

**EXHIBITING MULTICULTURALISM: CANADIAN NATIONAL IDENTITY AND THE
REPRESENTATION OF CHINESE-CANADIAN CULTURE**

by

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Abstract

Since the 1950s, the Canadian government has played a large role in the construction of a singular Canadian national identity through public institutions. In 1971, with the implementation of the Multicultural Act, the national image became focused on the portrayal of ethnic diversity and tolerance. I examine representations of Chinese-Canadian ethnic culture in select exhibitions and installations to argue that national institutions use cultural stereotypes to justify the success of the Multicultural Policy, despite categorically limiting cultural production, disciplining the population on the notion of “belonging,” and downplaying systemic racism.

I present two exhibitions in public institutions titled *Beyond the Golden Mountain* (1989-1991) at the Museum of Civilization and *Chop Suey on the Prairies* at the Royal Alberta Museum against two installations by Chinese-Canadian artists, *I am Who I am* (2001-2006) by Xiong Gu, and *Gold Mountain Restaurant* (2002-2017) by Karen Tam, to show that despite the anti-racist activism of racialized artists’ communities in the 1980s, even by the 1990s-2000s, reforms suggested by these communities have not reached certain public museums with regards to Chinese-Canadian representation. I also suggest that there may be underlying political motives which cause change, or the lack thereof, at the level of national institutions based on the political policies at the time. Through the use of public spaces such as the subway station and streets of Chinatown in Gu’s case, and a recreated restaurant space in Tam’s case, these artists work to question the approach of national institutions with regards to issues of authenticity, cultural hybridity, cultural definition, and spectacularization of ethnic culture for consumption. Their work suggests that ethnic culture cannot be constrained to the limited cultural definition and expression constructed by the government, and that the government constructed national image and identity needs to be critically assessed and questioned.

Lay Summary

This thesis considers the representation of Chinese-Canadian ethnic culture in relation to national ideas of multiculturalism between 1980-2017. By examining select exhibitions and installations, I argue that government-supported public museums such as the Museum of Civilization and Royal Alberta Museum use cultural stereotypes to downplay difficult and sensitive Chinese-Canadian immigrant history in order to justify the success of multiculturalism. In addition, I compare the public museums' approach to the alternative approaches taken by two Chinese-Canadian artists, Xiong Gu, and Karen Tam to show that through the use of unconventional public spaces, artists like Gu and Tam asks viewers to question the representation, within public museums, of Chinese-Canadian culture.

Preface

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Jade (Jue) Wang.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	iii
Lay Summary.....	iv
Preface.....	v
Table of Contents.....	vi
List of Figures.....	vii
Acknowledgements.....	ix
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: Government Institutions and the Construction of the National Identity.....	10
Chapter 2: Discipline of Ethnic Culture and Appeasement of Yellow Peril.....	23
Chapter 3: Cultural Identity and the Chinese Restaurant.....	43
Conclusion.....	56
Figures.....	59
Bibliography.....	83

List of Figures

Figure 1. “A dancer performs a traditional Chinese folk dance, Vancouver, 1982“, Autumn Moon in the Han Palace,” Beyond Golden Mountain (1989). Gatineau, QC.....	59
Figure 2. “A performance of the dragon dance in Vancouver’s Chinatown, 1968,” Beyond the Golden Mountain (1989). Gatineau, QC.....	60
Figure 3. “A lion’s head is examined before a performance of the lion dance at an international fall fair, 1960,” Beyond the Golden Mountain (1989). Gatineau, QC. Image from catalogue <i>Beyond the Golden Mountain</i> by Ban Seng Hoe.	61
Figure 4. Ban Seng Hoe, “W.H. Yuen, whose British Columbia bakery has been in his family for three generations, makes moon cakes for the Mid-Autumn Festival, 1987,” Beyond the Golden Mountain (1989). Gatineau, QC.	62
Figure 5. “The offering of a roast pig in commemoration of the dead, at the Chinese cemetery in Victoria, 1900,” Beyond the Golden Mountain (1989). Gatineau, QC.	63
Figure 6. “Sifu F. Lee, a gong fu master, demonstrates the White Crane gong fu style with a sword, Edmonton, 1976,” Beyond the Golden Mountain (1989). Gatineau, QC.....	64
Figure 7. “Chinese musicians with their friends in a Chinese church in Victoria, 1890,” Beyond the Golden Mountain (1989). Gatineau, QC.....	65
Figure 8. “Church members assemble for a group photograph in commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of Victoria’s Chinese United Church, 1935,” Beyond the Golden Mountain (1989),Gatineau, QC.....	66
Figure 9. “A Chinese work gang for the Great Northern Railway, 1909,” Beyond Golden Mountain (1989). Gatineau, QC.	67

Figure 10. “A Chinese-Canadian wedding in which the women wear traditional costumes and the men are dressed in Western attire,” *Beyond the Golden Mountain* (1989), Gatineau, QC. 68

Figure 11. “Compilation of portraits,” *Xiong Gu, I am Who I am* (2006), Toronto, ON. 69

Figure 12. “St. Patrick Station,” *Xiong Gu, I am Who I am* (2006), Toronto, ON. 70

Figure 13. “Montreal Chinatown View One,” *Xiong Gu, I am Who I am* (2001), Montreal, QC.
..... 71

Figure 14. “Montreal Chinatown View Two,” *Xiong Gu, I am Who I am* (2001), Montreal, QC.
..... 72

Figure 15. “Installation View One,” *Chop Suey on the Prairies* (2013), Edmonton, AB..... 73

Figure 16. “Installation View Two,” *Chop Suey on the Prairies* (2013), Edmonton, AB..... 74

Figure 17. “Installation View Three,” *Chop Suey on the Prairies* (2013), Edmonton, AB..... 75

Figure 18. “A historical photo of the K and P Cafe in Lethbridge, Alberta from the Glenbow Archives,” *Chop Suey on the Prairies* (2013), Edmonton, AB..... 76

Figure 19. Karen Tam, “Entrance,” *Gold Mountain Restaurant* (2004), Montreal, QC..... 77

Figure 20. Karen Tam, “Restaurant Scene,” *Gold Mountain Restaurant* (2004), Montreal, QC. 78

Figure 21. Karen Tam “Counter,” *Gold Mountain Restaurant* (2004), Montreal, QC. 79

Figure 22. Karen Tam, “Lantern,” *Gold Mountain Restaurant* (2004), Montreal, QC. 80

Figure 23. Gerald McMaster, *Savage Graces* (1994), Lethbridge, AB. 81

Figure 24. Karen Tam, “Back Kitchen,” *Gold Mountain Restaurant* (2004), Montreal, QC..... 82

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Introduction

Canada has a tumultuous past with regards to the governmental policies of race, identity, immigration and cultural representation of its peoples. Due to earlier attempts to disentangle itself from its colonial British roots, and later to distinguish itself culturally from the leviathan power of the United States, Canada has made many attempts at establishing and advocating for a singular constructed national identity.¹ The manufactured dominant identity and cultural ideals were promoted through various governmental institutions which favored certain populations and languages, while leaving much out of the picture despite the presence of a conglomerate of different races, cultures, hopes and desires for Canada. In order to advocate for a unified national identity, visual images constructed to represent Canada were promoted heavily by nationally funded institutions. From the photography projects from 1941 – 1984 of the National Film Board of Canada,² an organization that functioned as Canada's national image bank, to the national museums' exhibitions on the myth of the Canadian wilderness from the 1920s to 1970s, these federally funded methods of dissemination sought not only to legitimate governmental policies, but also to 'acculturate' ethnic populations by assigning them a place within Canadian identity even if it meant to systemically marginalize them.³ The 1970s-1980s marks a turning point in

¹ John O'Brian argues that in the early 20th century, art in Canada was a form of European subordination and colonial importation which was supported by the copying and adapting of European artistic subjects and styles. However, by the 1920s, with the support of the National Gallery of Canada, artists such as the Group of Seven and Tom Thompson began to rebel against European colonial roots to establish a national identity rooted in the wilderness painting aesthetic that is believed to be uniquely Canadian. The wilderness imagery prevailed into the 1970s through many Canadian national institutions. See John O'Brian, "Wild Art History," *Beyond Wilderness: The Group of Seven, Canadian Identity, and Contemporary Art*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 21-22.

² Carole Payne, "Lessons with Leah: re-reading the photographic archive of nation in the National Film Board of Canada's Still Photography Division," *Studies*, 21:1 (2006), 4-22.

³ O'Brian, "Wild Art History," 22-23.

Canadian history, when the concepts of racial tolerance and mutual acceptance became official national policies through the Bilingualism Act and the Multicultural Act, thus marking a moment of rapid change within funding policies and representational practices, which is my entry point into this complex topic.

Broadly speaking, this thesis sets out to examine select exhibitions and installations held between the years of 1980-2017, after the onset of the multicultural policy, to suggest that Canada has continued to construct the myth of a unified nation with a focus on ethnic diversity through various nationally funded programs and institutions despite the criticisms of structural racism that attached to this type of approach. My project specifically examines representations of Chinese-Canadian populations that have been a pivotal part of Canada's history since the late-1800s (through the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway), and how representations of Chinese populations through cultural stereotypes function to justify the success of the Multicultural Policy (1971) despite categorically limiting cultural production, disciplining the population through the notion of 'belonging,' and downplaying systemic racism of Canada's violent colonial roots. Through tracing the funding agencies and governmental policies focused on constructing and maintaining the national image such as the Massey Report (1951), Canada Council for the Arts (1957), and the Applebaum-Hébert Report (1982), I suggest that despite multiple revisions and the onset of the Multicultural Policy, museum reform at the level of the public institution with regards to Chinese-Canadian culture did not reflect the anti-racist activism of artists' communities even up to the mid-2010s. The national practices still maintained Eurocentric colonialist ideals of portraying ethnicity through the history of civilization while confining representations of minority culture to the "Other" through cultural stereotypes and commodified objects for consumption. In addition, I will compare two government funded

exhibitions with two exhibitions of community-based Chinese-Canadian artists/activists to emphasize the stark difference in the approach to ethnic representation and identity politics. In order to delve into topic, first, the rise of, and reactions to, multiculturalism must be re-assessed as multiculturalism plays a pivotal role in the changes in national arts funding agencies as well as the representation of the Canadian identity.

The term multiculturalism can have a plethora of definitions, however, I will use the Canadian government's definition of multiculturalism which is that all Canadians, regardless of their racial or ethnic origins, their language, or their religious affiliation, are considered equal: "Multiculturalism ensures that all citizens can keep their identities, can take pride in their ancestry and have a sense of belonging [...] Multiculturalism encourages racial and ethnic harmony and cross-cultural understanding."⁴ In addition, I will at various times refer to ethnic minorities as "the Other" in reference to Edward Said's 1978 book *Orientalism*, where he describes the perspective of a binary opposition between Occidental (West) versus Oriental (East) from the European point of view which he most heavily attributes to the British and French.⁵ Said ascribes the historical construct of the Other to the need for European knowledge and culture to dominate and control foreign cultures in order to justify the imperialist and colonialist system of rule.⁶ Thus, the Other is a Eurocentric idea fabricated through a hegemonic process that inaccurately represents non-European culture and races in order to reduce them to

⁴ "Canadian Multiculturalism: An Inclusive Citizenship," 10 Dec. 2014
<<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/multiculturalism/citizenship.asp>>

⁵ While Said attributes the Oriental East to mostly Middle Eastern cultures, I use the term "the Other" to highlight the underlying principle emphasizing the notion of the constructed superiority of White, male, Europeans against all other races subjected to colonial practices. See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1978), 12.

⁶ *Ibid*, 14-15.

subjects suitable for colonial control and domination.⁷ This term is apt in describing the representations of minority cultures through my analysis of the institutional portrayal of multiculturalism.

I will examine the rise of Canada's multiculturalism policy in relation the representation of cultural diversity by the Canadian government in order to suggest that this model continues to perpetuate colonial and racist ideals through endowing recognition upon minorities. As seen in Irving Abella and Harold Troper's statistical analysis of immigration patterns in Canada, Canada, it can be argued, has always been selective, favouring immigrants that share Eurocentric Canadian ideals while excluding all others.⁸ Abella and Troper argue that admitting too many different kinds of immigrants that are alien to the country would disrupt the Canadian cultural fabric.⁹ Similarly, Neil Bissoondath has argued that multicultural practices tend to fragment the country through cultural categorization.¹⁰ He proposes that Canada should shift its focus onto the commonality of ideals of its population rather than skin color or ethnicity. However, his argument oversimplifies the relationship between race and identity that has already been established by centuries of colonial history and cannot easily be written away by focusing on common ideals. In an anthology of essays titled *Navigating Multiculturalism: Negotiating Change*, edited by Dawn Zinga, the authors acknowledge that multiculturalism is moving towards a model of racelessness similar to Bissoondath's proposal; however, they also highlight the systemic issues of such an approach. For example, this model has a tendency to homogenize

⁷ Ibid, 44.

⁸ Irving Abella and Harold Troper, *None is Too Many* (Toronto: Lester Publishing, 1991), xxii-xxiii.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Neil Bissoondath, *Selling Illusions: The Cult of Multiculturalism in Canada* (Toronto: Penguin, 1994).

culture based on the idea of the ethnic “Other” in addition to various other problems, such as the concepts of integration and acculturation. On the other hand, Richard Day argues that the multicultural policy is a myth created to cover the ongoing history of colonial violence.¹¹ He traces the theory of the state to explain the construction of human difference and its management based on the fantasy of unity of the nation state. In this framework, according to him, multiculturalism is an extenuation of the European drive to manage and control diversity. Keeping the different strains of critique of multiculturalism in mind, my aim is to evaluate the ideology of multiculturalism in its manifestation in public institutions and organizations focused on the construction of culture, such as museums, to argue that despite the ongoing debates around museum reform and anti-racist activism, provincial and national museums continue to perpetuate dominant colonial ideals as official practice.

