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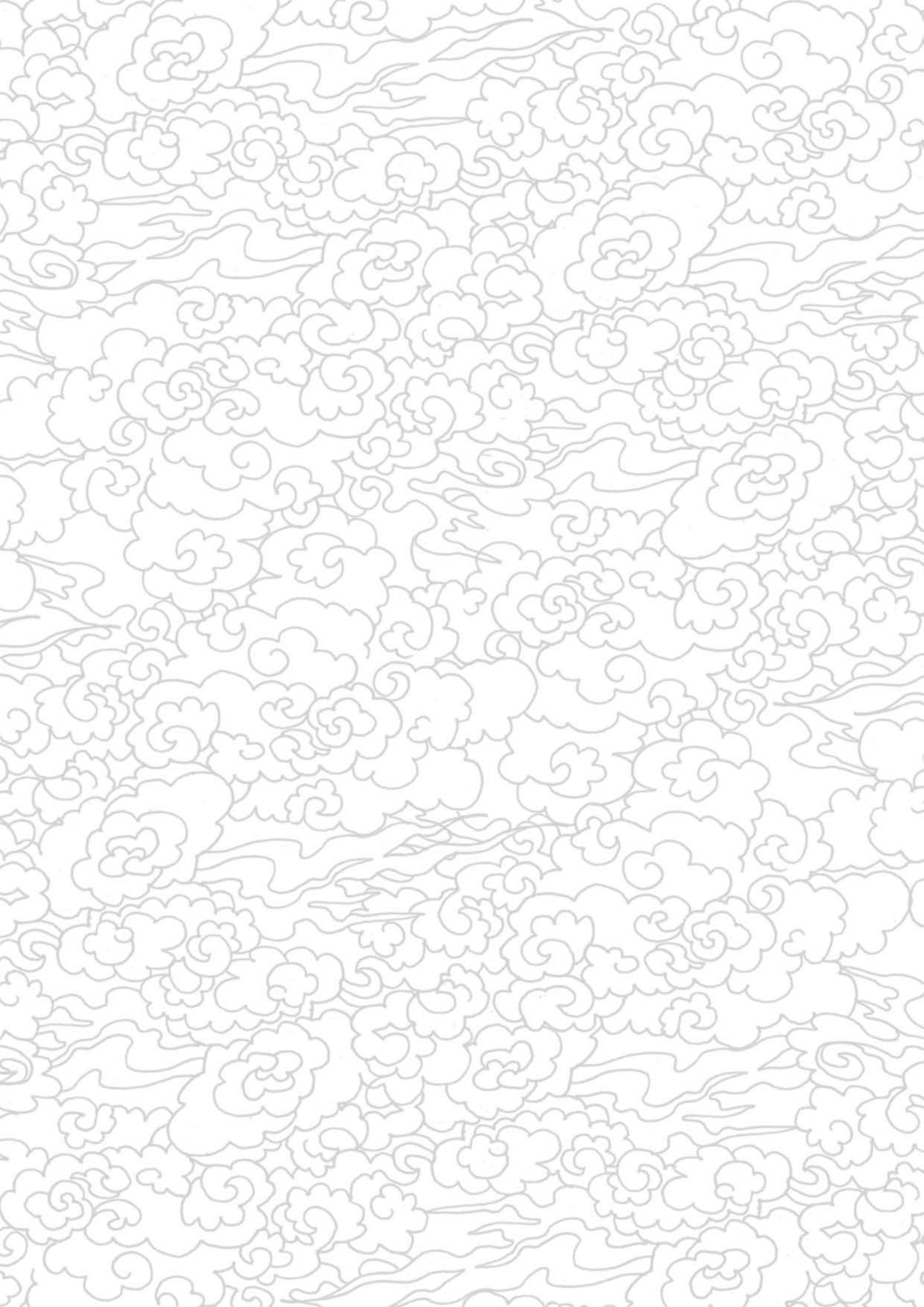
HOME MADE

PICTURING CHINESE SETTLEMENT IN NEW ZEALAND

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Masters in Design at
Massey University, Wellington, New Zealand.

by Kerry Ann Lee

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ABSTRACT

Since the first gold-seekers arrived in New Zealand in the 1860s, Chinese have been regarded as outsiders to discussions of national identity. Colonial representations of otherness have left Chinese longing to be recognised as established settlers. Fresh interpretations are much needed to align myth with the longstanding realities of settlement. The absence of a recognisable Chinatown in New Zealand has meant that many of the Chinese customs inherited from the first settlers are observed in private within the family home. This condition coupled with emerging research and exposure on the topic offers a chance to define Chinese spaces and author Chinese stories from within a local community.

This research project interrogates the transformation of Cantonese settlers into Chinese New Zealanders through illustration design. By claiming the book as a space, unsung moments of settlement are made visible to challenge stereotypes and forge a new space for Chinese New Zealand stories. The process of collage is used to illustrate the complexities of constructing identity. *Home Made* is an alternative cultural history told through visual metaphor. Gold was responsible for first transforming the sojourner into the settler, the bowl is used to mediate tradition between home and enterprise in settlement, while the lantern illuminates and celebrates local Chinese spaces. Brought out from home kitchens and backrooms of family businesses, these artefacts represent a longstanding Chinese presence. *Home Made* activates these metaphors to structure an argument for the longevity and contemporary significance of Chinese settlement in New Zealand.



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Central Proposition

New Zealanders of Chinese descent have long experienced anxieties of what postcolonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha (1994) describes as 'a world that reveals itself as caught up in the space between frames' (p. 214). Bhabha uses the term *third space* to locate hyphenated identities like the Chinese New Zealanders (Dale, 1999). A longing to belong to both Chinese and mainstream Kiwi culture underscores the meaning of a Chinese New Zealand identity. Despite similarities in settler history with Chinese in Australia and the US since the mid-1800s, the absence of a recognisable Chinatown in New Zealand has meant that Chinese have made home in the margins of society for generations. These conditions enable a hybrid identity to evolve quietly over the past 160 years where cultural traditions are largely practiced and preserved by families behind closed doors.

The cultural space afforded to Chinese has been constructed by colonial notions of otherness imposed from outside of the community since early arrival in the former British colony. As a result, the history of Chinese in New Zealand can be traced through unfair representations as imagined by Pakeha/European settlers. Chinese were vilified as the 'Yellow Peril' in the late-1800s, played the role of the agreeable 'model minority' since the 1950s and were implicated in the 'Asian Invasion' of the 1990s. These stereotypic depictions have undermined settlement by branding the Chinese with a permanent migrant status. If public negotiations are still fraught with difficulties, new interpretations are much needed. Local Chinese perspective is invaluable in realigning myth with the reality of settlement.

This research through design thesis explores the transformation of Cantonese settlers into Chinese New Zealanders through illustration. The project employs visual metaphor to investigate the place of Chinese in New Zealand as imagined by

outsiders. The non-fixed perimeters of living in the margins offer rich potential for Chinese New Zealanders to construct identity from the inside out. This thesis argues for the longevity and significance of a hybrid settler identity by telling Chinese stories unique to New Zealand.

Home Made is the result of a formal investigation into graphic authorship. The work claims the book as a graphic space to interrogate tensions of making home in the margins. It critically responds to issues of settlement through illustration and graphic design. *Home Made* highlights the value of cultural signifiers to reveal a community history. Three primary metaphors feature throughout the book: Gold was crucial in transforming the sojourner into the settler, the bowl carries food and tradition between home kitchens and the backrooms of family businesses, while the lantern illuminates, names and celebrates local Chinese spaces. These iconic symbols are activated as silent witnesses to historic moments and personal memories of settlement.

Home Made is therefore a graphic translation of Chinese New Zealand history. Visual rhetoric is used to advance an alternative reading of Chinese settlement in New Zealand crafted from found text and image. The book uses collage as an effective means of ordering and making sense of cultural ephemera to challenge conventional understandings of identity and belonging. Illustration strategies such as collage attempt to lay to rest anxieties of being caught in-between cultural frames by reclaiming and transforming markers of identity to celebrate positive differences.

1.2 Home in the Space Between

I craved any piece of literature, any role model, any movie that showed Chinese as intelligent, thoughtful and active. What I really wanted was confirmation that, yes, there was a Chinese identity beyond the orthodox perimeters around me.

Kirsten Wong (M. Ip, 1996, p. 88)

National fervour for framing identity resonates on a personal level where being visibly Chinese often elicits more questions than answers about home and heritage. Chinese New Zealanders strive to create their own space in this discussion based on a history of marginal settlement. Experiencing firsthand the ambiguities of being a Chinese New Zealander coupled with the desire to learn more about my heritage similar to Wong, were primary motivations for me to research this thesis topic.

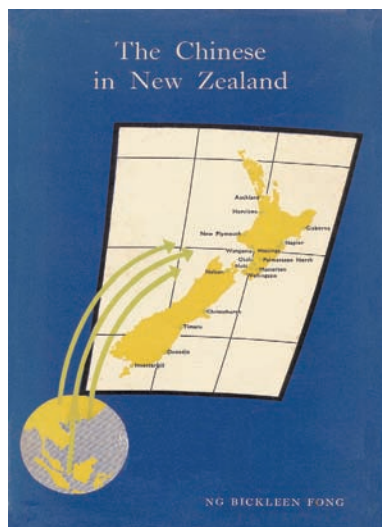


Figure 1. Bickleen Fong, *The Chinese in New Zealand: A study in assimilation*, published in 1959

Another intention was to discover the implications of this dual identity from the position of a local storyteller. There has been a noticeable lack of Chinese representation in the arts and popular culture in this country, however the emergence of artists, writers and performers of Chinese descent in recent years has offered inspiration by giving voice and dimension to one of New Zealand's largest and oldest ethnic groups.

Existing research into the cultural concerns of Chinese New Zealanders has long been driven by a strong sense of personal enquiry. Bickleen Fong

is regarded as a pioneer in the study of the New Zealand Chinese. Her work, *The Chinese in New Zealand: A Study in Assimilation* (Figure 1), based on her 1955 MA thesis, set a precedent as the first academic study of the Chinese community by an insider. Fong (1959) introduces her topic by stating, 'Being a member of the Chinese community, I am naturally interested to discover how my fellow countrymen are fitting into New Zealand life' (p. 1).

In Fong's study, just under half of the 4832 Chinese in New Zealand in 1951 were

recorded as having been born in New Zealand. Noticing an increasing tendency to assimilate to a New Zealand way of life, Fong believed that:

'As one or both parents are also New Zealand-born, these young children will have no intimate knowledge of things Chinese. Unless there is a return to the racial intolerance of former years, these third-generation New Zealanders of Chinese origin will be European in every way but their physical appearance' (1959, p. 49).

Fong's projection is infused with hope yet laments the loss of heritage through assimilation. Time has shown that knowledge of culture can be diligently recovered but simply being born and raised visibly Chinese in New Zealand does not necessarily guarantee protection from prejudice. As a consequence, those who have grown up with a Chinese heritage in this country are constantly challenged to defend and define what it means to be a Chinese New Zealander.

