Blandness

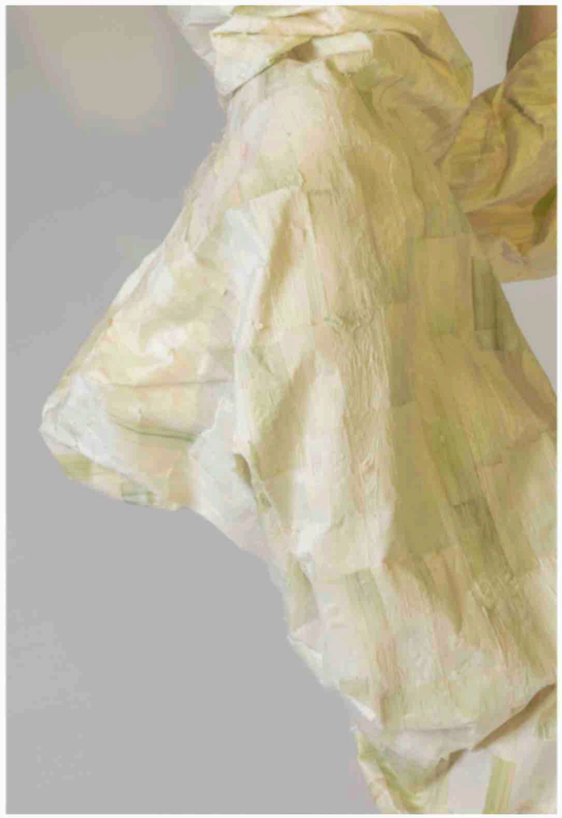
Nature | Change | Richness

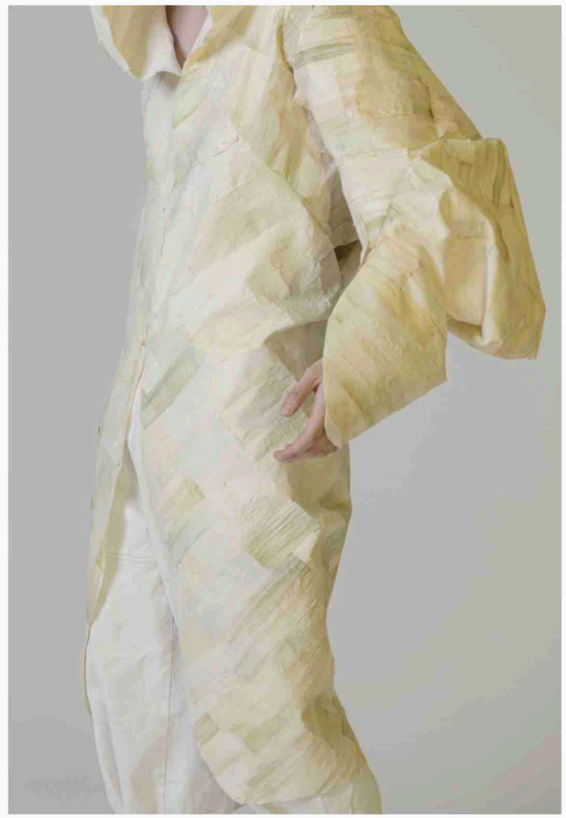
WESTERN CULTURE OFTEN OVERLOOKS THE CONCEPT OF BLANDNESS, WHILE IN CHINESE THOUGHT, IT IS SEEN AS A SUPREME AESTHETIC AND WAY OF LIVING.

BLANDNESS REFLECTS A DEEP UNDERSTANDING OF NATURE, CHANGE, AND INNER RICHNESS, OFFERING A HIGH LEVEL OF EXISTENCE BEYOND SURFACE COMPLEXITY.

— 《IN PRAISE OF BLANDNESS》
WRITTEN BY FRANCIOUS JULLIEN

MENGDI CUI





BLANDNESS AND RICHNESS:
BLANDNESS HOLDS RICHNESS BEYOND SURFACE.

BLANDNESS AND CHANGE:
BLANDNESS EMBRACES CONSTANT CHANGE.

BLANDNESS AND NATURE:
BLANDNESS REFLECTS THE ESSENCE OF LIFE.

Blandness and richness
Materiality—leek skin

Rather than being dull, blandness holds infinite space for expression, offering a quiet satisfaction and inner richness beyond surface simplicity.

This deliberate blandness reflects Daoist and Zen ideals, where blandness becomes a profound metaphor for nature's vastness and the human spirit, revealing that true richness lies in the contemplative spaces of the mind.

leek is an ordinary yet fascinating material. Its texture, rich grain, and pungent aroma are often overlooked. But its presence is undeniable, aligning with the Chinese cultural concept of 'Blendedness'.

Experimenting with leeks, I explore its transformation—pressed, dried, woven, and layered, revealing its aesthetic and conceptual potential.

