Reinterpreting English Chinoiserie From A Postcolonial And Personal/Taiwanese Perspective: Creating New Narratives Through Art Practice

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Reinterpreting English Chinoiserie From A Postcolonial And Personal/Taiwanese Perspective: Creating New Narratives Through Art Practice

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Abstract

This PhD investigates how to reinterpret English chinoiserie from a postcolonial and personal/Taiwanese perspective through art practice.

I explore aspects of history to scrutinise British/European receptions of China and Chineseness as a visual language in eighteenth-century English chinoiserie. This leads me to investigate eighteenth-century Sino-British/East-Europe historiographies to interrogate how to review relevant pre-colonial Sino-British contact. I also review Chineseness as an identity in relation to Taiwanese history, diaspora and my art practice. My findings reject a uniform insider Chineseness and instead point to plurality and subjectivity. That is multiple and personal perspectives from which to revisit history – which informs my approach in which to respond to chinoiserie.

I create *notional interlocution*, a new postcolonial strategy of fictional (auto)ethnography, through contextualising concepts of constructivism, post-structualism, art-based research, and aspects of postcolonial theory. Via this new methodological framework, I make three artist films regarding the chinoiserie collections at the three chosen cultural heritage sites: *This is China…* explores the chinoiserie interior at the Royal Pavilion Brighton; *Another beautiful dream* investigates the Chinese wallpaper at Harewood House; and *A note on Delftware* interrogates the Delftware vases at Chatsworth House. My films are open-ended, yet critical and philosophical, and create new spaces in which to revisit chinoiserie. The films form a trilogy for their shared exploration of English chinoiserie but can be considered independently and seen as independent works.

Rumi:

Somewhere beyond right and wrong, there is a garden. I will meet you there.

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Throughout this intellectual rite of passage, a number of individuals showered me with unwavering kindness and support without which this research would not have blossomed. My supervisors Beccy Kennedy, Jenny Holt and Fionna Barber have my genuine appreciation for their academic guidance. I am also grateful to my partner in crime Mr Lee for his company on the journey.

Author's Declaration

I declare that all the material in this thesis is my own work.

Author's Note: In this thesis, there are different spellings of some names due to different ways of romanising the Chinese language. Particularly, Chien-lung and Qianlong, as well as Ching Dynasty and Qing Dynasty are respectively the same words and are hence interchangeable.

Introduction

A phone conversation with a friend from the London art school where we were studying for our MFAs back in 2014:

Friend: What have you been up to?

Myself: I just came back from a day trip to Brighton. It was too cold to go into the water, so my friend and I visited the royal palace in the city centre…

*Friend: (a pause of silence) You mean, that one… (sigh) I don't know how to describe it. I have been there. I have been there, the inside... It was very strange. I mean…*very *strange…*

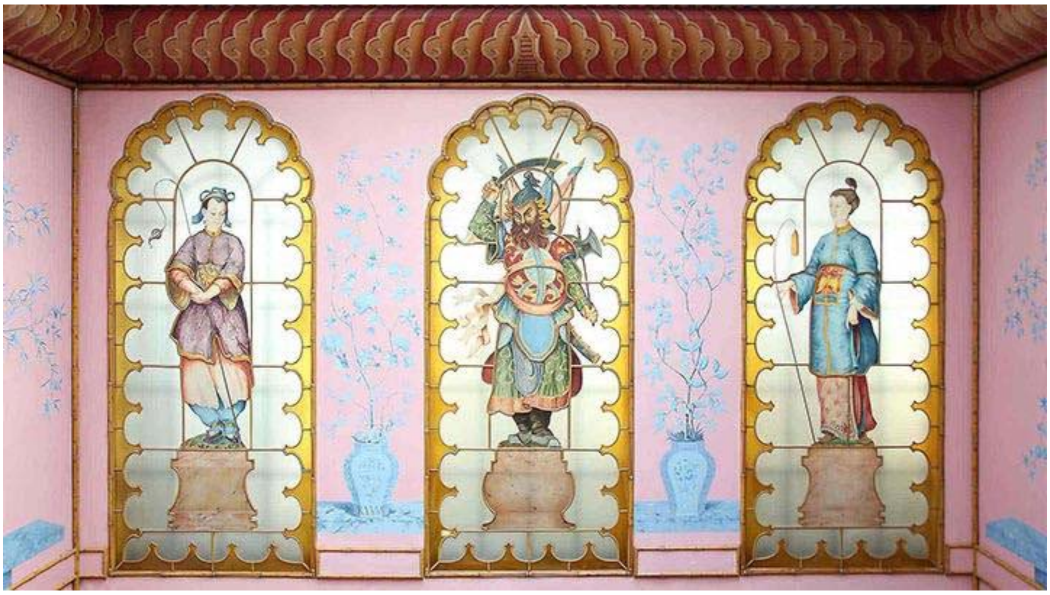

Fig 1: Image of the Royal Pavilion Brighton. A chinoiserie mural of three Chinese figures.

The palace in question was the Royal Pavilion Brighton, a pleasure palace whose interior is entirely furnished in the visual style of chinoiserie and exterior coated with Islamic Mughal motif (Beevers, 2014). Having never seen chinoiserie before, I was deeply fascinated and bewildered at what was described by my friend as *very strange*. It turned out that my Taiwanese friend and I were not alone in this feeling of cultural vertigo. According to the Pavilion staff, many Chinese tourists who visited the site similarly expressed their profound amazement and perplexity at the chinoiserie theme. Over the years this cultural enigma lingered in my mind. I felt compelled to revisit and reinterpret chinoiserie in relation to my Taiwanese and Chinese diasporic background. This aspiration has become the point of departure of this practice-based fine art PhD.

What was Chinoiserie?

Chinoiserie was a product of cross-cultural contact through maritime transport between Europe and East Asia (Hsai, 1997). The visual style refers to both objects and motifs from East Asia. Materially speaking, it included imports from East Asia and objects made with East Asian influence in Europe (Porter, 1999). Overall, much of chinoiserie in Europe as both imports of objects and as motifs was related to China. The visual style came in an extensive range from decorative objects such as ivory, wallpaper, silk, porcelain, furniture[1] and interior design that came to fill households, gardens, landscape and architectural style (Honour, 1961).

Chinoiserie was most popular in Britain across the eighteenth century thanks to Britain's oceanic expansion. For a number of reasons that are to be examined in this thesis, English chinoiserie was a result of fantasy and imagination of China. Hence the material culture lacked authenticity and accuracy in terms of what was Chinese (de Bruijn, 2017). Chineseness as a visual language was at stake.

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[1] often in the form of screens, boards, panels and cabinets

The linguist Ferdinand de Saussure dissects language into signifier and signified in terms of sign and semiotics. De Saussure argues that (1986: 66):

> ‘A linguistic sign is not a link between a thing and a name, but between a concept and a sound pattern. The sound pattern is not actually a sound; for sound is something physical. A sound pattern is the hearer’s psychological impression of a sound, as given to him by the evidence of his senses.’

If a signifier is a word, and the signified is the mental concept – or, in de Saussure’s word, psychological impression – of the word. By this logic, as discussed in this PhD, chinoiserie artefacts are signifiers and Chineseness as a visual language is the signified that is what was considered to be Chinese.

Research Overview

This practice-based fine art PhD aims to reinterpret English chinoiserie from a perspective informed by postcolonial thinking and my background of coming from Taiwan and the Chinese diaspora. The objectives of this research are: (1) to critically assess history relevant to eighteenth-century English chinoiserie, (2) to investigate how to reinterpret precolonial/ eighteenth-century Sino-British contact, (3) and to make three artist films as a way of reinterpreting the chinoiserie collections at the three chosen case studies of cultural heritage sites.

My three artist films constitute a trilogy given their shared concern of interrogating English chinoiserie. Especially *This is China*… and *Another beautiful dream,* films made respectively at the Royal Pavilion Brighton and Harewood House, constitute a sequel. This is because they are outcomes of my methodological mechanism, notional interlocution, and thus are fictions and share characters. My third film, *A note on Delftware*, is a non-fiction work with my narration of explaining and commenting on the Delftware objects' cross-cultural background. The three films can be reviewed separately and seen as independent works.

This research is a thought experiment in a sense that it suspends the narrative of Chinese other being on the receiving end of Western oppression, or *the logic of wound* (Chow, 1998). Intrinsic to my research is my deconstruction of binary oppositions of self and other by offering plural perspectives through scriptwriting in my artist films. The new narratives open up spaces historiographically. Rather than harbouring or articulating a stance, I provide possible ways in which to revisit relevant history. The artist films made for this research are thus open-ended.

My PhD is situated between Visual Art/artist film, Chinese Studies, and Postcolonial Theory. In a wider context, I position my thesis as part of the ongoing postcolonial project of revisiting history that is to reconsider past events in relation to colonialism.

Central to this thesis is the question of how to reinterpret the eighteenth-century pre-colonial Sino-British contact from a postcolonial viewpoint. I turn to art history and other historical literature to unpick related historical context. British perceptions of China in the eighteenth century are characterised by their complexity, ambiguity and fluctuation. The Asian state was '…above all, the land of paradox' (Honour, 1961: 22). Both favourable and critical attitudes towards China in England/Europe were a product of insufficient knowledge and imagination of the Asian state (de Bruijn, 2017). China's strict trading policy with foreigners also played a role in Europeans not accessing the country directly (Purdue, 2009).

In the eighteenth century, chinoiserie was part of the English culture of taste whereby the wealthy collected and displayed exotic artefacts at home. China and Chineseness played the role of other and by extension the world out there as Britain developed a sense of self in the globe widened by its oceanic expansion (Sloboda, 2014). Into the nineteenth century, chinoiserie decreased in popularity because of the increasing sense of antagonism in Britain towards China. This situation was due to Britain's trading deficit and diplomatic frustration with the Asian state. In 1842, the British began its colonisation of Hong Kong as the outcome of the First Opium War.

To reinterpret history pertaining to eighteenth-century English chinoiserie, I consider literature from Literary Studies with a focus on East-West and Sino-British encounter. My review of pertinent historiographies begins with Said's *Orientalism* (1978) which offers a picture of a European coloniser and colonised East. Such a binary narrative is challenged by the eighteenth-century historiographies that are important to this research: Porter's *Sinocentric historiography* (2010), Aravamudan's *Enlightenment Orientalism* (2011), Carey and Festa's *Postcolonial Enlightenment* (2009) and Jenkins' *Prehistory of Orientalism* (2013).

Also central to my research is to look inwardly into and problematise Chineseness as an identity through considering related literature from Chinese Studies. Regarding my personal context, I examined the cultural and historical context of Taiwan: migration over during Ching Dynasty (Friedman, 2009), Japanese colonisation (Dirlik, 2018), Nationalists' relocation (Dominic and Chang, 2010), the 228 Massacre (Kagan, 1982; Wang, 2017), the Martial Law (Sui, 2016), and resultant political divide (Meng-Hsuan and Chang, 2010). On the other hand, I questioned Chineseness as a pure, authentic entity through exploring identity in relation to diaspora (Hall, 1990) and the Chinese diaspora (Ang, 1994, 1998, 2001, 2013).

Methods and Methodology

I have three case studies of cultural heritage sites in this research: the Royal Pavilion Brighton, a pleasure palace of George IV, Harewood House, the family seat of the Lascelles, and Chatsworth House, the stately home of the Cavendish family. The rationale of choosing these sites is because of their substantial chinoiserie collections. And that the collections are significantly different from each other, in terms of provenance and history. Although this research originally sets out to interrogate English chinoiserie in the eighteenth century, the chinoiserie artefacts from these three places span across the long eighteenth century.[2]

From the outset of this research, methodology and methods have been in the forefront of my mind. It is important to employ a methodological framework that is suitable for the context in which this PhD is situated. My review of pertinent historiographies (Aravamudan, 2011; Carey and Festa, 2009; Jenkins, 2012; Porter,

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[2] The long eighteenth century is a periodisation in British history. There are slightly different definitions of this period of time. According to the historian Frank O'Gorman (2016), it refers to 1688-1832, from the beginning of the Glorious Revolution to the Reform Act of 1832. See: O'Gorman, F. (2016) *The Long Eighteenth Century: British Political and Social History 1688-1832*. London and New York: Bloomsbury.

2010), identity in relation to diaspora (Ang, 2013; Hall, 1990) points to plurality in perspective and subjectivity. Informed by this emphasis, I create a new methodological framework named notional interlocution whereby I create personal narratives through fictional (auto)ethnography. My postcolonial strategy has its foundation in constructivism (Patel, 2015), post-structuralism (Munslow, 2000) and art-based research (Given, 2008; Sullivan, 2011). To craft the positional and relational aspects of the framework, I expand Pratt's (1991; 1992) notions of contact zones and autoethnography. Importantly, I argue that notional interlocution *is* a phenomenon in contact zones. As a strategy of postcolonial voices, notional interlocution is informed by Said's *contrapuntal reading* (1993), Spivak's *subaltern voices* (1988) and Achebe's *the balance of stories* (2000). Influenced by Trinh 's *multiple voices* (1991), I diversify the narratives of the *Chinese self* to challenge the binary opposition of coloniser and colonised as part of my methodological mechanism.

My art practice is positioned between narrative and Visual Art, precisely artist film. It has been my aspiration as an artist to experiment with both the textual and visual, narrative writing and filmmaking, theory and image. This is because of my background in English Literature and my art practice of image making. Based on my research, I wrote the scripts for the three films which was an intense process. I commissioned voice over recording and music for the films. As to production, since all the selected sites are working museums, I was allowed to film in the interior with a DSLR camera before the opening hours and over a short window of time. This specific production condition inevitably played a role in how I configured and edited the visual elements of the films. Although the artworks present a trilogy, they have different visual strategies to address their respective themes drawing from the specific historical context of the cultural heritage sites and their chinoiserie collections. As this research focuses on generating new narratives, the three films are text heavy which is embodied in the dialogues between and monologues of the characters. Due to the volume of history involved, the narratives produced for the films are beyond the scope of this thesis to be reviewed completely.

In this PhD, I theorise through - and with - my filmmaking based on my research. In other words, my research and practice inform each other. My writing contexualises, reflects on and explains the process of my practice.

The contribution to knowledge of this PhD is threefold. Firstly, my research advances a reinterpretation of English chinoiserie through a postcolonial lens and from a Taiwanese/Chinese diasporic perspective. To the best of my knowledge, the convergence of chinoiserie, Visual Art, Chinese Studies, and Postcolonial Theory has not been explored in the form of practice-based fine art research and so this is the first PhD of its kind. Moreover, my creation of notional interlocution adds a new methodological approach to the field of practice-based fine art research. Through my filmmaking, I created new narratives to the chinoiserie collections at the chosen cultural heritage sites. Lastly, in a wider context, my PhD also contributes a new layer to the postcolonial project of reviewing history.

I would recommend watching the three films before Chapter 3, and preferably in the sequence listed below as they constitute a trilogy. However, the three films are all stand-alone pieces and thus can be considered independently.

Thesis Structure

Chapter 1 examines relevant literature with a focus on three key dimensions that are (1) Pertinent Sino-British/European history as to how and why Chineseness was represented the way it was in English chinoiserie. I look into history from the Jesuits' and other European accounts of China to the Opium Wars/British colonisation of Hong Kong. This historical review explores Chineseness as a visual language. (2) O/orientalism(s) that is how to reinterpret historical East-West encounter. Firstly, I examine Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978). From there I turn to investigate eighteenth-century Sino-British/European historiographies (Aravamudan, 2011; Carey and Festa, 2009; Jenkins, 2013, Porter, 2010). (3) Chineseness as an identity: I explore relevant Taiwanese history and situation (Dirlik, 2018; Friedman, 2009; Meng-Hsuan and Chang, 2010) and include my own art practice in the discussion. Through exploring identity in relation to diaspora (Ang, 1994, 1998, 2001, 2013; Hall, 1990), I frame Chineseness within a picture of fluidity and subjectivity.

