The Heart of the Dragon

Lilly Chen

Follow this and additional works at: https://repository.rit.edu/theses

Recommended Citation

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the RIT Libraries. For more information, please contact repository@rit.edu.
The Heart of the Dragon

by

Lilly Chen

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
MASTER OF FINE ARTS

IMAGING ARTS PROGRAM
SCHOOL OF PHOTOGRAPHIC ARTS AND SCIENCES
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

December, 1993

Jeff Weiss (Thesis Committee Chairperson)
Associate Professor
School of Photographic Arts & Sciences
Rochester Institute of Technology

Joan Boccino
Assistant Professor
School of Photographic Arts & Sciences
Rochester Institute of Technology

Heinz Klinkon
Assistant Professor
School of Art & Design
Rochester Institute of Technology

Martha Leinroth
Associate Professor
School of Photographic Arts & Sciences
Rochester Institute of Technology

Judy Levy
Assistant Professor
School of Photographic Arts & Sciences
Rochester Institute of Technology
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PERMISSION STATEMENT</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CREDIT</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENT</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THESIS PROPOSAL</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical stereotypes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory of melting pot and salad bowl</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prejudice and discrimination</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional values and influences</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISCUSSION</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Installation</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical data</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIDEO</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUDIO</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAJOR LEGISLATION AFFECTING CHINESE IN AMERICA</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILLUSTRATED MATERIALS</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floor plan</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slides (13 pieces)</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"The Heart of the Dragon" videotape is included.
PERMISSION STATEMENT

Title of thesis: *The Heart of the Dragon*

I, Lilly Chen, hereby deny permission to the Wallace Memorial Library of Rochester Institute of Technology, to reproduce my thesis (including the videotape) in whole or in part.
To Mom and Dad:

this one is for you!

and

thank you, Ted!
VIDEO

Shur-Tzy Hou
Diing-Wuu Wu
Hsin-Chen Wang
Ted Huang
Lilly Chen

AUDIO

Richard Chou
James Li
Regina Yuan
Florance Tan
Ann-Shing Shu
Al Fang
Lilly Chen
ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Special thanks to the Film & Video department for making this exhibition possible, and the following individuals:

Joan Boccino  
Bart Durkin  
Bill Landers  
Charles Werberig

Heinz Klinkon  
Martha Leinroth  
Judy Levy  
Jeff Weiss

And Bob Allen from Univisions
THESIS PROPOSAL

Statement of purpose

To create a body of work that hopefully will bridge the conflict created by the battle of emotion (intuition) and intellect (mind). The attempt to find a mid-ground, or a balancing point will be a challenge, and it will also be the essential part of thesis work. Various aspects in the psychology, the mental health, and the process of immigrants in America would serve as the foundation for generating ideas.

Background

Finding one's ethnic identity has always played an important part among the immigrants. I have felt the torment that results from acculturation and assimilation many times in my life. Many others have felt the same torment also. During the process of assimilation, one goes through many transformations. The emotional reactions will definitely be the major part of the work and they will also be the source for creating the visual images. Some research on the social, political and psychological aspects of immigrants in America will be necessary. This collected data should help me to concentrate my thinking. However, it will take intuition and spontaneity to transform a mental idea to an actual piece of visual work.

Procedure

Production of the visual work will be in several media. Each final result will use different shapes and forms. Various materials like photographs, wood, plaster, fabric, paint and others will be used. Some of the pieces will be three-dimensional. The visual outcome shall depend on various combinations of thinking and intuition.
INTRODUCTION

*The Heart of the Dragon* is an exploration of race relations, changes, and conflicts among Chinese Americans today. It attempts to translate the ethnic phenomenon through an artistic space by using visual vocabularies and mechanical tools to examine social concerns. To further understand this topic, I researched the historical background of the Chinese in America, and studied the psychological makeup of the Chinese national character, and, I investigated the ethnic relations and problems socially and politically in the United States. These studies further solidified an understanding to the purpose of *The Heart of the Dragon*. The revival of Chinese ethnic consciousness and dealing with the problem of ethnicity artistically not only helped me re-examine my own roots and experiences, it also, has helped me to gain a deeper awareness towards human equality and rights.

