

**ATTACHMENT D**

**DRAFT CHINATOWN PUBLIC ART PLAN**





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# NEW CENTURY GARDEN

## PUBLIC ART PLAN FOR CHINATOWN

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Prepared by Aaron Seeto, June 2015

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# INTRODUCTION

The New Century Garden Public Art Plan for Chinatown (the Public Art Plan) has been commissioned by the City of Sydney and is a continuation of work that began in 2010 for the development of a strategy to deliver permanent public art in Sydney's Chinatown.

Since 2010, a number of changes have occurred within the public domain which necessitates an update to this Plan. These include major capital works in and around the Chinatown area such as the Darling Harbour redevelopment (Darling Harbour Live); the light rail extension and George Street pedestrianisation and the imminent opening of the Goods Line in Pyrmont as a new public space. Concurrent to this Public Art Plan the City of Sydney has commissioned architects Spackman Mossop Michaels to undertake a Public Domain Study for the Chinatown and City South area. The Public Art Plan has benefited from, and addressed, this Public Domain Study.

The Public Art Plan has sought to understand, in the broadest possible sense, the qualities of a future Chinatown and proposes an overall curatorial strategy with recommendations for future public art in Chinatown in response to changes in the public domain. It recognises significant opportunities for the employment of artists in the development and integration of art within the public domain and the integral role that art and artists can play in articulating the cultural life of Chinatown as it transforms over the next decade.

Alongside curatorial strategies and recommendations this Plan presents a series of case studies of artists who encourage different ways for civic contemplation, social and ecological awareness, and social interaction to occur within our urban environments.

## New Century Garden

The curatorial framework is titled New Century Garden. It is a framework that uses the cultural formation of a Chinese garden as a metaphor transposed on the city area – with concentrated moments of cultural activity (artworks) connected by pedestrian walkways and thoroughfares through designed plantings. This concept reinforces the particular character of the various zones of Chinatown, highlighting pedestrian thoroughfares and responding to the unique Asian cultural qualities of Chinatown. This concept privileges the creation of rest and respite to contemplate the relationship between life and art. It must be stressed that the New Century Garden is a conceptual framework (and not a plan for a formal garden) to create a sense of cultural and human connectedness within Chinatown as it undergoes considerable public domain transformation.

The New Century Garden Public Art Plan offers an opportunity to consider what role public art may play as a response to this change. How can connections to the past and ways of living be respected? What lessons can be learnt from the area's social history? What will be the relationship between these important intangibles – linguistic and cultural diversity, social history and feelings of community – in the context of gentrification and development? Will these be articulations of a thriving and living culture, or representations of ideals that are invoked as a response to the threat of their ultimate erasure?

Core to this Plan is the principle that public art strategies in Chinatown should proceed with the awareness that the cultural and linguistic diversity and the social history of its communities defines the special place-making qualities of Chinatown. These qualities are unique to this area, and a reminder of the historical importance of Asian migration to Australia. It is with these qualities foremost in mind that the idea of the New Century Garden has taken shape.

# Guiding principles

The New Century Garden Public Art Plan has been guided by the following principles:

- to build upon a track record of excellence and best practice established by the City of Sydney
- to support cultural and linguistic diversity
- that public art engages artists, communities and the city in conversations about civic values responding to both social and cultural imperatives and should therefore have a wide-ranging input
- Chinatown's uniqueness is the result of its specific social and cultural history and public art strategies should be sympathetic this history and cultural dynamic
- to involve artists to shape public domain plans. This is an opportunity to present new ideas or to refashion existing thoughts in the public domain, in unexpected ways
- to work collaboratively within the community
- to consider both local and international creative networks with a commitment to developing artworks by artists from Sydney and elsewhere – not just to reflect on the broad Sydney demography, but to also allow for the work done here to enter into an international dialogue
- to embrace intellectual input and generate discussion about the role of public art in our cities
- to improve pedestrian experiences.

## **This report is formatted in two sections:**

### SECTION 1. CHINATOWN REVIEW

This section defines the area of Chinatown, its existing artworks, and makes observations about the area's history, its current conditions and future predictions.

### SECTION 2. FUTURE CURATORIAL DIRECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents the New Century Garden curatorial rationale. It provides a set of principles that will drive future public art projects in Chinatown. A series of recommendations follows which is based on the key principles. As well, it nominates 13 case studies as examples of artworks and projects by artists, which demonstrate a range of approaches that future public artworks could take in Chinatown.

### APPENDICES

- I. A survey of the existing artwork in the City Art Collection in Chinatown with recommendations
- II. New Century Garden Symposium Proceedings and Transcripts (2011)

# SECTION 1: CHINATOWN REVIEW

In this section observations of Chinatown's character, social history and future growth are made based on the City of Sydney's demographic profiling, the Chinatown and South Sydney Public Domain Study and observations made by the author from more than 14 years working in the area.

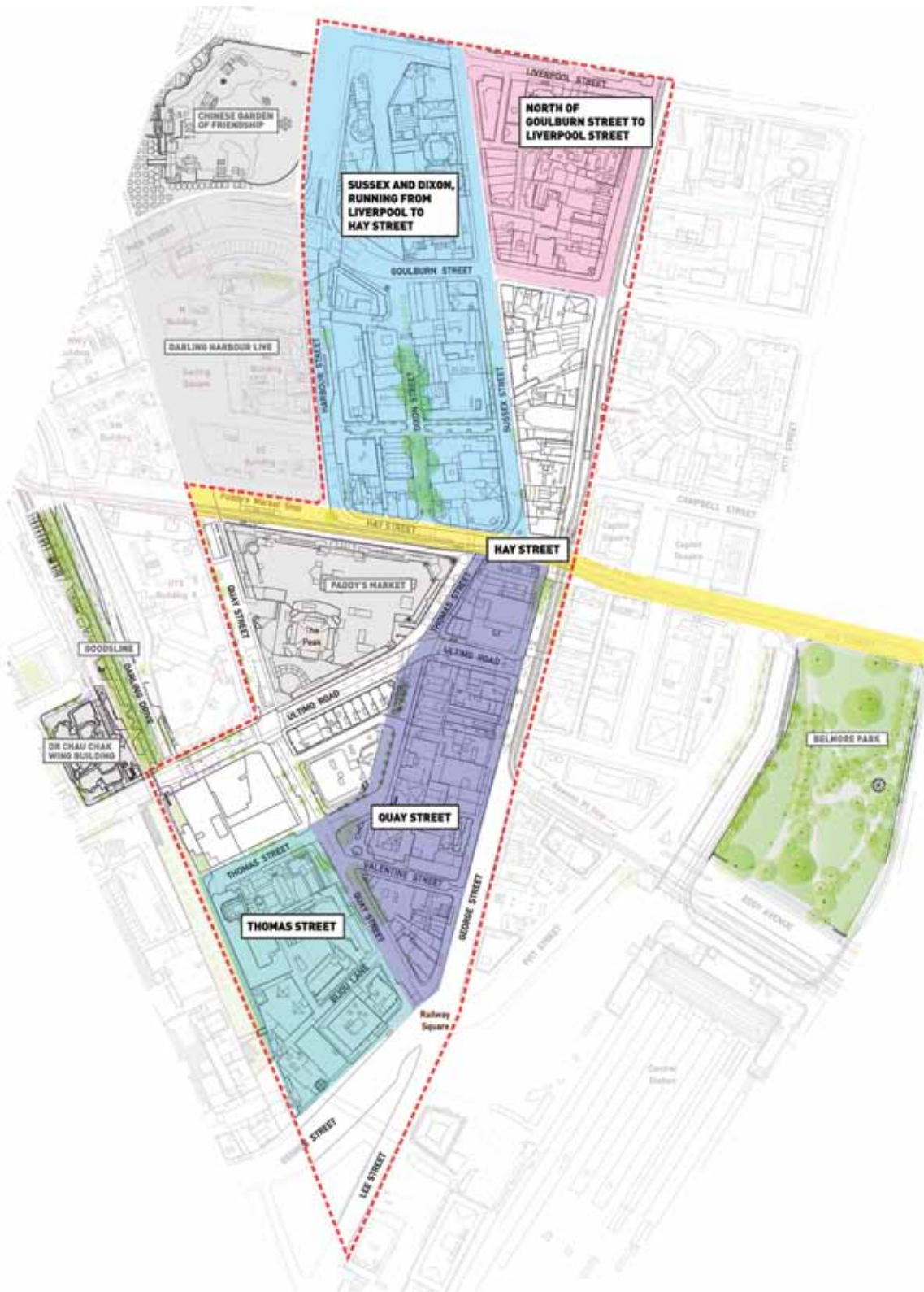
The area's Chinese-Australian social history is highly visible, with an active network of community organisations and individuals working to promote and preserve Chinatown as a symbolic site for the Chinese in Australia and a symbol of multicultural diversity. Its Asian population is equally diverse with active businesses and communities of Indonesian, Thai, Korean and Japanese contributing to the unique cultural offerings in Chinatown and Haymarket.

The Public Domain Study prepared by Spackman Mossop Michaels, highlights a number of existing public domain pressures. The growth of resident populations in the city is one driver, as well as changes to vehicular movement due to the development within and north of the area, as well as the delivery of new public transport infrastructure. A recent article in the *Australian Financial Review* noted that 'Central Sydney will reach 250,000 residents by 2022', three years earlier than previous predictions<sup>1</sup>.

The Public Domain Study articulates that there will also be new connectivity between different parts of Sydney. The extension of development activity north of Chinatown (the Darling Harbour 'boulevard'), which will connect Sydney's new convention and exhibition facilities to Chinatown will result in changed vehicular flows, and in new pedestrian experiences and zones in the city. Principles of pedestrianised activity, and the need for better pedestrian experiences are shared between the Public Domain Study and the Public Art Plan. These changes present opportunities for the delivery of the Public Art Plan which is discussed in more detail in the section titled 'Chinatown's future: Public Domain Study' on page 11.

1. <http://www.afr.com/real-estate/residential/nsw/sydneys-population-touches-200000-for-first-time-20150616-gho5vs>

# Defining Chinatown



The New Century Garden Public Art Plan is defined by a triangular arrangement bounded by the following key landmarks and streets:

- South of Liverpool Street
- East of Darling Harbour and the Darling Harbour Live project and Chinese Gardens; Ultimo Road and Quay Street
- West of George street



This area has a number of natural precincts or quarters, established by existing key vehicular and pedestrian thoroughfares. They can be generally described as:

### **Sussex and Dixon, running from Liverpool to Hay Street**

This area, since the 1980s at least, has been seen as the 'heart' of Chinatown, where key businesses and restaurants have been located along the pedestrianised Dixon Street. It is loosely defined by a number of key public artworks – *Chinatown Lighting Project* (2000), which traverses most of its footprint and to the south of this area Lin Li's *Golden Water Mouth* (1999). Recently this area has included Pamela Mei-Leng See's *Pao Cha* (2012) and Jason Wing's *Between Two Worlds* (2012) a new work planned in response to the older works.

### **North of Goulburn street to Liverpool Street**

Because of the volume of Goulburn Street's vehicular traffic, this creates an area of concentrated activity on the pedestrianised area of north Dixon Street that leads to the pedestrian bridge, linking Chinatown with Darling Harbour through the Chinese Gardens. This area has a distinct character with a mix of Uighur restaurants and other non-Cantonese cuisines.

### **Hay Street**

Hay Street runs parallel and south of Goulburn Street, from the Entertainment Centre in the west (it will bound the new Darling Harbour Live site), through to Elizabeth Street and Belmore Park in the east. Both the southern ends of Sussex Street and Dixon Street terminate at Hay Street. Hay Street forms a key light rail connection; it is an important pedestrian and public transport thoroughfare that highlights different cultural experiences within the precinct – museums, shopping, theatres and public transport infrastructure. There is the Powerhouse Museum and Sydney Entertainment Centre in the west, Paddy's Markets (at Market City) and Capitol Square to the immediate east, and Central Station on the eastern fringe. The light rail infrastructure and the Paddy's Markets site creates a natural demarcation between the north and the south of Chinatown. The Darling Harbour Live site (which will replace the current Entertainment Centre and plaza forecourt area) and The Goods Line development will change the way this area of Chinatown functions, and possibly create a new distinct area.

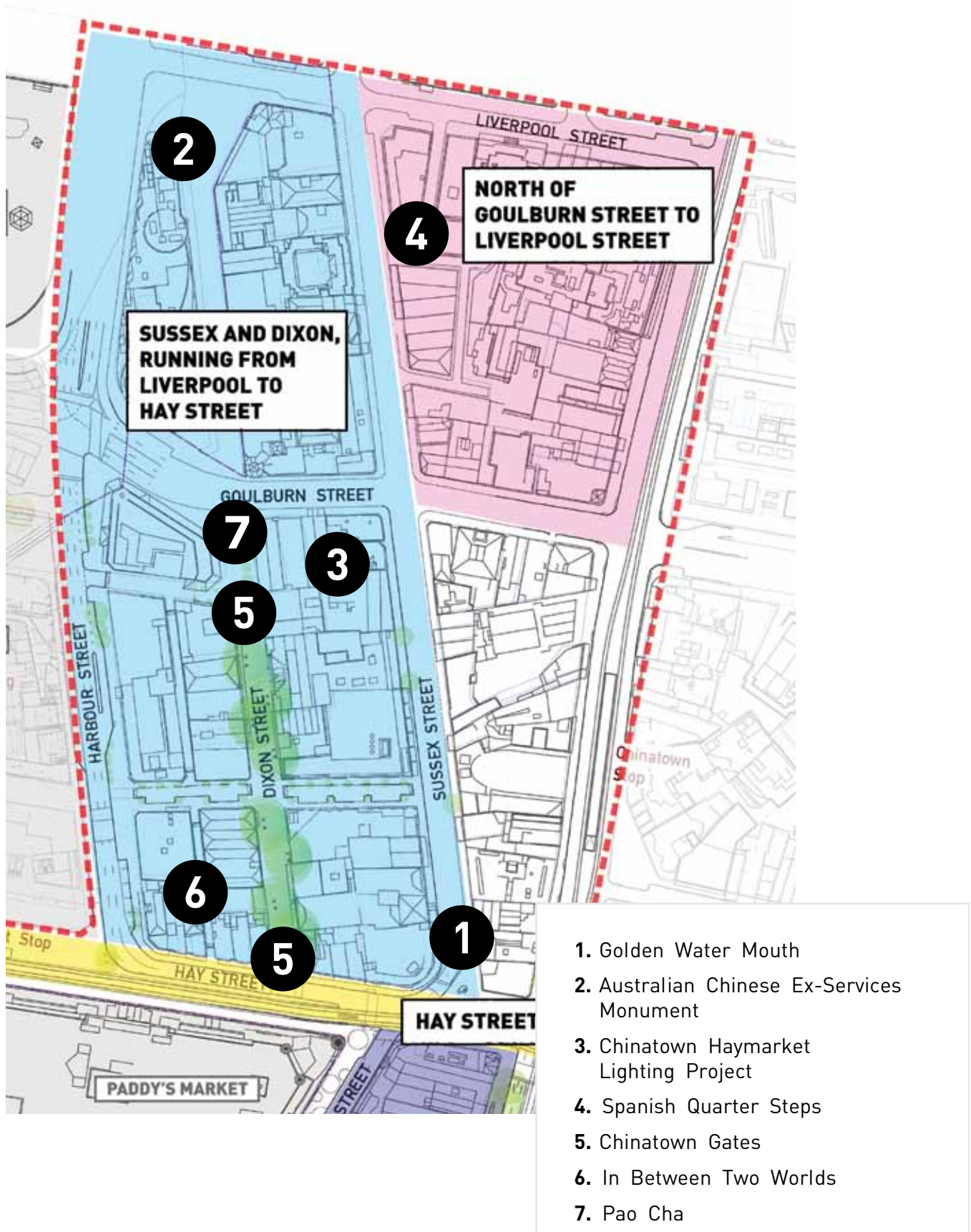
### **East of Thomas Street**

Running south of Hay Street and bounded by Paddy's Markets this area will be the site of a new public art work by Chinese-Australian artist Lindy Lee. This section signals a different pace, with its proximity to the produce market section of Paddy's Markets and other traditional providores. The street leads towards university housing buildings, the ABC headquarters and The Goods Line currently under construction. It houses a number of unique buildings and grocery shops, which relate to the area's history as a market garden – a time before ubiquitous supermarkets.

