2 (2010), 139–53 <https://doi.org/10.1080/17540763.2010.499608>. p143

then the creator could call them an 'archive' based on their own purpose. The format of the archive could be in any form, whether a single box of objects, a collection in a warehouse or a folder of digital images. The key point is the creators decide that this is the way they preserve memory and write history.

In the twenty-first century, it is hard to ignore the importance of digital information in any industry. The development of digital technology has enhanced the spread, speed and breadth in both production and marketing aspects of the fashion industry.[413] Digital information is an important part of a designers' work. For instance, the production side includes digital pattern cutting data, digital look-books and line-sheets; the marketing side contains promotion materials on various digital platform, from articles, photos to videos; all of this digital data formulates an important part of a contemporary fashion archive collection. Following new technological developments and the spread of digital devices in our everyday practice, it is necessary to take account of the influence of digital materiality. Heike Jenss and Viola Hofmann suggested that fashion images and fashion videos are also part of fashion materiality that are intertwined with self-understanding through fashion.[414] The digital archive is also a vital emerging archive type in the archive field. Digital fashion archives, which largely preserve fashion images and catwalk shows, have created a multifaceted resource to support further fashion studies and have filled the gap that traditional fashion archives could not cover in terms of breaking through the limitations of distance and space to reaching new audiences, and preserving materials in new formats for different lengths of time.

A digital archive can mean a physical collection that has been converted into digital form, in order to share the collection more quickly, efficiently and safely. It

[413] Sandy Black and other, ed. The Handbook of Fashion Studies, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), p. 26.
[414] Heike Jenss & Viola Hofmann. ed, *fashion and materiality,* (London Bloomsbury, 2020) pp. 1-9.

can also mean that the fragile and unique physical collection could have a digital version as a backup. But as a new format of archive, there is some dispute over how to use this new digital technique within the archive, and what can change based on the expansion of the usage of digital archives. In this Chapter, the case study of Labelhood's digital archive will explore the further uses of the archive in the digital realm.

Most of the fashion archives I approached include physical archive parts and digital archive parts. Space is generally the main limitation of physical archives. Following the growth of the brand, more and more physical material will fill up the original archive space. (see the example of STAFFONLY in Chapter Two) If the brand decides to stay in the same office long enough, one day the person who oversees the archive collection would need to appraise the collection again or even after every season's launch and would need to make new decisions about the archive collection. Thus, the physical collections in fashion companies are generally constantly changing.[415]

Another limitation of physical archives is the method of preserving the collection, especially when considering the need to maintain the collection in a good condition for as long as possible but in a profitable way. In this regard, fashion companies' archives are different compared to museums, because most of the fashion brands would value the profitability of archive material more than the historical value. Thus, the standard of 'good condition' has a different meaning for fashion brands than for museums, while most of the public museums' emphasis is on educating their audience and users which may not create direct profit. Also, above all, the will of the brand's owner is most important. Among all the archives I have approached, this person generally decides the fate of any material in the archive, if they have the time and energy to manage this part of the brand. This

[415] Shimo Zhou, WeChat, 14 June 2020.

situation is also applied to the digital archive collections.

According to my participants, digital data archives are generally a very active part of the participant's archive collections. For two participants, the archives they described were totally digital, and their original materials are digital data.[416] In the case of Labelhood, its collection is formulated by digital images, with the original materials in digital form instead of in physical material form. The argument over digital archives, especially the digital photographic archive, is based on the contention that 'the digital version of the material in photographic form preserves a representation of the object's content rather than a reproduction of its material form'.[17] The digital material is considered less valuable, compared to the original physical material. Jasmine E. Burns argued that the high tension over the difference between digital duplication and the original version has distracted the field from discovering potential new directions for this new format of archive. But in this Chapter, Labelhood's archive will provide an example to reveal the potential of digital photographic fashion archives to play the role of gatekeeper in the field, as well as revealing its challenges and limitations.

Fashion boutiques as gatekeepers in Shanghai

As the fashion capital of China, Shanghai has gathered many strong competitors in its fashion field. Among the players, there are a few organizations and companies that grabbed the chance to perform as the gatekeepers, such as Labelhood, who have three roles in the field: partnering with the fashion week platforms that belong to state-owned businesses, establishing showrooms, and setting up five buyer boutiques spread over Chinese first tier cities.[417] Labelhood has created a

[416] Qin Chen, 18 January 2021; Tasha Liu, Shanghai, 27 January 2021.
[17] Jasmine E. Burns, 'The Aura of Materiality', *Art Documentation: Journal of the Art Libraries Society of North America*, 36 (2017), p. 1.
[417] A number of the stores closed during and after Covid. Now Labelhood only has stores in Shanghai and Shenzhen.

spectacular fashion business empire from a single small store.

Before Labelhood became Labelhood, the original store was called Dongliang (栋梁), founded in 2009 in Beijing Wudaoying Hutong (五道营胡同) by Charles (王耀) and Lang Nan (南朗). The meaning of Dongliang in Chinese is 'mainstay', and there is a Chinese proverb using the word to connote 'a person of tremendous abilities' (栋梁之才), one who has great talent that could support the development of the country. When one of the main aims of Dongliang is to promote Chinese designers, the name of the store signifies that these designers they have selected are the 'Dongliangs'. Tasha joined Dongliang in 2011 as the third founder and began to focus on marketing projects that changed the scenery of Chinese buyer boutiques (Fig 3-3).[418] At that time, in this team, Charles was in charge of buying, Tasha focussed on marketing and business, and Lang Nan was a graphic designer before they opened the store, and thus he designed the aesthetics of the brand.[419]

[418] Ying Xia 夏颖, Tasha Liu: Wei Zhongguo Sheji Shi Gouzhu Yige Zaomeng Kongjian, Tasha Liu: 为中国设计师构筑一个造梦空间 (Tasha Liu, Creating a Space for Dream for Chinese Designers), *Huawen* 今日华闻, (2013) <https://ihuawen.com/article/index/id/36404/cid/69> [Accessed on 9th June, 2023].
[419] Zhuanfang Lang Nan, Tuidong Zhongguo Shijishi Shishang XInfeng, 专访南朗，推动中国设计师时尚先锋(Interview with Nan Lang, promote Chinese designer fashion pioneer), *Heaven Raven*, (2018) https://www.heavenraven.com/2018/07/03/labelhood-nan-lang-the-flocks/ [Accessed on 9th June, 2023].



Figure 3- 3: Three founders of Labelhood, Charles Wang (left), Tasha Liu (middle) and Lang Nan (right). [Source: https://m.jiemian.com/article/410072.html]

In 2011, when Tahsa joined the company and opened the first Dongliang Shanghai store, they started to target the objective of creating space in the market for Chinese fashion brands. Since then, in the following ten years the company went through separation and reorganization in order to achieve their original objective. During this process, Labelhood extended its business to e-commerce, warehouses (including warehouse services for other Chinese brands), showrooms and fashion week (Labelhood holds fashion shows under its name but has also been recognized as part of the official Shanghai Fashion Week). Now, the company's main office is located in Shanghai, and the company has around hundred employees. According to Tasha the company's main structure forms two parts: retail and 'community'.[420] The retail part is focused on stores and communicating

[420] Tasha Liu, 27 January 2021. It's the original English word Tasha used in interview. I think she refer to the original meaning of community in English.

with designers; the 'community' emphasis is on the branding Labelhood itself.[421] Tasha's work is mainly involved in the community side, covering anything that relates to using Labelhood as a brand. Her own team was designed based on traditional marketing company style separated into two groups, 'above the line' (ATL) and 'below the line' (BTL), to cover different medias. (see reference for explanation about ATL & BTL)[422] In the following paragraphs, I will analyse how each part of the Labelhood business map works together to support Labelhood as the gatekeeper in the fashion field.

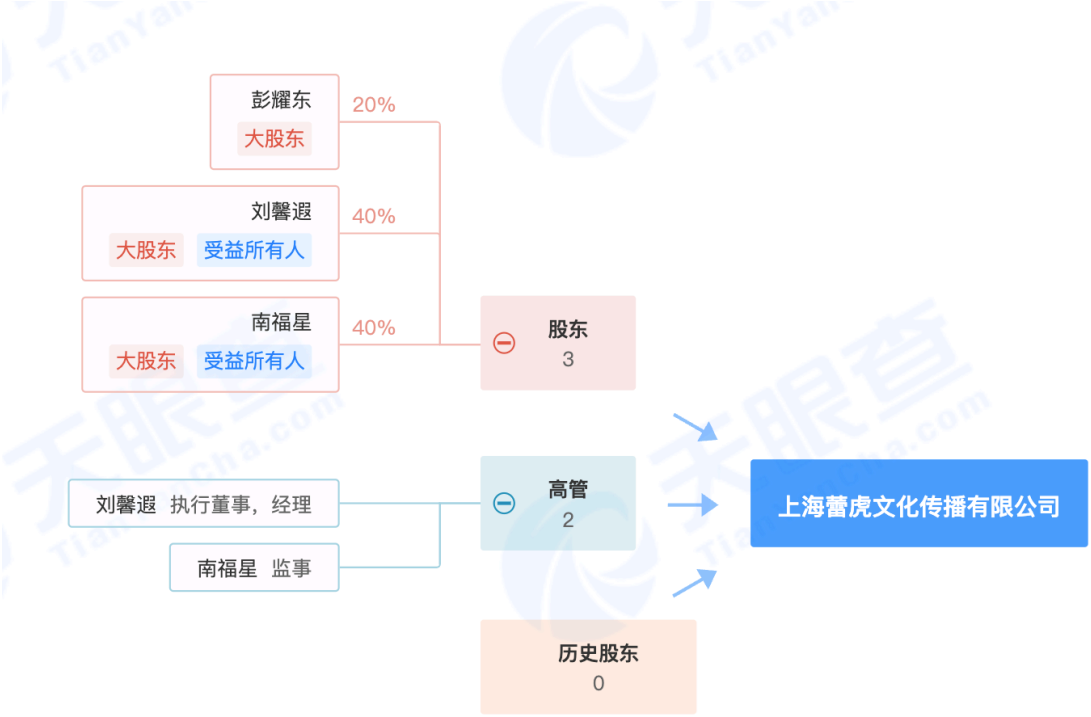


Figure 3- 4: The current structure of management level in Labelhood. The system shows that Tasha Liu (刘馨遐) owns 40% of the company, her position is executive director and manager. [Source: Cropped from Chinese commercial inquiry platform Tianyancha 天眼查.]

The first part is retail, which is also the original foundation of Labelhood. Inside

[421] Tasha Liu, interviewed by Mo Shi about Labelhood's Archive, WeChat, 2 December 2023
[422] Above the line (ATL) medias included TV, radio, outdoor, newspaper, magazines and now the internet. Below the line (BTL) medias are trade marketing, road show, door to door promotion and selling events. In Labelhood's case this is in-store events and Shanghai Fashion Week events. (https://digitalschoolofmarketing.co.za/digital-marketing-blog/what-is-above-the-line-and-below-the-line-advertising/, access 4th December 2023.)

Labelhood Ltd, the relationship between all these different businesses forms a steady system, including both business to business (B2B) and business to customer (B2C) formats. The B2C part contains five physical buyer boutiques in Shanghai (opened 2011 & 2015), Nanjing (2019), Guangzhou (2019) and Shenzhen (2021) and one Taobao T-mall e-commerce store (2018).[423] Each of the stores were designed with strong local cultural identifiers, presenting the store not just as the representation of Chinese fashion but also as local fashion landmarks (Fig 3-5 & 3-6). Figure 3-5 features the first Labelhood store located in Fumin Road (富民路), the first store which opened in 2011. Its location on Fuming Road, together with the two others, Julu Road (巨鹿路) and Changle Road (长乐路), represent the Shanghai cultural centre. One of the main representations is the style of the historical architecture along the road, known as small Western style houses (小洋楼).

The design of these buildings reflects the influence of Western culture during the early 20th Century, complemented by the signature sycamore trees, which are considered to represent the influence of French culture. The style of these roads has been recognized as a type of 'Shanghai style' and have become a cultural landmark of the city. These areas also became the target of China's emerging fashion businesses, aiming to blend the style of the city with the store, displaying the creative culture of Shanghai to its audiences. The Labelhood store opened in Guangzhou, which is located in the old town area district called Dongshankou (东山口). Similarly to the Shanghai store, the building itself has a local historical background. The design of the store has retained many original details, including the signature floor bricks of this building. Based on this design, the store has been

423 **Tmall.com** formerly **Taobao Mall**, is a Chinese-language website for business-to-consumer (B2C) online retail, spun off from Taobao, operated in China by Alibaba Group. It is a platform for local Chinese and international businesses to sell brand-name goods to consumers in Greater China. It has over 500 million monthly active users, as of February 2018. In the last few years, it has opened its features to brands, not only for online sales but also for developing brand awareness.

named A Brick by Labelhood.

Labelhood has intentionally chosen store locations in the districts representing local aesthetic culture. By selecting them to be the store location, Labelhood stores are adding its power to the side of cultural influence. This cultural capital power is important to their business, as they can create a suitable consumption environment for the customers to encounter the emerging Chinese fashion brands they are selling in the stores. The introduction and appearance of these new brands thus, virtually, acquires a cultural background to endorse its legitimacy as a Chinese brand. In this way, these historical buildings also enrich Labelhood's fashion business with local culture. This is an effective method to support its gatekeeper position within the fashion industry, as it has a superior identity over other fashion business who lack cultural capital. This is one of the business strategies that supported Labelhood to become a successful communication bridge between emerging Chinese fashion brands and local customers. In this manner, Labelhood as a buyer boutique has gradually built a strong local customer base for them to prepare to compete for the gatekeeper position in the market.



Figure 3- 5: Labelhood Shanghai store at Fumin Road. [Source: Photo by i-D VICE.cn, https://www.heavenraven.com/2018/07/03/labelhood-nan-lang-the-flocks/.]



Figure 3- 6: Labelhood Guangzhou store. [Source: https://wwd.com/feature/shenzhen-and-guangzhou-chinas-must-know-southern-powerhouses-1203700599/.]

The other business strategy that Labelhood has developed is online consumption. Following the development of Taobao (淘宝), online business became an essential part of the Chinese fashion market.[424] Labelhood's Taobao e-commerce store was established in 2018 and developed rapidly with the online consumption wave in China over the last five years. They also exploited the e-commerce warehouse business by collaborating with Chinese leading logistic company S. F. Express, building high technology logistic warehouses in Shanghai. Apart from serving

[424] **Taobao**, a Chinese online shopping platform. The website was registered on April 21, 2003 by Alibaba Cloud Computing (Beijing) Co Ltd. It's headquartered is in Hangzhou. According to American web traffic analysis company Alexa Internet, Taobao was the eight most-visited website globally in 2021.

their own store, they also contracted out for other emerging Chinese fashion brand's warehouse business. On the one hand, this could help alleviate logistical pressure for the young brands, on the other hand this is another beneficial element that attracts popular young talents to join the company and create close collaborative relationship.

Another important part of Labelhood's business territory is its partnership with Shanghai Fashion Week. Labelhood is the first buyer boutique in China which holds fashion shows in their own venue and under their own name as part of the official Shanghai Fashion Week.[425] How did Labelhood gain this opportunity to be part of the fashion week? This needs to be traced back to the predecessor of the Labelhood brand - Dongliang (栋梁). When Dongliang quickly developed its business in Shanghai starting from 2011, the opportunity to collaborate with the Shanghai Fashion Council also appeared due to the increasing supportive government policies aiming to make Shanghai the sixth fashion city in the world.[426] The company operation Shanghai Fashion Week is run by a State-owned company Orient International (Holding) Co. Ltd. Its business scope involves the Shanghai textile trade and internationalization.[427] One of the events Shanghai Fashion Week has operated for a long time is 'Design by Shanghai' which focuses on supporting Shanghai as the design centre of the Chinese fashion system.

Tasha started her involvement in this event in 2013. She guided Dongliang to collaborate with the Shanghai Fashion Week to bring Chinese fashion brands to

---

425 "Dongliang" heni zhidao de maishou diandou butong Biru meinian ta douyao wei zhongg shejishi banxiu | Jiemian Xinwen · Shishang, '"栋梁"和你知道的买手店都不同 比如每年它都要为中国设计师办秀|界面新闻 · 时尚' (Dongliang is different from the other buyer boutiques you know for instance it holds fashion show for Chinese designer every year| Jiemian News · Fashion) <https://www.jiemian.com/article/410072.html> [accessed 27 November 2023].

426 (17 banben) Shanghai Shishang Chanye Baogao Xiuzheng Ban- Hebing Ban（17 版本）上海时尚产业报告修正版-合并版 Shanghai Fashion Industry Report Revised edition - Consolidated edition (unpublished Donghua University, 2017), pp31-33.

427 *Dongfang Guoji*, '东方国际' Orient International <http://www.oih.com.cn/> [accessed 4 December 2023].

London Fashion Week. This is also how I originally met Tasha in 2013, when I was working as a street-style fashion photographer during London Fashion Week. The newspaper that hired me sent me to the 'design by Shanghai' event held in the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden, to take photos and report on the catwalk show and speeches. The success of this show lead to a long-term collaboration with Shanghai Fashion Council. In 2014, Dongliang followed with other fashion show events to promote the designers they selected and started another event called '*Dongliang Yiri*' (栋梁一日 One day in Dongliang). This event was held in Shanghai and introduced new designers to the market for three seasons.

However, Charles and Tasha had differing opinions on the objective of the company. According to anonymous resource in the fashion industry, the main reason was one of them wanted to focus on opening up the internal market, while the other one wanted to focus on the overseas markets. There is no written evidence showing when Charles separated with Tasha and Lang Nan, but Labelhood (蕾虎), a new name entering the upgraded version of this event, emerged in 2016. The name Labelhood is made up of label and hood; label representing the fashion brand label, while hood represents a period or community. Labelhood also sounds similar to neighbourhood, as Tasha said in another interview, as the company are aiming to build a young and energetic community to gather everyone together. This year has been recognised as a turning point for Tasha and the company in several interviews.[428] Labelhood joined the field and began competing for the gatekeeper role in Shanghai and soon gained success. In 2018, Changzuo Dongliang (长作栋梁) and Labelhood merged together to reduce confusion and focus on building Labelhood as a brand and a platform, rather than just a store. However, there is the other Dongliang store run by Charles which is still operating in Beijing, Shenzhen, and several other cities. And in fact, Labelhood has still not opened a store in Beijing even at the time of

[428] Lai Shuming 来舒敏，How to define Labelhood?|A Company, 如何定义“蕾虎”｜A 公司，13，5（2021） https://www.sohu.com/a/466288401_100126387 [Access 26th April 2022].

writing.

The Fashion Week partnership could count as social capital as it connects Labelhood with the official backers of the event. Overall, from 2009, over a period of twelve years spanning ten fashion seasons, Labelhood has discovered more than 300 emerging Chinese fashion brands.[429] From recommending new blood into the Shanghai Fashion Week calendar, to now holding parallel fashion shows that have been recognized as equally important, Labelhood has gradually stood out from all other buyer boutiques and built up its credibility in the field. This enabled Labelhood to gain more connections and attention in the field and placed the company in a higher position than other boutiques who do not have the ability to collaborate with the Shanghai Fashion Week. Emerging designers would naturally prefer to collaborate with a buyer boutique with these attributes instead of the others. All of these transformed into power to support Labelhood's position as one of the gatekeepers in the field of Chinese fashion.

Along with the fashion week platform, Labelhood developed a showroom business in 2016 from 'One Day in Dongliang'. This helped the company step deeper into its B2B business and gatekeeping in many different areas in the field, such as textile supply chains and logistics chains. Through selecting fashion brands who are deemed to have the right qualifications in the showroom and buyers who are allowed to come in to place the orders, Labelhood has further solidified its position as gatekeeper. I will further analyse the selection method in Labelhood in the following paragraphs.

The gatekeepers' position is extremely competitive, but there is also opportunity amongst the challenges. From 2020, under the impact of COVID-19, the Chinese fashion market placed more attention on Shanghai than ever before. During

[429] Ibid.

fashion week in Spring 2020, most of the major fashion weeks across the globe were heavily impacted by the pandemic. There was a big pause on all the fashion events in New York, Milan, Paris and London. However, China went through the initial chaos in Wuhan and rapidly enforced mandatory quarantine policies, which helped China return to normal life in 2020 sooner than other countries. Although Wuhan was heavily affected by pandemic, the rest of China managed to maintain a very low level of cases.[430] This offered the Shanghai fashion industry the chance to rebuild confidence through its online Shanghai Fashion Week, which Labelhood also participated in.[431]

Nationalism and patriotism were evoked through various propaganda promotions in China during that period.[432] At that moment, Chinese society had strong confidence that the economic losses incurred during quarantine would be regained.[433] According to the reports, fashion sales in China saw 5 to 10 percent growth in 2021 compared to 2019, bolstered by what was known as 'revenge spending (buying)' on luxury goods.[434] Following the strong growth in various social media platforms in China involved in transforming fashion sales from physical stores to the online format, Chinese customers started focusing more on local fashion brands instead of foreign fashion brands, an action which was also

---

430 'The State of Fashion 2020 Coronavirus Update' *The Business of Fashion* (2020), p. 40

431 Ibid, pp. 21, 36-40.; *Shishang Bu Diaoxian, Xiuchang "yun" Shangjian – Shanghai Shizhang Zhou Xieshou Tianmao Kiaqi Quanqiu Shouge Yunshang Shizhuang Zhou* '时尚不掉线，秀场"云"上见 ——上海时装周携手天猫开启全球首个云上时装周 (Fashion does not drop, see on the show "cloud" - Shanghai Fashion Week and Tmall to open the world's first cloud fashion week) 官方新闻-上海时装周 Official news - Shanghai Fashion Week' <http://www.shanghaifashionweek.com:8700/page/shfw/news/591> [accessed 4 January 2024].

432 Florian Schneider, 'COVID-19 Nationalism and the Visual Construction of Sovereignty during China's Coronavirus Crisis', *China Information*, 35.3 (2021), 301–24 <https://doi.org/10.1177/0920203X211034692>.

433 'The State of Fashion 2020 Coronavirus Update', pp. 26, 36-40.

434 Xiaofei Yu Yuebie Yue Wangsheng, Guangzhou Tiagu Hui Aima Shi Chongkai Dangri Maichao 1900wan', '消费欲越憋越旺盛，广州太古汇爱马仕重开当日卖超 1900 万'(The desire to consume more and more vigorous, Guangzhou Taigu Hui Hermes reopening day sold more than 19 million), 界面新闻 Finance Sina，(2020)https://finance.sina.com.cn/chanjing/cyxw/2020-04-15/doc-iirczymi6388254.shtml [accessed 28th April, 2022]; 'The State of Fashion 2020 Coronavirus Update' *The Business of Fashion* (2020), p. 12, 26; 'The State of Fashion 2021' *The Business of Fashion* (2021), p. 11; 'The State of Fashion 2021: Reality Check', *The Business of Fashion*, 2021 <https://www.businessoffashion.com/articles/news-analysis/the-state-of-fashion-2021-reality-check/> [accessed 4 January 2024].

considered as a way to show their appreciation to the nation.[435] This may have lead to the emergence of the '*Xinzhongshi*' (新中式 New Chinese Style or Neo Chinese Style) fashion trend later on in 2021 and 2022 on social media *Xiaohongshu* (小红书 Little Red), and the rise of Chinese brand such as Pengtai and Samuel Gui Yang (two brands both carried by Labelhood buyer Boutique).[436]

The fashion industry in North America and Europe also faced the danger of bankruptcy, which was exacerbated by the fact that these overseas fashion brands could not launch new collections or ship products to China as quickly as before. And Chinese customers who used to travel to shop outside the country could not leave the country either.[437] All of these elements combined to trigger a boom in the domestic market in mainland China and formed an opportunity for the Chinese fashion industry to seek growth through promoting nationalistic fervour and '*Guohuo*' (国货).

A great number of investors joined in the game, and every new season is accompanied by several spectacular buyer boutique's grand openings, such as R130, XC273 and SND Shanghai, which are challenging Labelhood's foundation. For example, R130 has strong support from fashion group Ribo (日播), which is a fashion company that has established its fashion empire in Shanghai since 1995 (Fig 3-7). At the same time, Labelhood is still a newcomer in the showroom

---

435 Crystal Tai, 'Chinese Consumers Ditch Foreign Fashion And Luxury Brands For Local Options: McKinsey Report', *Jing Daily*, 2023 <http://localhost:3000/posts/mckinsey-report-chinese-fashion-brands> [accessed 4 January 2024]; 'Local Apparel and Fashion Brands in China Winning Market Share', 2023 <https://www.consultancy.asia/news/5200/local-apparel-and-fashion-brands-in-china-winning-market-share> [accessed 4 January 2024].Melchers, 'THE RISE OF CHINESE DOMESTIC CONSUMER BRANDS • Melchers China', *Melchers China*, 2022 <https://www.melchers-china.com/posts/the-rise-of-chinese-domestic-consumer-brands/> [accessed 4 January 2024].

436 Pakkee Tan, 'The New Vanguard: Peng Tai Looks to Traditional Asian Heritage for Inspiration for the Future | Vogue Singapore | News, Fashion', *Vogue Singapore*, 2020 <https://vogue.sg/the-new-vanguard-peng-tai/> [accessed 5 January 2024]; Dao Team, 'What Is "New Chinese Style" and Why Is It the next Chapter for Guochao?', *Dao Insights*, 2022 <https://daoinsights.com/news/what-is-new-chinese-style-and-why-is-it-the-next-chapter-for-guochao/> [accessed 5 January 2024]; Robynne Tindall, 'The Rise and Fall of Guochao: China's Nationalistic Branding Phenomenon', *Focus - China Britain Business Council*, 2023 <https://focus.cbbc.org/the-rise-and-fall-of-guochao-chinas-nationalistic-branding-phenomenon/> [accessed 4 January 2024].

437 'The State of Fashion 2021' *The Business of Fashion* (2021), p. 51-53; Amanda Sikarskie and others, Male Idols and Branding in Chinese Luxury, (London: Bloomsbury, 2023), p. 13-14

business. There were several already established showroom brands in the field when Labelhood started, such as Ontimeshow showroom (2014), Tube showroom (2015) and Shitang (食堂) showroom (2014). These showrooms' main business is focusing on trade shows selling the products to retailers. But Labelhood, which has businesses in both showrooms and boutiques, has the advantage that it can place orders for its own boutiques. Technically, this advantage could help the emerging designers to secure a market leading position retailer for each season, reducing the selling pressure on young designers. This one-stop packaged service of providing fashion shows, showrooms and retail venues to the new players who have newly entered the field of fashion in Shanghai is a highly seductive marketing method. At the same time, it formed a solid foundation for its gatekeeper's role.



Figure 3- 7: Image of XC273 store in October 2022. [Source: Photo by Chao Yun Lo, https://wwd.com/business-news/retail/three-new-local-stores-launch-during-shanghai-fashion-week-1235366028/.]



Figure 3- 8: Outside look of R130 store, [Source: Photo taken by Mo Shi, May, 2023.]



Figure 3- 9: Display at the entrance of R130 store. [Source: Photo taken by Mo Shi, May, 2023.]

The appraisal method of Labelhood

I interviewed Tasha Liu face to face in Shanghai in January 2021 in order to further understand how Labelhood consolidates its gatekeeper position. During the interview, she introduced her position in detail to me for the first time. She summarised that she controls the storytelling part when the company is exporting information and content of individual fashion brands to the market. Her role is like a bridge, processing the information for both sides, the company and the market, connecting emerging designers and customers. According to the gatekeeping theories, gatekeeping is related to the control of information that passes between certain groups of people. Through the control of information one can maintain the power of controlling the movements and reactions in the field. Tasha is the one in charge of selecting and deciding what to tell and what not to tell in the case of Labelhood.

When I attempted to find out more information about her role as the gatekeeper I asked her, are you the one to make decisions? She suggested rather that the gatekeeper is not just one person, but a system. When she encounters a new designer and is attracted by this designer's talent, she introduces this designer to the team in Labelhood, and as such Tasha is just one of the members in the team. Her attitude of selecting designers is very much focused on the person's personality and their relationship to the style the brand tries to present, as well as following what is the emerging need of the Chinese market. She has stated three main original appraisal conditions, which she said are still applicable today: 1. Designers personality and their work are consistent, not just following a trend; 2. Their designer has influence on the future; 3. They have basic design skills of acceptable standard, with quality control of the product fitting their standard.[438]

[438] Tasha Liu, WeChat, 2 December 2023.

The way Tasha makes selections is largely affected by her previous work experience. Her background is not directly related to fashion, instead, she studied Finance and Insurance at Shanghai University of International Business and Economics. Her first internship job was in an ad agency, Ogilvy & Mather China in Shanghai. As she recalls, her training route was focused on 'planning' and the 'consumer inside', which is concentrating on market research for the company to better understand their target customers.[439] For instance, the planning team has an internal monthly meeting called 'Cool Pate' which require Tasha to share her forward-looking understanding about customer and market. Thus, Tasha started collecting information about fashion and art through all types of medias she can find to draw a landscape of the youth culture. In this process, she started to build her network in the field of fashion, as well as discovering Dongliang.

When I asked her why she changed to work in the fashion industry she replied that she does not think she is doing fashion (做时尚), instead, she is always interested in people, especially the creative talent.[440] Tasha clarified that her job is to understand the designer's design as a representation of a person instead of just looking at their work.[441] When she selects designers, she needs to know what kind of person the designers are and how they present themselves through their work. She emphasises the story behind the brand and the designer's personality and character rather than the product itself. For her, fashion is a carrier to understand creative talent. And she aims to use herself as a bridge, to introduce these talents, to discover their individual consciousness and the association to their work.[442] This is how she values her work. She also added that the carrier could be another form of art, and it was because she is interested in garments that she entered the fashion industry.

439 Ibid.

440 Tasha Liu, Shanghai, 27 January 2021.

441 Ibid.

442 Tasha Liu, WeChat, 2 December 2023.

The main opportunity for Tasha to get into fashion industry is while she was working in Pepsi. Co after Olgivy & Mather in 2009. Tasha used her spare time to write a monthly special column called *Design in China* for X magazine and Milk magazine which could fulfil her interest about fashion and help her to conduct marketing research. Each month she would interview one Chinese designer for the column. She recalled the first Chinese designer she interviewed was SANKUANZ (上官喆), one of the Chinese designers that has taken part in the official calendar for Paris Fashion Week since 2016. This achievement has been admired by the Chinese fashion industry for many years and became a symbol of success.[443] During this process she started to build a strong connection with buyer boutiques such as Labelhood. She would seek advice from insiders to make decisions to select designers for interview. Based on the group of leading pioneers such as Dongliang and the designers she interviewed, Tasha said she quickly found her 'community' which supported her to quit her job at Pepsi and open the first Dongliang in Shanghai.