**Historical stereotypes**

Generally speaking, three major periods can be discerned in the history of Chinese immigration to the United States. The initial period, which dated roughly 1850 to 1870, was one of free immigration, during which the Chinese were treated with more or less utilitarian indifference. China, especially at the South, was facing political turmoil, overpopulation, and economic hardship. Witnessing two decades of rapid industrial development on America's West Cost, including the discovery of gold mines in California and the construction of the transcontinental railway network, many peasants from Guangdong province of China were lured by so called "mountain of gold," and were shipped to United States virtually as slaves or semi-slaves in the notorious "pig trade" to fill up the acute shortage of labor on the West Coast. This population was predominantly composed of single males and represented the stereotyped "Chinese coolies". These people considered themselves as temporary sojourners, i.e., "Jin-shan ke" (guests of the Gold Mountain). Being
illiterate, unskilled, and poor, they had little ambition except to make some money to bring home for retirement.

The arrival of the first wave Chinese migration was viewed as a timely help and was, therefore, welcomed. Industrious and docile, these Chinese were primarily hired to work in the gold mines and on the Central Pacific railroads, as well as in other "dirty" jobs scorned by the whites. In fact, there was a consensus among prominent Californian industrialists and statesmen of the time that Chinese laborers filled gaps that would otherwise have been left unfilled, and, as such, they made a valuable contribution to the economy and development of California.1

With steady growth, the Chinese population approached 100,000 by 1870 as a result of a continuing influx of laborers from China, they began to be perceived by the American working class and the general public as a potential threat to their livelihood and well-being. The completion of several major projects involving Chinese workers, particularly that of the transcontinental railway in 1869, provided politicians and workers with a viable pretext for launching an anti-Chinese campaign. Suddenly the Chinese found themselves to be the source of all labor grievances and the center of attack by white Americans.

As the anti-Chinese sentiment became widespread, often accompanied by violent flare-ups, a Chinese Restriction Act - the first exclusive racial immigration law ever passed by the US government - was adopted in 1882, and this law was to remain in force until 1943, thereby ending the free admission of Chinese laborers, skilled or unskilled. This was soon followed by a long series of laws enacted throughout the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century to make the exclusion of Chinese

---

1 Professor Coolidge wrote: "Whatever the white man scorned to do, the Chinaman took up; whatever the white men did, the Chinese could learn to do; he was a gap-filler, doing what no one else could do, or what remained undone, and adapting himself to the white man's taste and slipping away unprotestingly to other tasks when the white man wanted his job." Coolidge, op.cit., p. 37. The heroism of Chinese in making the transcontinental railway a reality is described vividly in Oscar Lewis, The Big Four (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1938).
effective and eliminate competition from those Chinese already in the country. (See "Major legislation affecting Chinese in America"). The early stringent Anti-Chinese immigration laws barred the Chinese from bringing their families here, and racial discrimination discouraged inter-marriage. Life was made even more miserable by excluding them from a wide variety of occupations, by depriving them of the right to own land, by restricting their areas of residence, and by denying them fundamental civil rights and legal protection. The phrase "not a Chinaman's chance" alludes to the conditions faced by these Chinese during those early years.

Discrimination against the Chinese kept them out of the mainstream of American life, and created loneliness in their daily life in this supposed "promising land." For more than a century, they suffered and endured endlessly all forms of harassment and intimidation, including lynching and massacre.\(^2\) During these prolonged years of exclusion and oppression endorsed by government policy and condoned by public opinion, those who could afford to purchase - often with all their savings - a space aboard a cargo ship destined for China hurried back home. Those who were unable to leave\(^3\) began a poignant journey for survival voluntarily or involuntarily. The discriminatory environment, along with the strong ties to home on the part of the Chinese, resulted in the segregation of communities, most of them confined themselves in large cities and to activities and services catering primarily to the needs of the Chinese community itself, such as restaurants and laundries. Their bitter experiences and memories with the larger society convinced the Chinese immigrant of the value of silence and