The term 'Chinese New Zealander' is no longer exclusive in referring to those who grew up here through steady adoption by transnational Chinese. The label 'Asian' has been more commonly used ever since the late 1980s to classify Chinese immigrants from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia and Singapore, and also includes East Asian nationalities like the Japanese, Korean, Cambodian, Filipino and Vietnamese. The Asian ethnic group is New Zealand's fourth largest major ethnic group after European, Maori, and Other Ethnicity according to the 2006 Census report, totalling 354,552 people or 9.2 percent of New Zealand's population. Just under half of this group (147,570) identified as Chinese (2007).

Cultural theorist Ien Ang (1996) touches on the negative realities of this position saying:

'No matter how assimilated in terms of behaviour and way of life, one will never be protected from the painful, offensive incitation to 'go home'. Being Chinese in a white society means not to belong. It means inhabiting an identity that one has to 'get used to' (p. 15).

This perspective highlights that even with a long legacy of assimilation, Chinese New Zealanders are yet to be publicly recognised as established settlers.

The personal and social implications of these issues provided the impetus to interrogate the thesis topic of Chinese New Zealand identity through design. This thesis supports design luminary Milton Glaser's philosophy that good design is good citizenship (Heller, 2005). Upon reflecting on the cultural value of graphic ephemera and artefacts inherited from settlement, *Home Made* sets out to realise their potency to contribute to critical discussions on home and belonging. These become the basis for this exploration into the intricacies of identity through collage illustration. Fitting Fong's profile of a third generation Chinese New Zealander with a command of Cantonese that is wanting, I have found strength through using visual language to communicate my relationship with Chinese culture.

1.3 Voicing Otherness

Who names, who fringes?

Trinh T. Minh-ha (1999, p. 328)

This Masters thesis responds to filmmaker Minh-ha's question on marginalisation by revealing Chinese experiences in New Zealand. The visual argument is supported by scholarship that establishes a historic precedent for settlement in order to deconstruct Chinese as 'the ultimate other' (M. Ip, Murphy, N., 2005, p. 7). These texts draw upon postcolonial and intercultural theory relating to Cantonese diaspora and transnational Chinese identities to contribute local perspectives on issues of representation.

It's very hard to pin down...what it is like to be a Chinese New Zealander. There is a tacit, unspoken sort of thing...You have similar background, you know what the market-garden is like, you know what it is to serve customers...You are sons and daughters of laundrymen and greengrocers.

These days when I go into Chinese supply stores I have this vague sense of unease. I suppose it's a 'sense of otherness', which used to be a sense of togetherness whenever I visit Chinese places. Internally, I feel that I must be Kiwi because I don't understand people talking Chinese, nor can I read those signs in Chinese characters... for soya sauce, oyster sauce and what not... There is this painful estrangement from Chinese culture. On the other hand, I also feel that I've lost my

uniqueness of being a Chinese New Zealander. It is very uncomfortable, very disturbing.

Gilbert Wong (cited in M. Ip, 1996, p. 29 & p. 139)

Wong's experience is a familiar one for many local Chinese New Zealanders who were brought up to 'know their place' and not expect too much from mainstream Kiwi society (Wong, cited in Ip, 1996). This group has become unsettled with the public hostility exhibited towards increasing Asian immigration since the 1990s. The result was an invigoration of research into Chinese New Zealand identity. Dr Manying Ip's scholarship from this period offers voice and visibility to the Chinese community and challenge popular myths and marginalisation of the Chinese through critical commentary gleaned from case studies and oral history research.

Ip's *Dragons on the Long White Cloud* (Figure 2) features firsthand testimonials from four intergenerational families to reflect upon the transition of Chinese people from ethnic immigrants to New Zealand citizens. Candid stories about growing up in-between worlds give a face to the weightier issues of dealing with racial prejudice and maintaining Chinese customs and traditions against the pull of Kiwi life. Ip's work provides a basis for *Home Made* to explore the trade-offs that first and second generation Chinese had to pay towards gaining acceptance as the model minority. Direct quotations from Chinese restaurant owners in Wellington feature in the second section of the book to localise these issues.

Ip gives the local community a chance to fortify their place against racial intolerance towards themselves and the new wave of Chinese migrants. She recalls another local resident who said, 'All my life I have always regarded myself as Chinese, suddenly these last few years I have become "Asian"' (1996, p. 9). By presenting firsthand accounts, Ip exposes the day-to-day difficulties in defining Chinese New Zealand identity.

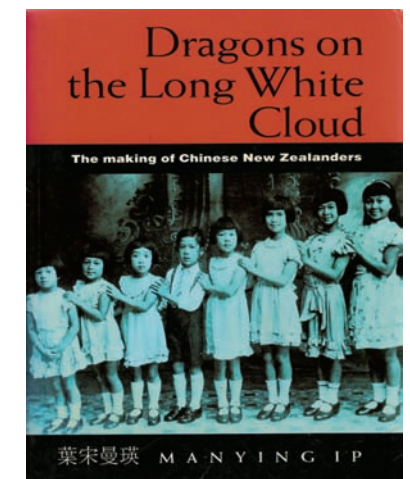


Figure 2. Manying Ip, *Dragons on the Long White Cloud: The Making of Chinese New Zealanders*, published in 1996

1.4 Telling Chinese Stories

You exist now today because of what's come before you and with that sense of celebration, inclusion and acknowledgement, you can really own who you are.

Lynda Chanwai-Earle (K.A.Lee, personal communication,
8 November 2007)

Like Chinese whispers Chinese stories shift over time as they get passed on. Details get lost in translation until present understandings of home and heritage are very different from those of our forbears. By telling stories, one can take ownership of their identity. Over the past two decades, Chinese stories located in New Zealand have been used to support historic, sociological and economic perspectives yet visual exploration into the same field of study is scant and underdeveloped. *Home Made* takes this opportunity to translate Chinese home stories through illustration design.

This chapter examines the value of self-reflection in storytelling to affirm identity through popular media. Contemporary storytellers like Roseanne Liang and Sonya Yee have each written, directed and performed in works that encapsulate first-hand tensions of living in between cultures in New Zealand through film and theatre respectively. *Banana in a Nutshell* (2005) documents Liang's quest for parental acceptance of her marriage to her Pakeha/European fiancé while Yee's solo performance *The Wholly Grain* which premiered at Bats Theatre in 2003, weaves Chinese myth

and legend into the story of a girl who explores her identity in contemporary New Zealand.

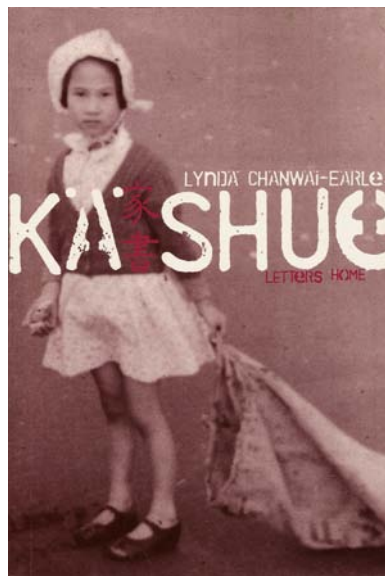


Figure 3. Lynda Chanwai-Earle, *Ka Shue (Letters Home)*, published in 1998

Playwright and multi-media performance artist Lynda Chanwai-Earle is another commentator who draws personal references to her work. Her one-woman play *Ka Shue (Letters Home)* (Figure 3) is credited as a break-through work that forged a space for Chinese New Zealand stories in mainstream theatre and performance. Premiering in 1996 at Circa Theatre, it has been widely performed both in New Zealand and overseas. Of Chinese and Pakeha/European heritage, Chanwai-Earle recalls:

'Research really opened my eyes to a whole buried history...it was a big gnarly topic but it was really important to try and tell these stories. Being Eurasian and (somewhat) on the outside of the Chinese community meant that I felt I could take more risks' (Chanwai-Earle, personal communication with K.A.Lee, 8 November 2007).

Following a similar path to Chanwai-Earle, *Home Made* also presents intergenerational Chinese stories grounded in historical research. *Ka Shue* conveys a sense of the immigrant's story. Chanwai-Earle infuses 'a hundred years of New Zealand and Chinese history with personal dramas of this family set against the backdrop of WWII and Tiananmen Square' (ibid, 2007). The title *Ka Shue*, means 'Home Book' which Chanwai-Earle explains were family albums that the immigrant Chinese prospectors used to bring to New Zealand with them. These books would hold all their letters, their photographs of their family and things meaningful to them from China. Chanwai-Earle translated it as 'Letters Home' to convey to European audiences a sense of great distances between China and New Zealand and letters between family. While *Ka Shue* captures the essence of homesickness, love and loss and yearning for a distant home (ibid, 2007), material evidence is collected and transformed in *Home Made* to reveal home as having long been made within New Zealand.

Referencing a collective history to tell Chinese stories raises issues of authenticity. This was discussed at the Banana Conference in Auckland in August 2007 where Chinese American author Frank Chin criticised the writers whom he regarded as 'Ornamental Orientals' whose work pandered to white audiences. Chanwai-Earle recalled a similar instance of hearing tales that reference personal history dismissed as 'Grandma revisited stories'. 'Fair enough,' says Chanwai-Earle, 'but that doesn't mean that Po-po (grandma) and Gong-gong (grandpa) stories are less pertinent, relevant and poignant' (ibid, 2007). Chanwai-Earle acknowledges that she writes in English for mainstream audiences and claims to speak 'yum char Cantonese' 'But...', she says:

'...It doesn't mean that I don't identify or feel emotionally engaged with stories from my Chinese heritage. I think that if you're looking at diasporic Chinese identity through your work it shouldn't matter what language it's in, it's the story that counts and the story that's universal' (ibid, 2007).

Ka Shue presented a dramatic interpretation of a Chinese New Zealand family history through one character. The success of Chanwai-Earle's work in reaching a wide audience through live performance also meant that her portrayal of plot, setting and characters was challenged to approach a sense of cultural authenticity. As an illustrated book where images take precedent, *Home Made* is supported by the text in the introduction and appendix to contextualise the themes explored in the work. Collaging scavenged 2D materials like packaging, photographs and found paper allows the freedom to explore stylistic trajectories to capture personal idiosyncrasies in settlement.

1.5 Picturing Chinese Settlement

I had to say that while I have a Chinese background, I don't speak a word of Chinese. In Sinocentric logic, I am a descendent of the Yellow Emperor who has gone too far astray and has been hopelessly decultured in the process.

len Ang (1996, p. 15)

Ang's statement captures a sense of ambiguity that second and third generation Chinese New Zealanders often feel towards their cultural heritage. Her response highlights the precarious nature of 'Chineseness' or claiming a Chinese identity when confronted by a mainland Chinese taxi driver asking where she was from followed by 'You are Chinese aren't you?' (Ang, 1996, p. 15) The Asian-Australian Professor argues that 'Chineseness' is not something that the mainland Chinese taxi driver needs 'to get used to', yet is a constant point of reflection for Chinese growing up as a minority group in the West. The idea is that if you look Chinese, you should be able to speak Chinese. If proven otherwise (as in Ang's case), one may be inclined to provide a lengthy explanation that challenges expectations of authenticity as discussed by Chanwai-Earle. It is natural for artists to refer to their cultural roots to tell stories, but in the case of Chinese New Zealanders, these root understandings have been complicated through 160 years of settlement in New Zealand. Artists with dual heritage can therefore use visual language to communicate difference by bringing a Chinese perspective on the everyday into the mainstream cultural forum of the gallery.