Tasha gains capitals in the field by way of her work experience and network ability. Her journalism background also helped her to gain more social capital for her newly opened store. But her marketing and advertising work experiences have largely affected how she framed the appraisal methods. Currently, for Labelhood, there are two layers to its appraisal process. Not all the brands selected to sell in the store can join the catwalk show hosted by the company. Based on the selection of Chinese designers for the buyer boutique, Labelhood would further select brands to walk in the seasonal fashion show. Currently, only the latter Chinese brands could be recorded in the archive. This selection process included selection by the 'brand committee' to appraise who would be suitable for the runway. Many well-known fashion professionals are involved in this appraisal process, for

[443] Tasha Liu, Shanghai, 27 January 2021.

instance Hong Kong Lane Crawford's Chief Brand Officer Joanna Gunn, Italian journalist Angelo Flaccavento, Chinese fashion editor Dan Cui, founder and chief executive of *Huasheng* Media (华声传媒) Feng Chuxuan, and more recently the top Chinese live streaming host Jiaqi Li 李佳琦, as well as Tasha Liu herself.[444] This list of committee members changes every season to ensure that new ideas and angles are considered, which also adds incredible credibility to the Labelhood fashion show.

The Labelhood archive collects the fashion show photos of the young Chinese designers who join the Labelhood fashion show events. One of its main function is to support the company's gatekeeper position. The archive benefits from the above economic, social and cultural capitals. But it is only a small group of designers who make it into the show, and they were selected based on a primary appraisal for the buyer boutique. This methodology also reflects the influence of Tasha's background and work experience, and how it impacts Labelhood and its archive. The first appraisal criteria are the three conditions she laid out for new designers to get into the Labelhood community. After that, based on different collaboration directions with Labelhood, including retail and fashion week or showcase, the designer will receive different examinations by various teams over different time periods. This appraisal process actually happens in the company every week; the internal meeting will involve at least three to four people from

[444] 1)Lane Crawford is a pioneer retail company with specialist department stores selling luxury goods in Hong Kong and Mainland China, founded in Hong Kong in 1850. 2) Joanna Gunn, formal Chief Brand Officer for Lane Crawford for 20 years. 3) Angelo Flaccavento been described as one of Italy's most successful fashion journalists in BOF 500. 4) Dan Cui (崔丹) is GQ China's fashion director. 5) Feng Chuxuan is the founder and chief executive of Huasheng Media. 6) Huasheng Media (华声传媒) is a media group that works with several foreign magazines to expand Chinese media on a global platform. The media company includes the Chinese editions of *T: The New York Times Style Magazine*, *Wallpaper* and *Kinfolk*. He also secured a deal to produce the Chinese-language print publication of *WSJ Magazine* and *New York Times Travel*, attracting luxury advertising for his company's publications; 7) Jiaqi Li or Austin Li 李佳琦, is the top live streaming host in China. In 2021, he had over 35 million followers on Tiktok and 7 million on Weibo. On Sngle's Day in 2021, he generated 1.7 billion USD in a 12-hour livestream.

various departments, from manager level to store sales staff.[445] The designers who are recorded in the archive are the ones who passed the appraisal process and have been recognised as the ones who could support profit growth and represent the store's style and understanding of Chinese fashion.

For example, one of the first groups of emerging Chinese designers selected by Labelhood that attracted attention was Angler Chen, who graduated from Central Saint Martin in 2014. But Tasha considered that her designs were too avant-garde for the mainland market at that moment. One news report quotes that Tasha would recommend that Angler Chen post styling photos on social media that de-emphasise her strong styles and incorporate her design into everyday life.[446] Shushu Tong is another very successful example, who will be further analysed subsequently. Since 2017, the brands Rui, Yuhan Wang and Pengtai represented new Chinese style with more diversity. These brands have also been accepted by the international market. In 2020 Yuhan Wang was shortlisted for the LVMH Prize.[447] And in 2021, Labelhood introduced new brand Rui who won the LVMH special prize.[448] Then in 2023, Louis Shengtao Chen, another brand that showed in Labelhood's fashion show, was also selected by the LVMH prize panel as one of the candidates.[449] All of these brands have brought new trends to the Chinese fashion market and helped divide it into many new niche markets. In other words, Labelhood played its role as one of the supporters and gatekeepers to transform the Chinese fashion market into a more diverse.

---

445 Tasha Liu, WeChat, 2 December 2023.

446 "Dongliang" heni zhidao de maishou diandou butong Biru meinian ta douyao wei zhongg shejishi banxiu | Jiemian Xinwen · Shishang, '"栋梁"和你知道的买手店都不同 比如每年它都要为中国设计师办秀|界面新闻 · 时尚' (Dongliang is different from the other buyer boutiques you know for instance it holds fashion show for Chinese designer every year| Jiemian News · Fashion) <https://www.jiemian.com/article/410072.html> [accessed 27 November 2023].

447 '2020 Edition', *LVMH PRIZE* <https://www.lvmhprize.com/2020-edition/> [accessed 5 December 2023].

448 '2021 Edition', *LVMH PRIZE* <https://www.lvmhprize.com/2021-edition-2/> [accessed 5 December 2023].

449 'About-Louis Shengtao Chen' <http://www.louisshengtaochen.cn/page/list-4.html> [accessed 5 December 2023].

When selecting new brands for the Labelhood brand, Tasha's role in Labelhood required her to engage with consumers' fashion journeys, connect it with the current social environment and the status of the customers, then advance the market, but not too far. This sounds like a standard approach for a buyer boutique's marketing strategy. But the difficulty of this approach is to be brave and accurate. Tasha is the one that needs to have an extremely sensitive perception about the market's social direction. So far, Labelhood has had many successes in promoting emerging Chinese fashion designers and proved that Tasha's appraisal methods work in this market. All of these successes have laid the foundations of Labelhood as one of the key gatekeeper organisations in the field. If young designers want to join the field through Labelhood, Tasha is the gatekeeper in this gatekeeper organisation who they should contact.

But beyond that, as Tasha said, Labelhood is also aiming to add diversity into the market, giving designers more pathways to develop and customers more choice to express themselves through fashion.[450] Thus, sometime the boutique will take risks by selecting avant-garde designers. This concept of appraisal that Tasha has goes beyond business strategy solely for the company, but instead focuses on making the overall market boom. In this way, she is not just the gatekeeper for a buyer boutique, a company, or the Shanghai market, but also the Chinese fashion industry.

The function of Labelhood's archive

According to Tasha, the original idea of the Labelhood digital archive was to record all the Chinese designer's brands who joined the Labelhood fashion shows. This archive is maintained purely online but open to the public. When I first arrived on the digital archive page I found the format of the archive to be similar to the

[450] Tasha Liu, Shanghai, 27 January 2021.

VOGUE Runway App but with more marketing information (Fig 3-11 & 3-13 & 3-15). The Labelhood digital archive front page listed the recorded designers in alphabetical order. Each brand has their own page with information about the designer's background and a short paragraph to introduce their new season collection with runway photos, at the bottom is the additional information including 'where to find' and 'where to buy'.

The official name of the Labelhood archive is "Chinese fashion designer archive" (Fig 3-10, 中国设计师档案馆, Zhongguo sheji shi dang'an guan), although obviously this archive would not cover all the Chinese designers because it only focuses on the brands being selected by Labelhood. Tasha said she does not take into consideration whether these designers are worth keeping in an 'archive collection', and she would not mind if it was named differently, but she would like to give the audience a place to search for the previous collection, a place to record 'right here right now' what happened. In the follow up interview, Tasha added that the targeted audience is not the general public or ordinary consumers, but fashion students or fashion insiders. Still, she hopes that eventually this archive may reach some 'ideal customers'.[451] Tasha even used Vogue Runway as an example to compare, suggesting that normal customers rarely use it to search for past seasons' fashion shows.

This record keeping behaviour ties back to what Tasha previously, that she is interested in seeing the creative talent grow and 'evolve'.[452] She said what she really wanted was to change the ideology in Chinese society about fashion, where fashion could be more than just a consumer product. Because she believes fashion is different from other consumer products as it has time value, and a good fashion brand could even accumulate positive 'time value'.[453] Tasha further explained that

[451] Tasha Liu, WeChat, 2 December 2023.
[452] Tasha Liu, Shanghai, 27 January 2021.
[453] Ibid. Time value: a concept in economics and finance that accounts for the difference in value of the same amount of money at different points in time. But here, Tasha means the history accumulated through time.

time value is composed of the history a fashion brand could accumulate through the passage of time, for this she used the word 'heritage'.[454] She added as most of the established fashion designers Labelhood collaborated with are about 10 years old, it is rare to see any brand with a history longer than 20 years.[455] But the brands these designers respected are the brands that has accumulated heritage over a much longer period of time. This is why she hopes that this archive will allow her to see the progression of the designers who have collaborated with Labelhood. And this would be important evidence that could reflect a 'good' brand has the ability to grow.[456]

In the follow up interview she also added that part of her motivation came from her religion, as she became a Christian in 2010. Beyond thinking about the 'motivation' or 'intensity' of a certain project, she believes 'God will know what I have accomplished' and 'a lie will not last long and fool everyone'.[457] She wanted to creative a real 'positive' influence for young generation consumers.[458] Because by 'enriching' each individual to gather a collective power which will help the nation archive cultural expansion.[459] Here, she has clearly positioned herself as a guardian angel and gatekeeper for the Chinese market. Aiming to use herself as a bridge to appraise information for the future Chinese fashion market. This archive is a display of her understanding of the 'positive' fashion history for the Chinese society.

454 Tasha Liu, WeChat, 2 December 2023.
455 Ibid.
456 Tasha Liu, Shanghai, 27 January 2021.
457 Tasha Liu, WeChat, 2 December 2023.
458 Ibid.
459 Ibid.

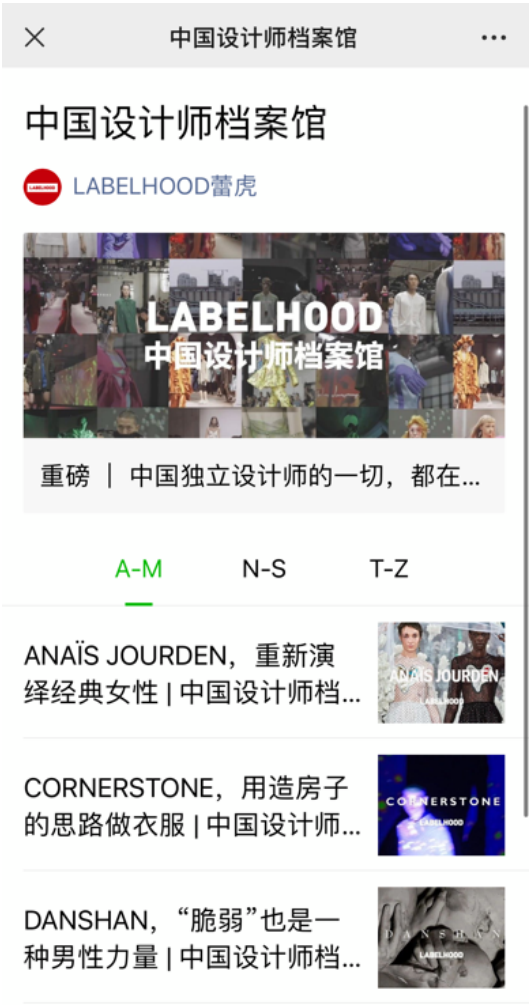




Figure 3- 10: (Left) Labelhood digital archive page, front page listed designer in alphabetical order. [Source: Cropped from WeChat by Mo Shi, March, 2023.]

Figure 3- 11: (Right) Brand list in alphabetical order the Vogue Runway app. [Source: Cropped from the Vogue Runway App by Mo Shi, March, 2023.]

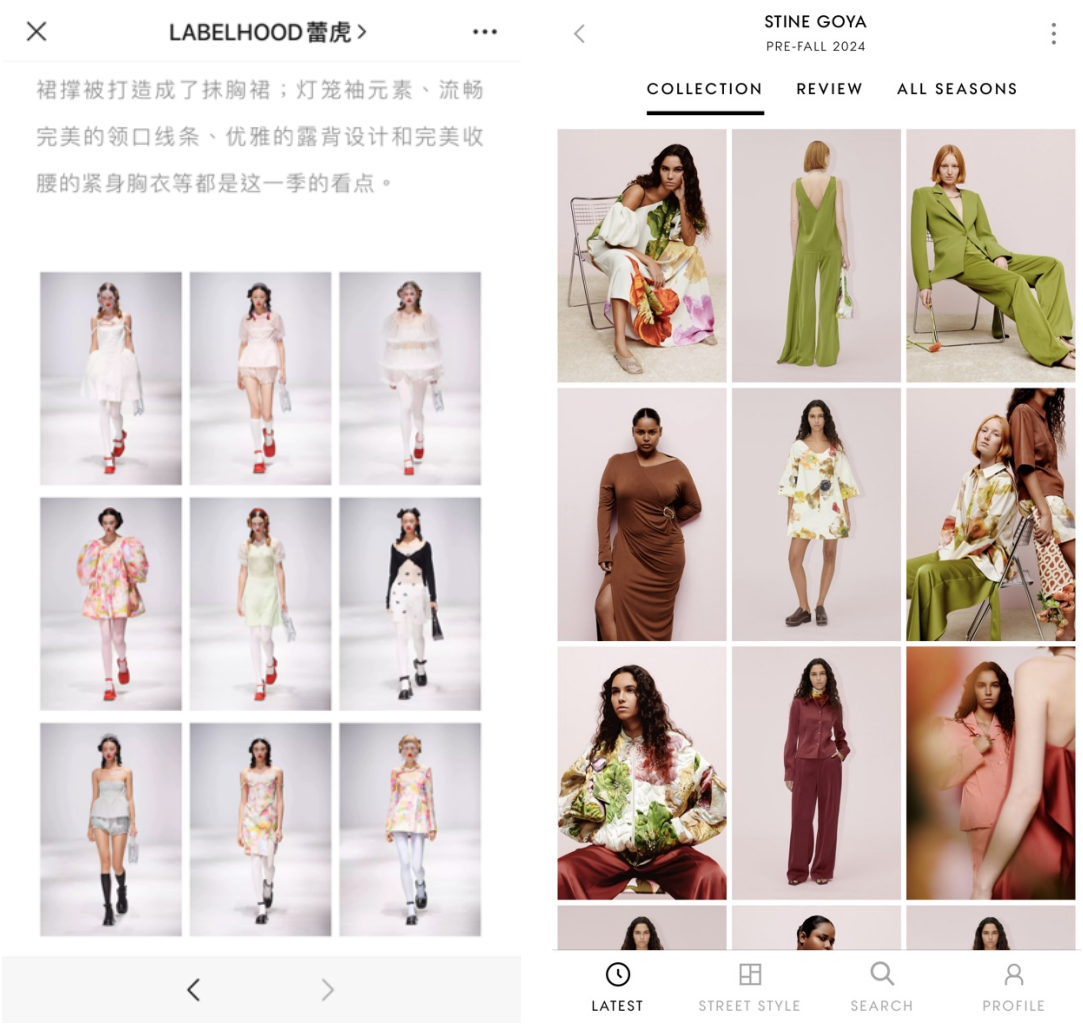


Figure 3- 12: (Left) The page of brand Shushu Tong in Labelhood online archive. [Source: Cropped from WeChat by Mo Shi, March 2023.]

Figure 3- 13: (Right) The page of designer on Vogue Runway, e.g., Sting Goya. [Source: Cropped from the Vogue Runway App by Mo Shi, November 2023.]

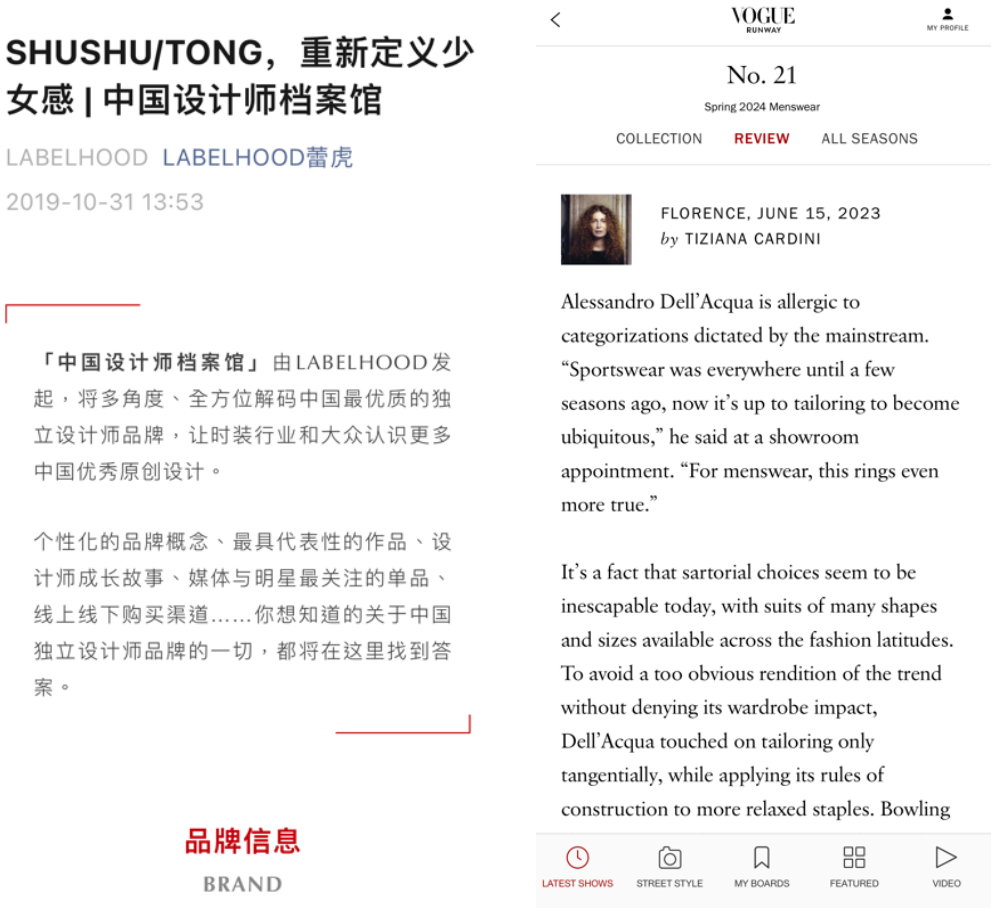


Figure 3- 14: (Left) The Shushu Tong introduction page in the Labelhood archive. [Source: Cropped from WeChat by Mo Shi, March 2023.]

Figure 3- 15: (Right) Runway review of brands in Vogue Runway App, e.g.: NO.21. [Source: Cropped from the Vogue Runway App by Mo Shi, March 2023.]

In the interview, Tasha also raised the concept of long-term development and long-termism. According to Tasha, although Labelhood has grown rapidly in multiple areas within the Chinese fashion industry, she suggested this speed of development would still not count as 'quick' from the Chinese perspective.[460] In the follow-up interview, Tasha gave an example: a start-up brand with a platform like Taobao could gain four to five hundred million RMB in the fifth year; a supply chain born brand could reach a billion RMB in their tenth year, with profit around

460 Ibid.

five to six hundred million RMB. However, Labelhood currently posts revenues of around two hundred million RMB per year. Instead, Tasha characterised their development as occurring at a steady speed.[461]

In her opinion, the Chinese fashion industry is still very much a newcomer in the global fashion field. This newcomer has not had the chance to accumulate the history and formulate a system of culture, which in the end can turn into a kind of added cultural value for brands. Nevertheless, every player in the Chinese fashion industry is facing the challenge of extremely high-speed development in a short period of time. There are many details that they cannot perfect while they all are struggling simply to survive. Although not explicitly stated by Tasha, it can be inferred that this archival endeavour serves as a discerning test aimed at addressing inherent voids and scarcities of knowledge.

In China, currently, new formats of communicating and engaging with the market and customers evolve with each passing day. Access to Labelhood's digital archive is slightly different from the common digital access method in the rest of the world – namely by way of a website – in that it is accessed in a very 'Chinese' way. WeChat is the most significant social media in China right now, with over 1.2 billion active users as of the end of 2021.[462] WeChat has combined the functions of Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram and Apple pay. Most people who live in Chinese cities would need to have a WeChat account to ensure a normal lifestyle. Due to the popularity of WeChat, most of the established Chinese fashion businesses would have launched a WeChat official account according to the needs of covering a multi-channel marketing strategy. This account posts news about the business every now and then to inform the audience and customers of any updates about

461 Tasha Liu, Shanghai, 27 January 2021.

462 *Tengxun Qixia Weixin Xiaochengxu Qunian Ri Huoyue Yonghu Chao 4.5 Yi, Rijun Shiyong Cishu Tongbi Zeng32%* '腾讯旗下微信小程序去年日活跃用户超 4.5 亿 日均使用次数同比增 32%' Tencent's wechat mini program had more than 450 million daily active users last year, up 32% from a year earlier, *Reuters*, 6 January 2022, section China <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSKBN2JG0D7/> [accessed 18 December 2023].

the business.

When Labelhood first launched their digital archive in 2019, they posted the news and the link in the news page and the landing page of their WeChat official account. However, there is not any archive access entrance available via the internet.[463] The accessibility of this archive is controlled in a rather Chinese cultural and socially focused circle, instead of open to the broader international public.[464] Apart from WeChat, the other two major social media platforms widely used in fashion marketing are Weibo and Red. However, in the case of the Labelhood digital archive, these two platforms are not essential. Because WeChat is a platform focusing on communications, it supports users to build up private network flows (私域流量), such as to keep consumers private contact details and communicate with customers directly and provide customised services. All of these are positive for buyer boutiques to build strong relationships with customers. The other two platforms rather concentrate on locking users into their own platform, rather than driving sales, which is not positive for consumption development.

Another aspect of this archive is that it demonstrates Labelhood's 'open' attitude, namely that this archive performs the function as a public promotional platform rather than just being focused on Labelhood itself. All the brands included in this digital archive have an individual page that contains a full list of where you can

[463] Dujia Shoufa|Shenme Yang de "Rongqi", Caineng Zhuangzai Zhongguo Shizhuang Sheji Poquan de Tuishou? '独家首发 | 什么样的"容器"，才能装载令中国时装设计破圈的推手 LABELHOOD？蕾虎'_ (Exclusive first release | What kind of "container" can contain the driving force that has broken the circle of Chinese fashion design LABELHOOD?) <https://www.sohu.com/a/www.sohu.com/a/498308483_121124644> [accessed 27 November 2023].

[464] There are two ways to access the digital archive on WeChat, the first is through the WeChat official account, the other is by scanning a QR code. The audience needs to first have a WeChat account, and when you register a WeChat account you need to connect to an active phone number. Once the audience has a WeChat account, the audience can search 'Labelhood' in the app, after which they will find the Labelhood official WeChat account and find the access link in the article about the digital archive. In the article, there is a QR code that the audience can scan using Wechat and access the digital archive. However, both access paths are not easy for people who are not familiar with the app or do not pay attention to the details.

purchase the brand, even though these channels are sometimes direct competitors with Labelhood. The current setting of this new-born digital archive creates benefits for the brand by sharing the information in a public social media environment. This function could potentially result in the archive becoming a profitable channel for both the brand and the buyer boutique, depending on whether the digital archive enjoys enough page views and traffic. It essentially functions in the same way as a magazine, for example the Vogue runway website already contains advertisements in the link, however in a more traditional web-page advertisement way, which is display photo or video in between editorial content.

Besides this, the digital archive's WeChat account provides a potential entry point for designers who are not in the Labelhood system already.[465] There is an email address for any brand that wants to join the archive to send an email to see if they can pass the appraisal process. Tasha also posts this information in her personal Weibo account. This archive could potentially be the new channel for Labelhood to gather young talents in the fashion industry. Once again, the Labelhood appraisal methodology would be applied to those young talents. Thus, Labelhood could further consolidate its gatekeeping position in the Chinese fashion industry. Also, in this way, Labelhood's archive is not only recording the development of individual designers, but also recording changes in the buyer boutique, which reflects the Chinese fashion market in Shanghai as well as the other first- or second-tier Chinese cities, thus recording the fashion trends in mainstream Chinese society.

[465] *Zhongbang|Zhongguo Duli Sheji Shi de Yiqie, Douzai LABELHOOD Sheji Shi Dnagan li*'重磅 | 中国独立设计师的一切，都在 LABELHOOD 设计师档案馆里'(blockbuster | Everything about independent Chinese designers is at the LABELHOOD Designer Archive) 微信公众平台 WeChat Public Platform, <http://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?__biz=MjM5MDc0NDg2MA==&mid=2651034308&idx=1&sn=456255b585f48b817e81aeef67683239&chksm=bdb71ab78ac093a18cee18de9913806f6e178cb677c0df5bc3449aa2fa70ad4796bad1237eb1#rd> [accessed 5 December 2023].

The future of the Labelhood digital archive

Labelhood's digital archive reached a pause not long after launch. It had only been running for one season (2019 October launched, recorded 2020 SS season) when COVID-19 arrived, just as Labelhood was still evaluating the results of the archive experiment. Despite an early return to normalcy in the domestic Chinese market, the global situation and future of uncertainty ensured that the players in the field were more cautious in case there was another unexpected seismic market impact.[466] Consequently, Labelhood decided to pause the digital archive project until they had more confidence in the market. Meanwhile, the company would have more time to figure out what the best way to achieve the most desired result from the digital archive.

When I asked Tasha whether she had a future plan for the digital archive, she did not directly answer me, but she seemed positive about it. First, she said that a collection solely consisting of images would be overly visual, it only helps us to build a basic understanding.[467] However, the weight, the sound, the touch and feel of the textures, how the garment adheres to the human body, all these sensory details are not apparent from just an image. This is also what Tasha was concerned about when she discussed the appraisal process. Before COVID-19, all the committee members needed to see the designers' work in real life, in order to make suitable decisions.[468] Late 2019, a few months before the pandemic erupted, marked the ten-year milestone of Labelhood, an anniversary that caused her to think about what she had achieved over the last decade, and what happened to the designers as well. What did their designs look like ten years ago? What was the market reaction then? What was the bestseller ten years ago? And what is the bestseller now?[469] Although Tasha has worked in the retail industry for ten years,

466 The State of Fashion 2020 Coronavirus Update' *The Business of Fashion* (2020), pp. 37-38.
467 Tasha Liu, Shanghai, 27 January 2021.
468 Ibid.
469 Ibid.

she did not say whether she wanted to use her accumulated experience to summarize or generate conclusions for herself or for the industry. But she did mention her idea to create an exhibition which would display the data of the changes of the Chinese fashion market.[470] For instance, what trends have been promoted by all the top media over the last ten years and how was the actual sales data for this particular trendy piece?[471] By basing the exhibition on facts and evidence it would allow us to investigate customer behaviour. This is what the fashion professionals in the retail side pay the most attention to, while fashion designers are looking for inspiration and reference the bestsellers to create new designs. Differing roles within the fashion industry could all find useful information from the same collection.

Tasha hopes to help the designers to communicate with the customer and the market through exhibitions or collections like this. But on the other hand, she also wonders whether the audience visiting the collection would conclude that even if the external look keeps changing, the core Chinese aesthetic has not changed that much over the last ten years.[472] The key words of the fashion trend in mainland market are always 'slimmer' and 'taller'. Tasha suggested this wish of using fashion products to change our look may be represented in different ways in different periods, which relates to perceptions of social status at that particular moment.[473] While selecting designers for Labelhood, she would like to operate as a 'positive' influence, not only providing diversity to the market but also supporting customers to achieve self-recognition through the fashion of the period.

Tasha gave me a few examples, one taken from a period when a minimalist style was popular in the market, which was recognised by those with a Chinese cultural

470 Tasha Liu, Shanghai,27 January 2021.
471 Ibid.
472 Ibid.
473 Ibid.

background as being the symbol of one who was highly educated. Tasha related this trend to the popularity of public intellectuals in social media, who influenced customers who wanted to make a similar impression by dressing as educated literary types. (Fig 3-16) The other trend currently popular in the Chinese market is the *Shaonüfeng* (少女风 maiden or teenage girl style). Tasha related this trend to the influence of the pandemic (Fig 3-17). She suggested that within the current situation, on the one hand, everyone wishes to have something to 'raise themselves up' in terms of social standing; on the other hand, general social anxiety is reflected by the concept of 'bai, fu, you' (白富幼, white, rich and youthful), a look which has always been pursued in China, for instance the recent popular TV programmes with Produce 101 and Sisters Who Make Waves (Chengfeng polang de jiejie 乘风破浪的姐姐) are both focusing on the youth and energy of women.[474]

It is obvious that Tasha is sensitive about the change of cultural trends and fashion trends in China. While working in the retail fashion industry, she used her sensitivity about social cultural studies to support her work. But she also admitted that although she finds these events very interesting, she does not have time to commit to creating an exhibition, such a thing is too time consuming for her current position. But the archive would be a foundation that could support her to explore this path. Hence, she confirms that they would definitely restart this archive project at the right moment.[475] Through the interview I could tell she recognised the value and function of a fashion archive. Her status shows that in China there is now fertile soil which is mature enough to allow fashion archives to grow, especially in the fashion retail space.

[474] Sisters Who Make Waves is a Chinese series reality TV show started in 2020, invite female celebrities that over 30 years old to re-defined themselves; Produce 101: A Korean girls band TV programme, Tencent bought the licence and created a Chinese version; 'Produce 101 (TV Series 2016–) - IMDb' <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt5613868/> [accessed 5 December 2023].
[475] Tasha Liu, Shanghai, 27 January 2021



Figure 3- 16: Uma Wang ss22 collection[Source: Photo by Alessandro, https://wwd.com/fashion-news/shows-reviews/gallery/uma-wang-rtw-spring-1235363791/.]



Figure 3- 17:Shushu Tong 2022 Spring/ Summer collection. [Source: https://www.harpersbazaar.com/uk/fashion/shows-trends/a38147225/shushu-tong-shanghai-fashion/.]