Chapter 2 delineates my methodological roadmap whereby to reinterpret chinoiserie. The first part explains the rationale for using and choosing the three cultural heritage sites, followed by my review of the on-site chinoiserie collections in a wider context of British and Sino/British history. The second part articulates my development of notional interlocution, the methodological framework whereby to create personal narratives powered by fictional (auto)ethnography. I lay the foundation of my postcolonial strategy in constructivism (Patel, 2015), post-structuralism (Munslow, 2000) and art-based research (Given, 2008; Sullivan, 2011). From there, I expand Pratt's (1991; 1992) notions of contact zones and autoethnography to construct the positional and relational aspects of the methodological framework. Lastly, I frame notional interlocution as a postcolonial strategy of plural narratives through reviewing postcolonial voices (Said, 1993; Spivak, 1988; Achebe, 2000) and *multiple voices* by (Trinh, 1991).

Chapter 3 analyses the three artist films filmed in-situ at the case studies of chosen cultural heritage sites. ***This is China of a particular sort, I do not know*** explores the Royal Pavilion Brighton, a pleasure palace with chinoiserie interior. Across the film relevant historical individuals and myself question, fail to understand, argue and disagree with each other over the representation of Chineseness in the chinoiserie theme on site. Among other ideas, concepts from Buddhism are used to deconstruct the chinoiserie artefacts and beyond. ***Another beautiful dream*** revisits the Chinese wallpaper at Harewood House, a stately home near Leeds. In the name of taste, exotic artefacts, such as the wallpaper, were used by the landed gentry as a token of other to imagine the wider world. As the wallpaper was made in China, this film also explores self-representation through the use of my personal family photos. ***A note on Delftware*** investigates the Delftware artefacts at Chatsworth House, a manor house in Derbyshire. The Dutch objects were products of multiple contact zones: Chinese porcelain, Middle Eastern technique via Spain, French craftsmen and Dutch motifs. This film reflects on the related cross-cultural historical context and postcolonial review of history in a non-fictional way.

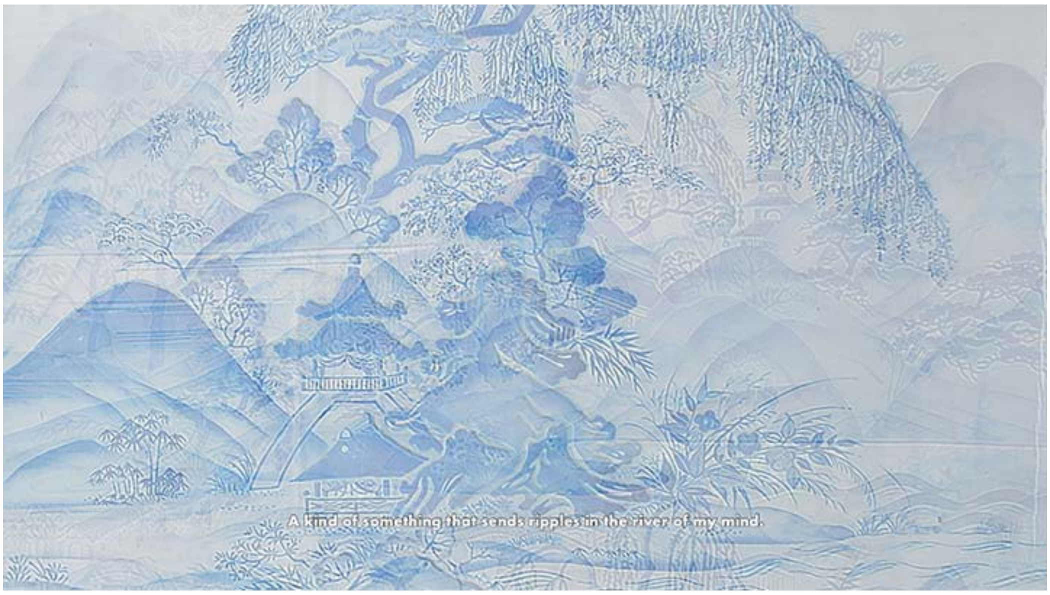
A kind of something that sends ripples in the river of my mind.

Fig 2: Film still of *This is China of a particular sort, I do not know.*

Timeline

221 BCE	The first Chinese Dynasty was established. As a translation from Mandarin, Dynastic China is also known as the Middle Kingdom in English.
1368	Ming Dynasty began in China.
1620	Craftsmen had been making Delftware by then in the Netherlands.
1644	Mind Dynasty ended and Ching Dynasty started in China.
1688	The Glorious Revolution took place in Britain.
1769	Chinese wallpaper was hung at Harewood House in Britain.
1787	Construction of the Royal Pavilion started in Britain.
1792	Macartney’s Embassy to China.
1823	The Royal Pavilion was completed in Britain.
1830	George IV died in Britain.
1839	The First Opium War began in China.
1842	British colonisation of Hong Kong began.
1856	The Second Opium War began in China.
1895	Japanese colonisation of Taiwan began.
1911	The Nationalists overthrew the Ching Dynasty/the Middle Kingdom. The Republic of China was established.
1945	Japanese colonisation of Taiwan ended.
1947	The 228 Massacre took place in Taiwan.
1949	The Nationalists’ relocated to Taiwan.
1949	Martial Law commenced in Taiwan.
1987	Martial Law ended in Taiwan.
1996	First democratic presidential election took place in Taiwan.
1997	British colonisation of Hong Kong ended.

Chapter 1

Unpacking Chinoiserie, O/orientalism(s) and Chineseness

This practice-based fine art research aims to reinterpret the representation of Chineseness in historical English chinoiserie from a perspective informed by postcolonial thinking and my personal/Taiwanese background. In order to form a postcolonial response to chinoiserie, it is pivotal to investigate the representation of Chineseness in tandem with relevant history and theories. In this chapter I critically examine three key dimensions: the representation of Chineseness in relation to pertinent Sino-British and wider history, O/orientalism(s) that is how to interpret historical East-West encounter and Chineseness as an identity.

Chapter 1 comprises three parts. Chapter 1.1 looks into how and why Chineseness as a visual language was represented the way it was in English chinoiserie. I reference art history and other historical literature to investigate Chineseness, ranging from early Sino-European contact to the British colonisation of Hong Kong. This historical review positions English chinoiserie in a wider social, economic and cultural context of Sino-British history of the (long) eighteenth century in which chinoiserie was most popular and which is the period this research focuses on.

Based on the findings of Chapter 1.1, Chapter 1.2 seeks to establish a historiographical framework that critically considers the historical, cultural and economic contexts within which my research sits. In tandem with my suspension of *the logic of wound* (Chow, 1998), I examine historiographies from Literary Studies (Aravamudan, 2011; Carey and Festa, 2009; Jenkins, 2013; Porter, 2010; Said, 1978).

As Chapter 1.1 and Chapter 1.2 investigate Chineseness outwardly as a visual language in relation to pertinent history and how to reinterpret history, Chapter 1.3 explores Chineseness inwardly as an identity. In this section, I reference debates from Chinese Studies and Cultural Studies. My intention here is to question my *insider* Chineseness, laying the foundation for a positional dimension from which new narrative emerge in Chapter 2. Chapter 1.3 considers the complex history and situation of Taiwan (Dirlik, 2018; Friedman, 2009; Meng-Hsuan and Chang, 2010) and my own art practice to delineate a problematic picture of Chineseness. Furthermore, I explore Chineseness as an identity in relation to diaspora, fluidity and subjectivity (Ang, 1994, 1998, 2001, 2013; Hall, 1990). Regarding my practice, I also address the importance of oral history and lived experience to me as an artist.

Chapter 1.1

A Historical Review: Representation of Chineseness in/and English Chinoiserie

‘Chinoiserie is not Chinese at all, but rather a fabrication of European designers’ (Whitehead, in Hevia, 1947: 70).

Chinoiserie was a cross-cultural phenomenon between Asia and Europe. Henceforth, unpacking chinoiserie requires unpacking cross-culture history between the two parts of the world. In Europe there had been a long fascination with foreign, exotic and rare objects. Collecting such precious treasures historically resulted in for example cabinets of curiosities[3] for the wealthy. In the seventeenth century, thanks to emerging oceanic technology and routes, objects from East Asia, including silk, porcelain and lacquerware, became available and were passionately collected and carefully displayed in European living environments. In France, King Louis XIV (1638-1715) ‘[…] became the vortex of fashion, not just for France but across Europe’ (Jacobson, 1993: 32), exporting chinoiserie as a court style across the region.

Chineseness: A Problematic Visual Language

As its etymological origin suggests, chinoiserie came to England from France and was initially a French taste of Far Eastern visual styles (Hsai, 1997). Interestingly, at the outset chinoiserie in Britain was an infatuation with both French culture and Asian cultures through France. Chinoiserie had been adopted into English language and as a style it was absorbed into English culture. In English it was also referred to as *the Chinese craze*, *things Chinese*, *all things Chinese*, *the Chinese taste* and *the taste for things Chinese*. All these terms connote a visual style imitating Asian, mostly Chinese motifs (Honour, 1961).

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[3] That can be traced back to Italian Renaissance. See: Sotheby’s Institute of Art. (2018) *Cabinets of Curiosities and The Origin of Collecting*. [Online] [Accessed 7 February 2020] https://www.sothebysinstitute.com/news-and-events/news/cabinets-of-curiosities-and-the-origin-of-collecting.

In chinoiserie, Chinese motifs were essentially in two categories: (1) Chinese imageries of people, landscape and industries etc., as well as (2) Chinese craft style, such as blue and white porcelain. Both sorts were meant to make artefacts *look* Chinese (V&A, no date). It was said that a European object could be Chinese simply by conforming to the accepted visual language of Chineseness (de Bruijn, 2017: 80). Such an agreement on what was Chinese is remarkably problematic, given its arbitrary nature and lack of visual and cultural reference. To address this ambivalence and inaccuracy of Chineseness as a visual language, I consider pertinent Sino-British and by extension Sino-European history in the following writing.

The Jesuits' Account of China: A Virtuous State Made

From the sixteenth century the conception of China in Europe was heavily informed by accounts of the Jesuits (de Bruijn, 2017; Jenkins, 2013; Porter, 2010). To revitalise the Catholic Church, the Christian sect dispensed missionaries to the Middle Kingdom as part of the objective to convert new populations. Familiarised with Chinese language and culture, the religious workers enjoyed a long, friendly relationship with the Imperial Court until the nineteenth century. To persuade the Church and the European public that China was worth pursuing as a destination to continue the religious work, the Jesuits started to present China as virtuous and proto-Christian.

The Jesuits' inaccurately positive descriptions of China came in wide circulation and formed the general perceptions of the Asian Kingdom in Europe.[4] From the mid-seventeenth century, translated accounts of China by the Jesuits began to be published in Britain.[5] China was positively portrayed as a high society of virtues and bearing elements of Christianity, along with its long history, peaceful political system and emphasis on both public and personal virtue (de Bruijn, 2017; Porter, 1999). The Middle Kingdom was perceived as an ideal state in terms of stability and morality, especially in Britain in its unstable time (de Bruijn, 2017).

The late seventeenth century saw the beginnings of the Enlightenment in Europe: a turn to reason, rationality and empiricism, and moving away from metaphysical and religious beliefs (Bristow, 2017). Anti-Christian philosophers employed the Jesuits' inaccurate portrait of China and its Confucius society in their expression of dismay at Christianity and the court. The common idealised European perception of China was different from the reality (de Bruijn, 2017). Confucius was a teacher/philosopher in ancient China whose teachings have been referred to as Confucianism. Having no religious bearing, Confucius's ideas constitute a system of philosophy that focuses on social values and personal conduct (Csikszentmihalyi, 2010).

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[4] For example, the French philosopher Voltaire was known for his profusely high respect for China that radiated from France across Europe. With his source originating from the Jesuits' publications, the philosopher praised China in a number of texts as an enlightened state. In his eyes, China stood for its wise government taking advice from officials, its religion as monolithic and free from superstition, its people in union with wider human history and in possession of utmost morality. His idealised picture of China speaks of his wish for Europe to tackle its segregated Christian sects and political instability (Mungello, 2009).

[5] Such as Martino Martini's *Bellum Tartarricum, or the Conquest of the Great and Most Renowned Empire of China, by the Invasion of the Tartars*, and Alvarez Semedo's *The History of the Great and Renowned Monarchy of China.*

Other European Accounts of China

In the seventeenth century, there were three notable European publications on China outside of the Jesuits' records. The Dutch traveller Johan Nieuhof's journal[6] was the standard source of information on China at the time, although his Chinese imagery was Europeanised (de Bruijn, 2017: 72). The publication documents the Dutch East India Company's embassy to China to request for a trading relationship. Like other European embassies, Nieuhof failed to secure anything tangible but managed to put together a record of Chinese life. The Dutch envoy's depictions of Chinese architecture, clothing and landscapes proved to be crucial in the development of chinoiserie in the eighteenth century. The visual accounts influenced the Sèvres porcelain in France, and pagodas in Britain and Germany (Royal Collection Trust, no date).

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[6] In 1669, Nieuhof's *An Embassy of from East-India Company of the United Provinces to the ... Emperour of China* was published in English in Britain. See: Royal Collection Trust. (no date) *An Embassy of from East-India Company of the United Provinces to the ... Emperour of China*. Royal Collection Trust. [Online] [Accessed 24 January 2020] https://www.rct.uk/collection/1050938/an-embassy-ofnbspfrom-east-india-company-of-the-united-provinces-to-the-emperour

The English architect John Webb in his essay[7] compares the Chinese language to that in the Bible of Adam and Eve and portrays China as a prototype of an ideal state (Ramsey, 2001). Such a perception of China had its appeal to the English public in the aftermath of the civil wars and in the early years of the Restoration that would later see the unification of political power in Britain (Ramsey, 2001). Integral to Webb's intention was his political suggestion to King Charles II to restructure the country with China in mind as a model.

The English diplomat Sir William Temple similarly conceives China through a remarkably positive lens. In *Of Heroic Virtue* (1690) he praises the Asian Kingdom for its enormous emphasis on virtue and sustaining high moral value even in the political change from the Chinese-led Ming Dynasty to the Manchurian-led Ching Dynasty (de Bruijn, 2017). However, in the same publication he both appreciates the Chinese aesthetics as natural and imaginative and criticises it as irrational and chaotic (de Bruijn, 2017: 68).

Eighteenth-Century Sino-British Context: The Canton Trade System

With maritime transportation on the rise and the Jesuit-sponsored idealised picture of China in circulation, the period of the eighteenth century saw the peak of British interest in chinoiserie (Hsai, 1997). Albeit chinoiserie's popularity, the accounts of China in the decorative style were by and large a product of fantasy and imagination with little or no factual source (Honour, 1961).

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[7] That is *Historical Essay Endeavouring a Probability that the Language of the Empire of China in the Primitive Language* (1669).

The lack of attention to realistic Chinese imageries was in part a result of the relative scarcity of imported objects from China. Despite the growing oceanic technology and rising capability to travel afar, to actually set out to the Far East was remarkably costly. Therefore, a considerable commercial undertaking would only happen when substantial financial backing and a plan of monetary reward were both in place. It was later in the nineteenth century that more first-hand information about China was available through increased travel and business activities, especially after the two Opium Wars.[8] In the nineteenth century, England's interest in the chinoiserie then ceased and was replaced by antagonism against China.

Moreover, the Chinese Empire's strict trade regulation for incoming Europeans also played a role in the scarcity of Chinese export – and Chineseness (Purdue, 2009). Canton as a Chinese epicentre of trade with other countries enjoyed a long history (Purdue, 2009). Historically there were three coastal trading hubs for business with Europeans in China: Macau, Canton and Hong Kong. It was Canton that participated in the development of chinoiserie objects across the eighteenth century. Hong Kong became a British colony after the First Opium War and was developed into a trading port in the mid-nineteenth century. Macau was exclusively in the hands of the Portuguese from 1557 to 1999. The leasehold of Macau to the Portuguese was a result of China rewarding the European empire for its aid in driving Chinese and Japanese smugglers and pirates away from costal China in the south. The Chinese Court benefited from the large amount of in-flowing silver from Latin America through the Portuguese. Like other Europeans in Canton pre-Opium War, the Portuguese were confined within Macau without access to any other parts of China (Purdue, 2009).

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[8] The First Opium War was from 1838 to 1842 and the Second Opium War was from 1856 to 1860. Both Wars were initiated by the British to gain more profits from the illegal opium trade in China.