\(^3\) "In 1949, with the establishment of the People's Republic of China, many people, for personal or political reasons, could not return to China." Yu, Lucy C., *Acculturation and Stress within Chinese American families*, (Journal of Comparative Family Studies, n. 15, 1984.)
perseverance. He endured verbal and physical assaults in silence because any resistance only invited harsher retaliation. Fear of attracting attention was particularly acute among the thousands of immigrants who came to America illegally. If caught, they had little hope for justice; the California Supreme Court ruled in 1854 that their testimony was inadmissible as evidence. Despite repeated promises of amnesty, fear and distrust linger today among the descendants of those immigrants and helps account not only for Asians' silence but also for their reluctance, even in the face of dire need, to turn to governmental agencies for aid.

The outbreak of World War II ushered in the third period of Chinese immigration, which witnessed a gradual liberalization of US policy toward Chinese immigrants, and the eventual acceptance of Chinese on an equal footing with their European counterparts. The ensuing era of Cold War between the Communist bloc and the Western world further prompted the adoption of a new immigration law in 1952, which gave priority to the admission of highly skilled aliens in an intensive post-war scramble with the Soviet Union for talented foreigners. Restrictions on admission of spouses and children of all Chinese-Americans were lifted, alien Chinese residents also became eligible for naturalization without discrimination for the first time in American history. The ultimate result of this long, and often willy-nilly, process was the amended Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 which subsequently controlled immigration to the US. The law granted the Chinese the same status as all other nationalities, with an annual quota of 20,000 new immigrants. The Chinese were therefore accepted, at long last, as equals of the white immigrants, at least legally.

During this period, with the declined of racial discrimination and prejudice, still, Chinese Americans, particularly the American-born-Chinese, found it difficult to be accepted into the larger society. They tend to be confused about what group they should identify with and where they should stand in the United States. Many have suffered from an identity crisis and become "marginal men" (Standly Sue, 1982). They are the men on the margin of two cultures and two societies, which never completely interpenetrated and fused.
The Industrial Revolution began in England in the 1700s. It had became wide-spread in western Europe and the northeastern United States by the mid 1800s. Due to famine, poverty, political persecution, overpopulation and unemployment in Europe, many came to this new country to take risks and seek better lives. German, Scandinavians, Poles, Jews, western Europeans and Italians made up the tidal wave of immigrants to America. Each group brought new talent, skills and energy. Because America's historical, ethnic, and religious roots were essentially in Europe, the term "melting pot" became the buzz word for the period. Ideally, the many strains of new immigrants would be melted together to forge a new, strong, but distinctive new product.

In the last quarter of a century, more and more Americans have come to realize that the idealistic melting pot will never become a reality. Because the "melting pot" theory is merely an idea. If the "pot" is put in for a test, it surely comes with its lid, and that ceiling is where all the trouble began. Hence, the analogy of America as a symphony orchestra or a salad bowl with English as the dressing has started to take hold. In the beginning, the salad was basically a European one: several types of greens with slices of tomatoes, carrots and cucumbers thrown in. More recently, new ingredients have been introduced to add their distinctive flavors to the whole: bean and alfalfa sprouts, sunflower seeds, kiwi fruits, tofu, bacon bits, and more. Each one of the parts never loses its identity, but all contribute to the color and uniqueness of the whole. Importantly for all, there is a salad bowl made of US Constitution and there is English language serving as the dressing exquisite for the final gourmet treat.

Two new buzz expressions for the 1990s, "Pacific Rim" and "multi-cultural diversity" have appeared in the vernacular. They give new hope to many of us that things will be different in the future. But there is a dark side emerging that threatens our freedom, dignity and constitutional rights. Hate crime and anti-ethnic violence have increased alarmingly in the past ten years and
groups such as the "skinheads" have become popular among some young people. There is a saying that goes, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." To confront the current problems of racism, Chinese Americans must remember the past and break the silence.

