



EXPLORING THE TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCE OF MATRESCENCE: A
REFLECTION ON MOTHERHOOD THROUGH INTERDISCIPLINARY ART.



A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for Master of Fine Arts DESIGN ARTS (INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM)

Silpakorn University
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By
MISS Karma SIRIKOGAR

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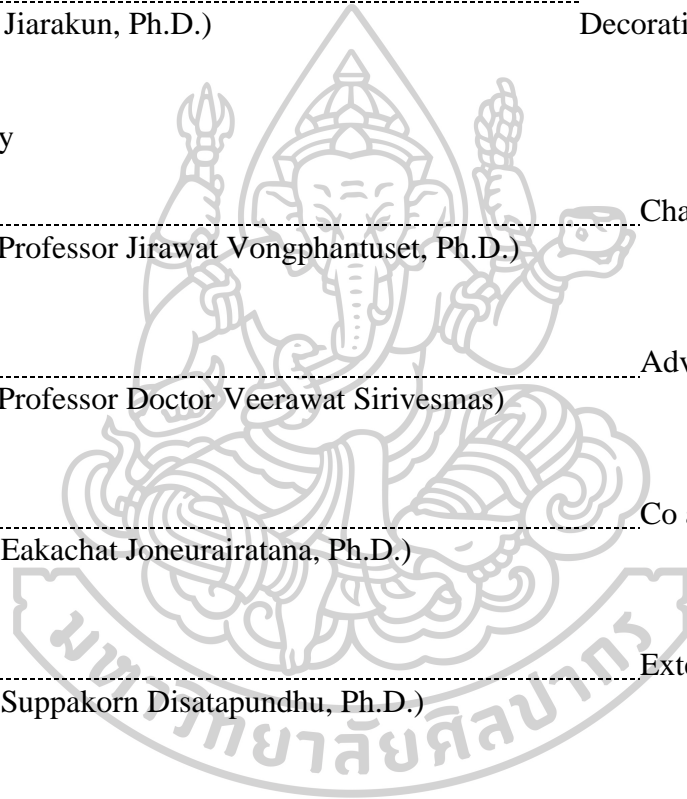
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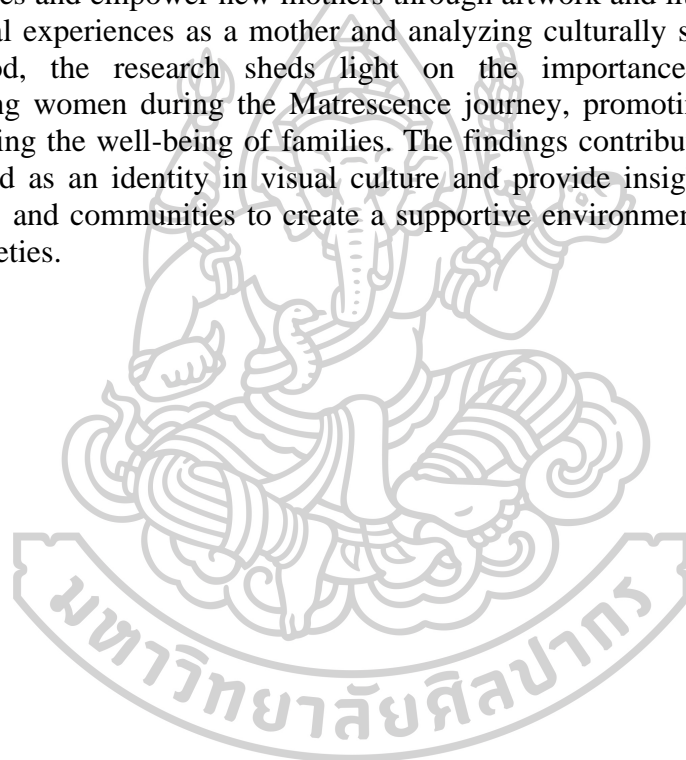


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This thesis explores Matrescence, a developmental stage for new mothers, focusing on the challenges faced in urban Asian environments. Specifically, it examines the limited attention given to Matrescence in Asian contexts, particularly in Thailand, and investigates the impact of short paid maternity leave, workplace inflexibility, and lack of childcare support on the experiences of new mothers. Through a practice-led approach using autoethnography, visual analysis, and literature review, the study aims to raise awareness and understanding of Matrescence in Asian communities and empower new mothers through artwork and literature. By reflecting on personal experiences as a mother and analyzing culturally significant artwork on Motherhood, the research sheds light on the importance of supporting and empowering women during the Matrescence journey, promoting work-life balance, and nurturing the well-being of families. The findings contribute to the discourse on motherhood as an identity in visual culture and provide insights for policymakers, employers, and communities to create a supportive environment for new mothers in Asian societies.



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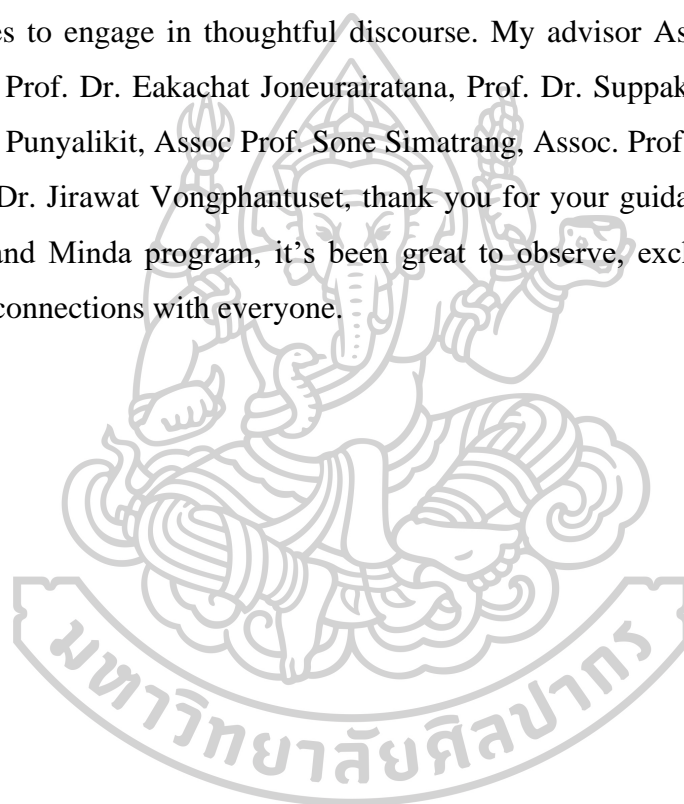


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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Significance of Research

Why am I exploring this topic? As a mother and visual artist with a child under 5 years old living in the dense urban environment of Bangkok, Thailand, it is a topic I am observing and living through. I have many privileges and support in this transition to Motherhood, but many do not, and I hope to contribute to the discussion on Motherhood here in Thailand. This thesis reflects and explores the representation of motherhood in Asian and Western contexts.

What is Matrescence exactly? It's a developmental stage for new mothers coined by American anthropologist Dana Raphael in the mid-1970s. Prior to the 1970s (and intertwined with it, the rise of feminist ideology), psychologist Erik Erikson's 8 stages of psychosocial development from infancy to elderly age did not include the adult stage of transitioning to parenthood. With this significant evolution in a person's identity acknowledged and expressed in Western culture, comes support in policy, the workplace, and communities, leading to the well-being of families and increased economic productivity. In Asian contexts, however, there has been limited discussion about matrescence, which encompasses the physical, psychological, and emotional changes mothers experience after giving birth. Consequently, the support provided to new mothers within the workplace and through government policies in most Asian countries is significantly impacted.

In Western contexts, work-life balance for both parents is considered more after the 1970s. Referred to as the second wave of feminism by Betty Friedan in her book *The Feminine Mystique*, open cultural discussion, and academic research interest in family life and how it affects productivity, mental health, and community behavior were developed. This resulted in progressive policy support and multinational companies allowing flexible working hours. For example, in Australia, Canada, and Sweden, paid maternity leave is up to 1 year, and it's the same for paternity leave in some cases too. However, in Thailand, paid maternity leave is approximately 3 months in both the public and private sectors, while paternity leave is just 15 days in the public sector. Working hours are also not as flexible for new mothers as well.

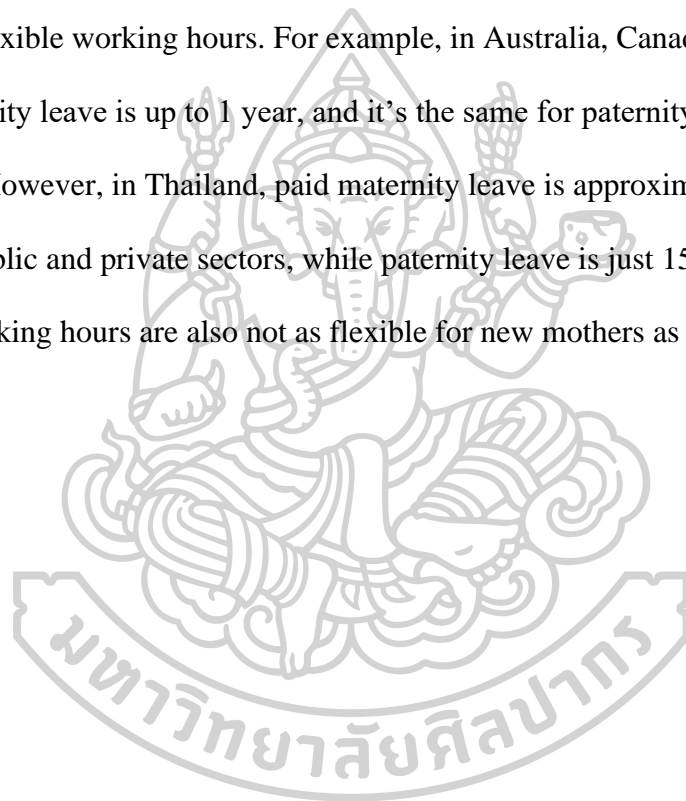




Figure 1 Klimt, Gustav. (1905). The three ages of a woman. [Oil on Canvas]. Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, Rome, Italy

Looking at visual culture, the representation of Motherhood in art historical contexts is many, yet mostly from Western artists, such as Gustav Klimt's 'The Three Ages of Woman', painted in 1905, also known as 'Mother and Child', believed to represent three main stages of a woman's life: infancy, motherhood, and old age. Searching for the representation of motherhood in Asian historical art proves more difficult. This lack of cultural reflection on Motherhood in Asian historical art shows that more

discussion and representation of Matrescence in Asian communities is needed. Short paid maternity leave, workplace inflexibility, and lack of childcare support can affect child development, parental mental health & economic activity (mothers leave the workforce). I aim to investigate and bring awareness to the developmental stage of Matrescence, by creating artwork reflecting on my own experience, reviewing the literature on modern motherhood, and analyzing culturally significant artwork on Motherhood. I hope to support and empower women by contributing to the discussion of motherhood as an identity and work-life balance in Thailand.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Matrescence, the developmental stage for new mothers coined by anthropologist Dana Raphael, has been largely overlooked in Asian contexts, leading to a lack of support for new mothers in the workplace and through government policy. The representation of motherhood in Asian historical art also highlights a lack of cultural reflection on Matrescence. This issue is compounded by short paid maternity leave and workplace inflexibility, and lack of childcare support, leading to negative impacts on new mothers' experiences, child development, parental mental health, and economic activity. This study aims to increase awareness of Matrescence in Asian communities and support and empower new mothers through artwork and literature analysis.

1.3 Hypothesis

The limited attention given to Matrescence in cultural conversations within Asian communities, alongside the lack of sufficient paid maternity leave, rigid work environments, and inadequate childcare support, deeply impact the experiences of new mothers. These factors have far-reaching consequences, affecting the development of children, the mental well-being of parents, and overall economic activity. It is crucial to carefully consider the variables of Matrescence, paid maternity leave, workplace flexibility, childcare support, the experiences of new mothers, child development, parental mental health, and economic activity to effectively address these challenges with compassion and understanding.

According to a study by the World Policy Analysis Center, in countries with paid maternity leave policies, mothers are more likely to take time off after childbirth, breastfeed longer, and return to work with greater job security and earnings. However, in Thailand, paid maternity leave is only approximately three months in both the public and private sectors, which is much shorter than the average of one year in countries such as Australia, Canada, and Sweden. The lack of support for new mothers in the workplace may lead to decreased mental health and job satisfaction, negatively impacting their economic activity. Moreover, the lack of cultural representation and discussion on Matrescence in Asian communities may exacerbate these issues.

