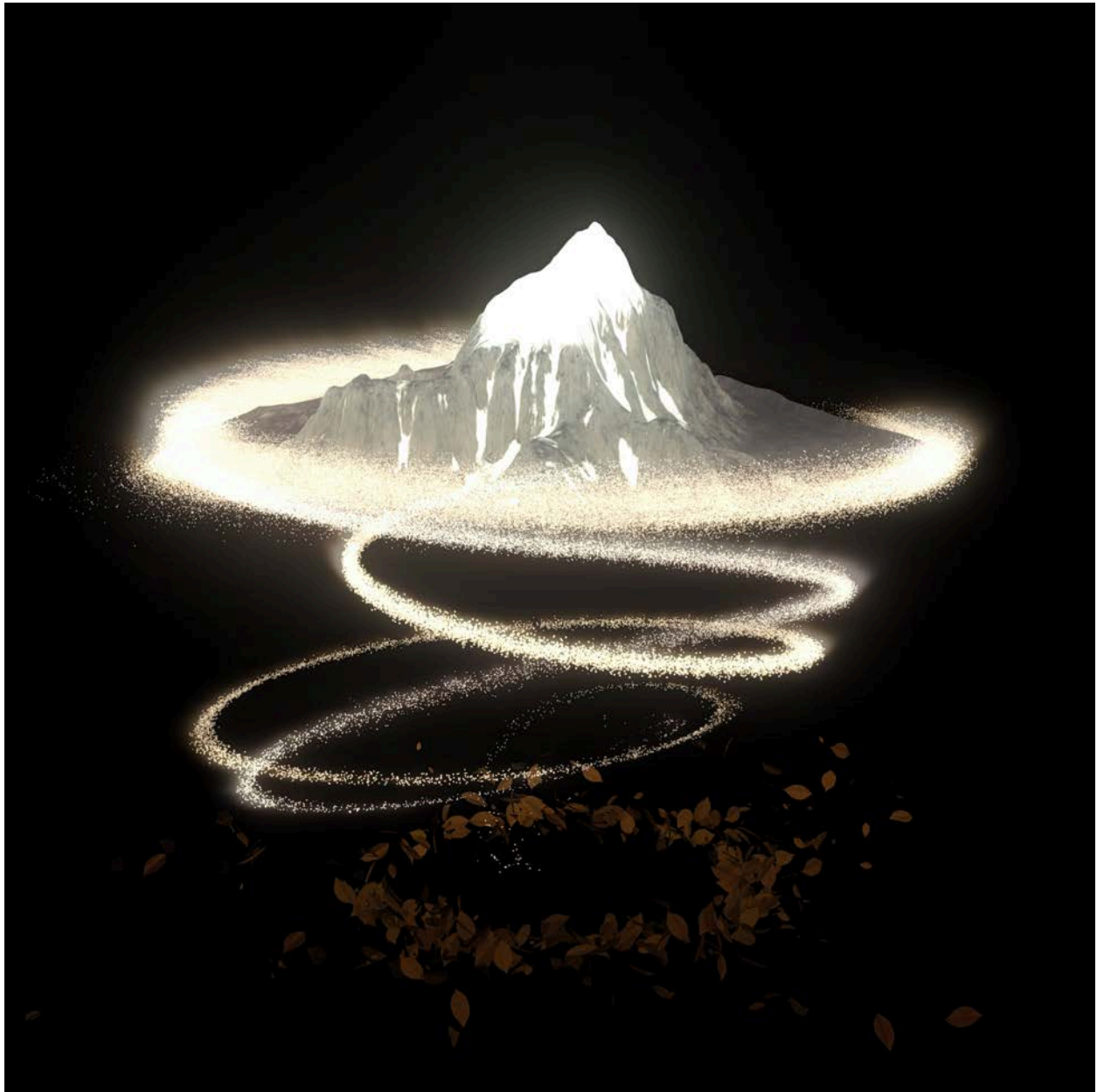


Water Street Projects presents

CHA CHA

Public immersive festival inspired by tea and its rituals, open four consecutive weekends timed to Lunar New Year beginning Feb 1, 2025

Featuring tea house-inspired installations designed by Toshiko Mori & Tei Carpenter, Shannon Lai of Studio Lily Kwong, Chen Chen & Kai Williams, Areesha Khalid, and Aaron Santiago & Michaela Ternasky-Holland



Oolong Tea House: Morning Light by Aaron Santiago and Michaela Ternasky-Holland, a digital immersive experience

New York, NY, January 7, 2024 – **Water Street Projects**, the roving interdisciplinary nonprofit platform, **presents CHA CHA, an immersive festival inspired by tea and its rituals** set to open the weekend of February 1st during Lunar New Year 2025. Through tea’s myriad forms — aroma, texture, color and flavor, visitors will experience innovative interpretations of how we gather to share tea and more. Over the course of four consecutive weekends, this event invites the public to experience the rich cultural heritage of tea through a multi-sensory environment created by an array of contributing artists and designers.