**Prejudice and discrimination**

Discrimination, often tied to legislation, is somewhat different now than in the 1960s. Today, it is extremely sophisticated, deeply systemic, and hard to prove. Prejudice, on the other hand, because it is an attitude and often maintained through stereotypes, is viewed as less damaging to a minority group than discrimination, although there is an assumed link between the two. Prejudice is much more widespread and on the rise in this country. The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights has recently published a national report on widespread incidents against new Asian immigrants. The most dramatic case was that of Vincent Chin,\(^4\) who was deliberately attacked and murdered as an act of racial hatred. Although a case like this has minor societal impact, it does serve as a reminder to the minority group member that prejudice and discrimination have not been eliminated and one has to remain on guard.

Pluralism emphasizes the maintenance of ethnicity and sees America as composed of a mixture of various groups. Walzer\(^5\) in 1980 saw racism as the barrier to a fully developed pluralism. Cheng and Bonacich\(^6\) in 1983 viewed race and ethnic relations in the

---

\(^4\) On June 19, 1982, Vincent Chin, a twenty-seven year old American-born draftsman of Chinese ancestry went to a topless bar with three friends in Highland Park of Detroit, to celebrate his impending marriage. Some racial slurs were made by an automobile industry foreman, who thought that Chin was Japanese and somehow responsible for his unemployment. Later that night, the foreman and his stepson beat Vincent with a baseball bat. Chin died four days later.  


context of the world economy. In their eyes the capitalistic economies require cheap labor which often composed of racial and ethnic minorities. These minorities are at the mercy of economic currents and political decisions. Race relations, from this perspective, are less a result of white racism and more a function of political and economic decisions.

**Traditional values and influences**

In view of the abnormal and wretched conditions to which the Chinese had been condemned for nearly a century, the residue of the psychological make-up from the unique historical experience has a far-reaching effects upon Chinese character and it continues to show its lingering effects today. For many, identification with the old culture provided the psychological support and group identity that denied them by the host society. The life styles of these immigrants in the ethnic enclave are basically fashioned after old world norms. The immigrant Chinese would naturally transmit their culture to their offspring, socializing them to conform to the contours of their cultural and personal roles.

Traditional Chinese society is a vertically structured hierarchical system, and was based on dictates of Confucian tenets on man and his interpersonal relationships. Relationships between parents and children, husband and wife, teacher and student, the Ruler and his subjects, and man and his God. This feudal society is a gigantic network of family ties and social connections, with intricate rules and regulations which are repressive to personal growth and individual creativity. The system makes sense in a society that is oriented towards preserving the status quo. It is less tenable in a society that is moving away from its linkage with the past.

In an ideology based on the moralistic, worldly ethic of Confucius, the doctrine of filial piety or loyal devotion to parents and an unquestioning respect and deference to authority were within the virtues needed for becoming a morally perfected man. Western enlightenment, by contrast, emphasizes individuality, personal liberty, and assertion of independence. As a result, anyone who is
caught in-between-worlds is living with his identity torn between two cultures in a place of complications, conflicts and compromises. For him, the memories of the old world haunt the characters in the new world almost like a nightmare.

"Ren"- translated as perseverance, tolerance, patience has a personal significance. "Swallow bitterness in order to excel" is an important ingredient of the work ethic that Chinese brought to this land of opportunities. It is also about one's willingness to put off challenges and to accept defeat. To put off challenges means to choose your timing and battles: to choose issues that are worth fighting for. To accept defeat means to recognize that one does not always have to win, but recognizes one's weaknesses and mistakes in order to advance. Beneath all the exposé of violent racism in America, "Ren" is usually the driving force to maintain the determination, courage and ambition of the Chinese to make their way forward against the most daunting of obstacles.