However, by increasing awareness and opening up the discussion on work-life balance, postpartum support, and the identity transition of Matrescence, there will be a positive impact on new mothers' experiences, child development, and the economy. This can be contributing to visual culture with my own artwork on this topic, reviewing the literature on working mothers, and analyzing culturally significant artwork on Motherhood, thereby supporting and empowering women in Thailand.

1.4 Objectives of the Research

To explore the concept of Matrescence in the Asian context and investigate the extent to which it has been discussed in the literature and cultural representations.

To examine the policies and support systems for new mothers in Thailand, including paid maternity leave, workplace flexibility, and childcare support.

To investigate the experiences of new mothers in Asian urban environments regarding Matrescence and the challenges they face in balancing work and family responsibilities.

To analyze culturally significant artwork on Motherhood in the West in connection to feminism and explore the representation of Matrescence in Asian art as well.

To create artwork reflecting on the researcher's experience of Matrescence and use it to empower and support new mothers.

1.5 Scope of the Research

The scope of my research encompasses an exploration of Matrescence. I aim to investigate the extent to which Matrescence has been discussed in the literature and cultural representations within Asian & Western contexts, providing a light contrast. I will examine the policies and support systems for new mothers in Thailand, including paid maternity leave, workplace flexibility, and childcare support. Additionally, I will delve into the experiences of new mothers in Asian urban environments, shedding light on the challenges they face in balancing work and family responsibilities. My study will analyze culturally significant artwork on Motherhood, both from Western artists and, to the extent possible, Asian artists, to understand the representation of Matrescence. Furthermore, I will create artwork reflecting on my own experience of Matrescence and utilize it as a means to empower and support new mothers. By focusing on Thailand while drawing insights from the broader Asian context, my research aims to contribute to the discussion of motherhood as an identity and work-life balance in Asian societies.

1.6 Research Framework (explained in Chapter 3)

My research framework is through applied research and practice-led research methodologies to explore the concept of Matrescence and its representation in the visual arts and my own personal practice. Through my research, I've discovered Visual Autoethnography as a method to explore and reflect on my personal motherhood experience. Additionally, I will employ visual analysis as a research

method to conduct a comprehensive examination of visual representations of motherhood in my literature review.

1.7 Limitations of the Research

While the research on Matrescence and the experiences of new mothers in urban Asian environments is significant, certain limitations should be acknowledged:

Generalizability: The findings and conclusions of the research may be specific to the context of urban Asian environments and may not be directly applicable to other cultural or geographic settings. The experiences and challenges faced by new mothers can vary significantly across different regions and communities, so it is important to interpret the research findings within the given context.

Subjectivity: The research methodology, particularly the use of visual autoethnography, relies on my personal experiences and interpretations. This subjectivity introduces a potential bias and limits the objectivity of the research.

While personal narratives can provide valuable insights, it is important to recognize that they represent individual perspectives and may not capture the full range of experiences.

Sample Size and Representation: The research may be limited by the sample size and diversity of participants. A small sample size or a specific demographic representation

may restrict the generalizability of the findings. It is important to acknowledge the limitations in sample size and strive for diverse representation to ensure a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences of new mothers.

Cultural Context: The research primarily focuses on the Asian context, specifically Thailand. While this provides valuable insights into the challenges faced by new mothers in this region, it may not capture the nuances and variations within other Asian countries or cultural contexts. The research could benefit from a broader cross-cultural comparison to enhance its applicability and validity.

By acknowledging these limitations, future research can build upon these findings and address any gaps to provide a more comprehensive understanding of Matrescence and the experiences of new mothers in different cultural and geographic contexts.

1.8 Research Output/ Outcome

The research output/outcome would be a comprehensive study that explores the concept of Matrescence in the Asian context and investigates the extent to which it has been discussed in the literature and cultural representations. The study would examine the policies and support systems for new mothers in Thailand, including paid maternity leave, workplace flexibility, and childcare support. It would also investigate the experiences of new mothers in Thailand regarding Matrescence and the challenges they face in balancing work and family responsibilities.

Additionally, the study would analyze culturally significant artwork on Motherhood

in Asia and explore the representation of Matrescence in these works. The researcher would create artwork reflecting on their experience of Matrescence and use it to empower and support new mothers.

The research output/outcome would bring awareness to the developmental stage of Matrescence and the challenges new mothers face in balancing work and family responsibilities in Thailand. It would provide insights into how policies and support systems can be improved to better support new mothers in the workplace and through government policy. The research findings could be used by policymakers, employers, and other stakeholders to develop policies and programs that support new mothers and their families. It could also serve as a basis for further research on Matrescence and its impact on new mothers in other Asian contexts.

1.9 Definition of Terms

The terms "Western" and "Eastern" are used to broadly categorize different cultural, geographic, and philosophical traditions based on their respective origins and characteristics.

In a cultural context, "Western" typically refers to societies and cultures that have their roots in Europe and North America, as well as countries influenced by Western European traditions (Blumer, 1969). These societies often share common values, institutions, and historical developments. Western cultures are characterized by individualism, emphasis on personal rights and freedoms, democratic governance, and

a focus on rationality and scientific inquiry (Hofstede, 2001).

On the other hand, "Eastern" generally refers to societies and cultures primarily found in Asia, including East Asia, Southeast Asia, and South Asia. Eastern cultures encompass a wide range of diverse traditions, languages, religions, and practices (Kim, 2017). These cultures may have different value systems and philosophical frameworks compared to Western cultures. Eastern cultures often emphasize collectivism, social harmony, respect for authority, and the interconnectedness of individuals within their communities (Triandis, 1995).

It's important to note that these terms are broad generalizations and can oversimplify the complexity and diversity within each cultural category (Hall, 1976). Cultural boundaries are not rigid, and there are significant variations within regions and countries. Additionally, globalization and increased cultural exchange have led to the blending and hybridization of Western and Eastern cultural elements in various contexts (Appadurai, 1996).

1.10 Introduction Summary

Chapter 1 introduces the research topic of Matrescence, a developmental stage for new mothers, focusing on its limited attention in Asian contexts, particularly in Thailand. It explores the impact of short paid maternity leave, workplace inflexibility, and lack of childcare support on the experiences of new mothers. The chapter highlights the importance of supporting and empowering women during the

Matrescence journey, promoting work-life balance, and nurturing the well-being of families. It also emphasizes the need for cultural representation and discussion of Matrescence in Asian communities. The chapter sets the objectives to raise awareness, analyze artwork on Motherhood, and contribute to the discourse on motherhood as an identity in visual culture. The research findings aim to provide insights for policymakers, employers, and communities to create a supportive environment for new mothers in Asian societies.



Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction to the Literature Review

This literature review aims to provide a comprehensive overview of existing research and scholarly discussions related to the concept of Matrescence, its representation in Asian cultures, and the support systems available for new mothers. By reviewing relevant literature, this section will establish the context for the current study and identify gaps and areas of focus for further investigation.

2.2 Matrescence: The Motherhood Identity

Matrescence, a term coined by anthropologist Dana Raphael in the mid-1970s, refers to the transitional stage experienced by women after giving birth. Unlike Erik Erikson's psychosocial developmental stages, which did not include a specific stage for transitioning to parenthood until the rise of feminist ideology, Matrescence recognizes the profound physical, psychological, and emotional changes that accompany motherhood. This section will explore the origins of the concept of Matrescence and its significance in understanding the experiences of new mothers.

Matrescence refers to the transitional period of becoming a mother, encompassing the physical, emotional, hormonal, and social changes experienced by women in the months following childbirth (Rosenberg & Trevathan, 2002). It is often described as a time of profound psychological and emotional transformation, comparable to

adolescence in terms of its significance and impact.

During matrescence, women undergo a process of identity shift and formation, as they develop a new sense of self as a mother (Stern, 1998). This transformation involves not only the physical aspects of motherhood but also the psychological and emotional dimensions. The concept of matrescence highlights the unique challenges and adjustments faced by women as they navigate their new roles as mothers.

The term "Matrescence" emphasizes the idea of the "birth of a mother," suggesting that becoming a mother is a transformative experience that fundamentally reshapes a woman's identity (Raphael, 1977). It is a time of profound personal growth, characterized by shifts in priorities, values, and relationships. The transition to motherhood involves adapting to new responsibilities, redefining one's self-image, and developing maternal instincts and attachment to the child.

The psychological and emotional changes experienced during matrescence are complex and multifaceted (Rosenberg & Trevathan, 2002). Women may gradually develop feelings of maternal attachment and parenting confidence over time. The process of constructing a maternal identity involves reconciling conflicting emotions, addressing societal expectations and myths surrounding motherhood, and managing the impact of physical changes on body image satisfaction.

Overall, Matrescence represents a period of significant personal growth, self-

discovery, and adjustment as women transition into motherhood. It encompasses not only the physical aspects of childbirth but also the emotional, psychological, and social dimensions, highlighting the transformative nature of becoming a mother (Stern, 1998).

Matrescence is a destigmatizing and empowering framework that new mothers can use to navigate their own journey. Drawing parallels to the concept of adolescence, matrescence has the potential to create a new field of study and bring together various psychological approaches, while also collaborating with related disciplines such as obstetrics and midwifery.

The timing of the growing recognition of matrescence may be attributed to significant social trends, including advancements in women's education, increased representation in the workforce, sexual and reproductive freedom, political activism, and expanded economic influence. These changes have brought forth both benefits and challenges for women, creating a space for matrescence to emerge and offer relief from outdated perspectives.

In her article "Reproductive Identity: An Emerging Concept," Aurelie Athan argues for the importance of defining matrescence as a reproductive identity. She presents a new concept known as reproductive identity that mirrors preexisting models of human identity such as race, gender, and sexuality. Educators, practitioners, researchers, and policymakers may use this novel term to explore how individuals realize parenthood

or non-parenthood, develop their reproductive identity, and integrate it into their overall sense of self. She asserts that deciding whether to become a parent is a significant developmental milestone in the adult life course, yet the concept of reproductive identity is not widely recognized. Athan compares reproduction to other aspects of human identity, such as race, gender, and sexuality, and emphasizes the need for an overarching concept of reproductive identity in human development. She believes that by defining reproductive identity, individuals can openly explore and destigmatize the reproductive experience, integrating it into their overall sense of self.

In conclusion, the concept of matrescence provides a valuable framework for understanding the transformative journey of becoming a mother. It recognizes the profound physical, psychological, and emotional changes experienced by women during the transition to motherhood. Matrescence involves the formation of a new maternal identity and the navigation of unique challenges and adjustments. By acknowledging the significance of matrescence, society can better support and empower new mothers in their personal growth and adaptation to motherhood.

2.3 Feminism and its Influence on Policy in Western Countries

One of the earliest progressive policies for new mothers in a Western country can be traced back to Germany with the introduction of the "Mother's Insurance" program in 1883 (Blau & Tekin, 2019). This policy, which was part of the broader social insurance system, aimed to provide financial protection and support for mothers during the maternity period.

Germany was undergoing significant social and economic changes. Industrialization was leading to urbanization and the growth of the working class. At the same time, concerns were raised about the health and well-being of pregnant women and the impact of their working conditions on both maternal and infant mortality rates.

In response to these concerns, labor movements and women's rights activists began advocating for legislation to protect the rights and health of pregnant women and new mothers. Their efforts aimed to address issues such as long working hours, strenuous labor, and inadequate healthcare during pregnancy and childbirth.

The awareness of Matrescence in Western countries has sparked policy changes and support initiatives to address the unique needs of new mothers. This shift is based on a growing body of research that highlights the importance of comprehensive support systems during the transition to motherhood.

For instance, in Sweden, a pioneer in family-friendly policies, the government has implemented extensive parental leave and support programs. Swedish mothers are entitled to 480 days of paid parental leave, with 90 of those days reserved specifically for the mother. This policy allows new mothers to prioritize their well-being and bond with their infants during the crucial early stages of development. Research shows that this approach positively impacts maternal mental health, reduces postpartum depression rates, and improves child development outcomes (Swedish Social

Insurance Agency, 2022).

In the United Kingdom, the National Health Service has recognized the significance of maternal mental health and its impact on overall well-being. As a result, they have implemented initiatives such as the Perinatal Mental Health Services, which aim to provide specialized support for women experiencing perinatal mental health issues. These services offer timely interventions, including counseling, therapy, and medication, when necessary, to address postpartum depression and anxiety. Studies have indicated that effective perinatal mental health services not only improve the well-being of mothers but also contribute to better long-term outcomes for children (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, 2000).

In Canada, the government has taken steps to support work-life balance for new mothers through the Employment Insurance program. The EI maternity and parental benefits provide financial assistance to eligible parents, allowing them to take time off work to care for their newborns. Additionally, some provinces have implemented extended parental leave policies that offer even more flexibility. Research has shown that longer maternity leave durations are associated with improved maternal mental health, increased breastfeeding rates, and enhanced parent-child bonding (Government of Canada, 2023).