### **West of Quay Street**

Due to the one-way entry at its junction with George Street, Quay Street is a relatively quiet city street. It is tree-lined, and a key pedestrian thoroughfare connecting Chinatown and the University of Technology (UTS) with the major Railway Square transport hub (rail and bus). Bounded by the ABC headquarters, a major employer in the area, it is proximate to the TAFE and UTS with university housing situated towards its eastern end. Its character is defined by the eateries frequented by students and city workers. Behind a number of these large institutions are some unique laneways, which reflect former histories of the area. In particular is Bijoux lane, which, as a service laneway seems almost anachronistic within the city.

# Existing Public Art in Chinatown



In the Chinatown Precinct a cluster of public art, public monuments and other structures are centralised around Dixon and Sussex Streets between Hay and Goulburn Streets, with other public works at the northern end of Dixon Street and at the junction of Hay and Sussex Streets.

Public monuments emerged in Chinatown as a result of increased Chinese community and business activity in the area in the 1970s. The development of the Chinatown Gates (1980) can be seen as an important manifestation of this activity. The works in the City Art Collection were developed from 1999 through to the present with a cluster of works commissioned to coincide with the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games and more recently activity occurring around 2012 to the present.

Public Art in Chinatown falls into three categories:

- Artwork commissions by artists
- Chinese heritage structures
- Architectural or designed structures

There are seven public artworks in the Chinatown area:

- *Golden Water Mouth* (1999), by Lin Li (artist)
- *Australian Chinese Ex-Services Monument* (2003), by McGregor Westlake Architecture in association with Paul White, Partridge Partners Engineering, and Tsang & Lee Architects
- *Chinatown Lighting Project* (2000) by Peter McGregor (architect)
- *Spanish Quarter Steps* (c. 2000) by Peter McGregor in association with Stanistic Turner Architects
- *Chinatown Gates* (1980), by Henry Tsang, Tsang & Lee Architects
- *In Between Two Worlds* (2012), by Jason Wing (artist)
- *Pao Cha* (2012), by Pamela Mei-Leng See (artist)

These are the major works that have loosely defined the character of public art in the Chinatown Precinct.

Of the seven works above, five fall within the City of Sydney Public Art Collection. The Australian-Chinese Ex-Services Monument (2003), though located in the public domain is not owned by the City of Sydney and the Chinatown Gates do not enter the Public Art Collection.

All of the projects can be described as having an approach that engages with the specific local, social and cultural history of the Chinatown area and traditional concepts of Chinese culture.

From observations of the area, public art is encountered by the everyday public as a way of orientating themselves in the local area. For example, a hand drawn map to describe the junction of Hay, Sussex and Thomas Streets would include a reference to the 'Golden Tree' (*Golden Water Mouth*). The north/south orientation of the Chinatown Gates would also include reference to the 'Golden Tree'.

## At the edges

The Chinatown Precinct is also bordered by other public artworks. For example the Marilyn Fairskye spirals at the Railway Square Bus depot at the south of the precinct; the 'Guerrilla Photo Gallery' on the Elizabeth Street-side of the Goulburn Street carpark<sup>2</sup>. There are also plans for a major work by Hany Armanious at Belmore Park as part of the City of Sydney City Centre Public Art Plan<sup>3</sup>. Darling Harbour Live is also expected to have public art projects.

2. <http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/art-and-design/guerrilla-elizabeth-st-gallery-returns--only-this-time-its-legal-20140522-zrkkp.html>  
3. This is part of City Central, Public Art Plan curated by Barbara Flynn. <http://www.cityartsydney.com.au/artwork/pavilion/>

# Chinatown history

Since at least the 1980s, the Chinatown precinct has centred on Sussex and Dixon Streets, bordered by Liverpool Street to the north, Quay Street to the south, and by George Street and Darling Harbour to the east and west. This is the 'centre' of Chinatown, identified by the Chinese gates to the north and south of the mall, and many established business and restaurants.

The first area of Chinese habitation in Sydney was The Rocks, as Chinese businesses moved there and Chinese seamen working in Port Jackson came to live, socialise and congregate in the area. In the late 19th century Chinese people began to move towards the edge of Surry Hills. In the 20th century Chinese businesses were found from Taylor Square westwards through Surry Hills towards George Street. Temples, community halls and other community infrastructure are still seen in this area. It was throughout this period that businesses began to extend into the current Chinatown area attracted by the lower rents in the district. The area was also an important market garden. The current fruit and vegetable markets at Paddy's Markets is connected to this history. The name of the suburb Haymarket, similarly reinforces the area's history as a produce market.

Several waves of migration that reflect broadly Australia's multicultural character from the colonial period through to the present day, led to the development of the Chinese community in the City of Sydney. The first of these waves was during the colonial period when seamen and Chinese labourers working on boats came to Port Jackson. The Gold Rushes in the 19th century and education opportunities in the 20th century resulted in additional waves of population growth. More recently, the 1990s saw migration by new waves of Chinese. The establishment of other Asian communities such as Thai, Korean, Indonesian and Japanese has further contributed to the character of the Chinatown area.

The current character of Chinatown is a mixture of both established and establishing communities. Although now it is a thriving area of the city, which attracts local Sydney residents, students and tourists, there were times when Chinatown was considered off-limits to the general public. Before the wider acceptance of multicultural communities by the Australian public in the 1980s, non-Chinese visitation to Chinatown would have been minimal. Awareness of Asian cuisine and increased inquisitiveness of society since this time has transformed the demographic of visitors to the area. Sydney's Chinatown is an important symbol of Australia's multicultural history.

Today, Chinatown is cosmopolitan and diverse with a variety of Asian communities. The rich offerings of housing and development, public transport infrastructure, public space, heritage, cultural and food offerings make for a vibrant area.

## Changing Chinatown

The demographic statistics below illustrate Chinatown as an area of linguistic and cultural diversity, which is unique when read in context of the city's broader demographic profile. The area's linguistic diversity is illustrated in the following snapshot from the City of Sydney Chinatown and CBD South Village Community Profile: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2006-2011<sup>4</sup>:

### How is the Population Changing? (ERP Data)

Between 2006 and 2011, the population increased by 28.4% (or 3,681 residents).

The following service groups contributed to population growth in particular:

- 'Tertiary Education and Independence' (18-24 years); increase of 353 residents (8.0%)
- 'Young Workforce' (25-34 years); an increase of 2,365 residents (52.2%)
- 'Parents and Homebuilders' (35-49 years); an increase of 562 residents (32.8%).

The population is estimated to increase by 42.4% by 2031 (7,063 additional residents). The greatest increases are anticipated in the following service groups:

- 'Young Workforce' (25-34 years); increase of 2,217 residents (32.1%)
- 'Parents and Homebuilders' (35-49 years); increase of 3,256 residents (32.1%).

## Who Are We? (URP Data)

- The majority of Chinatown and CBD South Village residents are born overseas (85.6% compared with 49.1% in City of Sydney)
- At home, 78.2% of residents speak a non-English language, either exclusively, or in addition to English. In City of Sydney this figure is 34.4%
- Tertiary qualifications are held by 62.8% of residents aged 15 years and over, compared to 68.4% for City of Sydney
- 42.7% of residents attend an education institution: 30.5% of the population is attending University or TAFE, compared to 16.8% for the City of Sydney.

## What Do We Do? (URP and Enumerated Data)

- Of the Chinatown and CBD South Village residents in the labour force, 87.7% are employed
- The largest occupational group is 'Professionals' at 25.8% of employed residents aged 15 years and over
- The largest industry of employment is 'Accommodation and Food Services'
- The median individual income for residents is \$423 per week, representing just under half of the City of Sydney weekly median individual income of \$888
- The median household income is \$1,177 per week, 27.7% less than City of Sydney weekly median (\$1,629).

# Chinatown's future: Public Domain Study

The Public Domain Study prepared by Spackman Mossop Michaels, highlight the unprecedented change that will illustrate a range of public domain needs within the area. Chinatown's new transformative period will be brought about through a mix of capital development projects by universities, state and local governments and private developers.

New and upcoming known projects are listed below:

- Light Rail in the City Centre and George Street pedestrianisation which will result in:
  - changes to the major arterial flow of vehicular traffic in the city
  - reduced traffic capacity for the city
  - more space for pedestrians in the area
  - new infrastructure and stations in the Southern CBD
  - a new light rail hub to complement Central Station, with expected increases in usage and visitation for the area
  - increase pressure on Chinatown streets to support city-wide traffic circulation
- Darling Harbour redevelopment (5000 residents and 7000 square metres of retail space<sup>5</sup>)
- Darling Harbour Live (Lendlease) (5000 new residents including 1000 students; 2000 workers plus tourists; 20,000 square metres of commercial space)
- Central Park Development (Carlton and United Brewery) (3500 residents and 5000 visitors and workers daily<sup>6</sup>)
- The Goods Line Development
- UTS Dr Chau Chak Wing Building
- The relocation of the Powerhouse Museum and possible development of this site.

The Public Domain Study highlights that the Chinatown area already faces a number of existing pressures including: high pedestrian volumes; congested footpaths and intersections; and reductions in public meeting spaces. One assumes that these will be amplified by increased residents living in the area; increased university and student activity; the restriction of vehicular traffic in the city centre together with the employment of new modes of public transportation and Chinatown's (existing) proximity to public transport hubs. The Public Domain Study also presents these issues within the context of other development activity – the impact, for instance of Barangaroo and other commercial and residential activity in

5. Spackman Mossop Michaels Public Domain Study, supplied slide  
6. ibid

the city shows how Chinatown will be connected to other development as it comes online – for instance, the Darling Harbour ‘boulevard’ which will connect Chinatown to Sydney’s new convention and exhibition facilities north of the area.

The Public Domain Study presents a variety of options the City of Sydney can employ to address key objectives such as: winning back space for Chinatown; maximising access to Chinatown and improving Public Domain quality within the area. These changes will directly effect how the New Century Garden Public Art Plan will be implemented. The changes to vehicular and pedestrian flow are of particular interest to the Public Art Plan. New developments and enhanced footpaths will create new zones and new pedestrian thoroughfares through the precinct, opening up opportunities for the employment of artists to direct and integrate public art into the broader public domain.

As new projects are completed greater opportunities for engaging existing and future communities arise. This enables a rich basis for the City of Sydney to generate discussion about the need and role of public art in the Chinatown area.

## Cultural impact

The large scale transformations of the public domain from increased population and development, will have an impact upon the existing culture and experience of Chinatown. Its potential impact is symbolic as much as it is physical. Considering Chinatown’s role as the symbolic heart of the Chinese community in Australia, its social history, specific demographic profile and linguistic diversity contribute in profound ways to the identity of Chinatown as a whole, and by extension, secures the vital participation of Asian community history within Australian cultural narratives. When new public infrastructure and private real estate developments are considered in the context of Chinatown’s existing rich layered social and cultural history, the area and its community requires genuine consultation and consideration. How can the unique qualities of Sydney’s Chinatown be retained? How can a new incarnation of Chinatown reflect the important history of Asian migration to Australia? These are the types of issues which are encapsulated by the curatorial framework discussed in the next section.

# SECTION 2: FUTURE CURATORIAL DIRECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section articulates the New Century Garden curatorial rationale and provides recommendations. The case studies which follow underpin the curatorial concept.

Current observations of Chinatown indicate:

- Chinatown has a unique profile and sense of place resulting from its social history and linguistic and cultural diversity
- Chinatown is about to undergo major transformation
- There are new stakeholders and new networks emerging in the area from government, education and private sectors
- There is obvious benefit and excitement around the degree and quality of development. However, there are inherent risks associated with change – as public spaces are developed amenity during program delivery may be compromised
- There have been various approaches to public art in the area (these are outlined in Appendix I: Existing works in the City Art Collection and Recommendations)

Considering Chinatown's unique history, location and demographics, the desire for Asian representation could result in unsophisticated responses that present a garish, simplified representation of Chinese and Asian culture. This may satisfy a desire to market and define Chinatown, but what the City's own census analysis and demographic forecasts illustrate, is that a much more nuanced, sophisticated approach is necessary. Whilst development within the area is occurring, the fine grain of Chinatown, its laneways, restaurants and arcades which give the area its positive intangible qualities, need to be retained. Areas like Bijoux Lane, or the arcades that criss-cross Dixon to Sussex and George Streets are unique reminders of the areas' history. It is this mix of the old and the new; the layering of languages and culture, of residents and business, which make Chinatown unique.

The role of public art in Chinatown is to be sympathetic to history, to allow artists to draw out qualities of the fine grain, which may disappear as growth and development occurs. The New Century Garden curatorial rationale has a preference towards an ephemeral materiality that can weather and patinate, or which might be living or planted material. This concept has been considered as a way to reinforce ideas about the role of individuals and their histories and experiences in determining meaning within cities.

## New Century Garden

The curatorial strategy New Century Garden proposed for this Public Art Plan is based upon a metaphor of a Chinese garden. At its most basic, a garden is a designed space (or series of spaces), interconnected through pathways and buildings or pavilions, which frame vistas of nature and encourage activation through cultural activity. The movement of people, through and around the Chinatown area – encouraged to interact, sit with, observe artworks – is an application of this metaphor.

Artwork in the various zones of Chinatown will operate as moments of reflection and contemplation, much like pavilions in a garden, and the process of traversing or reflection is an extension of cultural activity. Whilst large scale and monumental works will be accommodated by this scheme, it also allows for works of different scales, and privileges contemplation and respite in the city. In this sense, in a mode closer to Chinese and Asian cultural thinking, artworks make us closer to an understanding of everyday life, and our place within an expanded network of culture, society and nature.

Using the garden as a metaphor deflects the essentialist cultural symbolism embodied by the red lanterns and pagodas which seem to drive basic approaches to representing Asian culture. The garden space, although partially inspired by Chinese gardens, is for the most part inspired by a consideration of how they function. Additionally gardens have a range of relationships to other discourses beyond China and Asia. This is further articulated in the case studies below, which, for instance include a reference to Isamu Noguchi, specifically for his understanding of Japanese aesthetics, and his influence on post war American visual and performing arts and the establishment of modernism there.

## An interdisciplinary framework

The curatorial strategy for this Public Art Plan stems from a symposium called New Century Garden convened in 2011, by 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, Sydney in partnership with the City of Sydney. Architects, curators, artists, academics and writers<sup>7</sup> were invited to look at the relationships between traditional Chinese gardens, the built environment and to consider whether or not this classical form might provide a robust curatorial framework to explore Chinatown's contemporary relationship with its own social and cultural history and the creation and presentation of culture.

The symposium comprised a panel of speakers who were invited to develop a presentation that explored and articulated a response to the proposed idea of a garden in a public space that aims to be genuinely interdisciplinary in its methodologies. The speakers were selected for their extensive knowledge in the fields of contemporary art, art history, architecture, urban design, literature, cultural studies and connections to Asia, particularly China and Korea, and comprised:

- John Choi – Founding Partner, Choi Ropiha Fighera (architect)
- Felicity Fenner – Chief Curator, National Institute for Experimental Arts and Senior Lecturer, School of Art History and Education, College of Fine Arts, University of NSW
- Nicholas Jose – novelist and Professor, Writing and Society Research Group, University of Western Sydney
- Dr Xing Ruan – author and Professor of Architecture, University of NSW
- Aaron Seeto – Director, 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art and Symposium Convenor

The idea of the garden space emerged from some initial thoughts around creating new pedestrian thoroughfares through Chinatown. How could spaces of contemplation be created? How does daily life balance with quiet contemplation? How to tease out those experiences of historical layering and meandering as one traverses this part of the city, with its arcades and laneways? Gardens are planned with specific rules, and architecture, which create conditions for temporal activity to occur, contemplation and the creation of culture.

The symposium was convened to investigate whether one could extrapolate these ideas into a consideration of the city. How may a city also create conditions, akin to the Chinese Garden, for contemplation and cultural activity?