The Canton trade system was in place between the 1700 and the mid 1800s, the heyday of the Ching Dynasty in terms of its political power, cultural influence, monetary prosperity and territorial expansion (Purdue, 2009). The regulatory system only allowed Europeans to trade with China in the logic of tribute (Purdue, 2009). That is, Europeans were obliged to offer gifts to the Chinese Emperor who then reciprocated with presents. Intrinsic to the system were its limitations that played a significant role in the development of chinoiserie: Europeans had no access to producers of goods and were required to work only and closely with Chinese middlemen[9] who then coordinated most of the business activities (Purdue, 2009). Moreover, Europeans could only set foot in the designated zone in Canton four months a year and had to leave Canton after the trading season (Purdue, 2009). All year round, Europeans were strictly prohibited from accessing any other parts of China (Purdue, 2009). The designated quarter was compounded with foreign factories[10] by nationality, completely isolated from ordinary Chinese people, customs and landscape. This confinement of access to broader Chinese life fuelled Europeans and later Americans'[11] romanticising and imagining of China as somewhere distant. Such a fantasy then manifested in chinoiserie as a trend of exoticism (Purdue, 2009).

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[9] They were widely called Hong merchants or later Co-hong from 1760 as they combined into an association. The (Co)hong system ended together with the Canton trade system at the end of the First Opium War (Purdue, 2009).

[10] living-working spaces of foreigners where actually no manufacture took place (Purdue, 2009)

[11] Americans joined in the Canton trade in the 1780s and, unlike Europeans through East India Companies, were individual merchants (Purdue, 2009).

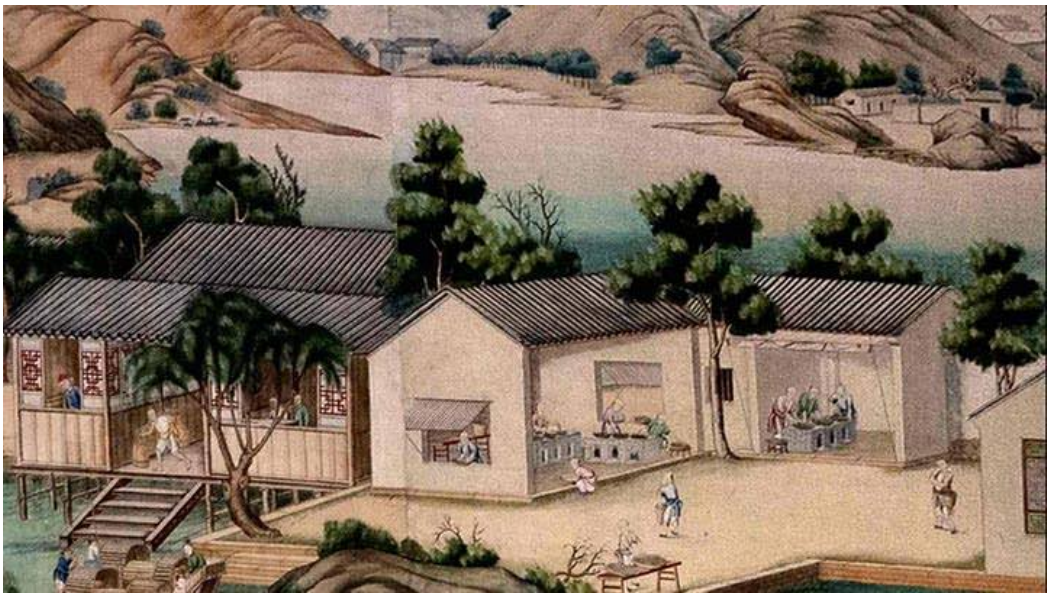

Fig 3: Image of Harewood House. A corner of the Chinese-made Chinese wallpaper in situ.

Chinese artefacts made in China for the Chinese, not for export purposes, were rarely seen in Europe (Honour, 1961). Chinese-made decorative goods for European merchants were produced for export purposes only and played '[…] a rather ambiguous role in the development of chinoiserie' (Honour, 1961: 2). Chinese-made artefacts for Europeans were outside of the local Chinese system in which arts were monopolised by the high culture of the literati. In many cases, workshops of Chinese craftsmen in Canton produced material culture ordered by Europeans who provided their preferred designs. It was common for Chinese makers to imitate European chinoiserie,

> ’[…] striving to outdo one another in their renderings of Western preconceptions of Chinese art, and a Chinese observer would have been hard

> pressed to recognize in the exaggerated motifs of a cliched oriental exoticism anything remotely Chinese at all' (Porter, 2002: 404).

This intriguing historical context points out the ambivalence in Chinese-made chinoiserie objects, such as the Chinese wallpaper at Harewood House. My case study of the artefact is interrogated in relation to the Canton trade system and self-representation. It is the second case study of cultural heritage site in this research.

Eighteenth-Century English Chinoiserie: A Lack of Accuracy

As to English/European-made chinoiserie material culture, it too suffered a lack of accuracy. In the eighteenth century, imports from China prompted craftsmen to formulate their design for a wide range of objects with inspiration and influences from Asian motifs. It was in this time that chinoiserie reached its peak in England. In this process of coming up with a new and mixed visual language, accuracy and realism in terms of Asian imageries and styles were not part of the consideration (Porter, 2002). Rather, European designers freely combined different motifs to create an exotic fantasy world and did not differentiate what was Chinese, Japanese or Indian (Honour, 1961). Such a cultural fusion is crystalised in the story at Osterley Park[12] in which Lady Proctor, upon visiting her host's dressing room, proclaimed that '[…] rich profusion of China and Japan, that I could almost fancy myself at Pekin' (Honour, 1961: 184).

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[12] a stately home in South-west London designed by Robert Adam who occasionally designed chinoiserie furnishing

Some British individuals' self-allocated authority in the authenticity of Chineseness further accentuates the problematic representation of Chineseness in chinoiserie. Sir Joseph Banks had travelled extensively and as far as to Brazil and Australia but had never set foot on Chinese soil. In his journal (1770), he concludes that 'A man needs go no further to study the Chinese [...] than the China paper, the better sorts of which represent their persons and such of their customs, dresses etc.'[13] China as a real place in Banks's world seemed to have equated with its representation in the form of wallpaper.

Having been to China indeed as an employee of the Swedish East India Company, Sir William Chambers became an expert of China and Chineseness after three trips in the 1740s. Formulating his account of observations in his publications,[14] the classical architect designed the chinoiserie built environment in Kew Gardens in London (Hsai, 1997). Chambers' chinoiserie architecture was part of the trend in which English men of letters pursued the high purpose of imitation of nature through acquiring chinoiserie gardens in the eighteenth century (Porter, 2002). His authority on authentic Chineseness in garden design was so revered that in France his architectural style became rife in the eighteenth century: *le jardin anglo-chinois*[15] was based on Chambers' practice (de Bruijn, 2016; Honour, 1961; Hsai, 1997; Porter, 2002; Reichwein, 1925). This is although Chambers' architectural structures had no reference to real Chinese examples, and his style '[…] is still a kind of rhetoric, meant to persuade and please the British public' (de Bruijn, 2017: 79).

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[13] See: Hooker, J. D. (ed.) (1896) *Journal of the Rt Hon Sir Joseph Banks.* New York: Macmillan, pp. 45.

[14] That are *Designs of Chinese Buildings* (1757) and *A Dissertation on Oriental Gardening* (1773).

[15] meaning English Chinese garden in French

Eighteenth-Century English Chinoiserie: A Shifting Visual Language

It is said that “China was generally perceived as a ‘fundamentally ‘other’ place, fascinating and admirable, but also mysterious and strange” (de Bruijn, 2017: 67). Chinoiserie traversed ‘[…] between ‘cultivated and vulgar taste, fine art and the fripperies of fashion’ (Porter, 2002: 400). Generally speaking, the first half of the century saw chinoiserie embraced in a positive light in Britain, thanks to the Jesuits’ propaganda work (de Bruijn, 2016). In the mid-century, English chinoiserie reached its peak and the demand for luxurious things of Chinese material culture soared remarkably. This obsession was fuelled by the culture of taste in which wealthy individuals showed off their wealth and explored their place in the world through possessing and displaying chinoiserie material culture at home (de Bruijn, 2016). Chinoiserie as exotic objects represented the widening horizons, physically and metaphorically, which were made available by the maritime expansion (de Bruijn, 2016).

Into the second half of the century, the perceived style of exuberance and exaggeration that embodied chinoiserie began to be subject to critique (Porter, 2002). The colour, gaiety and sheer otherness of chinoiserie decoration rendered it appropriate for relatively informal and intimate spaces such as cabinets, bedrooms, dressing rooms and in some cases drawing rooms (de Bruijn, 2017; Porter, 1999). By the time Macartney set out to China in 1793, things Chinese had already been associated with femininity and triviality: chinoiserie was subject to changing perceptions due to the shifting ideas of social, gender and national identity (Alayrac-Fielding, 2009; de Bruijn, 2017; Porter, 1999).[16]

Nineteenth-Century Decline of English Chinoiserie: Colonialisation in Full Swing

In the 1790s, Macartney's Embassy turned out to be a failure. Britain's first diplomatic mission to China acquired nothing it had set out to achieve: to gain access to the domestic Chinese market and for the Chinese Empire to open up ports exclusively for the British. The goal was essentially to reverse the deficit of trading with China where the East India Company purchased Chinese goods but sold nothing in return. In Britain, the resulting shortfall in revenue caused considerable dismay in the Company and general public alike which contributed to the decline of chinoiserie (Parissien, 1992). George IV's love for chinoiserie marked the extension of chinoiserie in Britain into the early nineteenth century (Parissien, 1992). The British King's taste for things Chinese as part of the Regency Style ended at his death in 1830.

The English East India Company was found in the seventeenth century to trade overseas. The eighteenth century saw a major shift in the Company. Robert Clive, an employee, through intervening in local politics, gained control of Bengal that led to the full-blown control of the Indian subcontinent and neighbouring areas. This was an unprecedented move for an English East India Company staff and began the chapter of British colonisation of India and surrounding states (Lawson, 1993). The mode of triangular trade between India, Britain and a third country began to formulate. The nascent trade strategy would become a powerful mass money-making tool for Britain and a token of colonialism (Markley, 2006).

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[16] The question of a gendered perception of Chineseness in chinoiserie falls beyond the scope of this thesis as it is not the focal approach of my research.

As a means to maximise profit for all trips by way of India, the British began to smuggle opium en masse to China (Markley, 2006). In 1839, Nanking was invaded by the British troops after the British refused to stop the illegal act that severely endangered Chinese society, as of the First Opium War. The war completely shook and shocked China, so much so that it began the country' Century of Humiliation that is a chapter of foreign invasions from near and far.[17] Under the Treaty of Nanking, China was forced to essentially open four ports, to pay a remarkably hefty monetary compensation and to deliver Hong Kong – all to the British.

Since then, due to the Nanking Treaty, more British and by extension European visitors – officials, missionaries, engineers, merchants and pirates – could access the now traumatised Empire (Markley, 2006). To maximise the opium trade, the British invaded Canton in 1856, as of the Second Opium War. Together with the French, the British seized Beijing and looted and burned Yuanming Yuan, the Old Summer Palace of the royal family. This war eventually ended with further loss of Chinese land in the Hong Kong region to Britain and massive monetary compensation among other atrocities. The threats and invasion from foreign states and the domestic chaos and unrest eventually led to the collapse of Ching Dynasty in 1911. From then China proceeded to the chapter as a Republic but only to have decades of civil wars and the Japanese occupation ensuing.

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[17] which is commonly perceived to date from the beginning of the First Opium War (1839-1842) to the Japanese Occupation (1937-1945)

Britain’s campaign against China at home was as in full swing as the Opium Wars happened on Chinese soil. It is said that China’s […] defences were shown to be pitifully weak, the vast majority of her people backward if not uncivilized […]’ (Honour, 1961: 201). This unfavourable perception of the Middle Kingdom was universes away from the Jesuits’ account as a utopian state. As the rose-tinted glasses dropped and were replaced by spectacles of antagonism and supremacy into the mid-nineteenth century, English chinoiserie was no more a craze but a thing of the past.

Chapter 1.2

O/orientalism(s): Mapping A Historiographical Framework

> "In spite if an increasing sense of technological, economic and political competence, and even superiority, however, the British public continued to demonstrate a need for a cultural 'other', an element of exoticism that was – consciously or unconsciously – left just beyond comprehension" (de Bruijn, 2016: 95).

My intention in this section is to formulate a historiographical framework in which to interrogate the findings of Chapter 1.1. The core question here is how to understand the history of the representation of Chineseness in the case of English chinoiserie. As this research focuses on the (long) eighteenth-century,[18] central to this section is my attempt to configure a suitable historiographical insight whereby to unravel Sino-British encounter in this particular period of time.

My point of departure is Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and from there I suspend the narrative of a Chinese other as a victim of Western oppression. To support my approach, I consider scholarship (Aravamudan, 2011; Carey and Festa, 2009; Jenkins, 2013, Porter, 2010) that re-examines the eighteenth-century contact between China and Britain, and non-European and Europe.

In this section, I reference literature from Literary Studies that is dedicated to critiquing chinoiserie literary texts and/or objects. Regarding the choice for this cross-disciplinary construction of knowledge, I concur with Aravamudan (2011), Aravamudan et al. (2014) and Jenkins (2012, 2013): the representation of the East across mediums is interchangeable and can be examined against the backdrop of the eighteenth-century historiography.

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[18] It refers to 1688-1832 (O'Gorman, 2006).

At this point, I feel compelled to address a recent and ongoing narrative regarding cross-cultural imitation: cultural appropriation. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, it is 'the act of taking or using things from a culture that is not your own, especially without showing that you understand or respect this culture.'[19] The narrative seems especially common in the field of fashion in which Western designers mimic non-Western attire or accessories in a superficial way – powered by the easy access of Internet-based images (Jacobs, 2022). I find it hard to retrospectively apply cultural appropriation to the analysis of chinoiserie because the eighteenth century was a very different time and age. Therefore, I do not pursue this viewpoint/narrative in this PhD.

Said's Orientalism: A Binary Nineteenth-Century Historiography

In 1978 Edward Said published *Orientalism*, a seminal critique of Western perceptions of non-Western cultures. Focusing on the colonial administrations of the French and British in the Middle East in the nineteenth century, Said scrutinises literary works through Michel Foucault's notion of discourse.[20] By contexualising orientalism as a discourse, Said (1978) discloses an expansive picture of how the European colonial project created, subdued and controlled the East, its colonies: that was not only through physical and military invasion and occupation, but also through discourse, study, representation and imagination of the non-West in all ways academically and culturally. In other words, it was through power and domination that Europe managed and produced the Orient ‘politically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period’ (1978: 11).

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[19] Cambridge Dictionary. (no date) *cultural appropriation*. Cambridge Dictionary. [Online] [Accessed 11 August 2022] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/cultural-appropriation

[20] which is elaborated in Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972) and *Discipline and Punish* (1973)

What is also fundamental within Said’s cultural examination lies in his extension of Antonio Gramsci’s idea of hegemony (San Juan, 2006). Said articulates (1978) that hegemony is at the core of European contact with the East. That is, there was a hierarchical structure in the relations of Europe and Asia. European identity enjoyed a sense of self-asserted superiority to the non-West. And it was this self-importance that informed the ways in which European conceived, represented and imagined the East (1978). Integral to Said’s (1978) application of Gramsci’s theory, binary roles are to be allocated. The Orient was assigned to play the role of the other and inferior. Asia was an idea of certain histories, cultures and traditions produced by the West in order to better secure the centrality and superiority of the Western self.

Reflection on Said’s Orientalism and Expanding Historiographical Framework

From the outset of this research, I have struggled profoundly with the focus of Said’s study that is on the nineteenth century, or in his words, the post-Enlightenment period. The literary scholar’s theory interrogates non-military European activities in direct relation to Europe’s physical colonisation of the East. As investigated in

Chapter 1.1, in the case of Sino-British contact across the eighteenth century, there was no military aggression from either towards one another. It was in the nineteenth century that Britain's antagonism towards China and the two Opium Wars took place.