The work of Auckland artist Yuk King Tan belies a consciousness of her position of as

a Chinese New Zealander. Tan describes herself as straddling Chinese, New Asian and European family traditions: 'Concerning identity in my works, the thread that passes through them is that there is nothing sure or easy that can be said' (Farrar, 2006, p. 21). Tan's work questions whether it is possible to speak of the personal when identity itself is so fragmented and composed of more than one tradition or influence (Dale, 1996, p. 5). Hence Tan transcends the label of 'identity artist' to focus on contemporary relationships between capitalism and commodification of Chinese culture. By drawing upon wider issues, Tan offers a perspective on perceived differences in making home and transforming place (*Yuk King Tan, 1997–1998*) that comes from but is not exclusively about New Zealand.



Figure 4. Yuk King Tan, *Graft* (installation detail), 1994.
Heat transfer on silk, fans, hooks, stamp, dimensions variable.
Collection of Auckland Gallery Toi o Tamaki

As a sculptor, installation and video artist and image-maker, Tan's practice reflects the eclectic nature of the themes she explores in her work. Critic Tessa Laird describes Tan 'an ideas-trader who demands her audience to enter her world of transformation' (Yuk King Tan, 2002, p. 8). Tan lends the viewer a hand by ordering visual elements. For example, the grid of oriental fans in *Graft*, 1994 (Figure 4) provides a reassuring anchor as Tan uses laser printed segments of her face to consider the immigrant adrift in a sea of cultural displacement. (*Northern Exposure – Five Auckland Artists, 1995*)

In 1997 Yuk King Tan and fellow Chinese New Zealand artists Denise Kum and Luise Fong participated in an artist exchange project to Hong Kong called *Fusion*. Although the Hong Kong and New Zealand artists shared a heritage, each artist's work offered very different takes on 'Chineseness'. For instance, Denise Kum's practice is informed by her family's involvement with the Chinese food and restaurant industry. Kum often uses fluid synthetic materials and substances (oils, commercial lubricants and polymers) to expose cultural relationships, stressing that 'the aesthetic, the edible, the toxic, the industrial, the social, the cultural are all rampant and consumable in a processed reality' (Kum, 1995). This is evident in *Cupel* (Figure 5), an installation at the Govett Brewster Gallery in New Plymouth in 1995, which examined the contamination of cultural residue through illuminated glass and industrial lubricant. Bhabha's third space is encapsulated in Luise Fong's exploration of the cosmic void. In a large canvas like *Element I*, 1999 (Figure 6), Fong's cultural space is also constantly in flux where painted surfaces reveal macroscopic and microscopic worlds in 'a universe that expands with possibility' (Milburn, 1999, p. 10).



Figure 5. Denise Kum, *Cupel*, 1995.
Glass, ethylene, vinyl acetate, cupping glasses, industrial dye, pearlescent pigments, petrolatum, light bulbs, electrical fittings, installed dimensions 3580 mm x 3200 mm

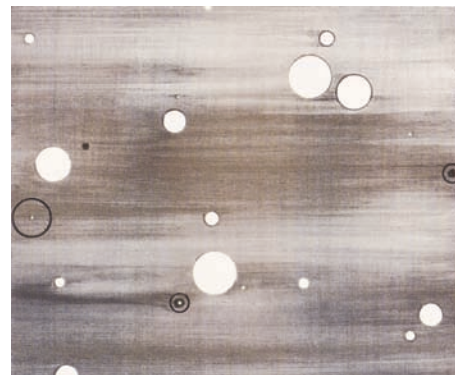


Figure 6. Luise Fong, *Element I*, 1999.
Mixed media on board

Professor Wang Gungwu's comment that those 'too western to be comfortably Chinese and too Chinese to accept conditions where Chineseness is being penalised' applies to Chinese New Zealanders (Wang, cited in Ang, 1996, p. 15). Ang states that efforts to shift from the ambivalent position of identifying as 'neither' (Chinese), 'nor' (New Zealander), towards valuing difference to use conjunctions 'both' as well as 'and', are a source of anxiety as well as creativity that Tan and other artists of Chinese descent explore through their practice (ibid p. 15).

This thesis interrogates such tensions by transforming visual and material evidence of Chinese identity in New Zealand. *Home Made* structures complex information to

bridge worlds exclusively through illustration design. While Yuk King Tan transfers one country's commercial debris into another country's high art in a gallery space, *Home Made* adopts the book a space for critical discourse, using cultural signifiers as visual metaphors that are both specific and universal.

1.6 Design Authorship

The designer lives a 'karaoke existence', always singing someone else's song and never saying what he thinks should be said.

Bruce Mau (Novosedlik, 1994, p. 45)

Canadian designer Bruce Mau describes the way the design practitioner assumes a minor voice in the undercurrent of commercial agenda to remind designers that content is no longer necessarily outside the realm of design practice (ibid, p. 45). To adopt the role of author is to assume a position of authority. In his essay *The designer as author*, Michael Rock (1996) attempts to demystify the idea of authorship in design by suggesting that the longing for graphic authorship is the longing for legitimacy of power (p. 53).

Rock suggests that forms of self-publication like artists' books activate a form of agency. Free from commercial restraints, artists' books can be viewed as an alternative space for authorship that allows room for self-reflection and visual experimentation. *Fortune's Daughter: An Allegory of Prosperity* by Mark Wagner, 2005 (Figure 7) is an artists' book featuring a giant illustrated poster of a woman created out of '200 US dollar bills cut into 12390 pieces, collaged in 446 hours in 2005, reduced to 0.4375 scale' and folded down to mimic the dimensions of a US dollar note. This work documents the creative process of transformation as much as it is a social commentary on transfiguration through money. Using text, image and materials to tell a story or invoke an emotion, Rock argues that artists' books could be 'the purist form of graphic authorship' (1996, p. 49). Rock insists that the illustrated book popularised by artist-illustrators like Sue Coe and Charles Burns, is often overlooked by the design community yet is almost entirely concerned with the generation of creative narrative. Lauf and Phillpot (1998) concur saying of books that are 'predominantly visual often carry words along very effectively like flotsam on a tide of images' (p. 53).



Figure 7. Mark Wagner, *Fortune's Daughter – An allegory of prosperity*, No. 128 of 500, 2005. Digital print of collage and letterpress cover, 95 x 185mm folded and 360mm x 880mm poster

Like its artists' book precedents, *Home Made* is a visual argument in illustrated book form. Drucker considers the book to be a space to reveal and document (personal) identity (2004). As an artist book it is self-referential in using of found materials of personal significance in the image-making process whilst communication objectives require the content to be structured in a graphic sequence. With both poetic and practical concerns in the hands of the illustrator, *Home Made* operates as an alternative site for storytelling.

2. RESEARCH AIMS

This research through design project aims to challenge long-held myths and stereotypes about Chinese in New Zealand by arguing for the longevity of Chinese settlement. *Home Made* gives agency for a local Chinese community to realign fact with fiction. The work aims to make visible a spectrum of historic and contemporary experiences in the space between Pakeha and Chinese culture that has often been overshadowed by colonial settler history.

The thesis seeks to affirm the critical role of the designer as author to deliver both a visual and textual argument. Media theorist and activist Geert Lovink calls for the creation of holes in the media system to allow alternative storytelling to emerge (2003). This work intends to highlight the potential for design authorship to communicate personal nuances inherent within a community history.

Another aim of the project is to contribute to the existing body of research on the thesis topic through design. *Home Made* looks to function as a repository of knowledge with the potential to extend beyond the community to encourage further critical discussion on Cantonese Diaspora and Chinese New Zealand identity.

The work seeks to enrich private and public understandings of home for New Zealanders of Cantonese Chinese descent. The label 'banana' is assigned to Western Chinese to describe a sense of in-between-ness as being yellow on the outside, white on the inside – a metaphor alluding to the divisions in culture, one masked within the other. The research attempts to challenge such labels by presenting new metaphors to expand the definition of Chinese New Zealander.

3. METHODS AND PROCESSES

3.1 Research through Design

Design is an effective method of research as it employs visual language with the express purpose of generating new perspectives. For this thesis, the illustrator assumes the role of the author who is essentially concerned with drawing expressive relationships between text and image to communicate a range of historic and contemporary experiences. Various illustrative approaches involving collage feature throughout *Home Made* to respond to the diverse content and highlight the currency of the handcrafted image in storytelling. *Home Made* argues for visibility and longevity of Chinese settlement in New Zealand primarily through use of visual metaphor.

3.2 Visual Metaphor as Argument

The key metaphors appearing in *Home Made*, gold, the bowl and the lantern, are significant for Chinese in settlement and are crucial to structuring the textual and visual work in the book. As a set of symbolic motifs, they frame a chronology of Chinese settlement in New Zealand. Gold brought Chinese to this country in the 1860s, the bowl represents Chinese families making home in the 1950s, while the lantern evokes a Chinese presence.

Gold, bowl, lantern reoccur throughout the book with multiple identities and meanings. The ubiquity of these Chinese motifs enables the illustrator-author flexibility to shift their roles from personal to public signifiers. In *Home Made* they are sometimes focal points used to punctuate a moment, echo quietly in the background or in some instances change form completely to suit the context of the story being told. By unifying a collection of loosely connected moments, these motifs assert a longstanding occupation and celebrate differences of cultural experience within Cantonese Chinese settlement.

3.3 Collage as Order

Collage is the primary illustration technique used in *Home Made*. As a medium that readily deals with synthesis and hybridity, collage was a sympathetic choice by which to explore constructing identity. Collage can be a compelling means of

developing new associations through the conflation of seemingly disparate elements. Two-dimensional graphic ephemera is reconfigured in *Home Made* to reveal new visual evidence of a Chinese existence in New Zealand. Through this method, the compositions have occurred as a result of both carefully planning and playful invention.

3.4 Collecting

Gathering relevant visual and textual material pertaining to Chinese home and settlement in New Zealand was essential to the creative process. Much of the materials selected for use in the collage illustrations held personal significance and included artefacts like colour-copies of photographs, postcards, food and toy packages, newspaper clippings, Chinese cookbooks, children's reading primers, decorative designs on crockery, wallpaper, and calendars most of which were found within the family home. This visual research grew to include Chinese poems, proverbs, superstitions, stories, historical photographs and newspaper reports relating to Chinese in Wellington and New Zealand. The appendix of *Home Made* is labelled 'the storeroom' and carries notes on the raw materials used in each illustration.

Direct experiences gleaned from interviews with members of the local Chinese community also informed the process of developing supporting text. Community participation through these conversations was valuable in activating a social presence for the project. Unseen moments were revealed as people shared their point of view. Details of these interviews are recorded in *appendix (i)* of this exegesis.

3.5 Paper Cutting

Decorative paper-cuttings carry symbolic value in Chinese culture and feature throughout the book. The versatility of paper, its ready availability and the ease with which it can be cut encourages quick spontaneous expressions (Minick & Ping, 1996, p. 54). Decoration is a means of demarcating home space. Paper-cut charms conveying folk tales or symbols of good fortune and protection from evil spirits, were offered to ancestors or placed around the house to celebrate festivals, holidays, births, deaths and marriages. However for traditions to survive they need to allow room for interpretation.