The Chinese fashion system and gatekeeping

Foucault suggested that the archive is a system of knowledge related to larger power relationships, and in the case of the Labelhood archive, the information of each brand that the digital archive provides to the customers and audiences could create a micro system of knowledge about the Chinese fashion industry.[476] Based on this, Labelhood was creating a power relationship in the fashion field. When Steedman described the power of the archive as being that which is displayed on the shelves, she pointed at the power generated through the formulation process of the archive: an archive is the result of how the owner uses power to appraise the knowledge.[477] In Labelhood's case, power has been displayed in a digital format in a public space, and though the way it spreads is slightly different from physical archive, it is a suitable innovation in the Chinese fashion system. Labelhood's gatekeeping position is guarded by this power,

In the fashion system, gatekeeping and gatekeepers are essential practices. Labelhood's gatekeeper position has been guarded by several essential capitals that Bourdieu suggested in his "capital and field theories", including social capital (governmental support, fashion show and showroom), cultural capital (cultural events and archives) and symbolic capital (store locations).[478] The archive as one cultural capital exists as a tool to guard gatekeeping and is the result of the gatekeeping as well. But what has been missed out from the field of Chinese fashion as a result of this guarding? Labelhood is a buyer boutique with a mission to create space and support for innovative Chinese fashion brands. Thus, the archive is focusing on the niche market rather than the mass market. The brands featured in Labelhood's digital archives are mainly younger generation designers,

476 Michel Foucault, p142-148.
477 Carolyn Steedman, *Dust: the Archive and Cultural History* (Manchester: MUP, 2001) p1.
478 Pierre Bourdieu, 'THE FORMS OF CAPITAL', in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. by Richardson, J. Westport, (CT: Greenwood,1986) pp. 241–58.

most of whom have studied in the major fashion colleges in Europe and North America and have experienced strong overseas influences from the Western fashion system.[479] Tasha recalled that part of her job was to go to New York and London to hold events and meet talented students. In the last ten years, through these trips and activities she has met creative talents when they were still in fledgling form. This allowed her to generate a special bond of trust at the early stage of these young designers' careers. Many of them became recognised by the Western fashion system, for instance Angel Chen who has collaborated with international premier brands such as H&M and Canada Goose, and Rui Zhou, who just won the LVMH prize in 2021. They are the stars in Labelhood's archive.

Due to the mission and taste of Labelhood the archive only collects a small number (twenty-one) of fashion brands. Although it seems to have covered many emerging names in the Shanghai Fashion Week, many fashion designers lose the chance to be collected by this archive, as they do not fit Tasha's assessment of who is a 'talent' or 'creative', or those who did not want to sign the contract with Labelhood's showroom and buyer boutique. Since most of the designers that join Labelhood fashion show or showroom need to sign contract with the company this has secured Labelhood's business growth. But it may limit the designer's progress after the initial early stage. In a private conversation, Brain said Labelhood's contract suggested it would tend to protect Labelhood's benefit when the emerging brand's development went beyond their control. For example, emerging Chinese brand VII VICTOR wants to reach more buyers in various showrooms instead of through a single channel through Labelhood, which has caused a dispute.[480] Also, there are other emerging Chinese fashion brands who were

[479] Anja Aronowsky Cronberg, p. 303-304.

[480] VII VICTOR, the founder Victor Wang is one of the designers selected by Brain to exhibit in the exhibition 'Signature on Fashion: The New Generation of Antwerp in buyer boutique R130. *《Qianming Shishang: Ante Weipu Xinsheng Liliang》:Guanyu Chuangzaoli yu Shenfen Gongming* '《签名时尚：安特卫普新生力量》：关于创造力与身份共鸣' (Signature on Fashion: The New Generation of Antwerp: Creativity resonates with identity), 微信公众平台 WeChat Public Platform <http://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?__biz=MzIzNzQyMDYyMg==&mid=2247484114&idx=1&sn=e35382a5da00335aa0c074e33d179972&chksm=e8c9abf3dfbe22e598b1b216056174e5c032fee480a8a1c23dadfee475af03484f11a55da4d2#rd> [accessed 6 December 2023].

founded more than ten years ago or sponsored by established fashion firms – such as ICICLE – that are not included in this archive. According to Tasha, she did not and will not consider including this segment of the market.[481] The main reason for this is that established brands have already gained success in the market or field. They would not get enough benefits from Labelhood, as gatekeeper, to improve their business. Nor would Labelhood benefit, because the company wanted to focus on the 'new' and 'undiscovered' talents. Thus, these established brands were not on Tasha's radar as ones that would be considered part of their digital archive, or at least, not in the first echelon.

Thus, in one way, Labelhood archive's limitations reflect its gatekeeping position by deciding who is a 'talent' or 'creative' and who they consider will be accepted by the market that prefers innovative Chinese fashion brands, while the limitation of this archive is only recoding part of the Chinese fashion history, creating a bubble that eliminates the 'unsuitable' fashion brands for the buyer boutique. But due to Labelhood's role as gatekeeper, a brand rejected by Labelhood might not be considered talented or creative enough, and not representative of emerging Chinese fashion. Labelhood's appraisal method has reflected what British historian Carolyn Steedman described about archives as a place that preserves fragments of past history.[482] This digital archive could possibly show one angle of the status of Chinese fashion industry, but not all of it.

How fashion designers' archives play the role as gatekeeper

The brand Shushu Tong has been selected for close study in the next section. When discussing Labelhood with Tasha, this Shushu Tong appeared many times due to its fame and success in the current Chinese fashion market. The brand has had a close relationship with Labelhood from the day it joined the fashion field in

[481] Tasha Liu, WeChat, 2 December 2023.
[482] Carolyn Steedman, *Dust: the Archive and Cultural History* (Manchester: MUP, 2001) p69.

Shanghai. According to the co-founder Tutong Jiang, the *Dongliang Yiri* fashion of two Chinese designers Guo Yirantian and Angle Chen, who also graduated from UAL, gave her the confidence to come back to Chinese market. They also joined the Labelhood Fashion show in 2018. Since then, Shushu Tong and Labelhood began a long-term collaboration with multiple aspects, including fashion shows, retail and e-commerce. Part of the Shushu Tong's huge success in the market helped Labelhood to consolidate its gatekeeper position.

But when the fashion archive of a buyer boutique plays the role as gatekeeper in the field of fashion, could designers's own archives join this competition? What will they keep in the archive? Who can access the archive? What is the archive guarding? The following section investigates Shushu Tong's role in the field.

Shushu Tong and Archive

The brand was founded by two designers, Shushu and Yutong Jiang. This womenswear brand is one of the most popular 'maiden-style' fashion brands in China at this time. I personally met Yutong Jiang in her studio in Shanghai when they had just started the brand in 2015. Although we did not contact each other for many years, we were in the same circles and have many friends in common, due to the fact that we overlapped during our studies at the London College of Fashion. She was studying womenswear when I was studying the History and Culture of Fashion in the same building. My flatmate during that period, Shimo Zhou, who is also one of the founders of STAFFONLY, was working on her final collection on the fifth floor, where Yutong Jiang was concentrating on first year MA homework. My flatmate then introduced her to me later on in Shanghai. I have also continued to follow the development of the brand, and occasionally purchased products to examine the changes.

Yutong Jiang (represented by the 'Tong' in the brand's name) and her business partner Liushu Lei (represented by the 'Shushu' in the brand's name) both graduated from the London College of Fashion in 2015. She said they had been inspired by students who graduated a year before them, such as Yirantian Guo and Angel Chen, who successfully joined Labelhood and Shanghai Fashion Week, gaining huge attention and success.[483] They made the decision to return to China to start the business and first won an emerging fashion designer competition held by Hong Kong Lane Crawford. The Hong Kong buyer boutique selected four newcomers and bought from them to sell in the Lane Crawford line.[484] Shushu Tong won the prize, which gave them a great platform, although at same time a great challenge.

At that moment, Shushu Tong is a young brand that has not established an orthodox company yet; it is more like a graduate student's studio.[485] Everything about the production chain in mainland China, the export process and export taxes (because they are selling to Hong Kong which counts as export) was new to them. Winning the prize was an opportunity that pushed them to grow immediately in order to be able to finish the order from Lane Crawford.[486] During this whole process, Lane Crawford, a department store with a great international reputation in fashion, sent assistants to help them become familiar with fashion industry processes. This is practical knowledge that is hard to acquire at University and must also be learnt through everyday work in the industry.[487] When recalling these experiences, Yutong Jiang also pointed out that every young brand probably needs professional guidance to help them through this step.

From a young brand like this, Shushu Tong has grown into one of the most

[483] Yutong Jiang, interviewed by Mo Shi about Shushu Tong's Archive, Shanghai, 27 February 2021.
[484] 'SHUSHU/TONG /ABOUT' <https://shushutongstudio.com/en/about.html> [accessed 5 December 2023].
[485] Yutong Jiang, Shanghai, 27 February 2021.
[486] Ibid.
[487] Ibid.

prominent brands on Labelhood's list. They joined Labelhood's fashion show in 2016, rapidly bringing the *Shaonüfeng* trend to China.[488] They are also stocked in all the major fashion department stores and boutiques around the world, such as world-famous high fashion buyer boutique Dover Street Market and British buyer boutique Browns and Matches Fashion, as well as online, for instance FARFETCH and Canadian avantgarde fashion store SSENSE. So, what is the archive like for a representative emerging Chinese fashion designer like this? What has been collected, and what is the role of gatekeeping in the process, as well as what is the effect in the field of Chinese fashion?

According to Jiang, her first impression of fashion archives came from her internship position in Simone Rocha in London.[489] The collection was stored on massive two layered shelves which could roll down and up, organised by the studio and managed by intern assistants. For Yutong, the concept of 'archive' first appeared as a kind of record that recorded the designer's history.[490] Then soon, she found another concept of archive. She explained that she discovered that the archive could also be a type of product, representing a special value in the second-hand market.[491] In Japan, there is a buyer boutique called Archive, selling products like early years show piece collections of Comme des Garcons and Yohji Yamamoto. In her opinion, for this type of 'archive' the actual word 'archive' is a stunt in order to add more value to the product – in other words the word has been commercialised. When I asked if the museum archive was something that influence her understanding of archives, she replied she would focus on the museum exhibition more than think about the archive.[492]

When I conducted my interviews in January 2021, Shushu Tong had a six year

[488] 'Liushu Lei and Yutong Jiang | BoF 500 | The People Shaping the Global Fashion Industry', *The Business of Fashion* <https://www.businessoffashion.com/community/people/liushu-lei-and-yutong-jiang> [accessed 5 December 2023].
[489] Yutong Jiang, interviewed by Mo Shi about Shushu Tong's Archive, 27 February 2021.
[490] Ibid.
[491] Ibid.
[492] Ibid.

history as a brand, and had a warehouse (kufang 库房) to store their signature pieces. This collection had been slowly built up through the years, and the collection mainly contained of two types of pieces: the runway shows pieces and heavy embroidery or beaded pieces (重工).[493] The first major purpose of the archive collection is reference for design. Similar to many other designers, this collection is not stable. Some commercial lines will temporally stay in the archive collection, but eventually the commercial line or the repeated silhouette pieces would be selected for sample sales. For Yutong Jiang, she did not think their collection could be called an archive as yet.[494] In her opinion, a certain accumulation of time is required before it could be called an 'archive' and she expressed her respect for the word 'archive' by only using the word 'sample' (Yangyi 样衣) to refer to her collection.[495] Her respect for the word 'archive' is connected to her respect for time and history, the social value created by history and the market value created by social values. According to the interview, this understanding mainly comes from her work experience in the UK and China.

In the interview, Yutong Jiang also explained the details and changes of how they select the sample collections. At the beginning of their business, each season's collection was rather small compared to now. They would try to keep as much as they could, but as the collection has grown, they select certain pieces for clearance every two years. When they appraise the value of the piece, one of the selection methods is based on how often the media would borrow the piece to photoshoot.[496] The value for emerging designers relates to whether the archive piece could help the brand to spread information to greater audiences. Also, as they would normally try a few different fabrics on one style, each style would have 5 to 6 samples SKU.[497] In order to maintain space in the studio it is not worth it to

493 Ibid.
494 Ibid.
495 Ibid.
496 Ibid.
497 SKU: stock keeping unit.

keep each of them as the cutting and silhouette will be the same.[498] Most of the time, the two founders will make decisions about which piece to keep, but when they get busy, they cannot go through each of them, at which point the studio manager will then be involved in making decisions. But, still, the appraisal standards need to be based on the founders' instructions. For instance, the basic logic is focused on selecting show pieces.[499] After selecting all the show pieces, they then select best sellers and then some carry-on styles. The rest they would not consider keeping. Sometimes, forms of consumption are happening parallel to the appraisal process. While the founders select show pieces, interns or friends may offer to buy the pieces that will not go into the archive. In addition, Jiang herself sometimes could not abandon some of the pieces, as she has an emotional connection with her own work.

Even though Jiang identified one design piece that did not have sufficient value to be kept in the studio sample collection, she would keep that piece at home if the design was her personal preference.[500] When I ask her what kind of design this would be, she said they are the designs that would 'exhaust' her. Because she is the one in control of production, she is clear which one may not be suitable for a general customer's request for practical garments, and which would cause trouble during high volume production. However, after a few seasons, when she looks back to these 'exhausting' designs, she has found they are actually meaningful. But she also added this is only her own feeling about the material. Although I was not able to interview her male business partner Liushu Lei, according to Jiang, Lei won't really wear any of the designs when he has less enthusiasm about this past design material. Jiang added that because she is more emotional, she needs to be the first person to go through the collection, then Lei and the studio manager can help to further appraise the collection.[501] The whole process goes through a

498 Yutong Jiang, Shanghai, 27 February 2021.
499 Ibid.
500 Yutong Jiang, Shanghai, 27 February 2021.
501 Ibid.

struggle between sense and sensibility from the gaze of both a female and a male, a producer and a creator, then decisions are settled in the final balance.

The entire archive collection has been stored in a corner in their studio warehouse (kufang 库房) or has been packed in boxes and sent to their logistics warehouse, which is not in the studio but a collaboration with a third party. The collection stored in the studio warehouse is displayed on hangers, although I did not have the chance to visit during my interviews. As an emerging brand, Shushu Tong's studio only has around ten staff, including the two founders, one studio manager, two interns, one patterner and other staff. Maintaining the archive collection is part of the studio manager's job, however, not the main job. Thus, this archive has not had a proper system or list to record detailed information.

When we discussed the show pieces and special textiles Shushu Tong used in their designs, I was trying to find out how Yutong Jiang defines their value. She said the brand has some very loyal customers who would purchase every season; interestingly their targets are the 'most' show pieces (the signature show look). Yutong Jiang speculated that maybe their wardrobes would form an interesting archive. Some of these customers might be the founder's friends or those who admired the brand and then worked as interns in Shushu Tong, eventually turning into customers. Sometimes, when Yutong Jiang wanted to reproduce one particular design and realised the archive had gotten rid of the sample, she would turn to her friends and intern customers to borrow that piece as a sample. If one of the main functions of the designer fashion archive is for reference, then Shushu Tong has expanded their archive to includes close clients' wardrobes.[502]

In the gatekeeping theory, Lewin argues that it is important that the gatekeeper has a feedback system, enabling them to control the information as it goes in and

[502] Yutong Jiang, Shanghai, 27 February 2021.

out, and also to circulate the information to create more suitable appraisal standards for the field.[503] In the case of Shushu Tong's archive, while deciding what the brand needs for future reference and promotion, only relying on professional ideas from the design side is not sufficient. The market reaction and real customer feedback are both important for the brand's archive.

As a start-up brand, Shushu Tong has the chance to closely communicate with their customers, which is not common among all the cases I have collected. Since none of the other participants mentioned that their customers or friends would be involved in the feedback system. But I believe Shushu Tong is not the only case among the emerging young Chinese designers who started business with a tiny group of staff in small studios. According to my observation through talking to the designers and visiting their offices in the last decade, I noticed the familiar way these designers communicated with their supporters, including families, friends, peers and customers.

In the case of Shushu Tong, the archive located in multiple levels and locations. Apart from the influence of designers and their staff team, the circulated information from their customers would influence the formulation of the young emerging designers' archive. Both company and personal archives preserve history and can be drawn on to access history, which can extend to the brand's seasonal creations over the long term. Through this mechanism, a brand's customers can also play the role of gatekeepers.

Conclusion:

In this Chapter, I have introduced and analysed a new type of archive, that belongs more in the realm of retail, and that has combined many features that the other

[503] Kurt Lewin, p. 143-153.

fashion brand archives do not possess. It has demonstrated how fashion businesses operate archives that are more than just for design inspiration and reference, but also acts to provide support for gaining a gatekeeper position. This supports the accumulation of cultural capital through which the player in the cultural field can establish an orthodox position, and at the same time enables them to shape the sampling of cultural orthodoxy and apply implicit rules to that sample. The business Labelhood used archives exactly in this way as a type of cultural capital to achieve its gatekeeper position.

But Labelhood has multiple power to support its gatekeeper's position. For instance, Tasha Liu's position also functioned as the gatekeeper for Labelhood, and also for the Shanghai fashion field. Over a decade, Tasha Liu was not just in charge of transforming the buyer boutique, but also involved in the transformation of the overall Chinese fashion industry. Labelhood as a brand, has already gained a certain amount of cultural capital and is shaping the orthodoxy rules for emerging fashion designers in the field. In this way, their public archive is displaying the orthodoxy sample they have selected and differentiating its orthodoxy from the other emerging fashion designers. But this digital archive has been suspended since 2021, and I have not received any further information about its future plan. For Labelhood, the current situation well worth considering is, will the current lack of their digital archive affect their future development path? Does the gatekeeping power of an archive really matter for Labelhood? At the time of writing, it seems that the importance of the archive and historical records for the implicit control and power of the gatekeeper's position are lesser than the immediate challenge of survival in the market.

In the case of Shushu Tong, it reflects another facet to the importance of gatekeeping. The appraisal method of the brand's archive has revealed how brands gatekeep their DNA through multiple layers of appraisal and access to different archive resources. The appraisal process is not only a mechanical process,

it also involves the emotional needs of the designers and the influence of the designer's close friends and loyal customers. This methodology has actually split the archive and the history written through the archive into two set of formats: the company archive and the personal archive. They both play a role in the function of supporting the brand to create history and new products. This complicates the idea of gatekeeper and the power relationship in the field.

Most of the participants which had overseas work experience, such as Jiang, understand the long-term value of the archive but could not apply that directly to the Chinese market. The example of successful semi-public fashion corporations' archives, such as the Dior Heritage department in the previous Chapter, have long been distanced from the reality of young Chinese fashion brands, who are still struggling with finding their position in the field and gaining commercial success to survive in the market. While all the fashion brand players in the field are still competing to gain higher status and recognition, the archive as a long-term game is the least of their concerns in business at this stage. More than one participant told me this answer honestly. The development of archives in the fashion industry is extremely sensitive to the changes in the market. In another way, the emergence and decline of fashion archives itself has recorded this aspect of Chinese fashion history.

The flexibility of the function and definition of the archive allows it to be shaped according to the various demands of its creators. This chapter has demonstrated another perspective of the function and definition of the archive in China that both exemplifies and complicates the role of gatekeeping in the Shanghai field of fashion design. It has also enriched understanding of how Chinese fashion professionals write their own history through the creation and use of archives, where what is kept relates so directly to the constraints and needs of the business but also responds to the cultural aspirations and emotions of the gatekeepers. In the next Chapter, the focus turns to the commercial potential of personal fashion

archives, which is has emerged as another challenge with regard to the definition of the fashion archive in China, opening up further possibilities on the future of the Chinese archive.

Chapter Four: commercialization of archive fashion

In the European and North American fashion industries, archive fashion is already established as a mature business model. There are collectors who use their personal collections for rental or as a selling business. There have been several key incidents that spurred the market's understanding of the power and value of archive fashion. For example, fashion designer Helmut Lang caused an earthquake in the archival fashion market in 2010. When Helmut Lang left his namesake fashion label in 2005 to become a full-time artist, he donated a large volume of his work in fashion to 16 museums and fashion institutions, including the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, Musée de la Mode in Paris, the Costume Institute in Japan, MoMu-Fashion Museum Antwerp and Bath Fashion Museum.[504] But he also kept a large amount of the archive collection in his New York studio.

A fire accident in 2010 destroyed part of his archive and changed his view about keeping an archive. Different from other archive owners who are aiming to preserve, Helmut Lang understood this accident in another way. For him, the fact that his work had been destroyed triggered him to use an artistic angle to understand the meaning of the destruction his own work and transform it into something else; for example: artwork. He shredded six to eight thousand pieces of clothing in what was left of his archive 'with neither remorse nor preference', turning them into confetti and using them as raw material for his artwork 'Make It Hard' in 2011.[505]

According to reports, the process of making the artwork was: after he shredded

[504] Shields, Rachel, 'Helmut Lang: From Catwalk to Gallery', *The Independent*, 2010 https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/fashion/news/helmut-lang-from-catwalk-to-gallery-1953743.html, [accessed 26 September 2023].

[505] "Dongliang" *heni zhidao de maishou diandou butong Biru meinian ta douyao wei zhongg shejishi banxiu* | Jiemian Xinwen · Shishang '"栋梁"和你知道的买手店都不同 比如每年它都要为中国设计师办秀|界面新闻 · 时尚'.

the archives, Lang 'combined the fabric remnants with resin and pigment' and dried them using an aluminium tube to create what was described as 'a sort of fossilized fabric pillar'.[506] The final exhibition of the artwork is a collection of 16 long pillars in a black, chalk white and natural colour range, displayed in a plain white space, to look like a burned forest. According to *Interview Magazine*, this artwork is to 'reference the natural world and the power of human industry'.[507] Through this artistic working process, Lang has tried to replace the archival value of his archive collection with artistic value, but this value was based on the raw material is his own archive. On the other side, such a decision suddenly raised the value of pieces held by some early collectors of Helmut Lang's collections, due to the rareness and the new cultural capital Lang created through his artwork.

It also drew attention to the question about how designers should deal with their own heritage. Then, in 2021, Raf Simon launched his new collection with 100 design pieces all derived from his original work in his archive to celebrate his 25th work anniversary.[508] These incidents sent out a signal to the market over the last two decades that, apart from just using the archive as an inspiration and reference resource, the fashion industry has learnt that the archive collection can bring long-term profit in many different ways. The archive itself could be a symbol of the brand, and how the designer uses it could send out signals to the market. The market also responds to these high-profile designers' actions, accelerating the vintage and second-hand fashion markets, as well as the newly emerged archive fashion pieces market.

In this Chapter, I aim to explore the way that this new business model of the

506 'Helmut Lang Shredded His Entire Clothing Archive For The Sake Of Art | Complex' <https://www.complex.com/style/a/skylar-bergl/helmut-lang-shredded-his-entire-clothing-archive> [accessed 26 September 2023].
507 'Still Shredding: Helmut Lang', *Interview Magazine*, 2011 <https://www.interviewmagazine.com/art/helmut-lang-the-fireplace-project> [accessed 26 September 2023].
508 Raf Simons Reissues 100 Archive Pieces, Showstudio, https://www.showstudio.com/news/raf-simons-reissues-100-archive-pieces [accessed on 14th March, 2022].

fashion archive is emerging in the Chinese fashion industry. This business model in China was influenced by the overseas market but has its own attributes due to the specific development of the Chinese fashion industry. These archives do fulfil the general effect of an archive that collects the social memory of certain periods and areas, recording one aspect of history and allowing access to certain audience groups, thereby creating a particular stream of history. However, these 'traditional' effects of the archive are insufficient to satisfy the latest demands of the fashion industry. Along with the development of the fashion industry, the meaning of 'archive' has been expanded and adapted to add value or to define the values or exact prices of materials, whether a recently produced product or previous product that still circulates in the market. Based on this new trend, the fashion archive has seen emergent new business models, and with these new models, to some extent, is formulating new meanings of the word 'archive'.

Brain and Suga are the founder of Ninon archive (now Contemporary Fashion Institution - CoFI) who was based in Shanghai and has collected fashion since 2013. They are the second group of personal collectors I encountered during my research and fieldwork. And they were the only participants who were still concentrating on personal archive collecting and trying to develop their own collection into a new business model. The first group were the founders of buyer boutique Autumn Sonata, but they were focusing on the buyer boutique business.[509] Thus, Ninon archive became a live case that was in the process of transformation along with this research project.

When I first got in touch with Brain and conducted our first interview, I had many questions circulating in my mind. Because this was an unexpected archive case that I encountered during the research process while browsing a poster in a fashion related WeChat group, I had no knowledge about what the word "archive"

[509] Kian, WeChat, 27 October 2020.

meant on their poster, nor who had founded this organization and how this organisation operated. Apart from questions about the organisation itself, I also needed to explore if this was a particular phenomenon in the Chinese fashion industry that I had not yet realised. If yes, how did any new meanings for the archive develop? What were the impact of any new meanings?

Thus, I decided to conduct a closer and long-term observation methodology on this case. Due to the location of my participants and myself, Shanghai and London respectively. I decided to keep up an intermittent but long-term communication and observation with Brain and Suga from 2020 to 2022. Through participant observation methods, including on-line and face to face interviews, a studio visit and long-term follow-up investigation with the Ninon Archive studio, I developed deep communication and a strong connection with the team identifying changes in how they understand archives in the Chinese fashion industry they are attempting to build, and the future possibilities that are being offered to the Chinese fashion archive.

Revisiting the value of the archive in fashion business

One of the common aims of an archive is to record and store selective information for future use, based on the creator's requirements. Terry Cook suggested that public archives fulfil a function by storing collective memory, through opening these memories to the public to help citizens communicate with the past and find their roots and identities.[510] However, the archival information can be understood in a variety of different ways. According to Archivist Louise Craven, the head of Cataloguing at the National Archives of England and Wales and the UK (TNA), the audience's understanding of archival information can be equated with its use; that is, the use a reader makes of the information. Craven explained how an individual

[510] Terry Cook, "What is Past is Prologue", 17-63 (p. 18).

reads archival information based on their own identity and cultural background, creating individual meaning from the information and, through this process, the archival information is 'perpetually constructed and reconstructed'.[511] In the case of Ninon archive, as the object of study is a business archive, how will these qualities affect its business model?

In this research project, a personal archive is a collection of material that does not belong to public institution or corporation but is formulated based on the owner's aims. Because the appraisal process, preservation methods and final goals are all based on personal preference, I decided to call this type of archive a 'personal archive'. A personal archive could inherit some of the functions of public archives or be part of a corporate archive, as in the example of Shushu Tong's case study. But due to the individual's limitations of time, space, money and labour, after a certain period of accumulation, when the personal collector reaches their limitation point, some personal archives have emerged with an operating model that prioritises creating business value to support the operation beyond the sole objective of storing memories. In the fashion industry, when a collected piece used to be a product, it had a clear price or value attributed to it, but within the fashion archive, these archive values and product values are naturally bound together.

In fashion promotion and fashion marketing strategies, the value-added process is a key method to increase the value of the product.[512] The 4P strategy is a 1950s marketing concept that has been widely used since the 1970s. 4P stands for: product, price, promotion and place. In each P, there are multiple ways to add

511 Louise Craven, p. 17.
512 Harriet Posner, *Marketing Fashion: Strategy, Branding and Promotion*, (London: Laurence King Publisher, 2015), p. 41.

value for the brand.[513] Following the development of the marketing field, a new 7P tactic has been adopted in marketing research starting in the 1980s.[514] The other three Ps that have been added are people, process and physical evidence.

All of these tools need to be used together to create the marketing strategy for a fashion brand. Luxury brands are one type of fashion brand, which prefer to use culture and historical background to propagate their differential from other brands. The value of Bourdieusian cultural capital in fashion adds exclusive value to the brand to distinguish its value from other competitors.[515] As we have seen, an archive as one of the departments could provide physical evidence to help articulate this value-added process, encouraging many established fashion houses to invest in building their own archive collection. But in this Chapter, the personal collector is collecting fashion products that have already gained cultural capital through the above marketing approach. The value-additive process could provide a fashion marketing perspective to analyze how personal archive collections gain their position in the market.

So, using the change in ideology terminology as a starting point: what can the word 'archive' bring to a fashion product in the current fashion market in China? Originally, the word archive represents rigorous official records, but as more and more fashion brands build their own archives for internal use, designers rely on the archive to provide inspiration, and the word 'archive' appears in new collections to represent a recollection of a glorious period of the brand or classic style.[516] Such a thing can be seen when Raf Simons launched a collection name

[513] 'Product' includes the physical product (quality, design, package, limited edition or other selling point) and service counts as part of the product. Good customer service before, during or after the purchase could add value to the product and brand. Price is about finding the right price range to fit the target market and customers. Promotion is how to use special offers or other advertisement tools to attract customers. For 'place', the store location or style of the shopping area all take part in the value-added process. Harriet Posner, *Marketing Fashion: Strategy, Branding and Promotion*, (London: Laurence King Publisher, 2015) pp. 41-49.

[514] Ibid, p. 41.

[515] Pierre Bourdieu, 'THE FORMS OF CAPITAL', pp. 17-21.

[516] 'Raf Simons Reissues 100 Archive Pieces | SHOWstudio'.

after his own archive.[517] Since 2015, the word archive appeared more frequently in the fashion market as an attractive feature of fashion products.[518] At the same time, second-hand fashion and vintage fashion platforms have gained growing attention.[519] The word 'archive' carries implications of recognition by official institutions, preciousness and exclusivity. All of these are a value-additive process for both archive fashion pieces and new season fashion products. In return, this strategic process of fashion marketing has enriched the meaning of 'archive' in the fashion industry.

In this Chapter, interviews and other interactions with Brain and Suga are used to explore how they understand the different definitions of second-hand, vintage, 'Grailed' and archive in the fashion market.[520] I analyse how they are trying to build a business by using their new definitions of the archive fashion within the Chinese fashion industry. Through these experiences, we can see the changes in the market and further understand the tension between creating value and creating history.

Second-hand/vintage/archive/Grail

While the fashion industry tries to sell as much new product as possible to create annual growth, at the same time the second-hand fashion market is growing rapidly.[521] Second-hand is a large and general term and can be used to describe anything that has been previously owned. Vintage is a type of second-hand fashion,

[517] Karl Smith, 'Raf Simons Archive Redux Collection and Fashion Resale' <https://i-d.vice.com/en/article/wx8mgb/fashion-archive-resale-market> [accessed 28 November 2023].
[518] Condé Nast, 'The Raf Simons "Riot" bomber has sold for $47,000', *Vogue France*, 2018 <https://www.vogue.fr/vogue-hommes/fashion/articles/the-raf-simons-riot-bomber-has-sold-for-47000/69541> [accessed 6 January 2024].
[519] 'Behind the HYPE: How Raf Simons' Riot Jacket Became a Streetwear Holy Grail', *Hypebeast*, 2020 <https://hypebeast.com/2020/8/raf-simons-riot-jacket-bomber-jacket-hype-history> [accessed 6 January 2024].
[520] 'What Our Love Affair With Archival Fashion Means For The Industry', *Grailed* <https://www.grailed.com/drycleanonly/archival-fashion-interest> [accessed 7 January 2024].
[521] Harriet Posner, pp. 15-19.

but not all second-hand fashion can be categorised as vintage. Archive fashion is another concept that has emerged in the second-hand fashion market in recent years, which I will discuss in more detail below. During interviews with Ninon Studio's founders, I also learned of another new concept, Grail. The concept has been widely used in the second-hand luxury street style menswear niche market to represent something combining the features of vintage and archive fashion products. All of these definitions emerged in different periods, and in different areas they may signify different meanings. It is important to clarify their origin and current status, especially in China.