Along with the virtue of perseverance, fatalism, a calm acceptance of one's lot, was another belief prevalent in the Chinese culture. Constantly buffeted by the forces of nature and society, over which he clearly had no control, the individual adopted a philosophic detachment and resignation that allowed him to accept his fate with equanimity. Instead of trying to fathom underlying meanings in events, the Chinese met life pragmatically. He did not try to understand and control his environment and create his own opportunities; instead he became adept at making the most of existing situations.

Placed at the mercy of his environment by his society, the Chinese individual became in his own eyes a powerless non-entity whose life style was properly dictated by his superiors, his peers, and other external influences. Thoughts of tailoring the fabric of his environment to fit him rarely occurred; the individual was content to wear whatever mantle his society dictated, even if it chafed. Ironically, the very factor that contributed to his early success in America - his adaptability - would later become a serious handicap. Cultural preferences for acquiescence and conformity thwarted the development of a strong sense of individuality and of individual
control of personal destiny, qualities that underlie forceful self-expression. In an alien culture that encouraged and demanded aggressive, outspoken individualism and self-expression, the Chinese could respond only with silence (Watanabe, 1973).


**DISCUSSION**

**Process**

Coming from a fine art background, I had the privilege of working with many different mediums in art. Photography ended up to be the most comfortable tool to satisfy my creativity near the end my undergraduate years. It brought a sense of magic to be able to combine science and art together, and there was also a sensation of manipulating the camera. Perhaps deep down in the unconscious realm, the power of mastering a piece of technology by an oriental woman was the most intriguing of all. In one word, before coming to Rochester Institute of Technology, I was charmed by the mere mechanics of image formation in photography.

The Master of Fine Arts program in Imaging Arts emphasizes the conceptual aspect and the context of art making. It focuses on the effectiveness of interpretation and communication between the mind of the artist and the viewer. No longer much needed was the expertise of exercising and controlling the mechanical tool - the camera to depict the real world; for the first time, I found the medium of photography to be a process too rigid to reflect the desire for self-expression. This is mostly due to the inherent nature of realism in photography. Unlike the other visual arts, which permit the gradual building up of a work, constantly subject to review and modification at the artist's whim, photography allows almost no opportunity for review or change during the actual process of image formation. The image can be modified, to be sure, by subsequent manipulation, but it is initially a record of what the lens "saw" at the instant of film exposure.

Man has been defined as a tool-using animal, but his most important tool, the one that distinguished him from all other animals, is the ability to speak his mind. In order to communicate the words behind one's thought, the edge of a sheet of photograph draws the boundary of one's message. The silver gelatin coating on a single piece of paper became the entrapment to the colors and the poetry in one's soul.
From a linear progression of thoughts, I produced sequential photographs to represent the cyclical journey through life, this marks the point of departure from the limitations of straight photography. However, my sequential work was criticized for its literalness and for being over-revealing. Hence heavy manipulation and multi-media collage began to take place. I was desperately seeking an alternative route to portray my perception of the complex yet fragmented impressions of this ambiguous life. I proceeded by experimenting with different processes and materials to create layers of information and to expand my visual vocabulary. As the ambition grew, the two-dimensional work space unfolded itself into the sculptural realm, then advanced to video, and the final stage transformed itself into an installation space. If The Heart of the Dragon is about metamorphoses of mankind, the process of making it is a journey of transformations of one's inner strength and creativity, and trial of one's willingness to face challenges.

Among all the video installations I have seen, Doug Hall's video installation "The Terrible Uncertainty of the Thing Described" triggered the inspiration to use video as a means of expression. The experience of being in his installation was an enlightenment. It granted a door to freedom and to a new way of seeing the world of imaging arts, and salvaged me from stubbornly confining my work to only a single media on a two-dimensional plane.

Video is the tool of extension that I was desperately seeking beyond the borders of photography. It gives me the satisfaction of working with sequences while it creates the continuity of space and time with endless layers of information, besides its additional dimension in sound. The most important power of all was the opportunity for direct confrontation with the outside world. Using the method of interviews, I have stepped away from my own experience of being a Chinese American and looked at the topic with more objective and less personal point of view. My earlier piece of video work, "The Trail of Shame", concentrated on the topic of racism. It deals with the problems of ethnicity from the non-Chinese perspective. Its semi-experimental and documentary style was interesting but covered too broad of a ground. It was a good therapy
for me to be able look from the other's eye and see racism in its different facade.