With many design motifs collectively inherited and the makers uncredited, paper-cuttings were dismissed as ‘folkloric’ and were not recognised as a contemporary form of creative expression by art critics and historians until recent re-appraisal of folk forms, supported by writers like Bhabha, insisted that innovation still occurs within traditional art practice (Seear, 2006, p. 122).



Figure 8. Various Artists, *The Great Survey of Paper-cuttings in Yanchuan County*, 2004

An example of this repositioning is *The Great Survey of Paper-cuttings in Yanchuan County* (Figure 8), which was part of the *Long March Project* in 2004. Billed as an ‘exhibition about exhibitions’ Chinese and international artists retraced the route of the historic Long March by creating, displaying and debating work outside of conventional gallery spaces and into remote rural villages (Lu & Qiu, 2003). In the survey, paper-cuttings made by 15,006 individuals from the Shaanxi Province were collected displayed and archived to sanction the works to be viewed as art. The paper cuttings in *Home Made* reclaim this domestic craft tradition to bridge individual expression with a collective inheritance.

3.6 Painted Imposition

While the cut-paper collage elements in the illustrations capture glimpses of the real world in *Home Made*, painted figures, texture, motifs and hand-lettered script in watercolour, gouache and ink reveals the illustrator’s hand in authoring the story. The process of affecting surfaces with paint in some of the illustrations establishes a visual hierarchy of foreground and background elements. In instances like *Lucky Gold Mountain Takeaways* (Figure 24), paint is stained into newspaper in the background and built overtop of with collage, while gouache painted motifs are directly ‘written over’ the surface of the found print in *Blue Willow Landscape* (Figure 13) to reveal

incongruous impressions of land.

4. HOME MADE ARTIFACTS

Gold, the bowl and the lantern are central metaphors for Chinese New Zealand identity. Located between home and enterprise, the motifs transport food, language and customs from one generation to the next. They are brought out from backrooms and kitchens as material evidence of a private world within the margins of society. They condense distances between a migrant heritage from Southern China and the present realities of Chinese New Zealanders. Each of these metaphors embodies aspects of a contemporary Chinese New Zealand identity, while collectively representing both the boon and burden of settlement – a yearning to retain Chinese culture and customs as well as forging a comfortable place in Kiwi society.

4.1 Gold

Gold was responsible for dislocating the Chinese from their homeland in Canton, China and bringing the Cantonese Diaspora to New Zealand. It was the primary agent for the transformation of Chinese as sojourner to settler. The extraction of gold shaped early impressions of land and home in New Zealand and created a rift between early settlers. Its economic value and cultural currency fuelled hostility towards Chinese in settlement. The text in this first section of *Home Made* features poems and historical third-hand accounts written about but seldom by the Chinese. For Chinese, gold created the longing for a distant home against the reality of a new one.

THE NEW GOLD MOUNTAIN

It's been here all this time, waiting for us!

Chan, *Illustrious Energy* (1987)

Chinese were ‘essential outsiders’ in the colonial visions of early New Zealand (M. Ip, Murphy, N., 2005). The arrival of the Chinese in New Zealand occurred during the first wave of colonization in the mid-nineteenth century. During this period British immigrants escaped over-crowded, industrialized cities and traveled to New Zealand with dreams of an antipodean paradise. Majestic landscapes produced by colonial

painters and Charles Blomfield, William George Baker and John Gully (Figure 9) captured the awe and splendor of what Prime Minister Richard Seddon (1845–1906) called ‘God’s Own Country’ (Elli, 1994). The absence of the figure and dramatic contrasts of light and scale captured in these works inspired colonial notions of New Zealand as an *imagined* land.



Figure 9. John Gully, *The Chimney, Milford Sound*, 1878. Watercolour on paper, 362 x 540 mm. Auckland City Art Gallery

These colonial landscapes supported the myth of New Zealand as unspoiled fertile terrain. British and European colonists saw New Zealand as the ideal place to raise sheep and family. Promoted by Edward Gibbon Wakefield’s New Zealand Company, this myth would feed a national obsession of framing, dividing and contesting land. Maori were already settled in New Zealand, however rapid colonization following the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi between Maori and the British Crown in 1840 heralded the loss of Maori land and culture. While this thesis focuses on relationships between Chinese and Pakeha/European colonial history, Chinese also have a relationship with Maori that relates to longevity in settlement. A good discussion on the topic is Jenny Bol Jun Lee’s essay *Eating Pork Bones and Puha with Chopsticks* (2003) which also screened as a documentary on Maori TV in 2007. Lee focuses on the Maori-Chinese community that grew from the South Auckland market gardens during the 1920s despite disapproval from Chinese, Maori and Europeans.

The Chinese also viewed New Zealand as a land of possibilities. Gold fuelled the imaginations of the first settlers to New Zealand. Seen as an attractive place for prospecting, New Zealand became known as *Sun Gum Saan*, the ‘New Gold Mountain’ after the original *Gum Saan* in California. In 1861, the first gold mining expedition arrived upon an invitation from the Otago Provincial Council formalising the arrival of Chinese on New Zealand soil. English translations of the names of

some of the early Chinese settlers such as ‘Rich Treasure’, ‘Perfect Man’ and ‘Cousin of the Moon’ recorded in Peter Butler’s *Opium and Gold: A history of the Chinese Goldminers in New Zealand* (1977) reveal the virtues of early Chinese who arrived here with dreams of the New Gold Mountain. Another evocative portrayal of these early settlers is *Illustrious Energy/Dreams of Home* (1987) directed by Leon Narbey (Figure 10). The story focuses on Chan (Shaun Bao) and his father-in-law Kim (Harry Ip) who have remained in the Central Otago goldfields at the end of the gold rush in 1895 living on the hope of striking it rich. Chan’s dreams of gold are fed by his desire to return back to China to be with his family while those of the old man have faded and wishes only to make passage home.

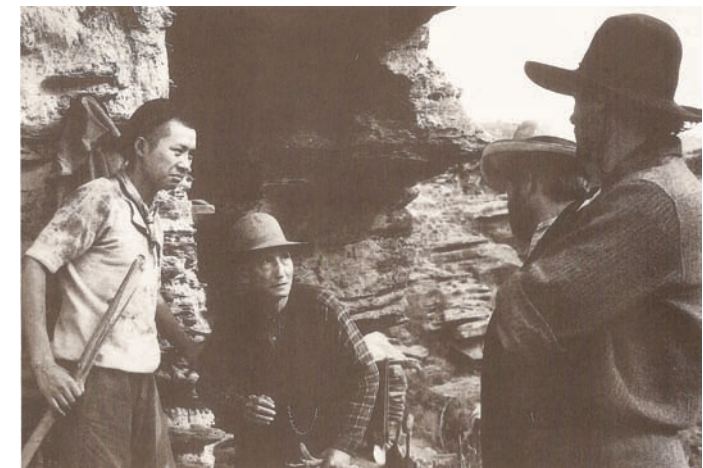


Figure 10. *Illustrious Energy/Dreams of Home*, starring Shaun Bao, Harry Ip and Peter Chin. Leon Narbey (Director), 1987

Home Made explores the notion of imagined land. The first illustration, *Dream of the Skyland* (Figure 11) follows Chinese photographer and printmaker Hong Hao’s process of reconfiguring existing representations into elaborate maps of new worlds. Hong’s *New World Map* series, 1997 (Figure 12) investigates the presentation of historic material through a series of trompe-l’oeil renderings of atlases and encyclopaedias

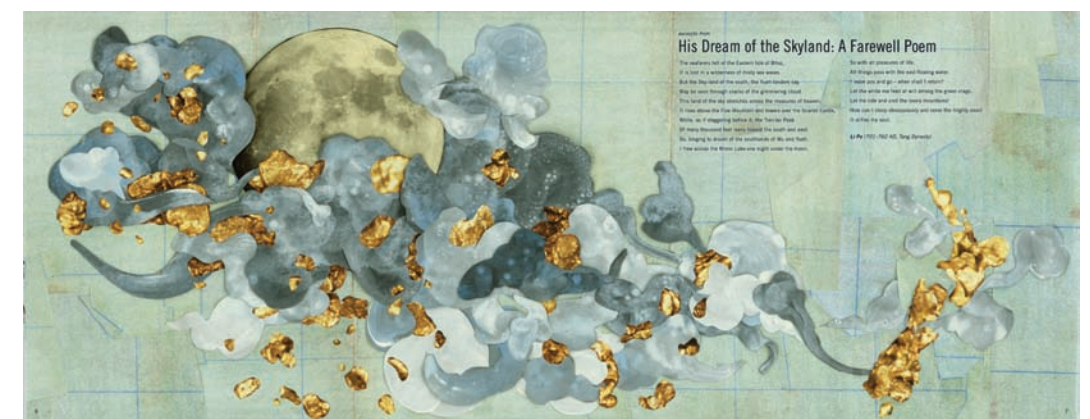


Figure 11. Kerry Ann Lee, *Dream of the Skyland*, 2007. Mixed media collage on paper, 220 x 525mm

crafted over a decade. Featuring First World countries in one image and resizing countries according to their military capacity in another, Hong seeks to reshuffle various aspects of culture to effectively dissolve boundaries and meanings (Seear, 2006, p. 114).



Figure 12. Hong Hao, *New World Map* series, 1997
Print, Collection: The artist, image courtesy: Long March Project, Beijing

The *Skyland* illustration is a new form of treasure map whereby a grid from an existing map is reconstituted into a sea/skyscape. Clouds often appear in traditional Chinese landscape paintings to symbolise good fortune, especially when painted with more than one colour. The illustration references the 'land of the long white cloud', the popular translation of Aotearoa, the Maori name for New Zealand. After hiding contours of the coastline of Aotearoa in the book's endpapers, clouds feature in *Skyland* to reveal the 'New Gold Mountain'. Illustrated in a style that captures the romance of Tang Dynasty poet Li Po's writing, the painted cloudscape conceals the miner's homeland of China represented by the moon. Known to the West in the nineteenth century as the 'Celestial Kingdom', it was left behind to travel to an imagined place.

The blue willow pattern illustrates an imagined Chinese place. In *Blue Willow Landscape* (Figure 13) reclaims the pattern by painting over top of an early impression of New Zealand by colonial painter Charles Bloomfield. The pattern is a well-known example of Chinoiserie design. Stemming from the Orientalist tradition, Chinoiserie is an 'imperfect romantic understanding' of Eastern aesthetic catering for European demand for authentic Oriental art objects during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Ma, 1999, p. 205). Originating from the Caughley Porcelain Factory in Shropshire around 1780, blue willow crockery became widely distributed throughout England and brought over to New Zealand by British immigrants. Two representations occupy the same space in the illustration to announce different

cultural understandings of land.

