

# Tea Picking Girls Fantasy Aspiration

PROJECT 1 | BOOK DESIGN  
Interview video link : <https://youtu.be/kFl7l3Zinw8>



## Introduction

Men ploughing and women weaving were the smallholder economy of feudal China, and the effects of this tradition continue to this day in tea production. In the early days of tea production, women were responsible for going up to the mountains to pick the tea leaves. Due to the stereotype that "women are more patient than men", it has historically been women who have been engaged in this mechanical and repetitive labour. Today, there are still some rural women who work as casual tea pickers to subsidise their families. This project documents their migration for the sake of their families through pictures and words, thus bringing to light the fact that they are bound by the burdens of their families.

# Background

In the traditional agricultural society, women did not have dignified female occupations. In recent times, with the awakening of women's consciousness and the improvement of their social status, women have begun to go out of the house. Tea picker, an occupation that enables women to combine family and work, has become a popular choice for women, and a large number of women still take up this occupation every year.

Tea picking, a very flexible job, was used by my grandmother, the eldest daughter in the family, as a means of earning a living due to the need to juggle family and work at the same time. As a result of my grandmother's experience, I became very curious about the tea picker community and therefore conducted more in-depth research and interviews.

## History



Tang Dynasty



Modern Times



Contemporary

During this period, women were involved in all activities. But it is only due to the subjective sense of masculinity in the text and the tradition that 'women had no official position' that their contribution is obscured.

In modern times, with the opening of the country's doors and the introduction of new ideas, the status of women has only improved in China's tea industry where women can hold up half the sky! They are present in all aspects of the industry.

There is no time off work for working women. In the old days, the so-called 'tea-picking girls' are now rare, and the younger generation of girls, fearing for their tanned skin, prefer to find work in factories and blow the cold air.

## Interview

Video Link : <https://youtu.be/kFl7I3Zinw8>



Wu Xiaoyue

She had to stay at home from an early age to do housework and take care of her brother. Wanted to work to improve her status in front of her husband.



Ding Yun

She worked as a chef for 12 years, and after retiring, she stayed home to cook for her children and grandchildren, pick tea, and take the pressure off her family.



Xu Jindi

She dropped out of school when she reached first grade and began working on the tea plantations with her mother before she reached adulthood, while her brother was able to continue his schooling.



Lin Aichun

When she was a child, she worked as a child weaver in a factory through connections, and when no other jobs wanted him, her mother told her to pick tea, which she did for decades.

## Interview summary

Interview summary: From the interviews, three women responded that they were motivated by the freedom of tea picking, one said they wanted to combine it with family work and the remaining said that they lacked other employment opportunities. This suggests that these women chose tea picking as a career by choice. They are caregivers for their families and go wherever they are needed.

## Field Research

Picking tea in the tea gardens gives the women the opportunity to meet a group of people with similar experiences in their work. Once the tea season arrives, they are present in the tea gardens in groups. This allows the women to get out of the house, a space that is completely isolated from men, thus allowing for the full release of women's thoughts and emotions.



Large collective dormitories



Bus to the mountain



Their hands "dance" 140 times per minute, 8,400 times per hour, from 6 a.m. tea picking to 6 p.m., excluding meal time, to repeat the action nearly 100,000 times a day.



### Tea Picking Tools:

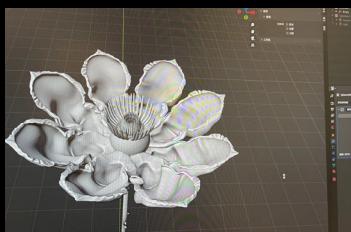
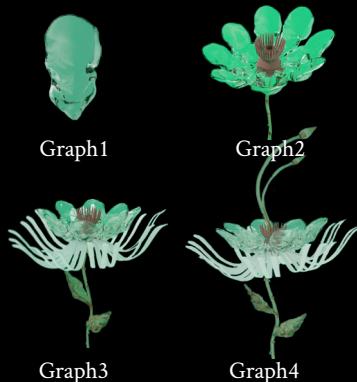
1. bucket hat
2. Raincoat
3. Rain shoes
4. Bamboo basket
5. tea picking knife
6. Flashlight
7. Snakeskin bag



# Visual Experiment

## Experiment 1

I tried to show the four stages of the Lacanian Desire Map in a tealight model using 3d modelling.



## Experiment 2

I visited and photographed scenes from the lives of the women tea pickers.



## Experiment 3

I recorded what the women tea pickers said during my interviews with them and selected some important quotes for the women to write down, and their difficult handwriting reflects the regret that women did not have the right to go to school in those days.



