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25 Years After The Hong Kong Handover: *NYC Chinese American Artists Respond*

...in images, words and music



An Evening of Interdisciplinary Artist Presentations
and a Panel Discussion / Town Hall Conversation
A Lower Manhattan Cultural Council Creative Engagement event.

Friday, October 14 from 7-9 pm.

Church Street School for Music & Art Performance Space
41 White St, New York, NY 10013 Tribeca.

This is a free event, please RSVP by emailing sage@churchstreetschool.org

Presenting Artists:

Chen Yi & Zhou Long (symphonic composition via video)

Alvin Eng (acoustic punk raconteur)

Nina Kuo (painting)

Lorin Roser (video art/installation)

Sammy Yuen (artist/illustrator)

Xu Xi 許素細 (novelist/essayist, longtime HK chronicler)

Artist Bios and photos, along with Presentation Descriptions follow

Curated and Hosted by playwright/memoirist **Alvin Eng**

Panel Discussion moderated by **Joanna C. Lee**

Event Overview

Great Britain's defeat of China in the 19th Century Opium Wars forever changed China and ignited the Chinese Diaspora worldwide. This defeat left China opened to the west against her will. The key concession of The Opium Wars was the ceding of Hong Kong to Great Britain from 1841- 1997. This concession, combined with a decimated Ching Dynasty that could no longer control its own borders, created a pipeline of sorts for Chinese immigration to New York City and many points west.

In this year, the 25th Anniversary year of the “Hong Kong Handover” from Great Britain back to China, Chinese American artists will gather in Manhattan—the isle that Hong Kong has been most compared to through the years—to explore Hong Kong's relationship with and impact on NYC's Chinese American community...through images (moving and still), words (spoken and sung) and music. The goal is to create a safe space to share and process personal experience as well as the historic precedents that planted the seeds of anti-Asian American laws and biases that have been festering in this country since Asians first arrived.

Presentation Descriptions

Playwright/memoirist **Alvin Eng** will read a passage from his memoir, ***OUR LAUNDRY, OUR TOWN*** (*My Chinese American Life from Flushing to the Downtown Stage and Beyond*) and perform excerpts from his acoustic punk raconteur work, ***HERE COMES JOHNNY YEN AGAIN (or How I Kicked Punk)***. Both the chapter and performance excerpts explore the profound impact of The Opium Wars on NYC's Chinese American community as well as the 1970s “heroin chic” punk/counterculture in which he grew up. This exploration is through the dual prisms of William S. Burroughs' character, “Johnny Yen”—immortalized in the Iggy Pop & David Bowie song, “Lust For Life”—and his own Grandfather's opium overdose in NYC's Chinatown.

Novelist/Essayist **Xu Xi**, a Hong Kong native and longtime HK chronicler, will read excerpts from two recent essays published on the occasion of the 25th Anniversary Year of the Hong Kong Handover: “Democracy” and “Forever This Hong Kong.”

Painter **Nina Kuo** and video artist **Lorin Roser** re-contextualize classic Chinese/Hong Kong imagery to create contemporary commentaries on the state of Hong Kong-NYC relations.

Sammy Yuen is an illustrator, graphic designer and AAPI activist. He is currently merging his passions in [*Drawn Together, Stories of Resilience and Renewal in NYC's Chinatown*](#), an exhibition on display at the Pearl River Mart Gallery thru Dec. 28. From that exhibit, Yuen will show and discuss “Lin Ze Xu Statue and Memorial Arch”—a portrait of the Chinese scholar and official known for sparking the First Opium War in 1839 by seizing and dumping British Opium into the Guangzhou Harbor.

Participating via video are the Pulitzer Prize-winning composing team of **Chen Yi** and **Zhou Long**. They will pre-record a video preface to a video excerpt of their symphony, *Humen, 1839*, about the “Destroying Opium Campaign” in Humen, Guangdong in 1839 that led to the start of the First Opium War between the British and Chinese Empires. They will then join all of the artists via zoom to participate in a Panel Discussion.

The Panel Discussion will be moderated by **Joanna C. Lee**, the longtime HK/NYC translator and cultural advisor to playwright David Henry Hwang and filmmaker Luc Besson among many others.

Artist Bios

CHEN YI (Composer) As a prolific composer and recipient of the Charles Ives Living Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, Dr. **Chen Yi** was born in Guangzhou, China. She blends Chinese and Western traditions, transcending cultural and musical boundaries. Her music is published by Theodore Presser, performed, and recorded worldwide. A cultural ambassador and strong advocate of new music and contemporary composers, Dr. Chen has introduced many compositions and connected musicians between East and West. She believes that music is a universal language, improving understanding between peoples with different cultural backgrounds and helping to bring peace in the world. A member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the American Academy of Arts and Letters, she has been a Distinguished Endowed Professor at the UMKC Conservatory since 1998. She has studied composition at the Beijing Central Conservatory of Music and Columbia University (NYC).