MENGDI CUI

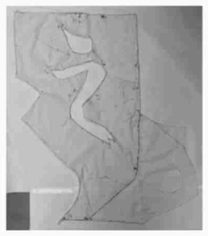
This Mu Xi's minimalist brushstrokes, such as in the painting of geese in flight, transform blandness into sky, clouds, and landscapes, inviting viewers to project their own interpretations.

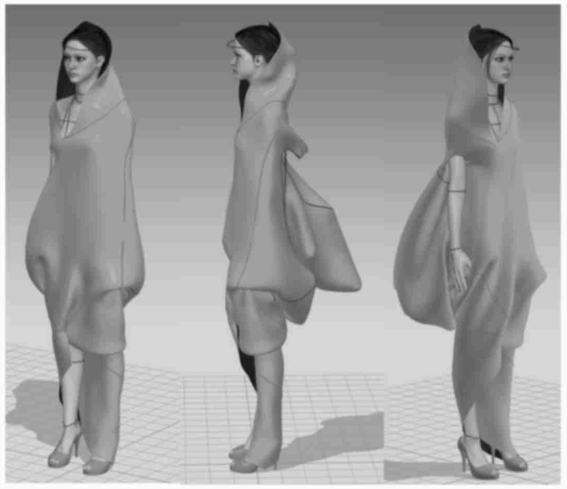
Blandness and change
In Chinese challigraphy

Chinese calligraphy is an art of rhythm and spirit, a discipline of endless transformation. In the Eastern Jin dynasty, the great calligrapher Wang Xizhi, in a moment of drunken inspiration, created Lanting Xu—a masterpiece that remains unsurpassed, embodying the pinnacle of Chinese calligraphy. Within it, he inscribed the character zhi (之) in 21 different forms, capturing the essence of movement, balance, and soul.

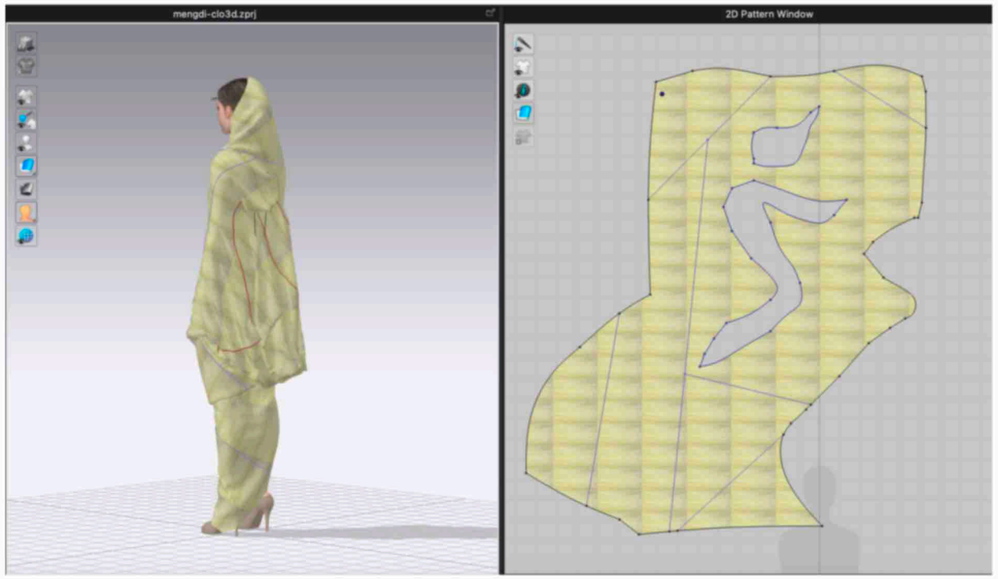
In Chinese culture, we do not speak of mere change; we speak of impermanence—the ever-shifting, uncontrollable nature of the world. To live is to embrace this impermanence, to flow with it rather than resist. The way to harmony is not to fight against change but to dwell fully in the present. This quiet acceptance, this seeming ordinariness imbued with endless flux, is the essence of blandness in Chinese philosophy.

I hope to translate the fluid beauty of change into the silhouettes of clothing, where the brushstrokes of Chinese calligraphy take form in seams. Let Wang Xizhi's spirit flow, unfurling in the contours of fabric like ink on paper.