"The Heart of the Dragon" on the other hand, is the voice of the silent minority, and my hope for brotherhood. Questions were raised during the thesis defense about the significance of my topic, and what does it do for the non-Chinese audience and the art community? The answer is simple. Throughout the ages, many artists have always served as the recorders of conscience for any nation. Their works are the literate and pictorial journals that note, comment and reflect back the age in which they live. Postmodernism especially seems determined to amplify this function as artists make self-aware art filled with appropriated images reflecting the modern cultural melting pot of outside influences and histories.
Installation

Conflict and contradiction are among the major problems in many aspects of immigrants' lives. It is also these elements that foster the aura of The Heart of the Dragon. Presented without any identity, each image of the framed lips on the wall represents a cancellation of recognition to problems in race relations in this country. Instead of the conventional style of documentary interviews, I chose to disguise the portrait of each speaker, leaving only the lips entrapped in the frame reminiscing their stories. Each presented without full identity reflects the slighting attitude of the host society. This method of presentation also corresponds with the passive nature in Chinese philosophy. Within their whispers and the floating music in the dark, the feeling of oppression is awaiting to be discovered.

The installation is constructed in a controlled environment, with soothing music (audio track of the videotape) to set the tone for a contemplative atmosphere. Using exotic colors and textures, the video channel paints a poetic yet fragmented image of the traditional Chinese culture burning in flames. It interweaves the poignant destinies of the people cut in between two worlds. The transformation of two cultures is metamorphosed through a woman's apparel and her demeanor. I chose Chinese characters "Ren-ni" (perseverance, tolerance) to conclude the visual as well as to sum up its philosophical impact on the fate of Chinese American.

The audio channel, on the other hand, presents a panorama of distinctive voices that tell their paradoxical secrets. There is a constant invitation for people to hear the thoughts of these minorities. By having the recordings placed in a loop, audience has the choice to invest any length of time they wish listening to each person. An important by-product of this section that should be noted here is the power of coalition as result of joining various of voices together (7 audio mini-speakers). Although it may only be whisper of a single man in the dark, while strengthened with the others, it became a protest.
Technical data

VIDEO

I used a Cannon A-1 digital Hi-8 mm camcorder to gather my field footage. All the video recordings were done with slow motion at 1/8 of a second to portray the subliminal consciousness.

After logging in the footage, the best shots were chosen and transferred to 3/4 inch tape for further manipulation and editing. Some of the images were further manipulated through the TBC/PROC AMP (time base corrector & processing amplifier) and the Amiga video-toaster to achieve the surreal qualities of color and impression. Then, a selected group of footage was dissolved through an A/B roll switcher and Convergence editing system with image of "moving line" that I have shot in a basement. This builds the basic layer of lines and textures per scene, and makes up the painterly quality of the film. Besides the usage of "moving line" that drew the feeling of uncertainly, fire was used as metaphor for the violence and the condition of victimization. Images of a dragon (East) and an eye (West) were used throughout the film to symbolize the representations for Heaven and God. The film ended with two Chinese characters "Ren" that translated as perseverance, and tolerance to conclude a poignant journey.

Without a script, only by intuition and imagination, I stitched different images together to portrait an aesthetic journey of metamorphosis. Two effects were used to built the structural transitions in the film. The first effect used is called the fade, which always involves black. Either the picture to fades up from black or down to black. I used cross-fade often to have a fade-out/fade-in occur quickly in the program. This effect brings time, space, content or a combination of these shifts completely.

Dissolve, is the other effect used throughout the program. It always begins with an image that is being replaced by another. During the dissolve a third image-the combination of the first and second image-is created. It disappears as the second image replaces the first. The dissolve is generally handled by an edit controller, a computer that, when programmed according to time-code locations,
automatically perform the dissolve at a specific rate. However, due to the malfunction of the Convergence A/B roll system, I did everything manually to accommodate the given circumstances. The fader bar on the switcher is applied manually to effect the dissolves while I quickly pushed the play and record buttons on the player A, player B and recorder decks.