Many researchers have worked on defining what vintage is. Julie McColl et al. described vintage as multi-faceted while referring to different time periods.[522] Word such as 'vintage', 'antique' and 'retro' have all been used to describe vintage clothing. But the vintage retailers who are involved in the process of promoting the concept of vintage fashion in the market have strong influence on the definition of vintage fashion. Therefore, this research has defined vintage fashion based on the small independent owned retailers' perceptive : 'Garments and accessories which are more than twenty years old, which represent a particular fashion era, and which are valued for their uniqueness and authenticity'.[523]

One of the main attractions of wearing vintage fashion is the uniqueness of the style. which could be a reaction against mass-produced fashion when the fast fashion business model began to take over the fashion market. Fashion scholars Tracy Diane Cassidy and Hannah Rose Bennett conducted research about vintage fashion based on interviews with vintage fashion retailers in Manchester and an online questionnaire surveying prominent figures in the vintage industry.[524] The collected data reflected the business environments and consumer habits of

[522] Julie McColl and others, 140-150 (p. 141).

[523] Ibid.

[524] Tracy Diane Cassidy & Hannah Rose Bennett (2012) *The Rise of Vintage Fashion and the Vintage Consumer*, Fashion Practice, 4:2, pp. 239-261.

vintage fashion in the UK. According to their research, there were customers who decided to change their consumption habits and pursue the value of something distinct from the fast fashion trend in the market; those consumers wanted to be different from the mainstream, selecting products that showed off their unique individuality with a strong historical and cultural background, hence becoming supporters of vintage fashion. Marilyn DeLong et al. further analysed vintage fashion as a new way of personal expression and social communication based on the experiences of a group of high-end vintage wearers. These participants have been described as those 'who all had at least ten years' experience buying and wearing quality vintage to create well defined and imaginative personal style'.[525]

Ninon Studios developed an identity as a vintage retailer. But, during the interview, they insisted that vintage retail was not their main goal of collecting archival fashion. Their methodology of collecting and their definition of vintage and archival fashion directed them to a particular business strategy.

From the business perspective, vintage fashion has a certain natural advantage. Since a very important part of fashion promotion is about creating an atmosphere and telling related stories, vintage garments connect consumers with the past, thus generating resonance.[526] Cassidy and Bennett suggest that more and more designers use vintage elements in their designs in order to attract customers to connect the new products with history and memory.[527] Fashion scholars, Camilla Keim and Ralf Wagner, followed Cassidy and Bennett's argument pointed out that fashion houses, including Louis Vuitton, Yves Saint Laurent, Dior and Miu Miu, have all launched collections based on inspiration from vintage fashion. They further suggested that '… fashion designers do re-purpose vintage items in their new collections, to allow real fashion to be revived nowadays through their new

[525] Marilyn DeLong, Barbara Heinemann & Kathryn Reiley (2005) *Hooked on Vintage!* Fashion Theory, 9:1, p. 25.
[526] Harriet Posner, pp. 40-54.
[527] Tracy Diane Cassidy & Hannah Rose Bennett, p. 243-244.

creations.'[528] From an eco-friendly perspective, vintage fashion is a popular solution to reduce over-production in fast fashion (or at least not add to it) and create opportunities to reuse resources, which corresponds to some key concepts in sustainable fashion strategy. As sustainability continues to be the major topic in the European fashion industry, vintage fashion continues to attract attention.[529] This has helped to shift the vintage trend from sub-culture to mass culture in the 21st century.

When I started to communicate with the founders of Ninon Studio, I kept a question in my mind: how they would define their collection as different from the vintage or second-hand fashion products? Many consumers in China were already familiar with the concept of vintage fashion due to years of development of the Chinese fashion market.[530] According to my personal experience and the reports I read, the vintage market in China began in the late 2000s, where the trend was influenced by the Japanese vintage market. One of my personal experiences is when I purchased vintage fashion pieces in Guangzhou between 2008 to 2011; I noticed many of the second-hand clothes had Japanese labels. It was a niche market with many concerns about hygiene and superstition from my parents' generation. But, in 2018, the second-hand market was reported to have reached 740 billion Chinese yuan (103 billion USD) and was estimated to exceed 1000 billion Chinese yuan (140 billion USD) in 2020.[531] But when moving from being customers to becoming collectors, how do the young generation of Chinese customers define the difference between archive fashion and vintage fashion and how would this affect the definition of fashion archives in China?

---

528 Camilla Keim & Ralf Wagner Back in time to move forward: An empirical study on luxury fashion vintage drivers, *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*, 9:2(2018), 87–102 (p. 98).

529 Annie Brown, 'Why "Singularity" and "Archive" Fashion Is Changing How We Get Dressed', *Vogue Australia*, 2023 <https://www.vogue.com.au/fashion/news/archive-fashion-trend/news-story/0494d29e146eda4862434a5184f0cff3> [accessed 6 January 2024].

530 Han Xu, Can China Look Past Counterfeits and superstition in its burgeoning second-hand fashion market?, *CNN style*, https://edition.cnn.com/style/article/china-second-hand-fashion-sept/index.html [accessed on 3rd August].

531 Old is the New: Vintage Clothes, in 'Vogue' with China's Youth, *CGTN*, <https://news.cgtn.com/news/2021-03-28/VHJhbnNjcmlwdDUzMjYx/index.html> [accessed on 3rd August 2023].

During the interview, the founders of Ninon Studio suggested that purely representing a specific time period is not sufficient to define a garment as an archive piece.[532] They believe that in order to be counted as archive fashion, the piece needs to be a particular piece that has appeared in a designer's fashion show and has been considered to represent the designer's core concept or revolutionary design. Then, the piece would be considered to contain sufficient value to be 'archived', to become an 'archive fashion' piece circulating in the market. This is also the broader definition of archival fashion. When I further asked how they decide which pieces represent the designer's concept, Suga answered that they would research about the designer, for instance, by reading fashion show reports and reading books about the designer, or through watching related documentaries.[533] When I ask Suga about how they start the research process, she used Margiela as an example. Their first large collection of Margiela pieces came from a well-known trusted Margiela collector in 2021.

In order to conduct research on this collection, Suga and Brain searched for all the information they could find from Business of Fashion, Vogue Runway and other online resources they could access through Google. Then Suga watched Margiela's documentary and videos from YouTube and read museum published books about Margiela, especially in relation to the exhibitions, for instance the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Palais Galliera in Paris.[534] They would then decide which of the pieces they saw in these resources could become significant archive pieces. Brain also added that their understanding about fashion has been largely affected by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, because he spent most of his spare time going through all the fashion pieces that had been recorded in the

[532] Brain & Suga, Shanghai, 25 January 2021.
[533] Suga, interviewed by Mo Shi about the Ninon Archive Studio, Lark, 10 September 2023.
[534] 'Margiela / Galliera, 1989-2009', *Palais Galliera | Musée de La Mode de La Ville de Paris* <https://www.palaisgalliera.paris.fr/en/exhibitions/margiela/galliera-1989-2009> [accessed 7 January 2024]; 7/10/24 10:51:00 PM 'Martin Margiela: In His Own Words (2019) - IMDb' <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt11284244/> [accessed 7 January 2024].

museum's digital archive.[535] Then, based on his memory of that museum collection, he started to purchase similar or the same fashion pieces online. This formed their incipient archive collection.

At this stage, apart from museum influences, their appraisal process of defining archive fashion was also affected by the influence of fashion marketing in various channels of fashion media. This is because many news reports of fashion shows and fashion designer's documentaries were sponsored by the brand, so it is hard to determine if marketing or news reports are paid for by the brand or represent an individual writer or reporter's opinion. It is also nearly impossible for collectors and researchers to avoid the influence exerted by the brand, which is always striving to promote itself.

Suga also shared an example of a design that they decided to discontinue collecting. This was Japanese fashion designer Jun Takahashi (高桥盾), even though it was this designer is who influenced Brain to name himself Brain.[536] Jun Takahashi's brand UNDERCOVER decided to support Hong Kong during the No China Extradition activity and used its official Instagram brand account to speak in public against the Chinese government's new policy.[537] This has caused certain fashion products related to Jun Takahashi to be banned from mainland China. Due to this political risk, Suga and Brain decided to drop the brand. Thus, considering all the above elements that affect Ninon Archive in decision-making, there is no doubt that Suga's research process has been strongly affected by the Western fashion system and Japanese fashion culture, as well as the ideological tension in

---

535 Brain, Lark, 15 September 2023.

536 Suga, Lark, 10 September 2023. According to Suga, Brain once bought a T-shirt from Jun Takahashi with a slogan on it says: Brand new brain. This slogan then became his WeChat name, and he started to call himself Brain.

537 Ren Chen 任琛, *Ri Shejishi Ting "Fansong zhong" Bei Naike Jinji Xiajia* 日设计师挺“反送中”被耐克紧急下架 (The designer is very "anti-send" by Nike emergency off the shelf) <https://www.dw.com/zh/%E6%97%A5%E8%AE%BE%E8%AE%A1%E5%B8%88%E6%8C%BA%E5%8F%8D%E9%80%81%E4%B8%AD-%E8%A2%AB%E8%80%90%E5%85%8B%E7%B4%A7%E6%80%A5%E4%B8%8B%E6%9E%B6/a-49362834> [Access in 25th September 2023]

China while they are targeting the domestic market.

The website Grailed is also selling old second-hand clothing and accessories. But according to my observation, some products has added a new concept, 'archival fashion', to its title or tag. As we have already seen in Chapter One, archival fashion has a very similar meaning to vintage fashion, though with a few extra attributes, such as the focus on specific fashion brands and hailing from a more recent period.[538] The concept of the website is to provide the younger generation of customers a chance to own the fashion products that they would not have the chance to purchase because of their young age and limited purchasing power. The founders of Grailed are principally based in Los Angeles and New York City. At the very early stages, this website attracted mainly young and rich male users from North America's major cities. When Brain from Ninon first encountered the website Grailed, he checked the words and knew the meaning of grail in English. Suga added that the users of the website would communicate to the sellers 'I want/like your Grails' using the English word.[539] Brain and Suga, would sell some of the pieces they decided to remove from their archive collection; or some of the pieces that they had more than one of in the collection in order to free up space for new collection pieces, as well as to gain cashflow to purchase new pieces.[540] When they are using the website, the name 'grails' take over the name 'archive'.

The word 'grail' derives from the 'holy grail' signifying a cup believed to have been used by Jesus Christ at the meal before his death. It now also represents something incomparably precious and unique that is extremely difficult to find or procure. By using this word as the name of the website it is clear that the founder of the website wanted to define the items on the website as extremely difficult to find or procure, just like the Holy Grail. In another layer, for the people obsessed with

538 Marc Richardson 'What Is Avant Garde Fashion?', *Grailed* <https://www.grailed.com/drycleanonly/what-is-avant-garde> [accessed 26 September 2023].
539 Suga Zoom meeting with Mo Shi, 20 June 2022.
540 Brain & Suga, Shanghai, 25 January 2021.

fashion, fashion could become a type of consumeristic religion, as the obsessive search for their dream fashion items is similar to the search for grail in the context of Christianity. The meaning of grail extended to something that a person, or a particular group of people want very much to have or achieve.

This reflects that through the development of trading, the fashion market has gradually changed the original meaning of the word vintage and archive, as well as grail. Based on the information from my participant, and my observation on the website, even though not all the products closely adhere to the definition of archival fashion, the way the users communicate still indicates that archival fashion is defined as precious with players in this field considering the pieces of value.

However, Brain and Suga's personal understanding was not representative of other participants in this study. For instance, after I heard about grails from Brain and Suga, I added a side question to my interview when I encountered any participants who mentioned they collected archive fashion online or from overseas channels.[541] But none of my other participants had heard of Grail or used this website. Furthermore, in some participants' minds, the archive is not yet connected with the market or consumption. Instead, archive is a word associated with official records, museums, government-owned collections and priceless objects. So, the next section concentrates on examining the struggles and difficulties Brain and Suga encountered while operating their personal fashion archive collection and endeavouring to transform it into a profitable business.

Ninon Studio and new business models for the archive

In this section, I use the interviews with Ninon Studio to explore, in detail, this

[541] Binggan, Shenzhen, 19 February 2021.

potential new business model of the fashion archive in China. By investigating their business goals and strategies, we can also explore the problematic situation of fashion archive commercialisation in China. As I now have followed this case for two years I will further analyse the changes in their business from 2019 through to September 2022. These changes occurred as a result of the difficulties and struggles they faced during the process of starting a business, reflecting the distance between their initial dreams and the reality they encountered, and the gap between their understanding of history and Chinese society's understanding of history through fashion. Furthermore, their plan for the future reflects their compromise and reconciliation to more common understandings of fashion and history or, put another way, it points out a new path for the future of Chinese fashion archives. Their journey has provided important evidence about how the different groups in the Chinese fashion industry field react to the fashion archive business, as well as the changes in the industry's understanding of history through fashion.

The emergence of Ninon Studio

My encounter with Brain, one of the founders of Ninon Studio, was unexpected. Before I met him, I conducted an interview with a couple who used to hold a personal collection but were now concentrating on their buyer boutique business called Autumn Sonata mentioned above.[542] They provided me new leads for my research by, indicating that China already has a group of people who understand the meaning of fashion archives, and collect items for their archives, which differed from a fashion designer's purpose for using an archive as I detailed in chapter one.[543] As we have seen in the previous chapters, for the designers, archive pieces are circulated products with the functionality and objective of preserving design reference or brand DNA.

[542] Kian and Zephy, Shanghai, 24 February 2021.
[543] The section of Archive types in Chapter One.

Soon, I saw a post in one of the Labelhood volunteer WeChat groups called Yutopia, looking for volunteers to help Ninon Archive catalogue a personal fashion archive collection. I immediately contacted the person, who turned out to be Brain. I first arranged an online phone call with Brain in November 2020, then visited their studio in Shanghai, arranging to meet Brain with Suga on two occasions. This couple opened a whole new world of fashion archives in China for me. According to them, I also changed their understanding about archives, and strengthened their conviction to pursue a fashion archive career. I have followed their career path since the interviews and became been involved in giving advice on some of their projects.

Brain introduced himself and Suga, explaining that they did not have any educational background related to fashion[544] They first began to have contact with fashion starting in high school around 2012 (equivalent to Year 11 in the UK education system).[545] Brain was first interested in the concept of fashion archives in 2014 when he started his university course in University of Alberta in Canada.[546] Brain studied textile, and he had the chance to visit and volunteer in the textile archive belong to Anne Lambert Clothing and Textile Collection. The collection founded in 1972, is one of the largest clothing and textile collections in Canada. This is the place Brain formulated his foundational experience of archives. But the concept of archival fashion came from his work experience as a *daigou* (代购), someone who is outside China, buying goods for someone in China.[547] This job not only brought Brain the funds to start his collection, but also led Brain to discover the concept of archival fashion.

544 Brain, WeChat, 11 November 2020.
545 Brain & Suga, Shanghai, 25 January 2021.
546 'Anne Lambert Clothing and Textiles Collection | University of Alberta Museums' <https://www.ualberta.ca/museums/museum-collections/clothing-and-textiles.html> [accessed 5 December 2023].
547 Suga, Lark, 10 September 2023.

According to Brain, this concept started to become popular in North America circa 2015. One famous New York collector David Casavant influenced Brain during this period. According to Glass magazine he started to build his own collection around Raf Simons when he was a teenager and soon expanded it to multiple luxury brands.[548] After he had accumulated pieces for a decade, he founded his own name Archive in 2013.[549] Brain has purchased some archive pieces from Casavant on the Grail website and learnt about his project with Grail on Instagram. David Casavant is famous for his contemporary menswear fashion brand collection, especially those pieces from Raf Simons and Helmut Lang.[550] He even published his own book: the David Casavant Archive.[551]

Casavant has been quoted as saying that when he began to collect when he was a teenager, he realised they were in a period in which designers had not realised the power of the archive and were simply trying hard to get rid of 'last season's old clothes' instead of defining them as vintage or archive pieces.[552] Casavant started to use his personal collection, first as an exchange for other stylists to use for their shoots, then gradually began to charge to rent the garments to stylists. According to interviews, he became widely known when he started to work with Kanye West, which introduced him into to the core group of celebrities in the North American music industry and gave him the chance to dress many big names over the last twenty years, including Rihanna, Lady Gaga and Kim Kardashian. Casavant applies his own philosophy for using his archive collection, as outlined in a Glass magazine interview: 'Although Casavant believes that clothes should be worn, not preserved, he still loans selectively. "That's my insurance policy. For me. If I trust these people,

548 Lily Rimmer, The Glass Archival Fashion Collector Series – David Casavant: Raf Simons and Helmut Lang, *the Glass Magazine*, (2021) <https://www.theglassmagazine.com/archival-fashion-collectors-series-david-casavant-and-raf-simons-and-helmut-lang/> [accessed on 14th March, 2022];
Dazed, 2015 <https://www.dazeddigital.com/fashion/article/28572/1/where-do-kanye-and-rihanna-find-their-rarest-fashion-pieces> [accessed 7 January 2024].
549 'David Casavant | SHOWstudio' <https://showstudio.com/contributors/david-casavant> [accessed 7 January 2024].
550 Rimmer. Dazed, 'Where Do Kanye and Rihanna Find Their Rarest Fashion Pieces?'
551 David Casavant, *David Casavant Archive* (Bologna: Damiani Books, 2018).
552 Ibid.

then wear and tear is okay."'[553] His success and methods of commercialization of an archive collection inspired Brain to use his own archive collection in ways that might recreate this success in China.

But Brain and Suga actually began to collect fashion items before they were inspired by Casavant's fashion archive commoditisation. They firstly focused on collecting the avantgarde fashion brands from 1990s rather than luxury brands. In this niche market, Japan exerted a strong influence throughout Asia at the time they were collecting. Thus, they began with Japanese fashion brands, such as Comme des Garcons. Casavant's then business model showed them that including mainstream fashion brands could support the business go further, especially in the rental business.[554] Then they began to collect more fashion brands from Europe and North America, for instance Margiela, Helmut Lang and Raf Simons. While assembling the fashion archive, Brain's bigger plan was to combine the concept of the fashion archive with consumption and popular culture, intending to bring the fashion archive to the mainstream media and mass audiences in China. His business of *daigou* turned into a vintage fashion store provide him with the funds to collect more archival fashion pieces. They were ready to test the market by using their archive collection when they finally move back to China in 2020 due the impact of COVID-19.

In the current market, apart from Casavant, there are other successful business model that are associated with using special collected fashion items. In the UK, there are two similar companies, the Contemporary Wardrobe Collection and Aro Archive, that have a mixed business strategy and both function like a costume hire department, museum collection and personal collection all rolled into one. The Contemporary Wardrobe Collection was founded by costume designer and stylist Roger K. Burton. This collection contains around twenty thousand items that

[553] Lily Rimmer.
[554] Brain & Suga, Shanghai, 25 January 2021.

function as 'a specialist hire company supplying vintage street fashion, couture items and accessories to Film, TV and Fashion industries.[555] Although the company does not use the word archive to represent its function of preserving history through fashion, the biography about the company on its own website describe that they are proud of their heritage by dressing the big names from pop royalty to cult icons, as well as other super stars throughout the history of pop culture. By providing inspirations to the industry for 45 years, the company has become the keepers of culture.

Aro Archive is an archival company founded in 2011, operated by an independent family specialising in pre-owned Japanese, Belgian, French and British design. The collection is made up of around ten thousand pieces, spanning the 1880s to present day. The archive offers rental service for design houses, museums and educational institutions, as well as selling online and in-store. My first impression about Ninon Archive was that it was similar to the function and style of Aro Archive. But I came to understand that Brain and Suga have bigger plans regarding the business strategy of their collection within the Chinese market.

For Brain, the first step of starting his fashion archive business was to increase public awareness about archives, using the Ninon archive collection.[556] When I asked Brain how he would achieve this in the first solo interview I had with him, he described an exhibition at the Fashion Museum in Hasselt, Netherlands in 2015.[557] Brain did not visit the exhibition in person but read about the exhibition from online articles. In this temporary exhibition called 'Collected by…', many of the exhibition collection been stored in archive boxes or put in transparent plastic bags line up on racks, and 'visitors are encouraged to touch, study, try on, and even buy some of the items on view'. One of the designers of this exhibition space called

555 'About contemporary wardrobe', <https://www.contemporarywardrobe.com/about> [accessed on 30th August, 2023].
556 Brain, WeChat, 11 November 2020.
557 'Temporary Fashion Museum', *Nieuwe Instituut* <https://nieuweinstituut.nl/en/projects/tijdelijk-modemuseum> [accessed 2 October 2023].

this exhibition is an '"active archive"'.[558] The original idea of this exhibition was to 'suggest some provocative reflections on the position of fashion within the musicological realm', but for Brain the exhibition was about 'there is nothing more exciting than owning a museum piece'.[559] The exhibition displayed an archive collection in a museum space, but with a price tag on the exhibit pieces.

This method and the information it carried has deeply influenced Brain. At that period, this was an ideal example allowing him to combine his archive collection and his knowledge about fashion archive to create a new business model. Because even if the audience does not understand the exhibit piece itself, they will understand the price tag thus understand the value of the archive piece.[560] Brain believes this simple and clear way of showing the value of the Ninon archive could quickly and widely attract audiences. He thus suggested the Ninon archive use the price-oriented method to gain attention from a mass audience at the start of their own exhibition.[561] Following this conversation, I searched for online articles or videos that Brain and Suga produced to promote their collection, including articles about a 2020 exhibition on street style that they organised in a Shanghai buyer boutique and their own Bilibili Channel.[562] The majority of the titles or covers of these articles and videos have figures that highlight the value of the Ninon archive collection. The early in-store pop up exhibition also has certain similarity to the Hasselt exhibition. These materials have reflected what Brain told me in the first solo interview about his business plan.

---

558 Tim McKeough, 'Temporary Fashion Museum Opens in Rotterdam', *Architectural Digest*, 2015 <https://www.architecturaldigest.com/story/temporary-fashion-museum-rotterdam> [accessed 2 October 2023].

559 'Re-Fashioning the Institution: Reflections on the Temporary Fashion Museum', *Nieuwe Instituut* <https://nieuweinstituut.nl/en/projects/tijdelijk-modemuseum/het-instituut-opnieuw-vormgeven-bespiegelingen-over-het-tijdelijk-modemuseum> [accessed 2 October 2023] ; Brain's original Chinese sentence from interview: 他的主题就是没有什么比买到博物馆中展出的东西更令人兴奋.

560 Brain & Suga, Shanghai, 25 January 2021.

561 Ibid.

562 Jarvis Jin, *Zhe Keneng Shini Weiyi Yici zai Zhongguo Kandao Zhe Liangjian Yifu de Jihui* '这可能是你唯一一次在中国看到这两件衣服的机会'(This may be your only chance to see these two pieces in China), 微信公众平台 WeChat Public Platform <http://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?__biz=Mzg4MDI0MTk5MQ==&mid=2247483945&idx=1&sn=fee6b13ebc165d1893cf7cf9116e91b9&chksm=cf797e01f80ef7175073a29081a21e2b5a6c5cb4c23799c11f6d6b70f851be689daf55b8ea8b#rd> [accessed 5 December 2023]; Bilibili is similar to YouTube.

Brain also suggested that the commercialisation or symbolisation of the concept of the fashion archive itself or the fashion archive collection is a necessary step while popularising the fashion archive.[563] Casavant's method of using the archive collection as a fashion styling rental business is something that interests them.[564] Brain believes this idea is quite new to the Chinese fashion market. Through observing the changes and development of the Chinese fashion market from 2015 to 2018, they preliminarily estimated that there was an opportunity to start a business similar to David Casavant. Brain soon put his dream into action, dedicated himself to selling and renting his collection when he was in Year Two of university. While earning funds from this process they were also slowly building their collection However, the reality was that the practice did not bring the success he dreamed of. According to Brain, the main reason is that in 2018 the vintage market in China was just becoming popular, and the fashion archive was not yet as valuable as he had thought.[565] After assessing the problematic situation in 2018, he decided to go back to Canada to continue his university studies and gather more experience about the fashion archive business.

After graduation from the University of Alberta in 2020, Brain and Suga decided to move back to China due to the influence of the pandemic in Canada. Brain went back to China first and met three other friends, who they thought had a similar understanding about fashion archives. The name of Ninon was formed by each of the member's Chinese name initial (there were five of them).[566] They first rented a studio in Hangzhou to store their collection, because Brain's Hangzhou-based family could provide support. The studio was located in a building full of Taobao fashion companies, which are typical low-cost online fast-fashion, entities with no interest whatsoever in fashion archives.[567] Brain and Suga found that they were

563 Brain & Suga, Shanghai, 25 January 2021.
564 Ibid.
565 Ibid.
566 Suga, Lark, 10 September 2023. Brain's Chinese name with initial is N.
567 Brain & Suga, Shanghai, 25 January 2021.

not compatible with the people surrounding them in Hangzhou, whether intellectually or in their pace of life. This was particularly so when they were trying to create an archive collection and cherishing legendary designers' pieces. The companies around them were rapidly copying and producing low quality garments, which trampled on what they considered valuable and worthy of cherishing.[568] Most ironic of all was that these companies earned at least ten million Chinese yuan per year, while Brain and Suga were unable to make ends meet. At that moment they had about 200 pieces in their collection.[569]

After less than a month in Hangzhou, Brain decided to move to Shanghai to seek new opportunities for their career with one of the members but separate from the other two. This was because Brain realized that Shanghai is the fashion centre for creativity and culture, while Hangzhou is more like a fast fashion manufacturing centre.[570] Eventually Suga also made her way to Shanghai.

I met both Brain and Suga face-to-face in mid-January 2021, for the first time, in a café bar near their home and studio in Shanghai near Wukang Mansion, which is a protected historic apartment building in the former French Concession area of Shanghai. We had a long chat in the noisy café bar, where fortunately I could make a clear recording of our conversation. This was the first time I met Suga. She demonstrated a different understanding about the archive compared to Brain. Suga seemed to utilise more humanity theories which supported the analysis of their business plan, although they had the same aim to promote their archive collection and both believed the fashion archive was a project that was worthy of endeavour, despite their methodologies having differences. Suga placed the value of history and culture first, while Brain was targeting profit through owning history and culture.[571] It was also in this interview that they started to admit that

568 Ibid.
569 Ibid.
570 Suga, Lark, 10 September 2023.
571 Brain & Suga, Shanghai, 25 January 2021.

the archive collection hiring business might be an impossible task for a collector who does not have any solid contacts in the relevant industries in China.[572] When Brain and Suga start to talk about their failure and struggles, I felt like they had started to trust me and realised they needed a listener with professional advice at their start of their careers.

In order to understand their archive collection better, I suggested another visit and interview at their home and studio in late January 2021. Thus, I finally got a chance to see their archive in Shanghai. They lived in a quiet environment in the city centre, located near Soong Ching-ling Memorial Residence and Wukang Mansion, the only place with a good location that Brain could find at short notice. The collection was stored in all of the spare space they had within a rented flat on the ground floor of a small house hidden in a small alleyway. When I entered the flat, the first thing I saw were rails and rails of clothes. (Fig 4-1 & 4-2) They said they were trying to re-catalogue everything so they could have a better sample catalogue to show potential clients what an archive collection could look like.[573] However, only Brain had experience through volunteering in the university archive. Suga has not visited or worked in any fashion company's archive nor a museum archive before. Throughout our conversation, I noticed this task had frustrated them and pushed them to learn more about this subject.[574] Brain gained knowledge from the Internet, while Suga went down the theoretical path by reading books about philosophy, contemporary art and curation. They were concerned that their potential clients would not trust them, because they could not show any evidence of what they are capable of achieving at this early stage. In addition, local designers were also just starting up, so the need for an archive in the local community had not yet developed. Brain told me that he once discussed with Tasha Liu, one of the founders of Labelhood and my main case study in

572 Ibid.
573 Ibid.
574 Ibid.

Chapter Three, what if Ninon Archive could develop the fashion archive business with Chinese designers. But he had received a negative response from her, and thus did not push forward this part of business.[575]



Figure 4- 1: Inside Brain and Suga's rental place, the archive collection and the silver background they use as cataloging background. [Source: Photo taken by Mo Shi, January, 2021]

[575] Brain & Suga, Shanghai, 25 January 2021.



Figure 4- 2: One conner of the room with piles of clothes. [Source: Photo taken by Mo Shi, January, 2021.]

Social media and promoting the archive

While they faced difficulties of paving the way to work with emerging Chinese designers, Brain and Suga decided to promote their collection through online channels, which allowed them to have more flexibility and autonomous ability to define the archive within their context. Brain suggested that current Chinese audiences need 'education' about the fashion archive.[576] His work experience in buyer boutiques had helped him to develop an awareness of finding target consumers, and if he could not find enough customers, then educating the consumers to become the target type was the next best approach. What they were trying to do was share knowledge of trendy and iconic fashion pieces they had collected to introduce the idea of a fashion archive.

[576] Brain & Suga, Shanghai, 25 January 2021.

Brain and Suga's account on Bilibili is called Black Sugar Time Travel Agency (黑糖时间旅行社)and has 11 thousand followers. They have posted eleven videos up to the time of writing in January 2024.[577] Most of the videos are focused on collecting and fashion archives (Fig 4-3). Their original purpose was to introduce the meaning of the word 'archive' to the public, then attract a greater audience to their own collection, which may help them to start their business. According to them, in order to quickly attract attention, they have used a common attraction which is to write an eye-catching high price on the cover of the video.[578]

Six of their videos have a labelled price on the front screen shot, three of them tagged as a 'collection worth a million' (All at row two in Figure 4-3), while another three give very precise prices for the items, including the latest one with the title 'Bazaar magazine send me gift worth sixty thousand yuan ($9990)' (Row one first left); the most popular video has been viewed 64,000 times with the title 'Rick Owens plagiarize Nike? Depth analysis the sneaker worth 300,000 yuan' , and the second most popular video has been viewed 52,000 times with the title 'a tattered pair of trousers worth twenty thousand? My jeans are the most fashionable one on Bilibili channel' (Fig 4-3, third row left and centre).