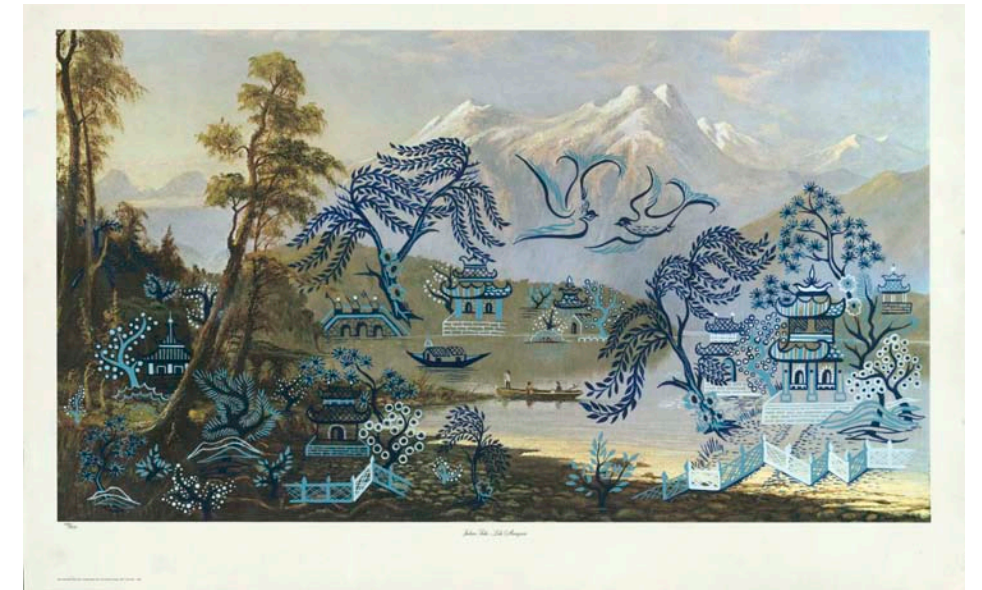


Figure 13. Kerry Ann Lee, *Blue Willow Landscape*, 2007. Painting on found Lithoprint of *Jackson Peaks, Lake Manapouri* by Charles Blomfield (1912), 550 x 880 mm

GILDED FRAMES

Gold was responsible for creating the third space between Chinese and New Zealand culture. In his key work *The Location of Culture* (1994), Bhabha theorises culture as complex intersections of multi-layered, historic temporalities and subject positions. Bhabha considers cultural differences resulting from displacement, dislocation or relocation are significant in generating constructs of cultural and national identity (cited in Mitchell, 1995). The Chinese did not arrive as adventures, refugees, or colonists but as labourers with the goal of finding gold and returning home to China (Ng, 1993–1999). The first Chinese immigrants were initially rural farmers from Canton with no experience in mining and were bound by imperial edicts and Confucian filial piety (of remaining in the land of one's ancestors). Famine, poverty, overpopulation and clan warfare resulting from the breakdown of the Qing Dynasty during the Opium Wars (1839–42 and 1856–60) drove these men to leave their ploughs and sickles behind in the southern province of Canton and head towards the gold fields around the Pacific rim.

Framing of location is a method of selective inclusion and exclusion. In *Tui's Speech* (Figure 14), a decorative Chinese paper-cut is laid overtop found black and white photographs of a stark empty shoreline. Strong juxtapositions occur upon arrival where Chinese were viewed as strangers in a strange land. The tui has many



Figure 14. Kerry Ann Lee, *Tui's Speech*, 2007.
Digital illustration. Paper-cut over found photograph, 270 x 410 mm

questions for the swallow in this closely framed dialogue. The 'double happiness' symbol featured in this paper-cut is often used in weddings for prospective harmony in union. In *Sun Gum Saan* (Figure 15), the gold mountain destination lies in the distance through a porthole framed by Chinese details. Circular motifs are repeated in the image. The gold pan/wok on the left holds an abundance of flowers in memory of home, gold coins for luck.



Figure 15. Kerry Ann Lee, *Sun Gum Saan*, 2007.
Mixed media collage on paper made from a soya sauce label, 270 mm x 420 mm

The first Chinese arrived in New Zealand with customs to safeguard their dreams of gold. On pages 12 – 13 of the book (Figure 16), the moon and clouds form the halo of Chang-O, the moon goddess and her pet rabbit that feature in popular Chinese legend. In the illustration Chang-O observes paper sailboats made from folded 'Hell

Bank notes' representing sacrifice in travelling long distances. A customary practice of the first Chinese settlers was the exhumation and repatriation of the remains of Chinese goldminers back to China for burial. The painting *SS Ventnor* (Figure 17), illustrates the story of the sinking of the Chinese burial ship *SS Ventnor* off the Hokianga Heads in 1902 to reflect upon loss through transition and a permanent state of in-between-ness. The search for bones in limbo at the bottom of the sea becomes a metaphor for a longing and subsequent failure to return home.



Figure 16. Kerry Ann Lee, *Chang-O*, 2007. Mixed media collage on paper, 270 x 420 mm



Figure 17. Kerry Ann Lee, *SS Ventnor*, 2007.
Painting over colour laser copy on paper, 235 x 350 mm



Figure 18. Richard Goodall, *The Yellow Peril*, published in the *New Zealand Truth*, 16 February 1907. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand, N-P982-5.

ALIENS IN AN IMAGINED LAND

The competition for gold between early settlers fuelled racial discrimination towards the Chinese who were regarded as unwanted aliens (M. Ip, Murphy, N., 2005). Cantonese goldminers became economic competitors. Working longer hours for less pay undercut European labourers and led to sinister stereotypes about the heathen Chinaman who would

happily 'live on the smell of an oily rag' (M. Ip, Murphy, N., 2005, p. 109). Bhabha (1994) draws attention to notion of 'colonial truth' whereby those within dominant culture assume the role of narrator to define and shape historical events to the point where they approach myth, fiction or 'colonial-nonsense' (p. 123). Through this definition, myth is adopted as cultural truth to simplify face-to-face negotiations with the other. This was true of the world of early Chinese migrants who were subject to harsh lessons of settlement in the new British colony, echoing the hostility encountered in the US and Australia.

Aliens at My Table – Asians as New Zealanders see them by Manying Ip and Nigel Murphy (2005) interrogates prevailing attitudes towards Chinese in New Zealand through racist stereotype reflected in newspaper cartoons of the past 140 years (p. 17). A well-known example featured is Richard Goodall's 'Yellow Peril Octopus' published in the *New Zealand Truth* in 1907 (Figure 18). This illustration not only depicted of Chinese as monsters but also exploited image of the Maori maiden as symbol of New Zealand nationhood by the Anti-Chinese movement at the turn of last century.

Ip and Murphy argue that 'blind spots' and anxieties towards Chinese stemmed from a national insecurity of the country's struggle to forge a new 'white' colonial identity as Mother England's 'backyard farm' up until the 1970's, and that this world view has affected contemporary attitudes towards non-British immigrants (2005, p. 27). In their scrutiny of racist legislation, Ip and Murphy critique New Zealand's label

as an 'immigrant nation' highlighting the ignorance towards old and new Chinese migrants in the 1990s as a hangover from this colonial dream. These drawings are examples of colonial mechanisms that disrupt settlement. In casting Chinese as 'undesirable aliens', they served as propaganda warning the public that Chinese were not welcome to settle in New Zealand.

PROTECTING SETTLEMENT

Gold financially assisted assimilation and eventually became a marker of successful settlement for the Chinese in colonial New Zealand. In *Windows on A Chinese Past* (1993–1999) James Ng discloses the legacy of gold in establishing the Chinese in New Zealand. Spanning a quarter-century of research this history of Chinese settlement in New Zealand from the 1800s until the 1990s has provided a wealth of knowledge to support this thesis.



Figure 19. Kerry Ann Lee, *Pioneers*, 2007. Watercolour painting and digital illustration, 270 x 700 mm

Concentrating on the gold mining era in Otago, Southland and the West Coast, Ng shows how the early pioneers transformed gold into capital for land and enterprise. Charles Sew Hoy, Sam Chew Lain and Chew Chong represent an almost a fabled claim to fame as Chinese businessmen against the backdrop of colonial New Zealand, but as early settlers they have been omitted from popular history. In *Home Made*, the images of these pioneers (Figure 19) reference colonial portraiture and are painted in full-colour and framed against the fabric of the land to even the odds.

Regardless of these achievements, the New Zealand government reminded Chinese that they were only over here for economic reasons and exclusively penalised them for settling in the country by introducing the £100 poll tax in 1881. Premier Richard

Seddon was also well known for his hostility to Chinese immigration. His campaign against the 'Yellow Peril' was an important part of his populist rhetoric. While Seddon was credited for establishing this country's welfare state with his Old-age Pensions Act in 1898, Chinese settlers were denied pensions, and were later barred from naturalisation and thumb-printed upon entering the country. Chinese paper-cut charms crafted from old Golden Kiwi lottery tickets feature on pages 20 – 21 of the book (Figure 20). Used as symbols of protection and prosperity, these charms speak of the value of money and chance in the lives of early settlers. Gold fortified settlement. After paying the poll tax, profits made in the gold fields were sent back to families in China, used to make passage home, and supported chain migration back to New Zealand.



Figure 20. Kerry Ann Lee, *Charms*, 2007. Paper cuts made from old lottery tickets, 270 x 700 mm

4.2 The Bowl

Despite social exclusion, gold helped the Chinese to be self-sufficient in New Zealand. Chinese market gardens and café-restaurant-takeaways became realisations of Gold Mountain dreams. In the second section of *Home Made*, the bowl moves through two worlds represented by the front counter and backroom of a café-takeaway. Food is the new currency to consolidate relationships in settlement, serving both paid customers and family members. In its unassuming practicality the bowl represents the model minority, silent and compliant. This section features firsthand interviews

with people who were involved in establishing the Chinese food and restaurant industry in Wellington. *Home Made* offers their side of the story.

CONTAINING CULTURE

The bowl is a metaphor for Chinatown. A Chinatown is a site of permanent settlement for Chinese in the West. As an enclave located outside of dominant white culture, the inhabitants of Chinatown have always been socially and culturally construed as the other (A. W. Lee, 2001). Chinese sojourners brought the bowl with them across the Pacific to establish the first Chinatowns in the United States, South America, Canada and Australia during the mid-1800s. San Francisco Chinatown (the largest outside China) was formed in the 1850s by Chinese who arrived during the California gold rush and the construction of the transcontinental railroad and has significantly influenced cultural perceptions of western Chinatowns. K. Scott Wong (1995) claims that Chinatown was an imagined place. In his essay *Chinatown: Conflicting Images & Contested Terrain* he argues that San Francisco's Chinatown was a site of negotiation and definition whereby the negative images revealed more about the attitudes of the observers than the observed (K. S. Wong, 1995). Inhabitants of Chinatown were caught between discrimination from US Nationals and visiting Chinese Nationals who questioned Chinatown's authenticity and wished to distance themselves from its inhabitants. These settlers had strayed too far from home and thus became foreign in the eyes of the Chinese Nationals.