The perspectives arising from the New Century Garden symposium indicated a wide variety of ways in which gardens are read architecturally, culturally, and artistically. What became clear, especially in considering the approaches of the architect Xing Ruan and novelist Nicholas Jose, is that what is defined as 'garden' is activated through close connections to different types of cultural activity. Without poetry or literature, the space of a garden is just a physical 'planted' space, but through cultural activities, gardens take on other cultured forms and meanings.

The perspectives of the guest speakers indicated a shift away from the idea of a garden as a static planted space, instead moving towards a cultural space, where its meanings can unfold over time, and encapsulate a range of different cross-disciplinary approaches.

The garden concept was also a link back to two distinct historical periods – the market garden, which involved much of the early enterprise and labour of the Chinese in the Haymarket area during the 19th century onwards, and the Chinese Garden – of which Sydney has an excellent example – built as a commemorative exchange of friendship in 1988. The question under consideration: what might a 21st century garden look like?

Following on from these discussions, in 2012, the City of Sydney engaged Chinese-Australian Lindy Lee to lead the design of a new public space. This space will accompany the pedestrianisation of Thomas Street and reconfiguring of Hay Street and is part of the long-term transformation of the Chinatown area<sup>8</sup>.

In the New Century Garden Public Art Plan, the concept of a Chinese garden is more a metaphor for uncovering the networks and connections between individuals and places. It is about the transformation from planted or designed spaces, into spaces of cultural and personal significance. Rather than a literal creation of a garden, the idea attempts to construct a methodology to encourage all kinds of cultural activity.

7. <http://www.4a.com.au/symposium-new-century-garden/> See Appendix II for symposium proceedings and transcripts.

8. <http://www.sydneymedia.com.au/5250-zen-artist-lindy-lee-leads-chinatown-revamp/>



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# NEW CENTURY GARDEN KEY PRINCIPLES

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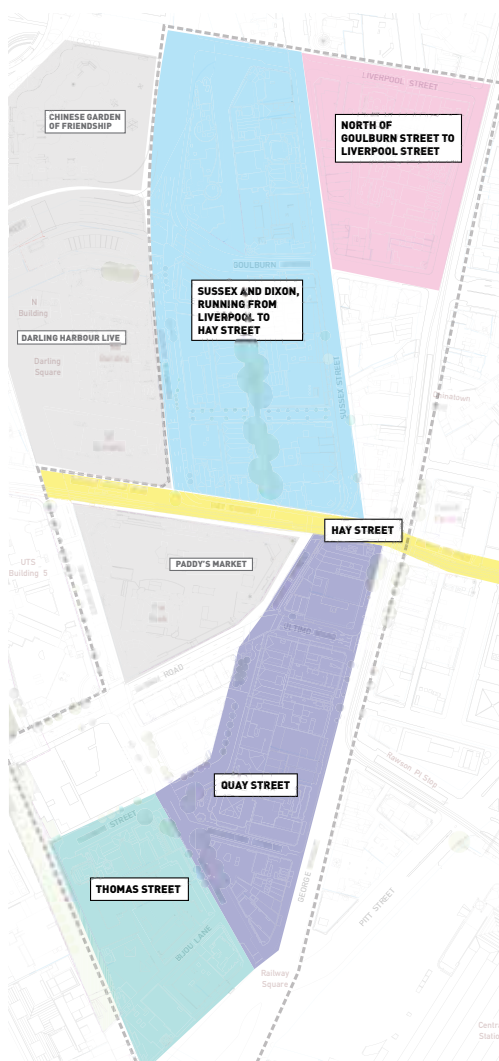
## 1. Conversations with the city

A key component of the curatorial rationale for the Public Art Plan is the idea of creating a multitude of 'conversations with the city'. This concept signals not so much a didactic representation or translation of the social history of a site by an artist, but instead invites both artist and audience to engage with ideas through the process of meandering or traversing Chinatown, as one would meander through a garden. Within the zones of the Chinatown area, there are many opportunities to develop permanent artworks, which can facilitate such experiences.

Within these zones public artworks should respond to the unique qualities of each area and the flow of movement around and through the area. In allowing for spontaneous activation, or the creative use of spaces by local individuals and groups, projects may unfold over a period of time, engaging local community in a conversation with the site and public art. This means a layering of projects (existing and new) and may mean glimpses of artworks down alleyways or text-based artworks to engage the imagination of the public and forge rich and – importantly – contemporary cultural connections that more fully embrace the precinct's changing dynamic in the 21st century.

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## 2. Zones of activity



The work undertaken through the Public Domain Study, together with the overview of the City Art Collection in Chinatown (see Appendix I) illustrates distinct areas and zones that exist within Chinatown. Major vehicular and pedestrian thoroughfares define these areas. With respect to future public domain works, public art can assist to rectify the perceived need to improve 'way-finding' and maintain the area's unique character.

Within these zones public artworks should respond to the unique qualities of movement within each area, or to define each space's unique qualities. In this sense, public artworks will operate like pavilions within a garden, places of activity or contemplation within the interconnected pathways and thoroughfares of the city. An analysis of the types of public artworks recommended for each zone is outlined in New Century Garden Recommendations: Approaches in the various zones.

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### 3. Shifts in representing Asian community

Contemporary Asian culture around the world is constantly evolving outwardly representational modes of Asian community.

In the past, public art in Chinatown has been formulated within a representational mode that employed a recognisable palette of Chinese elements – for example, lanterns or red lighting. These elements have been important to identify and locate the Chinese community living and working within the precinct. There are a number of works of this type already in the precinct. With the influence of technology and globalisation, as well as the development of specific, localised cultural discourses, alternate ways in which to mark out and express the meanings of 'Asianness' (in terms of place, history and culture) are necessary. Today, projects that do not critically address these more essentialist representations tend to be viewed as unoriginal and kitsch.

The New Century Garden curatorial strategy is an opportunity to directly reflect the history of the area rather than to replicate works seen elsewhere. As Barbara Flynn states in her City Centre Public Art Plan, the opportunity is to 'Use our distance [or context] as a chance to be original – the temptation to copy strategies that have been successful elsewhere, or to borrow techniques of urban regeneration that would be inappropriate within the Sydney context<sup>9</sup>.

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### 4. Responding to the layers of Chinatown – reflecting history and present

The existing cluster of projects around Dixon and Sussex Streets should remain as the 'symbolic heart' of Chinatown, (albeit with a review and a program of conservation put in place) with the intention that projects will radiate from this cluster, creating new networks and pedestrian experiences within the area. The intention is to create a few key landmarks and a network of smaller projects that cross north to south and east to west.

There exists a significant visual representation of 'layering' of different time periods in Chinatown; there are examples of old signs and painted advertisements from old businesses and new. It is this density of texture, which many people have indicated as a positive attribute of this part of the city. Layering occurs within the communities that are connected to the precinct. Chinatown is a mix of existing and emerging Asian communities – themselves significantly diverse when taken as separate language or ethnic groups – as well as residential and business activities, residents (including of non-Asian backgrounds), city workers and tourists. Other layers occur as new pedestrian corridors emerge, the result of increased residential developments (for example, World Square), key transport infrastructure (Railway Square buses, Central Station, Light Rail), and other activities and infrastructure being built at the edges of the precinct.

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### 5. A legacy of public work

The collection of public art in Chinatown illustrates a number of approaches that artists, designers and the City have taken over the last 15 years. In many ways it articulates how communities have sought to represent their own social histories or how these histories have been represented within civic discourse. In this way, permanent works and the discussions that emerge are important legacies of the public art process. The aim is to add to this legacy, ensuring that conservation and strategic review takes place before deaccessioning occurs to ensure the best examples are preserved.

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## 6. Variety of scale

The plan is conceived as a series of garden encounters. Large scale monuments, to smaller works through to temporary approaches, will allow for a range of audience experiences from the epic to the intimate. A variety of scale echoes the Chinatown Precinct from the expansive area of Hay Street to Bijoux Lane running off Quay Street.

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## 7. Cultivating spontaneity, developing infrastructure for temporary work

In addition to a commitment to permanent work, the New Century Garden Public Art Plan makes recommendations for the inclusion of temporary activations that might motivate more experimental engagements with spaces. A program of temporary public art should be encouraged in the Chinatown Precinct to complement the other cultural activities within the area. How this could be achieved would hopefully involve local players' input into its development. With the soon-to-be increased residential activities in the area, there is a great audience for works, which might evolve over time, or a series of annual projects that could help to define an identity for the area. Some consideration and thought could be given to the kinds of services (power, water, data) that might be accessible and necessary for such activation within the public domain. Temporary works could also occur as construction takes place throughout the area. These ephemeral works contribute to the creation of a dynamic and responsive cultural area.

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## 8. Embracing technology

How we engage with physical space is often aided by technology. The New Century Garden Public Art Plan in Chinatown should embrace the opportunity which technology provides, not only for us to engage the city in completely different ways, but to develop how we might create a narrative around the public artworks in the area.

Strategies to encourage discussion of public art and some of the important social history in the area could be developed through a range of public programs and locative media. This strategy could include different technology platforms, education programs, talks and tours.

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## 9. Artists as drivers

Artists must lead the development of new public artworks in Chinatown – this is a fundamental principle for a future public art program. Work will be sympathetic to the local culture and context of Chinatown. Chinatown is an important site of social and cultural histories that tell many stories of the contributions of Asian-Australian communities to Sydney culture. Chinatown is both a local enclave and an internationally connected area, as migrants, business, students and city workers help to create a dynamic mix of networks and information flows. To reinforce the unique global and local connections formed historically within Chinatown and the diasporic nature of its communities, there is an intention to work with both local and international artists.

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## 10. Creating new ways of engaging and navigating Chinatown

Under the New Century Garden concept, pedestrian walks would occur throughout the precinct, where layering between the old and new will occur, and a conversation will be activated by the flow of people between them.

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## 11. Building relationships, encouraging collaboration

Encouraging discussion and engagement with public art, can be established by building relationships and working with various stakeholders committed to social and cultural engagement.

The quality of a public domain that embraces the societal and cultural changes produced by Chinatown's unique demography and economic opportunity, whilst being respectful of the important role that Chinatown plays as a symbol and reflection of Asian-Australian diversity, requires an open approach between planners, architects, artists and the areas' many stakeholders. Chinatown poses a need for careful and sensitive considerations, with respect to cultural differences, which are unique to Chinatown. This New Century Garden Public Art Plan seeks to create a generous approach to the built and public domain that encourages the activation of the area through the private and individual experience of culture.

It is likely that there is potential for duplication – considering, for instance – that the Darling Harbour Live project (Lendlease) will have its own public art program, and will seek to engage with similar community stakeholders. The residential developments; the Goods Line and other stakeholders such as Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority, UTS, Haymarket Chamber of Commerce, Chinese New Year Festival and 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, have shared needs to engage their broad constituents in conversations around culture and place. As the local government authority, the City of Sydney would be best placed to initiate those conversations. This report recommends that a structure be encouraged to collaborate further with these and similar stakeholders. A regular meeting could be convened to relay information, or to even collaborate on projects. The rationale behind this is that though each has individual responsibilities, organisations would share a public, who may not so easily understand where one territory begins and ends. Collaboration and working together would enable strengthened conversations.

# NEW CENTURY GARDEN RECOMMENDATIONS

A key component of the curatorial rationale for the New Century Garden Public Art Plan is the creation of multiple 'conversations with the city'. This concept invites both artist and audience to engage with ideas through the process of traversing Chinatown, as one would meander through a garden. Within the zones of the Chinatown Precinct, there are many opportunities to develop both permanent and temporary artworks, which can facilitate such experiences.

With the transformations happening across Chinatown in the coming decade, the New Century Garden curatorial rationale presents an overarching framework designed to be flexible and holistic. Whilst this idea of 'conversations' may appear abstract, the case studies that follow illustrate ways in which nuanced experiences can manifest themselves within the public domain and through public art. In many ways the New Century Garden Public Art Plan has been developed as an antidote to highly didactic approaches to art in the public sphere.

Alongside permanent works, areas of temporary activations are encouraged while spaces are under development. This allows for spontaneity and the engagement of the local community in a conversation with the site and about public art. Through the creative use of spaces by local individuals and groups, projects could unfold over a period of time. A layering of projects (existing and new) may mean glimpses of artworks down alleyways or text-based artworks which could engage the imagination of the public and forge rich and – importantly – contemporary cultural connections that more fully embrace the precinct's changing dynamic in the 21st century.

Consistent with the other principles in this report, artists should be the drivers of public art outcomes, working with the curator and the Public Art Advisory Committee. With this in mind, the following provides further context for conversations to occur in each zone, and takes into account a number of the proposals of the Public Domain Study.

Rather than assign artists particular spaces, or define exact positions now for future work, it's hoped that this context reinforces the fundamentals of the New Century Garden approach, which would allow artists the freedom to propose and drive new ideas, sympathetic to current artistic discussions.

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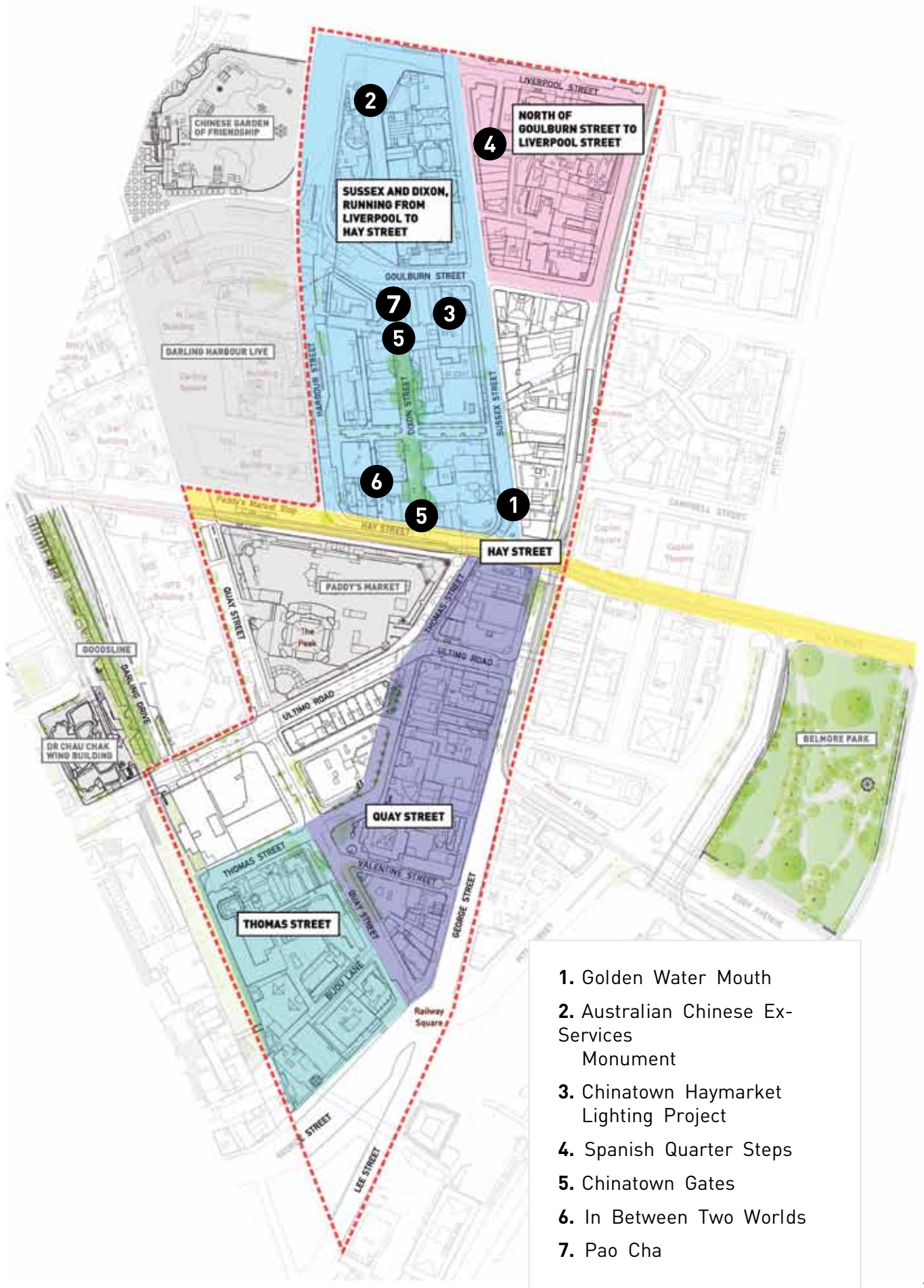
## Sussex and Dixon, running from Liverpool to Hay Street

The 'heart' of Chinatown features a number of key public artworks – *Chinatown Lighting Project* (2000), which traverses most of its footprint and to the south of this area, Lin Li's *Golden Water Mouth* (1999) and Pamela Mei-Leng See's *Pao Cha* (2012) and Jason Wing's *In Between Two Worlds* (2012), which was developed as a response to these older works.

