

Asian
Queer
Localized
Narrative







Introduction

In order to get deeper understandings of different perspectives, future hopes and stories from Asia queers live in the Netherlands, also foster dialogue for the Asian community in the Netherlands, I organized a **Fabric repair + Story sharing workshop**.

The goal is to explore the intersection of queerness and Asian identity, while addressing themes such as sustainability, styling, and self-healing aspects. Moreover, I hope to get inspirations and transform it into the Cyborg I create, using different making processes and materials connected to the stories people share. The workshop/interview aimed to provide a platform for sharing experiences, exchanging knowledge, and building communities focused on solidarity.

This workshop was structured into two parts:

*Part1–Bring the clothes or fabric you want to repair and we will share our stories while mending or modification. The story could be your own experience, perspective, challenge, hopes and feelings about as a Asian queer/non-binary/LGBTQIA+ living in Europe.

*Part 2– Bring a garment or object that has a gender or self-identity with you and share your story. For example, why it's so important to you? Did you have some special momentv with it? Do you think objects have the potential to bring self-healing to people?

First, we discussed how everyone has slightly different definitions of queerness.

I feel that the concept of queerness is not yet widely understood in Taiwan. Many of my friends still don't fully grasp what it means to be queer. I was surprised that even my close friends only have a vague understanding of queerness and feminism, and they don't seem to consider these issues important.

This made me feel a bit sad. I think this is also one of the reasons why I want to explore these topics more deeply in my work—so that more people can understand and support the community.

Yuan shares a similar feeling. They believe that it is even more upsetting to stay silent about things that matter because these issues, which may seem distant, are actually very close to us and deeply connected to our daily lives.

Yuan (they/them) identifies as queer and sometimes as transgay. In late July 2024, they moved from Beijing to the Netherlands, having never been to Europe before. Since childhood, they had resisted living in their hometown in Shandong. Yuan mentioned that as a child, they felt like a little boy.

In China, they constantly had to remind people not to misgender them, especially when communicating through text, but people often struggled to fully understand what that meant. After going through a period of rapid gender fluidity, Yuan later felt that they had no fixed gender and wished to break away from the binary system.

We also discussed the use of **"they"** in Mandarin, specifically the character " 他 " (tā), and the idea of creating a non-binary pronoun, such as " ㄊㄚˇ " or "Ta."

Since Mandarin does not have a non-binary pronoun, and all gendered pronouns are pronounced the same ("tā"), I feel that this makes it difficult to use gender pronouns effectively in everyday conversations. This could indirectly influence people's awareness—because when you speak, you also hear yourself using certain words. If all gendered pronouns sound the same, people may lack a more diverse understanding of gender identities.