Chinatown has held appeal as a fictionalised outpost of ancient China. Edward Said describes Orientalism as the intellectual authority over the Orient within Western culture, or in the words of VG Kiernan, 'Europe's collective daydream of the Orient' (cited in Said, 1995, p. 52). The Orientalist according to Said, attempts to domesticate the exotic from outside the Oriental experience (1995, p. 60). Historian Raymond Rast reflects on the Orientalist's viewpoint quoting *The Third Circle*, a novel by writer Frank Norris: 'In reality, there are three parts of Chinatown – the part the guides show you, the parts the guides don't show you, and the part that no one ever hears of' (Norris, 1897, cited in Rast, 2007, p. 29). Rast argues that both White and Chinese San Franciscans exploited Chinatown's exotic reputation, staging acts of depravity to feed tourists obsession for a taste of authentic Chinese culture (2007). The fleeting visitor can safely experience the Orient in this way through superficial engagement of stereotypic representations. Describing Chinatown as an 'anti-modern' refuge for

the bohemian flaneur seeking 'alternative underground experiences', Rast claims that in seeking exotic activity with Chinatown, Western visitors affirmed notions of Chinese American 'otherness' (2007).

Chinatown was mythologised through these distorted perceptions essentially shaped by outside forces. Minh-ha states that 'Myths circulate like gifts without givers, and no myth teller (cares to) knows where they come from or who invented them. Whatever their real origins, they exist only in traditions' (1989, pp. 61-62). Negative and stereotypic images of lecherous Chinese men, gambling and opium dens evolved into a template that influenced public perceptions of Chinese spaces in the West, including New Zealand.



Figure 21. Haining Street, published in *New Zealand Mail*, 17 August 1904, p46. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand, C12470.

THE BOWL AS AN ENCLAVE

In New Zealand, the bowl is a metaphor for Haining Street (Figure 21), which was the centre of Wellington's unofficial Chinatown from the late nineteenth century up until the mid-twentieth century. Few traces remain of Wellington's original Chinese quarter after its demolition in the 1960s. Fictions overshadow the day-to-day realities of the street. In *Remembering Chinatown*, Lynette Shum (2003) pitches reality against reputation. Through oral history research, Shum attempts to reveal Haining Street was once a real home space – a place to eat, shop and stay (Shum, 2003). Haining Street was the first place in Wellington to find Chinese food and was locally known as *Tong Yan Gaa* or 'Chinese People Street' (p. 73). This term is also globally understood as the Cantonese colloquialism for 'Chinatown'.

Shum (2003) argues that Haining Street symbolised the Yellow Peril, a fear born of the times serving to unite white New Zealanders of European descent (p. 76). The presence of Chinese was feared to corrupt the city. A headline published in the *NZ Times* in 1896 declared, 'WELLINGTON'S CHINATOWN. Plague Spots of Asiatic Vice in our Midst. DIRT, OPIUM, SMOKE and VEGETABLES. What a New Zealand Times Reporter Saw on a Midnight Round' (Shum, 2003, p. 79). This reflected the popular sentiment towards Chinese immigrants as 'unwelcomed others'. Haining Street became the scene of the indiscriminate murder of retired miner Joe Kum Yung in 1905 by Anti-Asiatic crusader Lionel Terry. By 1911 it was reputedly 'the most notorious slum area in New Zealand' according to the *Auckland Weekly News* (Shum, 2003, p. 75). Shum's interview with David Patterson, who policed the area in the 1930s and 40s revealed that Haining Street was frequently subjected to sensationalised media reportage (Patterson, 1994, cited in Shum, 2003).

Chinatowns can be found in major urban centres around the world with the notable exception of New Zealand. Chinese in New Zealand bypassed the need to maintain a Chinatown through steady assimilation into mainstream Kiwi society. However this created a unique situation



Figure 22. Shanghai Café, Courtenay Place, circa. 1980s. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand, PA Coll-6624-01.

in establishing marginal visibility in the city. Lanterns, banners and signage typical to a Chinatown were stylistically mimicked in the interiors and exteriors of Chinese restaurants, like the ornate façade of the old Shanghai Café in Courtenay Place (Figure 22) to offer a commodified cultural experience in New Zealand.

MODEL MINORITY

The bowl offers economic security as it establishes public relationships functioning inside businesses like restaurants, cafes and takeaways. The bowl presents aspects of Chinese culture and cuisine that are appreciated under fixed commercial conditions. Dishes are often cheap, transactions are quick and food is plentiful and tailored to suit

Western palates. Courtenay Place assumed the role of Chinatown, with decorative frontages of restaurants appearing somewhat exotic against the quaint backdrop of 1950s Wellington as illustrated on pages 24 – 25 (Figure 23). The painted clouds have transformed into plumes of smoke or steam from the Chinese establishments filling the street with stories of Chinese settlement in the city.



Figure 23. Kerry Ann Lee, *Restaurants*, 2007. Mixed media collage on card, 300 x 745 mm

The bowl supported the stereotype of the hard-working model minority. Bevan Yee (2003) deconstructs this much-lauded image of Chinese New Zealanders. He claims that the model minority myth perpetuates the ideal for many second-generation families namely, that education and hard work are the means to escape the discrimination and cultural alienation endured by previous generations. Some Chinese still feel cautious not to stand out. Yee employs psychological analysis to explore the various coping strategies Chinese people use to deal with discrimination, social inclusion and assimilation within New Zealand society. He argues that presenting a quiet and inoffensive front as the model minority is necessary for enhancing security against social stigma (Yee, p. 232).

Others have argued that food changed attitudes towards Chinese (K. Chan, personal communication with K.A.Lee, 19 November 2007). The first Chinese restaurants introduced a new vocabulary of tastes to Wellington in the 1950s that would become a cultural cliché towards the end of the century. Marshall McLuhan describes a cliché as a 'ditto device' that survives long after the conditions that produce them are dead (cited in Fletcher, 2001, p. 202). The popularity of fish and chips and abundance of cheap fast food ensures a place for the local Chinese Takeaway in kiwi society. The gold pieces from the *Skyland* illustration (Figure 11) reappear as golden potato chips on top of a Chinese New Zealand newspaper in the fictional *Lucky Gold Mountain Takeaways* (Figure 24). This image is a snapshot of settlement before and after,

whereby the early Chinese goldminers' dreams of gold and home are transplanted into the familiar local Chinese Takeaway, which often assume prosperous names in Wellington like 'The Golden Wok', 'New Dynasty', or the 'Gold Coin Café'.



Figure 24. Kerry Ann Lee, *Lucky Gold Mountain Takeaways*, 2007. Mixed media collage on newspaper, 310 x 400 mm

THE BOWL AS BURIED TREASURE

The bowl can be viewed as a hidden treasure. The diorama pictured (Figure 25) features a small green rice bowl that had been in New Zealand since the restaurant boom in the 1950s. In contrast to the decorative blue willow plate pattern, the simple unembellished surface of the bowl spoke volumes. At face value, the bowl is a practical object, yet the very nature of its history, purpose and location alludes to a



Figure 25. Kerry Ann Lee, *Goldminers*, 2007. Bowl, plastic rice, fool's gold, plastic model miniatures, paint. 80 x 130 x 130 mm



Figure 26. Hong Hao, *Long March in Panjiayuan A and B*, 2004.
Type C photograph, ed. 1/9, 127 x 230 cm, Collection: Queensland Art Gallery

greater unseen cultural value.

Hong Hao's images feature objects with a non-assigned value that float between treasure and trash. By flooding our periphery with clusters of everyday things, the viewer relies upon the artist's conscious ordering of subject matter to make sense of the deluge of artefacts. *My Things* was a personal project initiated by Hong in 2002. Thousands of ordinary objects from Hong's life – medicine packets, tubes of paint, bottles, utensils, postcards, some representing over twenty years of hoarding – were digitally scanned at 1:1 scale and arranged in a grid according to colour, size or shape. These micro universes resembling satellite photos offer an intimate glimpse into the domestic life of the artist and a snapshot of contemporary China through an overwhelming caché of evidence.

Hong comments further on the flexibility of assigned cultural value in two large digital images, *Long March in Panjiayuan A* and *Long March in Panjiayuan B* created for the Long March Project in 2004 (Figure 26). Portraits of Chairman Mao, *The Little Red Book*, badges, postage stamps and ephemera sold as tourist trinkets were collected

at the Panjiayuan outdoor markets in Beijing. Hong then arranged and documented this memorabilia and commemorative propaganda as a huge photographic survey, exposing yesterday's emblems of heroes and collective ideologies as junk in today's flea markets.

The bowl is a cultural signifier that is stored in the backroom of a Chinese restaurant. This hidden space is furnished with mementos of home: Chinese calendars, lucky banners and letters from relatives overseas. A true tale of hidden treasure is the *Lucky Duck* story (Figure 27), which was uncovered whilst researching this topic. The *Evening Post* reported the surprise discovery of gold pieces inside a duck at a local Chinese restaurant in 1950. The tale is like an urban myth and is embedded into a wallpaper design depicting Chinese legends, where the moon goddess Chang-O reappears holding a ladle and hiding pre-chipped potatoes up her sleeves.



Figure 27. Kerry Ann Lee, *Lucky Duck*, 2007.
Mixed media collage on found wallpaper, 490 x 525 mm

THE KITCHEN IS THE CENTRE OF THE UNIVERSE

It was not uncommon for Chinese families to live above the workplace. According to Yi Fu Tuan (2004), home is a place that offers security, familiarity and nurture. 'Home

that can be directly experienced not just seen but heard smelled and touched, is necessarily a small and intimate world', says Tuan. 'It is this direct experience that gives home its power to elicit strong emotional response' (pp. 164-165). This rich evocation is captured in a poem by Alison Wong (2006). In *there is always something to come back to the kitchen for*, she describes the kitchen as the centre of the universe. The illustration on pages 30 – 31 (Figure 28) tells of generations of Chinese children playing upstairs, out the back, helping in the shop, and growing up eating Weet-bix for breakfast and fried rice for tea.



Figure 28. Kerry Ann Lee, *Kitchen Universe*, 2007. Mixed media collage on funerary papers, 270 x 700 mm



Figure 29. Kerry Ann Lee, *Ingredients*, 2007. Digital collage, 270 x 700 mm

The bowl locates traditions inherited from ancestors within the private home sphere. The home kitchen is where children learn to use chopsticks with the bowl and recall the names for food and ingredients like *jook*, *woo tie* and *mong ai*, not immediately recognisable to Westerners. Chinese pantries in New Zealand once stored specialist knowledge in the form of imported foodstuffs and supplies only available from a couple of stores in the city (Figure 29).

PRESERVING AND PASSING ON CUSTOMS

The bowl is a metaphor for preserving knowledge. An agenda of the New Zealand Chinese Association is the 'preservation of the traditional family concept and propagation of the Chinese culture' (Joe Y Sing, 1996, p. 15). This is



Figure 30. A copy of the Lee Family *Tong Sing*, 130 x 250 x 40 mm

echoed in Mr Yee Kee Poon's

sentiments published in *A Brief History of the Overseas Chinese* (1996), concerning the 'loss of mother tongue' to ask, 'how do we teach them the Chinese language?' (ibid, p. 15). The publication's right-hand binding and bilingual text encourages bicultural readership and exists as a record of a community history intended to be passed from one generation to the next. A treasury of traditional knowledge found in Chinese homes is the *Tong Sing* or Chinese almanac (Figure 30). This ancient text is reissued annually and is often consulted by Chinese to chart auspicious dates or find remedies, superstitions and other such helpful information. Constructed from off-cuts of other illustrations, the image on page 35 of *Home Made* (Figure 31) looks closer at the *Tong Sing*. In this illustration, clouds part to reveal superstitions passed onto the young for safe settlement.