This area has the core collection of public art. As noted in Recommendation 5 (A legacy of public art) and in Appendix I (Existing works in the City Art Collection and Recommendations), a study of the existing works should be undertaken to advise of the conservation or deaccession of these works.

Due to the density of existing works in this area, other zones should be prioritised for future public art activity. In the cases where deaccessioning occurs new works should be considered to replace removed works.

# KEY ZONES



- 1. Golden Water Mouth
- 2. Australian Chinese Ex-Service Monument
- 3. Chinatown Haymarket Lighting Project
- 4. Spanish Quarter Steps
- 5. Chinatown Gates
- 6. In Between Two Worlds
- 7. Pao Cha

# Hay Street



in the desert is a creature  
naked bestial who  
squatting upon the ground  
held his heart in his hands  
and ate of it.  
is said is it good friend  
it is bitter bitter he answered  
but I like it because it is bitter  
and because it is my heart



Tatsuo Miyajima, Moon in the Ground (2014), Plastic coated waterproof Light Emitting Diode, IC, Electric wire, Stainless mirror, Iron. Source: <http://tatsuomiyajima.com/work-projects/moon-in-the-ground/>

Jun Yang, Bern Neonlight, 2008-2010  
four neon light signs (red and white neons) | approx. 3.5m x 1.5m each | Weichenbauhalle, Von-Roll Areal, University of Bern, Bern (CH). Permanent installation at the University of Bern, Switzerland. Source: <http://junyang.info/project/bern-neonlight/>

Vernon Ah Kee, because it is bitter (2009), Acrylic on linen, 240 x 320 cm. Source: <http://www.milanigallery.com.au/>

Matthew Ngui, Seeing may be believing but not always understanding 2007, installation. Source: <http://mca.com.au/collection/exhibition/437-matthew-ngui/>

Hay Street is an important pedestrian and public transport thoroughfare that highlights different cultural experiences within the precinct – from museums and theatres to fresh food markets. The opportunity for public art runs westwards from George Street.

Running alongside this zone is the Darling Harbour Live site (replacing the current Entertainment Centre and plaza forecourt area) and The Goods Line development. These developments will significantly change the way this part of Chinatown functions and it may create a new distinct area. In addressing this site the public art proposal should indicate a willingness to work with other designers for full integration into the public domain plan.

Strategies for public art in this zone may include lighting, integration into light rail stops or works which encompass the entire footprint of Hay Street in more subtle ways, for example, incorporation into the ground plane or the utilisation of technology. Public art activity in this area needs to carefully balance the experience of existing works (*Golden Water Mouth*, *Between Heaven and Earth*, and the Chinatown Lighting Plan), with the experience of Dixon and Sussex Streets (in the 'heart' of Chinatown), and the artworks to be delivered by Darling Harbour Live through their public art initiatives.

The large-scale nature of the Hay Street area requires an approach that is capable of integrating or responding to the scale of public domain changes. This also presents significant challenges for artists outlined below:

- Hay Street's scale and expanse
- the integration of public domain outcomes
- it borders Darling Harbour Live, with its own Public Art Strategy, which is beyond the scope of this Plan

Artistic influences:

Tatsuo Miyajima, Jun Yang, Vernon Ah Kee, Matthew Ngui

Hay Street's scale requires a public art response that is proportionate to its expanse. Ideas that connect the macro and micro, and artworks able to interact with commuters on the light rail should be considered.

The artists which have influenced the curatorial direction for this site include those who have worked with technology, for example the work of Tatsuo Miyajima. His large-scale LED projects of scrolling numbers, in particular at Roppongi, Tokyo, is a beautiful punctuation of the consideration of time in people's busy lives.

The work of Jun Yang has also been influential in thinking through the site's constraints. As an artist working within the public art context, Jun Yang often works with existing architectural typologies, adjusting and reinventing them to force different meanings within the public sphere. In a previous public art project for Bern University, he has used the vernacular language of neon signage, which is ubiquitous in the representation of Asian cityscapes, within the public space of a university to indicate the grafting and evolution of different knowledge systems within pedagogical institutions. His response in this sense was also about the memory of different sites.

The response for Hay Street may also influence the ground cover. A Vernon Ah Kee large-scale poetic text work etched into the pavement, or a Matthew Ngui perspective sculpture where text becomes legible as the individual traverses the area are examples of the types of approaches that could be employed to activate this vast space.

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## North of Goulburn street to Liverpool Street



This partly pedestrianised area is bounded by the Trades Hall building, a beautiful sandstone heritage structure. There are numerous new small restaurant developments and a laneway-like feel. There are a number of driveways providing amenity to apartment and office blocks.

This area is especially lively at night due to the volume of restaurants, which offer a variety of non-cantonese cuisines including Uigher. However its daytime character is very different – feeling somewhat like a thoroughfare disconnected from the rest of the activity on the pedestrianised Chinatown mall. The heavy traffic along Goulburn Street amplifies this.



Future public art activity on North Dixon street should work with this daytime/nighttime character, as well as its partly pedestrianised qualities. The disconnection from Chinatown to the south should be embraced, with connections to the Chinese Garden of Friendship and Darling Harbour prioritised. Public art, here, should announce the distinct quality of this zone and emphasise relationships north of the precinct such as the residential areas nearby.

Artistic influences:

Seung Yul Oh, Cai Guo Qiang and Ryoji Ikeda



North of Goulburn Street requires a response that highlights the different day to night experiences of this site, in turn reflecting the sense of this area as a transient space. The artists and works which have influenced this area include Cai Guo Qiang, and his *Clear Sky Black Cloud*, (2006), Metropolitan Museum of Art commission, New York, whose intervention, through a single puff of smoke at certain times of the day, not only creates anticipation, but also a sense of regulation, through a simple daily action. Ryoji Ikeda's *Spectra* (2000–) operates in similar expansive ways. Other works like Seung Yul Oh's transparent bubbles bring a sense of ephemeral materiality that highlights surrounding and external activity. These three examples are discussed in the case studies.

Image source: Starkwhite, Auckland <http://www.starkwhite.co.nz/seung-yul-oh-overview/>

Photo: Hiro Ihara, courtesy Cai studio  
Image source: <http://www.caiguoqiang.com/projects/clear-sky-black-cloud>

Image source: <http://www.ryojiikeda.com/project/spectra/>

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## East of Thomas Street

This zone signals a different pace, with its proximity to the produce market section of Paddy's Markets and other traditional providores. The street leads towards university housing buildings, the ABC headquarters and The Goods Line currently under construction.

This area will be the site of a new public art work by Chinese-Australian artist Lindy Lee. This work will define the character of this zone.



## West of Quay Street



The character of this zone is defined by its relative quietness, created by the one-way traffic flow along Quay Street. This atmosphere is enhanced by the street trees which makes it distinct from its surroundings including Railway Square and the juncture of Broadway and George Streets.

The area's eateries are frequented by students and city workers. Amenities like supermarkets (further east along Quay Street), and a number of new cafes outside the ABC's back entrance have contributed to the area's gentrification. The Goods Line extension, which will terminate at the ABC, will also contribute to the distinct quality of the area through the increase of green space and the potential public programming that could occur in these new areas.



The zone also contains some unique sites and laneways, which reflect the area's former histories. For example, a disused railway track runs beneath the TAFE building (an extension of the goods line). Though not part of the City of Sydney, these cavernous spaces would make an extraordinary cultural centre, which could open onto the Goods Line extension.

Bijoux Lane, a service laneway (which also connects to the ABC's back entrance) would make an ideal site for a public artwork. A work in the Quay street zone could signal relationships with Railway Square and the Goods Line, and speak to the new Lindy Lee work, located north of this area in Thomas Street.

Artistic influences:

Céleste Boursier-Mougenot, Lee Mingwei and Taro Shinoda



This area requires works which are not necessarily monumental in announcing themselves as public art. Rather they should enter a quiet conversation with the surrounding area. This will reinforce the sense of communal gathering and green space that the surrounding Goods Line will project. The area's proximity to large architectural statements such as the Frank Gehry Chau Chak Wing building, and the monolithic UTS building on Broadway, suggests that public art in this area should be more subtle, human-responsive or human scaled. This idea, described as 'Transient materiality and human observation' in the case studies, involves approaches by artists like Taro Shinoda, whose reflective works, such as *Karesansui* (2015), incorporate the highly cultured ideals and rules of garden making with contemporary technology – to highlight the interrelationship of nature and beauty in the contemporary world. In addition works like Céleste Boursier-Mougenot, *revolutions* (2015) – a living tree which conducts electricity and sonic information or Lee Mingwei's *Bodhi Tree Project*, (2006) a living tree, descendant from an important Buddhist tree, are a number of artistic influences upon the thinking in this area, which privileges human interaction and contemplation of nature. These ideas are discussed further in the case studies.

Image source: <http://highlike.org/celeste-boursier-mougenot-4/>

Image source: 100 Tonson Gallery, Bangkok, [http://www.100tonsongallery.com/site/exhibition?mode=past\\_view&ex\\_id=20&year=2009&type=0&ret\\_url=%2Fsite%2Fartwork%3Fmode%3Dview\\_list%26artist\\_id%3D13](http://www.100tonsongallery.com/site/exhibition?mode=past_view&ex_id=20&year=2009&type=0&ret_url=%2Fsite%2Fartwork%3Fmode%3Dview_list%26artist_id%3D13)

Image source: [http://universes-in-universe.org/eng/bien/sharjah\\_biennial/2015/tour/saf\\_art\\_spaces\\_2/taro\\_shinoda\\_2](http://universes-in-universe.org/eng/bien/sharjah_biennial/2015/tour/saf_art_spaces_2/taro_shinoda_2)

# CASE STUDIES

These case studies illustrate a variety of approaches to thinking about gardens. These examples, across various scales, connect the macro and micro in meaningful relationships, which allow for the contemplation about space and life, the role of artists and the social context for artistic practice in public landscapes.

The New Century Garden concept, also allows for the contemplation of how we live, what we should expect and demand about the quality of life in cities, and how art offers us a way to refine and change our perceptions.

These case studies also describe a sense of temporality, material exploration and of wonder to be found in the reconsideration of unassuming materials in public spaces. They have been categorised thematically.

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## Gardens as art

These four case studies illustrate the role that gardens and architecture play in making connections between people and places. In their own ways, they rely on esoteric understandings of space and history; their underlying value is in how they assert the role of the artist in the creation of public landscapes and the ways in which social, environmental, aesthetic concerns can be articulated. These examples create works of significance and material embodiment.

1. *Mirrored Garden*, Vitamin Creative Space, (completed 2014), Panyu, China
2. Shusaku Arakawa and Madeline Gins, *The Site of Reversible Destiny*, (1995) Yoro Park, Gifu Prefecture, Japan
3. Isamu Noguchi, *The Garden (Pyramid, Sun and Cube)* (1963), Hewitt University Quadrangle (Beinecke Plaza), Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, USA
4. Mel Chin, *Revival Field: Projection & Procedure* (1990-93) St Paul, Minnesota, USA

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## Macro/micro – Transient materiality and the human observation

These case studies illustrate interesting uses of materials, which are almost ephemeral. From light and reflection in Olafur Eliasson and Wit Pimkanchanapong to trees and planted materials in Céleste Boursier-Mougenot and Lee Mingwei, through to materials like clear plastic and bubbles in Seung Yul Oh and Cai Guo Qiang. These artists help to illustrate how works made from such materials can create real presence, and real connections and landmarks for social and cultural interaction. They also illustrate how work might perform to mark out time, to differentiate different modes during day and night. For example, Ryoji Ikeda's *Spectra* could work only at night or Cai Guo Qiang's *Clear Sky Black Cloud*, would signal a specific time of day with the single burst of a puff of smoke.

This kind of approach is an antidote to the necessity for public art to be big, bright and shiny. These types of artworks could signal the overlays of people occupying the various zones of Chinatown at different times of the day.

1. Olafur Eliasson, *We have never been disembodied* (2015) Mirrored Garden, Panyu, China
2. Céleste Boursier-Mougenot, *revolutions* (2015), French Pavilion, Venice, Italy
3. Lee Mingwei, *Bodhi Tree Project*, (2006), Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, Australia
4. Wit Pimkanchanapong, *Not Quite a Total Eclipse*, (2009)
5. Ryoji Ikeda, *Spectra*, (2000–), various sites
6. Seung Yul Oh, *SOOM*, (2014), Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, Auckland, New Zealand
7. Cai Guo Qiang – *Clear Sky Black Cloud*, (2006), Metropolitan Museum of Art commission, New York, USA
8. Taro Shinoda, *Karesansui* (2015) Bait Abdul Raheem Jasim, UAE, Commissioned by Sharjah Art Foundation



## Mirrored Garden, Vitamin Creative Space, (architect: Sou Fujimoto) completed 2014, Panyu, China

Mirrored Garden is an experimental space in the rural village Panyu located outside the city of Guangzhou in China. It is an initiative of Vitamin Creative Space, a contemporary art gallery, founded in 2002, that operates between an independent art space and commercial gallery.

Designed by Japanese architect Sou Fujimoto, Mirrored Garden is an attempt 'to construct a 'field' where contemporary art practice, quotidian life and a kind of farming-oriented life practice meet and overlap with each other'. Inspired by the surrounding Guangdong province, the architecture is comprised of several small buildings, which create a village-like ensemble. Construction materials combine local and reused (such as old roof tiles and Qing dynasty grey bricks) which bring historical and contemporary contexts together.

One of the questions Fujimoto proposed was: how can art and agriculture complement each other? Mirrored Garden proposes a new, more nuanced, way of producing and engaging with contemporary art. Rather than one central museum-style building, this is an art space which exists as a type of 'micro-village' situated in a rural setting amongst plants and agriculture. Here the experience of art viewing is closely integrated into life and visa-versa.

Whilst ostensibly an architectural project, it has an extremely nuanced arrangement between the artistic, architectural, and environmental which is essentially a reflection on the role of the individual and the role of culture within our everyday experience of life. This case study provides an opportunity to consider what the relationships between the built environment and public art means, apart from the place-making demands of art in cities, what other weightings and what other considerations might reinforce our relationships with society and nature? Through an architecture that responds to the history of culture, and basic human needs and desires, what kinds of cultural activity might generate – how can we perceive the relationship between art and life to be different? (Olafur Eliasson's most recent project for Mirrored Garden as an example of this and is outlined below).

<http://www.vitamincreativespace.com/en/?work=mirrored-gardens>

<http://www.designboom.com/architecture/sou-fujimotos-mirrored-gardens-china-03-16-2015/>

<http://encn.blouinartinfo.com/news/story/1073532/vitamin-creative-space-opens-its-mirrored-gardens#sthash.zCNgWFOg.dpuf>

Image source: <http://www.vitamincreativespace.com/en/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/03-084A5993.jpg>



## Shusaku Arakawa and Madeline Gins, The Site of Reversible Destiny, Yoro Park (1995), Gifu Prefecture, Japan

This park, with its fantastical landscaping embodies a sense of the unexpected. Described as an 'experience park', the project was conceived to guide visitors on a set of unexpected encounters with space and the environment through undulating planes, disorienting spaces. It was considered by the artists as an experiment reinforcing their ideas about personhood – in this case they believed the built environment should to be akin to their jumbled and non-linear experience of life. This case study, in the context of the New Century Garden Public Art Plan, illustrates how designed spaces can not only create interesting experiences, but also be part of much larger artistic and philosophical discussions.