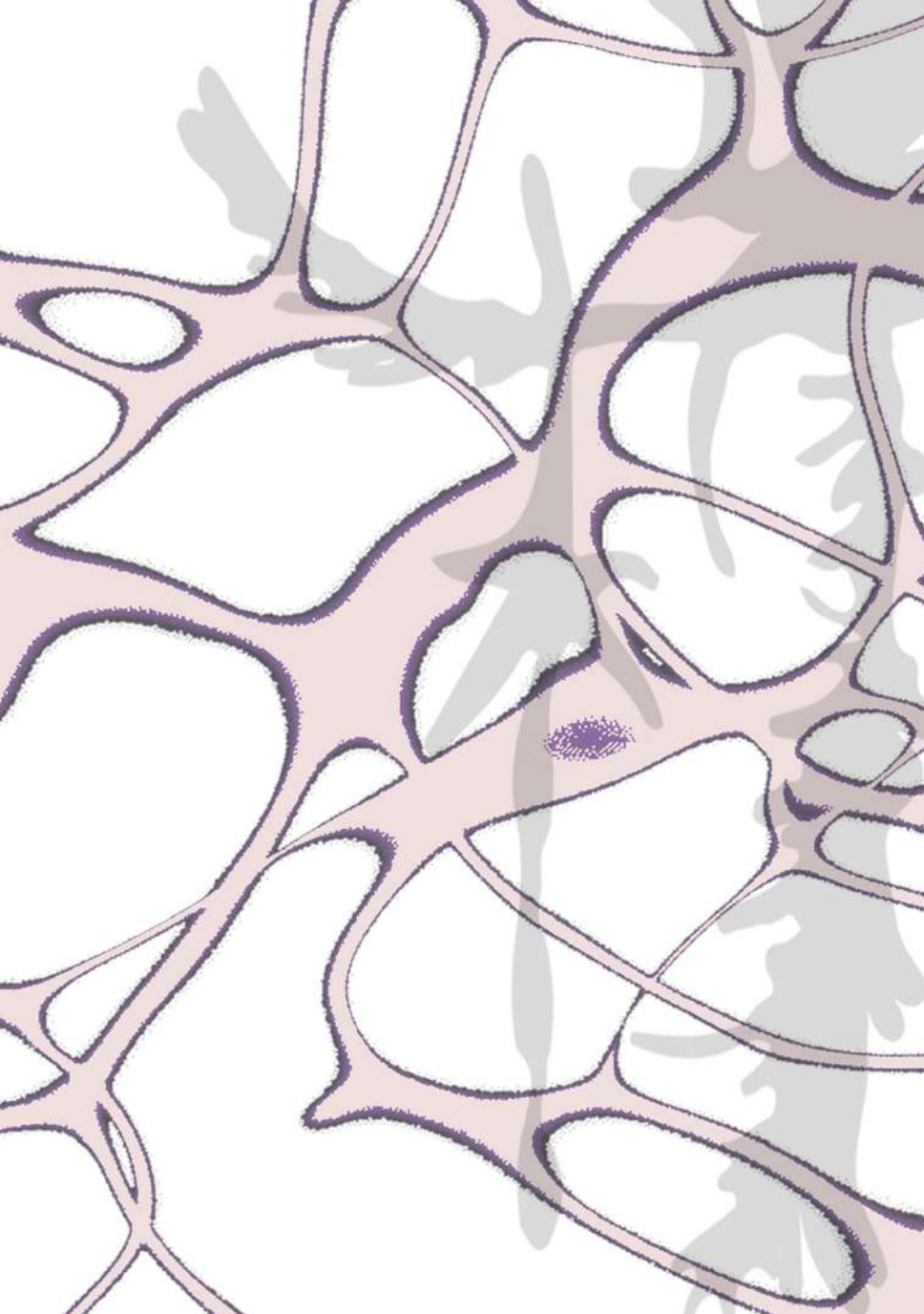
Regarding the experiences, challenges, and future hopes of being an Asian queer/non-binary/LGBTQIA+ person living in the Netherlands, Yuan hopes to connect with more queer communities. Perhaps the complexity of being an Asian queer person—intertwined with political and other factors—makes it harder for other groups to fully empathize with our experiences. I believe this is why it is even more important for Asian queers living in Europe to have a sense of community and mutual support. Yuan strongly agrees, saying,