To contextualize museum practices, I will take into account Tony Bennett’s seminal writing on the educational and authoritative power of museums and other governmental institutions through tracing the Canadian government’s ongoing attempt to control cultural production since the in 1950s, despite discourses around museum reform circulating since the 1980s advocating for community-based practices. Ruth Phillips, on the other hand, argues that there is vital agency of museums in spurring on social, policy and institutional change. Her analysis focuses on the changing government attitudes towards Indigenous representation with museums as both the beneficiary and sponsor of these changes through the discussion of a few key exhibitions and controversial events. Through postcolonial discussions of empowerment, she promotes hybridity and collaborative practices as a model for cross-cultural understanding and

¹¹ Richard Day, *Multiculturalism and the History of Canadian Diversity* (Toronto: Toronto Press Inc, 2000), 5-15.

mutual inclusion and respect. In addition, Monika Kin Gagnon and Richard Fung, in their 2002 edited collection *13 conversations about art and cultural race politics*, trace the mobilization of racialized artists, critics and curators against the dominant structures of production and representation in Canada from the 1980s to 2000s. They see alternative platforms such as interruptions within museums and changes in policy as ways in which intercommunity dialogue is generated, and power is returned to the underrepresented. However, issues within both Phillips and Gagnon/Fung remain unaddressed, such as the critique of the hybrid model of museum representation as potentially in line with the Canadian national imaginary of a mutually beneficial relationship that suppresses the history of colonial oppression. In addition, as proposed by Andrea Fatona, there are also issues with an all-inclusive, all-encompassing approach to the fight for equal rights.¹² The risk is that some colonial hierarchies have been re-inscribed into this approach due to not recognizing that different voices and needs must be addressed for different communities. As discussed by Susan Ashley in relation to the changing representations of Indigenous populations discussed by Phillips, those that are mixed race and even entire mixed race groups, such as the Métis, are left out of the conversation for not fitting neatly into the Indigenous categories of reform.¹³ In addition, in Ashley's most recent book, *A Museum in Public: Revisioning Canada's Royal Ontario Museum*, published in 2019, she questions the assertion that museums have reformed to become more representative, relevant, and open in their methodology and operations. By analyzing the architectural revamp and the new vision for the Royal Ontario Museum, she argues that museums often attempt to mediate the needs of the

¹² Andrea Fatona, "Andrea Fatona," *13 conversations about art and cultural race politics* (Montreal: Artex, 2002), 36-41.

¹³ Susan Ashley, "First Nations on View: Canadian Museums and Hybrid Representations on Culture," *eTopia* (March 2005): 38.

public with corporate and managerial interests, which incites the question of whether ideal practices of engagement are even administratively possible in these institutions.

Based on my findings, while certain reforms such as the inclusion of more community-based practices are pertinent, these changes are mostly reflected in the government attitudes towards populations that have triggered great national and international political pressure. Thus, despite the changes made to government policy to increase underrepresented populations and practices, the funding and policies are not applied proportionally, as I will later discuss in relation to my case study exhibitions. In fact, at a national and provincial level, Indigenous communities appear to be at the forefront of museum reforms while other ethnicities such as Chinese-Canadians are often less visible. In addition, by the 1990-2000s, funding cuts and the turn toward corporate sponsorships and digital technologies of display further distracted museums from the antiracist activities of the 1970s-1980s.¹⁴ In order to approach the issue of multicultural national ideals in state representation, a review of multicultural policy in the Canadian context is necessary.

Multiculturalism emerged from a colonial past paired with the global intolerance of racism that began to arise around 1960s. Historically, multiculturalism began as an effort to establish Canada's national identity and economy stemming from European colonial roots. As Bissoondath argues, multiculturalism is a product of Canada's colonial past and a means to try to decolonialize the country.¹⁵ In 1931, the Statute of Westminster gave Canada full control over its foreign and domestic policy, thereby giving Canada a sense of nationhood where Canadians

¹⁴ Andrea Fatona, "Arts Funding, the State and Canadian Nation-Making Producing Governable Subjects," *Critical Inquiries: A Reader in Studies of Canada*, Eds. Lynn Caldwell, Carianne Leung and Darryl Leroux (Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2013), 37-45.

¹⁵ Bissoondath, *Selling Illusions*, 30.

began to seek ways to establish a unique identity for Canada to distinguish it from Britain.¹⁶ However, the underlying British ideologies of race, class and religion were still maintained in this process.¹⁷ Also, complicating the matter from the beginning was the presence of not only non-white, non-European populations such as the First Nations Peoples, Chinese labourers, and Japanese fishermen, to name a few, but also non-dominant streams of white populations, such as the French and Eastern Europeans. In order to accommodate these differences in the cultural fabric of Canada, first the Official Languages Act (1969) formally allowed bilingualism and thus recognition of both English and French origins of the country, then the Multicultural Act (1971) attempted to recognize all populations, at least in name.

During the 1960s, Canada's neighbouring country, the United States of America, saw a wave of liberal ethics such as the rally for equality inspired by Martin Luther King Jr. and the Kennedy brothers. The North American rally for equal rights, citizenship and protection for all races affected Canada no less than the United States since Canada was being criticized for its racist governmental policies that favored certain populations.¹⁸ Canada was reminded of many events of the past and present, such as efforts to control certain populations like the Indigenous, Chinese, Japanese and non-Europeans. For example, from 1885 to 1923, a \$50-\$250 "head tax" was required for ethnic Chinese people to enter the country, and after 1923, they were banned from entering the country altogether through the Chinese Exclusion Act.¹⁹ In a study of Canada's racial policies by Abella and Troper, they conclude that "Canada's government still enforced a

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid, 30-35.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ There are a few exceptions to the ban which included clergymen and certain businessmen. "Immigration: Chinese Exclusion Act," 18 Dec. 2014
<<http://www.library.ubc.ca/chineseinbc/exclusion.html>>

restrictive immigration policy with unabashed racial and ethnic priorities [...] Jews, Asians and blacks did not fit the national vision.”²⁰ In fact, as documented in a study by Walid Chahal, in the early 1960s, 90 percent of immigrants in Canada were from European countries.²¹ It was not until 1967, a few years prior to the implementation of a national multicultural policy, that Chinese immigrants were allowed into Canada through the newly implemented points-based system of the Immigration Act, supposedly “remov[ing] all formal criteria of preference based upon race, nationality or ethnicity.”²² However, this skill-oriented system outlines a completely different set of problems such as the heavy-handed government control over the concept of the ideal immigrant with emphasis on six categories of virtue: language, education, work experience, arranged employment, and adaptability.²³ Moreover, multicultural ideas do not appear to apply consistently to all populations, evidenced by the questionable introduction of the Investor Immigration Program in 1986 which allowed those with investment resources of 1.6 million dollars or more to bypass most of the immigration requirements in the name of expanding gross domestic product. These changes in immigration policy necessitated the management of a larger and more diverse population within Canada, which I would suggest, partially explains the focus on promoting multicultural national representation in order to appease the demands of both ethnic populations and the anxieties of the dominant population.

²⁰ Irving Abella and Harold Troper, *None is Too Many*, xxii-xxiii.

²¹ Walid Chahal, “Multicultural Education and Policy Making,” *Navigating Multiculturalism: Negotiating Change* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006), 100.

²² Doreen M. Indra, “Changes in Canadian Immigration Patterns Over the Past Decade With Special Reference to Asia,” *Visible Minorities and Multiculturalism: Asians in Canada* (Scarborough: Butterworths, 1980), 164.

²³ “Six selection factors – Federal Skilled Worker Program (Express Entry),” 5 Nov. 2020 <<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/immigrate-canada/express-entry/eligibility/federal-skilled-workers/six-selection-factors-federal-skilled-workers.html>>

National institutions and organizations became one of the obvious choices in spearheading the changes in in the new culturally diverse view of Canada as it had already been deeply involved in portraying Canada's national image since the Massey Report of 1951 and further concretized by the policies governing arts production of the Canada Council for the Arts. Thus, with the new focus on multicultural diversity, I would argue that national museums renewed their efforts to promote exhibitions that conveyed the image of a peaceful, tolerant and accepting country for all races and ethnicities.

Chapter 1: Government Institutions and the Construction of the National Identity

In order to explain the pivotal role of the museum on the new multicultural national identity, I will outline the history of the national museum and Canada's arts funding agencies and how they became authoritative sources of cultural representation that informed the population on the official Canadian narrative and policy. In addition, I will trace the anti-racist activism that occurred within the 1970s and 1980s that attempted to push Canadian institutions to reform. However, I argue that despite widespread activism from artists, museum reform on a provincial and national level were not only slow to take place, but favoured populations and racial issues that received greater international political attention while both under-representing and downplaying issues related to other minorities. Moreover, in addition to the lack of structural change at the institutional level, such as the continued focus on anthropological displays rather than artist-based works and ethnocultural communities, budget-cuts greatly affected communities attempting to push back against deficiencies within the system.

The authority of the museum institution and its educational power stems from 19th century Europe where two strategies were employed to create the current museum structure, in

which dominant perspectives of the national narrative are displayed.²⁴ First of all, archeological collections were defined to create the universal history of civilization; secondly, universal histories were annexed into national collections and explained as the outcome of the development of civilization to the modern nation.²⁵ Tony Bennett writes that “museums, galleries...[and] exhibitions played a pivotal role in the formation of the modern state and are fundamental to its conception...[of] a set of educative and civilizing agencies” with priority with regard to funding in all developed nation-states.²⁶ The authority of the museum is further justified in literature at the time by evolving scientific knowledge, which is used to ground the comparison of differences between species, cultures and peoples. At the same time, social hierarchies are established with “Man” (dominant, European, white, male) as the primary subject and “Others” positioned outside of the dominant history, such as women and so-called “primitives” (a derogatory category often used to describe minorities and Native populations in the 19th and 20th century).²⁷ Moreover, museums also provided a hierarchical linear progression of evolution, which placed “Others” somewhere in the evolutionary timeline to indicate that they were less developed and thus can be categorized as inferior sub-species of Man, or “primitives”.²⁸ According to Timothy Mitchell, museums began to be seen as representative of the world from a distanced and objective perspective, especially in the case of foreign cultures such as the Orient.²⁹ I would argue that these European historic notions were the exact ideals

²⁴ Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London: Routledge, 2005), 76-77.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid, 66.

²⁷ Ibid, 46.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Timothy Mitchell, “Orientalism and the Exhibitionary Order,” Donald Preziosi, eds. *The Art of Art History: a Critical Anthology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 409-423.

embodied by the Canadian government in the 1940s and 1950s in order to not only create, but also administer a national image in the arts and humanities through the Massey Commission and the establishment of the Canada Council for the Arts.

In the 1940s and 1950s, Canada wanted to position itself as a unique nation separate from that of Europe, but that also had European historic roots (Anglophone, British) and values.³⁰ As Paul Litt argues, these aims were necessary in Canadian culture in order to prevent the take-over of American popular and mass culture.³¹ Thus, the Canadian Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences (also known as the Massey Commission) was created in order to investigate and report on this issue. In 1951, the Massey Report declared an urgent need for a state-defined national culture not only with regard to politics and economics but also in the production of culture and the arts. The report proposed that the government needed to control the administration of public funds in the social sciences, humanities and arts with an emphasis on non-profit organizations, universities and the public radio.³² The government accepted the proposal to increase funding to universities and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and to establish the National Library of Canada, the National Film Board and the Canada Council for the Arts.³³ However, upon closer examination of the Massey Report, the class, racial and religious biases, which were to dominate cultural expression in Canada until the present day, can be identified early on.

³⁰ Andrew Horrall, "'A Century of Canadian Art': the Tate Gallery exhibition of 1938," *British Journal of Canadian Studies* 27:2 (2014): 149-162.

³¹ Paul Litt, "The Massey Commission, Americanization, and Canadian Cultural Nationalism," *Queen's Quarterly*, 98:2 (1991): 375-387.

³² Albert Shea, *Culture in Canada: A study of the findings of the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences* (Toronto: Associated Printers Ltd, 1952), 65.

³³ *Ibid.*

First of all, all of the members of the Massey Commission except one were drawn from the cultural elite of the homogenously male, well-educated, white and politically affiliated.³⁴ Susan Crean argues that the report “may be regarded as the effort of an elite class of patrons to preserve its own cultural forms by transforming them into Official Culture.”³⁵ Thus, this report not only stems from Anglocentric conservative ideals, which were criticized by Francophone Canada, but also “raises issues surrounding the presumption of an official national art and the institutional authentication of culture.”³⁶ In addition, the outcome of the Massey Report justified the government’s glorification of certain collections and curators which can be felt to this day through many national institutions’ outdated museum mandates supported by a wealthy class of patrons. Alexander Alberro has argued that often a small group of people, including the board of trustees, art critics, directors, curators, and art dealers, systemically controls the artistic and cultural production which inherently reflects biases due to upbringing, educational background, and political stance.³⁷ Zainub Verjee also writes in *Canadian Art* magazine that the Massey Report’s outdated 1950s model of entitled aesthetics and dismissal of artists’ communities and activism is clearly not sufficient for Canadian culture in the 21st century, yet these ideas continue to proliferate.³⁸ Moreover, all non-English, non-French and non-Native populations are placed under the ethnic “Other” category and erased from the palette that symbolizes the

³⁴ Fatona, “Arts Funding, the State and Canadian Nation-Making Producing Governable Subjects,” 37.

³⁵ Susan Crean, *Who’s Afraid of Canadian Culture?: report of a study on the diffusion of the performing and exhibiting arts in Canada* (Toronto: York University Press, 1973), 10.

³⁶ Sandra Paikowsky, “Constructing an Identity: The 1952 XXVI Biennale di Venezia and “The Projection of Canada Abroad”” *Journal of Canadian Art History*, Archive Volume XX (1999): 131.