The question now is how to understand the pre-colonial Sino-British encounter across the eighteenth century, in order to interpret the representation of Chineseness in chinoiserie objects. As mentioned in the Introduction, this research is a *thought experiment* on the grounds that it suspends the common narrative of the Chinese other always in receipt of Western oppression.

The cultural theorist Rey Chow (1998: 6) refers to *the logic of wound* as initially '[…] as a justified reaction to aggression, and gathering and nurturing means of establishing cultural identity in defense […]. Chow (1998) points out the ongoing phenomenon of self-prescribed cultural essentialism and Sinocentrism in which Chinese identity is defined by its defense against the rest of the world, particularly the West. Such a narrative is fundamentally based on an assumption of China as *an other* on the receiving end of Western antagonism (Chow, 1998) – it is this assumption that this research suspends. Thus, my quandary now is how to understand Chineseness as an aesthetic value of orientalism/exoticism outside the framework of colonialism, imperialism and Eurocentrism.

Farewell to Said's Orientalism/Eurocentrism: A Sinocentric Historiography

The literary scholar David Porter (2010: 304) warns us that, 'There is always a danger of reading too much of the Victorian era's imperial triumphalism back into the Stuart or early Georgian period'. Considering the eighteenth-century Sino-British relation, Porter (2002: 401) further highlights that the first half of the century did not see Britain’s colonial ambition in China and that China was not and had no prospect to be a colony of any foreign powers.

As demonstrated in Chapter 1.1, English chinoiserie objects were most popular in the eighteenth century. It would be fair to say that English chinoiserie in the eighteenth century involved no physical or military aspect of the British colonial project in China. In fact, Porter stresses (2002) that the power dynamics between China and England/Europe was far from one of asymmetrical power in favour of Europe in the period.

The Canton trade system demanded the British and Europeans to trade strictly on Chinese terms (Purdue, 2009). To compromise to such an extent was a humiliating position for the English East India Company to be in (Porter, 2002: 401). This situation was complicated by the trade deficit the British were faced with, as British products of wool and tin attracted little attention in China. Whereas Chinese tea, silks and porcelain were in high demand in Britain, and thus considerably drained Britain of silver bullion as a result (Porter, 2002). What that means is, it was not through power or domination but ‘uncharacteristically servile obeisance’ (Porter, 2002: 401) that the British acquired and then adored chinoiserie throughout much of the eighteenth century. It was China that had the upper hand in the Sino-British relationship.

By way of reviewing history with a Chinese focus, Porter (2002, 2010) suspends the Eurocentric historiography. That is to say, paradoxically in this case, the postcolonial logic of calling out the coloniser (i.e. the West) is put aside in order to construct a postcolonial historiography in which to (re)examine the relations between Britain and China. The postcolonial strategy here is *not* to reproduce and re-present a European focus or binary framework informed by colonialism.

Postcolonial Enlightenment: An Enlightenment Historiography

Porter does not stand alone in suspending the dichotomy of coloniser versus the colonised in revisiting the eighteenth-century history of the European's contact with the non-European. In agreement with Porter but without the China focus, Daniel Carey and Lynn Festa (2009) propose to focus on the Enlightenment.

In the introduction of *Postcolonial Enlightenment*, Carey and Festa (2009: 2-3) articulate that rather than letting Postcolonial Theory or Eurocentrism define eighteenth-century culture and the Enlightenment, it should be the reverse way. As Postcolonial Theory has been prevalent and pervasive, it has engendered the periodisation problem: 'colonialism risks becoming a transhistorical thing, always present and always in process of dissolution in one part of the world or another' (Ahmad, 1995, cited in Festa and Carey, 2009: 19). This is resonant to Gallien and Jokic's reminder of Said's theory being a '[…] monolithic and hegemonic version of Orientalism as discursive formation, transportable and translatable to any given time and place' (2015: 121). In other words, by critiquing text/history in terms of colonialism, we might unnecessarily reproduce colonialism by framing and assuming the context as such.

Moreover, Postcolonial Theory's insistence on critiquing Eurocentrism might distract our attention to the '[…] diversity of historical experience, power relations, and practices of resistance’ (Carey and Festa, 2009: 23). What do we miss out in this process? Carey and Festa (2009: 23) pinpoint the paradoxical problem of Postcolonial Theory’s focus on critiquing Eurocentrism in relation to Western interaction with the non-West. In this case, Carey and Festa (2009: 23) warn us that there is a danger of leaving the subjectivity and nuances of response and narrative of the supposed other at stake.

Furthermore, through looking inwards into the European situation, we are reminded that the Enlightenment was itself a plurality of ideas that are too complex to be simply put in a binary pro- or anti-empire/imperialism. Homogeneous interpretations of the Enlightenment risk missing the complexity and nuances of the eighteenth century (Carey and Festa, 2009: 6-7). As such, ‘[…] not all Enlightenment writers supported empire, nor did all critics of Enlightenment oppose colonial enterprise […]’ (Carey and Festa, 2009: 18-19). The Enlightenment was neither merely an incubator of nor entirely innocent of the ideas and activities of imperialism and colonialism to come (Carey and Festa, 2009: 21).

Through unpacking the Enlightenment, Carey and Festa (2009) liberate the eighteen-century historiography from the overshadowing nineteenth-century colonising discourse. What stands out to me is that Carey and Festa (2009) deconstruct the binary concept of self and other by diversifying the European and pointing out the plurality of the Enlightenment. So, if *some* Europeans indeed were not preoccupied with the colonial logic in the eighteenth century, why were they interested in China and by extension the East? To answer this query, I proceed to examine pertinent historiographies.

Enlightenment Orientalism: Another Enlightenment Historiography

In line with Carey and Festa (2009), Srinivas Aravamudan (2011) advocates that different perspectives lead to different meaning and conclusions in revisiting and reinterpreting novel and by extension history. Aravamudan (2011) questions the correlation between eighteenth-century Enlightenment/European fascination with the East and nineteenth-century European colonisation/Said's association of power with knowledge. As an open-ended thought experiment, 'Enlightenment Orientalism, then, is the epistemologically inventive, open-ended, cosmopolitan sister to its hegemonic, imperialist, Victorian brother' (Aravamudan et al., 2014: 2).

Aravamudan (2011) argues that there is a question of from what view to explore and understand the Enlightenment. In the eyes of Foucault, it was in relation to '[…] functionalizing society and objectifying human activity […] and was reduced to a façade for will-to-power' (Aravamudan, 2011: 2). In tandem with his reading of Nietzsche, Foucault's interpretation of the Enlightenment then formed the theoretical backbone for Said's (1978) emphasis on domination.

Rather than following the narrative of Said that illustrates a dark, violent picture of Europe, Aravamudan (2011) calls for attention to qualities of the Enlightenment, such as scientific discovery, political freedom and most importantly curiosity. He stresses that Europe's interest in the East in the eighteenth century was '[…] defined by its curiosity about, and experiment with, literature and philosophy from China, India and the Levant' (Aravamudan et al., 2014: 2). And therefore, Enlightenment Orientalism observes '[…] European knowledge regarding the East influenced by the utopian aspirations of Enlightenment more than materialist and political interest' (Aravamudan, 2011: 3).

What is pivotal in Aravamudan's study (2011) is his assumption that the Orient and Oriental tale alike did not come across as a physical territory in relation to the European colonial project, as suggested by Said. Instead, the East (re)presented an opportunity for Europeans to traverse to an imagined space which was not fully known and thus to be explored (Aravamudan et al., 2014: 24). That is to say, the Orient made possible for Europeans to experiment with the Orient itself and by extension a wider picture of an unknown destination (Aravamudan et al., 2014: 25). Such a sense of curiosity was one of the attributes of the Enlightenment as well as the culture of taste across the eighteenth century (de Bruijn, 2017).

Integral to his argument for Enlightenment Orientalism, Aravamudan (2011) brings into focus cosmopolitanism as a key element in eighteenth-century European fascination with the East. The literary scholar (2011) accentuates that any notion of the exotic brings forth a boundary. On one side there was commonplace European cultures, and on the other side embodied the unfamiliar, such as the East in textual, visual and material forms. Cosmopolitanism was a sensibility that '[…] makes boundary-crossing obligatory, embracing strangers and internalizing them' (2011: 229). It was out of a combination of appreciation, affinity and desire to explore the unknown that cosmopolitanism invited individuals towards foreign tales and artefacts. From there, cosmopolitan subjects adored and absorbed the Orient into their familiar environment of domestic dwelling and by extension national culture which correlate with the Enlightenment's experiment with taste (Aravamudan et al., 2014: 9).

As such, Aravamudan (2011: 228) encapsulates that

> '[..] the eighteenth-century exoticisms often highlighted civilizational complexity, focusing on the sophisticated refinements of those deemed more advance than Europe in ideas or in material culture, with Ming-Ch'ing China'.

Such a picture is in stark contrast to the fixed picture of a powerful Europe and a weak East prescribed by Said.

However, if China/Chineseness was associated with civility, the unknown/to be explored and the widening world, why was it perceived negatively towards the end of the eighteenth century? That was universes away from the Jesuits' fabricated accounts of China, as elaborated in Chapter 1.1. At this point, I can't help to ask: why did the European perception of Chineseness change? Why was Chineseness an unstable visual language? To answer these questions, I review Jenkins' study (2013).

Prehistory of Orientalism: An English-Selfhood Historiography

Concurring with Carey and Festa (2009) and Aravamudan (2011), Jenkins (2013) advocates looking beyond the paradigm of coloniser v.s. colonised in the study of eighteenth-century British interest in China. Moreover, the literary scholar (2013) proposes to analyse the dynamics between China and Britain in the eighteenth century with a focus on the development of English selfhood. Jenkins (2013: 1) claims, 'By the early nineteenth century, it was impossible to conceive of English identity without attendant notions of Chineseness'.

Suspending China as *an other* in the English imagination, Jenkins delineates a complex route thereby to unpack Sino-British relation. Firstly, she asserts that “[…] modern English selfhood first takes shape through strategies of identifying with rather than against certain forms of ‘China’” (2013: 1). This was in part because of the perceived moral and economic advancement of China in the world in the first half of the eighteenth century. Further, she urges to detach China, chinoiserie and Chineseness from their ethnic and geographical qualities that linked to China as a place and Chinese people in deciphering relevant text. China being a reference for English selfhood was because of what China stood for: an expansive circulation of goods and the wider world in which the oceanic trade took place and blossomed. As such, Jenkins (2013) crystalises eighteenth-century English interest in China as *prehistory of orientalism*.

Similar to Aravamudan (2011), Jenkins (2013) puts forth that China (re)presented an extensive, traversable world to the English subject, even though parts of it remained unclear. In this widening global picture, England was different from all other countries because it contained all other countries, given the artefacts England imported from around the world. And it was in this context that England grappled with and developed its identity in this period of time.

Jenkins therefore argues that cosmopolitanism and national identity in England did not contradict each other, but rather joined forces to create ‘[…] a national culture based on the acquisition and display of imported objects […]’ (2013: 18). In other words, it was a culture ‘[…] that identified the nation with the display of acquired, foreign things within English spaces’ (2013: 18).

Crucially, Jenkins (2013) examines English selfhood and chinoiserie with reference to Locke's theory of the exterior and interior. The philosopher John Locke (Jenkins, 2013: 18-19) articulates the human capacity to incorporate external objects as ideas and to identify with their organised and meaningful presentation. To this end, England

> "[…] thrives on the incorporation and internalization of 'otherness,' in the form of things originally external to it; it is sustained not by assimilation but by difference, in the form of harmonious mixture" (Jenkins, 2013: 19).

According to Jenkins (2013), it was in this complex picture of the domestic and foreign, the inside and outside, and self and other that the emergence of Englishness and English modern subjectivity took place across the eighteenth century. Underneath the dynamics of Sino-British contact was Britain's shifting selfhood. This is why the meanings generated by English chinoiserie '[…] remain unstable, and the archive of representations of China is convoluted and self-contradictory' (Jenkins, 2013: 5).

Chapter 1.3

Chineseness as an Identity

> '[…] defining a Taiwan cultural identity requires consideration and discussion of the historical discontinuity and cultural hybridization that resulted from both external and internal political and cultural machinations' (Chen, 2006: 51).

As Chapter 1.1 and Chapter 1.2 examine outwardly the relevant history and ways to reinterpret it, my intention in this section is to investigate inwardly the enigma of Chineseness as an identity. Here I want to interrogate my own problematic 'insider' Chineseness, paving way for a positional dimension in which new narratives are to come in Chapter 2.

To discuss Chineseness as a Taiwanese person requires unpacking academically and soul-searching personally. My research focuses on the Taiwanese situation and the Chinese diaspora, the two realities in which I am embedded. I also review my art practice from outside of the PhD as part of the discussion.

Powered by the rise of China (Dirlik, 2018) in the recent decades, Chineseness has been a hotly debated topic across the world. Although the Taiwan-China relation has been a contested terrain in politics (BBC, 2022), my thesis does not navigate in that direction. Rather, it is in fact my aim in Chapter 1.3 to shift the focus from the geopolitical to what is cultural and personal aspects of the subject matter.

In this section, I reference literature from Chinese Studies and Cultural Studies with a focus on the postcolonial complexity (Dirlik, 2018) in Taiwan and negotiation of

Chineseness in diaspora. My choice of such literature is meant to problematise Chineseness as a homogeneous, fixed and singular identity (Ang, 1994, 1998, 2001, 2013; Hall, 1990).

Chineseness as an Identity in Taiwan and its Complexity

In terms of ethnicity, Han people make up 95% of the overall Taiwanese population. It is imperative to remember that the ethnic Chinese were originally migrants to the island.[21] Indigenous people have resided in Taiwan for as long as 15,000 years (Sui, 2011). In total of 16 groups, indigenous Taiwanese are ethnically Austronesian. From the seventeenth century, Fujianese and Hakka immigrants from coastal provinces of southern China began to move to Taiwan island (Friedman, 2009). The incoming Chinese were mostly imperial subjects of the Ching Dynasty (1644-1911).

In the meantime, Taiwan attracted foreign interests from near and far. Before 1895, Europeans including the Spanish, Portuguese, French, and Dutch either attempted to occupy or indeed arrived at the island, but none of them settled for long or at all. In 1895, taking advantage of the Chinese Empire weakened by foreign invasions including the Opium Wars, the Japanese set foot and commenced colonial rule on the island. Japan’s colonisation of Taiwan (1895-1945) had profoundly changed the latter’s cultural fabric. The historian Arif Dirlik (2018) points out the limitation of postcolonial thinking in terms of analysing the nuanced relations between coloniser and colonised after colonisation in the case of Taiwan. Dirlik (2018) claims that the Japanese rule has formed a sense of historical identity for many Taiwanese, rather than leaving a layer of resentment behind. To explain this postcolonial paradox requires unpacking the arrival of the Nationalist Party in 1949.

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[21] More than 95% are Han, including Holo/Fujianese, Hakka and other groups originally from China. 2% are indigenous and another 2% are new immigrants, mostly from China and Southeast Asia. See: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of China. (no date) *About Taiwan*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of China. [Online] [Accessed 3 March 2022] https://www.taiwan.gov.tw/about.php

In 1911, the Kuomintang (KMT) or, the Nationalist Party, overthrew the Ching Dynasty and thus China entered the new phase as a republic. But the nascent peace in China under the Republic of China (ROC) did not last long. In the early 1930s, the Japanese invaded Manchuria. Between 1937 and 1945 China and Japan were at total war. It was the Second Sino-Japanese War which was also the Second World War in Asia. Japan was eventually defeated. As a result, Taiwan was freed from Japan's colonisation. At the same time, on the mainland the Chinese Civil War ensued. In 1949, the Nationalists were chased out by the Communists/Mao into the newly postcolonial Taiwan.

In spite of the infrastructural and economic development, the Nationalist/KMT rule on Taiwan proved to be very problematic. In 1947, an anti-government uprising erupted in Taiwan due to the collective sentiment against political monopoly and corruption of the Nationalists. In response, the government targeted and killed up to 28,000 individuals, as of the 228 Massacre (Wang, 2017). The major upheaval was followed by a very long Martial Law imposed on the island between 1949 and 1987. During the Martial Law period, pervasive repression was forced on civilians, and it was referred to as the White Terror. Dissidents were disappeared and/or murdered en masse with little to no documented records. Due to a lack of transparency and freedom of speech, there was a long silence about the dark period between 1947 to 1987 across Taiwan (Sui, 2016). In 1996, the first democratic presidential election took place in Taiwan as a result of years of active pro-democracy civilian movements. Ever since, Taiwan has been split down the political line between the Fujian-majority Green Party and the Nationalist-majority Blue Party (Meng-Hsuan and Chang, 2010).

