

**Karen Tam**

Curated by Mary Jane Jacob

January 31 – March 8, 2008

Opening Reception Thursday, January 31, 6:00 – 8:00pm

“Karen Tam brings us China or the conflated and complex Chinese-ness that surrounds us. Her environments embody it. They are home. They are us.”

–Mary Jane Jacob

*Model Kitschy Kitchen Mao: Not Made in China!* [detail], 2007  
Mixed media  
Dimensions variable



Karen Tam’s installation work employs a delicate balance of humor, confrontation and innovation to promote awareness and change in regards to cultural identity and authenticity. The artist works in many different media, including music, video and sculpture. Blended together, the finished product is both poignant and functional.

Tam, a Canadian-based artist, strives to wittily point out Western culture’s fascination with, and prejudice towards Chinese culture through their notions of the Chinese and the reproduction of Chinese culture. More specifically, Tam is “particularly interested in the history of the Chinese Diaspora, especially its close connection to the emergence of the overseas Chinese restaurant and cuisine both in North America and internationally.” Also of interest is the historical and current production of Eastern goods for Western taste, something Tam investigates through her installation at CUE Art Foundation, her first solo exhibition in New York.

Home and interior design shows, competitions and home décor stores that treat Asian cultures as commodities gave rise to the basic premise for the installation. Similar to a home design showroom, Tam creates four modern-day *chinoiserie* rooms called *Pagoda Pads*. The rooms consist of a kitchen, living room, children’s playroom and a bedroom. Many parts of the kitchen will be functional and the children’s playroom will be filled with toys purchased in Chinatown, at discount stores, including many of the lead-contaminated toys recently recalled. All the *Pagoda Pads* will include what the artist describes as an “Oriental flair.” To achieve this, Tam will incorporate music, photographs, paper cut-outs, text and faux-antiques. Played within the installation as background music will be *Chinese Firecrackers*, a recording of people Tam asked to do cover versions of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century English and French racist tunes.



*Orientally Yours*, 2007  
As installed at the Southern Alberta Art Gallery (Lethbridge, Alberta), Mixed media  
12’ x 27’ x 52’

(More, over)

**Accompanying public program:  
Call for submissions for exhibiting artist Karen Tam's next installation.**

Interested parties are invited to submit a concept, list of materials and budget for the design of one room in their household.

For additional information, please contact Ryan White, Programs Assistant, CUE Art Foundation, 212-206-3583, or email [ryan.white@cueartfoundation.org](mailto:ryan.white@cueartfoundation.org)

**ARTIST'S BIO:**

Since receiving a BFA from Concordia University, Montreal, Canada and an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL, Karen Tam has exhibited her work in Canada, Ireland, United Kingdom and the United States. She has participated in residencies across Canada, as well as the Chinese Arts Centre, Manchester, United Kingdom and the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin.

In 2006, Tam was awarded the Joseph Stauffer Prize from the Canada Council for the Arts for most outstanding young visual artist. She has also received grants from the Canada Council for the Arts, the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec, and Fonds pour la Formation de Chercheurs et l'Aide à la Recherche, Québec.

Recent activities include solo and group exhibitions: *LAB 7.3: Pagoda Pads* (2007) at Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia; *REDRESS Express* at Centre A, Vancouver, British Columbia; *Orientially Yours* (2007) at The Southern Alberta Art Gallery, Lethbridge, Alberta; and *Portraits d'artistes*, a Conseil des arts de Montréal initiative. Upcoming activities include participating in group shows at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal and the Harbourfront Centre in Toronto, and a solo exhibition, *On Rock Garden*, at AKA Gallery, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

**ABOUT CUE:**

*CUE Art Foundation, is a 501(c)(3) non-profit forum for contemporary art and cultural exchange between artists and the public. CUE gives artists, students, scholars and arts professionals resources at many stages of their careers and creative lives. Our programs include exhibitions, studio residencies, publications, professional development seminars, educational outreach, symposia, concerts, readings and performances. Since 2002, we have operated from our 4,500 square foot storefront venue in New York's Chelsea Arts District.*

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