Figure 31. Kerry Ann Lee, *Protect and Prosper*, 2007. Mixed media collage on paper, 270 x 420 mm



Figure 32. Kerry Ann Lee, *Bai Shan*, 2007. Paper-cuts and funerary papers, 380 x 550 mm

Bai Shan, or ancestor worship, is another tradition that older Chinese fear will disappear unless observed by younger generations. A small altar with a portrait of the ancestor marks a place in the home where the bowl is used by descendants in symbolic gesture to their ancestors. James Ng (1993–1999) concedes that ‘...it is inevitable that when the New Zealand Chinese become Chinese New Zealanders, the old Chinese beliefs will become anachronisms which are eventually forgotten’ (Vol. 1, p. 76). Evidence of these include Chinese paper-cuttings, lucky red envelopes of money given on auspicious occasions and funerary papers like hell money (Figure 16). The illustration on page 36 of *Home Made* (Figure 32) is structured around a grid made of joss papers (traditionally burnt at funerals) in order to remember. Paper-cut bowls made from facsimiles of money follow a strict arrangement and double as paper effigies that symbolise sacrifice and posthumous provision.

The bowl is the most fluid of the three metaphors used in the book to represent Chinese settlement. It is valuable in assuming many roles in home and enterprise, located in Chinatown, inside a restaurant, stored in the kitchen or backroom, or placed on top of a home altar. The bowl serves Chinese dishes to Western customers as well as facts and fictions about Chinese spaces. It carries food and cultural traditions into the present that need to be actively practiced between generations in order to survive.

4.3 The Lantern

The lantern can be considered a Chinese placeholder. It can adopt many forms traditionally crafted from paper or fabric, feature decorative motifs and knotted tassels or remain unadorned. In Chinese legend, lanterns were used to light up the night sky in order to communicate to the gods (Spolidoro, 2003). The lantern makes an appearance in New Zealand when displayed outside in public spaces during festivals such as Chinese New Year to offer momentary visibility to the Chinese community. In the last section of *Home Made*, text is reduced to short proverbs to enable the final set of illustrations to capture this point of visibility through integrating Chinese elements into the local environment.

THE LANTERN AS AN ORDERING ORNAMENT

The lantern transcends ornamental decoration to become a potent marker of cultural space. Bhabha’s third or ‘liminal’ space allows room to negotiate, construct and re-construct new fluid identities through mimicry, hybridity and complex ambiguities that don’t fit neatly within the confines of conventional cultural traditions or histories (cited in Mitchell, 1995). Bhabha (1994) views third spaces as ‘discursive sites or conditions that ensure that the meanings and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity where even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricised and read anew’ (p. 34). Under these conditions, the lantern can be recontextualised through the freedom of translation. By reclaiming text and visual imagery, appropriation appears to be an effective political and social aesthetic in a strategy which Dale describes as *post-orientalism* (1999, p. 62).

Post-orientalism can be seen in the work of Yuk King Tan. An archaeologist of contemporary culture, she uncovers artefacts and presents them to us reclassified and ready for re-consumption (Farrar, 2006, p. 20). Tan’s *Overflow* exhibition at the Wellington City Gallery in 2006, showcased work created during her one-year residency in Hong Kong in 1995. Her *Overflow* installation (Figure 33) comprises of mass-made goods found from all over the world – toy aeroplanes, plastic animals, robots and clay statues – altered with melted coloured wax. Designer goods sit next to copies of designer goods...a profusion of objects to make sense from, like the cornucopia of a market (ibid, p. 20). Tan appropriates imported objects from Chinatowns and Asian supermarkets to ask how they might connect to the idea of



Figure 33. Yuk King Tan, *Overflow* (detail), 2005. Mixed media

a Chinese homeland. Robbie BH Goh argues that Chinatowns are not only formed by diasporic communities wanting to maintain a connection to their own culture, but also by mainstream culture which 'seeks to contain and manage the foreign other by depicting the other as a lucrative commodity' (cited in Farrar, 2006, p. 23). Tan uses repetition to build and reinforce themes of excess and cultural commodification and impress them upon the viewer (Dale, 1996). As a result, multiple objects, images and patterns spill out exponentially from the centre of her compositions to reference the geometry of a snowflake.

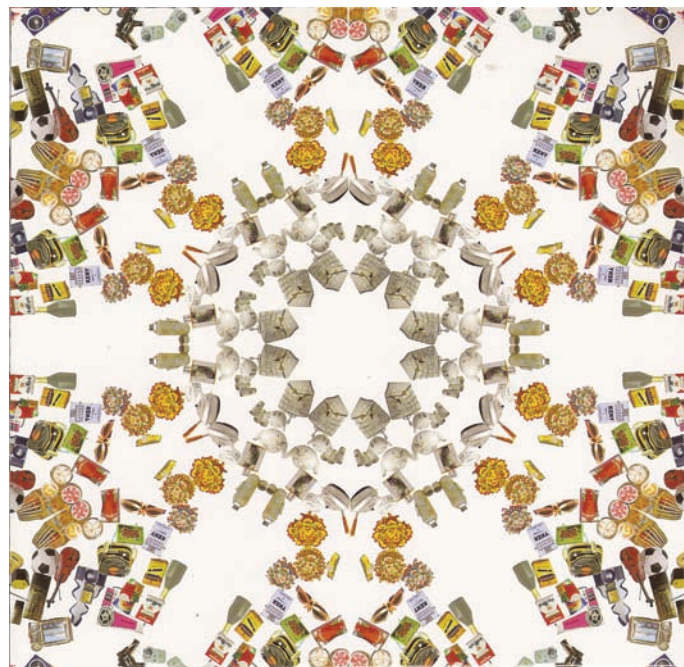


Figure 34. Yuk King Tan, *Sunset Industries*, 2005. LED print

These 'snowflake' works appear ornamental from a distance yet up close, they operate almost like a reference map for the installation by providing entry and exit points to navigate the work. Tan applies this strategy of ordering chaos in *Sunset*

Industries, 2005 (Figure 34). This is a photographic arrangement of paper burial tokens, which are crafted into shapes of coveted contemporary consumer items representing what people value and wish to take into their next life. Tan uses these funerary articles (purchased and burnt as offerings to appease one's ancestors) to draw comparisons to modern consumables which are destroyed through use and ultimately replaceable (Farrar, 2006, p. 30).



Figure 35. Kerry Ann Lee, *Chinese Bazaar*, 2007. Digital collage, 270 x 700 mm

The lantern shines to commemorate auspicious occasions. The annual Lantern Festival marks the end of Chinese New Year celebrations. In Auckland, giant Chinese lanterns occupy Albert Park to guide the public towards the event. The Chinese Bazaar in Wellington serves a similar purpose. The illustration on pages 40 – 41 (Figure 35) captures the playfulness of childhood memories growing up with the bazaar. It references the Bazaar's geographical location inside the Chinese Anglican Church hall across the road from the Botanic Garden, in the kaleidoscopic arrangement of Chinese lions, chairs, signage, roast ducks and lanterns amidst the Garden's signature tulip beds.

REPLACING THE LANTERN

Securing the lantern into the cultural landscape can prove to be difficult when visible difference is seen as unwelcome. Since the 1990s, New Zealand was made aware of its new Chinese population through decorative features hanging on car dashboards, and the flourishes of houses in suburbs such as Howick in Auckland. New migrants comfortable with retaining their Chinese culture drew negative attention from mainstream Kiwi society threatened by gestures that boldly claimed space.



Figure 36. *Asian Angst: Is it time to send some back?*, published in *North & South*, November 2006

The presence of the lantern can adversely revive a stereotypic fear of the Chinese. From 1987, the influx of new Chinese migrants who entered the country under the skilled migrant, entrepreneur or student visas prompted MP Winston Peter to react, exclaiming, 'We don't have so many restaurants that we need slave labour!' (M. Ip, Murphy, N., 2005, p. 36) His anti-immigration stance during the 1990s prompted the news media to frequently use the term 'Asian-Invasion', and consequently pigeonholed all Chinese regardless of heritage. More controversy was sparked with Deborah Coddington's article published in *North & South*

(Figure 36), which presented an unsubstantiated claim that New Zealand is 'the new home for Asian drug runners, illegal suburban brothels, health cheats, student P pushers, business crooks and puaa smugglers' (2006, p. 39). Such allegations affect all Asians in New Zealand and undermines years of quiet assimilation. Echoing discrimination from a century before, these examples demonstrate how little attitudes have changed in viewing or accepting Chinese or 'Asians' as settlers.



Figure 37. GB Scott, *Oriental Bay*, souvenir postcard, c.1950s

This contemporary 'othering' services the protection of colonial images of New Zealand. Writer Steve Kerr (2006) argues that 'beautiful, boring postcards' of New Zealand (Figure 37) reflect the country's post-war experience and offered visually rich representations of aspects of (Pakeha) identity building (p. 3). Kerr points out that many photographers employed strict grid-based principles of composition as a formula for many shots of different New Zealand scenes. Like the paintings of the early painters and land surveyors, these postcards often feature a strong horizon

line broken up by a soft diagonal line and a focal point of a national monument. The illustration on page 42 of *Home Made* features Wellington's famous cable car manned by Chinese children in the foreground (Figure 38). The work responds to Kerr's hypothesis by offering a fantastical replacement of Chinese presence replete with a dragon emerging with flames and sparks out of Wellington Harbour.

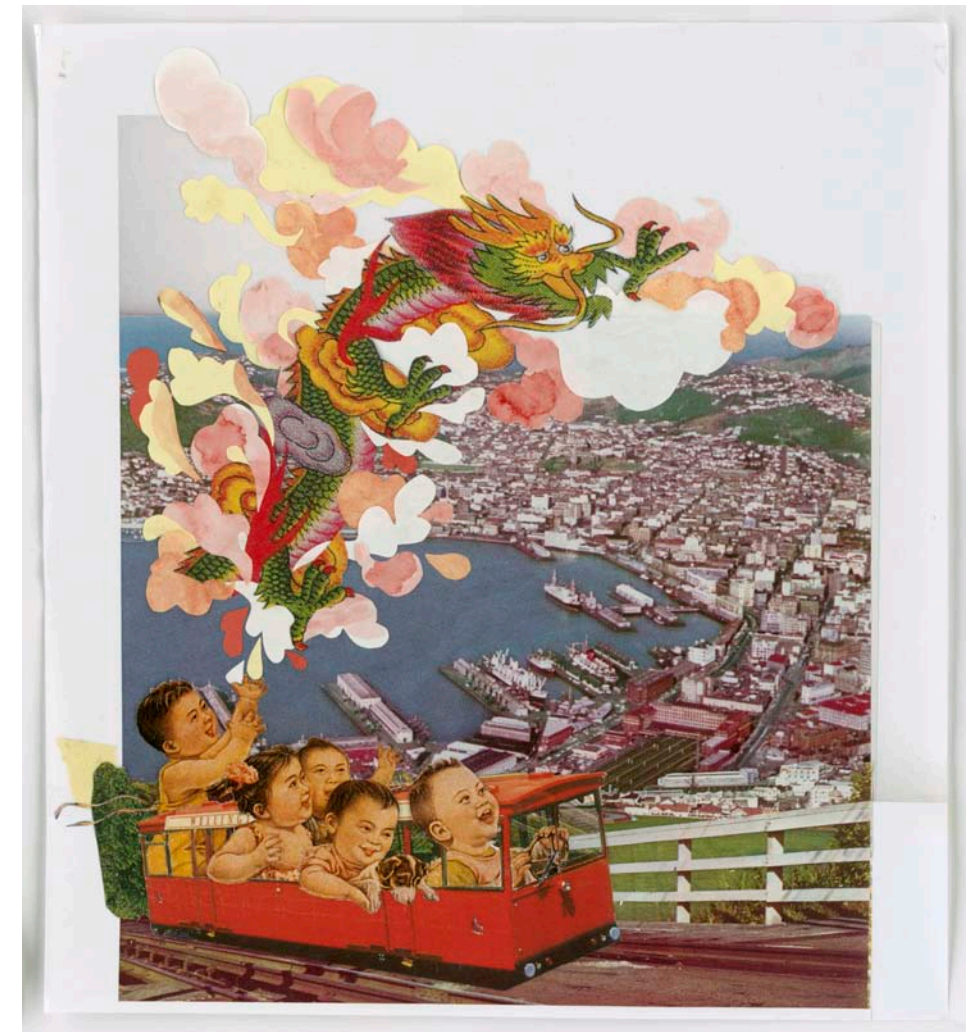


Figure 38. Kerry Ann Lee, *Cable Car kids*, 2007. Mixed media collage on paper, 290 x 350 mm