The disadvantage of this particular method is that it causes one generation lost per dissolve since the manual control produces glitches on the beginning and the end which have to be re-edited. Performing dissolves this way requires quick hands and spontaneous handling of the fader bar to produce a graceful or sensitive transitions. To arrive at a precise point for the dissolve to come in, several tests are needed. Since one dissolved image is entirely different from the next, it is hard to pre-visualize what the outcome of a final dissolved image will be. There are numerous elements that determine for a successful dissolve. Aspects of color, composition, texture, screen direction, movement, tempo, juxtaposition, and interpretation of the representation all have to be considered. Each multiple-image dissolve is edited with another multiple-image dissolve which might consist of 5 or 6 layers of images. I discovered that by placing the fader bar in the center of the switcher cause two scenes to appear simultaneously on the screen, while moving the fader bar back and forth will create fading of one shot from the other. This effect enables me to create a relationship between the images involved.

One of the other difficult challenges involved during the post-production was matching the video to the length, rhythm and the mood of an already existed piece of music. The original source of music accompanies The Heart of the Dragon is called The Spinster by Rock Record & Tape Co. Ltd. This piece of music was selected for its emotional undertone and ethereal qualities. I mixed and condensed four segments of The Spinster through a Scorpion sound mix console, onto a 4-Track recording tape. It was condensed to match the sensibility of the video piece in placement, color, and tempo. Special sound effects, for example, Reverb, and the sound of my breathing were added to alter the original composition, and to
establish an atmosphere to the film, also to create more drama, size and depth to accommodate the images in the video. Finally, the materials in the 4-Track tape are transferred to the 3/4 inch tape and edited its length to fit the length of the video.

The final version of The Heart of the Dragon was projected ten-foot high on to a wall in the gallery with GE's The Imager LCD Video Projector. The tape was placed on a loop and ran continuously throughout the exhibition. The music portion of the video projection, was sent through two speakers that were placed above the exhibition space to amplify its sound effect.

Technically speaking, the tape is a montage of layered images. Dealing with the problem of resolution due to lost of several generations was quite challenging. The video editing equipment and facilities were not designed for time consuming type of work. The whole production was based on experimentation and much trial and error along the side. Since I was not part of the video/film department, the opportunity to learn the techniques and produce a presentable work in a short time under RIT's cumbersome bureaucratic circumstances was a miracle just by itself. The video editing equipment malfunctioned quite frequently and the equipment was going through major revision and relocation during post-production which made life even more challenging.

If I was to redo the project, I would like it to be a collaborative piece, although doing the directing/producing/editing single-handedly was gratifying, however, it is more efficient to have the assistance of a production team. Having an original soundtrack created to accompany the tape would also be delightful. The most regrettable mistake I made was not having a back-up unit for the video projector. The GE's image LCD broke down during the third day of the exhibition. Due to the limited budget, I was not able to get another projector and a TV monitor was used as replacement.

**AUDIO**

I video-tape interviewed 6 Chinese Americans from different social stratus, age group, and career backgrounds. The audio portions of the interviews were later edited and transferred onto audio cassettes to be played back individually with 6 walkman audio
recorders. For aesthetic reason, the walkman recorders were hidden underneath black boxes, and audio cables were used to connect with the mini speaker units. I purposely choose small speakers to achieve the feeling of intimacy with the audience. The volume output of the interviews was set so that they speak in whispers hence creating the atmosphere of confession.

The images of the lips were video captures of each interviewee's mouth. One single frame of talking lips from the videotape was freeze framed and transferred through the Image Grabber program of Macintosh computer, I then, manipulated the image using Superpaint program and printed out a 10" x 7" computer image. A simple ordinary wooden frame entraps the picture of each unknown person's mouth, this is to reflect the insignificance of his presence in the given circumstances. Small fluorescent reading lights were placed above the framed pictures for illumination purpose.
CONCLUSION

As this project is ready to take a bow and make its exit, I came to realize that the tremendous driving force behind this whole ordeal started as early as the first footprint I set on the soil of this country. No doubt my interest lies on the psychological make-up of one particular ethnic group and its consequences and implications for assimilation/acculturation.