³⁷ Alexander Alberro, “institutions, critique and institutional critique,” *Institutional Critique and anthology of artists’ writings* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2009): 7.

³⁸ Zainub Verjee, “The Great Canadian Amnesia,” *Canadian Art*, June 2018, <<https://canadianart.ca/essays/massey-report-the-great-canadian-amnesia/>>

nation.³⁹ To further perpetuate the problem of the official national narrative, an official national arts funding organization was created in order to support or control production in the arts based on the governmental policy of the day. While the Canada Council has evolved and re-assessed its funding efforts many times, I would suggest that it has not generally deviated significantly from conservative Eurocentric ideals which portray ethnic minorities as the “Other” through attempts to control, contain and perhaps exploit them in order to justify the national policy.

The Canada Council for the Arts, Canada’s national arts funder, stemmed directly out of the Massey Report in 1957. Its aim is to “foster and promote the study and enjoyment of, and the production of works in the arts.”⁴⁰ The Canada Council receives an annual appropriation from the Parliament along with other national institutions such as the National Film Board, Museum of Civilization, and National Gallery. Moreover, the Council is “assigned full responsibility, through the Canada Council Act for its policies, programs and the expenditure of its funds.”⁴¹ In addition, the Canada Council determines the inclusion and exclusion list of what and who should receive funding. In the beginning, the largest amount of support went to established Western European disciplines such as theatre, music, ballet, painting, sculpture, and literature, and key organizations that are seen to represent the country nationally such as the Montreal Symphony Orchestra, the National Ballet Guild of Canada, the Stratford Shakespearean Festival, and the Banff School of Fine Arts.⁴² Thus, local, community-based artists and organizations were largely left out. In the 1970s, with the adoption of multiculturalism, community-based organizations representing ethnic minorities sought to access funding through the Council that were aimed to

³⁹ Fatona, “Arts Funding, the State and Canadian Nation-Making,” 40.

⁴⁰ “Canada Council for the Arts” 9 Nov. 2020

<<https://appointments.gc.ca/prflOrg.asp?OrgID=CCL&lang=eng>>

⁴¹ Fatona, “Arts Funding, the State and Canadian Nation-Making,” 42.

⁴² Ibid.

build and celebrate all cultures within Canada. However, while the organizations' aims were to create cultural productions that demonstrated the hyphenated and hybrid nature of Canadian identity, they were instead encouraged to produce nostalgic narratives of their traditions as tied to their place of origin.⁴³ While certain areas of the Council did eventually expand to include support for smaller galleries, new media, and women artists, the main outcome of funding for ethnic art forms was to tour the cultural differences and stereotypes defined by the Council.⁴⁴ While by the 1980s and 1990s, as a result of the criticism by anti-racist activists, artists and the widening implementation of multicultural policy, some changes were made to the Canada Council, I would like to reiterate that changes to more inclusive practices were not implemented within many national institutions such as certain museums even up until the 2000s, especially with respect to ethnic minorities outside of the Indigenous category.

During the 1980s to 1990s, the ideas of multiculturalism in Canada as well as the cultural politics of representation began to be questioned by artists and activists through the proliferation of protests, conferences, artist-run exhibitions, and arts festivals. With respect to Chinese-Canadian representation, Asian-Canadians wanted to consciously bring attention to and access spaces that make these communities visible.⁴⁵ According to Xiaoping Li's 2007 book *Rising Voices: Asian Canadian Cultural Activism*, Asian-Canadians or those that identify themselves as such sought to "foster a collective Asian-Canadian identity, and to intervene in nation building by pushing for structural and discursive changes in the cultural sphere."⁴⁶ By working with other

⁴³ Ibid, 44.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Victoria Nolte, "Artist and Activist Networks: Constituting Asian Canadian Contemporary Art in the 1980s and 90s" *Artex*, August 2018 <<https://artex.ca/en/articles/artist-and-activist-networks-constituting-asian-canadian-contemporary-art-in-the-1980s-and-90s/>>

⁴⁶ Xiaoping Li, *Rising Voices: Asian Canadian Cultural Activism* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), 11.

under-represented groups, Indigenous, Black-Canadian and Asian-Canadian minorities joined together to rally against the structural racism of Canadian institutions representing culture and the exclusion of racialized artistic practices.⁴⁷ Cultural theorist Monika Kin Gagnon writes that during this time artists sought to challenge “who defines and determines cultural value” and how the government’s representation of culture purposefully erased or downplayed the effects of colonialism, racism and exclusion.⁴⁸ Despite the push for museum reform from artist communities, I would argue that while government institutions such as the Canada Council acknowledged the underpinnings of anti-racist ideas, reforms at the national museum level were slow or non-existent as these institutions continued to act as tools to disseminate political ideology and the national narrative. I will provide brief examples of three pivotal exhibitions in relation to Indigenous communities, Black-Canadian communities and Asian-Canadian communities between 1988-1991 to emphasize that minority voices are not equally heard or acknowledged by the government. In fact, reforms appear to be linked to political pressure felt by the government depending on the hot topic of the day and more often than not, racial issues are written away with symbolic gestures of apology rather than action.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Monika Kin Gagnon, *Other Conundrums: Race Culture and Canadian Art* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2000), 23.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 22-24.

⁴⁹ For example, on June 11, 2008, Prime Minister Stephen Harper apologized on behalf of the Canadian government to all the Indigenous communities that suffered the abuse, cultural dislocation and assimilation of government sanctioned residential schools. However, despite existing arguments that there is restorative value in government apologies even if they are somewhat performative and used for political purposes, others such as Jan Lofstrom have also argued that apologies can also perpetuate systemic exclusion by the government through the emphasis of the apologies on behalf of “our history” and “our nation.” In fact, some members of the Indigenous communities criticized the apology in the lack of consultation with the communities and survivors and failing to acknowledge the persistent effects of such practices. See “Government Apology to Former Students of Indian Residential Schools” 26 Nov. 2020 <<https://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/government-apology-to-former-students-of-indian-residential-schools>> and Jan Lofstrom, “Historical apologies as acts of symbolic inclusion

In 1990, *Yellow Peril: Reconsidered* was curated by multimedia artist Paul Wong at the Oboro Gallery in Montreal. This exhibition was one of the first in Canada to focus on Asian artists of Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese and Filipino descent. The exhibition traces the racial and political difficulties of arrival and settlement in Canada. In addition, the exhibition title asks the audience to reconsider the idea of ‘Yellow Peril’, a term created in the early 20th century to describe the existential threat to white people by those of Asian descent (deemed as lower class and less civilized), and the anxiety and fear surrounding inter-racial interactions.⁵⁰ Wong has argued that despite the grouping of Asian-Canadians into a single visible minority, the language and cultural problems within this specific ethnic groups are enormous. “There is hostility and misunderstanding between native and nonnative borns, the assimilated and the not-so-assimilated, [and] those whose native tongue is English [and] those whose is not.”⁵¹ In addition, Wong pushes for artistic exchange within communities, one that involves borrowing aesthetic and conceptual techniques in response to diasporic experiences and strategies of resistance.⁵² The exhibition featured film, video, and photo-based artworks that focused on the Asian new world conscious and experience. While this exhibition is noted as “ground-breaking,”⁵³ and travelled nationally including to Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Halifax, Vancouver and Ottawa, its exhibition approach was not taken up by national institutions in the

– and exclusion? Reflections on institutional apologies as politics of cultural citizenship,” *Citizenship Studies* 15:1 (2011): 93-108.

⁵⁰ Michael Odijie, “The Fear of ‘Yellow Peril’ and the Emergence of European Federalist Movement,” *The International History Review* 40:2 (2018): 358-363.

⁵¹ Paul Wong, *Yellow Peril: Reconsidered* (Vancouver: On Edge on the Cutting Edge, 1990), 8.

⁵² *Ibid*, 12.

⁵³ Victoria Nolte et al, “Tracing Asian Canadian Art Histories and Aesthetic Alliances,” *EHAR@Artexte*, April 2015: 1-2.

years that followed.⁵⁴ Moreover, even more jarring is that despite the ruminations of anti-racist ethnic movements since the 1970s, and Wong's highly acclaimed installation in 1990, it was only by 1989-1991 that the Museum of Civilization held its first exhibition in the Cultural Traditions Hall dedicated to Chinese-Canadians.⁵⁵ This exhibition, titled *Beyond the Golden Mountain: Chinese Cultural Traditions in Canada*, which I will analyze in chapter two, fully conformed to the outdated anthropological approach of the dominant versus the "Other," erasure of difficult histories, perpetuation of racial stereotypes and refusal to acknowledge injustices in the system. Perhaps the biggest challenge in ethnic representation is what Paul Wong summarizes as follows: "to be understood [as an ethnic minority], we must first be heard."⁵⁶

Another monumental exhibition close in time to Wong's exhibition is titled *Black Wimmin: When and Where We Enter* in 1989 at A Space Gallery in Toronto, which subsequently travelled to Ottawa, Victoria, Halifax and Montreal. The exhibition included sculpture, constructions, music, poetry, fabric, and movement that documented African diasporic imagery such as a textile installation by Winsom (a multimedia female Canadian-Jamaican artist), a papier-mâché map of Africa bound by chains, and a series of paintings set inside a muslin tent.⁵⁷ The artists brought to attention the colonial racial issues faced by Black-Canadians through a process of self-authorization, site-specific critical resistance, and the creation of artistic networks that challenged the Eurocentric aesthetics of representation.⁵⁸ Even more importantly, it marked

⁵⁴ Anne Rosenberg, "Icons of identity: Yellow Peril Reconsidered holds up a mirror to society on issues of color, ethnicity, racism, and sexuality from Asian Canadian experience" *Vancouver Sun* May 25, 1991: D6.

⁵⁵ Sarah Jennings, "Museum's Chinese Exhibit is Tale of the Sparrow and the Elephant," *The Globe and Mail*, Sept 9 1989: C9.

⁵⁶ Wong, 7.

⁵⁷ Alice Ming Wai Jim, "Making an Entrance," *Canadian Art*, Spring 2020

<<https://canadianart.ca/essays/making-an-entrance-black-wimmin-when-and-where-we-enter/>>

⁵⁸ Ibid.

the introduction of Black women artists into the Canadian art scene.⁵⁹ Yet, in an interview with Buseje Bailey in 2002, the curator of *Black Wimmin* and a follow up exhibition titled *Women's Work: Black Women in the Visual Arts* in 1997, she indicates that the situation has gotten worse since 1989 despite the effort of racialized artists. The structural and funding difficulties of anti-racist artists' endeavours makes the process appear rather bleak. Bailey indicates that between the late 1980s and the 2000s artists and activist communities faced significant obstacles of sustainable funding and support from various governmental organizations aimed at broadening cultural diversity due to budget-cuts.⁶⁰ Moreover, institutions and community links often had to adapt their mandates to fit government solutions in order to sustain operations and therefore, many resources dried out for artists trying to challenge the system. While Bailey's exhibition was applauded, the Royal Ontario Museum, a provincial institution, was displaying an appallingly racist work on the portrayal of Black populations titled *Into the Heart of Africa* in the same year. Despite protests against the exhibition, it was not taken down nor modified during the year of its exhibition. In fact, the Royal Ontario Museum did not issue an apology for all of 27 years before admitting to the racist and colonial representations in 2016.⁶¹ Gagnon also references other instances of denial from organizations that closely interact with government authorities, despite activist efforts such as a series of four-year national conferences on race between 1989 and 1994. For example, in the 1992 conference titled *About Face, About Frame*, through discussions of employment equity in the film industry, Gagnon concluded that

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Alice Ming Wai Jim, "Articulating Spaces of Representation: Contemporary Black Women Artists in Canada," *Towards an African Canadian Art History: Art, Memory and Resistance* (Concord: Captus Press, 2019), 355.

⁶¹ Mike Crawley, "Royal Ontario Museum apologies over racist exhibit...27 years later," *CBC News* 18 Nov. 2020 <<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/rom-apology-into-heart-africa-royal-ontario-museum-1.3840645>>

employment equity and job creation programs are considered baggage for the industry where the quality of work and job opportunities for white employees are threatened despite the ongoing pledge to support racial diversity on the surface.⁶² In addition, some of the organizations involved, such as the Association of National Non-Profit Artists Centres (ANNPAC), refused to recognize their role in propagating racist policies even though they were clearly identified.⁶³ Instead, ANNPAC argued that as they had proposed to include an equity coordinator, a symbolic gesture as argued by Gagnon, their intentions towards diversity were addressed despite being a predominantly white organization that excluded other ethnicities.⁶⁴ Thus, as Gagnon suggests, these tokenistic gestures towards equity are insufficient if the systemically racist underlying ideas are not challenged.⁶⁵ Alice Ming Wai Jim also acknowledges that while exhibitions such as those curated by Bailey are crucial in negotiating the process of representing minorities, many gaps still remain yet to be filled.⁶⁶

Finally, one of the exhibitions that had a significant impact on government policies was *The Spirit Sings: Artistic Traditions of Canada's First Peoples* in 1988. The exhibition on Indigenous art was delivered as one of the showcases for the Calgary Winter Olympics at the Glenbow Museum. The exhibition focused on the cultural appropriation of Indigenous artifacts while receiving sponsorship from Shell Canada Ltd, an oil company that was drilling on the Lubicon Cree Nation territory.⁶⁷ Glenbow Museum accepted the funding despite the provincial

⁶² Monika Kin Gagnon, *Other Conundrums: Race, Culture and Canadian Art* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2000), 61-62.

⁶³ Ibid, 63-64.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 63-68.

⁶⁶ Jim, "Making an Entrance."