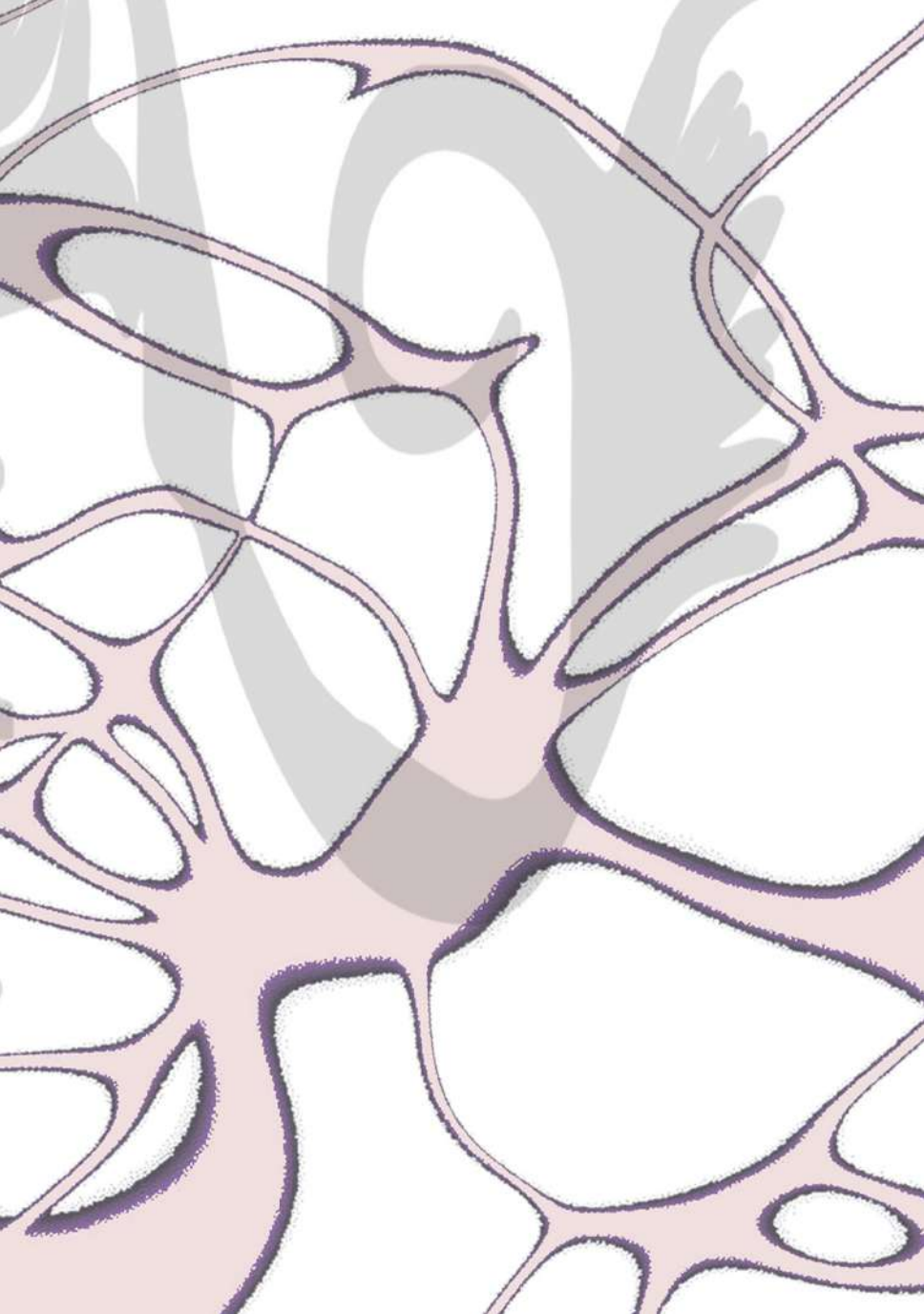
"Maybe some people don't feel the need to integrate into a specific community, but there will always be others who need care and support."

Yizon (he/him) considers himself as Gay/Queer. He points out that As an Asian queer person living in Europe, the biggest challenge he've faced is being fetishized and having stereotypical labels placed on. There's a social expectation that Asian gay men behave in certain ways—being more submissive in bed, dressing a certain way, and so on. This can be both a blessing and a curse. On one hand, he can uses these perceptions to stand out, but on the other, these prejudices often prevent people from truly seeing him for who he is. He hopes that people will genuinely let go of labels and embrace true diversity.

Wyn (she/they) moved from Guangdong to the Netherlands in August 2024. They do not want to get married or have children and refuse to take on the gendered responsibilities that society imposes. On top of that, life in China felt too restrictive, so they wanted to leave and explore new possibilities.

Wyn believes that family remains the biggest challenge for queer individuals and the most important issue to confront, while societal pressures come second. We discussed how the experiences of many Asians might be similar—we have also not come out to our families or talked about our gender identities with them.





In the second part of our
conversation,
we talked about the connection with

objects, gender and self-identity,

and the theme of

self-healing.

Yizon has a blue furry doll keychain bought at a street market near my house. It's a baby doll dressed in a bear costume, and he attaches it to his leather purse. Carrying it around brings him comfort because it's a reminder that he's free to be himself.

