

Announcing: *M'goi/Do Jeh: Sites, Rites and Gratitude*

This exhibition looks at linguistic gesture as we seek modes of cross-cultural and inter-generational conviviality in the changing cultural landscape of Vancouver's Chinatown.

VANCOUVER, BC (April 1, 2014) – Centre A is pleased to announce the April 24th opening of *M'goi/Do Jeh: Sites, Rites and Gratitude*, an Art & Community initiative featuring visual art and community-based projects by poets Lydia Kwa and Kathryn Gwun-Yeen Lennon and a special window installation directed by neighbourhood elder Mrs. Chang.

The recent, ongoing transformation of Vancouver's Chinatown has been happening at a very rapid pace. A series of new condo towers are under construction and a list of new businesses are opening up. Not to mention the growing presence of the visual arts including artist studio space, artist run centres, commercial galleries and your friendly neighbourhood public gallery: Centre A. How are we to consider this process? How does the incoming community relate to and have relationship with the long established community of the neighbourhood? In some instances newcomers embrace the old, retaining legacy signage or seeking other means to place a volume dial of their cultural expression. Others open up with distinct, sharply branded aesthetics that make no nod to the existing neighbourhood's past or present.

In a capitalist society where the right to enter one space or another is dependent on little more than one's ability to pay rent, are there rites of passage/entry, gestures and postures that should be adopted to pay respect? As a commercial rent payer and a public art institution recently moved to Chinatown, Centre A is interested, on both institutional and personal levels, in ways one takes on a posture of gratitude and respect especially in instances where the act of being given to isn't so direct and the right to receive isn't necessarily one's own.

A reflection on the two distinct ways to say "thank you" in Cantonese *m'goi* and *do jeh*, this exhibition considers rites of passage and gratitude in the contexts of urban transformation in Vancouver's Chinatown, and, the psycho-social processing of inheritance, loss and change. In so being, *M'goi/Do Jeh: Sites, Rites and Gratitude's* participants, community engaged poets Lydia Kwa and Kathryn Gwun-Yeen Lennon as well as neighbourhood elder Mrs. Chang help Centre A in its quest to discover its place in the geographic and cultural space it recently moved into.

Lydia Kwa is a well-respected poet, author and practicing psychologist who spends a lot of time in Chinatown and is concerned with its transformation. In July 2012 she read an [article](#) in the Vancouver Sun¹ about Canada's first Chinese print shop Ho Sun Hing. Sensitive to the implications of the shop's ultimate closure, and in a light meditation on shifting modes of cultural production Kwa purchased a selection of foundry type. Using both Chinese and English type she ended up making a series of playful works on paper that she later coupled with short poems, creating a deliberately unbound, self-published limited edition book entitled *linguistic*

¹ Vancouver Sun, "Video: Against all odds: the Ho Sun Hing Printing Company is still operating", July 26, 2012 (online) <http://www.vancouversun.com/news/Video+Against+odds+Hing+Printing+company+still+operating/6997068/story.html> (accessed in March, 2014)

tantrums. For *M'goi/Do Jeh*, the original artworks from *linguistic tantrums* will be exhibited and members of the public will be invited to react to these with poems of their own.

Kathryn Gwun-Yeen Lennon is a prairie storm of community building. Recently transplanted from Alberta, Lennon is a linguistically curious poet and community activist who has been vigorously engaged with projects aimed at creating spaces for intercultural dialogue and activating Edmonton's Chinatown. Since her arrival in Vancouver last year, she has been a member of the Ho Sun Hing Project, a group including Kwa that aims to preserve some of Ho Sun Hing's foundry type; and an integral part of Friends of 439, a group seeking to save the Ming Sun-Uchida Family building at 439 Powell Street. For *M'goi/Do Jeh*, in collaboration with linguist and Cantonese language instructor Zoe Lam and numerous neighbourhood partners, Lennon is presenting *Saturday School* – a series of neighborhood specific Cantonese language classes, the results of which will be progressively presented in the exhibition space and become the *Living Language Studio*. Once a week, this space will also serve as a pop-up resource centre, inviting visitors to imagine how a community space shared by groups engaged with cultural knowledge and community development might function. She is also curating a *Youth Community Film Screening* featuring recent films by Vancouver youth about life and change in Chinatown.

Then there's Mrs. Chang, a 96 year old neighbourhood elder who stopped by one day to let us know that our signage was insufficiently welcoming, and that Cantonese speakers would have little way of knowing what was going on. Herself the impetus for this exhibition, Mrs. Chang would like to see us improve the gallery's frontage, and so working with her we are going to try to make it a little more welcoming to the public.

We hope you'll join us.

M'goi/Do Jeh: Sites, Rites and Gratitude runs from April 25th to June 14th.
Opening reception: April 24th from 7pm to 10pm.

Saturday School runs on Saturday mornings from April 26th to June 7th from 10am to 12pm. Please visit [our website](#) for fees and schedules.

Other Public Programs at Centre A include:

- *Youth Community Film Screening*
Curated by Kathryn Gwun-Yeen Lennon
May 10 at 3pm
Free admission
- Poetry Reading by Lydia Kwa and Kathryn Gwun-Yeen Lennon
May 17 at 3pm
Free admission
- *Game of Couplets*, a participatory poetry game by Lydia Kwa
Daily with a special event on May 31 at 3pm
- *Community Memory Map*. Facilitated by Kathryn Gwun-Yeen Lennon
Contribute your stories and photos of the neighbourhood.

A small publication, referring to the process of generational change and a shifting cultural landscape in Chinatown, will be published in the wake of this exhibition and be released in September 2014.

About Centre A:

Established in 1999, Centre A is Canada's only public gallery devoted to contemporary art of the Asia-Pacific. Located in Chinatown's East Georgia Gallery Cluster, we have presented the works of over 300 Canadian and international artists and produced over 80 original projects. As a key piece of Vancouver's cultural infrastructure, Centre A works with artists, curators and other cultural producers from throughout the region to facilitate critical inquiry and provide a platform for conversation and artistic experimentation. Centre A is also home to the Centre A Reading Room including among a vast collection contemporary Asian art books, the Finlayson Collection of Rare Asian Art Books.

Centre A is a collaborative effort powered by generous support from:



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and our growing community of patrons, donors, members, volunteers and artists, and our volunteer board of directors.

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Available for comment on *M'goi/Do Jeh: Sites, Rites and Gratitude*:

Exhibition Curator: Tyler Russell

Artists: Lydia Kwa, Kathryn Gwun-Yeen Lennon

Cantonese speaking contact: Natalie Tan

Artist Bios, Press Images, a PDF of the Press Release, Saturday School and Youth Community Film screening details are available through our [Dropbox press pack](#).

To arrange an interview with any of the above, or for media requests and further information, please contact:

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