# Design Concept

Through this project, I hope that people will be able to understand the historical and social background of women tea pickers and their beliefs in upholding this profession. I also hope that more people will pay attention to the reasons for the boom in this occupation and hear the voice of women's power.

## Reference

I found an artist called Han Qian as my visual reference. Han Qian photographed the environment of a community that was once built but is now in ruins again. The positive images of identity information and the negative images of the ruined remains appear randomly in a loop of an old-fashioned slide projector.



Here Now Always, Han qian, 2023

## Book Making Process

I asked the women tea pickers to write down key messages and quotes from the interviews on a piece of paper next to them. The recorded quotes from the women tea pickers were torn into random shapes and pasted in the appropriate places in the book.



Personal information cards and employment certificates for female tea pickers



I artistically manipulated the portraits of the tea pickers and pasted them on top of the original photographs.



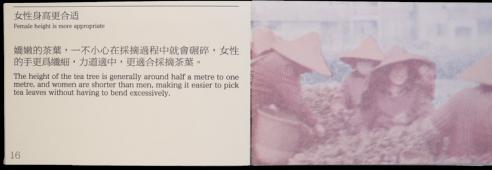
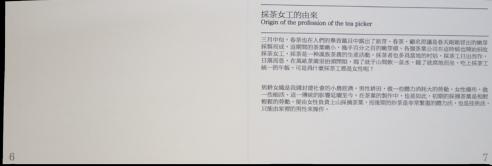
In the fourth section of the book, *Visions of the Women Workers*, I used 250g extra glossy gold paper to differentiate it from the first three sections. This emphasises the fact that the women workers still have a positive attitude towards life even though the income from tea picking is not as good as it used to be.

When I was a child, my family was poor. My mother was a farmer and my father was also a farmer. He did some extra work for other people to earn money, such as nailing a stool for a rich family, sawing a bowl, fixing a light bulb and other small jobs. When I was young, I envied my brother. I stopped going to school in the first grade and stayed home to help my mother with the farming. I was the first in the family and my sister did the small jobs, so I had to take on the burden of the planting, helping with the planting of vegetables and harvesting chickens and ducks.

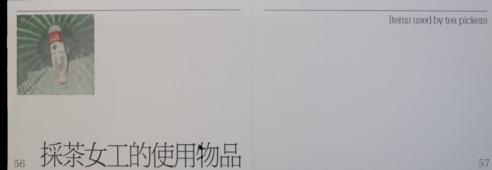
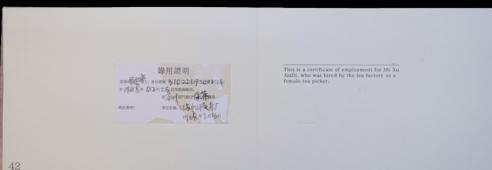
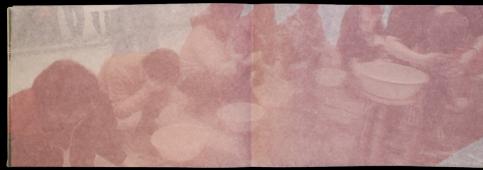
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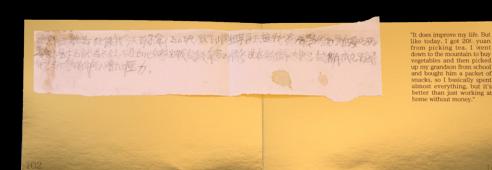
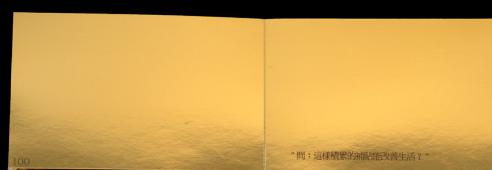
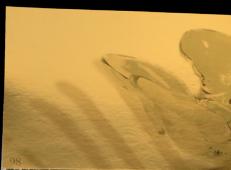
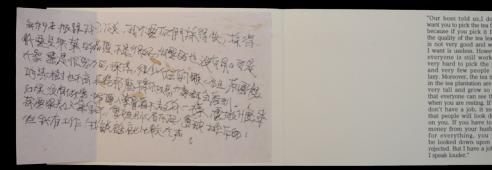
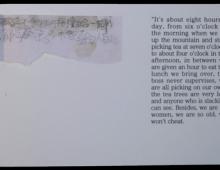
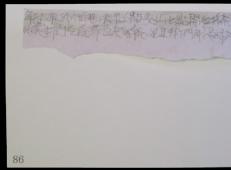
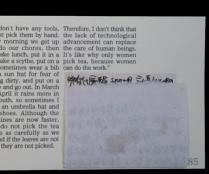
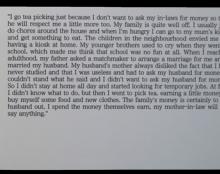
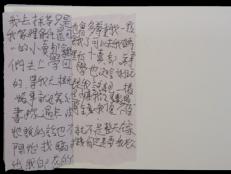
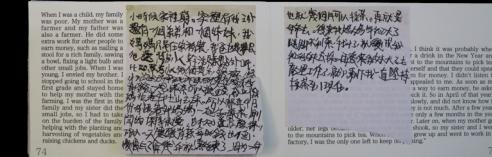
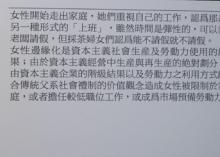
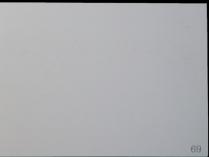
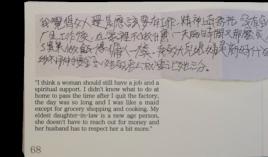
older, her legs became weak, and she could no longer walk. She had to give up her work as a tea picker. She was forced to live in a small hut near the tea plantation. Her health deteriorated rapidly, and she died at the age of 80.