Growing up in a judgmental family in Taiwan with two straight brothers, he was teased for his identity. He loved playing with Barbie dolls and cute things as a child, but these preferences were often used against him. He had to change himself to avoid becoming a target in his family and in a straight-dominated society. During his teenage years, he even started “acting straight,” since being feminine or different made dating difficult in Asia. However, after moving to Amsterdam, Yizon realized he needed to let go of the protective mechanisms he'd developed and rediscover who he truly is.

This journey started with wearing whatever I wanted.

That inner child hasn't fully grown up yet—he still loves warm, cute, furry things attached to a bag.

Even though he sometimes get comments about that keychain, he see it as proof that he is unique and that no one can hurt him. To Yizon, it's not just a keychain; it represents the special child he was and still is, and now it's a baby that he need to protect at all cause.

And by the way, the blue isn't just blue—it's a profound, dreamy, slightly purplish blue that can't be described by words.

He agrees that objects can definitely heal people. At its core, possessing an object is a way of expanding one's comfort zone. Bringing a piece of home on a trip can make someone feel at home, even in an unfamiliar place. An object can serve as a reminder or as a vessel that carries emotions and preserves memories. For example, a piece of heirloom jewelry can give someone a sense of belonging. These emotional connections have the power to heal.





Jeanne (she/her) moved from Taipei to the Netherlands in August 2024. She identifies as queer and a lesbian. She also believes in the self-healing potential of objects. Jeanne loves collecting stones, driftwood, insect remains, albino coral, and other natural objects she finds on the street. She is particularly drawn to dried-up golden beetles—she likes to bring them home and extend their meaning; otherwise, they would naturally disappear from the world. She finds beauty in death and does not shy away from appreciating it. She even enjoys collecting these objects.

She once incorporated her pet mice into her creative work, taking ID-style photos of them. However, since their lifespan is only about a year and a half, she often faced death and witnessed its fleeting moments. She recalls how a mouse would go from breathing to complete stillness, lying quietly in her hands. This made her realize that things that were once alive leave the deepest impression.

These experiences led her to approach things from a different perspective—appreciating the meaning and value of different people, objects, and experiences. Through collecting objects, she also became more aware of human relationships. At first, she no longer quickly dismisses the value of others.

She also hopes to explore different forms of intimacy—building close connections beyond language and engaging in meaningful exchanges. This is one reason she enjoys workshops like this, as they provide a space for intimate sharing and connection.



Each time she styles her look,

When getting dressed, she likes to incorporate symbols into her outfit—it's her way of defining aesthetics.



she focuses on a specific symbol, such as texture, color, or patterns. She applies this same logic in her creative work as well.

Yuan has a very detached attitude toward material possessions. They believe that objects come and go, and they tend to minimize their belongings because there was a period when they had no permanent home and were constantly moving. To them, objects carry memories, but the depth of emotional attachment to them is something they can subjectively alter. However, Yuan acknowledges the potential of objects to offer self-healing.

At one point, they were interested in crystals but hesitated to buy them, as they were concerned about the environmental impact of mining, which could disrupt the earth's geological layers and disperse the energy. Instead, they created a small altar at home, filled with collected stones, leaves, dried branches, pinecones, living plants, and small gifts or crystals given by friends.

One night, Yuan had a dream in which their soul left their body. On the small altar, a translucent figure resembling a cross-legged Maitreya Buddha appeared and called them to return.



Their spirit re-entered their body, and when they woke up, they felt an overwhelming sense of calm, as if the figure had given them a sense of peace, for which they felt grateful. The interaction between stones and objects created a kind of protective space, an energetic field with a strong presence. Crystals, in particular, resonate with one's energy.

I also shared my own experiences of spiritual interactions with crystals and minerals during the pandemic. We then discussed jade, agreeing that the stones of the earth carry energy.

Wyn showed me a jade Maitreya Buddha necklace that they have been wearing every day since moving abroad. In the past, they had worn a Guanyin pendant, but it eventually cracked. They feel that this necklace has now become a part of them. Before, they thought jade was quite ordinary, even a bit old-fashioned, but after leaving their home country, they started to miss aspects of their culture, such as jade, Buddhism, and other familiar symbols. I resonated deeply with this feeling.