These examples demonstrate how increased awareness of Matrescence has prompted policy support in Western countries. By addressing the holistic needs of new mothers,

including maternal mental health, postpartum care, and work-life balance, these policies aim to provide a nurturing environment for maternal well-being and optimal child development.

2.4 Matrescence in Asian Contexts

While Matrescence has gained recognition and research interest in Western contexts, its exploration and discussion in Asian contexts have been relatively limited. This section will examine the cultural factors and historical perspectives that have contributed to the underrepresentation of Matrescence in Asian communities. It will also highlight the impact of this lack of cultural reflection on the support provided to new mothers within the workplace and through government policies in Asian countries, with a specific focus on Thailand.

The underrepresentation of Matrescence in Asian communities can be attributed to various cultural factors and historical perspectives (Chuang & Tam, 2021; Izuhara, 2020). These factors have influenced the limited recognition and understanding of the unique experiences and challenges faced by new mothers in Asian countries. This lack of cultural reflection has had a significant impact on the support provided to new mothers within the workplace and through government policies, particularly in countries like Thailand.

In many Asian societies, traditional cultural values and norms prioritize collectivism and filial piety, emphasizing the role of women as caregivers within the family unit (Lan et al., 2020). Motherhood is often idealized and associated with self-sacrifice,

putting the needs of the family above personal well-being (Sasaki et al., 2021). As a result, the focus tends to be on the child and family as a whole, rather than on the individual experiences and transitions that mothers undergo during the perinatal period. New mothers may face societal pressure to prioritize their role as caregivers and face challenges when attempting to balance their own needs, career aspirations, and family responsibilities (Liu and Wong, 2020).

Historically, Asian societies have been influenced by patriarchal structures and gender roles, which have limited the visibility and recognition of women's experiences, including the transformative process of matrescence (Kumagai & Cole, 2019). This has resulted in a lack of discourse and understanding around the psychological, emotional, and social changes that occur during the transition to motherhood.

Access to affordable and reliable childcare facilities is another significant challenge for new mothers in urban Asian environments. Limited availability and high costs of childcare services make it difficult for mothers to secure quality care for their children while they are at work. This issue often leads to a heavy reliance on extended family members for childcare, which may not be feasible for all families (Liu and Wong, 2020).

The impact of this underrepresentation is evident in the workplace and government policies in Asian countries, including Thailand. Workplace support for new mothers, such as maternity leave, breastfeeding facilities, and flexible working arrangements,

may be inadequate or not fully recognized (Tham et al., 2020). Policies and practices often prioritize the continuity of work and productivity, without considering the holistic well-being of new mothers.

Government policies related to maternal health, childcare, and family support may also be limited in addressing the specific needs of new mothers (Wong et al., 2021). The focus may be more on population control, economic growth, and social stability, rather than providing comprehensive support for maternal well-being and the transition to motherhood.

In Thailand specifically, cultural values of filial piety, hierarchical structures, and gender roles shape societal expectations of women and motherhood (Razali et al., 2021). Traditional practices such as "Yu Fai" (the practice of postpartum confinement) and extended family involvement in childcare have their roots in cultural beliefs but may not fully address the psychological and emotional aspects of matrescence.

To address these issues, there is a growing need for cultural reflection and recognition of matrescence within Asian communities, including Thailand. Increased research, awareness, and dialogue surrounding the psychological and emotional changes experienced by new mothers can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of matrescence in Asian contexts (Shorey et al., 2018).

By integrating cultural perspectives into workplace policies and government programs, there can be a greater emphasis on supporting new mothers' well-being, mental health, and identity transitions (Gausman & Chuang, 2020). This includes implementing flexible work arrangements, promoting work-life balance, providing accessible maternal healthcare services, and fostering community support networks.

In conclusion, the underrepresentation of matrescence in Asian communities, including Thailand, is influenced by cultural factors and historical perspectives (Blau & Tekin, 2019). The lack of cultural reflection has hindered the recognition and support provided to new mothers within workplaces and government policies. However, there is an increasing awareness of the importance of addressing matrescence in Asian contexts, and efforts are being made to integrate cultural perspectives and provide more comprehensive support to new mothers.

2.5 Policies and Support Systems for New Mothers in Thailand

This section will analyze the policies and support systems available for new mothers in Thailand, with a particular emphasis on paid maternity leave, workplace flexibility, and childcare support. It will compare these policies with those in other countries, such as Australia, Canada, and Sweden, where paid maternity leave is more extensive. The section will explore the implications of short paid maternity leave and workplace inflexibility for new mothers in Thailand and discuss the potential consequences for child development, parental mental health, and economic activity.

Paid maternity leave is an essential policy that allows new mothers to take time off from work to recover from childbirth, bond with their newborns, and adjust to their new roles as parents. In Thailand, the current standard for paid maternity leave is 98 days, with 45 days fully paid by the employer and the remaining days partially paid (Chiarakul, 2020). While this exceeds the minimum requirement set by the International Labor Organization (ILO) of 14 weeks (or 98 days) of paid maternity leave, it falls short when compared to countries like Sweden, which offers up to 480 days of paid parental leave (The Swedish Social Insurance Agency, 2022).

The relatively short duration of paid maternity leave in Thailand can have several implications. Firstly, it may place additional physical and emotional strain on new mothers who may not have fully recovered from childbirth within this timeframe (Laopaiboon et al., 2021). Secondly, the limited time off may hinder the establishment of breastfeeding routines, as breastfeeding requires time, patience, and support. Longer paid maternity leave periods, as seen in other countries, have shown positive effects on breastfeeding rates, maternal mental health, and child development outcomes (Huang et al., 2022; Rollins et al., 2016).

2.5.2 Workplace Flexibility

Workplace flexibility refers to the ability of employees to balance their work and family responsibilities effectively. In Thailand, there is still a need for greater workplace flexibility to accommodate the needs of new mothers. While the Labor Protection Act guarantees the right to request flexible working arrangements, such as

part-time work or adjusted hours, the practical implementation and acceptance of these arrangements can vary (Kongtip et al., 2020).

In comparison, countries like Australia, Canada, and Sweden have implemented more comprehensive policies regarding workplace flexibility. These countries recognize the importance of allowing new mothers to have control over their work schedules, enabling them to meet both their professional and caregiving obligations (Moss, 2021). Implementing flexible work options in Thailand could enhance maternal well-being, reduce work-related stress, and support a healthier work-life balance for new mothers (Sirisup et al., 2019).

2.5.3 Childcare Support

Childcare support is another crucial aspect for new mothers, as it allows them to seek reliable and safe care for their children while they are at work or engaged in other activities. In Thailand, there are both formal and informal childcare options available, including daycare centers, nannies, and family support networks. However, the accessibility, affordability, and quality of childcare services can vary significantly across regions (Tongsri, 2021).

Countries like Australia, Canada, and Sweden have implemented comprehensive and well-funded childcare systems that prioritize accessibility, affordability, and quality. These countries recognize that investing in high-quality early childhood education and care not only supports child development but also facilitates workforce participation

for parents, particularly mothers (Blau & Tekin, 2019). Expanding access to affordable, high-quality childcare in Thailand could contribute to increased female labor force participation and improved child outcomes (Lam et al., 2020).

2.5.4 Implications for Child Development, Parental Mental Health, and Economic Activity

The limited duration of paid maternity leave, lack of workplace flexibility, and variable childcare support in Thailand can have significant implications for child development, parental mental health, and economic activity. Research has consistently shown that longer paid maternity leave is associated with improved child development outcomes, including cognitive, social, and emotional development (Berger et al., 2021; Montserrat et al., 2018).

Additionally, inadequate workplace flexibility and limited childcare options can lead to increased stress and anxiety among new mothers, affecting their mental health and well-being (Pichanee, 2022). This, in turn, can impact the parent-child relationship and the overall family dynamics. Furthermore, the lack of support systems may discourage women from re-entering the workforce or limit their career progression (Kiatpongsan et al., 2020).

2.6 Representation of Matrescence in Asian Historical Art

Art has long been a medium for reflecting and expressing societal values and

experiences. This section will explore the representation of motherhood in Asian historical art and examine the extent to which Matrescence is depicted. It will compare the cultural reflection on motherhood in Asian and Western art contexts, highlighting the limited representation of Matrescence in Asian historical art. The section will discuss the implications of this lack of representation and the need for more discussion and cultural reflection on Matrescence in Asian communities.

Artistic representation of motherhood in Asian historical art has its own unique characteristics and cultural contexts. While motherhood has been a recurring theme in Asian art, the specific depiction of matrescence, encompassing the transformative experiences of pregnancy, childbirth, and early motherhood, is relatively limited (Gellner, 2020).

In Asian societies, the portrayal of motherhood in historical art often aligns with societal expectations and traditional roles. Many artworks depict mothers as nurturing, self-sacrificing figures, embodying virtues such as filial piety and family devotion (Huang, 2013). These representations emphasize the collective identity and the role of women as caregivers within the family structure, rather than focusing on the individual experiences and psychological transitions associated with matrescence.



Figure 2 Yu-tae, L. (1970). Trilogy of Women - Affection [Oil Painting]. Ewha Womans University Museum, Seoul, Korea

Unlike Western art, which has seen feminist movements challenging traditional maternal representations, the cultural reflection on matrescence in Asian historical art has been more restrained (Kim, 2018). Factors such as Confucian values, hierarchical family structures, and societal expectations of women have influenced the limited exploration of the maternal experience beyond the prescribed roles (Yu, 2021).



Figure 3 Roy, J. (1972). Mother and Child. [Tempera on board]. Museum of Art & Photography, Bangalore, India.

This painting by Jamini Roy, is a representation of the mother-child relationship in Indian culture, showing the mother's love and protection for her child. The lack of explicit representation of matrescence in Asian historical art has implications for the recognition and support of new mothers in Asian communities. It reflects a broader cultural tendency to prioritize collective well-being and societal harmony over individual experiences (Huang, 2013). While the idealization of motherhood reinforces the importance of family and filial piety, it may also neglect the nuanced emotional and psychological journeys that women undergo during the perinatal period.

The limited representation of matrescence in Asian historical art highlights the need for more discussion and cultural reflection on this transformative stage of motherhood

within Asian communities. Recognizing and depicting the psychological, emotional, and physical changes associated with matrescence can provide a more comprehensive understanding of women's experiences and contribute to the well-being of new mothers (Yu, 2021).

By encouraging artists, scholars, and cultural institutions to explore and depict matrescence in Asian art, a space can be created for dialogue and reflection on the diverse maternal experiences. This includes acknowledging the challenges, joys, and complexities that new mothers face, and promoting a more inclusive and supportive environment (Kim, 2018).

Efforts are underway to broaden the representation of matrescence in contemporary Asian art and popular culture. Some artists are actively exploring the complexities of the maternal experience, challenging traditional roles, and addressing issues such as postpartum mental health, work-life balance, and the changing dynamics of family structures (Chen, 2020).

In conclusion, the representation of matrescence in Asian historical art is limited compared to its depiction in Western art. Cultural factors, traditional values, and societal expectations have influenced the emphasis on collective identities and roles of women within the family unit, overshadowing the individual experiences associated with matrescence. However, there is a growing recognition of the need for cultural reflection on matrescence in Asian communities to better support and

understand the diverse experiences of new mothers.



Figure 4 Beihong, X. (1941). The Mother of Zhao Wu. [Chinese Brush Painting].
The Xu Beihong Memorial Museum, Beijing, China

This painting depicts a mother with her child, reflecting the strong bond between mother and child in Chinese culture.

2.7 Representation of Matrescence in Western Historical Art in Connection to Feminism

The representation of matrescence in Western historical art has been a topic of interest, particularly concerning feminism and the portrayal of women's experiences.

This section will examine how Western historical art has depicted matrescence and

explore its connection to feminist movements. It will also discuss the implications of these representations for challenging traditional gender roles and highlighting the maternal experience.



Figure 5 Venus of Willendorf. (c. 24,000 BCE). [Limestone]. Naturhistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria

Throughout history, Western art has portrayed motherhood in various ways, reflecting the cultural and societal norms of different periods (Broude & Garrard, 1994).

Traditional representations often idealized motherhood, depicting mothers as nurturing, selfless, and devoted to their children. These portrayals perpetuated the stereotype of the "good mother" and reinforced traditional gender roles, emphasizing women's domestic roles and responsibilities (Nochlin, 1971).



Figure 6 Crivelli, C. (c1480). Madonna and Child. [Oil on Canvas]. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, U.S.A

However, with the rise of feminist movements in the 20th century, there has been a reevaluation and reinterpretation of maternal representations in Western art. Feminist artists and scholars have questioned the idealized and restrictive images of motherhood, aiming to challenge patriarchal norms and broaden the understanding of women's experiences (Chadwick, 1990).