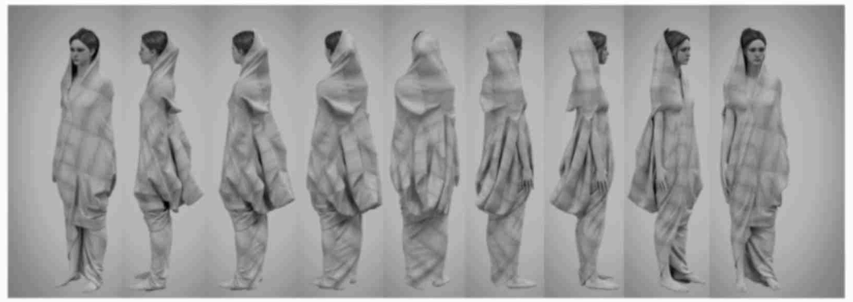


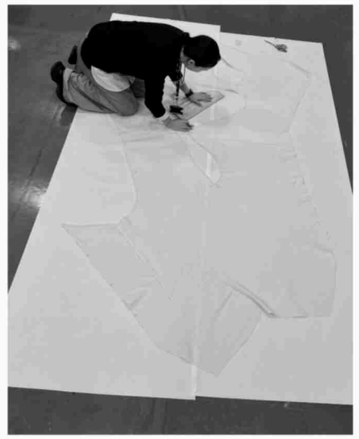
I scanned the texture of leek skin fabric sanple



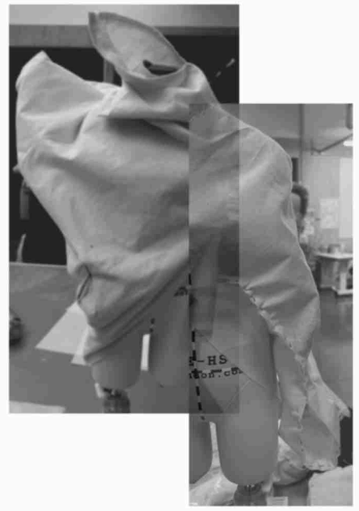
Digital reflection of Blandness

Before crafting the final fabric, I first explored its possibilities through digital visualization. I scanned real leek skins and used CLO 3D modeling to refine the silhouette through multiple adjustments. This process not only helped me achieve the desired form but also determined the precise angle and size of each leek skin in the final composition.





"之"ZHI PATTERN FULL SIZE



"之" ZHI PATTERN ON HALF SIZE MANNEQUIN

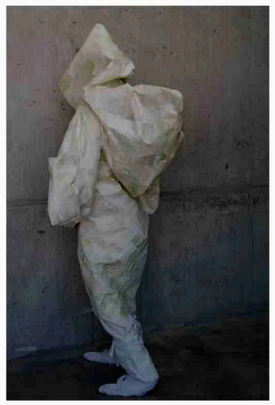
BLANDNESS AND CHANGE IN CHINESE CHALLIGRAPHY

I draped the zhi-patterned sleeve on a half-size mannequin and discovered a beautifully fluid silhouette. Building on this, I extended the hem, widened the sleeve openings, and adjusted the length for movement. Pushing the calligraphic form to its fullest expression.

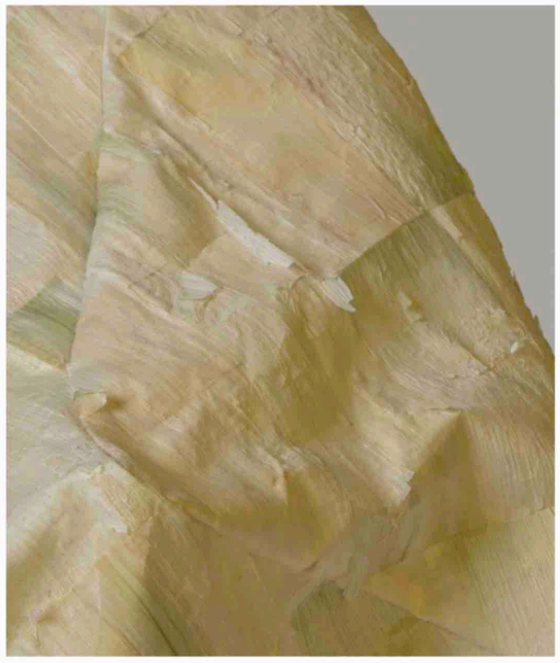
Blandness and nature

A journey where self and nature merged

I crafted a fabric of blandness from a thousand layers of leek skin inspired by Chinese painting restoration. In the slow, meditative act of trimming and placing each piece, I found myself slipping into a Zen-like stillness—a deep, quiet focus. For over 13 hours each day, I repeated the same simple motion, moving from restlessness to an almost transcendent joy.



It felt like an ancient monk's solitary retreat, where the world faded until only the leek and I remained, locked in silent dialogue. This is the essence of Daoist thought—the merging of self and nature, where all boundaries dissolve into harmony.



EPHEMERAL THREADS: CAPTURING IMPERMANENCE IN THE DIGITAL REALM

Using only natural materials—hemp fabric, cotton thread, and leek skin—this garment evolves with time and climate. The leek skin curls and peels, some pieces fall away, yet I choose not to restore them. A week ago and now, it is already two different garments. To preserve these fleeting moments, I captured it through digital scanning and will do so again a year from now.

This may be a garment that exists only in the virtual world —not seeking permanence, but cherishing the present. This fleeting nature is the essence of blandness that digital technology captures in this work.