It is clear that videos with large price tags attract more attention. According to the comments, some audiences started to recognize Ninon Archive as a top-level collector of fashion items. Brain and Suga believe they have pushed the wave of archive propagation due to the online videos they posted on Douyin (抖音), the Chinese version of Tiktok, and on the Bilibili platform through until 2021.

---

577 '*Heitang Shijian Lvxing She*' '黑糖时间旅行社' (Black Sugar Time Travel Agency)-哔哩哔哩(Bilibili platform)
<https://search.bilibili.com/all?keyword=%E9%BB%91%E7%B3%96%E6%97%B6%E9%97%B4%E6%97%85%E8%A1%8C%E7%A4%BE&from_source=webtop_search&spm_id_from=333.1007&search_source=5> [accessed 5 December 2023].

578 Brain & Suga, Shanghai, 25 January 2021.

But, during the first face-to-face interview, Brain expressed regrets about this decision, because he realised this was a misleading meaning of the word archive which would lead the audience in a direction contrary to their original idea. The videos have pushed the understanding about fashion archive to the commercial side instead of the social cultural side. Although Brain emphasised, they were keen to figure out a profitable way to operate their archive collection, he did not want to simply equate his collection to commodity.[579] His target was to validate the value of culture and history of his collection, then create profit through these added values. When I went through the videos, I found one of the comments said: 'many archive pieces have been worn by influencers and have thus been marked with high prices in the resale market…. Some influencers even said only those pieces that have resale value could be counted as archive worthy. The cultural value of archives has been eroded by its commercial value'.[580] So, there are some audiences that have followed Brain and Suga's thinking about how to define and protect the fashion archive through their videos.

[579] Brain & Suga, Shanghai, 25 January 2021.

[580] See Figure 4-2, middle row, the first video on right.
[Heitang Q&A] Wo Weishenme Yaodang Shishang Shoucangjia? Hua Jibaiwan Mai Jiu yifu? Wo Jianchi de Archive Wenhua shihenm? Shishang+Shenhuo Da Jieme! Neihan Chaoji Zhongbang Chouijang+Huodong Yugao
'【黑糖 Q&A】我为什么要当时装收藏家？花几百万买旧衣服？我坚持的 Archive 文化是什么？时尚+生活大揭秘！内含超级重磅抽奖+活动预告([Black sugar Q&A]Why would I be a fashion collector? Spend millions on old clothes? What is the Archive culture that I adhere to? Fashion + Life big reveal! Contains Super big draw + event preview)_哔哩哔哩_bilibili'
<https://www.bilibili.com/video/BV1mt4y1Q7QE/?spm_id_from=333.999.0.0&vd_source=caec40b7984665d6b618f0352e9fe8bb> [accessed 5 December 2023].



Figure 4- 3: 11 Video in Suga's Bilibili channel. [Source: Cropped from Bilibili website by Mo Shi, May, 2023]



Figure 4- 4: Blacksuga's 抖音 Douyin（also called Tiktok in English）account. [Source: Image cropped by Mo Shi, May, 2023.]

Another account they have on Douyin is called 'Blacksuga_' and it has 44,000 followers (Fig 4-4). In this platform, videos are shorter than on Bilibili, and the title is more straight forward and eye-catching. The most popular videos have been viewed up to forty thousand times. Many comments under these videos in this platform commented that Suga is the top player in the Chinese archive fashion field. Below the most popular video called 'Before and after learning about archive: is it worth to exchange a flat in Shanghai for a pile of second-hand clothes? Luckily, instant noodles smell good', there are 2623 comments.[581] The three top liked

[581] 'Blacksuga_的抖音 Blacksuga_'s TikTok, 抖音 TikTok' <https://www.douyin.com/user/MS4wLjABAAAAjYThnLgWe-7GmgwhwBtOJ_g2Y6QL6XLaLYOWNXMVbL5gmEY8MT6NLPK4aKL7WQeu?modal_id=6830757378942651663> [accessed 5 December 2023].

comments said: Top player in China; the ensuing comments on the page repeat the definition of the archive that Suga articulated in the video; Iconic and influential pieces designed by renowned designers at their peak time of their career. Some other comments refer to the fact that the parka jacket Suga wears in this video is worth around 150 thousand yuan. Through the comments, I discovered the atmosphere in this social media platform is slightly different from Bilibili. Bilibili is famous for sharing knowledge through long videos (longer than 15 minutes) but has more audiences with their own opinions and understanding about fashion and archive. *Douyin* went viral because of super short videos (less than 1 minute) and has a larger number of audiences based in fourth-tier or smaller cities.[582] In the minds of many of the audience in Douyin, the archive seems to be something you can 'play' with; it is like vintage products and antiques, a business based on personal interests.

Placing a price tag on their archive collection to make the fashion archive pieces equivalent to purchasable products instead of museum pieces has definitely helped the audience to understand the fashion archive in a more direct way. However, the value of the fashion archive is based on criteria and a value judgement system different from normal purchasable products. As such, the 'education' process delivered unexpected results. Brain claimed his videos have misled the public's understanding of the fashion archive, causing the audience to believe that high prices are the main focus of archive fashion, and they forgot about the historical and cultural value of the collection.[583] This is not what he believed an archive should mean. He hopes to push the audience back to the original path and further educate the audience to understand how the fashion archive is related to culture and history. Just as Brain said in our interview, he was

582 *Juliang Suanshu: 2020nian Douyin Yonghu Huaxiang Baogao|Huliangwang Shuju Zixunwang-199IT| Zhongwen Hulianwang Shuju Ynjiu Zixun Zhongxin* '巨量算数：2020 年抖音用户画像报告 | 互联网数据资讯网-199IT | 中文互联网数据研究资讯中心-' (Massive arithmetic: 2020 Douyin User Portrait Report | Internet Data Information Network-199it | Chinese Internet Data Research Information Center), 199IT (2020) <//www.199it.com/archives/1017794.html> [accessed 7 January 2024].
583 Brain & Suga, Shanghai, 25 January 2021.

excited and proud he owns the same archive piece as a museum. When he said this, he was not proud of the price he paid for the piece, but because the piece proved its historical value. That is the value he was seeking for approval in Chinese market, and eventually he wanted to use this as a selling point of Ninon Archive and equally as important, to prove his personal success as a collector.

The contradiction of the attributes of the fashion archive business are revealed within Brain and Suga's project. How to collect and use the archive, as well as make profit from it while still keeping their faith about the non-commercial value of the archive? This is their major task as they try to develop the new business model of fashion archive in China. His training in Canada has helped him to form a foundation for understanding the value of fashion archives. Brain explained why he was unsatisfied with the result of their social media in the interview. He said that if they break their faith about archive, which is to protect the value of history through preserving fashion products, they devalue the archive in current Chinese society.[584] In a way, he believed that this would also devalue their collection, reducing it from a museum art collection to a fashion product collection. They did not want to see this situation happen to their collection; thus, they would naturally protect their definition of archive. But Brain was certainly under financial pressure while making such decisions. During the interview, he also kept saying that they could not just sustain an archive as a hobby, they needed to find a way to make profit through the archive.[585] What he wanted to do and what he believed he needed to do were sometimes in conflict and worked against each other.

Within the history of fashion, French couture culture has a long record of borrowing the cultural capital of art to support its business. Art historian Nancy Troy explored the development of couture houses before World War I. According to Troy, from the father of couture Charles F. Worth to the other subsequent

[584] Brain & Suga, Shanghai, 25 January 2021.
[585] Ibid.

couturier collectors in the same generation, couturiers have collected and displayed art in different ways in response to their marketing strategies.[586] Through positioning couture fashion in an artistic environment decorated by art works, and moving away from the quickly developing industrial background, the couture business successfully created the new trend "lifestyle".

In this trend, couture is not just clothing anymore, its uniqueness is celebrated and positioned as equivalent to artwork. This marketing strategy used art to add value to fashion products and has been widely adapted throughout the fashion industry since then. Helmut Lang is an example that I have discussed before. Brain's struggles in his career reveal his understanding about cultural hierarchy about the field of fashion archive. He has positioned the museum owned fashion archive on top of the pyramid. What he was trying to achieve in his career is to bring up the carefully selected personal fashion archive collection to be equivalent to a public museum fashion archive collection. He had learned from other successful examples, both personal collectors and world class museums, that fashion does represent social ideology and could be transformed into certain types of historical artifact. Brain also decided the best way to make a profit is to adopt one of the ways museums make profits: transform Ninon Archive into an intellectual property and sell derivative art products.[587] During the interview, Brain even used the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art as an example to explain how it monetises the museum's intellectual property to create internationally popular symbols and art derivative products.[588]

However, to achieve this target requires the original collection to have a certain established popularity burnished by the overall good credibility of the institution, which Ninon Archive does not yet possess. As a personal collection, the Ninon

586 Nancy J, Troy, pp. 30-36.
587 Brain & Suga, Shanghai, 25 January 2021.
588 Ibid.

Archive will not be able to benefit from their collection in the same way as a national public museum has. In order to achieve this, perhaps not reaching a comparable level in the short term but by at least moving in this direction, they need to first improve the popularity and influence of their own collection. Then, this question led back to how they could promote their collection, as described above. This paradoxical situation also attracted me to continue following Ninon Archive. After I left Shanghai in 2021, Brain and Suga sent me updates and asked for my advice on setting up exhibitions, conducting research about archives, as well as changes they were making. I will further explain their contradictory predicament, and how they gradually solved some of these troubles over the following two years.

The changes in Ninon Archive's business plan

In the interviews conducted from 2019 to 2020, Suga and Brain had a difference in opinion on the commercialisation of the archive and the meaning of archive. As outlined, Brain is desperate to develop his business with the archive collection. This desperation was combined with the need to prove himself as an adult man and as a successful collector. He vaguely described his feeling while talking about his desperation to develop his business: "as a man, you still need to....".[589] But he did not finish his sentence. Suga clearly has a slightly different understanding of the archive business. Brain believes that Suga's approach is more academic while he is more marketing oriented. Suga talked about their willingness to collaborate with colleges or other public education institutions to develop the meaning of fashion archives in China, as well as what the archive collection means to herself.[590] When I spoke with them in March 2021, they were planning to move the archive collection from where they lived to a proper studio location in Jing'an district, which is in the centre of Shanghai, named after the Jing'an temple

589 Ibid.
590 Ibid.

(meaning the Temple of peace and tranquillity). A real estate developer called Xian Suo (现所) offered them a place in their one of their properties for free. In return, Ninon Archive would elevate the art value of this property, as a way to promote the property.

This type of collaboration has become common in China since the property market became more competitive. Property developers think the same way as Brain, about using cultural hierarchy to match its image with higher educated and elite target customers, thus elevating the attraction of its properties. In this case, Ninon Archive is a cultural activity that could help the properties to lift the cultural status. In return, this collaboration could help the Ninon Archive finally have a space to build proper archive shelves and display the collection. Also, it would reduce the cost of rent, which is a very important consideration in such an expensive city as Shanghai. In this new location, they could plan the exhibition project they had been thinking about for such a long time.

After moving to the new property, Brain and Suga decided to hold an exhibition to place Ninon Archive on the Shanghai Fashion industry map. This is a project Brain always wanted to achieve, but for him the previous exhibition in 2020 was considered a failure.[591] When I tried to discover more about this exhibition, Brain defined it as a failure, as he did not understand what an exhibition was nor how to curate it at that time.[592] Also they did not have a clear future path, although they felt that a new exhibition would be a good way to demonstrate that Ninon Archive was not just another fashion archive seller, but more importantly the studio had the ability to create academic and commercial content through their collection. In addition, the founder of the property area also supported them to create something relevant to fashion culture. Thus, when they moved into the new space,

[591] Jarvis Jin, *Zhe Keneng Shini Weiyi Yici zai Zhongguo Kandao Zhe Liangjian Yifu de Jihui* '这可能是你唯一一次在中国看到这两件衣服的机会'(This may be your only chance to see these two pieces in China).
[592] Brain, Lark, 15 September 2023

the exhibition became a great chance for them to practice curation skills and market their studio.

In May 2021, their exhibition Result/Process: What is a fashion archive? (Jieguo/Guochen: Hewei Shishang Dangan? 结果/过程：何为时尚档案？) opened.[593] The goal of this exhibition was to create a new brand image for Ninon Archive Studio. However, due to the COVID-19 travel restrictions, I could not visit the exhibition in person. But I had kept in contact with them and discussed their exhibition plan. I also saw the exhibition through a Zoom video call with them. This exhibition really helped them to expand their influence and hence they started to establish themselves within the fashion industry. Later on in 2021, they moved to another new location and began to collaborate with established Chinese fashion companies in the Ribo Group. I will lay out more details about these changes in the next section.

The New Ninon Archive and its exhibition

When Ninon Archive moved to the new space and opened this new exhibition, I was located in London and could not experience their new archive space in person. But in addition to the online contact I had with Brain and Suga, I saw a video they posted on the Bilibili account on 6th June 2021, titled: "in order to answer a question that conundrum that plaguing the fashion world, I curated an exhibition?" In this video they tried to explain how they asked and answered the very basic but crucial question through the exhibition: What is an archive? (Fig 4-5 & 4-6 for the exhibition scene) Based on our previous interviews, I understood this was also the question they kept asking themselves when they started their business. I also found that some of the concepts and definitions Suga shared in the video were

593 *NINON Xinzhan: Hewei dangan Shizhuang?* 'NINON 新展：何为档案时装？Exhibition：What Is Archive？' WeChat public platform, <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/k2UukvQizhh3MOzItHqq4g> [accessed 5 December 2023].

similar to the information I shared had with her during our previous interviews and informal conversations on WeChat, as we exchanged ideas and sought each other's opinions and knowledge.

In the video, Suga said she had received many comments on her social media accounts and then went on to summarise the definition of archive from these comments as 'the greatest work a fashion designer has designed during his/her peak period', but she argued that this definition is not entirely accurate.[594] In the video she said it is quite subjective to define who is a famous or who is a great designer, and the archive needs to be more objective. In order to demonstrate the necessity of their work, Suga also introduced the historical background of the archive by using Yves Saint Laurent building the Dior archive in 1964 as her example of the earliest fashion archive in history and indicated this is an important part of a mature fashion house.

The reason for using the YSL archive as a main example was due to the need for resources to supplement Suga's information about the archive. Due to a lack of academic publications about fashion archives, Suga's main information came from Google search. Dior Heritage was frequently cited appearing in multiple online articles as the gold standard example of a corporate's fashion archive.[595] At the same time, she connected the Dior archive and the fashion exhibition, Christian Dior: Designer of Dreams, which toured in Shanghai between July and October 2020.[596]

Suga further explained that fashion archives are necessary, by first pointed out

[594] *Weile jieda yige kunrao le Shishang quan de nanti, wo jinran cehua le Yichang zhalan?* 为了解答一个困扰时尚圈的难题，我竟然策划了一场展览？(I curated an exhibition to answer a conundrum plaguing the fashion world?) online video, Bilibili, 6 June 2021, <https://www.bilibili.com/video/BV1aA41137Qv/?share_source=copy_web&vd_source=60eee94dc5dc0956cb9f6f48fa0a5d46> [accessed on 3 Sep 2023]. (00:24 to 00:34) (Original Chinese line: 一个时装设计师在他巅峰时期做出的伟大的作品).

[595] Suga, Lark, 10 September 2023.

[596] See introduction Chapter: archive in Europe.

that fashion archives are not one or two pieces of fashion products, but a collection of appraised information. For fashion brands, their fashion archive could help the brand to continue its design DNA when the creative director changed. The archive could be used as a research reference or an exhibition display when necessary. Thus, she summarised that a fashion archive is a time capsule.[597] This final definition was also a response to their account name Black Sugar Time Travel Agency.



Figure 4- 5: Photo of Ninon Archive's exhibition in Xiansuo. The name of the exhibition on left side wall. [Source: Photo provided by Brain, May, 2023.]

[597] *Weile jieda yige kunrao le Shishang quan de nanti, wo jinran cehua le Yichang zhalan?* 为了解答一个困扰时尚圈的难题，我竟然策划了一场展览？(I curated an exhibition to answer a conundrum plaguing the fashion world?).



Figure 4- 6: The new Ninon Archive space and the exhibition. [Source: Photo provided by Brain, May, 2023.]

In previous interviews, Brain explained how he planned to make Ninon Archive's status comparable to fashion archive collections belonging to museums.[598] But the methodology of the personal archive collection is different from fashion archives in museums or corporations, which lead to a different result. In the video introducing Ninon Archive exhibition on the Bilibili website, they had changed focus to corporate fashion archives, which seemed to reflect my influence during the interviews I had conducted with them, where I had emphasised the function of a corporate archive. We had also exchanged opinions about the Dior exhibition. This may have resulted in the Dior heritage department becoming an ideal fashion archive case for Suga to discuss, in order to explain what their ideal fashion archive is, because it functions for both museums and companies.

[598] Brain & Suga, Shanghai, 25 January 2021.

According to what Brain and Suga have described and showed to me, their personal collection focuses on iconic pieces from selected successful designers. The design and industrial process, the failures, struggles and difficulties the designer suffered during the process, and other accompanying information is largely missing from their collection. Thus, the story and memories about each designer is rather fragmented. This does not mean their appraisal work has no meaning. They have demonstrated a personal perspective of understanding history through fashion and explored how to maximize its influence in the social media age. They have taken part in creating the Gen Z definition about archive in China.

In the same video on the Bilibili platform, Suga introduced the format of the exhibition as 'not showing fashion but showing our attitude to fashion'.[599] Their new archive space (Fig 4-6) was also their major exhibition object. The exhibition was intended to display the archiving process in the archive room. She also declared this as a serious research space, where they would perform the archive process. Here, they planned to use a professional method to arrange, summarise and repair fashion items. Also, they will use interdisciplinary research to overlay a deeper layer of historical context to the fashion archive. Suga suggested that this archiving process makes each archive piece more valuable. When I asked Suga what interdisciplinary research means to her, she answered that the Metropolitan Museum of Art online fashion collection introduced fashion pieces by using modern art as a designer reference, and it was this which inspired her to connect fashion with art.[600] The format of the Metropolitan Museum's Costume Institute's online fashion collection became yet another kind of model for Ninon Archive.

[599] *Weile jieda yige kunrao le Shishang quan de nanti, wo jinran cehua le Yichang zhalan?* '为了解答一个困扰时尚圈的难题，我竟然策划了一场展览？'(I curated an exhibition to answer a conundrum plaguing the fashion world?). From 03:06 to 3:28 Original Chinese line: 我们并不展示时装，而是展示我们对于时装的态度… 是一个演绎存档过程的限定空间。是一个严肃的研究场所。在这里我们通过专业的方式，整理、归纳时装，修复时装。并且通过跨学科的研究，为档案时装增加厚重的历史沉淀，并把他们珍藏起来，正是这个存档过程，让每一件档案时装显得弥足珍贵。

[600] Suga, Lark, 10 September 2023.

Until now, the framework of the Ninon Archive was mainly adapted from the format of North American academic archives. The way they understood history and used history was different from all the other participants I had approached. What Brain and Suga tried to do was to bring this concept about fashion archives into the Chinese market and use it to define the value of their collection. However, the early process had not gone as they wished. Now they have moved into the new space, they were rethinking how to demonstrate their value.

In the Bilibili video, after being introduced to this new space with all the above information, the content moves to show the interior detail of Ninon Archive Room, including the archive shelves with archive pieces in beige textile garment bags and a white marble table displaying a dress on it, three dressed mannequins and one white board with many photos on it.[601] Later, Suga explains the structure and function of an archive.[602] In the video she was wearing a white lab coat and white gloves; the white lab coat is similar to what was worn in images of Christian Dior and Yves Saint Laurent at the Dior studio and is also reminiscent of the staff in the Margiela stores (Fig 4-8 to 4-11). But according to Suga she was inspired by an image from a New York Times article about how French fashion brands use archives to revive their new season design (Fig 4-7).[603] When Suga told me in a follow up interview about this image she said it was an image of the MET's fashion archive. But the image was actually taken at the Palais Galleria fashion museum in Paris.[604] She added that they prepared white coats and shoe covers for the exhibition, but in this video, they did not wear shoe covers.

In the video, she rolled the wheel on their new archive mobile shelves, checking

601 *Weile jieda yige kunrao le Shishang quan de nanti, wo jinran cehua le Yichang zhalan? '*为了解答一个困扰时尚圈的难题，我竟然策划了一场展览?' (I curated an exhibition to answer a conundrum plaguing the fashion world?). From 03:48 to 04:01.
602 Ibid. Start from 04:02.
603 Alexander Fury, 'In Fashion, the Beauty (and Challenge) of Looking Back', *The New York Times*, 18 September 2017, section T Magazine <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/18/t-magazine/fashion-house-archives-inspiration.html> [accessed 5 October 2023].
604 Suga, Lark, 10 September 2023.

the boxes stored on shelves (Fig 4-12).[605] At the same time, the voice-over explained how archive shelves, temperature and humidity control help to protect the archive collection. Suga explained that the collection is in alphabetical order, following by details about how to store different archive pieces based on their size, shape and condition. The environment and the details reflected the daily work routine they wanted to display to the audiences. However, how much of this video content reflects the real daily routine in this archive is in question.



Figure 4- 7: Photograph at the Palais Galleria fashion museum in Paris. [Source: Photo by Annabel Wlston, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/18/t-magazine/fashion-house-archives-inspiration.html]

605 Weile jieda yige kunrao le Shishang quan de nanti, wo jinran cehua le Yichang zhalan? '为了解答一个困扰时尚圈的难题，我竟然策划了一场展览？'(I curated an exhibition to answer a conundrum plaguing the fashion world?).



Figure 4- 8: French influencer visits Dior heritage archive. [Source: https://www.filigranearchives.com/en/news/archival/dior-heritage-archives-et-fashion]





Figure 4- 9: (left) Mr Dior in House of Dior studio wearing white lab coat. [Source: https://www.harpersbazaar.com/it/bellezza/make-up/a42483000/chi-era-mitzah-bricard-musa-dior-dedica-la-sua-nuova-collezione-make-up/]

Figure 4- 10： (right) Yves saint Laurent in House of Dior wearing white coat. [Source: https://media.vogue.it/oldstaticized/en/news/encyclo/designers/s/yves-saint-laurent]



Figure 4- 11: The Maison Martin Margiela team in 2008, with an empty seat for Martin Margiela. Photographed by Annie Leibovitz, *Vogue*, September 2008. [Source: https://www.yahoo.com/lifestyle/martin-margiela-own-words-tells-133000265.html?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly9sZW5zLmdvb2dsZS5jb20v&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAI_Uhf3PWYOUnK2DerlnD3P91NRTaEm2J5xgAI520LldkuF-Usa_tiD3X_JYYUmARZaqa5OV2cMDK6RfWejv3JCwP6r4IBtAFzhQFzu4kUNiRsfVxLBFhiPT2VyVA2k3WRkUa8A1BlVcvY9iFNbh6oxZj8GMtc94f5NUA_nlStQG]



Figure 4- 12: Inside the Ninon Archive Room, Suga open the archive shelves. [Source: Image cropped by Mo Shi from Suga's video in her Bilibili account, May, 2023.]

Following on from the introduction of the space, Suga said the exhibition aimed to show people that fashion archive is a possible result for vintage fashion, and what leads to this result is the archiving process that adds infinite historical, cultural and other, additional, value, to the archive piece.[606] She continued to explain that, during the archive process, they will analyse the archive piece as a historical carrier and an important form of artistic presentation based on its historical background and cultural environment of past, current and future.[607] This definition about a value-added archive process has been adapted from museum archives. Museum archives as a representative of authority, have power to define the value of the items they have collected. By adapting the concept of museum

606 Weile jieda yige kunrao le Shishang quan de nanti, wo jinran cehua le Yichang zhalan? '为了解答一个困扰时尚圈的难题，我竟然策划了一场展览？'(I curated an exhibition to answer a conundrum plaguing the fashion world?). At 05:02

607 Ibid. At 05:25 Original Chinese line: 时装档案是一件复古时装可能的结果，而导致这一结果的呢，就是为这件时装档案增加无限的历史、文化和附加值的存档过。在存档过程中我们会结合过去、现在和未来的历史背景和文化环境，去分析这件时装作为历史载体和艺术呈现形式的重要形态。

archive and demonstrating its professional ability, Ninon Archive has created a brand image to connect itself with museums. This brand image is part of Brain's business plan, and this video is more like an advertisement, rather than their real archival work routine. Because according to my observation, the space does not have full control of temperature and humidity, and they do not wear the white lab coat and white gloves during work time either.

Later in the video, Suga explained how she conducted research in this archive space by displaying a show piece from Alexander McQueen's 1999 spring-summer runway.[608] She said when they archive one item, they will gather information from all angles, then analyse the information comprehensively and then appraise it.[609] After saying that, Suga opened a white fabric document folder, took out a small pile of photos and documents, including detailed photos of this archive piece on a mannequin, the show look of this piece and the designer's photos of that show. The documents contained excerpts about this show from various magazines, published academic writings and information about the pieces. At the end, there was a written estimate about the piece done by Brain and Suga. These documents were in both English and Chinese.

When I first saw the images of the new Ninon Archive studios they sent to me, the look of the archive room surprised me when compared to the previous archive space. When I conducted the earlier interview with this couple, their collection was stored in a crowed space in which they also lived. Now they have transformed the whole collection into the proper archive look they imagined. The white archive mobile shelves with rolling wheels, the white antiacid garments bag with pictures on them, the way accessories and documents have been stored in all-white boxes and the white lab coat; the way everything was presented in the video was a value-

608 Weile jieda yige kunrao le Shishang quan de nanti, wo jinran cehua le Yichang zhalan? '为了解答一个困扰时尚圈的难题，我竟然策划了一场展览？'(I curated an exhibition to answer a conundrum plaguing the fashion world?). At 06:48
609 Ibid.

additive process, using the symbolic look of official institutions and large fashion corporates to add to the Ninon archive collection's value. In the follow-up interview, I asked Suga if the similar elements from these brands have influenced her as well? She said the style of Ninon Archive was a combination of everything she has gone through when she conducts research.[610] But the exact sample was the image from the New York Times article.

This new archive room is itself an extremely large product, bringing out the special characteristics of each reference object, and blending them all together, to produce the Ninon Archive that we see today. Suga introduced how to use the archive shelves and why they stored the collection in this way. At the end of the video, Suga showed what a completed catalogued archive piece looks like.[611] The information folder includes photos of the front and back of the garment, its details, the model-worn look, the show look, and articles from Vogue or other publications about this show, as well as academic articles about this show or showpiece. She also said whenever she shows up in the video wearing the white coat it means that she will discuss professional content of the fashion archive. Up to now Suga has worn this white coat in two other videos on the Bilibili platform that have a similar theme.[612]

Through the explanations in the video of the archive pieces and why we need fashion archives, Suga has now defined the function of the Ninon Archive in great

---

610 Suga, Lark, 10 September 2023.

611 Weile jieda yige kunrao le Shishang quan de nanti, wo jinran cehua le Yichang zhalan? '为了解答一个困扰时尚圈的难题，我竟然策划了一场展览？'(I curated an exhibition to answer a conundrum plaguing the fashion world?).

612 Video 1: Weile jieda yige kunrao le Shishang quan de nanti, wo jinran cehua le Yichang zhalan? '为了解答一个困扰时尚圈的难题，我竟然策划了一场展览?' (I curated an exhibition to answer a conundrum plaguing the fashion world?); Video 2: *Jiazhi 6wan de Dinzhi Lifu Zhang Shenmyang? Fuerdai Zuo Pingpai Daobi de Beishang Gushi|Shishang Bowuguan Richang VLOG|Xianglai Hewo Yiqi Gongzuo ma?* '价值 6 万的定制礼服长什么样？富二代做品牌倒闭的悲伤故事｜时装博物馆日常 VLOG｜想来跟我一起工作吗？' (What does a $60,000 bespoke dress look like? Rich second generation's sad story of brand closure | fashion museum daily VLOG | Want to work with me?) https://www.bilibili.com/video/BV17U4y1c7TV/?share_source=copy_web&vd_source=60eee94dc5dc0956cb9f6f48fa0a5d46 [accessed on 3 Sep 2023].

detail. The archive working process and conservation details adapted from museums, and the look of the archivist adapted from Museum archives, has created an environment to suggest and demonstrate the professional identity of the Ninon Archive. The format of this exhibition further demonstrated this impression quite cleverly to the audience, by revealing the entire archive process to show how dedicated they have been working to preserve the archive collection.[613] Overall, they have moved away from simply showing price tag circulation and have successfully presented themselves as professional fashion archivists concentrating on preserving history through fashion.

After I received the information about the opening of Ninon Archive's exhibition in May 2021, I began observing the progress of this exhibition and the changes that occurred because of it. Through conversation in late 2021 with the founders, I also learnt that they had gradually found a better balance of commerciality and academia in the business balance within their archive. As I described above, in the early interviews, there were the contradictions in the business plan. One of the main reasons was that Brain had started to collect through purchasing vintage fashion pieces and gradually learnt the meaning of 'archive pieces' from the perspective of the fashion market, rather than through historical research. For him, at the beginning of his collecting journey, the value of the historical background of an archive piece was the icing on the cake, enabling the viewer to evaluate the value of a fashion product as an artwork with historical heritage. As a collector who is proud of his collection, this type of recognition was key for him to identify himself.

On the other hand, apart from just collecting or owning the precious museum-level archive pieces, financial pressure pushed him to try various methods to create a

613 Weile jieda yige kunrao le Shishang quan de nanti, wo jinran cehua le Yichang zhalan? '为了解答一个困扰时尚圈的难题，我竟然策划了一场展览？'(I curated an exhibition to answer a conundrum plaguing the fashion world?).

profit from the collection. Brain also needs to prove that the money he spent on the collection is worthwhile, and that his business decisions are correct. This exhibition allowed him to rethink his approach and with it brought new opportunities.

The exhibition finished at the end of February 2022.[614] Finally, in April and June 2022, I heard from some other contacts in the fashion and art fields talking about this particular exhibition. My friend Linlin, an art exhibition influencer based in Shanghai, shared that she enjoyed the exhibition and wanted to help Brain and Suga, thus she introduced an art curator and university professor to them, who later introduced the founder of JNBY to them.[615] This is just one connection that shows how Ninon Archive found opportunities through their activities based on the archive collection.