⁶⁷ Ruth Phillips, "Moment of Truth: The Spirit Sings as Critical Event and the Exhibition Inside It," *Museum Pieces: Toward the Indigenization of Canadian Museums* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2011), 49.

and federal inaction on land claims due to the occupancy of oil companies such as Shell, which resulted in the displacement of the Lubicon people.⁶⁸ The exhibition was boycotted by many Indigenous communities nation-wide and caused museum donors to withdraw from the exhibition.⁶⁹ In addition, the structural deficiency which allowed non-Indigenous figures of power such as curators and educators to interpret and represent Indigenous cultures reverberated within the national and international community, thus, I would argue, pressuring the government to address issues of museum reform.

By the late 1980s a multicultural committee was created within the Canada Council in the attempt to form a long-term strategic plan to facilitate the inclusion of First Nations artists. The Racial Equity Committee made up of racialized artists was created in 1990, with programs geared towards Indigenous artists in theatre, music, visual arts, media arts, and dance. Some programs addressing culturally diverse artists were also created; however, by 1993 funding cuts began due to the Parliament's aim to "amalgamate or eliminate forty-six agencies and/or commissions."⁷⁰ The funding cuts further signalled a change to top-down governance of the Canada Council, which also resulted in a number of lay-offs and artists leaving due to the unfair model of control.⁷¹ Fatona argues that despite many reiterations of cultural diversity with emphasis on issues such as restructuring and reforms of program delivery, budget cuts and market-like reforms dominated changes in the Council in the mid- to late-1990s. Ultimately, the

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Fatona, "Arts Funding, the State and Canadian Nation-Making" 50.

⁷⁰ Clive Robertson, *Policy Matters: Administrations of Art and Culture* (Toronto: YYZ Press, 2006), 118.

⁷¹ Fatona, 50.

Canada Council for the Arts transformed to take on the practices of the corporate world, without solely focusing on racial issues of representation.⁷²

By examining the methodology of the Canadian Museum of Civilization (renamed the Canadian Museum of History in 2013), and the Royal Alberta Museum, both funded by the government in the coming chapters, I would argue that both institutions continue to practice the outdated model of portraying Chinese minorities with racial and colonial biases as perpetuated by the Massey Report despite the artist communities' call for reform. Moreover, I suggest that both institutions are prime examples of museum curatorial methods which emphasize government aims to establish political ideologies of multiculturalism. The Canadian Museum of Civilization's mandate is "to enhance Canadians' knowledge, understanding and appreciation of events, experiences, people and objects that reflect and have shaped Canada's history and identity, and also to enhance their awareness of world history and cultures."⁷³ Moreover, their website boasts that they own "more than 4 million artifacts, specimens, works of art, and sound and visual recordings," as if to equate the quantity of object ownership to a more complete and accurate representation of historical knowledge.⁷⁴ Similarly "the Royal Alberta Museum collects, preserves, researches, interprets and exhibits specimens and objects related to the heritage of Alberta's people and natural environment."⁷⁵ Thus, both institutions attempt to present an anthropological history of civilization in relation to the national identity of Canada through object collections. In addition, both institutions indicate that they are advocating for their interpretation of Canadian history in order to enhance the knowledge of Canadians. Thus, in

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ "About the Museum" 10 Oct. 2020 <<https://www.historymuseum.ca/about/the-museum/#tabs>>

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ "Collections" 10 Oct. 2020 <<https://royalalbertamuseum.ca/collections>>

these mandates the self-proclaimed educational authority of the institutions is clearly displayed. As Caitlin Gordon-Walker argues, the national museum has an inherent political agenda despite masquerading as a source of universal truth and representational completeness.⁷⁶ Furthermore, the mandates can be interpreted as an attempt to educate the visitor on the biased “truth” of Canadian history, instead of acknowledging a specifically curated perspective with potential political motives. As Linda Nochlin writes, “in actuality, as we all know, things as they are and as they have been, in the arts as in a hundred other areas, are stultifying, oppressive, and discouraging to all those, women among them, who did not have the good fortune to be born white, preferably middle class, and above all, male. The fault lies not in our stars...but in our institutions and our education.”⁷⁷ In my interpretation, within the context of the multicultural policy, these institutions attempt to control the dominant history of progress within the nation at the expense of the minority populations’ history, which is portrayed through cultural stereotypes and spectacles.

Chapter 2: Discipline of Ethnic Culture and Appeasement of Yellow Peril

In this chapter, I would like to compare two very different exhibitions, the first ever Chinese-Canadian exhibition in the Cultural Traditions Hall of the Museum of Civilization, and a publicly installed exhibition by first generation Chinese-Canadian artist Xiong Gu, to evaluate the racial stereotypes, constraints on ethnic cultural definition and colonial history perpetuated by the official narrative of multiculturalism, yet challenged by the artist. While both exhibitions

⁷⁶ Caitlin Gordon-Walker, *Exhibiting Nation: Multicultural Nationalism (and Its Limits) in Canada's Museums* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017), 26.

⁷⁷ Linda Nochlin, *From 1971: Why have there been no great women artists?* (New York: Artmedia Artnews, 2015), 5.

address the topic of Chinese identity in Canada, addressing historical atrocities such as the Chinese Head Tax and immigrant experience, the exhibitions take entirely different approaches. The national narrative follows the trajectory of the “story of Man” as described by Bennett in *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (1995) which emphasizes the Darwinian notions of evolution and scientific progress by placing white Europeans at the most civilized and progressive end of the spectrum and other races somewhere further back on the evolutionary timeline.⁷⁸ This approach not only portrays Chinese-Canadians as the “Other,” but also uses cultural stereotypes to suggest the glorification of the success of multiculturalism and to “civilize” the ethnic population through notions of belonging. On the other hand, Gu’s exhibition can be interpreted to challenge concepts within the national narrative such as the ability to clearly delineate and define culture in order to bring attention to the historical inequality faced by Chinese-Canadians. He also emphasizes community space and the role of the audience as ways of returning agency to the population. Moreover, as I will explain with regard to Gu’s exhibition, only when politically relevant, or pressured by political agenda, does the government step in to support works of artists like Gu who question the constructed cultural stereotypes.

Beyond the Golden Mountain: Chinese Cultural Traditions in Canada, curated by Ban Seng Hoe, was shown from 1989-1991 at the Museum of Civilization. The exhibition was seen to be of such historical value that it is currently included in the Canada Library and Archives webpage as a resource on Chinese history in Canada, and the catalogue is categorized by the UBC library as a government document.⁷⁹ As Hoe stated on the opening night, the aim of this

⁷⁸ Bennett, *Birth of the Museum*, 46.

⁷⁹ “History of Canada’s Early Chinese Immigrants” 1 Oct. 2020 <<https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/immigration/history-ethnic-cultural/early-chinese-canadians/Pages/history.aspx?wbdisable=true>>

exhibition was “to help non-Chinese [people] understand the Chinese thread in the multicultural fabric” while giving the Chinese-Canadian population a sense of identity.⁸⁰ Looking at the catalogue, it states that the exhibition demonstrates the transition of immigrants by “blend[ing] many aspects of Canadian life with ancestral traditions...[and by] focusing on some of these cultural traditions which, rooted in China, found new expression in Canada.”⁸¹ In addition, “the heart of the exhibition is a presentation where Chinese-Canadians express their views and tell us of their experiences in Canada.”⁸² While the statements emphasize the intermixing of Chinese and Canadian culture, the exhibition contradictorily focused on stereotypical traditions and how Chinese-Canadian culture is constrained to practices and beliefs that are defined by the homeland. I would argue that the exhibition intended to both define and fit the constructed category of Chinese-Canadians within the national narrative. In addition, the exhibition promoted political aims to both educate the non-Chinese population which I attribute to rising racist resurgences of Yellow Peril, and to constrain and discipline those identifying as Chinese-Canadians within the national framework of multiculturalism.

Upon review of a number of newspapers from the late-1980s to the 2000s, it becomes apparent that Yellow Peril and fear of racial mixing was re-surfacing due to the points-based Immigration Act of 1967 and the Investor Immigration programs of 1986. In the mid-1960s, Asian immigrants accounted for less than seven percent of the total immigrant population, with a majority of the immigrants coming from Britain, Western Europe and America.⁸³ Within a mere

⁸⁰ Jennings, “Museum’s Chinese Exhibit is Tale of the Sparrow and the Elephant,” C9.

⁸¹ Ban Seng Hoe, *Beyond the Golden Mountain: Chinese Cultural Traditions in Canada* (Hull: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1989), 7.

⁸² “Beyond the Golden Mountain: Chinese Cultural Traditions in Canada,” 12 Dec. 2014 <<http://www.historymuseum.ca/event/beyond-the-golden-mountain-chinese-cultural-traditions-in-canada/>>

⁸³ Indra, 165.

10 years, by the late 1970s, 25 percent of immigrants in Canada came from Asian countries.⁸⁴ The *Globe and Mail* reported on Dec 14, 1993: “Canadians want Mosaic to Melt... Respondents believe immigrants should adopt Canada’s values.”⁸⁵ The survey claimed that 72 percent of respondents were frustrated by “the lack of conformity” in Canadian society and that the homogenization of society through immigrants adopting Canada’s values is preferred.⁸⁶ In 1995, The *Calgary Herald* similarly attacked the multicultural policy as improper use of tax dollars that could have been applied to the problem of employment.⁸⁷ They believed that ethnic minorities should gather and continue to practice multiculturalism without government funding.⁸⁸ In 2001, the *Halifax Daily News* also offered the opinion that “we have compromised our values so much that we have very little left” in terms of the Canadian national identity.⁸⁹ The *Edmonton Journal* announced in 2004 that 22 percent of the people polled believed that multicultural policy prevents “immigrant groups to fully integrate into Canadian society.”⁹⁰ Thus, I would argue that the political aim of addressing these racial anxieties conforms to the charge of ethnic under-representation at national institutions. Both issues required the renewed portrayal of a positive image of cultural diversity. In the name of recognition, specific definitions of Chinese-Canadian conduct were circulated to address both non-Chinese and Chinese populations.

In addition, I suggest that in a time of social anxiety the government needed to find a solution for controlling the public’s behavior and ideas surrounding race through public

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 171.

⁸⁵ Jack Kapica, “Canadians want Mosaic to Melt, survey finds: Respondents believe immigrants should adopt Canada’s values,” *The Globe and Mail*, 14 Dec, 1993.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*.

⁸⁷ “Liberals Multicultural Brainwashing,” *Halifax Daily News* 4 Dec, 2001: 14.

⁸⁸ Danny Nasser, “Manning Multicultural Policy ‘foolhardy’,” *Calgary Herald* 4 Jan, 1995: A6.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 14.

⁹⁰ Tim Naumetz, “Multicultural Policies Keep Canadians Apart, 1 in 4 Believe,” *Edmonton Journal* 18 July, 2004: A5.

institutions. As theorized by Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* in 1975, through the analysis of different forms of punishment, modern power structures changed the relationship between operations of power and the human body starting in 18th century France.⁹¹ The body used to be the recipient of corporal punishment, but in the late 18th century, it had shifted to a site of social norms, regulations and corrections.⁹² Foucault argues that institutions such as schools and the museum construct knowledge and shape both individuals' understanding of the world and their place within it.⁹³ In addition, institutions create what Foucault calls "docile bodies" that self-regulate and self-discipline in order to conform to the perceived norms and accepted behaviors of that institution, society, or government.⁹⁴ I would argue that this model reflects practices of the Canadian government where a combination of discipline and self-policing is taught to ethnic minorities and immigrants through implied expectations in order to be endowed the right to belong in Canada and to "fit in" with the nation. These ideologies are reflected in the documents of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship as well as through exhibitions about cultural minorities such as Chinese-Canadians. According to the Canadian Immigration website, in order to belong to Canada, immigrants, though not overtly told to assimilate, should "share the basic value of democracy with all other Canadians who came before them."⁹⁵ Moreover, the government of Canada's website indicates that one Canadian value is to respect cultural differences of different ethnic groups and that all

⁹¹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 27.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid, 96.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 135.

⁹⁵ Gordon-Walker, *Exhibiting Nation*, 13.

groups are free to maintain and share their cultural heritage.⁹⁶ These statements are inherently contradictory because in order to belong, one must adopt the national ideals and the definition of belonging as mandated by the government, yet that would be contrary to freely displaying cultural and ethnic differences. In fact, this contradiction appears visually as well in the way by which museums attempt to represent multiculturalism through the cultural mosaic. The mosaic model purports the possibility of representational completeness wherein all groups can be equally acknowledged and recognized.⁹⁷ However, in order to do so, cultural differences are reduced to easily definable cultural stereotypes and objects that are deemed acceptable within the national vision.

Furthermore, the literature would suggest that the introduction of tolerant policies of race are also based upon harmonizing the country and promoting acceptance of other cultures for economic reasons. In the 1960s to 1980s, Canada was desperately in need of a larger labour force and investments in order to increase its gross domestic product.⁹⁸ In order to aid Canada's growth and production, the need for labor seemed to outweigh previous notions of race and ethnicity. In such market driven times as the 1970s, it could be argued that ethnicity became second to capital, and multiculturalism was necessary to produce capital. In fact, Indra posits that there is a high correlation between the immigrant flow of a source country and the country's gross domestic product.⁹⁹ For example, Canada needed immigrants with strong agricultural skills

⁹⁶ "Citizenship and Immigration Canada, A Look at Canada, What Does Canadian Citizenship Mean?" 24 Jun. 2014 <www.cic.gc.ca/english/citizen/look/look-02e.html>

⁹⁷ This is contrary to an alternative model often called the "melting-pot" that is frequently attributed to American policies on immigrant cultural integration through assimilation rather than representing all groups and their own cultural distinctness. See Howard Palmer, "Mosaic vs Melting Pot?: Immigration and Ethnicity in Canada and the United States", *International Journal* 31:3 (summer 1976): 488-528.