REVISITING CHINATOWN

The absence of Chinatown in New Zealand has meant that Chinese have had to forge temporary spaces in public places. Bazaars and festivals offer short-term visibility, whereas a Chinatown is a permanent site for visibility that also exists as a cultural cliché. Therefore the lantern operates in lieu of a Chinatown as a non-fixed marker of Chinese identity in public spaces.

This issue was raised in *No Chinatown?*, an art project featured at the Auckland Triennial in 2007. Collaborative performance and video work occupied gallery and

public spaces around Auckland. Deemed a 'high-immigration city', a survey asked the public: 'Does Auckland need a Chinatown?' Participating artists were interested in using Chinatown as a metaphor for identity to respond to themes of globalisation, immigration and diaspora, however they were clear to not assert a critical position within the work. Artist Kah Bee Chow likened the experience to stepping on eggshells:

'As a somewhat new immigrant I tend to locate myself on the periphery. I think it's really difficult to engage with issues of land in New Zealand when it's so contentious and fraught. When do you start having enough authority to be actively part of that conversation? Our cultural value is not equivalent because it's not geographically specific enough. The Chinese Diaspora is too far flung, it's like there's nothing special about the Chinese, because they're everywhere' (K.B.Chow, personal communication with K.A.Lee, 29 November 2007).

DY Yuan (1960) argued that Chinatown existed as a place of defensive insulation against prejudices and hostility. He argued that as a symbolic 'safe zone' it allowed residents to delay assimilation into mainstream American culture (p. 264). Under a different set of conditions, the absence of a recognisable Chinatown in New Zealand's public sphere illustrates both the strengths and difficulties for Chinese with insider knowledge of Kiwi culture in locating a home for positive differences.

Chinatown is a storied space historically located in the margins of the mainstream. French theorists Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1999) use the term 'minor literature' to highlight local or underground language that challenges or disrupt the structures of a dominant language. In minor literature, lesser known texts like personal stories deterritorialise expression and take on collective value to become inherently political (Deleuze, 1999, pp. 59-61). Shum's involvement with the Haining Street Oral History Project is an example of this. By recording the memories of those who lived in or remembered Haining Street, Shum (2003) intends to help create a new history, 'that is rich and full of struggle but also life-affirming' (p. 91).

To refer to Haining Street as Chinatown demonstrates what Minh-Ha describes as the 'necessity to name in order to unname' (1999, p. 329). Shum explains that Wellington's first 'Chinatown' became redundant as a cultural locus once the

Cantonese community grew beyond the enclave and became assimilated. It simply was not needed. The death of Haining Street Chinatown has meant that Chinese presence in Wellington exists through a number of fragmented historical and contemporary locations, which people have self-sufficiently created to preserve their culture in private. In pages 44 – 45 of *Home Made* (Figure 39), the lantern transforms into Chinese knots that unravel to weave in and out of a street map of Wellington city. The names of the streets around Wellington's historic Chinese quarter are inscribed on the largest knot to remember this bygone era.



Figure 39. Kerry Ann Lee, *Chinatown, Wellington*, 2007. Painting on paper, 300 x 710 mm

Chinatown as represented by the lantern is therefore a necessary contradiction that is both promising and problematic for those identifying as Chinese New Zealanders. Chinatown is a safe space to be visibly Chinese while arguably isolating a community from mainstream society. As a liminal site, it can offer a taste of Chinese culture yet its authenticity will be called into question. It can be a place to uncover personal home stories at the risk of simplifying collective Chinese experiences and histories. As Bhabha has said, 'Small differences and slight alterations and displacements are often the most significant elements in a process of subversion or transformation' (cited in Mitchell, 1995). With this in mind, Chinatown can be viewed as a useful point of departure to construct new spaces for Chinese stories.

NEW ILLUMINATIONS

As a metaphor for contemporary Chinese settlement and identity, the lantern has the ability to draw Chinese New Zealanders and non-Chinese people towards uncovering heritage. Kirsten Wong offers timely reflection on recent Chinese settlers:

'I'd see them so comfortable with their Chineseness, in a way that I could never be...where does their confidence come from? They're not bowed down by all this historical racism. Well, not yet! ...We have inherited a nineteenth century view of Chinese culture. It's like our families left China last century and that was where Chinese culture stopped for us. That's what we inherited' (cited in M. Ip, 1996, p. 141).

Wong concludes with a tone of optimism suggesting that, 'What these new immigrants are offering us local-borns is a chance to catch up on the 150 years of Chinese cultural development we've missed out on' (ibid, p. 141). What is identified is the need to forge a new Chinese New Zealand identity based on ethnic awareness and the pride and confidence in difference.

The *Shou* character symbolising longevity has appeared throughout the book and echoes faintly in the background of the final illustration of *Home Made* (Figure 40). In this last image a piece of domestic crockery, the blue willow plate, is transformed into the lantern to illuminate both real and imagined ideas of home. The blue willow pattern illustrates the legend of Chang and Koong-se, two forbidden lovers who escape to an island paradise, and upon their capture and death were transformed by the gods as immortal doves (*The Story of the Willow Pattern Plate*, 1963). The plate pattern is therefore a record of the history of the island, subject to many variations depending on the artist. This new configuration evokes an older Chinese presence that is specifically located in New Zealand.



Figure 40. Kerry Ann Lee, *Lantern*, 2007. Digital collage, 270 x 700 mm

5. CONCLUSION

This thesis reconfigures what is already here – gold, cups, plates, bowls, chopsticks, spoons and lanterns, towards presenting an alternative Chinese New Zealander settler history. *Home Made* is about making home real for Chinese in New Zealand. Living in the shadows of popular imagination and labouring on the fringes of society has helped stabilise a marginalised community. At the same time, it has created tension by drawing lines between two distinct but connected spheres – the Chinese face that the public sees behind the takeaway counter and the life behind the plastic ribbon curtain at the back of the shop. Those who move through both sides of the curtain have knowledge crucial in shifting old margins.

Inherited by descendents of Cantonese settlers, gold, bowl and lantern are used as metaphors to impart new ways of viewing Chinese heritage. These motifs echo through the book to interrogate colonial notions of otherness. They are effective as a set to provide an historical overview of the nature of Chinese settlement in New Zealand, yet the degree to which each metaphor supports Chinese visibility is determined by their assigned value.

The heritage of Chinese in New Zealand is built on shaky ground founded on gold and dirt. Gold led to displacement then to subsequent reward through early settlers building and fortifying a new home. Gold is therefore the most comprehensive metaphor used to support settlement as it established an economic rationale for Chinese to be in New Zealand in the 1860s.

The cost of settlement for Chinese was quiet assimilation. The bowl became a cultural container that belonged to Chinese spaces often fictionalised or hidden from view. Once Chinatown shifted from the enclave of Haining Street, The bowl settled Chinese in Courtney Place, Wellington during the 1950s and was responsible for creating ties with the public through its use in restaurants. The bowl had a dual function used by families to preserve customs and tradition in the private home sphere.

The lantern is the most visible of the three motifs and offers temporary presence in a contemporary context, yet like a Chinatown, the lantern becomes a crucial contradiction. The lantern therefore is the most difficult of the metaphors to anchor settlement for Chinese in New Zealand because its visibility is also subject to

misinterpretation as well as celebration of a Chinese presence.

Creating a visual interpretation of Chinese colonial history which focused on early restaurants and takeaways in Wellington naturally meant that there was much content which was not covered in the thesis. Many more Chinese have arrived since the late 1980s with unique stories about settling in New Zealand. Diversity offers much potential for new kinds of histories yet to be written. There are a lot more stories that need to be heard like those of Chinese market gardeners, students, sportspeople, computer gamers, hip-hoppers, actors and musicians. The list goes on as identities constantly shift and evolve. As the definition of a Chinese New Zealander expands, the scope of research can become more focused to include such firsthand experiences.

This project owes a lot to academic writers who have been astute in underpinning the anxieties of dual identity through theories on third space, marginality, post-orientalism and deconstructions of Chinatown. It has only been in recent years that we've begun to hear new voices from the periphery explore themes of difference and visibility through channels such as literature, dance, film, theatre and visual art. The illustrations in *Home Made* employ collage as visual rhetoric to encourage new understandings about the nature of settlement, exposing Chinese as both insiders and outsiders to local New Zealand culture. Illustrators typically work within the perimeters of a client's brief to create worlds on paper according to another's dictation. By changing the script to assume the role of the author, illustration tells the story.

In arguing for longevity of Chinese settlement in New Zealand, this thesis has highlighted that public visibility is still a crucial issue that remains unresolved for Chinese in New Zealand. The study concludes with the hope that this research encourages new creative investigations to further explore the issue. As history inherently shapes contemporary identity, Chinese New Zealanders will need to take ownership of this heritage in order to comfortably engage in discussions of national identity. *Home Made* has revealed the potential for graphic authorship through an illustrated artists' book as a means of contributing to this dialogue. The thesis presents a Chinese New Zealand identity that is rich with complexities inspired by the historical and the everyday, an identity that is ultimately the sum of its parts, which is self-constructed and constantly evolving.

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APPENDIX

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John and Margaret Young, personal communication with K. A. Lee, recorded on 17 October 2007. Wellington.

Kah Bee Chow, personal communication with K. A. Lee, recorded on 29 October 2007. Auckland.

Lynda Chanwai-Earle, personal communication with K. A. Lee, recorded on 8 November 2007. Wellington.

James Chin, personal communication with K. A. Lee, recorded on 10 November 2007. Wellington.

Sonya Yee, personal communication with K. A. Lee, recorded on 13 November 2007. Wellington.

Ken Chan, Henry Kwing and Esther Lee, personal communication with K. A. Lee, recorded on 19 November 2007. Wellington.

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