Iain Maloney writing in *Japan Today* describes the experience of Site of Reversible Destiny as follows:

'You enter by way of a house. A normal house in that it has walls, a floor, and various domestic appliances. Here all similarities with reality end.

Called "The Critical Resemblance House," the floor is actually quite a steep hill covered by a map of Gifu Prefecture. The walls are five or six meters tall and about half a meter apart. Some of the furniture is where you would expect it to be, except bisected by a wall. There are walls through sofas, through fridges, through baths. Half the table is in one room, half in the next. Above, you may find a section of an upside down sink. Kitchen units lunge out from all angles. The only words spoken in this house while I was there were "nani kore" (what's this?) and "muri" (impossible).

From here you climb a slope decorated with a New York street map. At the top you encounter a place that cannot have justice done unto it by mere words. Shaped like a huge amphitheater, "The Elliptical Field" is, to quote the leaflet, "an array of complementary mounds and hollows." It's basically another world through which one wanders muttering confused exclamations and marveling at such names as "Exactitude Ridge," "Imaging Navel" and "Trajectory Membrane Gate."

<http://www.japantoday.com/category/travel/view/yoro-park-and-the-site-of-reversible-destiny>

<http://www.yoro-park.com/e/rev/>

<http://www.reversibledestiny.org/#!/reversible-destiny-foundation>

<http://www.reversibledestiny.org/elliptical-field>

[%E2%96%91%E2%96%91-site-of-reversible-destiny-](http://www.reversibledestiny.org/%E2%96%91%E2%96%91-site-of-reversible-destiny-%E2%96%91%E2%96%91-yoro/)

[%E2%96%91%E2%96%91-yoro/](http://www.reversibledestiny.org/%E2%96%91%E2%96%91-yoro/)

Image source: <http://pruned.blogspot.com.au/2006/03/site-of-reversible-destiny.html>



Isamu Noguchi, *The Garden (Pyramid, Sun and Cube)* (1963), Hewitt University Quadrangle (Beinecke Plaza), Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, USA

Japanese-American artist and landscape architect Isamu Noguchi (1904–1988) known for his sculpture and public works collaborated with architect Gordon Bunshaft for this work. Using the creamy Vermont marble surfaces of the library's panelled walls, the garden's sunken courtyard extends the space of the underground reading room inspiring contemplation and reinforcing a studious atmosphere.

The impetus for this work came from the experience of a Japanese Zen garden, which is viewed from the outside looking in.

'The mood is that of a Japanese Zen garden, quietly balancing cosmic forces symbolized by the circle (the sun and its energy), the pyramid (the earth and its history), and the poised cube (chance). This synthesis of East and West also unites past and future by suggesting both the marble flagstones of an Italian piazza and the surreal landscape of the moon.'

<http://www.noguchi.org>

<http://www.yale.edu/publicart/noguchi>

Image source: <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/232990980696017089/>



Mel Chin, Revival Field: Projection & Procedure (1990-93), St Paul, Minnesota, USA

Mel Chin's ecology projects such as *Revival Field* collaborates across disciplines of science to use art to draw attention to environmental issues. Utilising the unique properties of plants in green remediation projects. His work is a synthesis between artistic thinking and social and environmental activism, illustrating the broader role that artists can play within society. His work is often temporary, completed as sites are remediated. Whilst the use of plants in this way is now more commonplace his work emerged in the late 1980s and marks a shift in attitudes towards the role of artists in public landscapes. Rather than just making objects, these projects illustrate his desire to make a difference. The first of Chin's *Revival Field* works, commissioned by the Walker Arts Centre used the site of an old landfill near downtown St. Paul, Minnesota.

Mel Chin: 'Conceptually, this work is envisioned as a sculpture involving the reduction process, a traditional method used to carve wood or stone. Here the material being approached is unseen and the tools will be biochemistry and agriculture. The work in its most complete incarnation (after the fences are removed and the toxin-laden weeds harvested) will offer minimal visual and formal effects. For a time, an intended invisible aesthetic will exist that can be measured scientifically by the quality of a revitalized earth. Eventually that aesthetic will be revealed in the return of growth to the soil'.



Taro Shinoda,  
Karesansui (2015) Bait  
Abdul Raheem Jasim,  
UAE, Commissioned by  
Sharjah Art Foundation

Japanese artist Taro Shinoda is formally trained in traditional Japanese gardening and this work for the 2015 Sharjah Biennial created a *karesansui* (dry landscape garden) using local materials.

The philosophy behind the traditional Japanese *karesansui* or zen garden is a stylised arrangement of rocks, raked gravel and occasionally plants which symbolise a landscape of mountains and water. The garden's qualities of emptiness and distance offer a space for contemplation.

Shinoda's *Karesansui* was made with sand from the United Arab Emirates. Over time voids in the surface of the sand expanded like craters. The work included a shaded wooden platform, which designates the ideal viewing point of the garden.

[http://universes-in-universe.org/eng/bien/sharjah\\_biennial/2015/tour/saf\\_art\\_spaces\\_2/taro\\_shinoda](http://universes-in-universe.org/eng/bien/sharjah_biennial/2015/tour/saf_art_spaces_2/taro_shinoda)

Image source: [http://universes-in-universe.org/eng/bien/sharjah\\_biennial/2015/tour/saf\\_art\\_spaces\\_2/taro\\_shinoda\\_2](http://universes-in-universe.org/eng/bien/sharjah_biennial/2015/tour/saf_art_spaces_2/taro_shinoda_2)



## Olafur Eliasson, *We have never been disembodied*, 2015, Mirrored Garden, Panyu, China

Olafur Eliasson's project for *Mirrored Garden*, *We have never been disembodied*, takes the 'humble context of plants and agriculture as a platform' to hand back the responsibility for the 'art-viewing experience' back to the viewer. The viewer's experience of travelling to the garden then experiencing the art within it turns their attention to transformations and exchanges. Eliasson states: 'It is a platform of potentials, taking the intimacy of the village to its extreme, allowing for micro-sequences when visitors move through the building, and making explicit the temporal dimension of life.'

This work continues the artist's phenomenological exploration of light, colour, reflection and refraction as a means to explore nature but also what it might mean to be human.

Olafur Eliasson: 'This context has allowed me to make artworks that, through their direct presence, hold hands with the spaces in an understated, reduced manner. There is no need to conquer the space, no need to conquer the experience. Instead, a dimension of hospitality emerges through the collaboration of space, art, and visitor, each containing the others. While developing the exhibition, I worked with the idea that the architecture would find itself reflected in and identified by the artworks; visitors would find themselves in the artworks; the artworks would find themselves in the architecture; and the architecture would find itself within the visitors. This is not to say that all become one. The focus, instead, is on an economy of shifting identifications. The mirroring of *Mirrored Gardens* is not about the reflections themselves; it is rather about the ability to nurture identification, the same way we identify with something unknown yet emotionally familiar.'

Sources:

<http://www.vitamincreativespace.com/en/?work=5607>

<http://olafureliasson.net/eliassonmirrored>

<http://olafureliasson.net/press/mirroredgardens>

Photo: Luo Xianglin, Chen Shengming  
Image source: <http://www.olafureliasson.net/press/mirroredgardens>





Céleste Boursier-Mougenot, *rêvolutions* (2015), French Pavilion, Venice, Italy

For his exhibition *rêvolutions* at the 2015 Venice Biennale Céleste Boursier-Mougenot turned the French pavilion into an experimental eco system. The skylights of the building were removed, exposing the gallery to the open air. Entire trees – and their root systems – were placed in the space. The trees were connected to low voltage electrical currents to make them move and their movements produced an electrical rustling sound. This creation of a real-time soundscape gave viewers a chance to sit and relax within a 'kinetic forest' environment.

Drawing upon gardens and their architecture such as the 'folly' within 18th century gardens Boursier-Mougenot's installation brings a sense of wonder and the marvellous. As the exhibition's curator Emma Lavigne stated the artist's intention was to: 'commandeer systems used for controlling living beings and their movements and compose a poetic work offering humanity living spaces marked by liberty and unconventional beauty'

<http://www.e-flux.com/announcements/celeste-boursier-mougenot/>



Lee Mingwei, Bodhi Tree Project (2006), Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, Australia

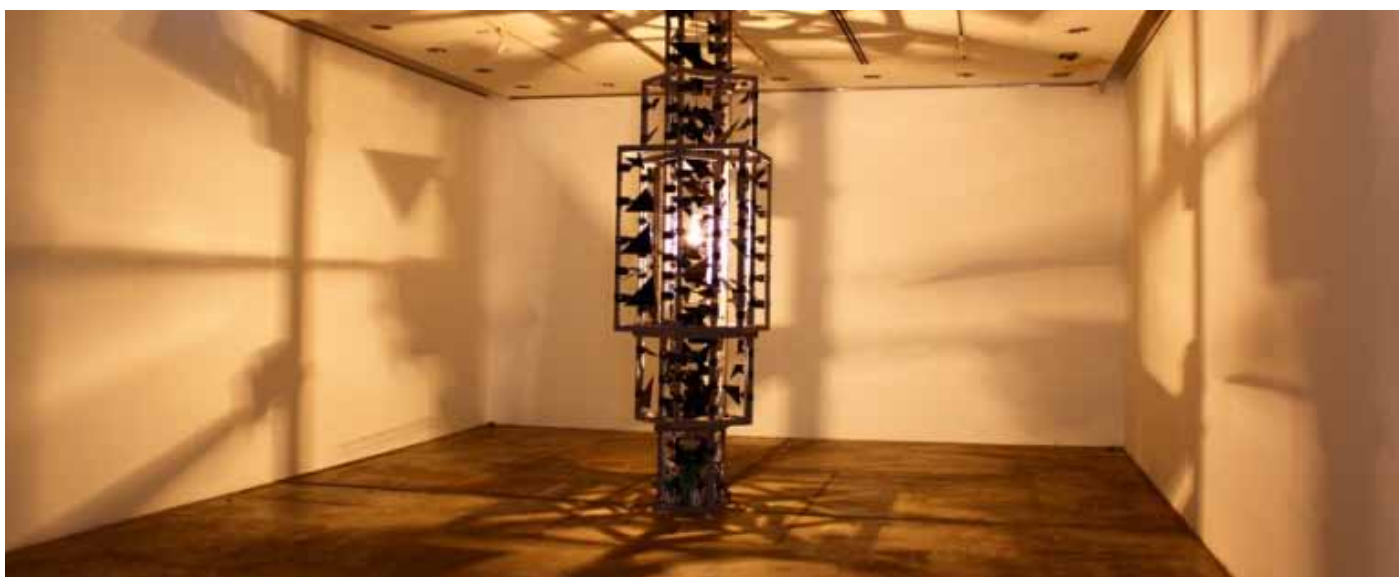
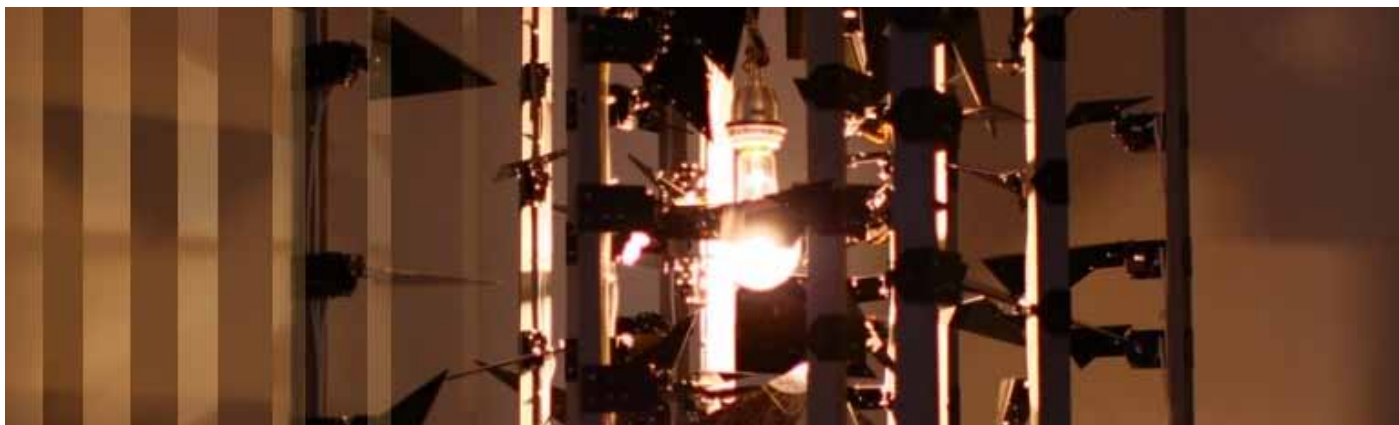
This permanent artwork by Taiwanese-born Lee Mingwei is a Bodhi tree (*Ficus religiosa*) situated outside Brisbane's Gallery of Modern Art. Lee Mingwei's art practice seeks to directly connect the artist with his audiences. *Bodhi Tree Project 2006* is site where communities, particularly the Buddhist community, have a continued engagement with the work and it is an ongoing place for gathering and contemplation.

Central to this work is a bodhi tree, a tree sacred to both Hindus and Buddhists and the oldest species of tree to be depicted in Indian art and literature. The sapling of this tree has a direct lineage to the tree that the historical Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama, sat under when he achieved enlightenment. This work expands from the site at GOMA into the community and across the world, as the tree was gifted by the Kelaniya Raja Maha Viharaya (Raja Maha Temple) in Sri Lanka to the Chung Tian Temple in Brisbane and continues to be used in ceremony by the Buddhist order in Brisbane.

Lee Mingwei is one of the leading artists from Taiwan, his sculptures and installations are imbued with a generosity which connects people and places. His inclusion as a case study illustrates superb strategies that connect cultures and communities, in ongoing and meaningful ways.

[http://www.qagoma.qld.gov.au/exhibitions/past/2010/21st\\_Century/artists/monir\\_shahroudy\\_farmanfarmaian2](http://www.qagoma.qld.gov.au/exhibitions/past/2010/21st_Century/artists/monir_shahroudy_farmanfarmaian2)

<http://www.leemingwei.com/projects.php#>



## Wit Pimkanchanapong, Not Quite a Total Eclipse (2009)

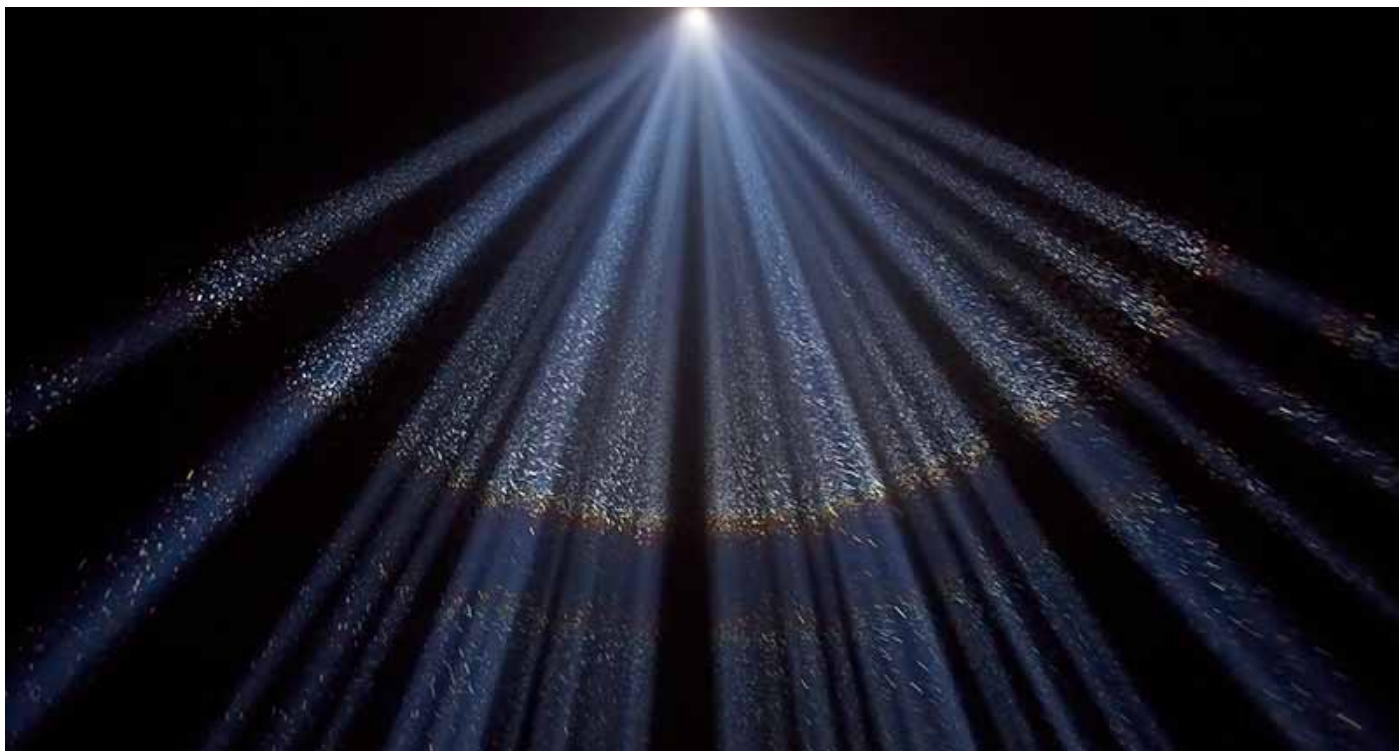
Thai artist Wit Pimkanchanapong's practice uses technology to represent the phenomena of nature. *Not Quite a Total Eclipse* is a kinetic sculpture that creates a play of light and shadow on the gallery wall in a similar way to that of a solar or lunar eclipse. The mechanical appearance of the sculpture contrasts against the organic effect of the light and naturalistic noise it generates – like that of insects.