Unsurprisingly, the severity of the political divide in Taiwan is immense and much of the debate is centered on the identity of Chineseness. Sick of the oppression by the invading Chinese/Nationalist regime, many Fujianese/Hakka people see themselves as Taiwanese – instead of Chinese. Dirlik (2018) points out that the Fujianese/Hakka Taiwanese identify with the collective experience of Japanese rule. This chasm has been complicated by the Nationalists' strict policy of de-Japanising/Sinicising. Under the Martial Law, Chineseness was officially made into an all-encompassing cultural homogeneity imposed on the whole Taiwanese population. For instance, no dialects, e.g. Fujianese, could be spoken at least in public, such as at school and at work. Doing so was met with humiliation and punishment. Only Mandarin was permitted as the only vehicle of communication. As forced Chineseness as an identity was doomed to fail and has failed indeed, ethnicity has since become a primary cause for the societal and cultural division in Taiwan (Chen, 2006: 52).

For mainlanders, or *waishengren,*[22] living in Taiwan by reality and China through memory has characterised their identification with Chineseness, complicated by the long-lasting travel ban. Between 1949 and 1987, the travel ban as part of the Martial Law prevented all communication including post and travel between China and Taiwan (Southerl, 1987). When the ban was lifted after 38 years, many Nationalists veterans went to China wishing to see their families and only to find the loved ones in cemeteries.

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[22] Meaning people from outside provinces in Mandarin. Conversely, local Taiwanese are referred to as *benhengren*, meaning people from inside the province. Currently mainlanders make up 10-13% of overall Taiwanese population (Meng-Hsuan and Chang, 2010).

The Nationalists, in the political scientist Edward Friedman's words, '[…] imagine themselves as a continuation of the Republic of China (ROC), a nation founded in 1912 upon the overthrow in 1911 of the Manchu Qing monarchy' (2009: 60). As the political landscape has changed significantly since 1949, Taiwan has become the Nationalists' permanent host land: the old China they/their families came from no longer exists. Also common in mainlanders is a sense of alienation due to the fierce political sentiment against their/their forebearers' undemocratic regime in Taiwan since the movement of democratisation (Meng-Hsuan and Chang, 2010).

As Fujianese/Hakka and Nationalists differ in their historiographies and thus identities, the two groups of Taiwanese have both been grappling with the rise of China (Dirlik, 2018) and increasing Chinese hostility towards Taiwan (BBC, 2022). With a complex history in the background and difficult present in the foreground, Chineseness as an identity in Taiwan continues to be subject to politicising. This is the reason for some peculiar phenomena on the island, such as parliamentary fights,[23] textbook re-editing[24] and political talk shows.[25]

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[23] Fights among politicians in the parliament in Taiwan are frequent and violent. Such physical brawls manifest the political wrestling between the Fujianese majority Green party and Nationalists majority Blue party. See: Sui, C. (2017) *Taiwan's brawling in parliament is a political way of life*. BBC. [Online] [Accessed 7 March 2022] https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-40640043

[24] For example, often Chinese history/geography are categorised as world history/geography when the Fujian-majority Green Party is in power. Conversely, Chinese history/geography are moved to domestic history/geography when the Nationalist-majority Blue Party is ruling. See: Tsoi, G. (2015) *Taiwan has its own textbook controversy brewing.* Foreign Policy. [Online] [Accessed 10 March 2022]

Chineseness as an Identity and My Art Practice

After a short stint as a painter, I started to experiment with moving image during my MFA at Wimbledon College of Arts. My aspiration was to work with both the visual and textual, and to rekindle my interest and background in literature. Ever since I have been investigating the Chinese diaspora based on my familial background through artist moving image. My moving image work explores how individuals live a life in a time of profound social and political turmoil, as well as how they negotiate the history that they come from but which no longer exists. In my practice, I collect oral history of lived experience to document and showcase personal stories that would otherwise be unlikely to be heard. This is because the diasporic individuals from the Nationalists' relocation are already very old or no longer around indeed. It is crucial to gather memories before they fade.

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https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/07/21/taiwan-textbook-controversy-china-independence-history/

[25] There are numerous political talk shows in Taiwan, often aired in the golden hours of evenings. The arguments are fierce and all-consuming, so much so that they have become a tourist attraction. It is known that holidaymakers from China request their tour guides to let them stay in hotel rooms to watch such shows rather than sightseeing when they visit Taiwan.

He fell into the flower with his head in the front and it was all dark.

Fig 4: Still from *Sumatra* (2014). I use the Sumatran human-eating flower as a portal through which to travel back to the past to discuss my father's migration from Indonesia to Taiwan. As tools of magic realism, the Rafflesia and wild tiger roaming into his house at night in the film were actually a reality in rural Sumatra back then when my father was a child. When I visited my paternal family there in 2005, local people still talked about the lethal flowers in nearby forests.

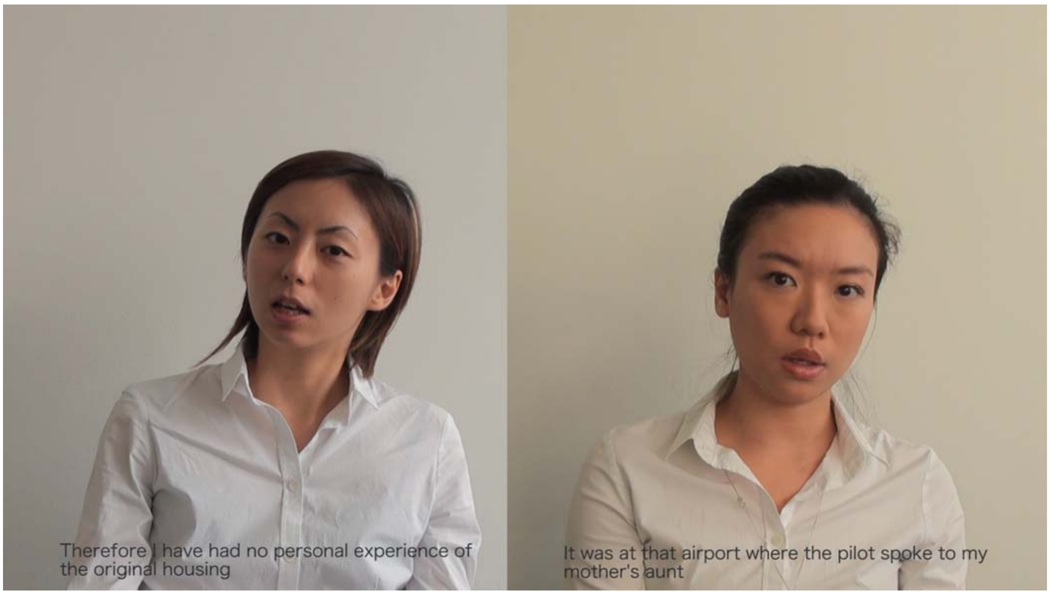
Therefore I have had no personal experience of the original housing
It was at that airport where the pilot spoke to my mother's aunt

Fig 5: Still from *A complete story: between the strait* (2014). The personal backgrounds of Xiao and I present a complete story regarding the consequences of the Chinese Civil War. She is from Chongqing, has relatives in Taiwan who came back to visit in the late 80s when the travel ban was lifted, grew up watching Taiwanese TV, and came to the UK as an adult. My maternal family came from Chongqing to Taiwan and went back as soon as the travel ban was relaxed, only to find everything changed. Naturally, I consumed Taiwanese popular culture before relocating to the UK.

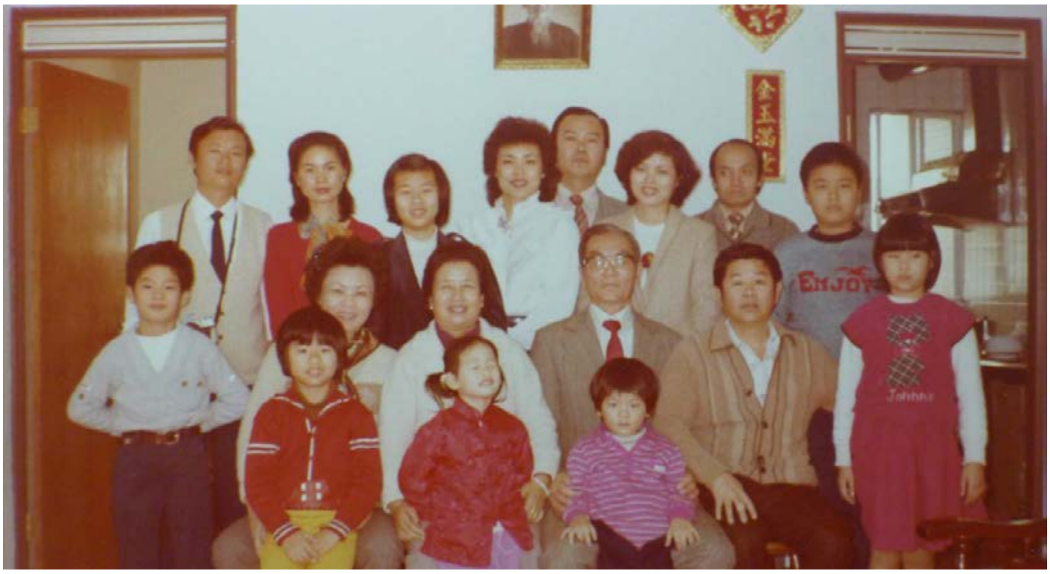

Fig 6: Still from *A love story: between the strait* (2015). My maternal extended family, before I was born, in my grandparents' flat allocated to them as Nationalist veterans in Tainan, Taiwan. All of them later emigrated to various parts of the world in the 90s amid the mounting Taiwan-China political and military tension. My family moved to Canada, but I did not settle there. My brother was educated in Vancouver and has since lived in North America as a Canadian citizen.

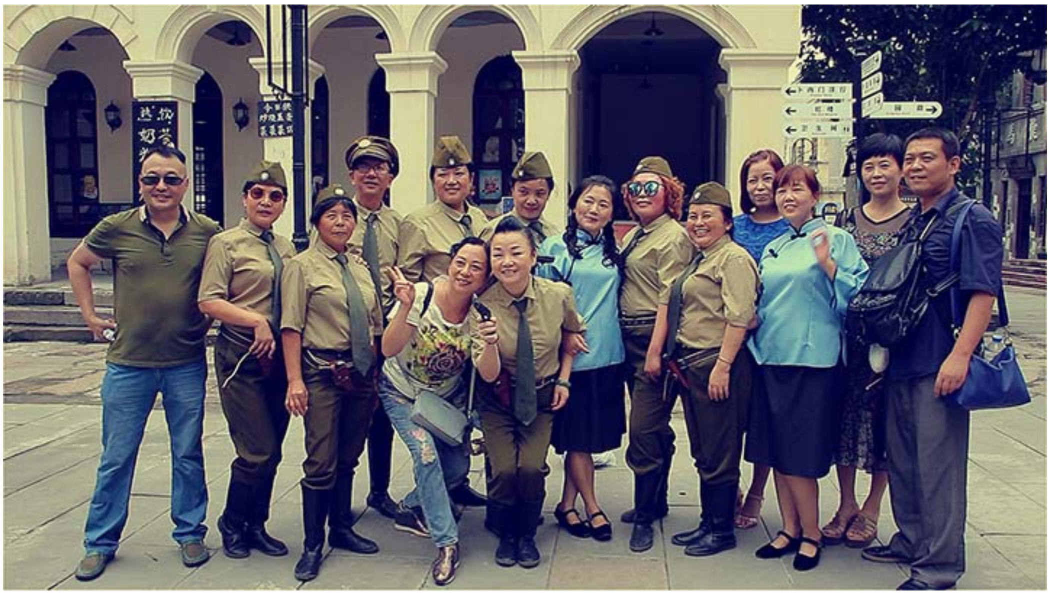

Fig 7: Still from *A homeland story: between the strait* (2019). In 2017, I visited China for the first time. Our relatives in Chongqing took us to a theme park mimicking the Nationalist time. Excited Chinese tourists in hired Nationalist military uniforms took photos of themselves everywhere. But only my parents and I were the real Nationalist descendants. How is it possible to access the history that gave rise to you but no longer exists? As an artistic strategy, I reversed the footage in the film, exploring the (im)possibility to return to history.

My emphasis on personal stories is a way to confront narratives informed by ideology. My ethnographical approach is a means to challenge the very pervasive politicsed review of history. In the highly divided society of Taiwan, grand narratives hijacked by ideology emanate through, for instance, textbook (Tsoi, 2015) and the mass media, as explained previously. I feel very much compelled to put forth micro accounts of intimate, personal stories in the face of large-scale chaos of political disagreement. By lending an ear to various lived histories, I disclose the plurality of mainlanders' experiences: that were not necessarily associated with the dictatorship/government or as *privileged outsiders* (Meng-Hsuan and Chang, 2010: 110), but of civilian and personal struggle to settle in the new environment with meagre means and resources.

As I was born and brought up in Taiwan, I tend to identify with the *mainlander sect* of which my mother is a descendant. My paternal family is both *peranakan*, ethnic Chinese whose families have lived in Indonesia for centuries, and *totok*, Chinese immigrants who moved to the South-East Asian state around the late nineteenth century. As a child, my father fled rural Sumatra for Taiwan by boat amid the anti-ethnic Chinese/Communist Purge. Sadly, for many of Chinese heritage, though Indonesian by birth, being there and then meant either a hasty escape or likely death (BBC, 2016).

Looking back, quite incredibly, both my paternal and maternal families have experienced existential difficulties because of their Chineseness in the respective adopted lands. It has taken me a long time to slowly realise that underneath the façade of ethnography I have actually been negotiating Chineseness as an identity, however directly or indirectly. Also on my journey is my exploration of China as an *imagined community* (Anderson, 1983) at a cultural and personal level.

Chineseness as an Identity in Diaspora

Given the difficult histories – national and personal, societal and cultural, articulated so far, I am keen to review Chineseness as an identity in a wider context. In Chinese Studies, there have been calls (Ang, 2013; Chow, 1998; Chun, 1996; Gabriel, 2011) for questioning the meaning of Chineseness in relation to history and politics. As the *double* second generation of the Chinese diaspora, I gravitate towards discussions outside the Taiwanese landscape. Thus, the cultural theorist Ien Ang's focus on the diaspora and personal agency particularly interests me.

Coming from a *peranakan* background in Indonesia, Ien Ang and her family fled to the Netherlands amid the Communist Purge and is now based in Australia. Informed by her personal stories, the cultural theorist (1998: 227) argues for a diasporic conceptualisation of Chineseness. Although Ien Ang's theorisation is centered on the experiences of overseas Chinese, I feel that her argument is relevant to this research. Also, at a personal level, my parents' twofold diaspora alongside my own migration abroad has situated me in a liminal space between being Taiwanese and diasporic.

Ang (1994, 1998, 2001, 2013) proposes that new narratives, experiences and perspectives in relation to China and Chineseness can abound through positioning Chineseness as an open signifier – as free from having to affiliate with real China. I concur with Ang's rejection of associating Chineseness to any monolithic narrative tied to the supposed homeland, as well as a sense of belonging prescribed by others.

Moreover, the cultural theorist puts forth Chineseness as a discursive construct. Ien Ang argues that Chineseness as an identity is '[…] a category whose meanings are not fixed and pregiven, but constantly renegotiated and rearticulated, both inside and outside China' (2001: 25). This view resonates with another cultural theorist Stuart Hall's (1990: 225) insistence on considering cultural identity as not only being but also *becoming*: identity in diaspora is in the past and future. Hence it is imperative to address its fluidity, its being in the making as such (Hall, 1990: 225). What's also crucial in both Ien Ang's (1994, 1998, 2001, 2013) and Hall's (1990) theories on cultural identity is the refusal of essentialism and endorsement of individual agency and subjectivity. Chineseness is not an identity but *identities*.