Figure 7 Bourgeois, L. (1997). Spider. [Sculpture]. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, U.S.A

Feminist artists such as Mary Kelly, Louise Bourgeois, Judy Chicago, and Frida Kahlo have used their art to explore the complexities and challenges of matrescence. Their works often delve into the physical and emotional transformations of pregnancy, childbirth, and motherhood, offering alternative perspectives that defy traditional notions of the "perfect mother" (Heartney et al., 2013).

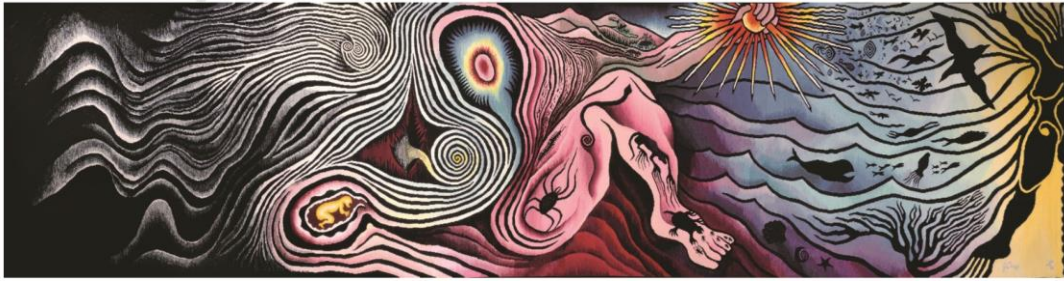


Figure 8 Chicago, J. (1982). The Creation from the Birth Project. [Modified Aubusson tapestry]. Museum of Arts & Design, New York, U.S.A.

These representations of matrescence in Western historical art have played a significant role in feminist discourse and activism. By highlighting the maternal experience and questioning societal expectations, feminist artists have contributed to the reclamation of women's bodies and experiences from male-dominated narratives (Pollock, 1988).

Furthermore, these representations have provided a platform for discussions about the intersectionality of gender, race, and class in motherhood. Artists have explored how race and socioeconomic factors intersect with matrescence, shedding light on the experiences of marginalized groups of women and challenging the notion of a universal motherhood experience (hooks, 1990).

The feminist critique of maternal representations in Western historical art has paved the way for more diverse and inclusive depictions of matrescence in contemporary art and popular culture. Artists and activists continue to challenge the stereotypes and idealized images, advocating for a broader understanding of the maternal experience that acknowledges the complexities and diversity of women's lives (Lippard, 1996).

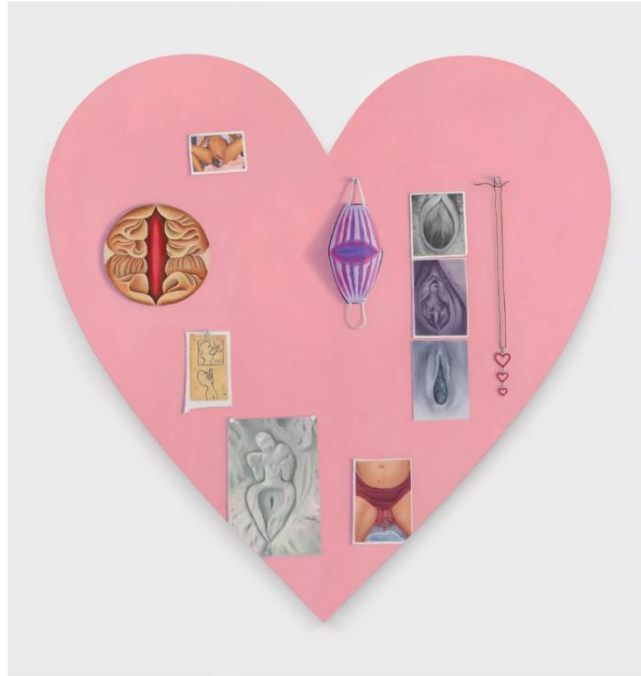


Figure 9 Haynes, C. (2020). Birth Altar. [Oil on Canvas]. Private Collection, U.S.A

In conclusion, the representation of matrescence in Western historical art has been connected to feminist movements. Through challenging traditional gender roles and idealized images of motherhood, feminist artists have contributed to a more nuanced understanding of the maternal experience. These representations have played a crucial role in reclaiming women's bodies and experiences, promoting inclusivity, and fostering discussions about intersectionality within motherhood.

2.8 Empowering and Supporting New Mothers Through Artwork

Art has the power to convey emotions, challenge societal norms, and inspire change.

This section will discuss the researcher's intention to create artwork reflecting on their

experience of Matrescence and use it to empower and support new mothers. It will explore the potential of art as a catalyst for opening up discussions on work-life balance, advocating for policy improvements, and increasing awareness of Matrescence in Thailand and Asian communities.

2.9 Literature Review Summary

This literature review provides a comprehensive overview of the concept of Matrescence, its representation in Asian cultures, and the support systems available for new mothers. Matrescence refers to the transitional stage experienced by women after giving birth, encompassing physical, psychological, and emotional changes. It is a time of profound personal growth, self-discovery, and adjustment as women transition into motherhood. Matrescence is an empowering framework that new mothers can use to navigate their journey.

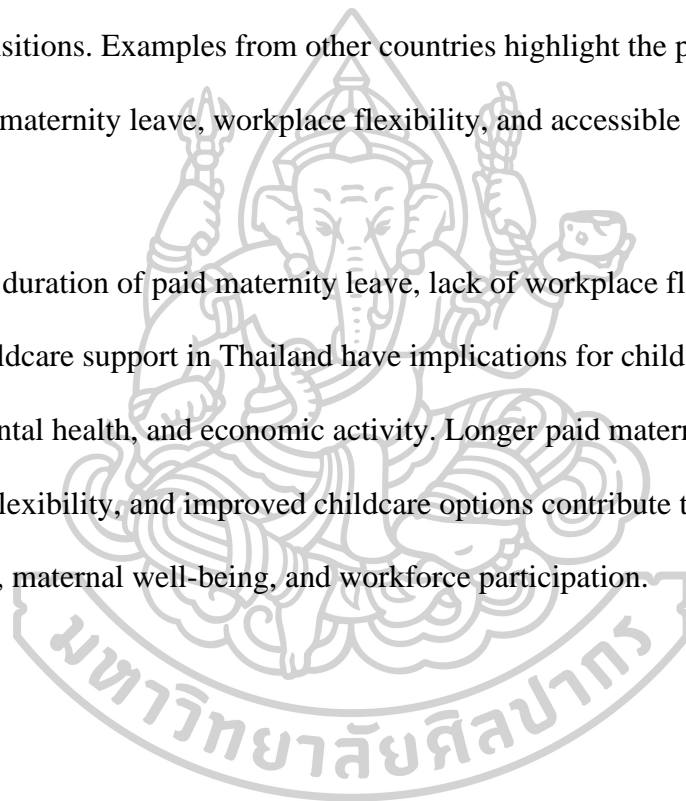
The review explores the influence of feminism on policies in Western countries, where comprehensive support systems for new mothers have been implemented. Examples include paid parental leave, maternal mental health services, and work-life balance initiatives. These policies prioritize maternal well-being and optimal child development.

In Asian contexts, including Thailand, Matrescence has been underrepresented due to cultural factors and historical perspectives. Traditional values and norms often prioritize collectivism and overlook the individual experiences of mothers. Workplace

support and government policies may be inadequate, emphasizing productivity over maternal well-being.

To address these issues, there is a growing need for cultural reflection and recognition of Matrescence in Asian communities. Integrating cultural perspectives into policies and support systems can better support new mothers' well-being, mental health, and identity transitions. Examples from other countries highlight the potential benefits of longer paid maternity leave, workplace flexibility, and accessible childcare support.

The limited duration of paid maternity leave, lack of workplace flexibility, and variable childcare support in Thailand have implications for child development, parental mental health, and economic activity. Longer paid maternity leave, workplace flexibility, and improved childcare options contribute to positive outcomes for children, maternal well-being, and workforce participation.



Chapter 3 Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Research methodology is the specific procedure or technique used to identify, select, process, and analyze information about a topic. In this chapter, I will outline the research methodologies I will employ to investigate and generate artwork about Matrescence, focusing on my personal experiences as a mother and visual analysis of motherhood representations.

3.2 Practice-led research

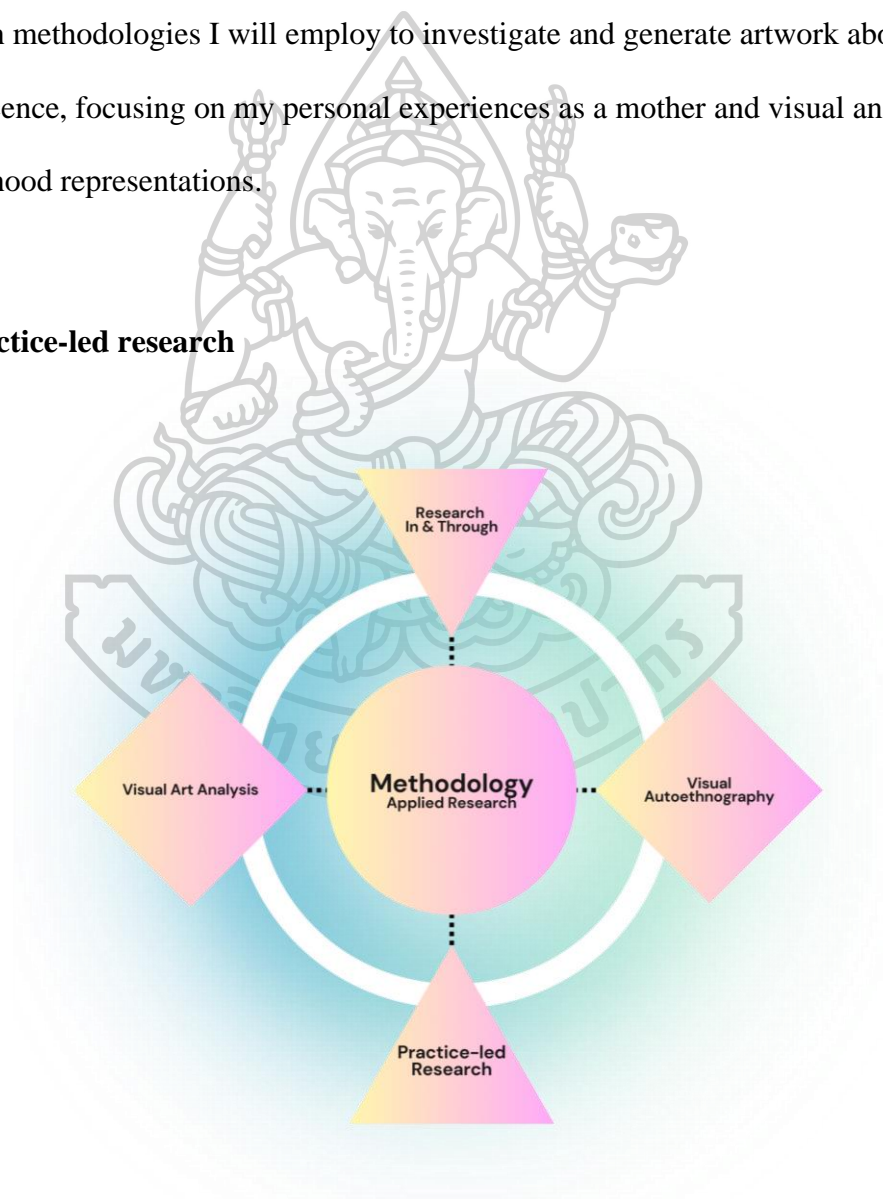


Figure 10 Methodology Diagram, (2023)

For my thesis, I will utilize applied research and practice-led research methodologies to explore the concept of Matrescence and its representation in the visual arts and my own personal practice. Visual autoethnography is a powerful research method that allows individuals to explore and reflect on their personal experiences through the lens of visual representation. Rooted in the principles of self-reflection and cultural understanding, visual autoethnography combines visual arts and ethnography to provide a unique approach to research and storytelling (Pink, 2013).

Practice-led research and visual autoethnography are closely related in their emphasis on integrating creative practice and research inquiry. Practice-led research in the visual arts involves artistic creation as the primary mode of inquiry, placing the creative process and outcomes at the forefront (Barrett, E., & Bolt, B, 2013). Visual autoethnography combines visual representation and ethnographic inquiry to explore personal experiences and cultural understandings, utilizing visual mediums to document and reflect on individual experiences within broader contexts.