Reviewer, Brian Mertens writing in *Art Asia Pacific* describes the work as follows: 'The three frameworks are supported by a shaft-like inner section that extends more than three meters from floor to ceiling. Mounted over this is a shorter, boxier frame about two meters tall, one meter wide, which in turn is surmounted by an outer box about two meters tall and two wide. The frames are made of wood, and painted gunmetal gray. The triangular fins rotate in arcs that range from 60 to 120 degrees, the servomotors controlled by a personal computer whose innards sit on the floor inside the sculpture's frame. Hung at eye level within the sculpture's center is a very large, slowly pulsating incandescent light bulb that shines out through the frame and fins to cast a grid of moving, geometric shadows on the floor, ceiling and walls. The motors whir quietly, like the hissing of insects in a field. Despite the mechanical, architectural look of the sculpture and its near-monumental scale, its light, sound and rhythm convey a soft, organic effect. Time is also an element: the rotation of the fins and the pulsating of the light varies gradually in rhythm over the course of a 24-minute cycle controlled by the computer'.

<http://artasiapacific.com/Magazine/67/NotQuiteATotalEclipseWitPimkanchanapong>

[http://www.100tonsongallery.com/site/artist?mode=profile&artist\\_id=13](http://www.100tonsongallery.com/site/artist?mode=profile&artist_id=13)

Image source: 100 Tonson Gallery, Bangkok,  
[http://www.100tonsongallery.com/site/exhibition?mode=past\\_view&ex\\_id=20&year=2009&type=0&ret\\_url=%2Fsite%2Fartwork%3Fmode%3Dview\\_list%26artist\\_id%3D13](http://www.100tonsongallery.com/site/exhibition?mode=past_view&ex_id=20&year=2009&type=0&ret_url=%2Fsite%2Fartwork%3Fmode%3Dview_list%26artist_id%3D13)



## Ryoji Ikeda, Spectra, (2000–), various locations

Japanese-born electronic composer and installation artist, Ryoji Ikeda is known for his work across sound and art. *Spectra*, a series of large scale site specific installations which began in 2000, has been shown in cities across the world including London, Buenos Aires, Sharjah, Barcelona and Paris. The work employs intense white light as a sculptural material which point skywards. In 2013 *Spectra (Tasmania)* was situated on a hill in Hobart and beams of white light streamed fifteen kilometres up into the night sky.

Ryoji Ikeda: 'White light includes the full colour spectrum. With the light-installation, the perceiver receives colour information into his/her eyes instantly and so intensely that he / she cannot see anything, just like in darkness. The installation therefore becomes almost invisible. Consequently, the artworks provoke a feeling of something indescribable, something sublime and unearthly, something unforgettable.'

Image source: <http://www.ryojiikeda.com/project/spectra/>

<http://www.ryojiikeda.com/project/spectra/>



Seung Yul Oh, SOOM  
(2014), Auckland Art  
Gallery Toi o Tāmaki,  
Auckland, New  
Zealand

SOOM, a specially commissioned work by Korean-New Zealand artist Seung Yul Oh created sixteen oversized, transparent PVC bubbles, which filled the sculpture terrace at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki. The title translates as breath in Korean.

'SOOM extends Oh's work with inflatables and explores his interest in expansion, growth and the possibility of explosion ... There is an element of something playful, active and instantaneous – and ever so slightly threatening – with his work.' Sue Gardiner, Chartwell Trust.

<http://www.aucklandartgallery.com/whats-on/events/2014/november/seung-yul-oh-soom>

<http://www.starkwhite.co.nz/seung-yul-oh-overview>

Image source: Starkwhite, Auckland  
<http://www.starkwhite.co.nz/seung-yul-oh-overview/>



## Cai Guo Qiang Clear Sky Black Cloud, Metropolitan Museum of Art commission New York 2006

Photo: Hiro Ihara, courtesy Cai studio

Image source: <http://www.caiguoqiang.com/projects/clear-sky-black-cloud>

The Chinese-born, New York based artist known for his work with gunpowder, which lead to spectacular site-specific ephemeral works using fireworks. *Clear Sky Black Cloud* is another ephemeral sculpture. The work consisted of an actual black cloud, which appeared at noon above the roof garden of the Metropolitan Museum everyday from Tuesday through Sundays during the exhibition period.

<http://www.caiguoqiang.com/>

<http://www.caiguoqiang.com/projects/clear-sky-black-cloud>

[http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/25/arts/design/25smok.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/25/arts/design/25smok.html?_r=0)



Taro Shinoda, *Ginga*  
(2010) mixed media,  
750 cm diameter

This artwork featured in the exhibition 'Sensing Nature: Rethinking the Japanese Perception on Nature' at Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan. The work consisted of suspended bottles above a pool of milky-white water. As drops of liquid hit the surface of the pool stellar constellations were visible in the ripple for a brief moment. *Ginga* means Milky Way in Japanese and was inspired by the Hojo Garden at Tofukuji Temple in Kyoto, Japan.

'In the middle of the exhibition is Shinoda Taro's *Ginga*, which consists of a round pool filled with white-colored liquid. Attached to the ceiling above the pool are about 50 PET bottles, and at intervals a single drop is released from each bottle. As the drops hit the surface of the pool, they trace various constellations visible in the Tokyo summer sky, such as Orion and the Big Dipper. The light emanating from each star is expressed in ripples emanating from the point where each drop hits the surface. Because the ripples disappear so quickly, you can miss them with just one blink.'

Image source: Taka Ishii  
Gallery, Tokyo, Japan [http://  
www.takaishiigallery.com/en/  
archives/5993/](http://www.takaishiigallery.com/en/archives/5993/)

[http://mori.art.museum/english/contents/sensing\\_nature/event/main.  
htm](http://mori.art.museum/english/contents/sensing_nature/event/main.htm)

# APPENDIX I

## EXISTING WORKS IN THE CITY ART COLLECTION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Commissioned work by artists

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Lin Li -  
Golden Water  
Mouth (1999)



*Golden Water Mouth* brings together ideas of place and transplantation. The old eucalyptus trunk is evocative of the Australian landscape, while the water dripping from the golden embellishments high in the tree's branches is evocative of Chinese philosophical concepts of knowledge. The dripping water operates enigmatically and passers-by often comment on the small drops of water falling from the sky. The reception of this work within the local community is mixed however the work has become a landmark in Chinatown for locals and visitors to orient themselves and it has been observed that tour guides often reflect on this work.

This is one of the key works by Lin Li in a public collection in Australia. It is a good example of the artist's work, and an important artwork by a Chinese-Australian woman in an Australian public collection.

Lin Li (born 1960) is a Chinese-Australian artist who is from the post-Tiananmen generation of artists who arrived in Australia after 1989. Li arrived in 1990 and at the time, was possibly the only publicly recognised female artist from this group in the Sydney art scene.

### Recommendation

*Golden Water Mouth* is an iconic work in the area, but it is awkwardly landscaped, with only a small area of tiling which announces its significance. Situated in a busy thoroughfare at a major pedestrian junction, there is limited opportunity to appreciate this work. The Hay Street upgrades or other development opportunities could incorporate a plan to enhance its landscaping and support its iconic place-making role. The artwork has recently been restored and a bilingual plaque is being remade to sit at the base of the tree.

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Lin Li, *Golden Water Mouth* (1999)  
Corner of Hay and Sussex Streets,  
Haymarket  
Images courtesy the author



Jason Wing -  
In Between Two Worlds (2012)



This artwork was an early start project of the earlier Public Art Strategy completed in 2012. It spans the length of Kimber Lane, which runs parallel to Sussex and Dixon Streets. The work, by Jason Wing (born 1977) reflects the artist's Chinese and Aboriginal heritage. Wing's father is Chinese (Cantonese) and his mother is a member of the Biripi people in the Upper Hunter region of NSW.

Jason Wing's practice explores issues of bi-cultural and Indigenous political identity through combined elements of the Aboriginal and Chinese traditions and ancient techniques such as Aboriginal rock art painting and Chinese paper cut. Wing's iconic works feature cupid-like self-portraits and bird motifs often utilising stencil and spray paint. Notions of urban spirituality and regeneration are invoked through the act of recycling and repainting as well as the artist's own interest in the investigation of Australia's cultural setting.

Wing states: 'My art is inspired by the way my life has thrown up apparent contradictions. It is the place between the contradictory energies that creates a unique space for me to carve out who I am as an artist and a man.'

## Commissioned work by artists

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### Pamela Mei-Leng See - Pao Cha (2012)



Pamela Mei-Leng See with Frost\* Design, created a community information kiosk which takes the form of a pagoda clad in a design based on traditional paper cutting. Auspicious imagery such as flowers, fish and birds intricately wrap around the circular curved glass form, which becomes the exterior walls of the structure. The work functions as a kiosk during the day, and lights up as a lantern at night time.

See's practice is a contemporary take on traditional practices like paper-cutting. Utilising this technique as a form of drawing See often incorporates traditional Chinese iconography. The artist is known for collaborating with architects, transforming this handicraft technique into large scale facades developed through a mix of both computer-aided and hand-crafted techniques.

The kiosk won a Small Project Architecture award at the 2012 NSW Architecture awards.

## Chinese Heritage Structures



Items within this category include the Chinatown Gates located at the north and south ends of Dixon Street. These are one of the most visible symbols of Chinatown within the area.

The gates were developed by the local community with fundraising initiatives to assist in their construction. In 2010, Michael Bogle was commissioned to write a report which provided in depth analysis of this work and makes recommendations concerning its incorporation into the City Art Public Art Collection.<sup>1</sup>

### **Recommendation**

These structures are not part of the City Art Public Art Collection, however they form an important part of the cultural infrastructure of Chinatown. The Chinatown Gates have strong place-making qualities and have become a symbol of the 'heart' of Chinatown and a focus for the Chinese community. There are regular requests from the community for restoration or conservation of these items. A review of these works should consider the materials used for construction, and the challenges they pose in restoration and conservation processes.

<sup>1</sup> "History of the Chinatown Gateways Dixon Street, Sydney and Assessment in Accordance with the City of Sydney Guidelines for Public Art Acquisitions, 2008" (2010)

## Architectural and designed structures

The majority of work in the City Art Public Art Collection in Chinatown was developed with what can be termed as a 'design approach' – a process of architects working within a public art context. In Chinatown two types of these works exist – projects, which double as public utility such as Dixon/Sussex Street lighting as well as public monuments (Spanish Quarter Steps, Chinatown Lighting Project) and works which serve a memorial purpose (Australian Chinese Ex-Services Monument). This approach to public work has the potential to create opportunities for interdisciplinary relationships to emerge.

It is important that the artworks and artefacts exist as part of Chinatown's cultural history. This Plan recommends undertaking a review to allow for all options to be considered, including accessioning, rebuilding, conserving or de-accessioning structures within the Chinatown area.

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## Australian Chinese Ex-Services Monument

Australian Chinese Ex-Services National Reunion  
McGregor Westlake Architecture in association with Paul White,  
Partridge Partners Engineering, Tsang & Lee Architects  
2003

The Australian-Chinese Ex-Services Monument is located at the north of Dixon Street. It is a public memorial to ex-servicemen and women of Chinese-Australian background. The work suffers from its awkward design and location in the north Dixon Street area.

It is not owned by the City of Sydney and is not part of the City Art Public Art Collection.



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**Australian Chinese Ex-services Monument (2003)**  
McGregor Westlake Architecture  
in association with Paul White,  
Partridge Partners Engineering,  
Tsang & Lee Architects  
Intersection of Dixon and Liverpool  
St. Image courtesy the author

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# Chinatown Lighting Project

Located on the intersections of Dixon and Little Hay Street, Little Hay Street, Dixon Street, Sussex Street, this work was commissioned in the lead up to the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. Peter McGregor working with Hassel and LiLiang Architects developed these works.

Peter McGregor's major work in the area includes the red horizontal lighting on Dixon and Sussex Streets; the suspended circular element of 'Heaven' and its partner 'Earth' which is the embedded street lighting at the junction of Dixon and Little Hay Streets; and the traditional lantern-style lighting on the sides of the buildings. This work responds to 'Chinese settlement and activity within the Haymarket setting,' and incorporates 'urban design and Feng Shui principles'. Various components have been removed during the construction of new buildings in the area and the embedded lighting has been damaged by vehicular traffic.

This lighting strategy was developed through a process of consultation with Feng Shui advisors who worked on the overall plan for Chinatown during this period. The lighting design is representational of traditional Chinese ideas of the relationship between people, heaven and earth. The incorporation of Feng Shui principle and urban design is one of the remarkable qualities of this work.

A criticism of this approach to public artwork is that the desire to incorporate a representational Chinese character results in the development of stereotypical images of Chinese life and culture. This is apparent in the design of the box lanterns on the sides of the buildings on Little Hay Street. Many of these elements have been removed as new buildings are erected.

Despite this criticism, the lighting design for Haymarket is, for the most part enigmatic and stunningly translates Feng Shui principles into the urban design of the area.

## Recommendation

The Chinatown Lighting Project is an important work, which when considered with the Chinatown Gates, incorporates a successful interaction of Feng Shui principles and urban design strategy and forms the 'symbolic' heart of Chinatown.

Components of this work have been temporarily removed as due to construction nearby. The 'Earth' element, which originally consisted of the embedded lighting display, has been modified to protect it from vehicular traffic and 'Heaven' is currently in storage and will be reinstated when development is complete.

So this work retains its site specific significance, it is recommended that the City of Sydney continue its active conservation program.



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Detail, Chinatown Lighting Project  
(c. 2000)  
Peter McGregor with Hassel and  
LiLiang Architects  
Image courtesy the author

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## Spanish Quarter Steps

Peter McGregor in association with Stanistic Turner Architects created this work located at Douglass Place around the year 2000, however there is little information about its commissioning.

The architect's statement for Spanish Quarter Steps talks clearly about the amenity of the area: 'the project formalises the place as a pedestrian threshold to Douglass Lane and the surrounding laneway system, enhancing the area's connectivity.'



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Spanish Quarter Steps (c. 2000)  
Peter McGregor in association with  
Stanistic Turner Architects  
Douglass Place  
Image courtesy the author

# APPENDIX II

## NEW CENTURY GARDEN SYMPOSIUM PROCEEDINGS AND TRANSCRIPTS

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On 21 October 2011, a forum was convened titled New Century Garden: Talking About Public Art in Chinatown, produced by 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art in partnership with the City of Sydney. The forum explored ideas, approaches and concerns around public space and public art within the social and historical context of Sydney's Chinatown.

