

Artist Statement Christine Cheung

Centre Street and Chinatown Banners – Portraits (All together now)

An interest of mine is the notion of diaspora (derived from the Greek notion of “scattered seeds”). Since 1858, Calgary’s Chinatown has a specific history, having been moved three times to various locations¹. Starting as an enclave that was imparted upon Chinese Canadians who were brought over by the CP Rail, it began as a visible site of marginalization.

Within this context, I created this series to celebrate the struggle of citizenship for the individuals who occupied this space and made it what it is today. As viewers enter and leave the downtown core, there are four images of various figures which confront the viewer at a time: a woman with oranges, two images with figures standing side by side, and a man expressing a state of exuberance. Capturing moments of looking, the figures can be seen as individuals, as pairs or as groups of four, or as a whole, suggesting the duality of individual vs. collective harmony and self/other. Through the simultaneous duality of the individual and collective gaze, these abstract renderings express different emotional states and ways of being. Depicting the subjective grasp of place in this way could be seen to call into question issues of nationalism, globalization. What creates a sense of community? Who belongs?

Chinatown banners – Spring and Summer (Scattered Seeds)

Diaspora, means in Greek, “scattered seeds.” These paintings make reference to the form of the bright orange, delicately formed flower of the Chinese Lantern plant. The plant is so named for its resemblance to Chinese lanterns and is found in various locations throughout the world. The work grows from an attempt to freeze a kind of movement or process of change as the blossoms tumble down the page.

Biography

Born and raised in Canada, Christine Cheung was the 2006 recipient of the Joseph Beuys Scholarship at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design where she completed graduate studies. Her paintings are exhibited regularly across Canada and internationally, and belong to numerous collections including the Alberta Foundation for the Arts. She has recently been artist-in-residence at Red Gate Studios (Beijing), Compeung (Thailand), Jogja National Museum (Indonesia), Struts Gallery (Canada), and AIR KREMS (Lower Austria) and Agder Kunstnercenter (Norway). In 2008, she was awarded a production grant from the Alberta Foundation for the Arts and Canada Council of the Arts. She recently won the Alberta Lieutenant Governor General's Emerging Artist Award. In 2010, she is currently living and working in Berlin where she has an upcoming solo show at Gallery.CON.

¹ From www.chinesealbertanhistory.com