

Artist Statement: Memory Resurrected:

In response to the prompt of collective memory, our group decided to investigate the immigration experiences of elders in the community of Chinatown. At the very outset of this project, we aimed to capture the complexities, both personal and social, of the immigrant experiences in the diverse city of New York. Additionally, we wanted to explore the multi-faceted juxtaposition of life in New York, Chinatown, and China, and how transitioning from China to New York affected the interviewees' lives and mindsets. From the information and interviews we gathered, we decided that it would be most effective to create a project consisting of a sculptural element, a two-dimensional, illustrative element, as well as a video component. Ultimately, it was and is our goal to accurately and faithfully reflect the stories of the individuals who were gracious enough to lend us their time to interview them, and to pick out key themes that resonated through all the interviews we conducted.

According to our interviews with three Chinese elders in Columbus Park, we found similarities in their effort to maintain disciplined and balanced in both work and life. Our experience of interviewing subjects and finding willing participants was somewhat challenging. Despite having a large pool of potential interviewees that fit the bill in who we were looking to hear from, only three agreed to participate. This was perhaps due to the sensitive nature of the subject we wanted information on, but it could have also been partly due to the "mind-your-own-business" mindset that most of the elders had. The first interview we had was with a lady who was doing Tai Chi with her friend. In brief, she mentioned that she came to the United States because of the opportunities for self-invention and democracy that she believed was attainable away from her home in Guangzhou, China. She spoke fervently about the importance of leading a balanced life in terms of wealth, family, and health. From her experiences, she concluded that her self-invention and independence was to achieve happiness. She also mentioned that she wore red inside her jacket as a reminder of home, back in what was Communist China. The second man we interviewed said he came to the United States all for the sake of money and better life. While he repeatedly told us about his fortunate in the past to get the chance moving to the states, he also talked about his friends back in China that was not as lucky as him and how he helped his sister's family immigrated here just two years ago. At the end, he said he now went back to China to visit families once two to three years after becoming half-retired. In general, we can see family was his center of life and the main reason for his lifelong hardworking. In contrast to the two previous interviewees, the third man we interviewed stated strongly on the fact that he came to the United States due to his father's desire. By the way, he did not experience much culture shock as his birthplace Hong Kong was already quite westernized at the time and he had not been back to Hong Kong ever since he moved here in 1986. In response to our curiosity, the man as well spoke about people's lack of interest in American politics in Chinatown as they might not even know either of the nominees' names and had no idea about the election and its aftermath after all.

Based on our interviews, our project therefore is going to interpret the immigrant experiences in New York City with 2D, 3D and digital art. The black and white fish together represent Yin and Yang, a traditional Chinese symbol of balance, which opposite forces interconnect and give rise to each other. The red, small lantern in the middle of each fish reflects with the first interviewee's idea of wearing red in remind of the past China. The hanging scroll displayed at the back of the fish portrays an imaginary landscape of a harbor side town in China with a compass on the upper right corner. The compass has our fish in the middle with the north as discipline(律) and the south as laziness(惰). The middle of the scroll is spaced for projection of a video made in order to show the juxtaposition of lives in New York City and Chinatown. The video is thus edited with daily scenes in New York City and major parts of records of our three interviews in Columbus Park.