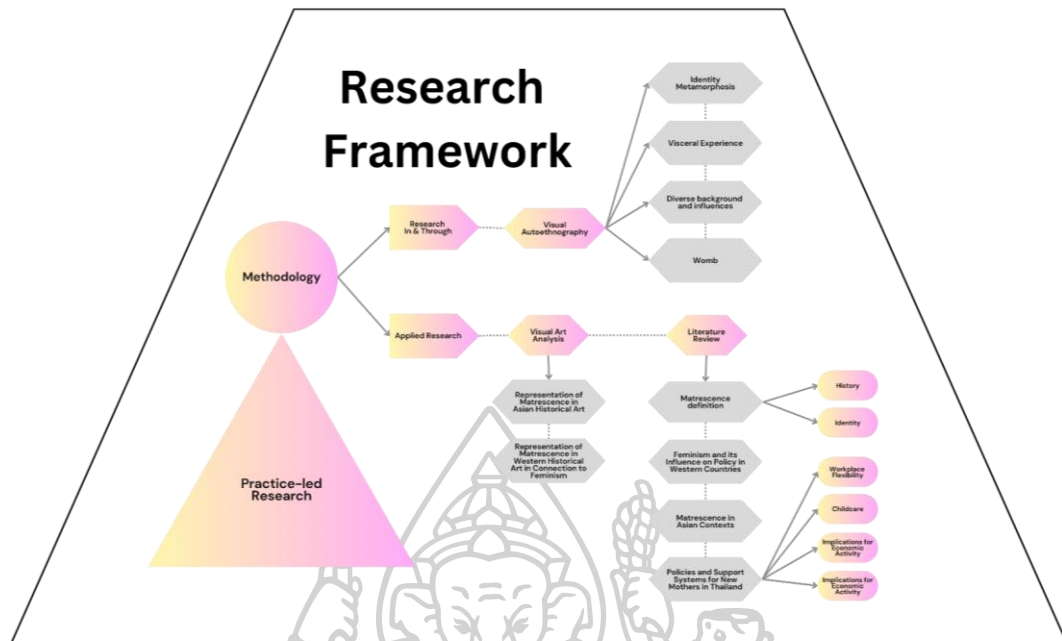


Figure 11 Research Framework Diagram, (2023)

Both approaches highlight the value of creative expression, self-reflection, and personal narrative for generating knowledge and understanding. They offer researchers opportunities to engage in embodied and experiential modes of inquiry, going beyond traditional textual analysis (Rose, G., 2019). Visual autoethnography specifically uses visual artworks as a central component, allowing researchers to explore and represent personal experiences and cultural insights.

3.3 Visual Autoethnography for Reflection on Matrescence

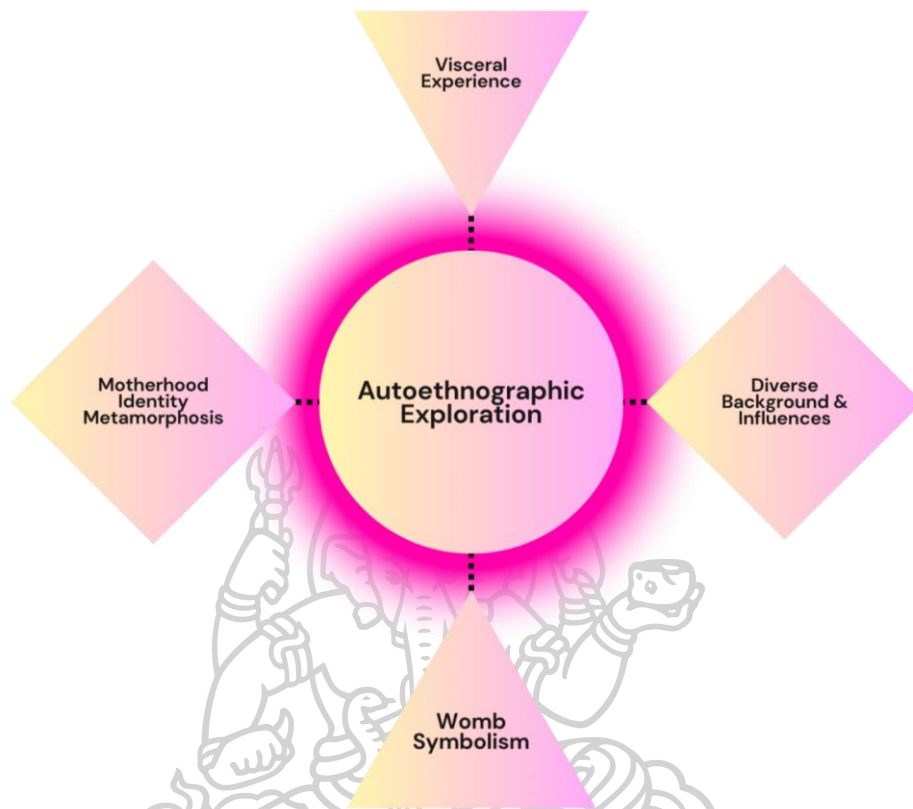


Figure 12 Autoethnographic Exploration Diagram, (2023)

Through visual autoethnography, I can authentically and intimately explore the nuances of Matrescence by creating artwork that reflects my personal experiences.

This approach allows me to go beyond traditional academic discourse and delve into the realm of creativity and personal expression. By engaging with various visual mediums, such as painting, digital art, or mixed media, I can visually capture the essence of Matrescence, channeling my thoughts, emotions, and experiences into tangible and evocative artistic forms. The nature of this thesis topic is autoethnographic because of the personal reflection (auto) and socio-cultural (ethno) reflection on Motherhood.

Visual autoethnography also offers a unique opportunity to bridge the personal and the cultural. By incorporating cultural elements and symbols into my artwork, I can explore the intersection between my journey and the broader social and cultural contexts of motherhood. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of the shared experiences and challenges faced by mothers within the Asian community.

Furthermore, visual autoethnography serves as a powerful means of communication and empowerment. Through my artwork, I can not only express my own narrative but also connect with other mothers who may resonate with similar experiences. By sharing my visual autoethnographic work with a broader audience, I hope to contribute to the ongoing discussion on Matrescence, challenge societal norms and expectations surrounding motherhood, and foster a sense of solidarity and support among fellow mothers.

In summary, visual autoethnography offers a rich and immersive research methodology for exploring the complex and transformative journey of Matrescence. It allows me to visually capture my own experiences, incorporate cultural elements, and communicate with authenticity and creativity. By employing this approach, I aim to contribute to a deeper understanding of the maternal experience and foster a sense of empowerment and connection among mothers in Thailand and beyond.

3.4 Visual Analysis

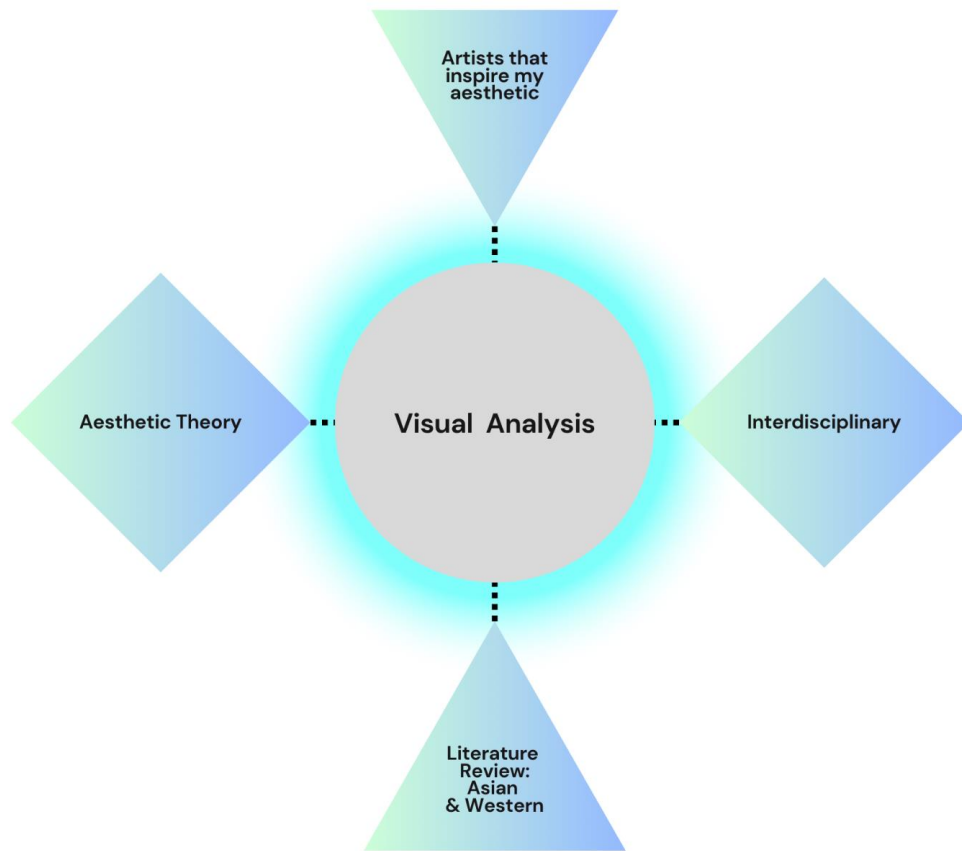


Figure 13 Visual Analysis Diagram, (2023)

In my research, I will conduct visual analysis to examine representations of motherhood. Through a literature review, I have already explored depictions of motherhood in Asian and Western historical art, gaining valuable cultural insights and establishing a basis for further exploration. Additionally, I will discuss influential artists who have influenced my artistic style and reflect on the interdisciplinary nature of contemporary visual creation. By integrating visual analysis, cultural exploration, and interdisciplinary approaches, my research aims to enhance our understanding of motherhood while highlighting the interconnectedness of traditional artistic practices and digital techniques in today's diverse creative landscape.

3.5 Research Methodology Summary

By combining autoethnography and visual analysis, I aim to utilize visual research methods that provide a unique visual language through which I can explore, interpret, and communicate the multifaceted aspects of motherhood. These methodologies will enable me to create artwork that resonates with and empowers both mothers and audiences, fostering a deeper understanding of the Matrescence journey and the transformation of one's personal mother identity.

Overall, this research methodology allows for a personal and in-depth exploration of Matrescence, drawing upon my own experiences and utilizing the visual analysis to inform the creation of artwork that reflects the complexities and nuances of motherhood.



Chapter 4

Design Development / Research Results

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 delves into my design development and research results in my artistic practice. I will share the range of interdisciplinary artworks I created whilst reflecting on Matresence. The Autoethnographic themes I am exploring are Motherhood as an identity metamorphosis, the womb as a symbol, the gestation period, and the visceral experience of it all.

In addition, I explore the intersection of aesthetic theory, personal inspiration, and interdisciplinary perspectives. I begin by examining Clive Bell's Aesthetic Theory, particularly his concept of "significant form," which highlights the importance of formal elements in evoking emotional responses in art. Drawing upon this theory, I delve into my unique aesthetic style, characterized by a fusion of formalism, abstraction, and surrealism, with a particular emphasis on vibrant neon and neutral color palettes. Additionally, I examine a diverse range of artists who inspire my aesthetic, drawing from cultural traditions, global perspectives, and the transformative themes of motherhood.

As the chapter progresses, I delve into the interdisciplinary nature of art, design, and craft. I discuss the evolving relationship between traditional and digital media and explore the various purposes and possibilities of art in contemporary society. This exploration highlights the ever-changing landscape of artistic expression.

Ultimately, through this exploration, I aim to convey the transformative journey of matrescence and invite viewers into a contemplative space of connection and understanding. My artistic practice serves as a means of communication, allowing me to share my experiences and perspectives with others, while also fostering a sense of unity and dialogue within the art community.

4.2 Aesthetic Theory



Figure 14 Akasha, (2017). [Photography, Digital Painting]

My artwork is a fusion of various styles which I think are formalism, abstraction, and surrealism. I'm particularly drawn to vibrant neon and neutral color palettes. Through a maximalist approach, I experiment with the interplay of geometric and organic shapes, aiming to create visually captivating compositions that evoke contrast yet harmony, energy, and calmness.

As I explore the connection between Clive Bell's concept of "art as form" and my aesthetic style, I find words for being able to describe the imagery I've been creating. Bell's theory of "significant form" is a concept he developed in his book "Art" published in 1914. Bell suggests that the essence of art lies in its formal qualities rather than its representational or narrative elements.

According to Bell, the aesthetic value of art lies in its ability to evoke an emotional response through the arrangement of formal elements such as lines, shapes, colors, and composition. He argued that certain combinations of these formal elements create a unique and powerful aesthetic experience that transcends mere representation or narrative. The concept of "significant form" suggests that the arrangement of these formal elements is what gives a work of art its aesthetic impact and that the emotional response it elicits is independent of the subject matter depicted. It highlights the inherent power and expressive potential of art's formal qualities, further emphasizing the importance of form in the evaluation and appreciation of artworks.