* * *

In conclusion, in Chapter 1.1, through my historical review, I have disclosed Chineseness as a visual language to be unstable, changing and self-contradictory (de Bruijn, 2016, 2017; Honour, 1961). This is because both favourable and negative receptions of China in Europe were a product of insufficient knowledge, fantasy, imagination and propaganda of the Asian state (de Bruijn, 2016, 2017; Honour, 1961; Jenkins, 2013; Porter, 1999). Such a situation was in correlation to Britain's/Europe's internal shifting religious, political, cultural and financial situations and relations to the wider world (de Bruijn, 2016, 2017; Ramsey, 2001). What adds more ambivalence and complexity to the scenario was China's rigorous trade policy that provided the English/Europeans with very little access to Chineseness (Purdue, 2009).

In a nutshell, Chineseness was made to play the role of *other*, however highly civilised, virtuous, frivolous, or feminine (Alayrac-Fielding, 2009).

In Chapter 1.2, my search for *a* postcolonial historiography in which to scrutinise English chinoiserie started with Edwards Said's *Orientalism* (1978). My frustration with Said's binary logic and focus on the nineteenth century has eventually led me to explore *multiple* relevant historiographies. Over the years, I have always treasured a Buddhist metaphor. In order to consider a picture as fully as possible, you learn perspectives other than your own, like opening windows from which to establish the scenery outside. Rather than rely on one window, use multiple. Indeed, historiographies put forth by Aravamudan (2011), Carey and Festa (2009), Porter (2010) and Jenkins (2013) have provided me with viewpoints from which to analyse the cross-cultural phenomenon of English chinoiserie. Their studies also support my suspension of *the logic of wound* (Chow, 1998) that is the Chinese other being a victim of Western oppression. Looking back now, I can see expanding my historiographical framework was the turning point for my research to open up, to deconstruct binary oppositions, and to cultivate plural perspectives.

In Chapter 1.3, my examination of Chineseness as an identity began with the Taiwanese reality. Through my historical review of Chinese migration during Ching Dynasty, Japanese colonisation (Dirlik, 2018), the Nationalist rule (Kagan, 1982), post-democratisation and the current situation with China (BBC, 2022), I disclosed a rather complex picture of Taiwanese identity in relation to Chineseness. The issue of identity in Taiwan has been political and politicised. Reviewing my art practice, I addressed the importance of oral history and lived experience to me as an artist. This approach will influence my use of (auto)ethnography, articulated in Chapter 2.2.

Also, I unpacked my personal background of familial experiences and pave way for the need to further explore identity in question: outside of the confinement of the Taiwanese context. Like mapping out the multiple Sino-British historiographies in Chapter 1.2, here I needed to deal with the duality of self and other. In this case: Fujianese/Hakka v.s. Nationalists, local Taiwanese v.s. invading mainlanders. Through considering identity in relation to diaspora (Ang, 1994, 1998, 2001, 2013; Hall, 1990), I then deconstructed Chineseness as a singular, fixed and prescribed identity. Here Chineseness is articulated as a plural identity and open to (re)negotiation, (re)interpretation, and (re)articulation.

My examination of pertinent historiographies and Chineseness as an identity point to plurality, that is to scrutinise from multiple vantage points. As my research informs my practice in this PhD, *multiplicity* will be pivotal in my development of methods and methodology, which I explore in Chapter 2.2.

Chapter 2

Reinterpreting Chinoiserie: A Methodological Roadmap

> 'These ingredients conjured up the land of Cathay: a recipe for romantic speculation, creating fantastic visions of luxury and refinement, pleasure and abundance' (Jacobson, 1993: 10).

Chapter 2 delineates a methodological roadmap whereby to reinterpret chinoiserie over two parts. In Chapter 2.1, I employ relevant literature from art history and other historical narratives to review my case studies in this research: the Royal Pavilion Brighton, Harewood House and Chatsworth House. The three chosen cultural heritage sites and their chinoiserie collections are explored within the wider context of relevant English history and Sino-British/European relations. This analysis is an extension of the historical review of chinoiserie in Chapter 1.1, and further contextualises the specific cultural and cross-cultural factors related to the chinoiserie artefacts this research aims to respond to.

The focus of Chapter 2.2 is on how to make such responses to chinoiserie. My intention here is to argue for a way in which to reinterpret the cultural heritage through discourse. I come up with an intricate modus operandi, which I refer to as notional interlocution: my postcolonial strategy of fictional (auto)ethnography is grounded on constructivism as an educational theory, post-structuralism and art-based research. To argue for the relational and positional aspects of notional interlocution, I extend the notions of contact zones and autoethnography (Pratt, 1991; 1992). As my research informs my practice in this PhD, my findings of Chapter 1.2 and Chapter 1.3 inform Chapter 2.2. I situate my methodological framework in the context of asserting postcolonial voices (Said, 1993; Spivak, 1988; Achebe, 2000). To argue for multiple voice as part of notional interlocution, I review artworks on chinoiserie (Cheng, no date; Tan, 2012; Tsang, 2012) in relation to Trinh T. Minh-ha’s (1991) three voices and critique on cultural essentialism.

Chapter 2.1

Case Studies of Cultural Heritage Sites

As articulated previously in Chapter 1.1, English chinoiserie reached its peak in the eighteenth century and was very popular with the wealthy due its high cost. Intrinsic to this period, the culture of taste informed how the rich decorated their homes with exotic objects, including chinoiserie artefacts (de Bruijn, 2016). Centuries later, luckily it is possible to visit the royal palaces and stately homes, and their chinoiserie collections – if they are working museums and when they are open to visitors.

My rationale for the method of case studies of cultural heritage sites with chinoiserie collections is twofold. To begin with, the physical legacy of this history that is the artefacts is crucial. The physical access to relevant chinoiserie objects allows me to observe, study and film them. Another pivotal aspect is the provenances of objects. Relevant literature enables me to examine the history of chinoiserie artefacts within the historical context of the cultural heritages sites that hold them. From there, I investigate the visual style within the wider history of English chinoiserie and Sino-British/European relations.

This section reviews the three chosen case studies of cultural heritage sites and their respective chinoiserie collections. Overall, the three chosen chinoiserie collections/heritage sites span across the long eighteenth century of 1688-1832 (O'Gorman, 2016). The first case study is the Royal Pavilion Brighton, the starting point of this PhD research. Built by George IV (1762-1830), the royal pleasure palace is in Brighton and Hove, East Sussex. Its extensive chinoiserie interior is associated with George's aspiration to escape his given responsibilities, as well as his father's diplomatic project of Macartney's Embassy to China (1792-1794).

The second case study is Harewood House, the stately home of the Lascelles family in West Yorkshire. Hung in the mid 1700s, the elaborate Chinese wallpaper is said to be one of the finest in the world.[26] The artefact was a product of the English East India Company, which the Lascelles was affiliated with, and the eighteenth-century English phenomenon of the culture of taste.

The third case study is Chatsworth House, the country house of the Cavendish family in Derbyshire. The in-situ Delftware collection is a result of the family's involvement in the Glorious Revolution (1688), inviting William and Mary to the British throne from the Netherlands. As a result, the Delftware is linked to the Dutch East India Company (VOC).

I chose these three sites because their chinoiserie artefacts are substantial and of excellent quality, and most importantly there is existing literature regarding their provenances and related history. Without such crucial information, it would be very difficult, if not altogether impossible, to review historic chinoiserie objects in a meaningful way.

There is also a practical aspect on the horizon. Working with cultural heritage sites takes time and requires negotiation. A year into my PhD, it became clear to me that I needed to find institutions that would be happy to work with research students like me. It was often down to whether they would have enough resources, namely staff time, to accommodate my needs. Apart from site visits and planning meetings, I had to film on-site which had to be supervised by allocated staff. As I only looked at sites that were working museums and open to visitors, this would not be easy. Somehow, I managed to use personal connections to reach relevant individuals and the results were positive. Overall, it was a process longer than expected for me to finalise the case studies.

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[26] Historic wallpaper conservation specialists Allyson and Adrian McDermott concluded so when they worked on the artefact after it had been re-discovered in storage at Harewood House. See: Harewood House Trust. (2017) *The Chinese Wallpaper: Harewood House*. Leeds: Harewood House Trust.

The Royal Pavilion Brighton and Its Chinoiserie Interior: Illusion

> 'The Royal Pavilion at Brighton was one of the most extravagant – some would say outlandish – manifestations of what is broadly called chinoiserie' (Thomas, 2015: 233).

As its name suggests, the Royal Pavilion Brighton is in the city of Brighton and Hove, located on the south coast of England, in East Sussex. Thanks to its perceived therapeutic sea water, Brighton turned from a fishing town into a desirable resort in the mid-eighteenth century. Informally called London by the sea, the seaside town became popular with the rich and famous owing to its proximity to the capital city. Widely known for his decadent lifestyle, George IV[27] was also attracted to Brighton. He was described as '[…] a vain and extravagant man with a passion for fashion, the arts, architecture and good living' (Brighton Museum, no date). In 1783, the Prince first visited the resort destination at the age of 21. Plagued with gout, he was advised to have sea water treatment by his physician. The newly fashionable seaside town was to offer George not only therapeutic treatment, but also escape and entertainment. Later in the eighteenth century, the Prince would start the process of having the Pavilion built.

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[27] George IV was born in 1762 and died in 1830. He was Prince of Wales (1762-1811), Prince Regent (1811-1820) and King George IV (1820-1830) of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.

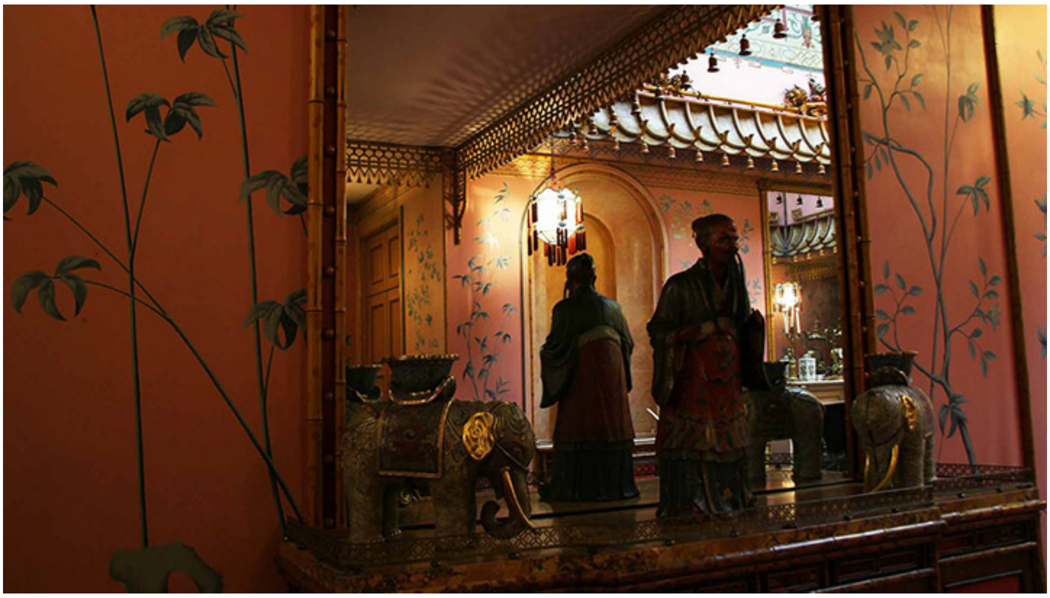

Fig 8: Image of the Royal Pavilion Brighton. A statue of a Chinese figure in the Long Gallery against the background of painted pink chinoiserie wallpaper. Together with the dim light and artefacts of mixed origins and materials, the mirrors create a sense of illusion and fantasy.

Unpopular with the British political circle and public alike, George IV is said to have been '[…] possibly the most universally loathed monarch since Richard II' (Parissien, 1992: 16). He was notorious for his vices of '[…] spending money like water and secretly marrying his catholic mistress, Mrs Fitzherbert' (Parissien, 1992: 16). It was habitual of George to get into debt as a result of his splurging on expensive parties, music, art, architecture/decoration, drinking, womanising and gambling. Running the kingdom was the last thing in his mind.

In 1786, George had accumulated huge arrears and thus retreated to Brighton with his mistress in a village nearby. In the following year, the House of Commons agreed to wipe off his debts and increase his income as a result of George's much pleading. With the new money in hand, George purchased a farmhouse and hired architect Henry Holland to design it. The result was the Marine Pavilion in Brighton. Over the course of more than three decades, the small structure of the Marine Pavilion would go through extensive interior and exterior transformations into the elaborate Oriental palace of the Royal Pavilion Brighton.

Originally, the designer Frederick Crace designed the chinoiserie theme of decoration in 1800-1801 for the Marine Pavilion. Architect John Nash proposed to have the Pavilion covered with Indian Mughal style exterior. As Nash's expansion of the palace began in 1805, redecoration was necessary. Hence, the designers Frederick Crace and Robert Jones respectively furnished parts of the Pavilion's interior under the theme of chinoiserie, to the taste of George IV between 1815 and 1823 (Thomas, 2015). It was in 1823 that the Royal Pavilion Brighton was finally completed, both on the inside and outside.

After George IV's death, succeeding monarchs William IV and Queen Victoria both had the Pavilion as a residence. In 1850, the Town of Brighton purchased the royal home from Queen Victoria as the palace was not to the monarch's liking.[28] The Pavilion's interior, from wallpaper to chimneys, was stripped for other royal homes, although Queen Victoria and subsequent monarchs retuned most of the original items. In the mid-nineteenth century, the restoration of the palace commenced based on George IV’s approved design in the early 1820s. Thus, the Pavilion is now in sync with his original chinoiserie decorative plan.

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[28] Queen Victoria, instead, acquired Osbourne House on the Isle of Wight as her private home.

The function of the Pavilion speaks volumes about the Prince Regent. As a pleasure palace, the Pavilion offered a setting less formal and more fun than that of other royal residencies such as the Carlton House[29] (Thomas, 2015). By hiding at the Pavilion, George could escape the stiff London life and royal responsibilities, as well as from his disappointed father and disastrous marriage with Caroline of Brunswick.[30] At the pleasure home, George IV threw lavish parties, music concerts and banquets, against the background of the elaborate chinoiserie interior design.

The chinoiserie interior of the Pavilion is what this research focuses on in the case study of the royal palace. Dramatic and extravagant, the decorative scheme takes visitors to a different world in which the boundary between reality and dream is blurred. Across the palace, a sensation of fantasy prevails from room to room. As mentioned previously, my unplanned visit to the Pavilion several years ago culturally bewildered me. To this day, I still feel a twang looking at photos of the site, amazed by the sense of parallel reality the artefacts in-situ emanate. Being inside the palace simply takes you to another place. Illusion is the central theme in my artist film set in the Pavilion, which I review in Chapter 3.

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[29] Another residence of George IV, Carlton House was situated in central London, near where Pall Mall is now. The arrchitect Henry Holland was responsible for renovating the mansion. In tandem with the chinoiserie trend, the central London palace had a Chinese Drawing Room. Unfortunately, the whole property was demolished in 1825.

[30] Advised by his father George III, he married Caroline in 1795 so as to resolve his financial situation. It was a marriage of convenience.

