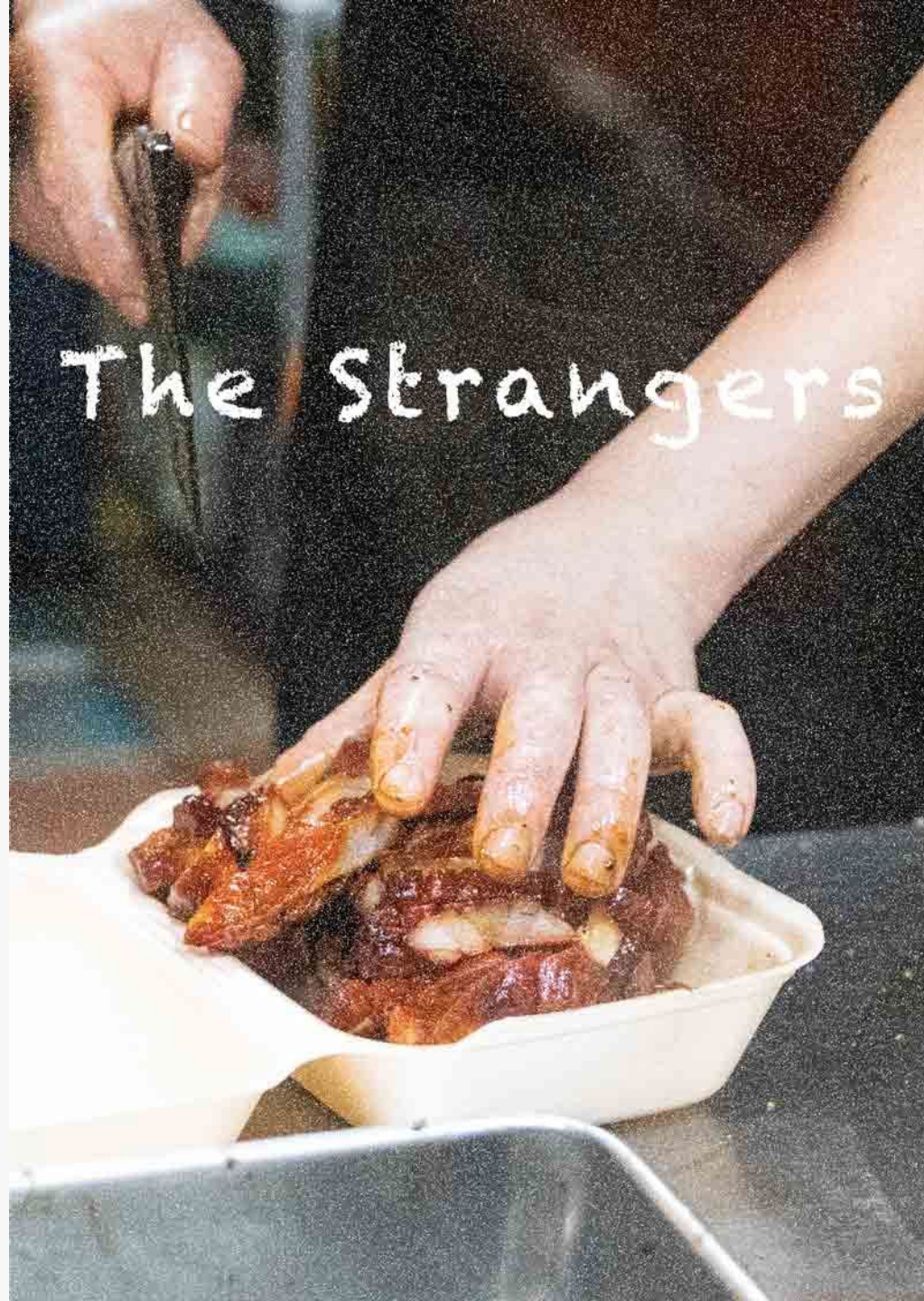


The Strangers



MA Contemporary Arts China

Final Art Project

Shuyi Xie

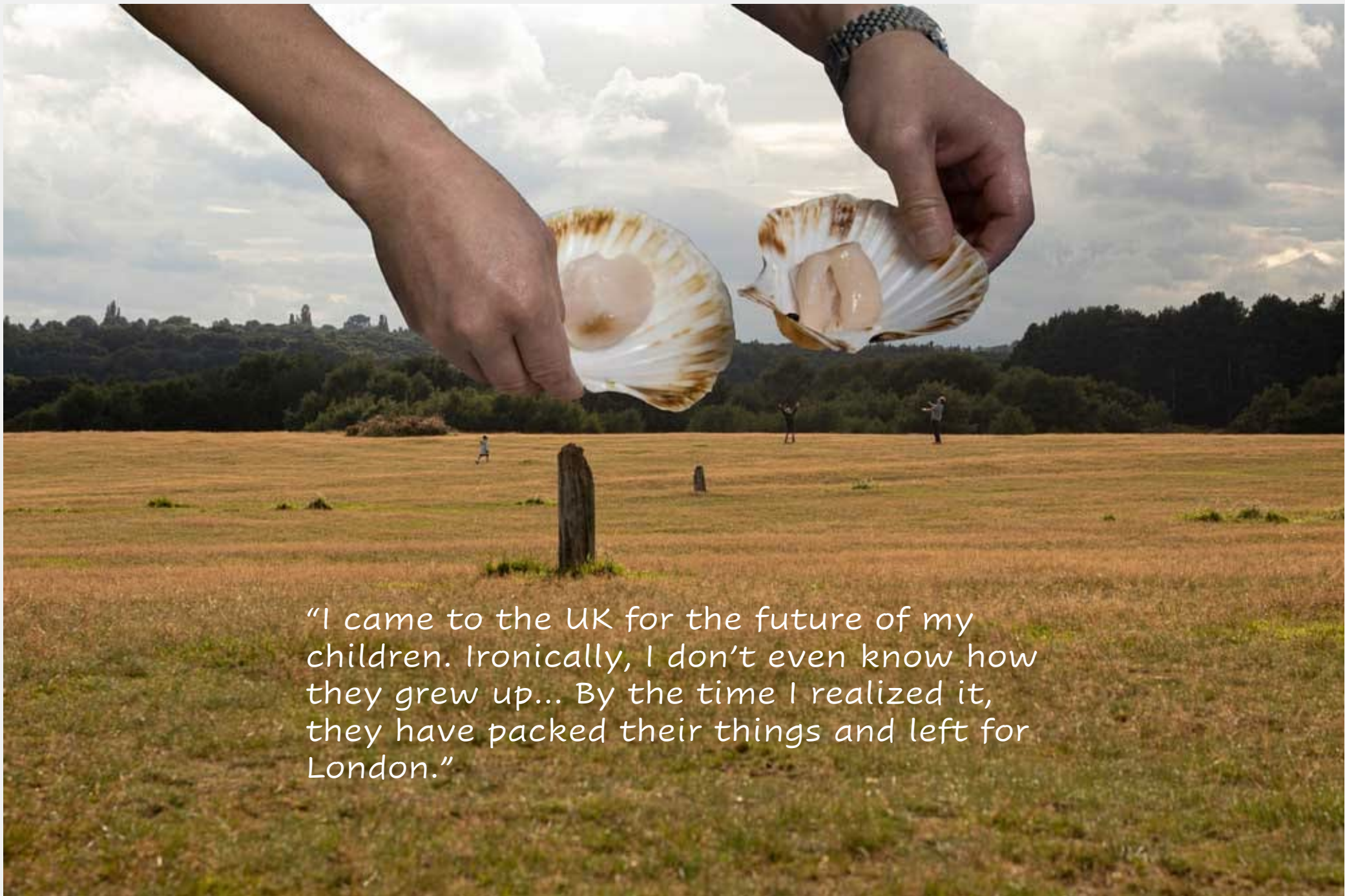
My work over the past year studying at BCU has made a shift from objects and paintings based to multi-media approach including web-based projects, photography, video shooting and installations. In my work, I look at the collective struggle of humankind and the ways social systems function in individuals. I am interested in making something happen, telling stories, presenting the hidden systems or raising people's awareness on social issue. I see arts as a tool for building up dialogues and connecting people.

The Strangers is about the life and dreams of Chinese working-class people in Birmingham. I have produced a photography set, a video and a booklet to tell the mentality that the participants have and visualize their struggles and reality in a surrealistic way. The juxtaposition of working hands, British natural sceneries and the music from the participants is the demonstration of my practice: how the British social environment affects the mentality of the Chinese working-class people and how their real lives went completely against their dreams because of that.



Photographies set
Digital collage
Lustre print, mounting paper
40cm*50cm each
2021





"I came to the UK for the future of my children. Ironically, I don't even know how they grew up... By the time I realized it, they have packed their things and left for London."



"How the food made customers feel is the least thing we consider. I am responsible for making the same bread with same flavor, same texture and in same quantity everyday."

I have put together my thoughts during the making and the life experiences shared by participants into the booklet and made it a readable resource where the viewers get to know more about the project.