⁹⁸ Indra, "Changes in Canadian Immigration," 160-165.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 166.

to grow the agricultural economy of Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and the first choice of immigrants for these jobs were Southeast Asians skilled at farming.¹⁰⁰ Thus, the years from the 1960s to the 1980s saw a massive change in the social and racial landscape with regards to the increase of Asian populations, communities, restaurants, and establishments. In 1989, amidst the growing racial anxieties of increased immigration to Canada, but also the continued enthusiasm for Chinese homeland populations to immigrate to Canada, the Canadian Museum of Civilization showcased their first exhibition focused on Chinese-Canadian history that was directed at both Chinese and non-Chinese populations.¹⁰¹

Beyond the Golden Mountain begins with a walk through a street in a simulated Chinatown, complete with neon restaurant signs, parking meters, martial arts gyms, and blaring folk music. The stores have a red façade and a few shops are available to be viewed from the inside such as a Chinese apothecary, a restaurant, and a laundry. As visitors move past the Chinatown, they are presented with a tranquil Chinese garden with stone benches for viewing a number of videos of Chinese-Canadian history and listening to tapes of older Chinese settlers speak about their immigration experiences. This part of the exhibition is reflected in section one of the catalogue titled, “History of the Chinese in Canada.” Beyond the garden are displays of various objects, documents, and photographs, such as a head tax certificate, porcelain dishes, painted scrolls, and photographs of traditions as well as contact with Canadian society which are documented under section two of the catalogue titled, “Cultural Traditions.” The final part is titled “Chinese in Contemporary Canada,” which shows over 200 video interviews of Chinese-Canadians.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 173.

¹⁰¹ As indicated in the opening night curator talks by Hoe. Jennings, “Museum’s Chinese Exhibit is Tale of the Sparrow and the Elephant,” C9.

The “Cultural Traditions” section of the catalogue consists of eleven sub-chapters of defined cultural practices with a short definition of each, such as family traditions, food traditions, folk medicine, martial arts, lion and dragon dances, calligraphy and painting, and religious and folk beliefs. One main visual theme that emerges is the photographs of Chinese-Canadians engaging in stereotypical activities deemed to be traditionally Chinese, such as performing Chinese opera in Chinese costumes, making mooncakes in a Chinese bakery, participating in a ritual in a Chinese cemetery, practicing martial arts, and performing dragon or lion dances (Fig. 1-6). All of these photographs either emphasize that the cultural tradition of Chinese people is relegated to the past, or that they are located in a specifically Chinese environment such as a Chinese cemetery or Chinatown. Most of the activities presented are not actively practiced by the majority of Chinese-Canadians in modern life, in fact, many practices such as martial arts, dragon dances and Chinese opera were only displayed during special occasions by specifically trained artists and are not representative of Chinese culture as a whole. These images circulate the ideas that Chinese cultural practices are ancient, self-contained and unaffected by the changing modern society similar to the way in which the Canadian government portrayed Indigenous populations based on European ideologies.¹⁰² The clothing and practices of Chinese-Canadians in *Beyond the Golden Mountain* are also represented as being rooted in the past and do not address issues of hybridization within Canada, nor do they address issues of sub-cultural identifications, customs, and debates surrounding clashing ideologies within the definition of Chinese-Canadians. By further isolating the practices to locations noted to be for

¹⁰² For example, as I will later discuss in chapter three in relations to Gerald McMaster’s exhibition, a common representation of Indigenous communities by European colonial powers is that they are not adapting to modern society, or ways of life, and are thus a disappearing race relegated to the past. See Alfred Young Man, “McMaster Challenges First Nations Stereotypes,” *Windspeaker Magazine* 12:8 (1994): 13.

Chinese people, one could interpret that Chinese populations are being told they should remain segregated to only establishments operated by the Chinese for the Chinese.¹⁰³ Kay Andersen writes that Chinatown can be seen as “an urban village pitted against encroaching land uses...[and] is a [ghettoized] product of segregation on the basis of race or ethnicity.”¹⁰⁴ She argues that Chinatowns are manifestations of white European cultural domination.¹⁰⁵ The exhibition shows that Chinese populations do not appear to be welcome in other spaces while non-Chinese people may also avoid sites such as Chinatowns for fear of the foreign and unknown. These ideas can be interpreted as one of the ways in which the government attempts to pacify racial anxiety by indicating that ethnic Chinese people will keep to their own traditional culture and are not a threat to the cultural fabric of the country as reflected in the fears of the newspaper surveys.

In addition, modes of adaptation to Canadian life emphasized by the exhibition are prescribed in superficial ways to the Chinese-Canadian population through another visual theme of racial interactions and engagement in laughable “modern” activities. One set of images indicate cultural adaptation through the portrayal of Chinese-Canadians adopting Western clothing such as long dresses and suits (Fig. 7, 10). In addition, the catalogue notes that “the Chinese have come a long way from the disadvantaged minority they were to the successful cultural group within the plurality of Canadian society they are now” while outlining that Chinese-Canadians are now able to work in different professions and blend into Canadian life

¹⁰³ Howard Brotz, “Multiculturalism in Canada: A Muddle,” *Canadian Public Policy* (Winter 1980): 42-44.

¹⁰⁴ Kay J. Anderson, “The Idea of Chinatown: The Power of Place and Institutional Practice in the Making of a Racial Category,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 77:4 (1987): 581.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 584-585.

through the celebration of holidays such as St. Patrick's Day and Valentine's Day.¹⁰⁶ These elements represent a superficial participation in Western customs, not through the role of cultural interchange, but rather in the participation of some forms of the dominant culture. However, in these images and activities, Chinese populations are still shown to keep to their own groups, and marry within the same ethnicity without necessarily participating in the larger social fabric of society. These images also work to confirm the success of multicultural diversity in affirming that Chinese-Canadians are able to express their own culture as well as participate in "Canadian" culture, despite the act of constraining ethnic cultural practices such as the defined 11 sub-sections of traditions that are presented in the catalogue.

Moreover, the only images showing racial interactions are groups of Chinese-Canadians posing with presumably white Canadians indicating racial tolerance to each other (Fig. 7-9). The image of the railroad workers and the white overseer shows both races getting along despite the erased racial histories where at the time of this photo, Chinese railway workers were paid only half of the other workers and assigned to the most dangerous jobs.¹⁰⁷ Two images of Chinese populations with the influence of the church is also presented seemingly indicative of successful integration into the Western religion of Christianity but within a Chinese setting where almost all participants are Chinese, and the only non-Chinese people present are church officials (Fig 7-8). In the image of *Chinese Musicians with their Friends in a Chinese Church in Victoria* (Fig. 7), the European constructed racial hierarchy can also be observed where the white male occupies the most dominant position in the middle of the frame, towering over the Chinese musicians.

¹⁰⁶ Hoe, *Beyond the Golden Mountain*, 46.

¹⁰⁷ "Building the Railway" 1 Nov. 2020

<<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/multiculturalism-anti-racism/chinese-legacy-bc/history/building-the-railway>>

Historically, Christianity and the church played a significant role in attempting to assimilate and control non-White, non-English speaking populations within Canada.¹⁰⁸ For example, in 1986, the United Church of Canada, the same church as portrayed in the 50th anniversary photo of Victoria's Chinese United Church (Fig. 8), formally acknowledged its involvement in colonialism, reinforcement of the official languages of Canada, and controlling cultural expression.¹⁰⁹ While the apology was directed primarily at the Indigenous communities due to the church's involvement in Residential Schools, similar strategies were deployed within other communities as well.¹¹⁰ Despite the church's admitted role in colonial practices, group images of church gatherings continued to be portrayed in a positive manner within the exhibition, indicating racial harmony, successful participation in Canadian religion and going as far as labeling the subjects as "friends."

In addition, through the object collections displayed in the exhibition, such as a head tax certificate, golden Buddha figure, porcelain dragon and various props used for activities such as dragon dances and martial arts, the difficulties faced by early Chinese settlers are downplayed or even dismissed as mistakes which led to the current success of Chinese-Canadian population within Canada. The head tax certificate is explained in the catalogue with respect to the progress made after the Chinese Exclusion Act (1947) was repealed.¹¹¹ Moreover, in order to emphasize the change in immigration policy that now welcomed Chinese populations, statistics from 1921 are compared against statistics from 1970-1980 to explain the successful arrival of hundreds of

¹⁰⁸ Peter G. Bush, "The Canadian Churches' Apologies for Colonialism and Residential Schools," *Peace Research* 47:1/2 (2015): 47.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, 47, 51.

¹¹⁰ Involvement in other communities is implicitly acknowledged by the Church's apology as they indicated they were also apologizing for their general involvement in colonial practices. *Ibid*, 47.

¹¹¹ Hoe, *Beyond Golden Mountain*, 10-11.

thousands of Chinese settlers.¹¹² Furthermore, the objects promote the acceptance and allowance of Chinese traditions in Canada as outlined in the accompanying texts indicating the blending of Chinese and Canadian practices, however, the emphasis on the development and usage of Chinese-specific communities such as Chinatown offers a contradictory view where Chinese populations are constrained to spaces of Chinese origin.¹¹³ Through the overt use of a large number of historical photographs, the exhibition emphasizes a view to the truthful and objective nature of the events documented rather than as a representation of a specific perspective of history. As Susan Sontag writes, photographic images “do not seem to be statements about the world so much as pieces of it, miniatures of reality that anyone can make or acquire.”¹¹⁴ As suggested by the exhibition photos and objects, racial harmony and cross-cultural understanding as defined through the Canadian definition of multiculturalism are portrayed through the lens of the dominant white, European race against all periphery ethnicities. Furthermore, in order to be recognized by the majority (nation) as a cultural group, one should look, act and behave like the vision presented while subscribing to a membership of the manufactured categories of minorities.¹¹⁵ In addition, in this power structure, in the name of multiculturalism, the nation or government is given the all-encompassing ability to “recognize” minority groups and to endow certain status upon others.

I would argue that in order to avoid conflating the narrow and prescribed view of the national image, the interactions between different cultures other than between the dominant and Chinese population are not shown in *Beyond the Golden Mountain*. In fact, heterogeneity in the

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid, 16.

¹¹⁴ Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), 4.

¹¹⁵ Gordon-Walker, *Exhibiting Nation*, 24-26.

categorical denotation of Chinese culture is entirely left out, such as the tension of different identities between mainland China, Taiwan and Hong Kong.¹¹⁶ The clash between early Chinese laborers and wealthy investors' is not addressed, nor are the contentions of space of the different Chinese populations such as old Chinatown versus newly established Chinese neighborhoods.¹¹⁷ Also, the exhibition fails to address a newly circulating idea in Canada brought on by American media, the idea of the "model minority," which represents the noble, hardworking, disciplined, educated and highly financially successful North American Asian population.¹¹⁸ The model minority is an idealized subject attributed to an ethnic group and identified as such by the majority of a society. This idea originated in America in 1960s rising from civil rights movement in USA. It trivializes the differences among those described as always hard working, successful, diligent, agreeable, and supports the racial hierarchy that subordinates those who do not adhere to their standards.¹¹⁹ While the model minority can also be seen as an instrument of domination that downplays systemic racism, ratifying self-reliance and individual achievement as the highest virtues, these ideas are not addressed in this exhibition since this notion is often associated with the new wave of young, skilled, and educated immigrants.¹²⁰ Instead, *Beyond Golden Mountain* emphasizes a notion of the unevolving and static nature of early Chinese settlers and their experience within Canada. The model minority does contribute to one aspect of visual imagery of ethnic minorities which is to affirm representations of the "noble" hard working Chinese, who

¹¹⁶ Wong, *Yellow Peril*, 8.

¹¹⁷ With regard to the effects of new, wealthy immigrants and the use of Chinatown versus new spaces of high Chinese occupancy such as Richmond, B.C., see Katharyne Mitchell, "Global Diasporas and Traditional Towns: Chinese Transnational Migration and the Redevelopment of Vancouver's Chinatown," *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review*, 11:2 (spring 2000): 7-18.

¹¹⁸ *Model Minority* (Toronto: Gendai, 2015), 9-11.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

succeed against the system. However, this is usually used in the USA to pit successful “noble” Asians against the “savage” Black and Native populations to deny flaws in the system, the stereotypical idea being that if Asians can succeed through hard work, so can all ethnic minorities unless they are undisciplined, lack good moral judgment, or are downright lazy.¹²¹

Keeping in mind the contentious and outdated racist representation of Chinese-Canadians of *Beyond Golden Mountain*, Xiong Gu, a Chinese-Canadian artist, offers an alternative type of installation, which received international attention. Titled *I am Who I am* (2001-2006), Gu’s exhibition featured a series of photographs of ethnically Chinese or mixed-Chinese individuals living in Canada between the 19th and 21st centuries. Each portrait is overlaid with a brief statement in three languages, English, French, and Chinese, often overlapping each other in clashing colors of red, yellow and blue (Fig. 11-14). The statements address issues of identity, citizenship, rights, law, immigration and religion. Contrary to the national museum which dictates the way in which viewers should act and interact in the exhibition setting, Gu’s large-scale portraits were installed directly on lampposts in Montreal’s Chinatown in 2001 (Fig. 13-14), and later onto the wall of the St. Patrick subway station in Toronto in 2006 (Fig. 12), both of which received wide public exposure. In the 2001 production, a total of 25 images were shown, including 24 portraits and 1 image of a head tax certificate as part of the *Le Mois de la Photo à Montréal: The Power of the Image*, a biennale dedicated to exploring themes of post-colonialism, deconstruction of the image, and interventions in the public space.¹²² Gu stated that

¹²¹ Gordon Pon, “Importing the Asian Model Minority Discourse into Canada: Implications for Social Work and Education,” *Canadian Social Work Review*, 17:2 (2000): 278-279.