This has formed the basis of the curatorial thinking behind this Public Art Plan.

Extensive documentation was produced for New Century Garden: talking About Public Art in Chinatown. The transcripts or papers from the forum are published here.

Extensive documentation was produced for New Century Garden: talking About Public Art in Chinatown. This includes ten separate video recordings comprising three short 'preview' clips used to announce the symposium to a general audience and communicate aspects of its content, and seven clips of each guest speaker's presentation.

Speakers included:

**John Choi** - Founding Partner of Choi Ropiha Figuera architects with an international profile for innovative projects that bring together architecture, planning, branding, public space and tourism.

**Felicity Fenner** - Chief Curator at the National Institute for Experimental Arts and Senior Lecturer in the School of Art History and Education at the College of Fine Arts, University of NSW.

**Nicholas Jose** - a novelist, essayist, playwright, former Cultural Counsellor to the Australian Embassy in Beijing, and is currently a Professor at the Writing and Society Research Group at the University of Western Sydney.

**Dr Xing Ruan** - an author and Professor of Architecture at the University of New South Wales.

**Aaron Seeto** - Director of 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art and Public Art Curator for City of Sydney's Chinatown Public Art Plan.

**Bridget Smyth** - Design Director at the City of Sydney and leads the City's urban design and public art team.

**Jason Wing** - a Sydney-based artist of Aboriginal and Chinese heritage who has been commissioned for a public art project in Chinatown's Kimber Lane.

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### Links to online content

- New Century Garden: Talking About Public Art in Chinatown on 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art's web site:  
<http://www.4a.com.au/symposium-new-century-garden/>
- 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art's Vimeo channel:  
<http://vimeo.com/user8698460>
- Aaron Seeto preview video: <http://vimeo.com/29766889>
- Bridget Smyth preview video: <http://vimeo.com/29761389>
- Jason Wing preview video: <http://vimeo.com/29768219>
- Aaron Seeto symposium introduction video: <http://vimeo.com/31476255>
- Bridget Smyth guest symposium introduction video:  
<http://vimeo.com/31479422>
- Jason Wing symposium introduction video: <http://vimeo.com/31479520>
- Xing Ruan symposium guest speaker presentation video:  
<http://vimeo.com/31479690>
- Nicholas Jose symposium guest speaker presentation video:  
<http://vimeo.com/31636846>
- Felicity Fenner symposium guest speaker presentation video:  
<http://vimeo.com/31636893>
- John Choi symposium guest speaker presentation video:  
<http://vimeo.com/31641609>
- MP3 audio recording of symposium

# GUEST SPEAKER'S PAPER – XING RUAN

This is an edited transcript of Professor Xing Ruan's talk that was accompanied by a slideshow presentation given at 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art on 21 October 2011 for the forum *New Century Garden: Talking About Public Art in Chinatown*, produced by 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art in partnership with City of Sydney. Copyright of this text remains with the author.

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## Garden as Public Sphere – A Historical Lesson?

The purpose of this forum *New Century Garden* is, I believe, to predict what the 'new century garden' will be in the twenty-first century. Unfortunately I am a historian, so the only thing I'm able to know – if I'm lucky – is the past. So I wish to use this opportunity to ask whether or not there is a historical lesson here. I wish to ask whether or not this idea of a pre-modern Chinese garden has any potential to be reincarnated for the new century?

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## Chinese Garden as a Place – The spatial anatomy

I will begin with the Chinese garden as a physical place. As you know, we have a Chinese Garden here in Sydney's Chinatown, and the spatial anatomy of Chinese gardens is all too familiar to most of us. Now if one takes a look at the plan of the Bi residence in Suzhou, located in the south-east of Jiangsu Province in Eastern China, one notices that this is not something that we see too often because in this instance the garden and the house are actually together, which it should be, because in pre-modern China gardens were often regarded as a compliment to the house. If I may borrow a rather elegant term coined by my colleague and cultural geographer Professor Ronald G. Knapp, a Chinese house is a 'social template' because when one looks at the axis and the symmetry in the series of the courtyards depicted in this plan of the Bi residence, what it reveals and what is rather legible even in this plan, is that, to the people who belong to that culture, this plan facilitates a social hierarchy within the family and its habitants, and a kind of decorum that the house itself imposes on you. In a way a house itself is rather didactic: you ought to behave in certain ways and you know it. But beyond this rather rigid structure, if one looks at a Chinese garden as a physical space – let's say its whole anatomy – the pattern of the Chinese garden is actually quite universal; it is quite simple. Now if you understand that plan, and if you have been to the Chinese garden here in Chinatown, you will find it is quite repetitive. All Chinese gardens have exactly the same spatial anatomy, exactly the same pattern, repeated over the centuries. So what actually gives a Chinese garden a distinctive character, if there is any? The distinctive character does not come from a physical place or physical structure.

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## Chinese Garden as a Synthesis – epicure, literature, art and architecture

I would like to illustrate this idea with two fascinating episodes from the famous eighteenth-century Chinese novel *Hóng Lóu Mèng* (紅樓夢), or *Dream of the Red Chamber*, authored by Cao Xueqin (曹雪芹), which is all too familiar in the canon of Chinese classics. The first episode I would like to describe in this extraordinary novel, which I regard as the absolute pinnacle in pre-modern Chinese literature, occurs when the master of one house, Jia Zhen, invites a group of kindred spirits and literati friends, and also his son, for a walk in his newly completed garden. What takes place is an interesting competitive game where all these people are asked to recite classical poems, and to give them some slight twists for they are asked to name the buildings and bridges in the garden, thereby bestowing a meaning and creating a spatial narrative hitherto unexpressed. After this is completed the garden could be thought to have a life, and from this point onwards the garden belongs to the master's family, and in particular, the master himself – the person who has commissioned the garden. The builder had nothing to do with that; the builder just repeated the existing spatial pattern.



Another interesting episode from the same novel is about a particularly pleasurable thing to do in autumn when one of the capable granddaughter-in-law, Feng Jie, organises a party for the grandmother, Lady Jia, to have an outing in the garden and eat steamed crab. The old lady walks across this rickety bamboo bridge to reach the pavilion; this prompts her to think about her childhood and the memory of her own garden. Later, Lady Jia and others eat crab, taking pleasure in the special art of how to actually open the crab and eat it elegantly, following the manners for this sort of activity which dictate how one should eat crab accompanied by tea and wine, and how much one should eat and so on. It is essential to understand that eating crab is the supreme culinary art in China. Indeed, the seventeenth-century Chinese playwright and erotic novelist Li Yu has written a wonderful book on food, women and other pleasures in domestic life, in which he says that the supreme food in Chinese culture is actually steamed crab in autumn. In addition to everything about good and its season, it also has a wonderful texture which is very rare. So eating crab is an art. After enjoying the steamed crab, the grandmother is accompanied by a servant girl back to the house to take a little nap whilst the young ones and their servants go fishing and admiring chrysanthemums. But the more literary ones – the prince, Bao Yu, and the princesses get together to walk to the garden hall where the rice paper is already laid out, the ink is ground, and paint brushes are prepared, to start composing poems on chrysanthemums. And these poems range from the memory of last year's chrysanthemums to the admiration for the qualities of chrysanthemums – their colour, fragrance, you name it – there is no limit. That is one particular chapter in that book which I find pertinent to our discussion.

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## Chinese Garden as Public Sphere

At this point, it is quite important for me to remind you of this rather peculiar Chinese attitude or disinterest in anything that is material. In a sense the Chinese can be seen as being completely uninterested in materiality. There is a wonderful observation made by one of Australia's most important sinologists and great intellectual Professor Pierre Ryckmans (who is also known under the pen-name Simon Leys): he notices that when foreigners visit China often they are a little disheartened. They often ask how come a country with such a long, unbroken history has so little material heritage? And when beautiful old buildings were demolished to give way to the Olympics, foreigners were very sentimental but the Chinese just couldn't be bothered. They wouldn't care. Well, that is the surface of things, at least. I think that Professor Ryckmans, as well as Professor F.W. Mote, have in particular noticed this very important aspect of Chinese culture. That is, the value of the written word is always greater than anything that is material. Let me quote what Simon Leys has to say:

*Thus, the past which continues to animate Chinese life in so many striking, unexpected or subtle ways seems to inhabit the people rather than the bricks and stones. The Chinese past is both spiritually active and physically invisible. ...[E]ternity should not inhabit the building, it should inhabit the builder.*

I think this is a very compelling observation of Chinese culture.

So if we return to the Chinese garden maybe there's not much there to learn in terms of its physical characteristics or spatial anatomy. Speaking as an architect, I feel very sad about that. But looking at Chinese culture one recognises that 'the greatest form has no shape, or the greatest image has no form' - I don't know how to adequately translate that into English with the equivalent poetics but basically what it says is that what is invisible probably is more eternal. If the garden works, if that place is animated by people's way of occupying it, in the end it is a synthesis of architecture, culture, literature and almost anything else one can think of. So the idea of a 'public sphere' is rather fitting for seeing the Chinese garden as private, as a walled compound, is probably a misreading because after all it is a social place.

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## New Century Garden – a failed Chinese attempt and its paradox

My final observation is an example that shows a rather heroic but failed attempt to make a 'new century garden' as a civic place in China and, it's, perhaps, lasting paradoxes. In the early 1950s, at the beginning of the new Republic of China, Professor Liang Sicheng (梁思成), the son of the famous Qing Dynasty reformist Liang Qichao (梁启超), having been trained as an architect in the U.S.A. at the University of Pennsylvania, returned to China with a great deal of enthusiasm. When the communists went into Beijing, he was approached by Premier Zhou Enlai and Chairman Mao to give them a list of Beijing's heritage buildings. He was very impressed as he presumed that this new regime actually wanted to preserve some cultural heritage, that they weren't just a bunch of cultural thugs and vandals. So unlike many of his colleagues Professor Liang Sicheng decided to stay in China. In the early days of the new Republic, he thought he could propose something wonderful: a new century civic place for Beijing. He suggested that the new city centre should be built on the western side of the old city and that the old city should be preserved. And then he pointed out this wonderful city wall, about 40 kilometres long, and he said let's use it. Let's green it and use it as a civic park as that will serve a very fine Chinese habit, that is, occasionally you would climb high and inspect the horizon. A very beautiful, romantic idea. But his dream was devastated. Legend has it that one day Chairman Mao stood on Tiananmen, the Gate of Heavenly Peace, and while inspecting the horizon, Mao envisioned a forest of gigantic industrial chimneys with black smoke bellowing into the sky. Mao saw this as the future of Beijing. The beautiful city wall in Beijing was demolished. The rest is history.

To conclude, it is perhaps quite easy for us to blame the brutal regime for Professor Liang Sicheng's sad fate and his failed attempt to make a civic place, a kind of 'new century garden'. But maybe there is something else. This garden would remain as a 'new century garden' if it were an envisioned place for vision, and for vision alone. There are no other ingredients to allow the Chinese to have that kind of synthesis as seen in *Dream of the Red Chamber*. If that is also one of the reasons that this heroic attempt failed, maybe there is a paradox here, because this kind of vision – to inspect the horizon and to have no fear of the freedom of the space – is indeed the essence of our modernity.

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### Notes

1. Ground floor of residence and garden, Bi residence, Suzhou. Source: see Chen Congzhou, *Traditional Suzhou Dwellings*, Shanghai Sanlian Shudian, Shanghai, 2003: 187.
2. Li Yü (Liweng), Xianqing Ouji.
3. Simon Leys, *The Hall of Uselessness*, Black Inc. Collingwood, Victoria, 2011:239-58.
4. For the city-all-park/garden proposed by Liang Sicheng, 1951, see Wang Jun, Chegji, *Shenghuo Dushu Xingzhi*, Beijing, 2003: 110.

# GUEST SPEAKER'S PAPER – FELICITY FENNER

This is an edited précis of Felicity Fenner's talk that was accompanied by a slideshow presentation given at 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art on 21 October 2011 for the forum *New Century Garden: Talking About Public Art in Chinatown*, produced by 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art in partnership with City of Sydney. Copyright of this text remains with the author. documentation of this talk visit [www.4a.com.au](http://www.4a.com.au)

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## The Garden as Art

A good starting point for our discussion today is perhaps to throw up some ideas and show you some of the things that have been done in other parts of world that are stimulated by this idea of the garden as art. I have to pre-empt this by saying I am a reluctant convert to this premise, and when faced with the question of the aims of public art in my role as a current member of the City of Sydney's Public Art Advisory Panel, I sometimes find myself thinking, in response to some proposals, that perhaps the most suitable solution to revitalising a given urban space is not to install art but rather create a garden instead.

Is a garden art? Can art be a garden? I'm unresolved about that. I think one of the challenges is to ask how can we break down that intellectual barrier between art and gardens and make it one thing. One way is to get contemporary artists involved, obviously, but I also believe curators have a role here too in working with artists to realise projects that challenge preconceived definitions of art and gardens.

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Artist and curator initiatives that I have taken a look at in regards to this subject include the following:

- **National Institute for Experimental Arts, HotHouse: Cultural Ecology and Sustainable Urban Environments (2010), Sydney, Australia**  
[www.niea.unsw.edu.au/environment-and-sustainability/projects/hothouse](http://www.niea.unsw.edu.au/environment-and-sustainability/projects/hothouse)  
A conference produced by the National Institute for Experimental Arts, for which I am Chief Curator, and held at the Sydney Opera House over two days in July last year. We invited designers, artists, curators, creative thinkers, academics, philosophers, urban planners, architects and other people from all over the world to ask how we might use public art to reinvigorate urban spaces and landscapes in need of cultural renaissance. Leading international curator Michaela Crimmin was a guest speaker, widely acknowledged for her important projects and initiative with artists working with the landscape or otherwise concerned with environmental issues.
- **Joseph Beuys, 7,000 Oaks (1982), Documenta VII, Kassel, Germany**  
[www.diaart.org/sites/main/7000oaks/](http://www.diaart.org/sites/main/7000oaks/)  
A seminal work in which Beuys gathered 7,000 basalt stones, dumped them in front of a gallery, and asked that one tree be planted for every stone. This work has been continued in New York by the DIA Art Foundation. Curator Michaela Crimmin spoke about the historical significance of this work during her presentation for *HotHouse*.
- **Agnes Denes, Wheatfield (1982), Battery Park, New York City, USA**  
Again, a seminal work produced in the same year as Beuys' in which the artist planted and grew wheat in a two acre landfill sight in Battery Park in Lower Manhattan. A single harvest yielded over 1,000 pounds of wheat which was then shipped to 28 countries, thus making a point about how disused space can actually feed people in New York and other parts of the world. This wasn't a one off work by Denes – though probably her most well-know one – as she did another work whereby she planted 10,000 trees on a mountainside in Finland.

- **Metabolic Studios, *Not a Cornfield* (2005), Los Angeles, USA**  
[www.notacornfield.com](http://www.notacornfield.com)  
Based in L.A., the team from Metabolic Studios came to our HotHouse conference last year. Not unlike Agnes Denes' work, they used 32 acres of brown field in the historic centre of Los Angeles – an area 16 times larger than Denes' project – and brought in 15 truckloads of earth into this industrial wasteland. The aim was to grow corn over a season, but mostly to make a point that this land was not being used productively. In fact, the California Department of Parks and Recreation were so impressed by the project that they have since taken over the park, turned it into a green space with bicycle tracks and it's now a very popular destination. Sometimes it just takes an artist to put an idea out there for the authorities to see the potential of a situation and act on it.
- **Diller, Scofidio + Renfro et al, *The High Line* (1999), New York City, USA**  
[www.thehighline.org](http://www.thehighline.org)  
A very well known and well loved transformation of a heavy industrial elevated train line on Manhattan's West Side, built in the 1930s and disused since the 1980s, that in 1999 was saved by community residents, known as The Friends of the High Line, and converted into an elevated garden space. This is a highly successful remedial work which continues to be used creatively for various purposes. In fact, this week sees the first dinner party on the High Line, hosted by restaurant chefs from the local vicinity.
- **Janet Laurence, *In the Shadow* (2000), Sydney, Australia**  
[www.janetlaurence.com/in-the-shadow](http://www.janetlaurence.com/in-the-shadow)  
Another successful remedial work and a beautiful example of an artist responding to a former industrial sight. Janet in fact remarked to me that it's interesting that the Sydney Olympic Park Authority have expressed their desire to trim the casuarina trees originally planted as part of the work since due to their growth they now obscure views to the nearby tennis centre. So Janet's response was 'you can't touch it, it's art', which is one of the gains of deeming a garden as art – the artist can retain some control over it.

