

CHINOISERIE – PING CHONG

Chengrui Fu

Ping Chong



- Born in Toronto and raised in Chinatown in New York City
- Contemporary theatre director, choreographer, video and installation artist
- Pioneer of interdisciplinary theatre and the integration of media

Ping Chong Career



- Visual Artist and Filmmaker at School of Visual Arts and Pratt Institute
- Studied Dance Performance with Meredith Monk – worked with his company, “The House”
- First independent theatre work, Lazarus in 1972
- Theme of "Otherness" in his work – estrangement from society
- Otherness – colonialism and collision of cultures in society, uses documentary and interview materials

Ping Chong + Company



- Founded in 1975
- “to create and tour innovative multi-disciplinary works of theater and art, which explore the intersections of history, race, art and technology in the modern world.”
- Obie Award for “Humboldt’s Current”
- “A.M/A.M the articulated man” – started Ping Chong’s interest in choreographic theatre
- Created works of dance/theatre including Angels of Swedenborg and Kind Ness

Ping Chong



- 1990's – drastic changes in his style of theatre, disbanded his old ensemble
- 1992 – Undesirable elements series – explored poetic works and documents of historical subjects
- East/West Quartet:
 - *Deshima*
 - *Chinoiserie*
 - *After Sorrow*
 - *Pojagi*
- 1998 – Ping Chong's interest in puppetry with “Kwai dan”

Ping Chong



- Created over 70 works in the Undesirable Elements project - issues revolving the race, culture and identity of people in specific communities
- “Seated Operas for the Spoken Word”
- Beyond Sacred – "Coming of age of Muslims in mist of 9/11 and islamophobia"
- 2014 – “Collidescope: Adventures in Pre- and Post-Racial America” – social injustice in America with reference to killings of Trayvon Martin
- 2016 – Baldwin/Now is a pure dance work by Ping Chong
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CT1dGwzsh_A – all islands connect underwater

Chinoiserie

- Initial thoughts on the play
- Chinoiserie?
- 90 minutes
- Impressionistic and informative theatre
- 40 sections
- East West Quartet



Actors in Chinoiserie

- Ping Chong
- Shi-Zheng Chen
- Aleta Hayes
- Michael Edo Keane
- Ric Oquita
- Music by Guy Klucevek



Themes in Chinoiserie



- What are some of the themes in Chinoiserie?
- Themes revolve around the two main stories told through the play
- China's relations with the West as the first encounter of Lord George McCartney, the trade ambassador, with Qianlong, the Emperor of China in 1793
- Story of Vincent Chin, 1982, beaten to death from an auto worker and his stepson because they thought he was Japanese

Lord George McCartney and QianLong



- McCartney Embassy in 1793
- Goals of the mission included opening new ports for British trade into China, getting a small island from China, and establishing a permanent embassy in Beijing
- British lobbied for an embassy because of the trade imbalance – fighting the canton system in China
- British demand for tea – China's demand for silk
- East India Company paid for Chinese tea using silver; they wanted to find something that the Chinese wanted

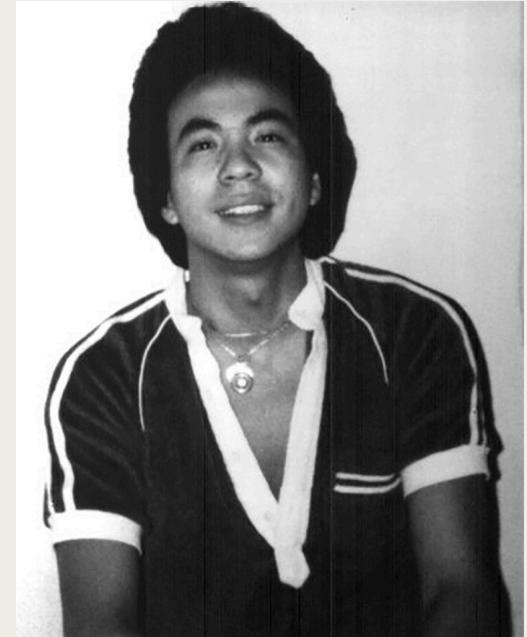
Opium Wars



- Two opium wars in the mid 1800's
- First began in 1839
- Chinese Emperor made opium illegal in early 1800's – British East India Company smuggled opium from India to China – monopoly on Opium
- Chinese began addicted and wanted more
- 1839 – Lin Tse Hsu letter to British Monarch pleading for halt of Opium was ignored
- War started from China wanting to confiscate Opium from foreign stores
- Treaty of Nanjing caused China to give Hong Kong to the U.S