Because of the numinous quality of my abstract compositions, I like to use the phrase

“Meditative formalism”, to describe it, which alludes to the contemplative and introspective aspects of my art. By creating works with a harmonious quality, and emphasizing the use of geometric forms, balanced compositions, and optimistic color palettes, I hope to evoke feelings of vibrant introspection.

Combining artwork on motherhood with Clive Bell's aesthetic theory of "art as form" provides an interesting perspective on how the formal qualities of artistic representations intersect with the subject matter of motherhood. In the context of motherhood artwork, artists use formal elements such as line, color, composition, and harmony to express ideas and emotions related to the maternal experience. These artistic choices create a visual language that communicates nurturing, tenderness, strength, and the bond between mother and child.

Bell's theory also emphasizes the concept of "significant form," where specific combinations of formal elements generate a unique aesthetic experience. In the context of motherhood artwork, a significant form can refer to the arrangement of lines, shapes, and colors that evoke a profound emotional response or convey a narrative about the complexities of motherhood. I am now exploring fusing the formal qualities of abstraction with the figurative subject matter of matrescence. Next, I will talk about the artists that inspire my aesthetic.

4.3 The Artists That Inspire My Aesthetic



Figure 15 Exhibition Photo, (2017). [Acrylic on Canvas]

I am a visual artist, graphic designer, and university lecturer with a rich and diverse background that has greatly influenced my artistic practice. Born in Singapore, with Indian ethnicity and Thai nationality, my cultural heritage has provided me with a unique perspective and a deep appreciation for artistic diversity. This has informed the complexity of my imagery; I've been exposed to a lot of different input and experiences.

I've had the opportunity to immerse myself in different cultures and traditions, thus my artistic influences are as varied and plentiful as my background. From studying Art Direction & Copywriting at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology in Australia to exploring traditional Printmaking at Tagore's Kala Bhavan Institute of

Fine Arts in India, my educational experiences have exposed me to a range of artistic techniques and approaches. Traveling the world and growing up with ample accessible visual media like libraries and the internet, has led me to appreciate an overwhelming amount of art. I will briefly list many artists whom I've admired in this section.



Figure 16 Klint, H.a. (1915). Tree of Knowledge No.1. [Watercolour, Gouache, & Ink on Paper]. Guggenheim Museum, New York City, U.S.A

Drawing from the groundbreaking and spiritual work of Hilma af Klint, I am fascinated by her exploration of spiritual and abstract motifs, which resonates with the transformative themes of motherhood and identity in my artwork. The vibrant and playful compositions of Joan Miró and Paul Klee influence my use of color and the dynamic interplay of shapes, lines and space as well.

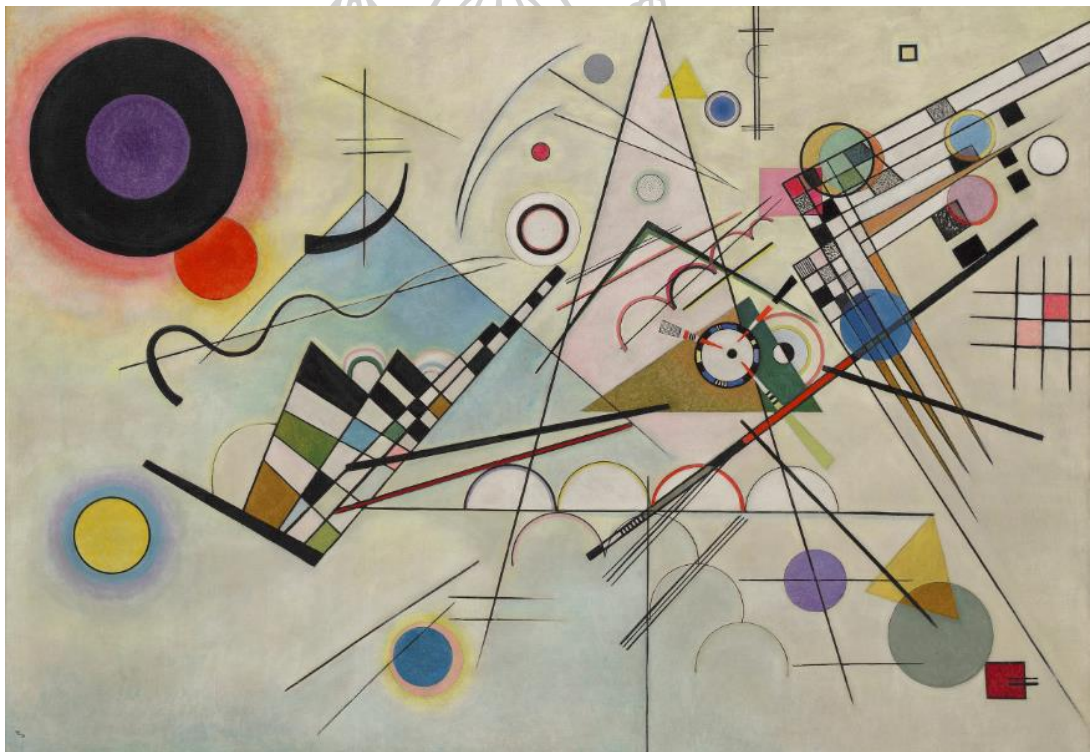


Figure 17 Kandinsky, Wassily. (1923). Composition 8, [Oil on Canvas]. Guggenheim Museum, New York City, U.S.A

Wassily Kandinsky's theories on the spiritual power of abstraction, alongside the intricate patterns and organic forms of artists like S.H. Raza and Georgia O'Keeffe, provide a global perspective that infuses my artwork with cross-cultural influences. I am also inspired by the scientific illustrations of Ernst Haeckel and the surrealistic

expressions of Salvador Dali and M.C. Escher.

Exploring further, the geometric abstractions of Stanton Macdonald-Wright and Ruth Asawa, as well as the innovative use of light and space by artists such as James Turrell and Anish Kapoor, contribute to a global dialogue on form and its transcendent qualities. The materiality and textural explorations seen in the works of Dale Chihuly, Ernesto Neto, and Barbara Kasten reflect a global perspective that embraces diverse cultural traditions and craftsmanship.

Furthermore, the conceptual explorations of artists like Judy Chicago, Yayoi Kusama, and Mariko Mori, as well as the meticulous geometric constructions of Thoshido Yoshida, Julia Dault, and Zach Harris, highlight the intersectionality of culture and identity. By incorporating these global cultural influences, including the works of artists such as Pratuang Emjaroen, Emily Cheng, and others, my artwork reflects a rich tapestry of diverse artistic expressions and perspectives.



Figure 18 Emjaroen, Pratuang (1973). Phra Athit. [Oil on Canvas]. MOCA, Bangkok, Thailand

My artistic style is a reflection of this diverse upbringing and education. I have developed an abstract approach that combines elements of abstract-surrealism, lyrical abstraction, and formalism, which has been discussed. Touching on lyrical abstraction, it is spontaneous and expressive in nature. It combines elements of abstraction and gestural mark-making to create artworks that convey emotions, moods, and a sense of lyrical movement. Lyrical abstraction often features vibrant colors, dynamic brushstrokes, and a sense of fluidity. Abstract surrealism on the other hand, is a style that combines elements of abstraction and surrealism. It involves the distortion and transformation of recognizable forms and objects to create dreamlike

and symbolic imagery. Abstract-surrealist artworks often have a sense of mystery, ambiguity, imagination, and psychological depth.



Figure 19 Wongsam, Inson (2023). Infinite Ride Exhibition. [Oil on Canvas]. 333 Gallery, Bangkok, Thailand

In summary, my diverse cultural background acts as a wellspring of inspiration, infusing my artistic practice with a cross-cultural depth. From this vibrant tapestry of influences, I embrace an abstract style that serves as a gateway to explore the transformative journey of matrescence. Through my aesthetic approach, I embark on a symbolic exploration of the multifaceted experiences and emotions entwined with matrescence. Employing a visual language of symbolism, organic forms, and geometric elements, I strive to encapsulate the essence of this transformative journey. By inviting viewers into the depths of these complexities, my art opens up a space for connection and contemplation, enabling a deeper understanding of the universal themes that matrescence encompasses.

4.4 Interdisciplinary: Thoughts on Art, Design & Craft

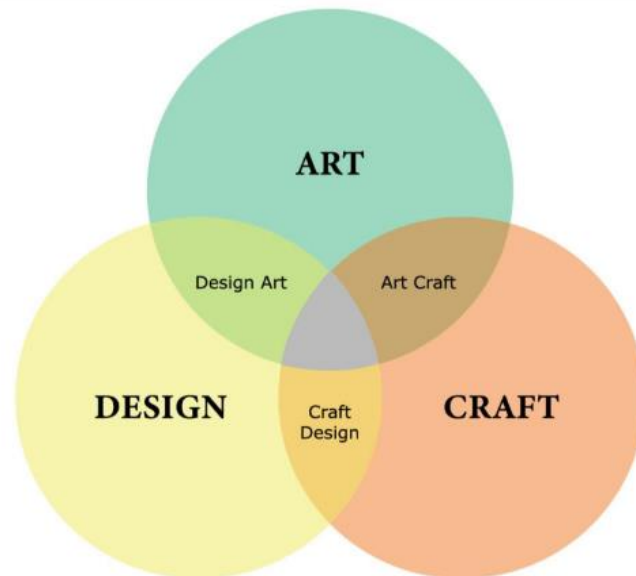


Figure 20 Joneurairatana, E. (2021) Diagram for Art and Design Research

In my observation and opinion, the digitisation of visual culture has allowed for the productization of artwork. Paintings can become digital images which can then be manipulated and applied to objects of functional or decorative use. Interchangeably so, objects of design can be turned into artworks exhibited in galleries.

The advancements in technology and industrialization have both enhanced and threatened traditional craft practices. On one hand, machines and industrial processes have made production more efficient and accessible, expanding the range of possibilities for artists and designers to innovate. On the other hand, there is a concern that the uniqueness and authenticity associated with handmade crafts may be lost in

mass production.

Some argue that art doesn't necessarily require a specific purpose or utility beyond its existence as a form of creative expression. Art can be appreciated for its aesthetic qualities, emotional resonance, or ability to stimulate thought and evoke emotions. In this view, art serves as a means of personal and cultural exploration, a way to communicate ideas, experiences, and perspectives that might otherwise be difficult to convey through other mediums.

Others believe that art can and should have a purpose beyond its aesthetic or expressive qualities. Art can be seen as a vehicle for social commentary, political activism, or raising awareness about certain issues. It can be used to challenge societal norms, provoke critical thinking, or promote social change. In these cases, art becomes a tool for engaging with and addressing broader issues within society.

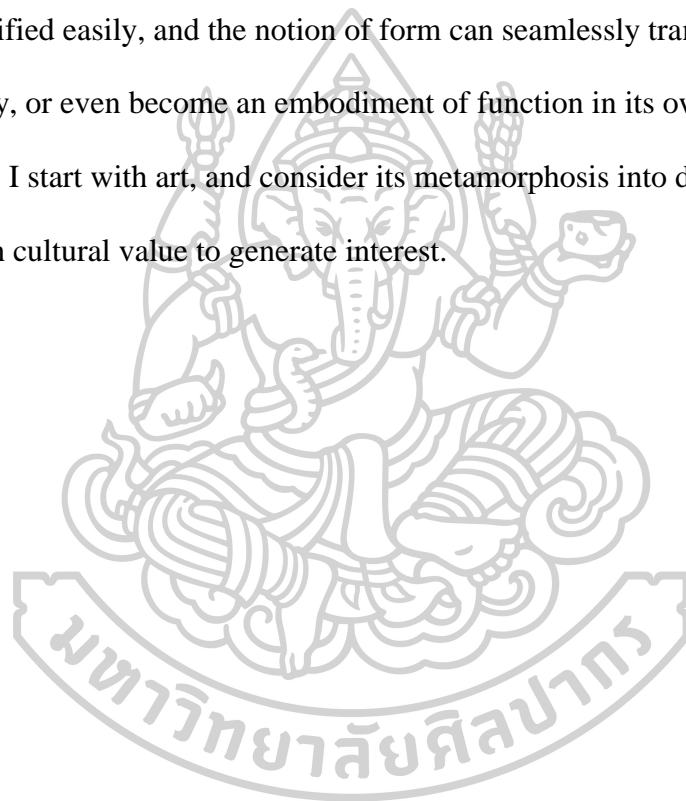
Life gets in the way of art. I've contemplated and struggled with the purpose of art, to justify its activity. The pressure to monetize art and the limited availability of time for artistic practice are common challenges faced by artists, and even harder for those who have families. The need to balance artistic integrity with commercial viability can be a delicate task. Many artists aspire to find clients who appreciate their unique artistic vision and style, allowing them to create work that aligns with their natural inclinations. One can print artwork on a multitude of functional design objects today easily or collaborate with design businesses. Creating design objects has never been

more accessible or saturated than today.