There is an old Chinese saying "Leaves fall back to the roots", meaning things return to where they come from. With all the reoccurring fate of Chinese in America, a concept should be introduced, that is, "Root where we choose to live". An awareness should be noted among the new immigrants that the strength and progress depend upon the diversity of the people. With the economic hardship and hate crimes on the rise, everyone should carry part of the responsibility of cultural bridging.
MAJOR LEGISLATION AFFECTING CHINESE IN AMERICA

Exclusion Laws

In 1868, the United States and China signed the Burlingame Treaty, which recognized the right of reciprocal immigration, privileges, immunities, and exemptions between the two nations. Two years later, the California State Legislature passed an act denying Chinese women immigrants the right of entry unless they could prove to the Commissioner of Immigration that they were "of correct habits and good character." The 1875 Page Law and the California State Constitution adopted in 1879 added further restrictions to the immigration of Chinese laborers and women deemed to be prostitutes.

Then, in 1882, the United States Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, suspending the immigration of Chinese Laborers, both skilled and unskilled, for ten years. Teachers, students, merchants, and travelers were exempt from this prohibition, but no Chinese would be permitted naturalization. This was the only federal statute ever to deny citizenship to a people because they were considered undesirable. The Geary Act of May 5, 1892, extended the Exclusion Act for ten more years; on April 27, 1904, the exclusion of Chinese laborers from the United States and its island territories was extended indefinitely.

Laws were also passed to decrease the number of Chinese already in America. The Scott Act of October 1, 1888, prohibited the return of any Chinese laborers who had departed from the United States. At the time it was passed, over 20,000 Chinese laborers had temporarily left the United States for China with re-entry certificates. These permits were declared void.

Section Three of the Cable Act, passed on September 22, 1922, stipulated that any female citizen who married an alien ineligible for citizenship "shall cease to be a citizen of the United States. If at the termination of the marital status she is a citizen of the United States she shall retain her citizenship, regardless of her residence." This meant that any American woman who married a Chinese would lose
her citizenship. Non-Chinese women would be able to apply for and regain their citizenship if they divorced or became widowed. But women of Chinese ancestry would never be able to regain their original legal status since Chinese were ineligible for citizenship.

Until 1924, wives of Chinese merchants and wives of American-born Chinese were allowed to enter the country for permanent residence, although wives of Chinese laborers were barred. After passage of the 1924 immigration Act, no Chinese women were allowed to enter the United States for the purpose of permanent residence. In 1925, the Supreme Court ruled that merchants' wives were admissible. Five years later, an amendment to the Cable Act also permitted the entry of alien wives who had been married to United States citizens prior to 1924.

**Anti-miscegenation Laws**

States forbidding marriages between whites and people of color, including Chinese, were Arizona, California, Georgia, Idaho, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, South Dakota, Utah, Virginia, and Wyoming. At least one official interpreted the law to include anyone who was part Caucasian, thus preventing a Chinese man in Utah from marring a black woman that the official considered mulatto. In some states these laws were not struck down until the United States Supreme Court decision in 1967.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bourne, P.G.

Charge, Pao-Min

Fong, Stanley L. M.

Lyman, L.M.

McCunn, Ruthanne Lum

Nishi, Setsuko Matsunaga

Smith, David L
Sue, Stanley, & Morishima, James K.

Tong, Ben R.

Watanabe, Colin

Wong, Angi Ma
The Heart of the Dragon
Floor Plan

Photo Gallery

- Video Projection Area (10'x10')
- GE Imager LCD Video Projector
- Audio Unit (see slide #11)
- Movable Wall
- Black Seamless Paper
- Sign-in Table
- Exhibition Title & Credit