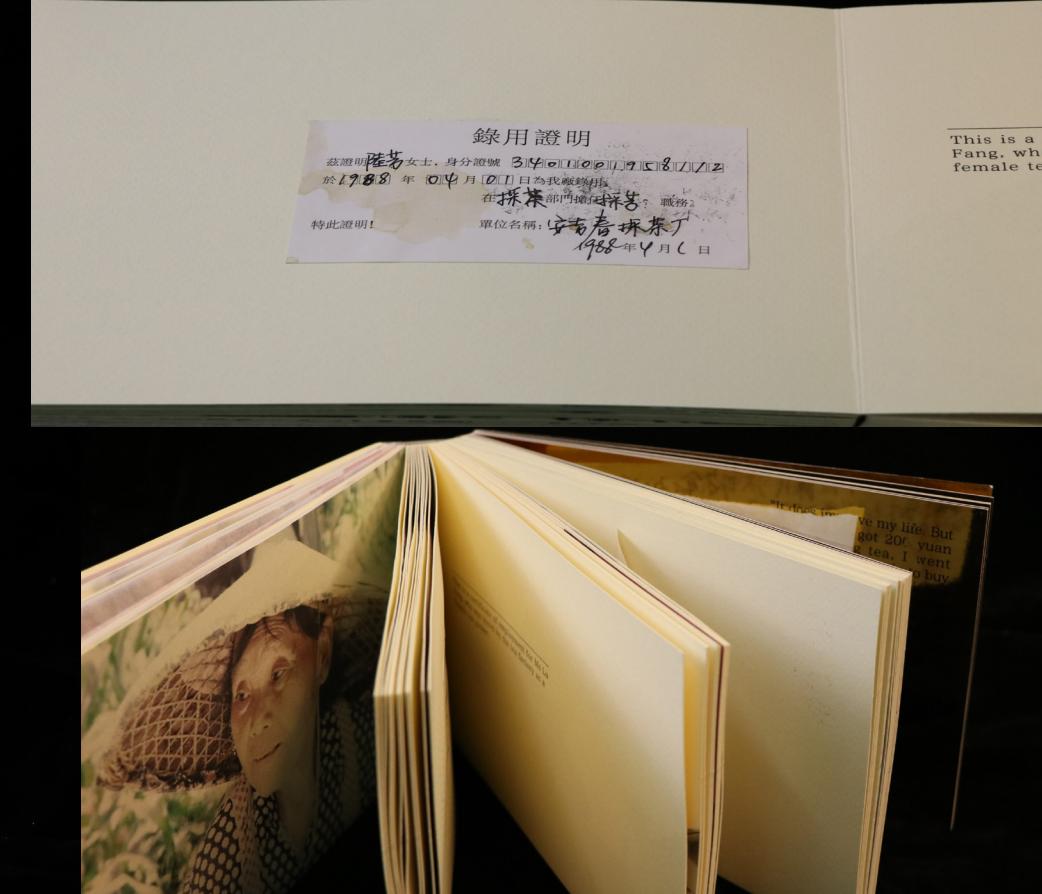
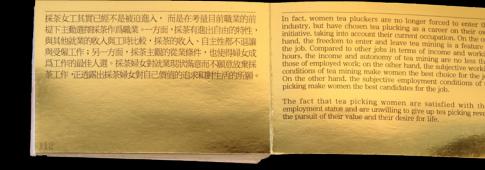
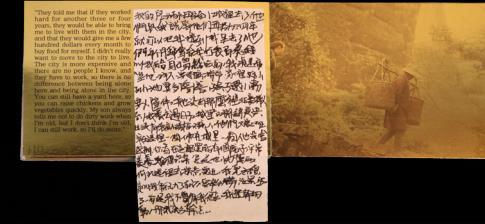
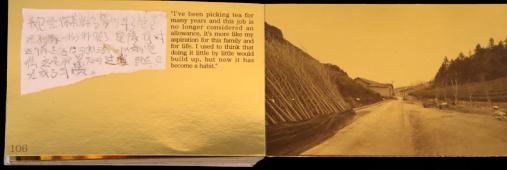
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The tea picking period is concentrated in the 20 days from the end of March to the middle of April, which is the peak season of tea picking. It is also the peak season for tea picking, and everything is as convenient as possible. The tea pickers eat a uniform meal, and the tea workers live in dormitories, which will cause inconvenience if there are a few men, which is also one of the reasons why the tea pickers are all women.