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Moving on to exhibitions and curatorial initiatives, some examples that I find interesting are:

- **Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennial, Niigata Prefecture, Japan**  
[www.echigo-tsumari.jp/eng](http://www.echigo-tsumari.jp/eng)  
A triennial art festival and exhibition in Japan's Niigata Prefecture, an area in which most young people had left, leaving behind a lot of empty homes, schools and other buildings, which has now been reinvigorated by this triennial. It runs over a 760 km<sup>2</sup> area. Essentially, commissioned artists from around the world create permanent works for small houses situated throughout the landscape and every third summer when the triennial is on they invite yet more artists to add to this by creating temporary works. One of their permanent works includes Janet Laurence's *Elixir* (2005): [www.janetlaurence.com/elixir](http://www.janetlaurence.com/elixir)
- **Jeremy Deller, *Speak to the Earth and It Will Tell You* (2007 – 2017), Münster Skulptur Project, Münster, Germany**  
[www.skulptur-projekte.de](http://www.skulptur-projekte.de)  
This Münster Skulptur Project happens every ten years in Germany. The last one in 2007 featured a work by British artist Jeremy Deller in which after seeing the little collective gardens (or Kleingärten) of the town of Münster he initiated an ongoing project whereby diaries are kept that record who uses the gardens, what happens to them, how is the produce used? This record keeping has been taking place since 2007 and will continue until the next Münster Skulptur Project in 2017.

- **EXYST, *Dalston Mill* (2009), London, UK**  
[www.barbican.org.uk/artgallery/event-detail.asp?ID=9311](http://www.barbican.org.uk/artgallery/event-detail.asp?ID=9311)  
 This outdoor work was produced for the Barbican's 2009 exhibition project Radical Nature. It uses a disused space near Barbican and near the Olympic development at the time, copying Agnes Denes' idea but taking it one step further by installing a mill and a cafe so one could harvest the wheat, bake bread and eat it with a coffee amongst friends. It became a popular community hub for just one summer whilst the exhibition was on.
- **Fritz Haeg, *Edible Estates* (2009), London, UK**  
[www.fritzaeg.com/garden/initiatives/edibleestates/main](http://www.fritzaeg.com/garden/initiatives/edibleestates/main)  
 Another work commissioned for the Barbican's Radical Nature show from New York-based architect and artist Fritz Haeg who wished to work outside and so he also located his work in a local council estates, inviting the residents to come out of their flats, meet each other and talk about what they might do with a garden – what sort of food might they collectively grow? – before actually getting them to install the garden themselves. So unlike Dalston Mill this is actually a permanent work, it's still there and to this day acts as a pretext for bringing people together.
- **Martha Rosler, *Proposed Helsinki Garden at the Singapore Biennale* (2011), Singapore**  
[www.singaporebiennale.org](http://www.singaporebiennale.org)  
 Similarly, this work by Rosler for the 2011 Singapore Biennale also involved the construction of gardens by local community members, fellow artists and art students. The artist had proposed this work for a project in Helsinki and it never happened because the reluctant commissioners of the project, the Helsinki Business Council, couldn't decide if it was an art work or if it was a park and therefore they could not determine who would be responsible for looking after it in the future. In their minds this question couldn't be resolved so it didn't happen. So when Rosler was invited to create work for the Singapore Biennale she revived her original idea to suit a different context.

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# GUEST SPEAKER'S PAPER – NICHOLAS JOSE

This is an edited transcript of Nicholas Jose's talk that was accompanied by a slideshow presentation given at 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art on 21 October 2011 for the forum *New Century Garden: Talking About Public Art in Chinatown*, produced by 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art in partnership with City of Sydney. Copyright of this text remains with the author. documentation of this talk visit [www.4a.com.au](http://www.4a.com.au)

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## What is a (Chinese) Garden?

A garden is a conceptual as well as a physical space, a constructed environment, a zone of play or reflection. In Chinese culture the garden is an art form too, with a rich tradition of both creation and appreciation. The experience of the garden in body, mind and heart is central to understanding the concept. That includes the after-impression of the garden, what renewal is achieved, what encounters and ideas can be taken away. In Chinese culture the symbolic dimension has overtaken the physical space of the garden, intensified through a long association with personal cultivation. In the literati tradition you show your refinement in the way you are able to read the garden. The line that connects writers and artists with gardens goes back to the poet Tao Yuanming (362-467) and the fabled harmony of his simple country life. Such gardens are typically a place of retreat from the cares of public life, private spaces, spaces within. It makes sense to consider a New Century Chinese Garden from a literary point of view if that means to think of it conceptually, as a place inscribed by the imagination, a space that transcends itself. The Orchid Pavilion is an archetypal Chinese literati garden because it inspired a text written in exemplary calligraphy attributed to Wang Xizhi (309-c365), that was copied for generations until it became so venerable it was meaningless, as the contemporary performance artist Qiu Zhijie shows in *Copying Lantingxu 1000 Times*, 1990-1995. The black sheen on his voided page of overwritten script is the ultimately conceptual Chinese garden.

Turning now to the space in Thomas Street, in Sydney's Chinatown, let's start by saying that, quite contrary to a literati garden, it is not a private or interior space, but rather the opposite, an urban hub, an intersection of many pathways, in the centre of a busy twenty-first century city. Its storylines go back in time, to the deep history of a colonial port, in a society constructed on exclusionary racial lines that produced enclaves of difference, and that extend to ancestral homelands and diaspora. This Chinatown has been a first destination for migrants, refugees, students, tourists. The Chinese-Australian writer Sang Ye calls Chinatown 'a flowerpot simply placed here', where no one puts down roots, because 'the soil in the flowerpot is segregated from the soil here' (*The Finish Line*, 1995). But that's only part of the story. That flowerpot has been in Australia as long as any European garden. In any case, Chinatown is only partly Chinese. For many visitors to Sydney it is the most cosmopolitan place they can find, the only place they feel at home, as depicted by Matt Huynh in his graphic novel *Chinatown*. Rather than inner space, Thomas Street is a version of 'outer space' in a special sense.

It is also remnant space, like backyards and decks and inner urban courtyards throughout the city, left over space that calls for imaginative reclamation. In that sense its limitations, its layers and intersections, are its virtue. One of the best writers about contemporary space is Yi-Fu Tuan, Professor of Geography at the University of Wisconsin Madison. Tuan's approach is partly formed by his growing up in Sydney, as he shows in overlaying Indigenous and Chinese concepts of space onto Western ones. He refers to the paradox of the Ming garden that was at once quite small but 'had cosmic pretensions'. 'To overcome the actuality that this space was bounded by the blank face of a wall, imagination must come powerfully into play' (*Passing Strange and Wonderful*, 1993). If the space in Thomas Street is bounded by walls, it has few of the features normally found in a garden,

except in a conceptual, non-organic, obliquely referential way, which calls the imagination into play more vividly.

Yi-Fu Tuan quotes a connoisseur's experience of a Ming garden. Imagine it transposed to Thomas Street:

*In certain lights—at dawn or dusk, or sometimes in the blinding glare of summer noon—the wall might even seem to have melted away altogether, leaving the rocks and bamboo floating in ... horizonless and vaporous distances ... Shrinking himself to the size of an ant, the connoisseur could wander in these misty wastes among rocks now grown into mountains, and shrubs and grasses as big as trees and forests. And as he walked and paused, the landscape unfolded around him as if he were taking a three-dimensional stroll through one of his own paintings, slowly unrolling the horizontal scroll from right to left. (Maggie Keswick, Foreword, Ji Cheng, *The Craft of Gardens*, 1988).*

Imagine if the artwork was not a horizontal scroll, but a moving projection, or an installation, and if the vegetation was hallucinatory in a different way, making the city disappear.

The New Century Garden continues the adaption of the Chinese garden in re-used space, pushing its conceptual character. The Japanese Zen garden already points the way, with its radical reduction of elements, daily destroyed and renewed. The hybrid Australian version of Chinese gardens also points the way. I'm thinking less of Chinatown's own Chinese Garden, though that popular spot is interesting in identifying Sydney as a southern-style place, not only through the acknowledgement of Guangdong as homeland to many Australians, but through aesthetic and botanical affinity too. In Australia historically the Chinese garden has been a market garden, remnant testimony of which lives on across the country today. One remote example is Adel's Grove, at Lawn Hill National Park on the Gulf of Carpentaria, where the lychee, mango and tamarind trees in the camping ground record the garden that was there before the Aboriginal-Chinese family that established it was moved on early last century. Sydney still has Chinese market gardens visible on land too close to the flight path for real estate development in Arncliffe, fertile remnant land not far from where Joseph Banks speculated on the possibility of productive agriculture when he stepped ashore in 1770. That Chinese garden suggests a link with the market garden that once existed in Thomas Street itself.

The market garden is the opposite of the rarefied literati garden, but in Australia the two meld as an aesthetic and functional intervention. My friend Michael has created a garden of this kind on his balcony in Redfern, from found plants and pots, from stuff left in the street, making a transformed space of his own to block out the Eastern Distributor. The Chinese-Australian public garden works to reconfigure and recycle, promoting civic values, useful knowledge and friendly exchange. Townsville's Perfume Gardens reclaims a dodgy pocket of CBD badland into a safe place to eat lunch, connect or pass through. The relocated colonial structure at one end attracted a sister-city Chinese gift at the other, with explanatory plaque in Chinese. The Chinese Herbal Medicine Garden at the Bankstown Campus of the University of Western Sydney where I work used Japanese architecture and, curiously, European culinary herbs such as rosemary, thyme and chamomile outnumber the Chinese citrus, that 'opens the orifices' according to its plaque, and juniper.

It's only one step from here to the kind of public art that philosopher Martha Nussbaum advocates as a way to encourage civic virtues of community, belonging and respect for diversity. Can art do this? Or is it better at critiquing such high-minded utilitarianism? There's a strong American tradition, deriving perhaps from the puritan reverence for the written word, of edifying texts being carved in stone in public places whose significance is amplified by the inscription. At Freedom Plaza in Washington DC uplifting

quotes are literally laid down in the stones you walk on. At Harvard the entrance to Emerson Hall is carved with the Bible's words: 'What is man that thou art mindful of him?' (Psalm 8:4). That might have given those philosophy students pause for thought—especially the girls.

China has a version of this tradition too in which significant words which also work as visual images are carved in stone in a landscape, as if to inscribe a timeless conceptual significance that unites the human and the natural in cosmic harmony.

If the role of public art in a New Century Garden in Chinatown is to connect people with an inspiring, transforming set of possibilities, the stimulus of concepts will be powerful, as abstract ideas are presented in an economical, mysterious, provocative, edgy way, as part of the symbolic architecture, with space around them for imagination to take off. The Chinese American architect I. M. Pei, whose family roots go back to Suzhou, home of some of China's most exalted gardens, shows how architecture, art and design can work together symbolically, as in his new Museum of Suzhou with its highly illusionistic mountain and water landscape garden. Years earlier, when the Chinese characteristics of his architecture were less overt, he designed the John F. Kennedy Memorial Library in Boston. It ended up being away from the city centre, on Columbia Point, overlooking the Atlantic. The most memorable thing about this commemorative building is the vast central atrium that looks through a complex lattice at the vaster ocean: abstracted landscape, form and void, enclosure that is not enclosed.

Art is an agent in reconceptualising a Chinese garden in place and time. The transformation includes writing that interprets and intervenes, as it participates in what critic Wang Guanglin, speaking of Brian Castro's novel *The Garden Book*, a book about Chinese writing and Australian bush, has called 'the garden of transcultural life'. Perhaps the New Century Garden will only exist in the imagination, in the space of respite it gives us. Such a garden was described by a Ming scholar in the sixteenth-century: 'the Wuyou Garden - which means "The Garden-that-does-not-exist." ... What difference is there between a famous garden which exists no more, and this particular garden which never existed at all, since in the end both the former and the latter are known only through the same medium of the written word?' (Pierre Ryckmans, *The Chinese Attitude Towards the Past*, 1989) And the future. The space can be marked by story, text, idea—all in a word, deftly inscribed, changing from language to language, floating: a neat way to free up space for reflection.

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# GUEST SPEAKER'S PAPER – JOHN CHOI

*This is an edited transcript of John Choi's talk that was accompanied by a slideshow presentation given at 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art on 21 October 2011 for the forum New Century Garden: Talking About Public Art in Chinatown, produced by 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art in partnership with City of Sydney. Copyright of this text remains with the author. documentation of this talk visit [www.4a.com.au](http://www.4a.com.au)*

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I would like to talk about the relationship between art and the city, as well as the relationship between the city and identity and culture through the lens of a 'new century garden' as proposed by this forum.

Firstly a bit of background: I am of Korean origin, born in Seoul, and migrated to Australia with my family when I was ten years old in 1980. Over the last 30 years the global context in relation to Korea and the Asia-Pacific region has shifted dramatically and at the same time I've witnessed enormous change in Sydney and Australia as well. I bring this up in the context of the term 'new century', which already has some level of currency particularly in our economic, political and cultural context and changing circumstances in a globalised world, and I think Sydney has a particular place in this order. To think of gardens, I think, is an interesting way to prompt a discussion around public art. I wish to reflect on gardens in a broader sense in terms of landscapes and ecology from a personal perspective and reflections.

Korea's geography is very mountainous with approximately 70% of its land mass being mountainous areas and therefore a city like Seoul, with a population of half of Australia's, fits into a very small land mass. So one does wonder where the garden fits into these emerging mega-city contexts.

This is an area north of Seoul called Insadong that is quite well known as an art and heritage precinct with a number of interesting public artworks and small galleries. But what I wish to focus attention on is the depth and breadth of the ecology that one sees reflected in the built environment as a clear indicator of the depth of creative energy of the local residents, business owners, consumers and those who run things. When I say ecology I refer to an ecology that does not separate between natural and human components but instead regards this system as inherently integrated.

Here on the left you have a French restaurant that sits within this ramshackle building where the roof still has tarpaulins over it, you can see the air con ducts haphazardly put together, and this small garden at the front. On the right is another building of 1960s or '70s origin. What is interesting for me is the degree of precision and craft in that tiled facade at street level. The area has of course some contemporary architecture but this particularly facade's interplay with recycled material, the old and the new, creates interplay between building and public life. I'm using these examples as one way to look at art in the context as a medium to represent and reflect on things, but also the deeper impact it can have in the culture of a city and really seeing art as a capacity building exercise that can operate, transform and deepen the scope of people who create, make and shape ideas in the city.

When I first came to Sydney there wasn't much sense of multicultural spirit, even though there was cultural and ethnic diversity. Things were fairly thin, particularly where I grew up in St Ives. Over the course of the past thirty years things have developed tremendously. Sydney, particularly in the past twenty years, has increased the number of residents in the city, changing the character and pattern of use of the city quite dramatically, and as many of the other speakers pointed out this southern part of the city in which

Chinatown is situated in a really active and interesting ecology. Of course, Chinatown has a lot of roots and focus in history and memory and is the foundation to Asian culture in Sydney itself, but where I do see Sydney being quite particular in a global context is the incredible fine diversity of Asian and non-Asian cultures in this southern part of Sydney. To give an example, if I go to my favourite Korean restaurant on Pitt Street there are quite a lot of Asians, and some non-Asians, but the majority are in fact Koreans, and I think in this sense of ownership is quite a unique thing. This sense that we already collectively own this culture is something I haven't seen in other big international cities quite in the same way as Sydney. I think there's a little bit more distance between relationships overseas. I really do see this area of Sydney's southern central business district as indicative of Australia's latent potential in the cultural sphere. It's almost as if there's a line in Bathurst Street that delineates between north and south, what's above and what's below. To conclude, I would like to ask how we can tap into the energies that are already latent in this area and ask ourselves how public art can reveal some of those things and build capacity so different voices and emerge within these systems.

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