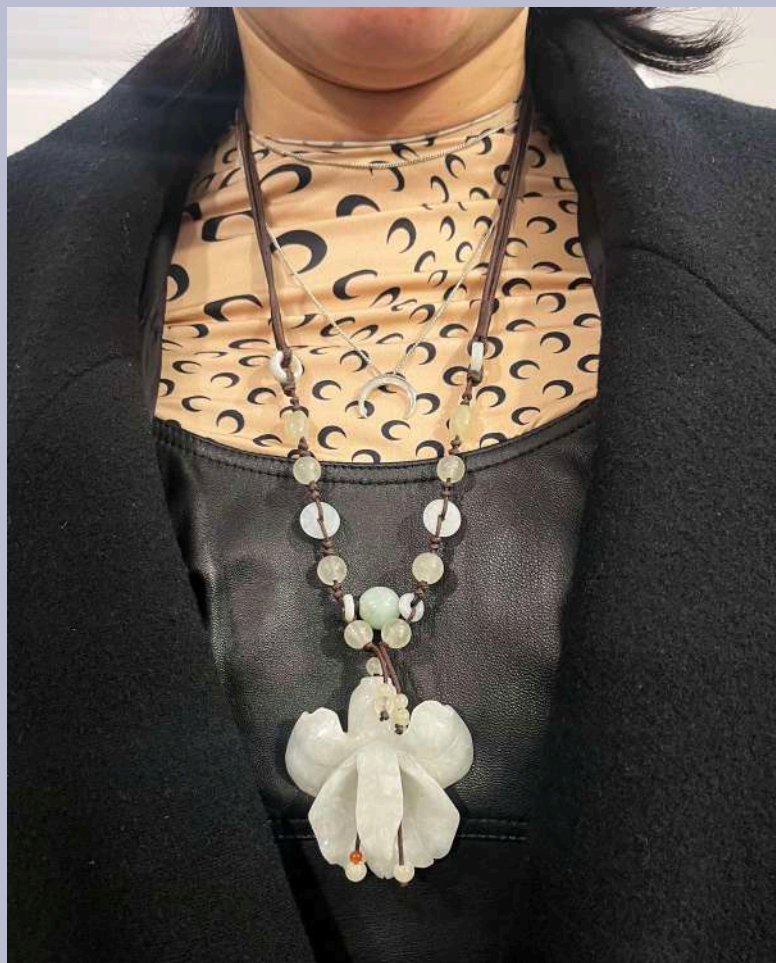


During my conversation with Wyn, they were weaving on a loom using fabric scraps they had collected. They found the repetitive motion soothing and believed it had a therapeutic effect. I was fascinated by this and decided to weave alongside them, hoping to incorporate this creative process into my Cyborg art work.



For me it's this Jade orchid necklace. It's my Christmas gift from a friend. From my country jade is associated with Chinese conceptions of the soul and immortality. It also protects and heals the body and spirit of the wearer from malevolent forces. It will break as it takes the brunt of a possible injury. As a living being, the more jade is worn, the clearer, purer, and more powerful it becomes. I wasn't really interested in jade and its meanings but after I got this necklace, I tried to put them on my daily styles and it looks surprisingly good on me. In my memories, normally only old people like to wear jade because most designed look really old fashioned.

But this time I started to curious about it and want to research the jade from Taiwan. I found that there are some special Taiwan jade has a green color and is found in the Laonao Mountain area of Hualien. It's a type of nephrite primarily composed of minerals.





Taiwan Jade can be classified into three main types: Common Jade, Cat's Eye Jade and Waxy Nephrite. There is a special type of nephrite called Dragon Vein Jade, which is a combination of the three types. The details of it is beautiful and makes me think about the relationships with the identities and cyborg I want to create. It's really intriguing for me that sometimes you receive an object and it makes you delve into the area you didn't interested before. For me I enjoy this process in daily life and transform it into my artistic practices.