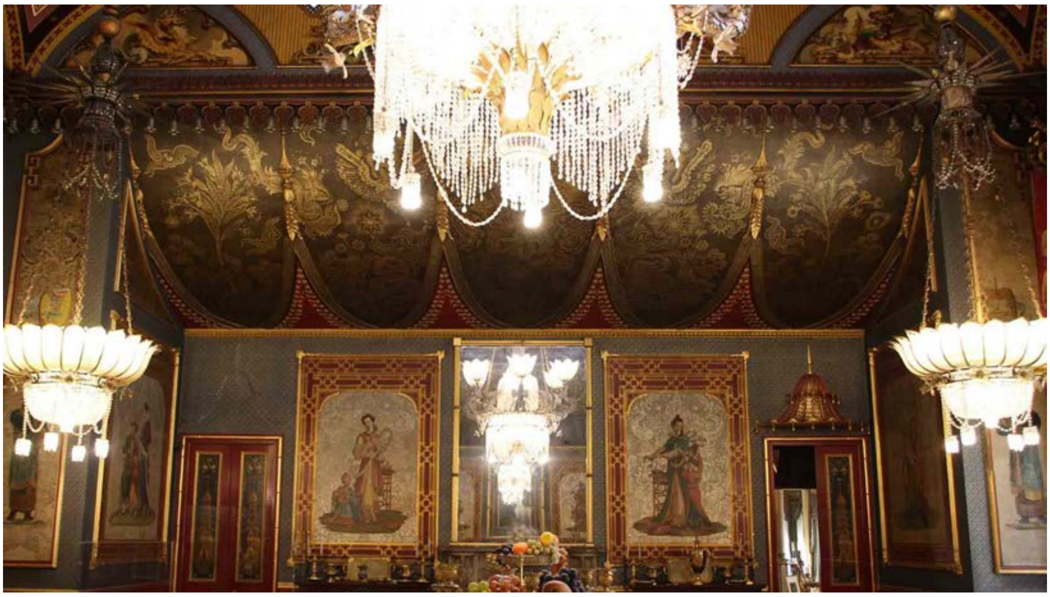

Fig 9: Image of the Royal Pavilion Brighton. In the Banqueting Room, there are original murals by designer Robert Jones. In the murals, there is a mixture of European and Chinese figures. The chandeliers are decorated with dragons and serpents.

As chinoiserie was the approved decorative plan, the visual style plays the role of the dominant theme but does not fill up the whole palace. Some objects within the Pavilion are of French, Egyptian, Indian, Classic, and Gothic motifs (Beevers, 2014). In terms of chinoiserie, George IV had an affinity with Chinese-made furniture and artefacts, primarily supplied by the company of designer Frederick Crace and other agents. The objects' overlapping cultural components and complex provenances contribute to creating a sense of blurry reality/dream:

> […] it was not unusual to find a French secretaire adorned with Japanese laquer panels or an English organ within a case decorated with Chinese motifs' (Royal Collection Trust, no date).

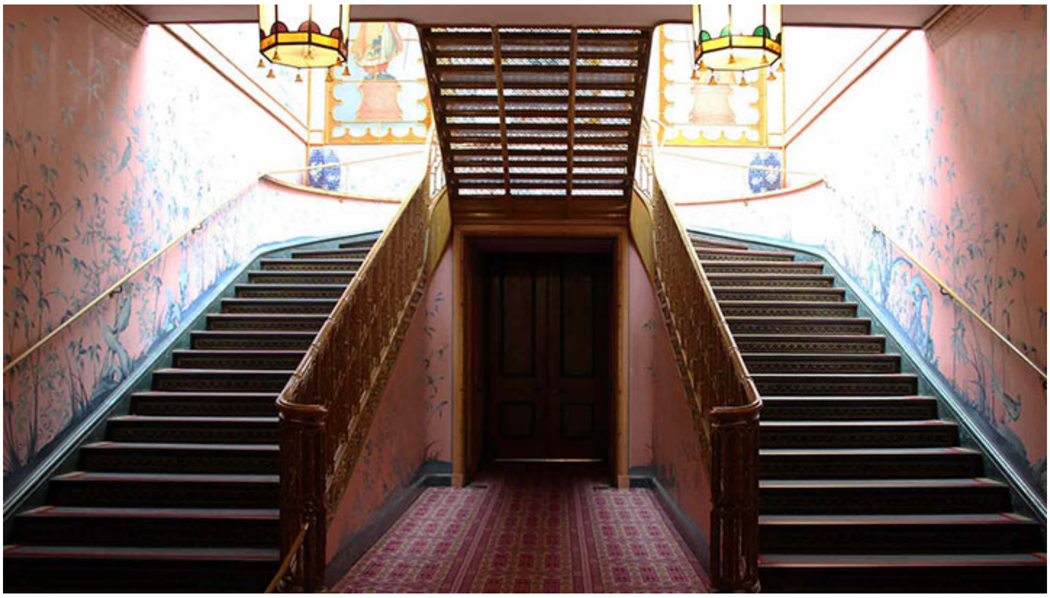

Fig 10: Image of the Royal Pavilion Brighton. The Long Gallery is said to be '[…] the most resolutely Chinese part of the Pavilion' (Dinkel, 1982: 8). As bamboo being the theme, only some artefacts are Chinese-made and actually made from bamboo. The rest is English-made simulation of bamboo, including the cast iron staircase pictured here.

As the making of the Pavilion spanned from the late eighteenth century to the early nineteenth century, George IV is said to have revived the trend of chinoiserie (Parissien, 1992). As I have elaborated in Chapter 1.1, the visual style started waning in desirability in the late eighteenth century due to the political abrasion between China and Britain: Macartney's embassy to China (1792-1794). To unpack chinoiserie at the Pavilion, it is necessary to review its connections with the diplomatic mission.

In the early 1790s, it was George III, father of George IV, who sent Macartney off to China. The main purpose of the Embassy was to secure business relations and trade privileges with the Eastern Empire. None of Macartney's pleading and demands were accepted by the Chinese Emperor Chien-lung, who viewed the visiting foreigners as nothing but tribute bearers. From the Chinese monarch's perspective, there was no point in having maritime business with Britain. As a result, the diplomatic group were sent home by Chien-lung who showered them with a vast number of royal gifts.[31]

Of royal quality, the gifted artefacts '[…] exhibited local material and manufacture as well as exquisite workmanship' (Royal Collection Trust, no date). It is said that the Chinese royal gifts influenced George IV's taste for things Chinese (Royal Collection Trust, no date). After Queen Charlotte's death in 1818, many of these royal Chinese presents from Chien-lung were sold at an auction and George IV later reacquired some of them.

Another connection between Macartney's Embassy to China and George IV's Pavilion is William Alexander. Together with over one hundred crew members including doctors, botanists and scientists, Alexander was one of the two illustrators on the diplomatic mission. In addition to securing business deals, it was also the Embassy's aim to gather as much information about China as possible, because accounts of the Asian state had long been from the Jesuits and other missionaries. As Britain's first ever official delegate to the Asian state, '[…] the embassy proved to be an early essay in penetrating the bamboo curtain of Chinese exclusiveness' (Crammer-Byng, 1962: 22).

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[31] They were not just for the British monarch but for all the members of the Embassy. Some of the gifted artefacts are still around and available to view on the website of Royal Collection Trust. See, for example, Royal Collection Trust. (no date) *Pair of cabinets with stands*. Royal Collection Trust. [Online] [Accessed 14 April 2022] https://www.rct.uk/collection/themes/trails/the-macartney-embassy-gifts-exchanged-between-george-iii-and-the-qianlong-2; Royal Collection Trust. (no date) *Covered circular box*. Royal Collection Trust. [Online] [Accessed 14 April 2022] https://www.rct.uk/collection/themes/trails/the-macartney-embassy-gifts-exchanged-between-george-iii-and-the-qianlong-1.

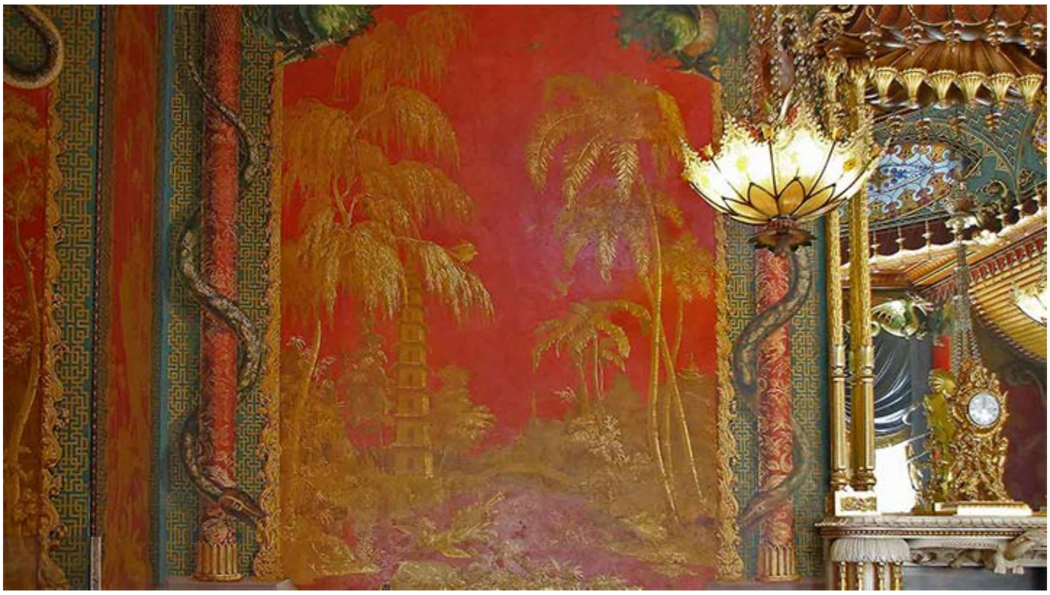

Fig 11: Image of the Royal Pavilion Brighton. The red and gold wall panels in the Music Room at the Pavilion are re-workings of scenes from William Alexander's *Custom of China* by the designer Frederick Crace.[32]

Not allowed much access to inland China, Alexander primarily observed the country from the boat. Using his own experience, memories and second-hand materials, the draughtman managed to produce a vast amount of visual output of China. His visual book *The Costume of China and Dress and Manners of the Chinese* (1814) then inspired designer Frederick Crace to create the wall panels in the Music Room and a painted glass pane on the South Staircase landing (Loske, no date). Both the Embassy and William Alexander's drawing are explored in my film set in the Pavilion.

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[32] See: Royal Collection Trust. (no date) *The Macartney Embassy: Gifts Exchanged Between George III and the Qianlong Emperor*. Royal Collection Trust. [Online] [Accessed 11 April 2022} https://www.rct.uk/collection/themes/trails/the-macartney-embassy-gifts-exchanged-between-george-iii-and-the-qianlong

Harewood House and Its Chinese Wallpaper: Self and Other

> 'Chinese wallpaper seems to have developed out of a combination of three factors: the European taste for Chinese pictures, the capacity of the East India Companies to ship goods across the globe and the ability of the Chinese painting workshops to respond to western demand' (de Bruijn et al., 2014: 3).

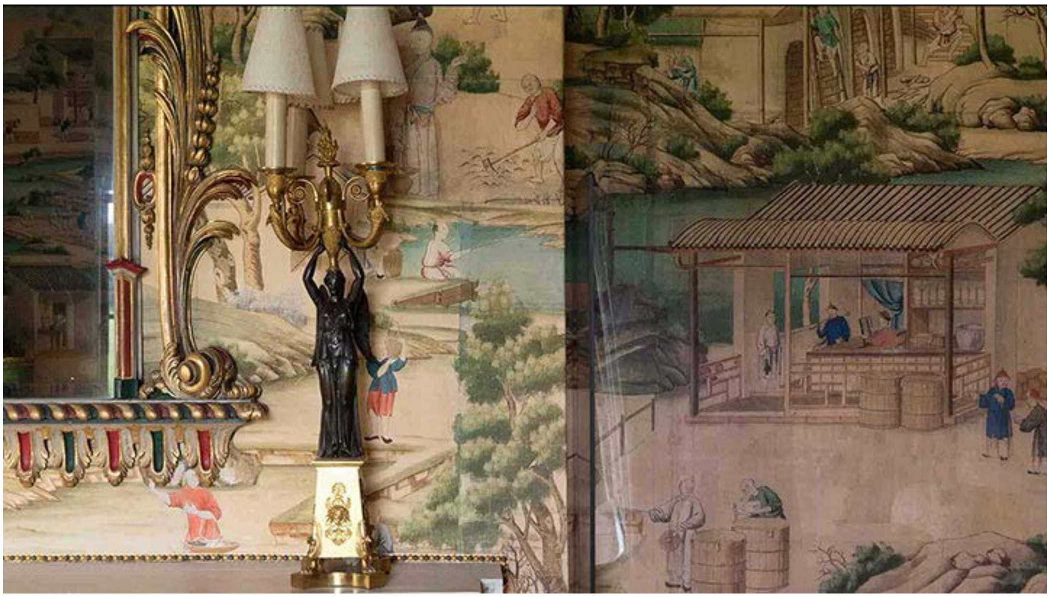

Fig 12: Image of Harewood House. In the East Bedroom: a corner of a Chinese-style pier glass and a European-style lamp against the backdrop of the Chinese wallpaper this research focuses on.

Harewood House is a stately home in West Yorkshire, near Leeds. For more than two hundred and fifty years, the home has been the family seat of the Lascelles. Transformed into a trust[33] ownership in the twenty-first century, Harewood House is now a working museum. However, the family have continued to live on-site, in '[…] a small and manageable flat on the first floor of the central block […]' (Buckle, 1979: 2).

As the last name suggests, the Lascelles were French and were originally from Normandy. Back in the eleventh century, the family were part of the Norman

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[33] That is Harewood House Trust.

Conquest (1066). They participated in the Battle of Hastings – on the French side, of course – and were thus awarded a plot of land in North Yorkshire by William the Conqueror. Since then, the Lascelles have been affluent. Later, the early eighteenth century would see a huge increase of wealth and prominence in the family, as well as the creation of Harewood House.

In the early eighteenth century, the young Henry Lascelles first visited Barbados whilst the family were already interested in potential business opportunities in the West Indies. As part of the British colonial structure, he became a Collector of Customs in Bridgetown, an important Barbadian port. In a personal capacity, Henry was a money lender to local plantation owners. As some loaners could not pay back their debts and thus surrendered their plantations to Henry, the Lascelles businessman gradually took over agricultural farms and the attached slaves (Smith, 2014). Therefore, Henry was involved in all aspects of the sugar trade: owning plantations, as well as using slaves and thus keeping the transatlantic slave trade alive and thriving (Lascelles, 2017). With his partners, he also owned warehouses in London. The business of Henry Lascelles on the Caribbean island proved to be tremendously lucrative, so much so that he became one of the richest individuals in England within twenty years of his career in the Caribbean (Lascelles, 2017).

In 1712, Henry's Barbadian-born son, Edwin, was later educated at Cambridge in England and had a Grand Tour of Europe. In Barbados, Edwin Lascelles owned many plantations and thousands of enslaved farm workers. In 1738, the father and son acquired the estates of Harewood and Gawthorpe, using the money from the West Indian sugar trade. In 1753, Henry committed suicide. With a vast inheritance in hand, Edwin began to have Harewood House built.

From the outset, Edwin Lascelles wanted the best of everything for the house: '[…] the best architect, the best designer, the best landscape gardener, the best furniture maker, the best ornamental plasterer, the best painters' (Lascelles, 2017: 14). Indeed, he had 'Capability' Brown,[34] the most sough-after designer of English landscape, on board. Brown managed to enlarge the lake, surround it with plantations and gently move the parkland, a move much appreciated by the Lascelles. Decades later, the landscape design was continued by another well-known architect, Humphry Repton.

As to the architectural scheme, Henry rejected William Chambers' plan and instead hired John Carr of York as the lead architect. Whilst Carr was in the process of designing the house, the Lascelles double-booked so to speak, approaching architect Robert Adam and hired him. The businessman famously said to the Italian-trained Scottish architect: 'I would not exceed the limits of expense that I have always set myself. Let us do everything properly and well, mais pas trop' (Mauchine, 1974: 73).

Robert Adam's decorative plan for the House commenced in 1765. A frequent collaborator with Adam, Thomas Chippendale was responsible for supplying furniture and furnishing throughout the country house. Born in Otley, only a few miles away from Harewood, Chippendale '[…] is without doubt most famous furniture maker and designer of Georgian Britain' (Bowett and Lomax, 2018: forward).

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[34] He was famous for always pointing out the *capability* of a land to his clients and hence the nickname.

