



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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- **Media Preview:**
10-11 am, March 6, 2008
- **Opening Reception**
6 - 9 pm, March 13, 2008

IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 31, 2008

Pacific Asia Museum Announces Exhibition
Chinaman's Chance:
Views of the Chinese American Experience



Detail, Untitled (Mirror Lake), Arthur Ou, courtesy Hudson Franklin New York

Pasadena, CA – Pacific Asia Museum presents a major multi-media exhibition that examines the diverse Chinese American experience from the days of the Transcontinental Railroad's construction to today. Curated by Chip Tom, ***Chinaman's Chance: Views of the Chinese American Experience*** will be on view from March 6 through July 27, 2008 and includes new works from three outstanding Chinese American artists: Amanda Ross-Ho, Zhi Lin, and Arthur Ou.

The discovery of gold in California drew unprecedented numbers of Chinese immigrants. By 1865 about 50,000 Chinese had come to “Golden Mountain” to try their luck. But the winds of fortune often blew in unexpected directions. The majority of the Transcontinental Railroad’s east-bound track was built by Chinese. To conquer the treacherous terrain, workers were often suspended from the top of cliffs to plant explosives. It was from this dangerous task that the phrase “A Chinaman’s Chance in Hell” was coined. Later shorten to “Chinaman’s Chance”, the phrase unfortunately defined many immigrants’ experiences.

While the experience of being of Chinese heritage and living in America is unique to each individual, *Chinaman’s Chance* will investigate the similarities and dissimilarities of these experiences. In addition, the exhibition will explore the vast changes in laws and social mores as they pertain to Chinese Americans. For example, Chinese immigrants in 1860 could not become U.S. citizens, vote, own property, or even testify in court.

The three artists in the exhibition will transform Pacific Asia Museum’s two exhibition spaces into two seamless installations that can be viewed as a whole, or as individual pieces. While these three artists have different life experiences and views on the Chinese American experience, together they will present a unified perspective of the Chinese in America from 1860 to 2008. The experience of the viewers will be simultaneously cerebral and physical, historical and contemporary, foreign and universal. The artists will also be incorporating Pacific Asia Museum collections into their work, and all draw their inspiration from the history encompassed in the museum’s exhibitions.

The museum will present a wide range of public events in conjunction with the exhibition, including a curator tour with Chip Tom at 1 p.m. April 26. The opening party will be from 6 to 9 pm Thursday, March 13, 2008. This event is free for members and a guest, and \$10 for non-members. During the opening, Pacific Asia Museum will premiere a 30-minute short film “*Chinese Ghost Story*”, a documentary by Dan Boord and Luis Valdovino. Come meet the curator, the artists and enjoy an evening of food, drinks and music by DJ Tony.

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About the Artists

ZHI LIN, born and educated in China, was trained as a painter. For this exhibition, however, he will present life-size pencil drawings of railroad tracks on their bed of granite rocks. The granite rocks will be drawn so that the viewer can faintly make out names written in the gravel. Zhi Lin plans to include the names of hundreds of Chinese workers, whose blood and sweat make up the railroad, but who have long been forgotten. In addition, he plans a collaborative video with Dan Boord and Luis Valdovino that will be projected on to one of the drawings. The video will depict a re-enactment of the Golden Spike ceremony at Promontory Summit, Utah, where the eastbound Union Pacific train met the westbound Central Pacific train. A sound track of the trains in motion will softly fill the gallery.

ARTHUR OU, born in Hong Kong and educated at Yale, is another multi-media artist who will present an installation-based piece. Many of the works will reference the early photographs of Carlton Watkins' mountain series. Watkins' elegant pictures, capturing the serenity of the mountains, take on new meaning when the viewer realizes that these are the same mountains that the Chinese railroad laborers were dynamiting to build the railroad. Ou takes the reference further by floating Chinese landscape paintings in Mirror Lake, and then photographing the paintings, the water, and the reflections of the mountains. In addition, Ou will create sculptures using furniture, ceramics, and other Chinese art forms.

AMANDA ROSS HO, born and raised in Chicago, received her MFA at USC. Of mixed-race parentage, Ross Ho's work represents a different, but much more contemporary Chinese American experience. Using images pulled from a wide range of cultural material – drug-seizure websites, self-help books, newspaper clippings, and holiday craft manuals – Amanda Ross-Ho locates sites within culture's representational flow, carving out designated points of focus. Amanda's work has been selected for Whitney Biennial 2008.

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About the Curator

CHIP TOM is regarded as one of Los Angeles' most innovative independent curators. Chip has more than 20 years experience in the contemporary art field. He has organized exhibitions at the Centre D'art Contemporain in Geneva, Switzerland, Collection de l'Art Brut in Lausanne, Switzerland, as well as at numerous museums and galleries in the United States, including the Contemporary Arts Forum in Santa Barbara, Domestic, ACME, City, L Man, and Advocate Galleries in Los Angeles, and Judy Saslow, Doug Dawson, and Rhona Hoffman Galleries in Chicago. He was associate director of Regen Projects in Los Angeles and the director of the Center for Contemporary Culture in Seoul, Korea.

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Pacific Asia Museum is one of only four institutions in the United States dedicated exclusively to the arts and culture of Asia and the Pacific Islands. The museum's mission is to further cultural awareness and understanding through the arts. Since 1971, Pacific Asia Museum has served a broad audience of students, families, adults, and scholars through its education and outreach programs.

Pacific Asia Museum is located at 46 North Los Robles Avenue, Pasadena, California 91101. Museum opens Wednesday through Sunday 10 am to 6 pm. Admission is \$7 general, \$5 students/seniors, and free for children ages 11 and younger. Admission is free every 4th Friday of the month.

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