According to Suga, during the exhibition period they received a lot of magazine and media requests seeking to report on their studio or exhibition.[616] And these promotional activities began to show their influence. In late 2021, Brain and Suga contacted me to share their new updates about Ninon Archive.[617] They were going to move location again and there was a potential opportunity to host an exhibition in collaboration with a Shanghai Art Museum called West Bund Museum, which is a government-owned art institution. The museum has a long-term collaboration with the French contemporary art museum the Pompidou Centre. While holding the exhibition with highlights of the Pompidou collection, the West Bund Museum was trying to add new angles to inspire their audience. Brain and Suga were very

---

614 Dangdai Shizhuang Ynajiu Zhongxin 当代时装研究中心, *Dangdai Shizhuang Yangjiu Zhongxin: Chongxie Shishang Shidaixing*, '当代时装研究中心：重写时尚现代性', (Contemporary Fashion Institution: Rewriting Fashion Modernity) 微信公众平台 WeChat Public platform <http://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?__biz=MzIzNzQyMDYyMg==&mid=2247483974&idx=1&sn=730b3990dba0ecad9e57b149361e7e94&chksm=e8c9ab67dfbe2271b6f43fbf71174d08d1d549374a3342469e17ecfb4917fc86c5ec924f5121#rd> [accessed 5 December 2023].

615 JNBY is one of the leading designer apparel brands and perhaps the most influential in China. It was founded by Lin Li in 1994 with its headquarters located in Hangzhou.

616 Suga, Lark, 10 September 2023

617 Brain & Suga, private conversation with Mo Shi, WeChat, September 2021.

excited when they received this opportunity. If they could successfully join this project, it would demonstrate that Ninon Archive's collection had been accepted by an official Chinese art institution. This would be an essential step for the Ninon Archive to add value to its collection because the government-owned museum is representing the cultural capital controlled by the State's power. This could add not just cultural capital but also potential economic and social capitals to Ninon Archive. Through this type of collaboration, Ninon Archive could pass the government gatekeeper's assessment and enter the core area in Shanghai's cultural and museum field.

Before going into the meeting with the curation team in the West Bund Museum, they shared their PowerPoint proposal with me, seeking my advice. I joined the meeting as an adviser to provide advice related to my professional experience as an archivist and archive researcher. The proposal's title was 'Fashion and Body' (时装与身体).[618] In the introduction, the proposal quoted from French socialist and philosopher Jean Baudrillard's book '*The Consumer Society*' was used to point out that fashion as a type of material has been imbued with symbolic meaning in the contemporary society.[619] The proposed exhibition would focus on the period from the 1980s onwards and on how fashion turned from an emphasis on artistic aesthetics to the expression of personal subjectivity, including political position, social position and personal emotion. In addition to The Consumer Society, the exhibition proposal cited also included Baudrillard's '*The System of Objects*' and '*Fatal Strategies*', as well as French theorist Roland Barthes's '*the Fashion System*', and a British fashion scholar's '*Fashion at the Edge*'.[620] Although they are the key texts for UK-based fashion cultural studies, none of these books were recommended by me.

---

618 Brain & Suga, 'Fashion and Body', unpublished proposal delivered at a private meeting.

619 Ibid, p. 3. Jean Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures* (London: SAGE, 2016); Jean Baudrillard, *The system of Objects* (London: Verso Books, 2005); Jean Baudrillard and others, *Fatal Strategies* (Los Angeles: Semiotext[e], 2008); Roland Barthes, *The Fashion System* (London: Vintage Classics, 2010); Caroline Evans, *Fashion at the Edge: Spectacle, Modernity, and Deathliness* (London: Yale University Press, 2003)

620 Brain & Suga, 'Fashion and Body', unpublished proposal delivered at a private meeting.

Through this list of names and books, they showed ambition to demonstrate their ability to conduct academic research. And more importantly, to demonstrate the value of their own collection. In the proposal, a few fashion looks Brain and Suga proposed to include in the exhibition were positioned next to art works and social events, which reflected their original aim of discussing the changes of fashion from mere clothes to social communication tools or even an art works.[621] But more frequently the fashion looks from the Ninon Archive were presented alongside with the same look that been collected by MoMA, the MET, the Palais Galleria or a fashion house's museum.[622] The words below these looks touched upon the concept of fashion and the body or fashion and contemporary art, which was in response to the title of the proposal and the exhibition in the West Bund Museum. Brain and Suga also suggested a collection of related activities including conferences and dance workshops.[623] At the end of the proposal there was a list of potential sponsors and my name was included in the invited guest speakers and lecturer lists.[624]

Unfortunately, in the end they were not able to implement this exhibition. Brain told me the main reason that the exhibition could not happen was due to the complicated system inside the museum.[625] The person and contact who suggested this project to Brain and Suga was in the museum's education department but was not in a position to decide if this proposal would be accepted. Furthermore, Brain said the Pompidou exhibition in the West Bund Museum is dominated by the curation team from the Pompidou, and any changes to the exhibition may cause conflict with the original exhibition loan contract between the West Bund Museum and Pompidou.[626] Thus, this suggested collaboration may have failed due to being

621 Brain & Suga, 'Fashion and Body', unpublished proposal delivered at a private meeting, p. 14.
622 Ibid, pp. 17-22.
623 Ibid, pp. 30-35.
624 Ibid, p. 39.
625 Brain, Lark, 15 September 2023.
626 Ibid.

misguided from the beginning. But Brain reflected that : before, they did not understand about the museum system in Shanghai, so this opportunity brought them closer to the reality in the field.[627] After this unsuccessful attempt, Ninon Archive recruited a new employee who left the education department of West Bund Museum to join them.

From Ninon Archive to CoFI

In January 2022, due to the sudden severe lock-down policy in Shanghai, Brain and Suga decide to close the exhibition and move their collection to a warehouse for short period. Afterwards they moved to a new location in the premises of a fashion company called Ribo Group (日播集团), and they also received sponsorship from that company.[628] The new plan was to curate another exhibition with buyer boutique R130, who were also founded by the same group.[629] In a further interview, Brain and Suga said they been introduced to Yaning Shi, the manager of R130, by Brain's business friend in the fashion industry. Yaning Shi was trying to plan a special grand opening for R130 around Shanghai Fashion Week, as the opening of this buyer boutique is part of the new business strategy development plan Ribo Group implemented in 2010. Brain's friend highly recommended Brain and Suga to curate an exhibition for the boutique.[630]

As a traditional apparel producer, the Ribo Group needed to develop new business areas in order to create growth. R130 is part of this strategy to explore a new retail

627 Brain, Lark, 15 September 2023.

628 Ribo Fashion Group is a fashion group with an emphasis on luxury women's fashion who works in the fields of process technology, creative design of moderate apparel, research and development, production and sales. The company founded was in 1997, it now has more than 1700 staff and more than 1100 shops in total.

629 See Introduced Chapter.

630 *《Qianming Shishang: Ante Weipu Xinsheng Liliang》:Guanyu Chuangzaoli yu Shenfen Gongming* '《签名时尚：安特卫普新生力量》：关于创造力与身份共鸣' (Signature on Fashion: The New Generation of Antwerp: Creativity resonates with identity), 微信公众平台 WeChat Public Platform <http://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?__biz=MzIzNzQyMDYyMg==&mid=2247484114&idx=1&sn=e35382a5da00335aa0c074e33d179972&chksm=e8c9abf3dfbe22e598b1b216056174e5c032fee480a8a1c23dadfee475af03484f11a55da4d2#rd> [accessed 6 December 2023].

business model. According to Brain's proposal, the R130 exhibition had no direct connection with the Ninon Archive collection, but it did require them to curate emerging fashion designers who had graduated from the Royal Academy of Fine Art in Antwerp.[631] This group of designers included Chinese, European and African designers. Their style was more provocative and avant-garde than most other fashion brands in Chinese market. The exhibition presented the boutique with a professional tone and created an image of the buyer boutique's style.

Through this collaboration, Suga and Brain progressed from being archive collectors to being curators. Before they took on this collaboration project, they already started serious research about Martin Margiela, and had already purchased a collection of Margiela's early work. Margiela is also one of the Antwerp Six graduates from the Royal Academy of Fine Art (RAFA) in Antwerp. Through the many years of collecting Margiela, Brain and Suga therefore had a deep knowledge of RAFA's tradition of fashion education and as such were deemed to be suitable curators for this exhibition by Yaning Shi. Shi was their main bridge to collaborate with Ribo Group. While the path towards a museum exhibition had been obstructed, another path to work with fashion corporates became feasible.

The exhibition was originally planned to open at the store's grand opening during Shanghai Fashion Week in April 2022. However, again the pandemic disturbed their plans. From April to June 2022 Shanghai went through a comprehensive and strict lock-down. All Fashion Week activities were entirely cancelled – a situation that did not occur even in early 2020, when COVID-19 first impacted the Chinese fashion industry. After three months of lock-down, I finally had another zoom call with Brain and Suga. They told me they were still working on this exhibition and planned to open it in October 2022.[632] The planned new store for R130 would

631 Brain & Suga & Yaning Shi, meeting with Mo Shi, WeChat & Zoom, Jan 2022.
632 Brain, private conversation with Mo Shi, WeChat, April 2022.

open at the same time. And in a positive development, they now had an office in Ribo Group which would enable them to work closely with the company.

They also received a new offer from another location to move their archive room to in September 2022. The new location is called NIB Building, a landmark building near the Bund in the heart of Shanghai city. The building has been registered as a conservation building, due to its historical background as the original head office of the National Industrial Band of China in 1932.[633] This change of office location and collaboration partner resulted in Ninon Archive Room changing its name to Contemporary Fashion Institution (CoFI).[634] In their public account, they posted an article titled CoFI: Rewrite Fashion Modernity. In the post, they declared that CoFI will maintain the highly independence and non-profit features of its archive department and continue to produce good quality content about fashion culture and research.[635]

At the end of this doctoral research project, it is clear that the Ninon Archive, which is CoFI now, has gained important cultural capital to support the next step of their development. The location of their new office is strongly bonded with Shanghai cultural context, which provides extra cultural capital for their personal archive collection to gain a voice in the field. The R130 exhibition aimed to demonstrate Brain and Suga's taste and knowledge of selecting fashion items, as well as further developing their ability as curators. From the new name, CoFI, it seems that their future business plan will move away from an archive focus and, instead, they will focus on fashion research.

633 The NBI building was designed by British owned architectural firm Atkinson & Dallas in 1929 and renovated by another British architectural firm David Chipperfield Architects in early 2010s. Then became part of Rockbund Art Museum.

634 *《Qianming Shishang: Ante Weipu Xinsheng Liliang》:Guanyu Chuangzaoli yu Shenfen Gongming* '《签名时尚：安特卫普新生力量》：关于创造力与身份共鸣' (Signature on Fashion: The New Generation of Antwerp: Creativity resonates with identity).

635 Ibid.

Conclusion

In this case study, I have witnessed and taken part in a transformation process. I can sense that my influence was more obvious and essential to Brain and Suga before they held the Ninon Archive Room exhibition. They contacted me and sought advice on archive theories, curation proposals and future direction more frequently before the exhibition. The contacts they made during the exhibition have led them in a new direction. This direction may not be the same as their original plan, but it could support the Ninon Archive to survive in the competitive Chinese market.

Is what the Ninon Archive experienced common for other personal collections in China? The answer is that although the emergence of the Ninon Archive is typical, the transformation from a studio mainly based on a rental and resale business to an institution focussed on research and curation is a special model in the current Chinese market. During the developing process, the Ninon Archive demonstrated the possibilities of a fashion archive to their Chinese audiences. However, as this Chapter shows, although Brain and Suga intended to build the Ninon Archive by adapting a museum business model, their methodology of appraising and collecting archives led them to another path.

The reality is that after they commercialised their archive items, the Ninon Archive has practiced commercialising the archive process as well through the exhibition. Their business path reflected contradictory understandings about history and archive, which also reflected the uncertainty about the definition of archive in Chinese society. Considering that the Ninon Archive then received support through their exhibitions and online channels, it could be argued that the concept of archive has been truly explored and expanded in the field due to Ninon's activities, but the business model itself is not mature yet.

In my research, the Ninon Archive has been a unique case study among all my research participants, as it has enriched my understanding about how professionals in the Chinese fashion industry are trying to use history to create value. During our communication process, I also learnt about my own deficiencies in archive practices. Most of my work experience with archives was focused on archive recording and general management, which related less to the decision-making process. However, Brain and Suga need to constantly make decisions during their practice, including deciding what to collect and why to collect. Especially when they started to practice curating, they needed to decide what to exhibit and why. When they combined both archive work and curation work themselves, they were actually trying to control both the information's entrance into the archive and its exit to the public through the exhibition. This control further affected their appraisal methodology, because they are not just writing history in the archive, but also in the public space.

The Ninon archive case study demonstrates how Brain and Suga tried to revalue the meaning of the fashion archive in the Chinese fashion market through a new business model. The marketing methods they have used to commercialize their archive collection reveal a process of adding value and gaining cultural capitals, and a complex power relationship in the field of fashion. These capitals came from the brands contained in their collection and the exhibitions they have curated based on this collection, as well as from established museums and buyer boutiques in Shanghai. By bringing the concept of the archive deeper into the Chinese fashion market, this case study has added diversity to the exploration of writing history through fashion in China.

In September 2022, not long after they moved into the new building, Brain and Suga recruited a curatorial assistant from Shanghai's West Bund Museum to expand the team. The team started to actively propose new activities for the NIB building and Rockbund Art Museum, including reading groups, conferences, and

exhibitions. But in April 2023, I found out that Suga had left the team and moved to Melbourne to conduct further study. The story of the Ninon Archive has turned a new page.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

This research aims to uncover the meanings and possibilities presented by the Chinese fashion archive in the framework of the twenty-first century Chinese contemporary fashion industry. By placing the fashion archive within the context of the Chinese fashion industry this research further defines the value of the fashion archive and the history of fashion within an emergent region in the creative industries. Through exploration of how fashion professionals use fashion archives to create history and understand history in various archive cases, this project reveals the logic of history and memory-making within the Chinese fashion system. Fashion archives are not only supporting the creation of history, but also becoming part of the history during the process of history-making. At the macro level this research also reflects how modern Chinese society understands and responds to history in multiple ways which celebrates more diverse perspectives of history in China.

The cases in this research project demonstrate that the archive has multiple formats in present day China. They have maintained the functions of an archive to preserve and create history and have also developed new functions that help the archive to fit into different types of fashion business. This results in greater diversity in ways of 'writing' history and understanding history. This project therefore also provides a direction for progressing and building a solid foundation for the research of the history in the Chinese fashion industry, and also reveals the location and nature of primary sources for fashion historians in the future who may research this period of Chinese fashion history.

Before I started this PhD research project in 2019, I considered an apparent lack of established and usable archives in the Chinese fashion industry might impede the development of the industry. Due to complex historical and political reasons, the histories, memories and narratives that archives could preserve and inherit

seemed to have been neglected by industry professionals for too long. As a researcher, I wanted to find out the reasons behind this situation.

After I started my research, I soon realized that China has its own fashion archive format and its own fashion system of creating archives. My previous underestimation of the presence of archives in China was undoubtedly due to my initial concentration on fashion archives modelled on the European fashion system, and so the multiple types of fashion archive cases and I encountered and the interactions I had with a wide variety of fashion professionals opened up a wealth of possibilities for the Chinese fashion archive. Where the Euro-American fashion system is currently offering an archival model, it needs to adapt and transform in the Chinese context and requires translation for local audiences.

This discovery has been reflected in Chapter One, as the translation of the word archive and *dang'an* has drawn attention to the tension between the fashion systems of China, Europe, North America and Japan. The strongly rooted nationalism and contradictory ideologies around cultural awareness and cultural confidence are still ongoing issues in Chinese society, which will keep on affecting the way history is written in the country. The fashion archives in this thesis provide one perspective to reveal the influence of these contradictory ideologies; they also offer a way to record changes in social ideology.

My research process from 2020 to 2022 was greatly affected by COVID-19 restrictions which limited my fieldwork trips and the number of participants I could approach face to face. But this also allowed me to reduce time and funds on travelling and networking, and instead concentrate on the cases I selected and create a deeper connection with certain participants. The case selection process was similar to an archive appraisal process. My appraisal method has given these cases the power to represent the current situation of Chinese fashion archives in this thesis, though each one just uncovers fragments of the overall reality. This

reality is diverse and changing rapidly.

The examination of contemporary Chinese definitions of different types of archives enables further exploration of a series of questions: what has been collected in the different types of archives? Why do these materials matter for the creator? And how did the creator decide to preserve their collection? In Chapter Two, the exploration of materiality and location of Chinese fashion archives was guided by the contradictory ideology explained in Chapter One. I have analysed fashion companies located in different areas, to understand how they build their archives. It was clear that because fashion is a business, and archive formats are largely based on the brand's business strategy, archives are not a priority for most small fashion businesses and independent fashion designers, who face multiple challenges to survive.

For established fashion companies, archives started to demonstrate their importance, for instance, as seen in the case of Vintage and Republic case. At the same time, the creator of an archive may face new struggles in understanding history through fashion or positioning themselves with that history, such as Binggan from Roaring Wild, and potentially the individuals working at Vintage and Republic. Their and Sandriver's archives further reveal the nostalgia and cultural heritage approach of using archives within the nationalistic influence and the development of the Chinese fashion industry. The multifaceted understandings of the archive reflect uncertainty about how to preserve history and position history, while at the same time, overall, Chinese fashion designers are creating fragments of new history during the process of using history in their everyday work routine to support their fashion businesses.

But what about those working on the marketing or management side of the fashion business in China? What is their understanding of the history of fashion and their own history? Chapters Three and Four pursued this question through

two crucial cases which reflected another aspect of the archive's function. In Chapter Three, the main case study of Labelhood, the buyer boutique and leading Chinese fashion platform for emerging designers, revealed how, within their special business model, the archive plays a role as a gatekeeper's tool. The Labelhood archive collection was a way of displaying power, demonstrating how a buyer boutique and fashion platform could control people and information going through the gateway to enter the fashion field in China. Compared to the fashion designer's archive, which focuses on internal use, Labelhood has brought the power of the archive into the public arena due to its access method and target audiences. In comparison, in a designer's own archive, the feedback function within the gatekeeping process safeguards the circulation of its internal information to write the creator's history, and involving more individuals who then become part of the gatekeeper system.

The other crucial case study of Brain and Suga's Ninon Archive outlined in Chapter Four, showed how a personal archive collection has itself become a new business model for the Chinese fashion industry. A start-up business heavily influenced by the new popular concept in the fashion markets of North America and Europe - archive fashion, or archival fashion – Ninon's business plan and goals about the fashion archive reflected another way of using history within the Chinese fashion industry, namely that history could be commercialized to create profit.

In order to closely observe the development of this new business model, I employed a combination of observational and analytical methods, but due to Brain and Suga's unexpected interest in my research, this came to involve participating in the formulation of part of their business plan and providing advice on an exhibition proposal regarding their archive. This research process has led to a deep understanding of the status of fashion archives in China from the level of participant observation as well, including the market's reaction, the business challenges and the commercialization process of archives. Ninon Archive's

development is a test of the new possibilities of the archive in the Chinese fashion industry. Through taking part in advising Ninon Archive's projects, my role has involved interpreting archive theory and archive practice in the fashion field in China and the West. The Ninon Archive has faced numerous challenges that reveal the difficulties of transforming North American and European archive models and archive fashion concepts into the Chinese context. Their situation provides diverse perspectives for understanding the dynamic power flows in fashion systems.

This thesis rethinks definitions of the archive for the Chinese fashion system. Currently, the development of a Chinese fashion archive system is comparatively slow, principally due to the relatively short history of the contemporary fashion history and rapidly changing challenges in the Chinese fashion market, as well as the strong censorship control by State agencies which affects what fashion professionals choose to collect and use. This research project itself is an archive as well, having recorded the period of the history of the transformation of the Chinese fashion industry from the 1990s to the 2020s. It remains to be seen whether these fragments of history may prove to form a crucial period in Chinese fashion history. Nevertheless, they have provided insights into commerce-led understandings of Chinese fashion history, backed by evidence of how industry insiders have used and collected history.

As with all research there are limitations in my project. The digital fashion archive is one of the archive types that I touched upon in several Chapters but did not develop into a full case study due to the limitation of contacts and existing examples. Although Labelhood's archive was in digital format, its main function did not reflect particular features relating to digital technology that warranted further investigation here. The other case study on Shi Tang (时堂) showed that its business development was associated with a wider range of technology applications. Shi Tang had formed another type of archive related to its fashion business, which did not contain any physical fashion material, but instead is totally

focused on internal use of its customer behaviour database. This indicates the potential for another kind of fashion archive that could influence the future fashion market and the development of the Chinese fashion industry. Questions about the relationship between digital database fashion archives and the creation, preservation and uses of history are raised that could lead me to future research.

Apart from revealing the potential future research direction, I also collaborated with one of my participants: CoFI held an exhibition based on part of my thesis during Shanghai Fashion Week in March 2024. The exhibition was entitled "Archiving Chinese Fashion: Connecting Past, Present and Future". It gathered four key participants from this research project: Shushu Tong, Osmos (the founder was one of the founders of Nume), Sandriver and STAFFONLY, as well as six other Chinese fashion brands. The exhibition attracted a certain level of attention in the industry. Based on it I have reconnected with the Chinese fashion industry since my last fieldwork trip in 2020 and enlarged the influence of the concept of 'archive' in China with a more mature definition.

I am also planning an international conference and roundtable talk in China around March 2025. The conference will focus on further exploring the diversity of Chinese history through the lens of fashion archives. Topics of discussion will include materiality, identity and new technologies. This conference will collaborate with leading Chinese art colleges, and aims to invite speakers from the Chinese education system to join the conversation with international fashion archive researchers and archivists regarding the definition of Chinese fashion archives and the future development of the subject. If this conference establishes itself as an annual project and acts as a bridge between Western and Eastern fashion archive research fields, then this research topic could continue growing and absorbing new intellectual input. Through this, and the other industry interactions detailed in this thesis, this research itself is becoming a foundation for rebuilding Chinese cultural confidence through fashion and energising the

industry with a deeper understanding of the archive.

The essence of an archive is not derived solely from that which is recorded in the archive, it is also derived from that which has not been recorded. In the case of Chinese fashion archives, currently the dominant attitude is to understate or underestimate the value of unofficial historical records. This reflects Chinese social ideology which concentrates on celebrating the collective instead of the individual. If we want to create a multi-dimensional Chinese fashion history, it is crucial to not only recognise the value of corporate and personal archives, but also to understand its nature more deeply. For fashion scholars and fashion professionals to use these contemporary history archives, it is important to understand the complex cultural conditions under which they are being made.

Appendix 1

(See interview transcription and translation in Appendix 2)

Interview questions:

Pre question:

Please introduce yourself and your fashion brand.

请介绍你自己的和你的品牌

Q1:
How do you call the archive in your company? How do you describe your archive? Where did you first encounter the word 'archive'?

你怎么样称呼你公司当中的 archive？你怎么形容它？你第一次了解到‘archive’这个词是什么时候？

Q2:
What's the format of the archive? Digital or Mix?

你们的 archive 是什么样的形式？电子还是混合？

Q3:
How do you start the archive? What kind thing do you keep in the archive? Why?

你们如何开始有 archive？你会把什么东西会被收藏在其中？怎么选择？

Q4:
Does your archive have a function? What is it?

你的 archive 有作用吗？作用是什么？

Q5:

Do you have any plan regarding archives in the future?

对于你的 archive，你是否有什么关于未来的构想？

Interviewee list:

	Brands Name/ Participant's Name	Years	Background	Interview Methods/ Time	Do the participants recognize the word archive?	Does the participants' organization have an archive?
1.	(TEST) STAFFONLY/ Shimo Zhou 周师墨	2014	LCF	14/06/2020	Yes	yes
2.	(TEST) Tingtang 厅堂 /Freya		UAL	01/06/2020	No	Yes 资料室
3.	/Lulu	2017	莱佛士 China	WeChat phone call / 02/09/2020	No, First time in interview.	Semi-archive 龙门架
4.	OUTDOGER and 素然 /Zhang Zuohui	2019	Shanghai 读书/2010	WeChat phone call/ 02/09/2020	No Learn from work experience.	共享云端/公共盘
5.	Judy Fan /Judy Fan	2017	ITALY/马兰戈尼; Lcf/bespoke tailoring	WeChat phone call/ 03/09/2020	Yes Learn from study.	云相册/微云
6.	Fengyi Tan/ Fengyi Tan	2015	RCA womenswe	WeChat phone call/	Yes Learn from	仓库/样衣/sample

			ar	03/09/2020	VandA museum exhibition.	中文没有这个说法
7.	Roundface/ Jia ya(Wendy)	2019	UAL Camberwell	WeChat phone call/ 03/09/2020	No	
8.	Wan Yifang/ Yifang Wan 万一方	2012 / 2015	CSM	WeChat phone call/ 05/09/2020	Yes	样衣/资料 样品仓
9.	Zssh/ Xiaoyu Wang 汪晓钰	2016 /	GAFA, CHINA	WeChat phone call/ 06/09/2020	No	
10.	Jinginglab/ Jingjing	2019	LCF accessory	WeChat phone call/ 06/09/2020	Yes, Learn from work.	样品库
11.	Peiying Studio/ Ying Pei 裴颖	2015	LCF Womenswear	WeChat phone call/ 07/09/2020	Yes，Learn from study, library.	No name
12.	FUN AFFAIR/ 晶晶 Cee Cee	2015	LCF Womenswear	WeChat phone call/ 09/09/2020	Yes, Learn from publications.	贮藏室
13.	Carven in ICICO group/	2019	France	WeChat phone call/	Yes. Learn from	

	Kass			20/10/2020	work, in LV.	
14.	Luminous/	2019	LCF	WeChat phone call/ 21/10/2020	Yes, learn in LCF class.	样衣
15.	Chen Peng/ Chen Peng 陈鹏	2015	LCF	WeChat phone call/ 25/10/2020	Yes, learn during study.	资料，产品
16.	loops/ Zhou Yi	2017 - 2019	LCF	WeChat phone call/ 26/10/2020	Yes, learn in LCF library.	仓库
17.	Old Lyrid（not fashion brand）/ Kian and Zephy	2011	LCF	WeChat phone call and Face to face interview. / 27/10/2020 and 24/02/2021	Yes. Learn during work and shopping.	Archive
18.	Luooif Studio/ Lena	2016	CSM TEXTILE	WeChat phone call/ 02/11/2020	Yes, not sure. From fashion marketing friend.	运营

19.	卡 玫 莲 （ not fashion brand）/ Kiko Su	2014	UK, Marketing	WeChat phone call/ 03/11/2020	No	
20.	Suzhou Cobbler/ Denise Huang	2000	China	WeChat phone call/ 03/11/2020	Yes. But haven't built one yet.	
21.	KEH FORM/ Gary	2019	Parsons, USA	WeChat phone call/ 05/11/2020	Yes, learn from buy vintage or work in Oscar de la Renta, or MET.	面料 archive
22.	Ninon （ not fashion brand）/ Brain and Suga	2014	Canada	WeChat phone call and Face to face interview/ 11/11/2020 and 25/01/2021	Yes, learn from shopping.	Archive
23.	Y/project/			Questionnaire		
24.	姐姐介绍			Questionnaire		
25.	姐姐介绍			Questionnai		

				re		
26.	William 介绍			Questionnaire		
27.	The Warehouse by Shitang（not fashion brand）/ Chen Qin	2018	China	Face to face interview/ 18/01/2021	No.	Membership Big date.
28.	Staffonly/ Une Yea 温雅 (the 3rd party Elaine)	2015	LCF and RCA	WeChat phone call and Face to face interview/ 22/01/2021	Yes. Learn from work and study.	仓库
29.	Labelhood (not fashion brand)/ Tasha Liu	2013	China	Face to face interview/ 27/01/2021	Yes,	档案馆
30.	Sandriver/ Xiuling Guo 郭秀玲	1990	China	WeChat Phone call and Face to face interview/ 31/01/2021	No.	
31.	Vintage and Republic/ Hui Zhan 詹慧	2014	China	Face to face interview/ 03/02/2021	No.	样衣

32.	Fussed/ Ginger and Himm	2014	Japan/UK	Face to face interview/ 17/02/2021	No.	
33.	Roaring wild/ 饼干 Binggan	2010	China	Face to face interview/ 19/02/2021	Yes.	样衣间/sample room
34.	Ming Ma/ Ming Ma	2018	CSM, UK.	Questionnaire 19/02/2021	Yes. In college library.	品牌档案
35.	L'ELEMENTO/ 康康 Kangkang	2018	Italy	Face to face interview/ 24/02/2021	Yes, from family business.	
36.	Ecrivian /杜龙亮	2019	France	Face to face interview/ 24/02/2021	Yes.	
37.	Yehua Fan/ Yehua Fan	2018	Kingston/ UK	Face to face interview/ 25/02/2021	Yes. From study.	
38.	Haizhen Wang/ Haizhen Wang 王海震	2010	LCF/RCA UK	Face to face interview/ 25/02/2021	Yes. From work in Max Mara.	仓库
39.	Shushu/Tong/	2015	LCF	Face to face	Yes.	仓库/库房

	Yutong Jiang 蒋雨彤			interview/ 27/02/2021		
40.	Nume/Steven	2020	America	WeChat phone call 27/04/2021	Yes. From museum and work.	Archive/ 老作品（old work）
41.	Ejing Zhang/ Ejing Zhang	2015	RCA textile	Face to face	Yes.	Archive
42.	Broadcast 播 / Wenqi Wu 吴文棋	1999	Parsons	WeChat phone call 28/08/2022	Yes. From FIT archive.	档案馆

Bibliography:

Published resource

Aronowsky Cronberg, Anja, '"There will never be a Chinese Fashion": Staking a Claim for Shanghai as a Fashion City', *Styling Shanghai* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020)

Barthes, Roland, *The Fashion System* (London: Vintage Classics, 2010)

Barzilai-Nahon, Karine, 'Gatekeepers, Virtual Communities and the Gated: Multidimensional Tensions in Cyberspace', *Virtual Communities* (2006) 1-28

Barzilai-Nahon, Karine, 'Toward a Theory of Network Gatekeeping: A Framework for Exploring Information Control', *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 59(9) (2008) 1493-1512

Bass-Krueger, Maude, 'Fashion Collections, Collectors, and Exhibitions in France, 1874–1900: Historical Imagination, the Spectacular Past, and the Practice of Restoration', *Fashion Theory*, 22.4–5 (2018) 405–33 <https://doi.org/10.1080/1362704X.2018.1425354>

Baudrillard, Jean, *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures* (London: SAGE, 2016)

Baudrillard, Jean, *The system of Objects* (London: Verso Books, 2005)

Baudrillard, Jean and others, *Fatal Strategies* (Los Angeles: Semiotext[e], 2008)

Black, Sandy, and other, ed. The Handbook of Fashion Studies, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013)

Bolton, Andrew and Asam Geczy, et al, ed. *China Through the Looking Glass* (New York: Yale Press and Metropolitan Museum, 2015)

Bourdieu, Pierre, *Distinction* (Oxford: Routledge, 2010)

Bourdieu, Pierre, 'THE FORMS OF CAPITAL', in Richardson, J.ed, *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (1986), Westport, CT: Greenwood, pp. 241–58

Bourdieu, Pierre and Loïx J.D. Wacquant, *An invitation to reflexive sociology*, (1996, 97).