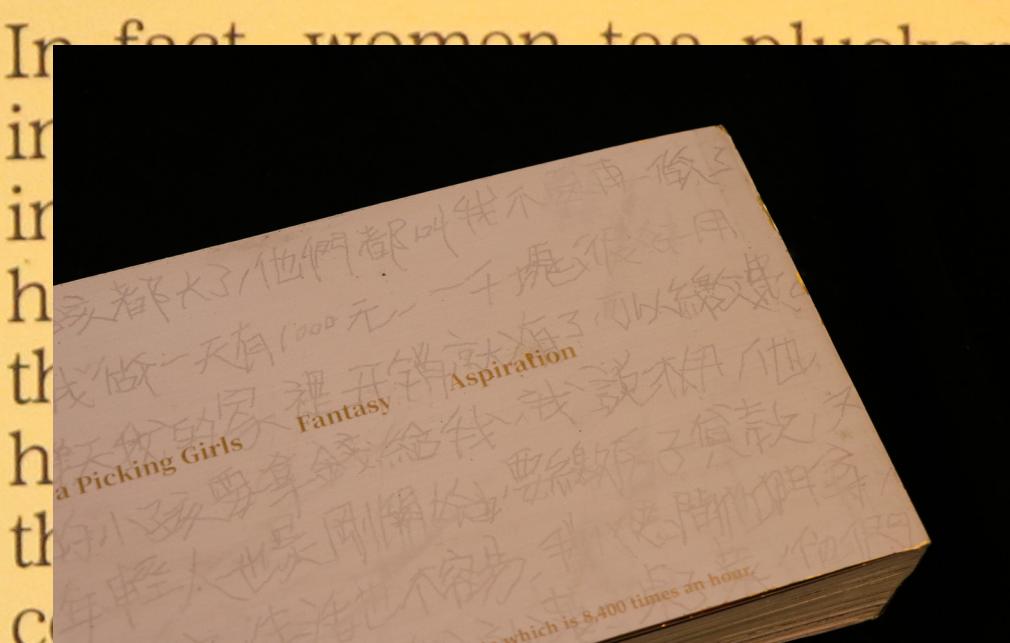




In fact, women tea pluckers are no longer forced to enter industry, but have chosen tea plucking as a career on their initiative, taking into account their own circumstances. On the hand, the freedom to enter and leave tea mining is a feature of the job. Compared to other jobs in terms of income and working hours, the income and autonomy of tea mining are not less than those of agriculture; on the other hand, the subjective worth of tea mining is greater, the best choice for the conditions of tea mining. On the other hand, the subjective worth of tea mining is greater, the best choice for the job.

The fact that tea picking women are satisfied with their employment status and are unwilling to give up tea picking reflects the pursuit of their values and their desire for life.

This is a c  
Fang, who  
female tea



On the other hand, the subjects of tea picking make women the best

The fact that tea picking employment status and are unique in the pursuit of their value and



## Video Link : <https://youtu.be/BqEzsB1JzrE>

I did an in-depth interview with Ms. Xu Jindi and recorded it on video. I visited her home and she took me to the tea garden in the mountains to show me where they normally work. I also interviewed her about her family's financial situation as well as her reasons for picking tea and her thoughts on the future.