¹²² Guy Bellavance, “Le pouvoir de l’image Le mois de la photo a Montreal, 2001,” *Making Worlds*, 56 (Jan 2002): 27-30.

the exhibition addressed immigrant experiences of Chinese-Québécois-Canadian identities which are constantly in flux and linked to different cultural identifications and social backgrounds.¹²³

Gu's portraits are of people of different origin in different outfits from casual clothing such as t-shirts, polo shirts and dresses, to more formal clothing such as suits, Chinese tunics, and military uniforms. Visually, the overlaid texts, languages and even colors represent the transcultural practices of everyday immigrants, red and yellow representing prosperity in Chinese tradition, and blue as a symbol of Quebec tradition.¹²⁴ In addition, the installation was accompanied by a page of text in the catalogue that included various statements from Chinese-Québécois-Canadian immigrants defining their own identity outside of the constraints of the national definition of Chinese—for example, statements indicating that while they are considered “Chinese” in Canada they can be from China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Vietnam, and Cambodia.¹²⁵ Moreover, Chinese-Canadians were not constrained to the traditional activities outlined in *Beyond Golden Mountain*, evidenced through statements of favorite things such as rice, milk, tea, Québécois beer, hiking, biking, and driving, all of which brings attention to the fact that despite being considered immigrants, everyone is simply human and can share hobbies and activities.

Gu also bypasses the audiences' choice in viewing this installation. Subway users and Chinatown goers are forced to participate in these thought-provoking portraits as well as ponder issues of identity within Canada. By being non-discriminating in the social, educational, and ethnic background of the viewer, Gu's installation provokes questions regarding identity politics

¹²³ Xiong Gu, “I am Who I Am,” *La Mois de la Photo, 2001: Le pouvoir de l'image=The power of the image* (Montreal: Vox, 2001), 91.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid, 90.

and the government-defined cultural constraints of ethnic cultures. Moreover, the sidewalk of Chinatown or the subway station are casual spaces where viewers are able to engage in more provocative conversations with friends and those they are travelling with, contrary to the constrained or monitored space of a museum. In this way, *I am Who I am* creates a dialogue between the past and future, individual and community, suffering and triumph. The portraits outline the hybridity and fluidity of identity, and that cultures cannot be disciplined into only engaging with government-defined traditions and activities. As Fred Wah states, if “you’re pure anything you can’t be Canadian.”¹²⁶

In an interview, Gu stated that it is important to record immigrant experiences, because immigrants “are often ignored by mainstream culture.”¹²⁷ In addition, Gu notes that Montreal’s Chinatown is the only place where Chinese signs were allowed to be displayed bigger than French signs as the Chinese population won the right in a court case in the mid-1980s.¹²⁸ These actions to constrain cultural behavior are unsurprisingly contradictory to the actual mandate of multiculturalism where all ethnic cultures are encouraged to express their own culture and practices in Canada. Gu’s exhibition highlights some of the contradictions of the government’s vision of cultural diversity where in fact minorities are disciplined to not use their own language if they want to belong in Canada and continue their businesses. As Fatona argues, surveillance, regulation and discipline play a large part in the administration of culture where the population needs to have “acquired cultural competence” in order to participate in the constructed national visions of the country.¹²⁹

¹²⁶ Fred Wah, *Diamond Grill*, (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 2006), 53.

¹²⁷ Li, *Rising Voices*, 209.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, 210.

¹²⁹ Fatona, “Arts Funding, the State and Canadian Nation-Making,” 34-35.

Furthermore, while Gu specified in his 2004 interview that the successful case regarding Chinese signage in Quebec was a small triumph that was unthinkable 20 years prior, by 2007 Quebec began to crack down on accommodations sought out by minority groups in the establishment of the Bouchard-Taylor Commission, also known as the “Reasonable Accommodation debate.” This commission aimed to evaluate the extent to which minority and immigrant cultural practices could be accommodated, citing the threat to fairness towards all minority groups and gender equality.¹³⁰ However, the underlying principles were xenophobic attitudes towards practices deemed as ‘extreme’ or those that do not conform to Quebec’s identity and religion. As Gada Mahrouse argues, the Commission perpetuated the “racialized hierarchies and exclusions that it wanted to address” through the exclusion of Indigenous communities, xenophobic public forums, anti-Muslim sentiments and increased surveillance of immigrants.¹³¹ Thus, political policies and minority representation often feels like a constant struggle that is two steps forward, one step back, with the government trying to assert control of the national identity at every turn.

I would argue that despite the pushes for museum reform in the 1980s, state institutions such as the Museum of Civilization did not reflect such changes when showcasing minority groups that may be receiving less international attention as demonstrated through *Beyond Golden Mountain*. For the most visited museum in Canada, to only begin to include the first highly racist representation of Chinese-Canadian experience in the Cultural Hall in 1989 is preposterous. This exhibition continued to perpetuate the Massey Report’s attempts to better society through the production of universal knowledge and practices related to the transcendental potential of

¹³⁰ Gada Mahrouse, “‘Reasonable accommodation’ in Quebec the limits of participation and dialogue,” *Race and Class* 52:1 (2010): 86-87.

¹³¹ *Ibid*, 86, 88-90.

Western sensibilities, rather than attempting to change racist representations of ethnic cultures.¹³² Moreover, while constraining ethnic culture, the ideological stance used was still to establish the English and French as the founders of Canada and erasing them from ethnic affiliation despite the disputes from a range of ethnic and Indigenous groups in the 1960s Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism hearings.¹³³ While activism against the dominant representation of minorities were at a high in the 1990s, the voices of minorities such as Chinese-Canadians continued to be unacknowledged by the Museum of Civilization. The national museum in this case can be seen as one among the “technologies designed to draw clear parameters around the types of creative and intellectual knowledge that the Canadian state would privilege as representing the Canadian nation,” which draws on Foucault’s concept of discipline of the self.¹³⁴ The museum can be interpreted as attempting to mould and correct minority cultural practices and displays to only elements deemed appropriate on a national level, whereby also regulating the social norms of minority cultures. By displaying certain stereotypes at major institutions with a wide range of visitors, “the idea now is to thoroughly regulate [the population] at all times” in order to manage racial interactions and exert the correct interpretation of cultural diversity.¹³⁵

Ironically despite the increases in the promotion of diverse artistic and cultural productions put forth by the government in the late 1980s to early 1990s, Hoe has explained that the *Beyond the Golden Mountain* exhibition was small in size due to having a “tight-budget.”¹³⁶

¹³² Fatona, “Arts Funding, the State and Canadian Nation-Making,” 38.

¹³³ Ibid, 40.

¹³⁴ Ibid, 36.

¹³⁵ David Garland, “Foucault’s Discipline and Punish—An Exposition and Critique,” *Law and Social Inquiry* 11:4 (1986): 851.

¹³⁶ Jennings, “Museum’s Chinese Exhibit is Tale of the Sparrow and the Elephant,” C9.

If even a cultural institution of the highest prominence and authority in Canada is struggling with funding with regard to exhibiting certain underrepresented ethnic minorities at a time when multiculturalism is highly promoted, it is not surprising that curators such as Buseje Bailey and artist communities would struggle immensely to receive governmental support. In addition, while Hoe indicates that the exhibition consulted the Chinese community, *Beyond the Golden Mountain* has been criticized for its “sugar-coated Disneyland approach” as well as being a “white-washed version of the Chinese in Canada.”¹³⁷ Hoe defended his position in responding that the “aim of the exhibition is to create understanding, not to offend people,” and that the exhibition “has to be sensitive and respect the people involved.”¹³⁸ His defensive attitude further justifies his anthropological approach of leaving out many crucial racial and colonial issues of representation circulating within activist communities. In addition, in 2013, after receiving \$25 million dollars in funding to revamp the museum to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Confederation of Canada, Mark O’Neill, the new president of the Canadian Museum of Civilization, openly criticized the approach taken in past years by this institution. He noted that that from the translocated Ukrainian-Canadian church, a highlight of the museum, to the Chinese laundry meant to represent Chinese-Canadians, the representations used in this institution teach very little about the history of Canada.¹³⁹ In fact, prior to the plans for revamp, the museum had been strongly influenced by Disney’s Epcot theme park, featuring mock-up scenes and artifacts behind glass cases.¹⁴⁰ Furthermore, as criticized by various academics and communities, the reconstruction funding was not for the purpose of changing museum representations, the

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ John Geddes, “Written by the Victors,” *MacLeans Toronto*, 126:31 (2013): 18.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

reconciliation of historical atrocities or the active engagement with cultural communities. Instead, as John Geddes argues, the revamp was targeted towards glorifying the progressive nature of Canadian dominant history with an emphasis on the benevolent political policies building up to Canada's 150th anniversary celebration in 2017.¹⁴¹ James Moore, the Canadian Minister of Heritage, states in relation to the confederation celebration, museums should foster national ideals and educate "more about the achievements and accomplishments that have shaped our great country," thus still continuing to glorify the successful implementation of multiculturalism without acknowledging its problems.¹⁴² Thus, as the Canadian History Association writes, national museums "appear to reflect...[the] use of history to support the government's political agenda," as has also been argued by Fatona and many cultural historians.¹⁴³

The political agenda in supporting artistic production is obvious in Gu's *I am Who I am* as the exhibition did not receive significant governmental support in the majority of its showings, especially not in Vancouver, where the oldest and largest Chinatown in Canada is located. It was in 2006 when Vancouver audiences were finally able to view this work, when Gu was invited to attend the 2006 World Urban Festival which directly involved the City of Vancouver's funding and participation.¹⁴⁴ Gu's installation was shown from June 21 to 25, 2006, and his portrait of the head tax certificate was prominently placed at the entrance of the festival. Perhaps it is too naïve to think that prime minister Stephen Harper coincidentally issued his Head Tax Apology to the nation on June 22, 2006, the second day into Gu's installation. The apparent timing of the

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ "City of Vancouver Administrative Report" 25 Oct. 2020
<<https://council.vancouver.ca/20030911/pe1.htm>>

apology seems to emphasize the state's hidden agenda when finally allowing Canada's colonial racism and biased policies to come to light, if only for a brief few days.

Chapter 3: Cultural Identity and the Chinese Restaurant

Even in the present day, government-sponsored institutions continue to use techniques that have been challenged repeatedly to portray multiculturalism, such as recognizing ethnic minorities through cultural spectacle and encouraging the consumption of culture through entertainment. While these strategies have been pervasive since the 1970s, by the 2000s, the government actively began to focus on popularizing history through digital platforms and media. Despite continuing to perpetuate the dominant imagery of the success of cultural diversity and exclusionary practices of museums, displays began to focus on the spectacle through the multisensory and digital performance of history. Coined 'pop-history' by Pamela Rogers and Nichole Grant, these displays emphasize "the theatrical over the historical, making history a performance to be consumed" rather than to be thought about critically or to be engaged with.¹⁴⁵ By reducing culture to definable elements such as food, dance, and objects, and engaging the viewers through technologically advanced media, audiences are encouraged to view history as "fun," which neutralizes the need for political action, as has been theorized by Guy Debord.¹⁴⁶ Debord argues that forms of media of the digital age such as sounds, videos, and visual imagery are not simply chosen for their entertainment value, but work on a deeper level by "creating a worldview transformed into an objective force."¹⁴⁷ As audiences consume the spectacle for

¹⁴⁵ Pamela Rogers and Nichole Grant, "The Pop-History Spectacle: Curating Public Memory and Historical Consciousness through the Visual," *Canadian Journal of Education*, 40:1 (2017): 1.

¹⁴⁶ Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, (New York, Zone Books: 1994), 7.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

entertainment, for example in the instance of a historical movie, they are unable to question the particular ideology or perspective presented.

Moreover, by parading stereotypes of difference, the success of multiculturalism is also justified through the public's consumption and participation in a mish-mash of loud and colorful displays despite retaining the narrow definition of Canada's national identity based on a normalized version of the past. Simply being recognized as different through cultural spectacles becomes the solution to the problem of inequality and underrepresentation. This method of dissemination can be seen in many ways, as I will discuss for Royal Alberta Museum's exhibition *Chop Suey on the Prairies*, which contributes to the history of Chinese restaurants in Canada in the pop-history format. However, these practices are not simply limited to museums. Many cultural events such as festivals also emphasize the theatrical where participants sample ethnic foods, purchase miniature replicas, dress up in traditional clothing, and watch ethnic performances, thus reducing the role of intercultural exchange to entertainment. Rather than actively engaging the community in the design and content of exhibition programming as promoted by Phillips, community engagement revolves around gaining a larger audience by making programming more "enjoyable" and entertaining. The commodification and appropriation of cultural difference through these stereotypes both distract from and perpetuate the power structure of the dominant population without bringing up the historical and racial injustices experienced by each group. Karen Tam, a Montreal-based Chinese-Canadian artist, focuses on playfully challenging ideas surrounding cultural stereotypes and the theatricality of spectacles by using the same themes to invert the viewer's experience and shed light onto issues surrounding Chinese-Canadian history, such as questioning authenticity, consumption, national identity, and erased histories. In addition, instead of allowing the viewers to consume and be

consumed by the spectacle, she allows the viewer to become the actor and take control of the experience.