Breakell, Sue and Wendy Russell, *The Materiality of the Archive: Creative Practice in Context*, 1st edn (London: Routledge, 2023) https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429262487

Breward, Christopher and Juliette MacDonald ed, *Styling Shanghai*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2020)

Bryson, Anna and Sean McConville, The Routledge Guide to Interview: Oral History, Social Enquiry and Investigation (London: Routledge, 2014)

Burnes, Bernard and Bill Cooke, 'Kurt Lewin's Field Theory: A Review and Re-Evaluation: Kurt Lewin's Field Theory', *International Journal of Management Reviews* (2012) <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2370.2012.00348.x>

Burns, Jasmine E., 'The Aura of Materiality: Digital Surrogacy and the Preservation of Photographic Archives', *Art Documentation: Journal of the Art Libraries Society of North America*, 36.1 (2017) 1–8 <https://doi.org/10.1086/691368>

Cassidy, Tracy Diane and Hannah Rose Bennett *The Rise of Vintage Fashion and the Vintage Consumer*, Fashion Practice, 4:2 (2012), pp. 239-261

Chu, Nellie, 'The Emergence of "Craft" and Migrant Entrepreneurship along the Global Commodity Chains for Fast Fashion in Southern China', *The Journal of Modern Craft*, 9.2 (2016) 193–213 <https://doi.org/10.1080/17496772.2016.1205278>

Cook, Terry, "What is Past is Prologue: A History of Archival Ideas since 1989, and the Future Paradigm Shift", *Archivaria*, 43 (Spring 1997), pp. 17-63

Cook, Terry, 'Evidence, Memory, Identity, and Community: Four Shifting Archival Paradigms', *Archival Science*, 13.2–3 (2013), pp. 95–120

Cook, Terry, Tom Nesmith, Greg Bak, Joan M. Schwartz, Society of American Archivists, and Association of Canadian Archivists, eds., *'All Shook up': The Archival Legacy of Terry Cook* (Chicago, Illinois]: [Ottawa, Ontario: Society of American Archivists ; Association of Canadian Archivists, 2020)

Corbin, Juliet and Anselm Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, 4th Edition (London: Sage, 2008)

Craven, Louise, 'From the Archivist's Cardigan to the Very Dead Sheep: What are Archives? What are Archivists? What do They Do?', in *What are Archives? Cultural and Theoretical Perspectives: A Reader,* ed. by Louise Craven (London: Routledge, 2017)

Croberg, Anja Aronowsky, '"There will never be a Chinese Fashion": Staking a Claim for Shanghai as a Fashion City', *Styling Shanghai* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020)

David Casavant, *David Casavant Archive* (Bologna: Damiani Books, 2018).

De La Haye, Amy and Valerie D. Mendes, *The house of Worth: Portrait of an Archive* (London: V&A, 2014)

DeLong, Marilyn, Barbara Heinemann, and Kathryn Reiley, 'Hooked on Vintage!', *Fashion Theory*, 9.1 (2005), 23–42 <https://doi.org/10.2752/136270405778051491>.

Derrida, Jacques, and Eric Prenowitz, 'Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression', *Diacritics*, 25.2 (1995) <https://doi.org/10.2307/465144>

Entwistle, Joanne, *Body Dressing: Dress, Body, Culture*, (Oxford: Berg, 2001)

Entwistle, Joanne, T*he Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory*, (Malden: Polity Press, 2000)

Enwezor, Okwui, and Wills E Hartshorn, *Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art* (NY: Steidl, 2008)

Evans,Caroline, *Fashion at the Edge: Spectacle, Modernity, and Deathliness* (London: Yale University Press, 2003)

Fallan, Kjetil, *Design History: Understanding Theory and Method*, (London: Bloomsburg, 2013)

Ferrero-Regis, Tiziana, and Tim Lindgren, 'Branding "Created in China": The Rise of Chinese Fashion Designers', *Fashion Practice*, 4.1 (2012), 71–94 <https://doi.org/10.2752/175693812X13239580431342>

Fei Xiaotong, 费孝通, *Cong Fansi Dao Wenhua Zijue he Jiaoliu*, 从反思到文化自觉和交流(From Reflection to Cultural Consciousness and Communication)(Beijing: 水木清华 Shuimu Qinghua, 2020.9), pp. 58-62

Fen, Huilin and Zhang, Jizhe ed, 冯惠玲 张辑哲 *Dangan Xue Gailun* 档案学概论 (An Introduction to Archival study), (China: Remin University of China, 2006)

Finnane, Antonia, *Changing Clothes in China: Fashion, History, Nation* (London: Hurst, 2007)

Foucault, Michel, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (Routledge, 2002).

Gerth, Karl, *China Made:Consumer Culture and the Creation of the Nation*, (US: Harvard College, 2003)

Gormally, Mary Frances, 'The House of Worth: Portrait of an Archive', *Fashion Theory*, 21.1 (2017), 109–26 <https://doi.org/10.1080/1362704X.2016.1179400>

Gu, Ban 班固, *Sima Qin Zhuan* 司马迁传, The Biography of Sima Qian, *Hanshu* 汉书 *Book of Han* (Beijing: Xinhua Shuju, 2012)

Gynn, Douglas and Roy Luckett, *The Vintage Showroom: An Archive of Menswear*, (London: Laurence King Publisher, 2015)

Hansen, Valerie, *The Silk Road: A New History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012)

Hartman, Saidiya, Venus in Two Acts*, Small Axe, Number 26,* 12.2 (2008), pp. 1-14

Hatton MacDonald, Darla, Rosalind Bark, Andrea MacRae, Tina Kalivas, Agnes Grandgirard and Sarah Strathearn. 'An Interview Methodology for Exploring the Values That Community Leaders Assign to Multiple-Use Landscapes.', *Ecology and Society*, 18.1 (2013) 1-13 https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-05191-180129

Hoyle, Victoria, Editorial: archives and public history, *Archives and Records*, 38:1 (2017), 1-4

Huppatz, D J. 'Introduction to Methodology: Virtual Special Issue for the Journal of Design History 2018', *Journal of Design History*, 33.1 (2020) 25–40 <https://doi.org/10.1093/jdh/epy021>

Jenss, Heike, and Hofmann, Viola, ed., *Fashion and Materiality*, (London Bloomsbury, 2020)

Jin, Bo 金波, Danganxue Daolun 档案学导论(Shanghai: Shanghai University, 2018)

Jin, Yating, 'A Mechanism of the Chinese Fashion System', *Fashion Theory*, 26.5 (2022) 595–621 <https://doi.org/10.1080/1362704X.2020.1736813>

Jobling, Paul, Roland Barthes: Semiology and the Rhetorical Codes in Fashion, in '*Thinking Through Fashion: A Guide to Key Theories*' (London: Bloomsbury, 2019)

Kane, Michael, *Creative Industry in China* (Malden: Polity Press, 2013)

Kawamura, Yuniya, *Fashion-ology* (New York: Berg, 2005)

Keim, Camilla, and Ralf Wagner, 'Back in Time to Move Forward: An Empirical Study on Luxury Fashion Vintage Drivers', *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*, 9.2 (2018), 87–102 <https://doi.org/10.1080/20932685.2018.1432408>

Kwon, K. Hazel, Onook Oh, Manish Agrawal, et al. 'Audience Gatekeeping in the Twitter Service: An Investigation of Tweets about the 2009 Gaza Conflict'. *AIS Transactions on Human-Computer Interaction*, 4.4 (2012) 212–29. <https://doi.org/10.17705/1thci.00047>

Liu Fang 刘芳, Dui Wenhua Zijue he Wenhua Zixin de Zhanlue Kaoliang 对文化自觉和文化自信的战略考量(Strategic considerations of cultural self-awareness and cultural self-confidence) (Shanghai: Zhuanti Yantao, 2012)

Lim, Ivy Maria, 'From Haijin to Kaihai: The Jiajing Court's Search for a Modus Operandi along the South-Eastern Coast (1522-1567)', *Journal of the British Association for Chinese Studies*, 2 (2013), pp. 1-26

Lewin, Kurt, 'Frontiers in Group Dynamics II. Channels of Group Life', *Social Planning and Action Research,* 1(1947), pp. 143-153

Li, Nan, 'Public History in China: Past Making in the Present', in *What is Public History Globally?*, ed. By Paul Ashton and Alex Trapenznik (London: Bloomsbury, 2019)

Lourido, Rui D'Avila, Chinese Fashion Crossed the Oceans in the Wake of the Portuguese Trade with China, During the Late Ming and Early Qing Dynasties, *Face to Face: the transcendence of the arts in China and beyond. Historical perspectives* (2014), pp. 355-369

Liu, Xiao ling, 刘晓玲, 'Meite Sibangwei de Fushi Bowuguan 美特斯邦威的服饰博物馆 (Metersbonwe's Fashion Museum)', *Guoji Guanxi* 国际关系(PR Magazine, 03, 2009)

Liu, Xinru, *The Silk Road in World History* (Oxford University Press, 2010)

Mack, Natasha and others, 'Participant Observation', *Qualitative Research Methods - A Data Collector's Field Guide* (Washington: United States Agency of International Development, 2005), pp. 13-28.

Mann, Steve, 'Research Interviews: Modes and Types', in *The Research Interview*, by Steve Mann (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016), pp. 86–113 <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137353368_4>

Manoff, Marlene, 'Theories of the Archive from Across the Disciplines', *Portal: Libraries and the Academy*, 4.1 (2004) 9–25 <https://doi.org/10.1353/pla.2004.0015>

Maiken Xi 2022 Zhongguo Shishang Chanye Baipi Shu 麦肯锡 2022 中国时尚产业白皮书 (McKinsey 2022 Chinese Fashion Industry White Paper)(McKinsey & Company eBook), (2022)

Marly, Diana de, *Worth: Father of Haute Couture* (London: Elm Tree Books, 1980)

Marx, W. David. *Ametora: How Japan Saved American Style* (New York: Basic Books, 2015)

Merewether, Charles, 'Introduction: Art and the Archive', in *The Archive: Documents of Contemporary Art*, ed. By Charles Merewether (London: White Chapel Gallery, 2006), pp. 10-17

Merriam, Sharan B. *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* (San Francisco: Josey Bass, 2016)

Merriam, Sharan B. *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* (San Francisco: Josey Bass, 2016)

McColl, Julie, Catherine Canning, Louise McBride, Karina Nobbs, and Linda Shearer, 'It's Vintage Darling! An Exploration of Vintage Fashion Retailing', *Journal of the Textile Institute*, 104.2 (2013), pp. 140–50 <https://doi.org/10.1080/00405000.2012.702882>

Oksenberg, Michel, and others*, 'The Cultural Revolution: 1967 in Review*', (The University of Michigan Center for Chinese Study, 1968)

Olmos-Vega, Francisco M. and others, 'A Practical Guide to Reflexivity in Qualitative Research: AMEE Guide No. 149', *Medical Teacher*, 45.3 (2023), 241–51 <https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159X.2022.2057287>.

Palaganas, Erlinda and others, 'Reflexivity in Qualitative Research: A Journey of Learning', The Qualitative Report, 22.2 (2017), 426-438 <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2017.2552>.

Pecorari, Marco, *Fashion Remains: Rethinking Ephemera in the Archives*, (London Bloomary, 2022)

Peirson-Smith, Anne, and Ben Peirson-Smith, 'Fashion Archive Fervor: The Critical Role of Fashion Archives in Preserving, Curating, and Narrating Fashion', *Archives and*

Records, 41.3 (2020), 274–98 <https://doi.org/10.1080/23257962.2020.1813556>

Posner, Harris, *Marketing Fashion: Strategy, Branding and Promoting*, London: Laurence King Publishing, 2015)

Poulos, Christopher N. 'Conceptual Foundations of Autoethnography.', in *Essentials of Autoethnography*, by Christopher N. Poulos, (Washington: American Psychological Association, 2021), pp.3–17. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0000222-001>

Qin, Dongxu, 'From Government Management to Board Governance: The Development History and Practice of Board of Trustees in Chinese Museums, a Comparative Analysis of Museum Boards in China and the US', *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 37.4 (2022), 401–17 <https://doi.org/10.1080/09647775.2021.1954982>

Ridener, John, *From Polders to Postmodernism: a Concise History of Archival theory* (Duluth: Litwin, 2009)

Rocamora, Agnes and Smelik, Anneke, ed., Thinking Through Fashion: A Guide to Key Theories (London: Bloomsbury, 2019)

Rocamora, Agnes, 'Pierre Bourdieu: The Field of Fashion', *Thinking Through Fashion: A Guide to Key Theories*, Agnes Rocamora and Anneke Smelik. ed, (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), pp. 233-250

Schneider, Florian, 'COVID-19 Nationalism and the Visual Construction of Sovereignty during China's Coronavirus Crisis', *China Information*, 35.3 (2021), 301–24 <https://doi.org/10.1177/0920203X211034692>

Schottenhammer, Angela, *Trading Networks in Early Modern* [East Asian Maritime History, 9] (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 2010), pp. 101-154.

Segre Reinach, Simona, 'The Identity of Fashion in Contemporary China and the New Relationships with the West', *Fashion Practice*, 4.1 (2012), 57–70 <https://doi.org/10.2752/175693812X13239580431306>

Sikarskie, Amanda, and others, Male Idols and Branding in Chinese Luxury, (London: Bloomsbury, 2023)

Singer, Jane B., 'Stepping Back from the Gate: Online Newspaper Editors and the Co-Production of Content in Campaign 2004', *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 83.2 (2006), 265–80 <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769900608300203>

Steedman, Carolyn, *Dust: the Archive and Cultural History* (Manchester: MUP, 2001)

Steele, Valerie, and John Major, *China Chic: East meets West* (US: Yale, 1999)

Steele, Valerie and Major, John, *China Chic: East meets West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999)

Steele, Valerie, ed, *Paris, Capital of Fashion* (UK: Bloomsbury, 2019)

Streib, Jessi, Jane Rochmes, Felicia Arriaga, Carlos Tavares, and Emi Weed, 'Class and the Cultural Styles Applicants Present to Gatekeepers', *Poetics*, 86 (2021), 1-17 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2020.101513>

Taylor, Lou, *The Study of Dress History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002)

The State of Fashion 2020 Coronavirus Update' *The Business of Fashion* (2020)

The State of Fashion 2021' *The Business of Fashion* (2021)

Troy, Nancy J, Couture Culture: A Study in Modern Art and Fashion (UK: the MIT Press, 2003)

Tsui, Christine, *China Fashion: Converstations with Designers* (London: Berg, 2009)

Tsui, Christine, '"Fashion" in the Chinese context.' Modern Fashion Traditions: *Negotiating Tradition through Fashion*, M Angela Jansen and Jennifer Craik (eds) (London: Bloomsbury, 2016)

Vacca, Federica. 'Knowledge in Memory: Corporate and Museum Archives'. *Fashion Practice*, 6:2, (2014) 273-288

Wang Ge 王歌, 'Guanyu Minyin Bowuguan zai Dnagxia Fazhan Zhilu de Sikao – Yi Meite Sibangwei Bowuguan Weili 有关民营博物馆在当下发展之路的思考——以美特斯邦威服饰博物馆为例 (Reflections on the Current Development of Private Museum – Using Metersbonwe Fashion Museum as Example)', *Zhongguo Bowuguan Xiehui Di Liu Jie Huiyuan Daibiao Dahui Ji Fuzhuang Zhuanye Weiyuan Hui Xueshu Huiyi Lunwen Ji* 中国博物馆协会第六届会员代表大会暨服装博物馆专业委员会学术会议论文集 (Proceedings of the Sixth Member Congress of the Chinese Museum Association and the Academic Conference of Costime Museum Professional Committee), (2014)

Wu, Baokang 吴宝康, Dangaxue Lilun yu Lishi Chutan 档案学理论与历史初探 (A Preliminary Study of Archive Theories and History), (China: Sichuan Science Technology Publication, 1986)

Wu Baokang 吴宝康, Lun Xinshiqi Dangan Xue Yu Dangan Shiye 论新时期档案学与档案事业(Archival Science and Archival Undertaking in the New Period), (Chinese Archive Publication, 1997)

Wu, Shellen X. 'Yuan Longping (1930–2021)', *Nature*, 595.7865, (2021) 26 <https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-021-01732-2>

Wu, Juanjuan, *Chinese Fashion: From Mao to Now* (Oxford: Berg, 2009)

Wu Zhiyan, Janet Borgerson and Jonathan Schroeder, *From Chinese Brand Culture to Global Brands* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013)

Xiong Yuezhi 熊月之, *Xixue Dongjian yu Wanqing Shehui* 西学东渐与晚清社会 The Eastern Spread of Western Learning and Late Qing Society (Shanghai: Shanghai Renming Publisher, 1994)

Yale, Elizbeth, 'The History of Archive: The State of the Discipline,' in *Book History*, 18 (2015) 332-359 < https://www.jstor.org/stable/43956377 >

Ze, Yuan and Yue, Hu, 袁仄 and 胡月, *Bainian Yishang* 百年衣裳 (A Hundred Years of Clothing) (Hong Kong Open Page Publishing, 2011)

Zhang Xudong 张旭东, Moyan shi Tongxiang Dangdai Zhongguo Wenxue de Menhu '莫言是通向当代中国文学的门户' (Mo Yan is the gateway to contemporary Chinese literature) in *Wenhua Zijue Pianlun: Qimeng Zhuyi de Zhengzhi Weiji yu Lunli Weiji* 文化自觉片论：启蒙主义的政治危机与伦理危机(A Discourse on Cultural Self-Awareness: The Political and Ethical Crisis of EnlightenmentWenhua Zhengzhi yu Zhongguo daolu), (Shanghai: Shanghai Renming Publisher, 2015)

Zhang Xudong 张旭东, *Wenhua Zijue Pianlun: Qimeng Zhuyi de Zhengzhi Weiji yu Lunli Weiji* 文化自觉片论：启蒙主义的政治危机与伦理危机(A Discourse on Cultural Self-Awareness: The Political and Ethical Crisis of EnlightenmentWenhua Zhengzhi yu Zhongguo daolu), (Shanghai: Shanghai Renming Publisher, 2015)

Zhao, Jianhua, *The Chinese Fashion Industry: An Ethnographic Approach* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013)

Zhao, Jianhua, 'Local Productions, Global Connections: Making Fashion in China', in *Fashion in Multiple Chinas*, ed. by Wessie Ling and Simona Segre Reinach (London: I.B.TAURIS, 2018)

Zhou, Jie, and others, 'Research on the Development Mode of Fashion Select Shop under the New Retail Format: Take LABELHOOD as an Example', in *2021 2nd International Conference on Electronics, Communications and Information Technology (CECIT)* (presented at the 2021 2nd International Conference on Electronics, Communications and Information Technology (CECIT), Sanya, China: IEEE, 2021), pp. 1069–74 <https://doi.org/10.1109/CECIT53797.2021.00190>

Zhou Wei 周卫, Yapian Zhanzheng dui Zhongguo Jindai Shehui Jingji Fazhan de Yingxiang 鸦片战争对中国近代社会经济发展的影响 (The influence of the Opium War on the social and economic development of modern China), *Chabai Journal,* 05 (2007) 137-138

Zylinska, Joanna, 'On Bad Archives, Unruly Snappers and Liquid Photographs', *Photographies*, 3.2 (2010), 139–53 <https://doi.org/10.1080/17540763.2010.499608>.

Web Source

'11 Slogans That Changed China', *BBC News*, 26 December 2013, section China <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-24923993> [accessed 30 December 2023]

'2020 Edition', *LVMH PRIZE* <https://www.lvmhprize.com/2020-edition/> [accessed 5 December 2023]

'2021 Edition', *LVMH PRIZE* <https://www.lvmhprize.com/2021-edition-2/> [accessed 5 December 2023]

'A COLLECTOR'S STORY: A Private Collection of VIVIENNE WESTWOOD', *The Bowes Museum* <https://thebowesmuseum.org.uk/exhibitions/a-collectors-story-a-private-collection-of-vivienne-westwood/> [accessed 25 December 2023]

'About contemporary wardrobe', https://www.contemporarywardrobe.com/about [accessed on 30 August 2023]

'Aimu Meishu Guan Shi Zhounian Yaoqin Zhan: Zai Wutuo Bang Zhishang Yu Gudao Hejie 爱慕美术馆十周年邀请展：在乌托邦之上与孤岛和解 (The Ten Years Anniversary Invitational Exhibition of Aimer Museum: Make Peace With Isolated Island Beyond Utopia)', *Xinlang Shoucang* 新浪收藏, (2018) http://collection.sina.com.cn/ddys/2018-07-09/doc-ihezpzwu2350499.shtml [accessed on 18 August 2022].

'Anne Lambert Clothing and Textiles Collection | University of Alberta Museums' <https://www.ualberta.ca/museums/museum-collections/clothing-and-textiles.html> [accessed 5 December 2023]

‘About-Louis Shengtao Chen’ <http://www.louisshengtaochen.cn/page/list-4.html> [accessed 5 December 2023]

‘About Ribo’ <http://www.ribo-group.com/about.html>[accessed 20 March 2022].

‘About Showroom’, <https://www.showroomshanghai.com/#page5> [Access on 30th October 2023]

Bateman, Kristen, ‘How TikTok Is Fostering A New Generation Of Fashion Archivists’ <https://www.refinery29.com/en-gb/2021/07/10556351/archive-fashion-tiktok-trend> [accessed 27 December 2023]

‘Behind the HYPE: How Raf Simons’ Riot Jacket Became a Streetwear Holy Grail’, *Hypebeast*, 2020 <https://hypebeast.com/2020/8/raf-simons-riot-jacket-bomber-jacket-hype-history> [accessed 6 January 2024]

Blacksuga_的抖音 Blacksuga's TikTok, 抖音 TikTok platform <https://www.douyin.com/user/MS4wLjABAAAAjYThnLgWe-7GmgwhwBtOJ_g2Y6QL6XLaLYOWNXMVbL5gmEY8MT6NLPK4aKL7WQeu?modal_id=6830757378942651663> [accessed 5 December 2023].

Brown, Annie, ‘Why “Singularity” and “Archive” Fashion Is Changing How We Get Dressed’, *Vogue Australia*, 2023 <https://www.vogue.com.au/fashion/news/archive-fashion-trend/news-story/0494d29e146eda4862434a5184f0cff3> [accessed 6 January 2024]

Burkitt, Laurie, ‘Zuczug Label Is What China’s Fashion Trendsetters Are Wearing’, *Wall Street Journal*, 14 November 2012, section Life and Style <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887324556304578118891337284014.html> [accessed 16 December 2023]

‘Calling For The Next New: The Finalists | Lane Crawford’ <https://www.lanecrawford.com/discover/calling-for-the-next-new-the-finalists-53400015-20150603> [accessed 4 January 2024]

‘China Will Continue to Dominate World Production’, *Investopedia* <https://www.investopedia.com/articles/investing/102214/why-china-worlds-factory.asp> [accessed 16 December 2023]

Cooper, Leah Faye, ‘How Christian Dior Pioneered 75 Years of Feminist Fashion’, *Vanity Fair*, 2022 <https://www.vanityfair.com/style/2022/07/christian-dior-feminist-fashion> [accessed 15 November 2023]

Cong “Chibao” Dao “Chihao”, “Nangeng Zhifu” Wang Cailin Daohua Xiangli Zhumeng ‘从“吃饱”到“吃好”，“南粳之父”王才林稻花香里逐梦行'(From "eat enough" to "eat well", Wang Cailin, the father of Nanjing, pursues his dream in DaoHuaxiang Li)-

中新网 Chinanews.com' <https://www.chinanews.com.cn/sh/2022/06-18/9783225.shtml> [accessed 29 December 2023].

Dangdai Shizhuang Ynajiu Zhongxin 当代时装研究中心, *Dangdai Shizhuang Yangjiu Zhongxin: Chongxie Shishang Shidaixing*, '当代时装研究中心：重写时尚现代性', (Contemporary Fashion Institution: Rewriting Fashion Modernity) 微信公众平台 WeChat Public platform <http://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?__biz=MzIzNzQyMDYyMg==&mid=2247483974&idx=1&sn=730b3990dba0ecad9e57b149361e7e94&chksm=e8c9ab67dfbe2271b6f43fbf71174d08d1d549374a3342469e17ecfb4917fc86c5ec924f5121#rd> [accessed 5 December 2023].

'David Casavant | SHOWstudio' <https://showstudio.com/contributors/david-casavant> [accessed 7 January 2024].

Dazed, 'Where Do Kanye and Rihanna Find Their Rarest Fashion Pieces?', *Dazed*, 2015 <https://www.dazeddigital.com/fashion/article/28572/1/where-do-kanye-and-rihanna-find-their-rarest-fashion-pieces> [accessed 7 January 2024]

Dao Team, 'What Is "New Chinese Style" and Why Is It the next Chapter for Guochao?', *Dao Insights*, 2022 <https://daoinsights.com/news/what-is-new-chinese-style-and-why-is-it-the-next-chapter-for-guochao/> [accessed 5 January 2024]

Davis, Jessica, 'Why You Need to Know about Shanghai Fashion Label Shushu/Tong', *Harper's BAZAAR*, 2021 <https://www.harpersbazaar.com/uk/fashion/shows-trends/a38147225/shushu-tong-shanghai-fashion/> [accessed 4 January 2024].

Diderich, Joelle, 'Dior Milestone: Heritage Brand', *WWD*, 2017 <https://wwd.com/feature/dior-milestone-archive-christian-dior-john-galliano-raf-simons-10997278/> [accessed 8 February 2023]

Dongfang Guoji'东方国际' Orient International <http://www.oih.com.cn/> [accessed 4 December 2023]

Dujia Shoufa|Shenme Yang de "Rongqi", Caineng Zhuangzai Zhongguo Shizhuang Sheji Poquan de Tuishou? '独家首发 | 什么样的"容器"，才能装载令中国时装设计破圈的推手 LABELHOOD？蕾虎'_ (Exclusive first release | What kind of "container" can contain the driving force that has broken the circle of Chinese fashion design LABELHOOD?) <https://www.sohu.com/a/www.sohu.com/a/498308483_121124644> [accessed 27 November 2023]

Fadina, Lexi. 'Alexander McQueen Opens Roses Exhibition in Its Flagship Store in London - The Glass Magazine', 2019

<https://www.theglassmagazine.com/alexander-mcqueen-opens-roses-exhibition-in-its-flagship-store-in-london/> [accessed 26 September 2023]

Fangzhi Fushi Bowu Guan '纺织服饰博物馆' Textile and clothing Museum in Shanghai Donghua University https://web.dhu.edu.cn/mtc/[accessed 30 December 2023]

'Fashion GPS® Background', *Launchmetrics* <https://www.launchmetrics.com/fashion-gps-background> [accessed 25 December 2023].

Fei Xiaotong: What is cultural consciousness? 费孝通 ：什么是文化自觉？ - 人文精神 Humanistic spirit - 中国改革网(China Reform Network)' <http://m.chinareform.net/index.php?m=content&c=index&a=show&catid=48&id=39268> [accessed 19 December 2023]

'Fiu Gallery 飞呦画廊 • 小红书 / RED', 小红书 <https://xiaohongshu.com/user/profile/5e4414b6000000000100142c> [accessed 27 December 2023]

Fiufiu, '"ARE YOU DREAMING"展览延长 | 一次性看到 250 件川久保玲是怎样的体验？', (Exhibition extension | What is it like to see 250 pieces of Rei Kawakubo at once?) 微信公众平台 WeChat public account platform, <http://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?__biz=MzI2MDIxMzEwNw==&mid=2247485156&idx=1&sn=b10a2e97ca9ed41d13742ebddbd5df05&chksm=ea6c56f8dd1bdfeeec320a46a928096ee0d857b7cf9610439bdd0c17a212a1593df3c5af7591#rd> [accessed 27 December 2023]

Fiufiu '"ARE YOU DREAMING"展览 | 像川久保玲一样做个"反叛者"', 微信公众平台 (Exhibition | "Be a Rebel like Rei Kawakubo") <http://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?__biz=MzI2MDIxMzEwNw==&mid=2247485157&idx=1&sn=e944ff328b25f61acaa649c165759b6f&chksm=ea6c56f9dd1bdfef5d2387be71f0afa21a63a9d5a38db286610e4685796dcf256cc9919c4c45#rd> [accessed 27 December 2023]

Fiufiu, '我们带着珍贵的 Archive 和硬核联名，强势登陆年度潮流大展 INNERSECT' ('With our precious Archive and Hardcore joint name, we have entered the annual trend Show strongly INNERSECT) WeChat public account platform, <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/xqAWZ4ZAtEdZ593y9lR7lw> [accessed 27 December 2023]

Fury, Alexander, 'In Fashion, the Beauty (and Challenge) of Looking Back', *The New York Times*, 18 September 2017, section T Magazine <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/18/t-magazine/fashion-house-archives-inspiration.html> [accessed 5 October 2023]

‘Helmut Lang: From Catwalk to Gallery’, *The Independent*, 2010 <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/fashion/news/helmut-lang-from-catwalk-to-gallery-1953743.html> [accessed 26 September 2023]

‘Helmut Lang Shredded His Entire Clothing Archive For The Sake Of Art | Complex’ <https://www.complex.com/style/a/skylar-bergl/helmut-lang-shredded-his-entire-clothing-archive> [accessed 26 September 2023]

‘House Of Worth: Portrait Of An Archive’, *The Costume Society* <https://costumesociety.org.uk/blog/post/house-of-worth-portrait-of-an-archive> [accessed 26 September 2023]

Hu, Denni, ‘How to Build a City, According to JNBY’, *WWD*, 2023 <https://wwd.com/business-news/retail/jnby-ooeli-sept-weekend-1235784253/> [accessed 16 December 2023]

Hu, Denni, and Templeton, Lily, ‘Icicle Co-Founder Ye Shouzeng Inducted Into France’s National Order of Merit’, *WWD*, 2023 <https://wwd.com/fashion-news/fashion-features/icicle-cofounder-ye-shouzeng-inducted-france-national-order-of-merit-shanghai-carven-1235512851/> [accessed 16 December 2023]

‘Is China’s Growth Model a Threat to Free-Market Economics?’, *The Economist* <https://www.economist.com/open-future/2018/06/13/is-chinas-growth-model-a-threat-to-free-market-economics?giftId=dcc1990c-d122-4bf7-bdaf-a025376e8693> [accessed 23 December 2023]

‘Japanese Menswear Still Rules. Here’s Why.’, *The Business of Fashion*, 2019 <https://www.businessoffashion.com/articles/news-analysis/japanese-menswear-still-rules-heres-why/> [accessed 29 December 2023]

Jarvis Jin, *Zhe Keneng Shini Weiyi Yici zai Zhongguo Kandao Zhe Liangjian Yifu de Jihui* ‘这可能是你唯一一次在中国看到这两件衣服的机会’ (This may be your only chance to see these two pieces in China), 微信公众平台 WeChat Public Platform, <http://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?__biz=Mzg4MDI0MTk5MQ==&mid=2247483945&idx=1&sn=fee6b13ebc165d1893cf7cf9116e91b9&chksm=cf797e01f80ef7175073a29081a21e2b5a6c5cb4c23799c11f6d6b70f851be689daf55b8ea8b#rd> [accessed 5 December 2023].