Murder of Vincent Chin

- Chinese American Draftsman
- Chrysler supervisor Ronald Ebens and his son, Michael Nitz(laid off)
- Chin celebrating bachelor's party at a bar
- Accused him of success of Japan's auto industry
- Ebens and Nitz bargained down charges and pleaded guilty in 1983
- 3 years probation, \$3000 fine, no jail time
- “policeman witnessed the beating”



Chinoiserie



- Series of historical events explored as thoughts – similar to how events are when people remember something from the past
- Western abstraction with Chinese motifs
- Transformation of images
- Soundscape of Chinoiserie
- Music from Catholic Mass and American popular music

Encounters between Colonial and Post-Colonial Context

- Historical Events portrayed as a series of encounters between conflicting forces
- East/West Quartet – encounter of the present(the performers) with the past(contents of the narratives)
- Medium to observe their events and encounters
- Chinese – British relationship through key events that trigger multiple waves



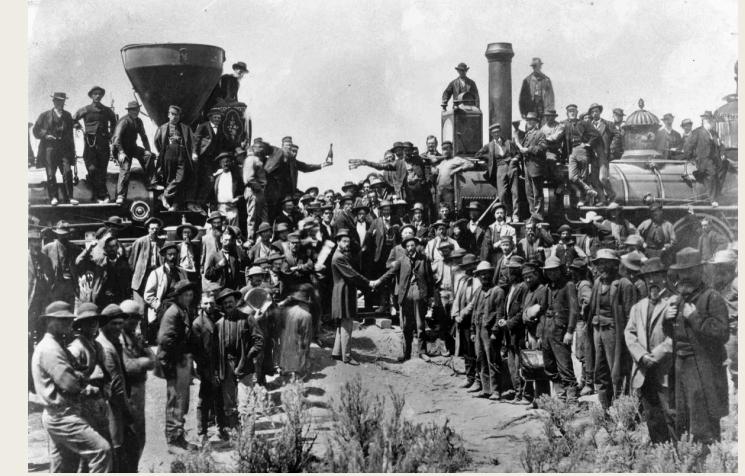
Chinoiserie



- Ritual of Kowtow – symbolic confrontation between China and the British empire
- Emperor – “the entire populations intermediary between heaven and earth” and preserve the “universal order against the forces of chaos”
- Expected Lord McCartney to Kowtow
- Lord McCartney did not Kowtow – caused problems
- Kowtow contributed to Western portrays of Chinese as barbaric and backward
- John Quincy Adams – “arrogant and insupportable pretension”

Chinoiserie

- Chinese immigrants workers in the United States
- 90 percent of the workforce in building the pacific branch of the transcontinental railroad
- “22,000 pounds of Chinese railroad worker’s bones were shipped back to China for burial”
- Photograph of key moment in which east and west railroads connected in Utah
- Photograph of everyone being white



Racial Representations

- Chong revisits racial politics and the damaging and popular racial representations of ethnic “others”
- Distorted images of Chinese that supported 19th century racist politics
- Excerpts from “The Chinese Must Go”
- Slogan of the Working Part of California – campaigned for anti-Chinese legislation



Who's History Is It?



- Racial discrimination in mid 1800's caused restriction of immigration from China
- Chong merges these ideas with the story of Vincent Chin
- Start of Asian American Activism
- Ric and Michael tell the tale of Vincent Chin in very gossipy tones – portrayed without a trace of sympathy to show voice of the media
- Included the voice of Vincent Chin's mother – new coverage only focused on the assailants and their trials

Personal Narratives

- Weaving personal stories into the play to capture large and small pictures
- Chong infuses his personal experience as a Chinese American to help the audience to better understand historical contexts of Asians
- Delivered as a lecture in the podium stage
- Standing behind a red lectern
- Peking restaurant



East West Quartet



- Poetic documentary that mixes various theatrical and poetical languages and actions
- Includes actual historical and archival documents
- Chinese opera movement – dance, movement and body language to convey meaning
- Body language to designate the difference between McCartney and Qianlong to show the encounters between east and west that would never be resolvable