Chop Suey on the Prairies: A Reflection on Chinese Restaurants was curated by Linda Tzang at the Royal Alberta Museum in 2010, and was shown again in 2012-2014. This exhibition subsequently traveled to over a dozen small communities around the province for two years. The exhibition began with wall texts and digital displays noting the prejudice faced by Chinese immigrants, with many brightly backlit photographs and interactive iPads containing news clippings and videos regarding Chinese-Canadian history (Fig. 15-17). A few objects were displayed in bright glass enclosures, among them a Chinese head tax certificate, The Black Candle book presenting racist anti-Chinese and anti-Black views, Chinese porcelain tableware, a set of Chinese tunic with trousers, while red lanterns hung from the ceiling of the gallery. A pseudo-restaurant mini counter was also present, with the neon flashing title of “Chop Suey” which both acted as the name of the restaurant and the title of the exhibition (Fig. 16). According to Tzang, the aim of this exhibition was to celebrate the effort of the hard-working Chinese through the chronicling of North American Chinese restaurants and specifically the interactions between different communities and the impact it had in Alberta.¹⁴⁸ However, while the historical issues of racism and inequality are mentioned, they are still confined to the purposes of glorifying the multicultural framework and the progress that Canada has made towards racial equality and inclusion. In the early 1900s, rather than having the intention to become restaurateurs, Chinese populations were restricted in the occupations they were legally allowed to partake in, and these limits constrained families to working as laborers, miners, loggers, and in

¹⁴⁸ Caitlin Gordon-Walker, “The Process of Chop Suey: Rethinking Multicultural Nationalism at the Royal Alberta Museum,” *Diverse Spaces: Identity, Heritage and Community in Canadian Public Culture* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 24-27.

laundries, canneries, farms and restaurants, which were considered the least desirable types of jobs.¹⁴⁹ In studies of diasporic culture, Chinese restaurants are often understood as sites of “Otherness” and exoticism in the greater landscape of the country.¹⁵⁰ In addition, in smaller towns in Canada, Chinese restaurants are often the only locations where non-Chinese populations came into contact with Chinese-Canadians.¹⁵¹ Although some of these issues are briefly mentioned, they are confounded by the approach of making difficult histories theatrical, interactive and entertaining.

Tzang portrays Chinese-Canadian restaurants as representative of the celebration of Chinese culture in Canada; however, this introduces many issues, such as those of cultural hybridity and authenticity which are not clearly addressed. Just as *Beyond the Golden Mountain* refused to acknowledge the national construction of Chinese culture in Canada, this exhibition ironically tied Chinese-Canadian restaurants into a celebrated aspect of Chinese immigrant experience which helped transform food and culture in the Prairies. However, in the late-1800s to mid-1900s, non-Chinese patrons would come into the restaurants consuming what they believed to be authentic Chinese cuisine when the dishes were in fact made for white, non-Chinese patrons.¹⁵² Unlike the expansion of different Chinese cuisines such as Shanghainese, Szechuan, Northern, Southern and Taiwanese that can be found now, early Chinese restaurants in Canada all served a mixture of foods including made-up “Chinese dishes” that are popular in Canada. In fact, many Chinese-Canadian restaurant owners at the time did not identify the food

¹⁴⁹ Alice Ming Wai Jim, “Redress Express: Chinese Restaurants and the Head Tax Issue in Canadian Art (Deliberations on a Preliminary Course),” *Amerasia Journal* 33.2 (2007): 101.

¹⁵⁰ Lily Cho, *Eating Chinese: Culture on the Menu in Small Town Canada*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 54-58.

¹⁵¹ Gordon-Walker, “The Process of Chop Suey,” 30.

¹⁵² Cho, *Eating Chinese*, 54-58.

they cooked as being Chinese.¹⁵³ For example, restaurants offered a wide smorgasbord of non-Chinese dishes such as sandwiches, chilli, tamales, omelets, and steaks with different originations, while the Chinese portion contained chop suey, chow mein, ginger beef, and sweet and sour pork.¹⁵⁴ Almost all the Chinese-themed dishes were made up for Canadian audiences. This is an excellent metaphor for Canada's construction of cultures to form the spectacle of the multicultural mosaic, where the country can welcome foods of minority cultures, but only if it is modified to "Canadian" tastes. As Lily Cho argues, westernized Chinese food "present[s] a comforting, palatable Chineseness disseminated through the institution of the restaurant," where Chinese food cannot be too exotic in ingredients, nor use too much spice, but has to be just right for the Canadian palette which is far removed from the dishes served in China, yet these hybrid dishes represent the definition and success of Chinese culture in Canada.¹⁵⁵

In a number of reviews of *Chop Suey on the Prairies*, critics argued that the use of iPads, videos, bright displays, and TV screens actually detracted from the historical and racial issues presented in this exhibition. In fact, the flashy displays, eye-popping neon lights, bright colours and entertaining iPads made the difficult histories of racism more palatable by providing interactive short snippets to watch and listen to. Moreover, despite the inclusion of a pseudo-Chinese restaurant front, this display was not a site of interaction, as the sterile counter lacked a sense of smell and taste, key features to any restaurant, further emphasizing the serious and contemplative nature of the museum.

On the other hand, some racialized artists have acknowledged the prominence of the entertaining and consumptive aspects of racial stereotypes that can frequently be observed from

¹⁵³ Ibid, 58.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 59.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 127.

mass media to the national exhibitions, but they are able to use the same motifs in reversal to question the exact issues being perpetuated. For example, *Black Wimmin: Where and When We Enter* (1989) as discussed in chapter one, uses the notions of black racial stereotypes such as the fertility goddess and the mammy (domestic servant) to challenge institutional and popular representation of black women. In relation to Chinese-Canadian representation, specifically, I would like to discuss Karen Tam's exhibition titled *Gold Mountain Restaurant* (and associated projects) 2002-2017, first shown at the Montreal arts intercultural in 2002 and later in many cities in Canada including Vancouver, Toronto, Winnipeg, Lethbridge, Saskatoon, Halifax, and Kamloops. Her installation used the same ideas of the early Chinese-Canadian restaurants and cultural stereotypes against itself in order to allow viewers to question the fallacies of a unified national image and the injustices that are negated by the national institutions. Tam reconstructed a Chinese restaurant space, filled with lanterns, ornate gates, chopstick fonts, porcelain Buddhas, and the clichéd lucky waving cat reminiscent of the imagery used in *Chop Suey on the Prairies* (Fig. 19-22). Like a movie set, visitors were invited to role-play as actors in the restaurant experience while questioning their own participation as consumers. Tam's installation not only embraced and performed the cultural stereotypes in the spectacle but used these notions to ask viewers to question the fictionalized imaginary of the Chinese restaurant.¹⁵⁶ The restaurant menus present the history and conceptualization of iconic "Chinese" dishes such as chop suey, egg rolls, ginger beef, and chow mein, which exist in a specifically Western, North American environment. Historically, Chinese restaurants in Canada served only newly concocted hybrid dishes adapted to the tastes of this country; thus by highlighting these dishes, ideas of cultural

¹⁵⁰ Jim, "Redress Express," 104-105.

authenticity and practices are questioned.¹⁵⁷ As the exhibition text explained, hybrid dishes were created in order to accommodate the limited ingredients available in Canada and to purposefully attract the tastes of non-Chinese patrons to consume a fabricated idea of Chinese culture.¹⁵⁸ In fact, a jar of fortune cookie fortune slips could be found in the entrance where instead of lucky idioms, facts related to historical atrocities experienced by Chinese-Canadians were brought to light to spark conversations. Moreover, Tam's installation encouraged visitors to engage and participate with their sense of taste and smell by allowing food consumption of self-brought meals invoking ideas of a real restaurant experience even if cooking does not take place at the exhibition site. Engaging these senses also encouraged intercultural exchange and conversation as curious visitors consulted with each other regarding their food and recipes, and shared first-hand accounts of individual experiences. The senses of smell and taste are usually purposefully left out in the environments of the national museum, and by reminding visitors to awaken these senses, Tam further questions the authorship of Canada's minority history through museums.

While Tam's exhibition was playful and mostly light-hearted in nature, perhaps a more politically poignant example of institutional critique can be seen through Gerald McMaster's 1994 multimedia exhibition titled *Savage Graces: "after images,"* first shown at the Southern Alberta Art Gallery, then travelling throughout Canada. This installation highlighted the common Indigenous stereotypes such as the Indian princess, 'noble savage' and Native warriors as well as commodified objects of Indian kitsch to question the innate prejudicial biases brought forth by popular culture, educational systems, and government institutions (Fig. 23).¹⁵⁹ Similar to

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Cho, *Eating Chinese*, 50.

¹⁵⁹ Alfred Young Man, "McMaster Challenges First Nations Stereotypes," *Windspeaker Magazine* 12:8 (1994): 13.

Tam's exhibition, McMaster also questioned the authenticity of culture by playing on appropriated artifacts in glass cases from the Provincial Museum of Alberta, emphasizing the propensity for museums to represent Indigenous culture as being dead, or vanishing.¹⁶⁰ In addition, the toys, trinkets, magazines, postcards, photographs and texts presented highlighted the pervasive stereotypes that are forced upon Indigenous communities and that indicate a loss of control by these communities of their own culture¹⁶¹ Compared to Tam's work, which gently reminded viewers to question and acknowledge the stereotypes they consume in an entertaining fashion, McMaster's installation emphasized the need to deploy multiple strategies of disrupting the entire Western mode of visualization that imbues power to these stereotypes.¹⁶² As Phillips explains, his use of blatant repetition, appropriation of the museum structural system, placement of condemning text, and prompts to engage viewers to participate in the refusal of the system "successfully flattens the hierarches of medium and genre that can distract critics from the apprehension of the systemic nature of oppressive discourses."¹⁶³ By comparing Tam and McMaster's works to the Royal Museum of Alberta's exhibition on Chinese restaurants, some of the exact elements of criticism can be traced in relation to the provincial museum.

Chop Suey on the Prairies, while attempting to present the history of the Chinese restaurant space, did so within the institutional structure of the museum. The pseudo-restaurant counter was clearly fabricated for this exhibition as when looking beyond the counter, audiences were faced with digital screens, enclosed glass cases and the watchful eyes of the museum staff.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ "McMaster, Gerald. *Savage Graces*. Edmonton Art Gallery. Edmonton" *Windspeaker News* 01 Aug. 1995: 12.

¹⁶² Ruth Phillips, "Cancelling White Noise: Gerald McMaster's *Savage Graces* (1994)," *Museum Pieces: Toward the Indigenization of Canadian Museums* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2011), 172.

¹⁶³ Ibid, 176.

If visitors chose to sit at the counter, they were presented with iPads to interact with, rather than encouraged to engage in conversation with each other, further isolating the audience in the perceived sacrosanct space. Tam's work, on the other hand, completely transformed the visitor's experience of the gallery into the director of the restaurant performance, not only through the realistic setting established, but further enhanced through the presence of taste and smells. As noted by visitors of the exhibition, one was as likely to chat with a curator as with a restaurant owner or a member of Tam's family.¹⁶⁴ The gallery space was transformed into a public space that invited people who normally would not engage with contemporary art. For example, school children used the space to eat their lunches, and even the curators could often be found eating lunch in this space.¹⁶⁵ Tam's creation further engaged the relations between the community and institution through the way in which the exhibition traveled. While traveling exhibitions are generally packed into crates and shipped to the next location, Tam borrowed the props, equipment and décor from the respective local community, such as restaurant owners, and at the end of the exhibition, returned them all instead of traveling with the items. Moreover, while her installation has been shown in major contemporary art institutions, it has also been shown frequently in small town communities without strong arts alliances or movements.¹⁶⁶ In small cities where perhaps the dominant cultural stance of municipal and provincial museums are less challenged, she allowed visitors to ponder the interactions of the community with the institution, Chinese with non-Chinese, public with private and even customers with cooks.

¹⁶⁴ Lily Cho, "The Diasporic Public: Chinese Restaurant as Institution and Installation in Canada," *American Chinese Restaurants: Society Culture and Consumption* (New York, Routledge, 2019), 279.

¹⁶⁵ Cho, "Diasporic Public," 279.

¹⁶⁶ Cho, "Diasporic Public," 276.

Tam's restaurant not only included the front of the restaurant, but also the back of the restaurant where the kitchen is located (Fig. 24). Normally, this area in a real restaurant is private and off limits to visitors. However, Tam opened this space to visitors to explore. As Days Lee commented in the exhibition catalogue, "people who have worked in restaurants tend to go behind the counter to examine the cash register [...] the coffee machine [...] the kitchen where often a stove, a deep fryer and even a sink are installed."¹⁶⁷ The back shop also included kitchen staples such as pots, pans, aprons, flat iron stove top, industrial refrigerator, microwave, shelves of dishes, bags of ingredients (flour, MSG), tubs of supplies, and take out containers laid out in a somewhat messy but realistic fashion. Visitors were invited into the private realm to examine the space where the production of the fictionalized imaginary of "Chineseness" occurs.

Another aspect that emphasizes the constructed nature of Chinese food in Canada was highlighted through Tam's recreation of restaurant menus. The restaurant menu in *Gold Mountain Restaurant* also revealed the structural racism faced by minority populations placed upon them by the dominant culture. These menus highlight the hybridity of culture, but rather than celebrating the success of Chinese restaurants in Canada as in *Chop Suey on the Prairies*, Tam's menu refused to allow the viewer to forget the racial inequality experienced by Chinese populations, as racial slurs were interspersed throughout the food offerings. Also, Tam's portrayal of the Chinese-Canadian restaurant can be read as a sign of resistance by highlighting the fact that restaurant owners purposefully participated in using over-the-top stereotypes of cultural expression and cultural spectacle. Rey Chow identifies that by constructing a hybrid version of Chinese culture for the unknowing consumer, ideas of authenticity are being

¹⁶⁷ Days Lee, "Memories of a Chinese-Canadian restaurant," *Gold Mountain Restaurant Montagne d'Or* (Montreal: Montreal arts intercultural, 2006), 40.

challenged or even mocked.¹⁶⁸ For example, in a video piece titled *Plum Sauce*, situated in the kitchen of *Gold Mountain Restaurant*, Tam's father is portrayed explaining that the signature plum sauce found in Chinese-Canadian restaurants is actually made with pumpkin sauce and contains no plums, yet the patrons are none the wiser.¹⁶⁹ In addition, the restaurant owners also challenge ideas of self-discipline by going beyond the constructed cultural stereotypes in the objects and décor presented to the consumers. In an interview with Tam, she indicated that during her research with restaurant owners, many indicated that they decorated their establishments with extravagant Chinese imagery by copying successful restaurants, or "used whatever brought in money."¹⁷⁰ Thus, by portraying the restaurant space as extra flashy, extra exotic and extra foreign, despite conforming to dominant constructed cultural expression, restaurant owners are able to transform the space into a more diverse social space by bringing in more customers.