Jinqi Sisheng Fen Duodi Yiqin “Zhanshi Zhuangtai”, Hanyi Shi Shenme? ‘近期四省份多地宣布疫情"战时状态"，含义是什么？-新华网 Xinhua Wang’ <http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2021-01/05/c_1126947929.htm> [accessed 30 November 2023]

John Dudovskiy, ‘Snowball Sampling’, *The Ultimate Guide to Write a Dissertation in Business Studies: a Step Approach (6th Edition)*, https://research-

methodology.net/sampling-in-primary-data-collection/snowball-sampling/ [accessed 9 March 2023]

Joly, Bruni, *ENK Creates Joint Venture with Mode Shanghai*, 10.22 (2012) https://uk.fashionnetwork.com/news/enk-creates-joint-venture-with-mode-shanghai,519872.html#fashionweek-paris-balenciaga [accessed 5 March 2023]

Juliang Suanshu: 2020nian Douyin Yonghu Huaxiang Baogao|Huliangwang Shuju Zixunwang-199IT| Zhongwen Hulianwang Shuju Ynjiu Zixun Zhongxin '巨量算数：2020 年抖音用户画像报告 | 互联网数据资讯网-199IT | 中文互联网数据研究资讯中心-' (Massive arithmetic: 2020 Douyin User Portrait Report | Internet Data Information Network-199it | Chinese Internet Data Research Information Center), 199IT (2020) <//www.199it.com/archives/1017794.html> [accessed 7 January 2024].

'Jun Takahashi | BoF 500 | The People Shaping the Global Fashion Industry' <https://www.businessoffashion.com/community/people/jun-takahashi> [accessed 29 December 2023]

'La Galerie Dior', *Galerie Dior* <https://www.galeriedior.com/en/> [accessed 6 January 2024]

Lai Shuming 来舒敏，Ruhe Dinyi 'Lei hu' | A Gongsi, 如何定义"蕾虎"｜A 公司，(How to define Labelhood?|A Company),13，5（2021） https://www.sohu.com/a/466288401_100126387[Access 26th April 2022].

Lexi Fadina, 'Alexander McQueen Opens Roses Exhibition in Its Flagship Store in London - The Glass Magazine', 2019 <https://www.theglassmagazine.com/alexander-mcqueen-opens-roses-exhibition-in-its-flagship-store-in-london/> [accessed 26 September 2023]

'Liushu Lei and Yutong Jiang | BoF 500 | The People Shaping the Global Fashion Industry', *The Business of Fashion* <https://www.businessoffashion.com/community/people/liushu-lei-and-yutong-jiang> [accessed 5 December 2023]

'Local Apparel and Fashion Brands in China Winning Market Share', 2023 <https://www.consultancy.asia/news/5200/local-apparel-and-fashion-brands-in-china-winning-market-share> [accessed 4 January 2024]

'Made in China?', *The Economist* <https://www.economist.com/leaders/2015/03/12/made-in-

china?giftId=cf3e0c56-7544-4aee-8d79-99c36fe4c9fe> [accessed 23 December 2023]

Ma Muyuan 马牧原, 'Op-Ed| Daduhui Bowuguan "Zhongguo" zhan: Xifang dui Zhongguo Yishu de Huanjue' 大都会博物馆"中国"展：西方对中国一书的幻觉 (Met "China" Exhibition: West illusion on Chinese Art), *Business of Fashion* (2015) <http://cn.bussinessoffashion.com/articles/news-analysis/op-ed-met-china-exhibition-west-illusion-on-chinese-art.cn> [accessed 31 March 2020]

'Margiela / Galliera, 1989-2009', *Palais Galliera | Musée de La Mode de La Ville de Paris* <https://www.palaisgalliera.paris.fr/en/exhibitions/margiela/galliera-1989-2009> [accessed 7 January 2024]

'Maison Margiela | Ensemble | French', *The Metropolitan Museum of Art* <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/692454> [accessed 7 January 2024]

'Martin Margiela: In His Own Words (2019) - IMDb' <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt11284244/> [accessed 7 January 2024]

Mao Slogans | Chinese Posters | Chineseposters.Net' <https://chineseposters.net/themes/mao-slogans> [accessed 30 December 2023]

Melchers, 'THE RISE OF CHINESE DOMESTIC CONSUMER BRANDS • Melchers China', *Melchers China*, 2022 <https://www.melchers-china.com/posts/the-rise-of-chinese-domestic-consumer-brands/> [accessed 4 January 2024]

McKeough,Tim, 'Temporary Fashion Museum Opens in Rotterdam', *Architectural Digest*, 2015 <https://www.architecturaldigest.com/story/temporary-fashion-museum-rotterdam> [accessed 2 October 2023]

'*Meite Sibangwei Mai Le Ziji De "Fushi Bowuguan", Shi Shenme Nanzhu Le Laopai Fuzhuang Qiye* 美特斯邦威卖了自己的"服饰博物馆"，是什么难住了老牌服装企业 (Metersbonwe Sold its "Fashion Museum"- What Has Caught Out the Old Fashion Enterprise)', *Meng Ma Caijing* 蒙马财经, (2021) <https://www.sohu.com/a/455004232_120426849> [accessed 12 Feb 2023]

Minzu Fushi Bowu Guang 民族服饰博物馆' National Costume Museum in Beijing Institution of Fashion Technology <http://www.biftmuseum.com/> [accessed 31 December 2023].

Nast, Condé. '10 Grails From The Golden Age Of Men's Fashion That You Can Still Wear

Right Now', *GQ*, 2020 https://www.gq.com/story/archival-fashion-grails [accessed 27 December 2023]

Nast, Condé, 'Why Everyone Makes Such a Big Deal about Archival Fashion', *British GQ*, 2023 <https://www.gq-magazine.co.uk/article/what-is-archival-fashion> [accessed 3 January 2024]

Nast, Condé. 'Fashion Shows: Fashion Week, Runway, Designer Collections', *Vogue* https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows [accessed 27 December 2023]

Nast, Condé, 'The Raf Simons "Riot" bomber has sold for $47,000', *Vogue France*, 2018 <https://www.vogue.fr/vogue-hommes/fashion/articles/the-raf-simons-riot-bomber-has-sold-for-47000/69541> [accessed 6 January 2024]

NINON Xinzhan: Hewei dangan Shizhuang? 'NINON 新展：何为档案时装？ Exhibition：What Is Archive？' WeChat public platform, <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/k2UukvQizhh3MOzItHqq4g> [accessed 5 December 2023]

Old is the New: Vintage Clothes, in 'Vogue' with China's Youth, *CGTN*, https://news.cgtn.com/news/2021-03-28/VHJhbnNjcmlwdDUzMjYx/index.html [accessed on 3 August 2023].

Pakkee Tan, 'The New Vanguard: Peng Tai Looks to Traditional Asian Heritage for Inspiration for the Future | Vogue Singapore | News, Fashion', *Vogue Singapore*, 2020 <https://vogue.sg/the-new-vanguard-peng-tai/> [accessed 5 January 2024].

Pratten, Nyima, 'Ma Ke on Being a Clothes Designer, Not a Fashion Designer', *WWD*, 2018 <https://wwd.com/feature/ma-ke-on-being-a-clothes-designer-not-a-fashion-designer-1202718154/> [accessed 16 December 2023]

'Produce 101 (TV Series 2016–) - IMDb' <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt5613868/> [accessed 5 December 2023]

《Qianming Shishang: Ante Weipu Xinsheng Liliang》:Guanyu Chuangzaoli yu Shenfen Gongming '《签名时尚：安特卫普新生力量》：关于创造力与身份共鸣' (Signature Fashion: The New Force of Antwerp: Creativity resonates with identity), 微信公众平台 WeChat Public Platform <http://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?__biz=MzIzNzQyMDYyMg==&mid=2247484114&idx=1&sn=e35382a5da00335aa0c074e33d179972&chksm=e8c9abf3dfbe22e598b1b216056174e5c032fee480a8a1c23dadfee475af03484f11a55da4d2#rd> [accessed 6 December 2023].

'Raf Simons Reissues 100 Archive Pieces | SHOWstudio' <https://showstudio.com/news/raf-simons-reissues-100-archive-pieces> [accessed 26 September 2023]

'Re-Fashioning the Institution: Reflections on the Temporary Fashion Museum', *Nieuwe Instituut* <https://nieuweinstituut.nl/en/projects/tijdelijk-modemuseum/het-instituut-opnieuw-vormgeven-bespiegelingen-over-het-tijdelijk-modemuseum> [accessed 2 October 2023]

Ren Chen 任琛, *Ri Shejishi Ting "Fansong zhong" Bei Naike Jinji Xiajia* 日设计师挺"反送中"被耐克紧急下架 (The designer is very "anti-send" by Nike emergency off the shelf) https://www.dw.com/zh/%E6%97%A5%E8%AE%BE%E8%AE%A1%E5%B8%88%E6%8C%BA%E5%8F%8D%E9%80%81%E4%B8%AD-%E8%A2%AB%E8%80%90%E5%85%8B%E7%B4%A7%E6%80%A5%E4%B8%8B%E6%9E%B6/a-49362834 [Access in 25 September 2023]

Richardson, Marc, 'An Introduction of Avant-Garde Fashion', 2.9(2019) https://www.grailed.com/ drycleanonly/ what-is-avant-garde [accessed 26 September 2023]

Rimmer, Lily, 'The Glass Archival Fashion Collectors Series – David Casavant: Raf Simons and Helmut Lang - *The Glass Magazine*', 2021 <https://www.theglassmagazine.com/archival-fashion-collectors-series-david-casavant-and-raf-simons-and-helmut-lang/> [accessed 26 September 2023]

'*Sannian kuisun 12yi, "chudai guochao" zhongchen "shidai de yanlei"*?', '三年亏损 21 亿，"初代国潮"美特斯邦威终成"时代的眼泪"？|森马|美邦|时尚|唐狮_网易订阅' (2022) <https://www.163.com/dy/article/HERGVLB205179L72.html> [accessed 26 September 2023]

'Shangye Dongcha| Jujiao Hangye Fengxiang Biao, Fuchan Fugong Hou De Shanghai Zai Shishang Chanye Mianling de 'Wei' yu 'Ji'' '商业洞察 | 聚焦行业风向标，复产复工后的上海在时尚产业面临的"危"与"机"_手机新浪网' (2022) <https://fashion.sina.cn/s/in/2022-06-09/detail-imizirau7356456.d.html> [accessed 26 September 2023]

'SHUSHU/TONG /ABOUT' <https://shushutongstudio.com/en/about.html> [accessed 5 December 2023]

Smith, Karl, 'Raf Simons Archive Redux Collection and Fashion Resale' <https://i-d.vice.com/en/article/wx8mgb/fashion-archive-resale-market> [accessed 28 November 2023]

Socha, Miles, 'Eric Chan Named CEO of Lanvin Group', *WWD*, 2023 <https://wwd.com/fashion-news/designer-luxury/lanvin-group-new-ceo-

chairman-executive-change-1236028252/> [accessed 16 December 2023]

Stephen Yu, 'An Introduction to Archival Fashion', *Farfetch*, 4.6 (2020) <https://www.farfetch.com/style-guide/trends-subcultures/archive-clothing-and-archival-fashion-brands> [accessed 27 December 2023]

'Still Shredding: Helmut Lang', *Interview Magazine* (2011) <https://www.interviewmagazine.com/art/helmut-lang-the-fireplace-project> [accessed 26 September 2023].

Shishang Bu Diaoxian, Xiuchang "yun" Shangjian – Shanghai Shizhang Zhou Xieshou Tianmao Kiaqi Quanqiu Shouge Yunshang Shizhuang Zhou '时尚不掉线，秀场"云"上见 ——上海时装周携手天猫开启全球首个云上时装周 (Fashion does not drop, see on the show "cloud" - Shanghai Fashion Week and Tmall to open the world's first cloud fashion week) 官方新闻-上海时装周 Official news - Shanghai Fashion Week' <http://www.shanghaifashionweek.com:8700/page/shfw/news/591> [accessed 4 January 2024]

Shields, Rachel, 'Helmut Lang: From Catwalk to Gallery', *The Independent* (2010) <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/fashion/news/helmut-lang-from-catwalk-to-gallery-1953743.html> [accessed 26 September 2023]

'Tasha Liu | BoF 500 | The People Shaping the Global Fashion Industry', *The Business of Fashion* <https://www.businessoffashion.com/community/people/tasha-liu> [accessed 4 January 2024].

Tai, Crystal, 'Chinese Consumers Ditch Foreign Fashion And Luxury Brands For Local Options: McKinsey Report', *Jing Daily*, 2023 <http://localhost:3000/posts/mckinsey-report-chinese-fashion-brands> [accessed 4 January 2024]

'Tengxun Qixia Weixin Xiaocheng Xu Qunian Ri Huoyue Yonghu Chao 4.5yi Rijun Shiyong Cishu Tongbi Zeng32%', '腾讯旗下微信小程序去年日活跃用户超 4.5 亿日均使用次数同比增 32%' (Tencent's wechat mini program had more than 450 million daily active users last year, up 32% from a year earlier)(2022) https://www.reuters.com/article/tencent-wechat-active-usersprograms-0106-idCNKBS2JG0D8 [accessed 18 December 2023]

'Temporary Fashion Museum', *Nieuwe Instituut* <https://nieuweinstituut.nl/en/projects/tijdelijk-modemuseum> [accessed 2 October 2023]

'The Importance of Reflexivity in Qualitative Research', Delve, 2022 <https://delvetool.com/blog/reflexivity> [accessed 6 May 2024].

'The State of Fashion 2021: Reality Check', *The Business of Fashion*, 2021 <https://www.businessoffashion.com/articles/news-analysis/the-state-of-fashion-2021-reality-check/> [accessed 4 January 2024]

'The Timeless Appeal of Archive Fashion: Access Fashion's Archives.' <https://www.trussarchive.com/editorials/the-timeless-appeal-of-archive-fashion-access-fashions-archives-with-truss> [accessed 27 December 2023]

'The What, When, Why, and How of Archive Fashion', *ThriftCon*, 2023 <https://thriftcon.co/blogs/education/the-what-when-and-how-of-archive-fashion> [accessed 27 December 2023]

Tindall, Robynne, 'The Rise and Fall of Guochao: China's Nationalistic Branding Phenomenon', *Focus - China Britain Business Council*, 2023 <https://focus.cbbc.org/the-rise-and-fall-of-guochao-chinas-nationali

Tiffany Ap, 'Lane Crawford's Creative Call Out to Offer $25,000 in Prizes', *WWD*, 2020 <https://wwd.com/feature/lane-crawford-call-out-2020-makers-movement-1203676324/> [accessed 5 December 2023]

UAL, 'LCF Collections and Archives', *UAL*, 2023 <https://www.arts.ac.uk/students/library-services/special-collections-and-archives/lcf-collections-and-archives> [accessed 31 December 2023]

'Uma Wang | BoF 500 | The People Shaping the Global Fashion Industry', *The Business of Fashion* <https://www.businessoffashion.com/community/people/uma-wang> [accessed 16 December 2023]

Vergeer, Kevin, 'An Introduction- And the Meaning of Archival Clothing', *Sumunage*, https://www.sumunage.com/an-introduction-and-the-meaning-of-archival-clothing/ [accessed 27 December 2023]

Wang Ying, 王莹, [Baige Shunjian shuo Bainian] 1943, "Ziji Dongshou, Fengyi Zushi" '【百个瞬间说百年】1943，"自己动手，丰衣足食"-新华网 Xinhuag Wang' <http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2021-04/20/c_1211117729.htm> [accessed 30 December 2023]

Ways, Curious, 'Is the Internet Ruining Archive Fashion?', *HUNGER TV* <https://www.hungertv.com/editorial/is-the-internet-ruining-archive-fashion/> [accessed 26 September 2023]

'What Is Archival Fashion', - *The Miami Student* <https://www.miamistudent.net/article/2022/02/what-is-archival-fashion> [accessed 27 December 2023]

'What Is Avant Garde Fashion?', *Grailed* <https://www.grailed.com/drycleanonly/what-is-avant-garde> [accessed 26 September 2023]

'What Our Love Affair With Archival Fashion Means For The Industry', *Grailed* <https://www.grailed.com/drycleanonly/archival-fashion-interest> [accessed 7 January 2024]

Wu, Shellen X., 'Yuan Longping (1930–2021)', *Nature*, 595.7865 (2021), p. 26<https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-021-01732-2>[accessed 29 December 2023]

Xiandai Hanyu Cidian 现代汉语词典(Contemporary Chinese dictionaries 7th edition App version) (China: The Commercial Press: 2023) [accessed 20 December 2023]

Xinhua Zidian 新华字典, (Xinhuang Dictionary 12th edition App version) (China: The Commercial Press: 2023) [accessed 20 December 2023]

Xin Niujin Yinghan Shuangjie Da Cidian 新牛津英汉双解大词典(The New Oxford English-Chinese Dictionary App version) (Shanghai: Shanghai Haidi Digital Publishing Technology, 2023). [accessed 20 December 2023]

Yeshen Laoma 野生老马, Qu Hongqi Nongchang, Luying Qiuge. '去红旗农场，露营秋割. (Go to Red Flag Farm, camp and harvest) - 微博 Weibo' <https://weibo.com/1882942343/4836108888445028?wm=3333_2001andfrom=10DC293010andsourcetype=weixinands_trans=1680890551_48361088884450 28ands_channel=4> [accessed 30 December 2023]

Ying Xia 夏颖，, Tahsa Liu: Wei Zhongguo Sheji Shi Gouzhu Yige Zaomeng Kongjian, Tasha Liu: 为中国设计师构筑一个造梦空间(Tasha Liu, Creating a Space for Dream for Chinese Designers)，*Huawen 今日华闻,* (2013) https://ihuawen.com/article/index/id/36404/cid/69 [accessed on 9th June, 2023]

Young, Robb, 'Guardians of History: At Christian Dior', *The New York Times*, 8 November 2010, section Fashion <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/09/fashion/09iht-rdior.html> [accessed 8 February 2023]

Yu, Stephen, 'An Introduction to Archival Fashion' <https://www.farfetch.com/style-guide/trends-subcultures/archive-clothing-and-archival-fashion-brands/> [accessed 26 September 2023]

'Yu Wenhua Tongxin Aimu Meishu Guan Shi Zhounian 与文化同行爱慕美术馆十周年 (In Company With Culture Aimer Museum Ten Years Anniversary)', *Shishang*

Beijing 时尚北京（2018.9）
https://www.fx361.com/page/2018/0919/4249688.shtml [accessed on 18 Aug 2022]

Zhang Xiaoming 张晓鸣, '*Shanghai Shizhuang Zhou Yueju Quanqiu Shishang Chanye Zhishu Disi Wei* 上海时装周跃居全球时尚产业指数第四位(Shagnhai Fashion Week Moved Into the Fourth Place in the Glocal Fashion Industry Index)', Sohu 搜狐 (2021) <https://www.sohu.com/a/459071998_120244154> [accessed 26 September 2023]

Zhao Huifang 赵慧芳 ed, 'Xiaofei Yu Yuebie Yue Wangsheng, Guangzhou Tiagu Hui Aima Shi Chongkai Dangri Maichao 1900wan', '消费欲越憋越旺盛，广州太古汇爱马仕重开当日卖超 1900 万'(The desire to consume more and more vigorous, Guangzhou Taigu Hui Hermes reopening day sold more than 19 million), 界面新闻 Finance Sina，(2020) [accessed 28th April, 2022]

Zhuanfang Lang Nan, Tuidong Zhongguo Shijishi Shishang XInfeng, 专访南朗，推动中国设计师时尚先锋, Interview with Lang Nan: the Pioneer who promoted Chinese Fashion Designer, 2018. *Heaven Raven*, <https://www.heavenraven.com/2018/07/03/labelhood-nan-lang-the-flocks/> [Accessed on 9th June, 2023]

Zhongbang|Zhongguo Duli Sheji Shi de Yiqie, Douzai LABELHOOD Sheji Shi Dnagan li '重磅 | 中国独立设计师的一切，都在 LABELHOOD 设计师档案馆里'(blockbuster | Everything about independent Chinese designers is at the LABELHOOD Designer Archive) 微信公众平台 WeChat Public Platform, <http://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?__biz=MjM5MDc0NDg2MA==&mid=2651034308&idx=1&sn=456255b585f48b817e81aeef67683239&chksm=bdb71ab78ac093a18cee18de9913806f6e178cb677c0df5bc3449aa2fa70ad4796bad1237eb1#rd> [accessed 5 December 2023].

Video:

'Blacksuga_的抖音 Blacksuga_'s TikTok - 抖音 TikTok' <https://www.douyin.com/user/MS4wLjABAAAAjYThnLgWe-7GmgwhwBtOJ_g2Y6QL6XLaLYOWNXMVbL5gmEY8MT6NLPK4aKL7WQeu?modal_id=6830757378942651663> [accessed 5 December 2023]

EFHA 2019 – 13 SOIZIC PFAFF, The Archives Department to Dior Heritage, dir. by European Fashion Heritage, 2020 <https://vimeo.com/410254423> [accessed 26 September 2023]

[Heitang Q&A] Wo Weishenme Yaodang Shishang Shoucangjia? Hua Jibaiwan Mai Jiu yifu? Wo Jianchi de Archive Wenhua shihenm? Shishang+Shenhuo Da Jieme!

Neihan Chaoji Zhongbang Chouijang+Huodong Yugao '【黑糖 Q&A】我为什么要当时装收藏家？花几百万买旧衣服？我坚持的 Archive 文化是什么？时尚+生活大揭秘！内含超级重磅抽奖+活动预告([Black sugar Q&A]Why would I be a fashion collector? Spend millions on old clothes? What is the Archive culture that I adhere to? Fashion + Life big reveal! Contains Super big draw + event preview)_哔哩哔哩_bilibili'
<https://www.bilibili.com/video/BV1mt4y1Q7QE/?spm_id_from=333.999.0.0&vd_source=caec40b7984665d6b618f0352e9fe8bb> [accessed 5 December 2023].

Heitang Shijian Lvxing She '黑糖时间旅行社' (Black Sugar Time Travel Agency)-哔哩哔哩(Bilibili platform)
<https://search.bilibili.com/all?keyword=%E9%BB%91%E7%B3%96%E6%97%B6%E9%97%B4%E6%97%85%E8%A1%8C%E7%A4%BE&from_source=webtop_search&spm_id_from=333.1007&search_source=5> [accessed 5 December 2023]

Jiazhi 6wan de Dinzhi Lifu Zhang Shenmyang? Fuerdai Zuo Pingpai Daobi de Beishang Gushi|Shishang Bowuguan Richang VLOG|Xianglai Hewo Yiqi Gongzuo ma? '价值 6 万的定制礼服长什么样？富二代做品牌倒闭的悲伤故事｜时装博物馆日常 VLOG｜想来跟我一起工作吗？' (What does a $60,000 bespoke dress look like? Rich second generation's sad story of brand closure | fashion museum daily VLOG | Want to work with me?)
https://www.bilibili.com/video/BV17U4y1c7TV/?share_source=copy_web&vd_source=60eee94dc5dc0956cb9f6f48fa0a5d46 [accessed on 3 September 2023]

Léna Situations visits the Dior couture workshop| Vouge Paris, (2020).
https://www.filigranearchives.com/en/news/archival/dior-heritage-archives-et-fashion [accessed on 8 February 2023]

The First Monday in May, dir. by Andrew Rossi (Conde Nast Entertainment, MediaWeaver Entertainment, Relativity Media, 2016) [accessed on 1 September 2021]

Weile jieda yige kunrao le Shishang quan de nanti, wo jinran cehua le Yichang zhalan? 为了解答一个困扰时尚圈的难题，我竟然策划了一场展览？(I curated an exhibition to answer a conundrum plaguing the fashion world?) online video, Bilibili, 6 June 2021,
https://www.bilibili.com/video/BV1aA41137Qv/?share_source=copy_web&vd_source=60eee94dc5dc0956cb9f6f48fa0a5d46 [accessed on 3 September 2023]

Interview and private conversation

Binggan, interviewed by Mo Shi about Roaring Wild's Archive, Shenzhen, 19 February

2021.

Brain, interviewed by Mo Shi about the Ninon Archive Studio, WeChat from London, 11 November 2020.

Brain, interviewed by Mo Shi about the Ninon Archive Studio, Lark from London, 15 September 2023.

Brain and Suga, interviewed by Mo Shi, Shanghai, 20 January 2021.

Brain and Suga, interviewed by Mo Shi about the Ninon Archive Studio, Shanghai, 25 January 2021.

Brain and Suga, private WeChat conversation with Mo Shi, WeChat, September 2021.

Bian Xiangyang, private conversation with Mo Shi, Shanghai, Donghua University, January 2021.

Brain, Suga and Yaning Shi, meeting with Mo Shi, WeChat and Zoom, January 2022.

Brain, private conversation with Mo Shi, WeChat, April 2022.

Cee Cee, interviewed by Mo Shi about Fun Affair's archive, WeChat from London, 9 September 2020.

Chen, Qin, interviewed by Mo Shi about The Warehouse by Shitang's Archive, Shanghai, 18 January 2021.

Elaine, interviewed by Mo Shi about Vintage and Republic's archive and STAFFONLY's archive, Shanghai, 22 January 2021.

Fan, Judy, interviewed by Mo Shi about Judy Fan's archive, WeChat from London, 3 September 2020.

Fang, Xiaojing. WeChat conversation interview, London, 19 February 2023.

Freya, interviewed by Mo Shi about Tingtang's archive, WeChat from London, 1 June 2020.

Gary, interviewed by Mo Shi about Keh Form's archive, WeChat from London, 5 November 2020.

Guo, Xiuling, interviewed by Mo Shi about Sandriver's Archive, WeChat, 31 January 2021.

Guo, Xiuling, private conversation in Sandriver factory, Shanghai, February 2021

Himm, interviewed by Mo Shi about Fussed's Archive, Guangzhou, 17 February 2021.

Huihui, private conversation with Mo Shi about Vintage and Republic, Shanghai Feb 2021.

Jiaya (Wendy), interviewed by Mo Shi about Roundface's archive, WeChat from London, 3 September 2020.

Jiang, Yutong, interviewed by Mo Shi about Shushu Tong's Archive, Shanghai, 27 February 2021.

Kangkang, interviewed by Mo Shi, Shanghai, Shanghai, 24 February 2021.

Kass, interviewed by Mo Shi about Carven and ICICLE's archive, WeChat from London, 20 October 2020.

Kian, interviewed by Mo Shi about his personal archive, WeChat from London, 27 October 2020.

Kian and Zephy, interviewed by Mo Shi about their own archive collection, Shanghai, 24 February 2021.

Liu, Tasha, interviewed by Mo Shi about Labelhood's Archive, Shanghai, Shanghai, 27 January 2021.

Liu, Tasha, interviewed by Mo Shi about Labelhood's Archive, WeChat from London, 2nd December 2023.

Lulu, interviewed by Mo Shi about her studio archive, WeChat from London, 2 September 2020.

Pei, Ying, interviewed by Mo Shi about Ying Pei Studio's archive, WeChat, 7 September 2020.

Pei, Ying, private conversation with Mo Shi, Shanghai, 22 January 2021.

Steven, interviewed by Mo Shi about Nume's Archive, WeChat from London, 27 April 2021.

Suga, interviewed by Mo Shi about the Ninon Archive Studio, Lark from London, 10 September 2023.

Tan, Fengyi, interviewed by Mo Shi about Fengyi Tan's archive, WeChat from London, 3

September 2020.

Une, Yea, interviewed by Mo Shi about STAFFONLY's Archive, Shanghai, 22 January 2021.

Une Yea, private conversation with Mo Shi, Shanghai, 22 January 2021.

Wang, Xiaoyu, interviewed by Mo Shi about Zesh's archive, WeChat from London, 6 September 2020.

Wu, Wenqi, interviewed by Mo Shi about Broadcast's archive, WeChat from London, 28 August 2022.

Yu, Qinrun, private conversation with Mo Shi, WeChat, 28 December 2023.

Zhan, Hui, interviewed by Mo Shi about Vintage and Republic's Archive, Zhongshan, 3 February 2021.

Zhan, Hui, private conversation with Mo Shi, WeChat, December 2023.

Zhang, Zouhui, interviewed by Mo Shi about OUTDOGER &ZUGZAG's archive, WeChat from London, 2 September 2020.

Zhou, Shimo, interviewed by Mo Shi about STAFFONLY's Archive, WeChat from London, 14 June 2020.

Zhou, Shimo, 'The Explore of the challenges facing the Chinese fashion industry in multiple contexts', Guangzhou Academy of Fine Art, December 2019.

Zhou, Shimo, 'The Explore of the challenges facing the Chinese fashion industry in multiple contexts', Guangzhou Academy of Fine Art, December 2019.

Unpublished Secondary Sources:

(17 banben) Shanghai Shishang Chanye Baogao Xiuzheng Ban- Hebing Ban（17 版本）上海时尚产业报告修正版-合并版 Shanghai Fashion Industry Report Revised edition - Consolidated edition (unpublished Donghua University, 2017)

(19 banben) Shanghai Shishang Chanye Baogao Xiuzheng Ban- Hebing Ban（19 版本）上海时尚产业报告修正版-合并版 Shanghai Fashion Industry Report Revised edition - Consolidated edition (unpublished Donghua University, 2019)

Brain and Suga, 'Fashion and Body', unpublished proposal delivered at a private meeting.

Li, Dan, '*The Economic Effects of Civil War: Evidence from Chinese National Railroads, 1906-1923*', (2007) unpublished manuscript.