Please read the booklet from [HERE](#)

Matte printing
A5-A6
2021

<https://youtu.be/ZZSOxEN4POg>

They finished school in the afternoon
stared working in the **afternoon**

We always woke up without seeing our kids,
and leaving for work without saying them
goodbye

There were at least three days in a week without
seeing our children

We missed their **childhood.**"





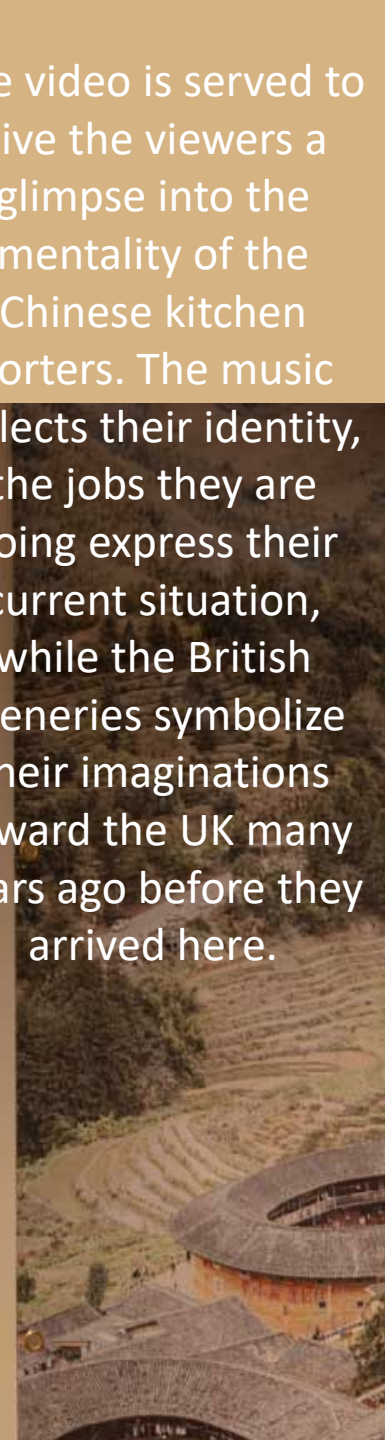
The Strangers-video

6'30''

2021

https://youtu.be/qpTofzY_Ya0

The video is served to give the viewers a glimpse into the mentality of the Chinese kitchen porters. The music reflects their identity, the jobs they are doing express their current situation, while the British sceneries symbolize their imaginations toward the UK many years ago before they arrived here.





I let the old love accompany the bridal gown away

Screenshot of the video

The Backdrop



Tulou, Fujian

The backdrop is served to be an interactive part of my exhibition, where viewers can stand in front of and take pictures. The backdrop itself is a part of my project. I was planning to have some of my participants fully dress up the way they go to work, and take pictures in front of it. I want to convey a sense of solation that these people have been going through for years they lived in the UK. Just like they're trapped in the limited sized backdrop, they are trapped in the social systems that were and still are put upon them.

The reason why I chose this picture was that Fujian is the hometown of most of my participants and most of the Chinese immigrants living in Birmingham.

The Backdrop

PVC

113cm*191cm

2021

The backdrop in gallery installation



I had some course-mates stand against the backdrop and pretend they are part of the scenery.

This is how I planned to do it. But due to Covid restriction and the degree show is not open to the public. I have created an effect picture of how it might look like.





Link to online version of my work: [THE STRANGERS — SHU YI \(squarespace.com\)](https://shuyi.squarespace.com/)

Link to my critical journal of the work: [Critical Journal for Semester Three — SHU YI \(squarespace.com\)](https://shuyi.squarespace.com/)

Link to the philosophical ideas behind my work: [Philosophical Ideas Behind My Work — SHU YI \(squarespace.com\)](https://shuyi.squarespace.com/)

Strangers

By Rachel, 2013

They are strange things; strangers.....
There are so many of them

Yet, although these strangers are strange to me
To you they may be a friend

They are a strange species; these strangers
They overpopulate almost every place

Yet, they go about living similar lives of their own
Each one with a different story or face

Strangely, we are taught not to talk to strangers
And trained to avoid them

Yet, each one, whether strange or not,
Is, strangely enough, a person.

Strange is the way we feel about strangers
We fear them because we do not know them

Yet, these strangers are unknown to us
Because we choose not to know them

What strange mystery these strangers possess
Each one of them has a life,
A secret,
A past,
And a name
Just like us....

Yet, we label them as strange.

Yes, strange thing; these strangers

Yet,
The strangest strange
Is that, strangely enough,
We are **all** strangers.

