

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.



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

2008



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.



Many thanks to Jacquie Naismith, Annette O’Sullivan and Caroline Campbell for all your guidance, Kirsten Wong and Lynette Shum for your knowledge and enthusiasm, Kenneth Chan, Henry Kwing, John and Margaret Young, Shirley and Allan Cho, Kah Bee Chow, Sonya Yee and James Chin, Esther Lee, Alison Wong and Lynda Chanwai-Earle for your stories and my friends and family for all your support and encouragement through this project.

The project was assisted with grants from The Chinese Poll Tax Heritage Trust and Asia New Zealand Foundation.

© Kerry Ann Lee 2008. All rights reserved.

CONTENTS

1.	INTRODUCTION	
1.1	Central Proposition	4
1.2	Home in the Space Between	6
1.3	Voicing Otherness	8
1.4	Telling Chinese Stories	10
1.5	Picturing Chinese Settlement	12
1.6	Design Authorship	15
2.	RESEARCH AIMS	17
3.	METHODS AND PROCESSES	18
3.1	Research through Design	18
3.2	Visual Metaphor as Argument	18
3.3	Collage as Order	18
3.4	Collecting	19
3.5	Paper Cutting	19
3.6	Painted Imposition	20
4.	HOME MADE ARTIFACTS	
4.1	Gold	21
	The New Gold Mountain	21
	Gilded Frames	25
	Aliens in an Imagined Land	27
	Protecting Settlement	28
4.2	The Bowl	
	Containing Culture	30
	The Bowl as an Enclave	31
	Model Minority	33
	The Bowl as Buried Treasure	35
	The Kitchen is the Centre of the Universe	37
	Preserving and Passing On Customs	38
4.3	The Lantern	
	The Lantern as an Ordering Ornament	40
	Replacing the Lantern	43
	Revisiting Chinatown	45
	New Illuminations	47
5.	CONCLUSION	49
	REFERENCE LIST	51
	APPENDIX	
i.	List of Interviews	54
ii.	List of Illustrations	55