The emergence of new media and digital art has further expanded the possibilities of artistic expression and challenged traditional notions of art and design. Digital art, encompassing mediums such as computer-generated imagery, interactive installations, virtual reality experiences, and more, allows artists to explore the intersections of technology, aesthetics, and culture. It provides opportunities for experimentation, interactivity, and the integration of multimedia elements, blurring the boundaries between art and design. With digitization, visual culture becomes more accessible, enabling artworks to be easily reproduced, manipulated, and applied to various objects or exhibited in diverse contexts. This fluidity between art and design, facilitated by advancements in technology, presents both opportunities and challenges for artists, designers, and audiences to navigate the evolving landscape of creativity and cultural value.

I've been fortunate, as It's never been easier than today to do this. Currently, my previous body of work created pre-motherhood still brings me, clients, today, and led to my part-time teaching work. I've turned artwork into designs and see the value of originality. Now that my child is past the newborn stage and becoming an independent young child, I'm looking to evolve my drawing and painting skills into new digital mediums. Remixing, combining photography, applying motion, and using projection are some skills I've been developing to do so.

In summary, I don't think art has a fixed purpose but rather possesses the potential to serve diverse and multifaceted purposes based on the intentions of the artist, the perceptions of the viewer, and the ever-evolving cultural and social environments in which it resides. Moreover, the boundaries between traditional and digital media have become increasingly porous, as technology enables new avenues for creative expression. Artwork, in its various forms, holds a repository of cultural value that can be commodified easily, and the notion of form can seamlessly transition into functionality, or even become an embodiment of function in its own right. This in my view is why I start with art, and consider its metamorphosis into design later, should it hold enough cultural value to generate interest.



4.5. Art Output

4.5.1 Motherhood Identity Metamorphosis



Figure 21 Metamorphosis (2023), [Digital Illustration and Photography on Paper]

Juxtaposing the formality of a triangle on an organic-shaped bed of butterflies, there is a contrast of shape and texture in this image. Digitally drawn figures of a woman in 3

stages of becoming a mother are connected by their hair, shaped by a geometric triangle to signify growth and change. There is a consciousness being brought to this change. A metamorphosis.

At the center of this artwork, I have deliberately placed an upside-down triangle, which holds symbolism within an Asian context. The symbolism of an upside-down triangle encompasses various interpretations tied to cultural and religious perspectives. In Hindu and Tantric traditions, the upside-down triangle represents feminine energy and is associated with the concept of Shakti or the Divine Mother, symbolizing creativity, fertility, and abundance (Hinduism and Symbolism, 2009).

In Chinese philosophy and Feng Shui, the upside-down triangle is linked to the water element, symbolizing fluidity, adaptability, and the flow of energy (Wong, 2013). Within Taoist philosophy, the inverted triangle represents yin energy, representing qualities like receptivity, intuition, and balance with yang energy (Daoism: The Tao of Philosophy, 2019).

In certain Buddhist traditions, the upside-down triangle signifies transformation and liberation from suffering, representing the overturning of conventional perceptions and the emergence of spiritual insight (The Three Jewels: An Introduction to Buddhism, 2012). These interpretations highlight the diverse symbolism associated with the upside-down triangle across different Asian cultures, emphasizing the significance of cultural and religious frameworks in understanding its meaning.

In many cultures, butterflies are commonly associated with transformation, change, and rebirth. The metamorphosis process of a caterpillar transforming into a butterfly is often seen as a powerful symbol of personal growth and development. The butterfly's ability to undergo a radical transformation from a crawling creature to a creature capable of flight represents the journey of self-discovery and personal evolution.

For Figure 24 below, titled Maternal Tree of Life, I'm portraying two women with and without children, with tree roots extended below from their hair, and branches reaching into the sky. This talks about the duality of being pregnant, and growing community roots. Through this visual representation, I aim to evoke a sense of interconnectedness, the importance of roots, and the nurturing qualities that mothers bring to their families and communities. The "Maternal Tree of Life" serves as a reminder of the profound role of motherhood in shaping individuals and society as a whole. The Tree of Life is a powerful symbol found in various cultures and belief systems, such as Norse mythology, and as the "tree of heaven" in China.



Figure 22 Maternal Tree of Life (2023), [Digital Illustration on Paper]

4.5.3 Womb symbolism



Figure 23 Galaxy (2023), [Digital Illustration and Photography on Paper]

For this image, I created a galaxy inside a uterus to convey the infinite creative potential of humanity to multiply. The rhythmic lines show a sense of movement and hypnotism. The ovaries are illuminated in magenta to give a sense of energetic creation. A womb of pure potential. The drawing proportions are anatomical, yet the rendering and texture are abstract and surreal. It is perhaps jarring to highlight this organ, but that's the point, it's where we all came from and the origin of abundance that could be more acknowledged.



Figure 24 Pure Potential (2023), [Acrylic on canvas]

Figure 23 is an acrylic painting about 2 meters in width. I started painting blocks of color with large flat brushes gesturally, looking for some kind of shape or form to emerge at first. It was spontaneous, lyrical, and mostly horizontal. Then I noticed warm colors gathering at the top half of the canvas and cool colors at the bottom. Moving to smaller brushes with repeating lines, I found myself building some kind of viscous-like looking shapes and textures, liquid-like and perhaps organic. It started to look cell-like and sperm-like. Towards the end of the painting, I added a large clear

with a circle shape with a hard edge. It looks embryonic and creates a focal point and balance in the image. The circle or embryo is still and static, like a planet, waiting.

The circle is a powerful symbol that represents unity, wholeness, and eternity. It has no beginning or end, symbolizing the interconnectedness of all things and the cyclical nature of life. The circle is associated with concepts of perfection, harmony, and balance. It holds spiritual and religious significance, representing the divine and sacred space. In art and design, the circle is used to create a sense of movement, focal point, and visual harmony. Its symbolism extends to cycles of time, such as the seasons and the phases of the moon, emphasizing the rhythm and continuity of existence.



Figure 25 Cocoon Baby (2023), [Digital Illustration and Photography on Paper]

Carrying on with the theme of butterflies representing change, figure 23 depicts a cocoon symbolizing a womb with a baby snugly growing inside it. Marks and patterned lines in vivid contrasting colors adorn the chrysalis, a transitional cyclical state. These ideas of the womb continue with the visual metaphor of a flower in Figure 24, culminating with a surrealistic image of a stingray delivering a baby instead of a stork (I decided to become a mother after an encounter with a sting ray).



Figure 26 Flower Baby (2023), [Digital Illustration and Photography on Paper]



Figure 27 Stingray Baby (2023), [Digital Illustration and Photography on Paper]



Figure 28 Pregnancy (2023), [Digital Illustration and Photography on Paper]

In summary, through various artistic mediums, including digital illustration, acrylic painting, and photography, I created artworks that symbolize the womb as a source of infinite creative potential and emphasize the significance of the circle as a representation of unity, wholeness, and eternal cycles. The inclusion of butterflies and cocoons adds depth to the symbolic exploration, highlighting themes of change, transformation, and the cyclical nature of growth. These artworks provide a contemplative perspective on the profound nature of the womb and its connection to life's abundance and beauty.

4.5.2 Visceral Experience

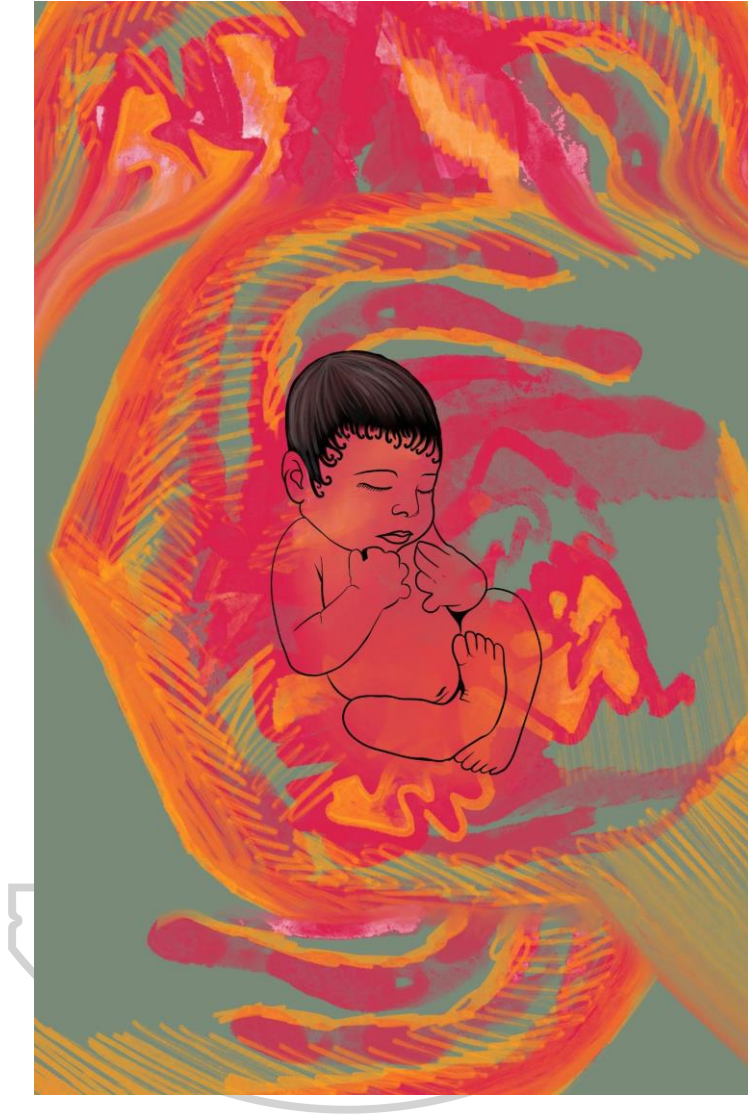


Figure 29 Visceral Birth (2023), [Digital Illustration on Paper]

For this artwork through the colors and textures, conveys my experience of birth. The cocoon is absent, and the mother's body takes on a liquid form, bursting forth a human baby. I attempted to viscerally convey the journey of birth.

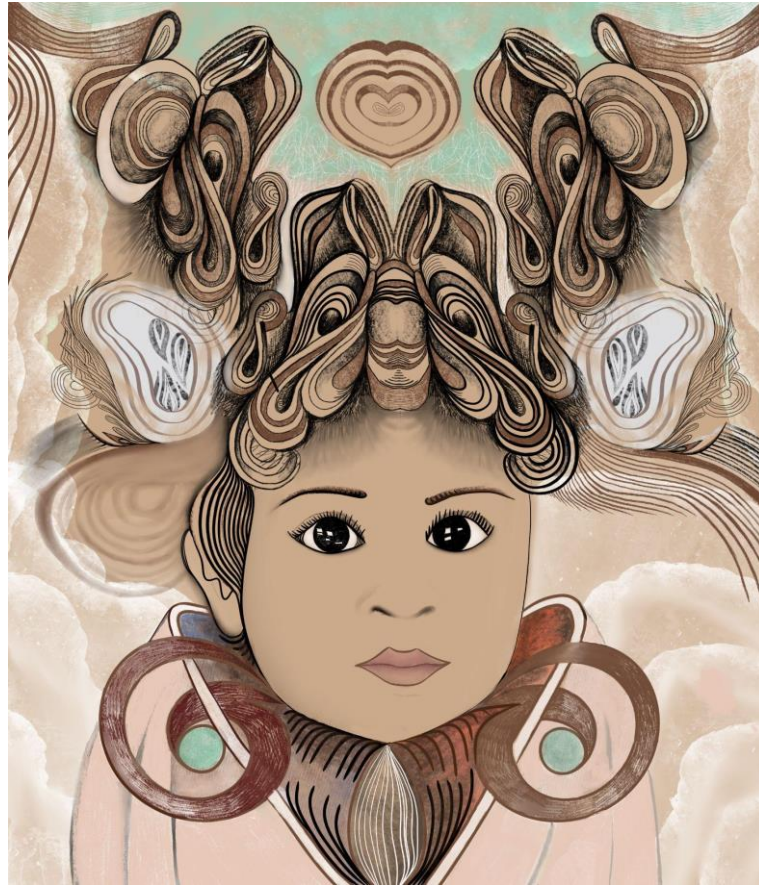


Figure 30 Ancestral crown (2023), [Digital Illustration on Paper]

In Figure 29, I began drawing meandering lines which translated the visceral feeling of being on a rollercoaster becoming a parent, then converted it to a tribal crown for a small child in which the cultural origin is ambiguous.