The free public festival will take place throughout the 40,000-square-foot Water Street Projects exhibition and community space located on the fifth and sixth floors of WSA, an iconic skyscraper and cultural hub in Lower Manhattan (161 Water Street). Conceived by Karen Wong, the cofounder of New Museum’s groundbreaking initiatives IdeasCity, NEW INC, and Onassis ONX, the presentation highlights five artists/designers commissioned to re-imagine a tea house inspired by five culturally significant Asian teas: pu-erh, oolong, hojicha, chai, and lotus tea. These installations will reflect the history, aesthetics, and ritualistic significance of tea, along with its social and cultural importance. **Selected design teams include mother-daughter architectural pair Toshiko Mori and Tei Carpenter, landscape artists Studio Lily Kwong led by Shannon Lai, furniture and product designers Chen Chen and Kai Williams, architectural designer Areesha Khalid, and creative technologists Aaron Santiago and Michaela Ternasky-Holland.** The first AAPI partner of renowned design consultancy **Pentagram, Natasha Jen**, and her team have designed the festival’s identity — marking a celebration timed to Lunar New Year and beyond.



CHA CHA Festival Visual Identity by Pentagram



Rendering of the Chai Tea House installation by Areesha Khalid

Within each of the five tea house-inspired installations there will be complimentary tastings of each respective tea during the festival. The connective tissue between the tea houses will be more than a dozen culinary artists exploring and expanding upon Asian delectables — primarily in the dessert and beverage categories. Confirmed participants include **99 Bakery, Bé Bép baby kitchen, Chicha San Chen, Fern and Aurora, Grand Tea Imports, Karachikababboiz, Kayanoya, Kiino Brooklyn, Kopitiam, Kora Bakery, Mas Budi, Patty Cruisey, Rana Jee's, SALSWEE, s-u-m studio, The Baodega, and Yun Hai.**

In addition, **architectural designer CoCo Tin and researcher Ming Chen** will create a **TCM Apothecary** installation to showcase Traditional Chinese Medicine in partnership with the **Kamwo Meridian Herbs**, a 50-year-old establishment in New York City's Chinatown neighborhood. WSA will host **CHA CHA Club**, a pop-up restaurant celebrating Bruce Lee and the Year of the Snake.

The festival's name draws from the Asian diasporic word for tea and Bruce Lee's favorite dance, the Cha-Cha. As a martial artist, Lee believed practicing this dance enhanced his physical coordination. Crowned Hong Kong's Cha-Cha champion at 18, he became a beloved and unexpected Hollywood icon who challenged stereotypes about Asians. Lee was an avid tea drinker and his go-to black tea blend included royal jelly, ginseng, and honey.

The phonetic similarities of the word for tea 茶 (chá) in Chinese and Japanese, 차 (cha) in Korean, चाय (chai) in Hindi, and Trà in Vietnamese—highlight the interconnected global history of tea, which originated from the *Camellia sinensis* plant. Tea has evolved into a rich symbol across human culture since its first use in China around 2700 BCE for medicinal purposes. It

has served as a meditation aid in Buddhist rituals, a form of political protest in Colonial America, a source of inspiration for modern masterpieces in art and architecture, and a crucial component of contemporary global trade.

While tea is the gateway, the festival structure is a homage to the unrealized 1980s enterprise Far East Trade Center by architect and engineer Alfred H. Liu (1942-2021). Conceived as a hub for commerce and entertainment, the complex was sited on top of Washington D.C.'s Chinatown Metro Station. It was to be a robust signifier of a dynamic community and catalyst for emergent Pan-Asian businesses and national tourism. Local politics, lack of funding and an uncooperative developer killed the project for good in 1986.



Far East Trade Center Interior Courtyard (1980s) courtesy of Alfred H. Liu/AEPA Architects Engineers, P.C.

Drawing on these rich and varied histories, culinary artists, architects, designers, and TCM practitioners will lead workshops and demonstrations amplifying AAPI voices across various cultural industries. In alignment with the festival's ethos of building community, CHA CHA will be free admission to the public, inviting all generations of New Yorkers to participate.

About Water Street Projects

Water Street Projects is a roving interdisciplinary nonprofit platform amplifying creative voices. Our projects include performance art, fairs, festivals, music shows, culinary experiences, and visual arts which champion diversity and global points of view. Our fluid and expansive attitude

for entertainment and education invokes the spirit of Cedric Price's never-realized Fun Palace commissioned by Joan Littlewood—a forum for a laboratory of fun and a university of the streets. Thank you to the Cha Cha advisory council: Natasha Jen, Dong Ping Wong, LinYee Yuan and Wen Zhou.

About Water Street Associates

Water Street Associates (WSA) is a cultural ecosystem and hub of artists, producers, and creative businesses. Housed in an iconic Fox and Fowle 1980s skyscraper, WSA interweaves working, production, wellness, and social spaces specifically designed to support artists and creative industries with dedicated resources for exhibitions, culinary experiences, interdisciplinary artist studios and production facilities, pop-up cultural events, and non-traditional creative convening places. With creative culture as foundational to its ethos, WSA takes an artist-first approach, and provides a new anchor and catalyst for cultural life within Lower Manhattan. The WSA ethos is indebted to pioneering developer and entrepreneur Mark Wadhwa, whose genre defying cultural venue 180 Strand in London serves as a model.

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