ALVIN ENG is a native NYC playwright/memoirist, acoustic punk raconteur and educator. His memoir, [*OUR LAUNDRY, OUR TOWN \(My Chinese American Life from Flushing to the Downtown Stage and Beyond\)*](#), was published by Fordham University Press in May 2022. The memoir was covered by The New York Times and NPR/WNYC among others. [*THREE TREES*](#), the first of Eng's *Portrait Plays* series of historical dramas about artists, was recently published by No Passport Press. This work dramatizes the haunting relationship between sculptor Alberto Giacometti and his primary 1950s muse/model, Japanese philosopher, Isaku Yanaihara. Honors include: LMCC Creative Engagement and Creative Learning grants; two-time appointee to the Fulbright Specialist roster as a U.S. Studies/Theatre scholar, three-time recipient of NYSCA/NYFA Fellowships—most recently in 2020 for Nonfiction Literature. Eng's plays and performances have been seen Off-Broadway, throughout the U.S., as well as in Paris, Hong Kong and Guangzhou, China. Follow at IG: alvin.eng8 Twitter: alvineng8, www.alvineng.com

NINA KUO, visual artist creates artworks with fictional and historical references in an individual modern language. She works in painting, multi-media, and montage and has been branching out in art installation, animation videos. She has deep passion for research travel in Asian especially Asian American cross cultural heritage. Exhibits in many venues: museums, galleries and public spaces.

LORIN ROSER is a multi-media artist- at the New Museum Aula, Wrong Biennial, PS1, Moca NYC, collaborated on Stelarc/Rewired Remixed, Art In Odd Places, Bronx Museum, Queens Botanical Garden, Harvestworks, , CBGB, Emily Harvey Gallery, NYC, Bowery Poetry – 3D animations, Tang Loopology, Super Deluxe, Tokyo, Flushing Town Hall, Plum Blossom, Robot Noise Ensemble, Puffin Room, Remote, Sumei, etc.

XU XI 許素細 is an Indonesian-Chinese writer from Hong Kong who is now a US citizen. Author of fifteen books, most recently [*Monkey in Residence and Other Speculations*](#) (Signal 8 Press, UK, November 1, 2022), [*This Fish is Fowl: Essays of Being*](#) (Nebraska 2019) and the novel [*That Man in Our Lives*](#) (C&R 2016), she also edited five anthologies of Asian writing. Co-founder of [*Authors at Large*](#), she is currently [*William H.P. Jenks Chair in Contemporary Letters*](#) at the College of the Holy Cross, Massachusetts. She previously directed two

international MFA's and also had a career in international marketing. For much of her professional life, she lived and worked between Asia and America and for a time on the South Island of New Zealand. A diehard transnational, she now splits life between New York and the rest of the world. Follow her @xuxiwriter on FB, Instagram, Twitter & LinkedIn.

SAMMY YUEN is an artist, illustrator, designer, writer, and self-defense instructor, who has recently merged his personal and professional lives to empower the AAPI community. With over 20 years of experience in the publishing industry, he creates book covers (including over 35 *New York Times* bestsellers), marketing and advertising material, animated videos, and social media assets. He is currently developing a bilingual board book series. A lifelong martial artist, he teaches self-defense classes all over New York City, from Flushing, Queens to Washington Heights in Manhattan.

ZHOU LONG was the first Chinese-American composer to win a Pulitzer Prize in Music for his first opera *Madame White Snake*. He also received the American Academy of Arts and Letters Award, Stoeger Prize from Lincoln Center Chamber Music Society; commissions from the Koussevitzky and Fromm Music Foundations, Chamber Music America, Barlow Endowment, Meet the Composer and the NYSCA; fellowships from NEA, the Guggenheim and Rockefeller Foundations, and the New York Foundation for the Arts. Born on July 8, 1953 in Beijing, Mr. Zhou graduated from the Central Conservatory of Music in 1983. Following graduation, he was appointed composer-in-residence with the China Broadcasting Symphony. He traveled to the United States in 1985 under a fellowship to attend Columbia University in New York, where he received a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in 1993. Dr. Zhou is currently Bonfils Distinguished Professor of Composition at University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory.

About the Venue

CHURCH STREET SCHOOL FOR MUSIC & ART (CSSMA) is a unique nonprofit community school for the arts located in Lower Manhattan. Since 1990, we have been dedicated to making high-quality arts programming accessible to a diverse range of students. We believe in the transformative and therapeutic power of the arts and specialize in facilitating each student's connection to their authentic creative voice. (www.churchstreetschool.org)

Photo/Image Credits:

Top Row: Painting, *Opium Dwg Lady Pipe* 2022 by Nina Kuo; Xu Xi photo by Paul Hilton; Illustration, *Lin Ze Xu Statue & Memorial Arch* by Sammy Yuen.

Bottom Row: Alvin Eng photo by Wrolf; *The Burning of Opium at Humen*. Anonymous—cover image for Chen Yi and Zhou Long's symphony, *Humen, 1839*.

This event is supported by an LMCC Creative Engagement grant. Funding provided by the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA). LMCC serves, connects, and makes space for artists and community.