4.5.3 Animated Video Art

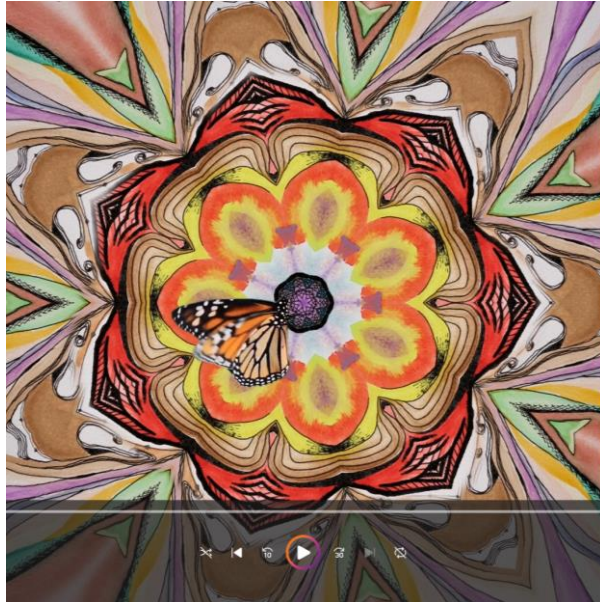


Figure 31 Metamorphosis Flower (2023), [Video, looping, 60 sec.]

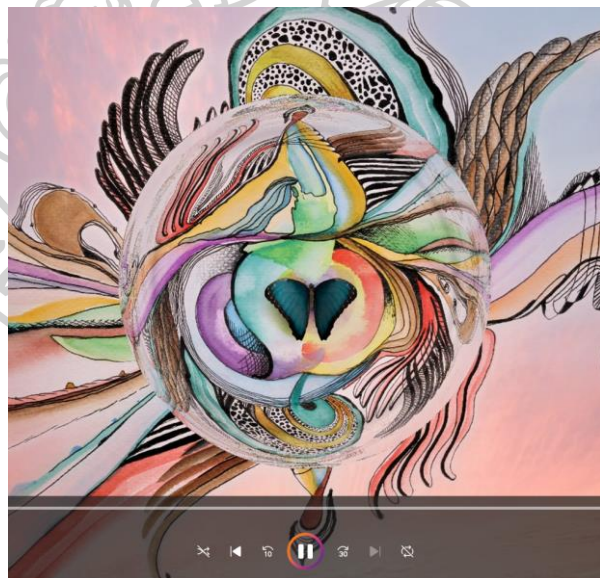


Figure 32 Metamorphosis 2 (2023), [Video, looping, 60 sec]

In Figures 30 and 31, I combined watercolor and ink drawings on paper with digital manipulation and then animated them, combining a video of a butterfly flapping its wing with the drawings which are hypnotically swaying.

4.5 Exhibition & Art Output Summary

In conclusion, my artistic exploration of matrescence has led me to create a diverse range of artworks that symbolize the transformative journey of becoming a mother by autoethnographic reflection. Through the use of symbolism, organic and geometric shapes, and vibrant colors, I aimed to capture the essence of this profound experience. The inclusion of cultural and spiritual symbolism, such as the upside-down triangle and the Tree of Life, added depth and meaning to the artworks. Butterflies and cocoons served as powerful symbols of change and personal growth, while the circle represented unity and eternal cycles. The artworks also delved into the visceral experience of birth, conveying the intense emotions and sensations associated with it. Finally, the exhibition at Silpakorn University Gallery of Art & Design, Wang Tha Phra campus, showcased the culmination of my interdisciplinary artistic exploration, featuring a variety of mediums, including acrylic painting, motion graphic videos, and digital art prints. Overall, my artistic journey has given a contemplative perspective on the profound nature of motherhood and its connection to life's abundance and beauty.

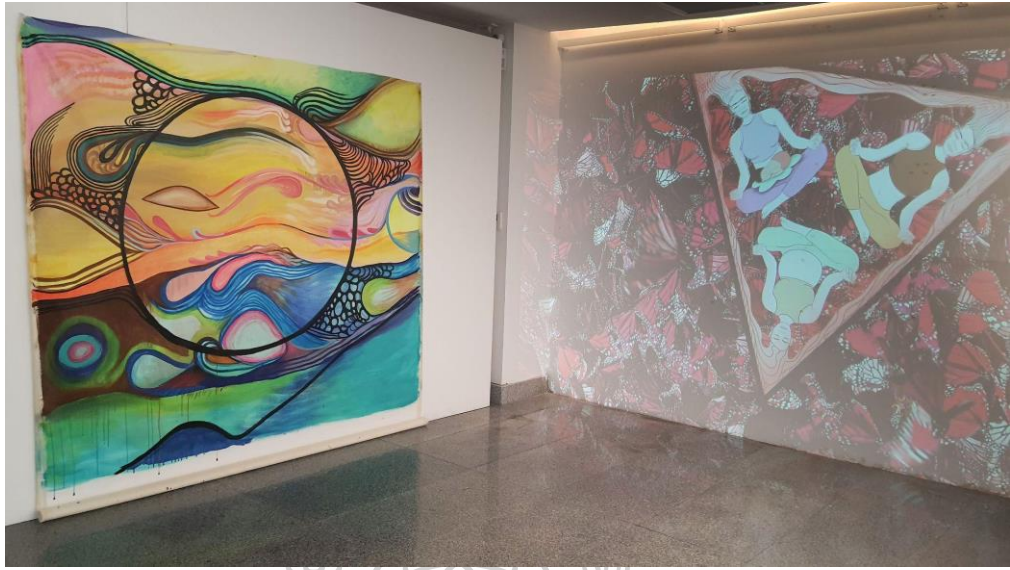


Figure 33 MFA Exhibition (2023), The Art & Design Gallery, Silpakorn University, Wang Tha Phra, Bangkok, Thailand



Chapter 5 Conclusion

5.1 Conclusion of Thesis

Looking at the objectives of research in this thesis, my exploration of the concept of Matrescence in the Asian context and its representation in literature and cultural artifacts has shed light on its limited discussion and awareness within Asian communities, including Thailand. This calls for further exploration and awareness to better support and understand this transformative phase in a woman's life.

Furthermore, my examination of the policies and support systems for new mothers in Thailand, such as paid maternity leave, workplace flexibility, and childcare support, has revealed significant challenges faced by new mothers in balancing their work and family responsibilities. The short duration of paid maternity leave, inflexible work environments, and inadequate childcare support underscore the need for policy changes that provide longer and more flexible leave options, supportive work environments, and comprehensive childcare support systems.

In addition to my research on Matrescence in the Asian context, I have analyzed culturally significant artwork on Motherhood in connection to feminism, comparing Western representations to the underrepresented Asian art. This analysis has highlighted the importance of cultural reflection and dialogue in portraying Matrescence and addressing the disparity in representation.

Through a practice-led research approach that combines autoethnography, visual analysis, and literature review, the thesis has aimed to increase awareness and understanding of Matrescence in Asian communities. By reflecting on personal experiences as a mother and analyzing culturally significant artwork on Motherhood, the research has offered valuable insights into the importance of supporting and empowering women during the Matrescence journey, fostering a sense of community and resilience.

To wrap up, this thesis contributes to the understanding of Matrescence in the Asian context, addresses the challenges faced by new mothers in Asian urban environments, and proposes recommendations for policy changes and support systems. By raising awareness, promoting cultural representation, and providing support for new mothers, I aim to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for Matrescence within Asian communities. Ultimately, I believe that these efforts will benefit not only new mothers but also families, workplaces, and societies as a whole. Future research should aim to gather first-hand data through interviews or surveys to enhance the understanding of the experiences of new mothers in Thailand and other similar contexts.

5.2 Artwork Conclusion

This thesis has explored the multifaceted realm of artistic practice, delving into the intersection of aesthetic theory, personal inspiration, interdisciplinary perspectives,

and the transformative themes of motherhood. Through the examination of Clive Bell's Aesthetic Theory and its emphasis on "significant form," we have gained a deeper understanding of the importance of formal elements in evoking emotional responses in art.

Building upon this foundation, I have explored my unique aesthetic style, characterized by a fusion of formalism, abstraction, and surrealism. The vibrant neon and neutral color palettes employed in my artwork have served as conduits for eliciting a wide range of emotions and inviting contemplation. By drawing inspiration from diverse artists, cultural traditions, and global perspectives, my artistic practice has been enriched with a rich tapestry of influences, enabling me to create works that resonate with universal experiences while expressing my personal journey through motherhood.

Furthermore, we have discussed the interdisciplinary nature of art, design, and craft, acknowledging the evolving relationship between traditional and digital media. The exploration of various artistic mediums, such as painting, sculpture, and mixed media, has allowed me to experiment with different techniques, materials, and visual elements, culminating in a diverse and thought-provoking art output.

Through this thesis, I have sought to convey the transformative journey of matrescence and invite viewers into a contemplative space of connection and understanding. By creating visually captivating compositions and engaging with the

interplay between form, color, and emotion, my intention is to spark imagination, provoke thought, and foster meaningful dialogue within the art world and beyond.

Overall, this thesis serves artistic expression as a vehicle for personal growth, social commentary, and cultural exploration. By embracing diverse influences, pushing boundaries, and engaging with interdisciplinary perspectives, I hope to contribute to the ongoing discourse in the art community and leave a lasting impact through my artistic practice.

5.3 Research objectives achieved.

- Explored the concept of Matrescence in the Asian context and investigated its discussion in literature and cultural representations.
- Examined policies and support systems for new mothers in Thailand, including paid maternity leave, workplace flexibility, and childcare support.
- Investigated the experiences of new mothers in Asian urban environments regarding Matrescence and the challenges they face in balancing work and family responsibilities.
- Analyzed culturally significant artwork on Motherhood in the West in connection to feminism and explored the representation of Matrescence in Asian art.
- Created artwork reflecting on the researcher's experience of Matrescence and utilized it to empower and support new mothers.

5.4 Discussions & Reflections

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of my research. I did not conduct interviews with new mothers in Thailand or collect any other first-hand data. To delve deeper into the topic, I believe conducting primary research through questionnaires and focus groups would be a valuable approach to gaining a better understanding of the experiences of new mothers here in Thailand. This limitation restricts the depth of understanding regarding the specific experiences and challenges faced by new mothers in the Thai context. Also, in terms of Asian context and policy support for new mothers, Japan is the most progressive in this matter which I did not address in my research as it did not directly support my argument, which is another limitation I acknowledge.

In terms of my artistic journey, the visual aesthetic I have begun to develop around this topic can be expanded by incorporating more narratives and symbolism. By incorporating these elements, I can further enrich my artistic expression and delve into the nuanced aspects of motherhood.

Reflecting on the one-year program, I must admit that my ambition to create a large body of work may have exceeded the time I had available. Juggling responsibilities such as teaching, working with clients, studying, and parenting limited my capacity to produce more. Nevertheless, this process of researching, writing, reflecting, and creating art has been an invaluable experience. It has allowed me to grow personally,

engage deeply with academic concepts, and connect with individuals who share similar passions within the M.F.A. program.

Looking ahead, I am eager to continue nurturing my artistic practice and incorporating research as an integral part of my creative process. This M.F.A. program has expanded my horizons in terms of design and art theory, and I am excited to see how this newfound knowledge will influence and shape my future artistic endeavors.

In conclusion, this M.F.A. journey has been transformative for me, offering valuable insights into the importance of research, critical thinking, and the relationship between art and society. While recognizing the need for balance and realistic expectations, I am enthusiastic about further exploring the topic of motherhood in Thailand, building connections within the artistic community, and continuing to create art that resonates with meaning and provokes thought.

5.5 Chapter Summary

In this concluding chapter, I have explored the concept of Matrescence in the Asian context, bringing attention to its limited discussion and awareness among Asian communities, including Thailand. I have also highlighted the challenges faced by new mothers in Thailand, underscoring the need for policy changes to support work-life balance. Additionally, I have analyzed culturally significant artwork on Motherhood, emphasizing the importance of cultural representation. Through a practice-led

research approach, I aimed to increase awareness and empower women during their Matrescence journey. In summary, this thesis contributes to understanding Matrescence, proposes policy recommendations, and explores the transformative power of art. Looking ahead, I am eager to continue nurturing my artistic practice, incorporating research, and delving further into the topic of motherhood in Thailand. This M.F.A. journey has been transformative, providing valuable insights into research, critical thinking, and the connection between art and society.



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