Despite the social and political changes that occurred during the 1980s and 1990s including the increase of funding for diverse representations through organizations like the Canada Council for the Arts, the Royal Alberta Museum has stated that they have not held a long-term large-scale exhibition focusing on any ethnic cultures in Alberta other than the Indigenous communities from the mid-1980s to 2010.¹⁷¹ In fact, since the 1990s, the Royal Alberta Museum has been focused on a "shift in programming with a concerted effort to increase its audience" due to wanting to compete with expansions of entertainment options such as major shopping centres, and multiplex theatres.¹⁷² In addition, historically the institution was not

¹⁶⁸ Rey Chow, "Have you Eaten? Inspired by an Exhibit," *Amerasia*, 31:1(2005): 20.

¹⁶⁹ Jim, "Redress Express," 106.

¹⁷⁰ Chow, "Have you Eaten?," 20.

¹⁷¹ Gordon-Walker, "*The Process of Chop Suey*," 24.

¹⁷² "About the Museum" 14 Nov. 2020. <<https://royalalbertamuseum.ca/about/history>>

concerned with documenting cultural diversity except for a short period between the 1970s to mid-1980s at the onset of the multicultural policy which encouraged museums to include underrepresented populations in its exhibitions.¹⁷³

Prior to the mid-1970s, the museum only distinguished between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal art. In fact, the focus was on natural history and the history of Indigenous communities in Alberta through the narrative of European settlement in Canada, such as the first the contact with Indigenous communities, to European immigration, largely downplaying the violence and displacement of Indigenous populations.¹⁷⁴ In 1971 Horst Schmid was appointed the Minister of Culture for Alberta, and as a German-born immigrant to Canada, he sought to implement the newly established multicultural policy within the arts sector of Alberta with great vigor.¹⁷⁵ With Schmid's encouragement, the Folklife program was established in the mid-1970s at the Royal Alberta Museum. Headed by David Goa, a historian with a focus on religious studies, its aim was to increase representation of Alberta's ethnic communities. However, for the next three decades, the approach taken by Goa was anthropological and ethnographical in nature as his goal was to expand the museum's collection through objects and photographs with the aim of representational completeness.¹⁷⁶ He was especially interested in collecting and displaying objects related to cultural traditions such as folk costumes, musical instruments, handicrafts and religious artifacts.¹⁷⁷ His belief was that all cultures can be equally represented, recognized and showcased if the collection of objects was adequately large and comprehensive, which reflected

¹⁷³ Gordon-Walker, "The Process of Chop Suey," 25.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 24.

¹⁷⁵ Fil Fraser, *Alberta's Camelot: Culture and the Arts in the Lougheed Years* (Edmonton: Lone Pine Pub, 2003), 7.

¹⁷⁶ Gordon-Walker, "The Process of Chop Suey," 26.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, 25.

the political ideology of portraying multiculturalism through the cultural mosaic. It was not until 2005 with Linda Tzang's takeover as curator, when the approach changed to include emphasis on interactions with communities. To justify her approach, she explained that *Chop Suey on the Prairies* visited and educated many smaller communities in Alberta.¹⁷⁸ However, due to the popularized nature of this exhibition, rather than approaching the communities to highlight the injustices in Chinese-Canadian history, her exhibition's major contribution was to bring entertainment and fun whilst continuing to justify the national multicultural identity of Canada.

Through a nationwide survey titled *Canadians and their Past* (2013), researchers found that since the early 2000s, the most popular medium for the consumption of history has been through entertainment such as television and videos.¹⁷⁹ Desmond Morton comments that Canadians regularly ingest popularized forms of history.¹⁸⁰ In fact, exhibitions such as *Beyond the Golden Mountain* also participated in an earlier form of the spectacle as entertainment by attracting and engaging audiences with visual performances. In the opening week, audiences were encouraged to participate in events including demonstrations of martial arts, Chinese opera, brush painting, Lantern Festival, and the dancing of one of Canada's longest and most colorful dragons.¹⁸¹ However, technological and entertainment based viewing experience began to officially be spearheaded by Heritage Canada in the late 2000s which affected many cultural programs, from the theatrical dramatized nightly shows of Canadian history at Parliament Hill every summer, to the emphasis on interactive and entertaining programming in institutions like

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Pamela Rogers and Nichole Grant, "The Pop-History Spectacle," 1-2.

¹⁸⁰ Desmond Morton, *A short history of Canada* (Toronto: Mclelland & Stewart, 2017), 25.

¹⁸¹ Jennings, "Museum's Chinese Exhibit is Tale of the Sparrow and the Elephant," C9.

the Museum of Civilization and the Royal Alberta Museum.¹⁸² In addition, with regards to the 2013 funding for the reconstruction of the Museum of Civilization, historian Dominique Marshall has remarked that the new museum intends to “popularize history, instead of probe the past.”¹⁸³ In contrast, while Tam’s work engages with the discussions surrounding the dominant national ideology and its exclusion of ethnic minorities, her installation seemed to present a space of negotiation rather than a space of fixed meaning. She asked visitors to engage with the relations of power through transforming a gallery institution into a public space, and to become authors of their own identity and story through the participation in the installation.

Conclusion

Despite the world-wide recognition that Canada has received as a multicultural and diverse country, I have outlined some of the ways in which this policy continues to perpetuate systemic racism by the dominant power. Although many ethnic communities are challenging these ideas, the voices that appear to be heard at a national level are limited, and are not always equal despite the promotion of equality for all in this country. By examining some of the constraints and regulations on cultural production including funding through governmental institutions and representations perpetuated by state institutions, I hope to reveal that many changes at the institutional level are partially influenced by political pressure to maintain Canada’s image internationally as a benevolent, culturally diverse and tolerant country. In doing so, the voices of some communities continue to be forgotten or underrepresented. However, at

¹⁸² “Northern Lights Launches on Parliament,” 1 Nov. 2015 <<http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?nid=998259>>

¹⁸³ Geddes, “Written by the Victors,” 18.

the same time, despite experiencing many difficulties including lack of funding and support, artists and activists continue to challenge the constructed ideas of race and culture, and push against constraints of not only institutional practices, but also racial self-identification confined to categories of diasporic communities such as ‘Chinese-Canadians’ and ‘African-Canadians.’ Artists such as Gu and Tam are able to offer glimpses of alternative models of representation and cultural interaction to the dominant model of consuming ethnic cultures through spectacle. They also bring viewers to question the function of government sponsored institutions by imbuing power to public and casual spaces. In addition, these artists offer an easier access point into these difficult histories through relatable subjects such as the Chinese restaurant, or a simple portrait, which allows viewers to begin by questioning their own experiences and notions of self-identity rather than the larger predefined ethnic category of Chinese-Canadians. In major museums, even the reforms that have been requested by the academic community but have not been widely implemented, such as the turn to include more community input and using a hybrid curatorial model, are not enough to cause reform at the national level. Optimistically, the possibilities of mobilizing the intended and accidental audiences in examples like Gu and Tam’s exhibitions can instigate a “new, creative and distinctively modern mode of power” that is able to negotiate the tensions between positions of power and those in other positions.¹⁸⁴ In addition, these changes may be able to bring to attention the desperate need for more diverse models of funding and consideration for racialized artists and communities. However, falling short of that, if minority voices can only be acknowledged through serious political pressure, the imminent long term discontentment might be reflected in more serious manifestations such as protests, and boycotts

¹⁸⁴ Michael Warner, “Publics and Counterpublics,” *Public Culture* 14:1 (2002): 108.

against national institutions which will inevitably spur on further controversies which could be otherwise avoided.

Figures

Figure 1. “A dancer performs a traditional Chinese folk dance, Vancouver, 1982“, Autumn Moon in the Han Palace,” Beyond Golden Mountain (1989). Gatineau, QC. Image from catalogue *Beyond the Golden Mountain* by Ban Seng Hoe.

Figure 2. “A performance of the dragon dance in Vancouver’s Chinatown, 1968,” *Beyond the Golden Mountain* (1989). Gatineau, QC. Image from catalogue *Beyond the Golden Mountain* by Ban Seng Hoe.

Figure 3. “A lion’s head is examined before a performance of the lion dance at an international fall fair, 1960,” *Beyond the Golden Mountain* (1989). Gatineau, QC. Image from catalogue *Beyond the Golden Mountain* by Ban Seng Hoe.

Figure 4. Ban Seng Hoe, “W.H. Yuen, whose British Columbia bakery has been in his family for three generations, makes moon cakes for the Mid-Autumn Festival, 1987,” *Beyond the Golden Mountain* (1989). Gatineau, QC. Image from catalogue *Beyond the Golden Mountain* by Ban Seng Hoe.

Figure 5. “The offering of a roast pig in commemoration of the dead, at the Chinese cemetery in Victoria, 1900,” *Beyond the Golden Mountain* (1989). Gatineau, QC. Image from catalogue *Beyond the Golden Mountain* by Ban Seng Hoe.

Figure 6. “Sifu F. Lee, a gong fu master, demonstrates the White Crane gong fu style with a sword, Edmonton, 1976,” *Beyond the Golden Mountain* (1989). Gatineau, QC. Image from catalogue *Beyond the Golden Mountain* by Ban Seng Hoe.

Figure 7. “Chinese musicians with their friends in a Chinese church in Victoria, 1890,” *Beyond the Golden Mountain* (1989). Gatineau, QC. Image from catalogue *Beyond the Golden Mountain* by Ban Seng Hoe.

Figure 8. “Church members assemble for a group photograph in commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of Victoria’s Chinese United Church, 1935,” *Beyond the Golden Mountain* (1989), Gatineau, QC. Image from catalogue *Beyond the Golden Mountain* by Ban Seng Hoe.

Figure 9. “A Chinese work gang for the Great Northern Railway, 1909,” *Beyond Golden Mountain* (1989). Gatineau, QC. Image from catalogue *Beyond the Golden Mountain* by Ban Seng Hoe.

Figure 10. “A Chinese-Canadian wedding in which the women wear traditional costumes and the men are dressed in Western attire,” *Beyond the Golden Mountain* (1989), Gatineau, QC. Image from catalogue *Beyond the Golden Mountain* by Ban Seng Hoe.

Figure 11. “Compilation of portraits,” Xiong Gu, I am Who I am (2006), Toronto, ON. Image from Xiong Gu’s website: <http://guxiong.ca/en/solo-exhibition/i-am-who-i-am/>

Figure 12. “St. Patrick Station,” Xiong Gu, I am Who I am (2006), Toronto, ON. Image from Xiong Gu’s website: <http://guxiong.ca/en/solo-exhibition/toronto-i-am-who-i-am/>

Figure 13. “Montreal Chinatown View One,” Xiong Gu, I am Who I am (2001), Montreal, QC.
Image from Xiong Gu’s website: <http://guxiong.ca/en/solo-exhibition/i-am-who-i-am/>

Figure 14. “Montreal Chinatown View Two,” Xiong Gu, I am Who I am (2001), Montreal, QC.
Photo: Courtesy of the artist. Image from Xiong Gu’s website: <http://guxiong.ca/en/solo-exhibition/i-am-who-i-am/>

Figure 15. “Installation View One,” Chop Suey on the Prairies (2013), Edmonton, AB. Image from CTV News Edmonton: <https://edmonton.ctvnews.ca/chop-suey-on-the-prairies-new-museum-exhibit-on-history-of-alberta-s-chinese-restaurants-1.1244205>

Figure 16. “Installation View Two,” Chop Suey on the Prairies (2013), Edmonton, AB. Image from CTV News Edmonton: <https://edmonton.ctvnews.ca/chop-suey-on-the-prairies-new-museum-exhibit-on-history-of-alberta-s-chinese-restaurants-1.1244205>

Figure 17. “Installation View Three,” Chop Suey on the Prairies (2013), Edmonton, AB. Image from CTV News Edmonton: <https://edmonton.ctvnews.ca/chop-suey-on-the-prairies-new-museum-exhibit-on-history-of-alberta-s-chinese-restaurants-1.1244205>

Figure 18. “A historical photo of the K and P Cafe in Lethbridge, Alberta from the Glenbow Archives,” Chop Suey on the Prairies (2013), Edmonton, AB. Image from CTV News Edmonton: <https://edmonton.ctvnews.ca/chop-suey-on-the-prairies-new-museum-exhibit-on-history-of-alberta-s-chinese-restaurants-1.1244205>

Figure 19. Karen Tam, “Entrance,” Gold Mountain Restaurant (2004), Montreal, QC. Image from Karen Tam’s website: <https://www.karentam.ca/goldmountain.html>

Figure 20. Karen Tam, “Restaurant Scene,” Gold Mountain Restaurant (2004), Montreal, QC.
Image from Karen Tam’s website: <https://www.karentam.ca/goldmountain.html>.

Figure 21. Karen Tam “Counter,” Gold Mountain Restaurant (2004), Montreal, QC. Image from Karen Tam’s website: <https://www.karentam.ca/goldmountain.html>.

Figure 22. Karen Tam, “Lantern,” Gold Mountain Restaurant (2004), Montreal, QC. Image from Karen Tam’s website: <https://www.karentam.ca/goldmountain.html>.

Figure 23. Gerald McMaster, *Savage Graces* (1994), Lethbridge, AB. Image from book by Ruth Phillips, *Museum Pieces: Towards the Indigenization of Canadian Museums*.

Figure 24. Karen Tam, “Back Kitchen,” *Gold Mountain Restaurant (2004)*, Montreal, QC.
Image from Karen Tam’s website: <https://www.karentam.ca/goldmountain.html>.

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