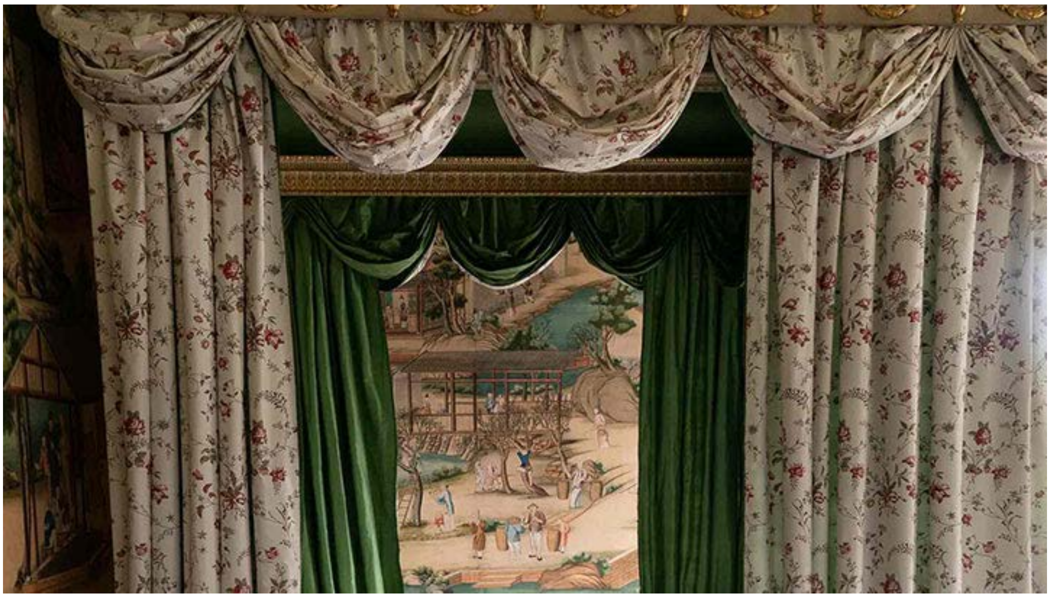

Fig 13: Image of Harewood House. Chintz textile was also very popular in eighteenth-century Britain. The Indian-made fabric was often used alongside chinoiserie artefacts, such as the bed curtains in the foreground and the Chinese wallpaper in the background in the East Bedroom photographed here.

Having established his cabinet-making firm in St Martin's Lane in London, he was widely known for his Rococo and neo-classical design, both popular in the eighteenth century in Britain. Of an entrepreneurial nature, the designer managed to raise funds and publish *The Gentleman and Cabinet-Maker's Director* (1754). The cover of the publication boasts to provide readers with 'elegant and useful delights of household furniture in the Gothic, Chinese and modern taste.'[35] *Director* sold well and further established Chippendale as the synonym of best English design.

Apart from the prevalent European styles, Chippendale was also extensively praised for his Chinese decorative theme, so much so that he was nicknamed *Chinese Chippendale*. It is said that when the designer was on top of his profession around the mid-eighteenth century, '[…] everything is Chinese or in the Chinese taste; or as it is more modestly expressed, *partly after the Chinese manner'* (Bowett and Lomax, 2018: 17). In *Director*, there are 64 illustrations of furniture in the Chinese style which is more than a third of the total. Nevertheless, it is certain that Chippendale had only been to France and had never set foot in China (Lascelles, 2017: 26). Like other designers and agents, his connection with Chinese objects was through the English East India Company. Via this channel of supply, Chippendale is known to have sourced Chinese-made artefacts for the wealthy over many decorative projects.

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[35] The then modern taste is what is known now as the neo-classical style.

Harewood House was the largest project for Chinese Chippendale.[36] Edwin Lascelles commissioned him to provide furniture and furnishing in the Chinese style. The result was a range of Chinese-style artefacts respectively made in China and England, alongside his own neo-classical designs throughout the house. In 1769, his workmen hung an elaborate Chinese-made wallpaper in the Chintz Bedroom. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the wallpaper fell out of fashion and was cut off the wall, rolled up in linen and put away in a different building. It was after almost 200 years that it was re-discovered, conserved and eventually hung in 2008 in the East Bedroom, where it is now. It is incredible that the wallpaper survived neglect and ended up in a superb condition after such a long time. In my artist film exploring Harewood House, I focus on this very wallpaper.

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[36] He died in 1779 during the project. His son Thomas Chippendale, the younger took over the work and finished the decorative scheme at Harewood in 1797 (Powell, 2000: 70).

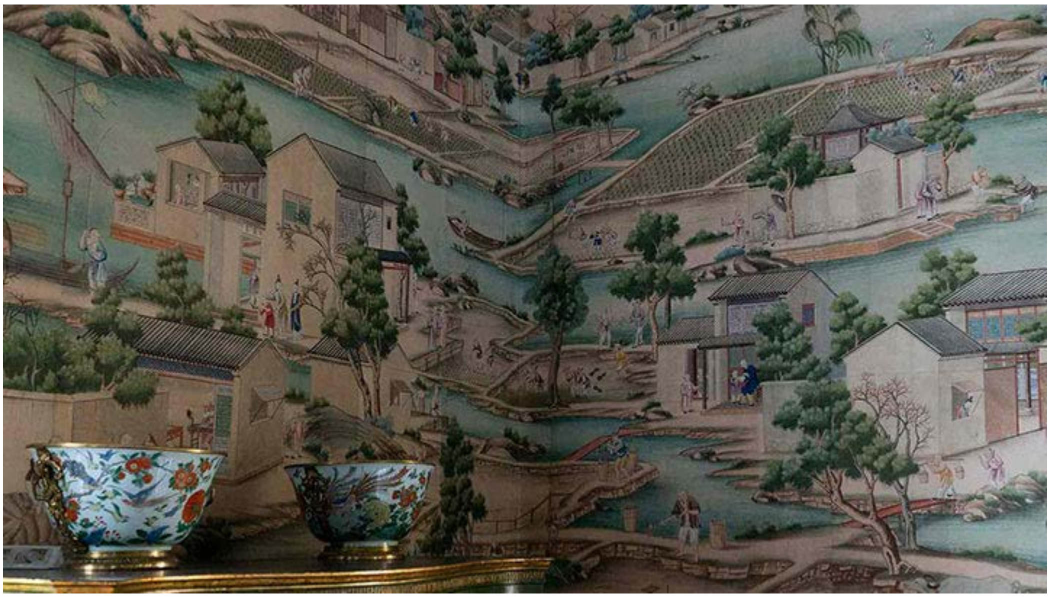

Fig 14: Image of Harewood House. Also in the East Bedroom: two famille verte Chinese bowls with ormolu mounting on top of a Chinese-style clothes press and the Chinese wallpaper in question. See: Lascelles, D. (2017) *Harewood*. Leeds: Harewood House Trust, pp. 37.

The hand-painted artefact came in sheets and every sheet is unique so that they constitute a continuous landscape when put together. Running across the East Bedroom, the paper shows an idealised scenario of Chinese productions of tea, rice, silk and porcelain. Integral to the painted depiction of the then important industries, there is a vast number of Chinese figures of playing children, women, workers and officials alike. The content of Chinese wallpaper is a factor in the price: trees, birds, insects and gardens were common and more affordable. Whereas landscapes with scenes of agriculture and industry were rare and more costly (Clifford, 2018).

It is understood that this wallpaper was made in China for the purpose of export to Europe (Lascelles, 2017). It is likely that it was commissioned by Edwin Lascelles (Gallimore, 2008). It is also likely the artefact was traded in Canton in the middle of the eighteenth century, where the English East India Company was allowed to dock and trade. As explored in Chapter 1.1, Canton was the only Chinese port in which foreigners could trade between the 1700s and mid 1800s, the prime time of the Ching Dynasty until the First Opium War. Merchants from overseas had to comply with a set of strict rules imposed by the Chinese court, known as the Canton trade system. Foreigners could only stay in a certain part of Canton and could not venture outside the designated area. All business had to be handled by Chinese middlemen and decorative items sold to Europeans were made for export to Europe (Purdue, 2009).

It is imperative to stress that in Chinese culture there was no such thing as wallpaper. Rather, painted screens were used. Chinese wallpaper was produced solely for foreign use. As mentioned in Chapter 1.1, in terms of the British market, painted Chinese hangings were exclusively associated with the East India Company. Whilst the official products were tea, silk and porcelain, anything else from China was purchased by the Company staff in a personal capacity that is through private trade (Purdue, 2009). Such objects, predominantly decorative items desired by the wealthy, were then imported in a small quantity alongside the regular trade. In great demand for home furnishing, Chinese wallpaper thus found its way to country houses via dealers in the City of London (Gallimore, 2008).

As an exotic, costly import, Chinese wallpaper was

> ‘[…] unmatched for its colour and texture. It came in non-European dimensions, accommodating non-repeat mural-like and diverse designs, which appealed to an enlightened audience seeking an idea of what China was really like, as well as satisfying the unquenchable thirst for exotic fantasy, while retaining its cachet of rarity and expense’ (Clifford, 2018: 47-48).

This appreciation for foreign objects and the foreign speaks of the culture of taste which requires reviewing the wider historical, social and economic context.

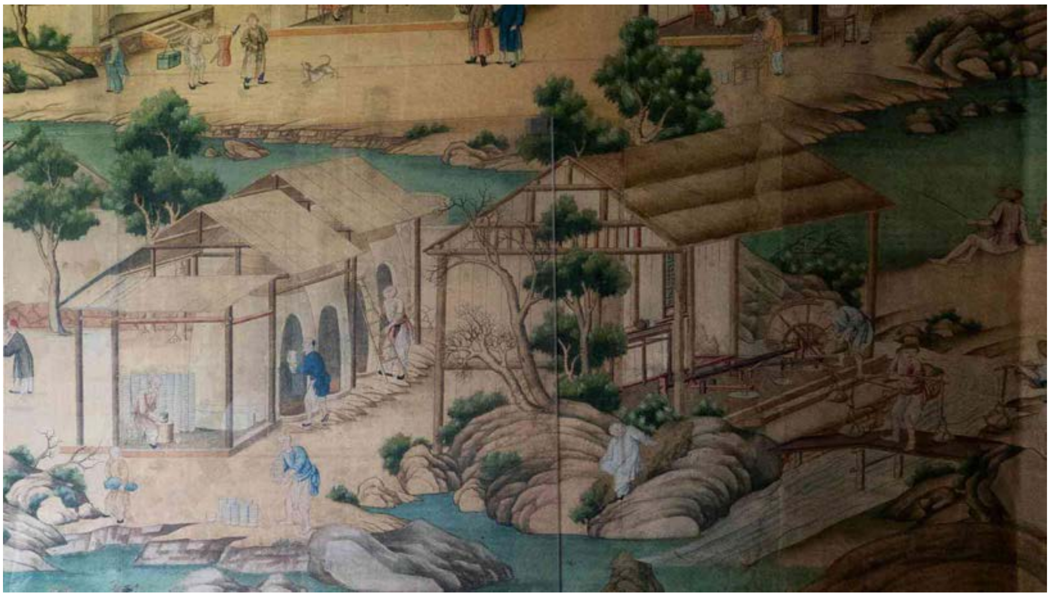

Fig 15: Image of Harewood House. A scene of porcelain making as part of the Chinese wallpaper in the East Bedroom: workers firing clay in kilns, utilising water resources and so on. Part of the paper is protected by a see-through plastic panel as it is adjacent to the visitor route.

In the eighteenth century, Britain enjoyed increasing wealth and a growing role in the world through its extensive overseas trade. This international business network was powered by Britain's advanced maritime technology. Oceanic routes were explored, established and travelled. Goods from further afield alongside resulting money predominantly poured into the pockets of the upper class.

Regarding the culture of taste, there became a common pursuit of the exotic for '[…] a sense of intellectual and sensual curiosity […] both equated physical travel and exploration with the widening of mental and cultural horizons' (de Bruijn, 2017: 63). Crucial to the phenomenon is a burgeoning self-awareness of Britain and its people.

With China as a point of reference, British cultural identity developed across the eighteenth century.

Consequently, rare, expensive Chinese decorative goods were sought after and arrived at country houses via the sea. It was in this context that chinoiserie objects, such as the wallpaper at Harewood, served as a gateway for wealthy individuals to venture into China and by extension the unknown. Intrinsic to domestic furnishing, chinoiserie artefacts offered a terrain in which to explore oneself vis-à-vis the widening world at home. The question of self and other is examined in relation to the wallpaper in my artist film set in Harewood House.

Chatsworth House and Its Delftware Collection: Multiple Contact Zones

Located near Bakewell, Derbyshire, Chatsworth House has been home to the Cavendish family for almost five centuries. In 1549, William Cavendish bought the estate from the Leche family. In 1552, William and his wife, Bess of Hardwick, began to have a new family home built which is now Chatsworth House. Overall, the stately home is known for its extensive art collections and expansive landscape.

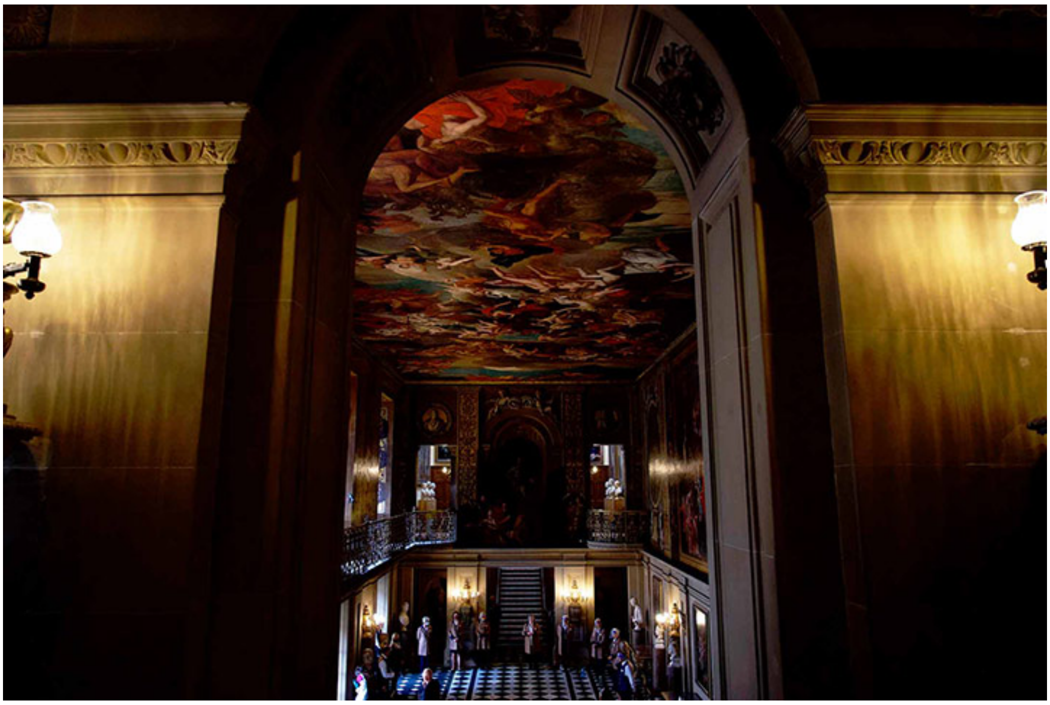

Fig 16: Image of Chatsworth House. In the seventeenth century, the 1st Duke of Devonshire intentionally chose Caesar as the decorative theme for the celling, pictured here, to please the new King William III (Ambrose, S. et al, 2016: 27). In the summer of 2020, I took this photo during my filming on site. There happened to be the daily staff meeting on the ground floor just before the House opened its doors to visitors in the morning. Because of the pandemic, they dutifully maintained social distance between each other and wore visors – and hence the spectacle.

The country house of the Cavendish had some alterations in the late seventeenth century. In 1686, the 4th Earl of Devonshire rebuilt part of the house and added more rooms for his family, as well as a State Apartment on the second floor which was meant to accommodate a royal visit of William and Mary, the new King and Queen. In 1694, the 4th Earl of Devonshire was created the 1st Duke of Devonshire for his involvement in inviting the royal couple to the English throne as part of the Glorious Revolution (1688).

The background of the Glorious Revolution goes back in time. The sixteenth century saw both the Reformation of the Christian faith across Europe and Henry VIII's establishment of the Church of England. In Britain there was a pervasive sentiment of grudge against Catholicism and the control of the Roman Catholic Church in the seventeenth century. When the British King Charles II died in 1685, the heir situation became a problem. Although the King had many children, they were all illegitimate. Therefore, his brother James Duke of York took over the throne, becoming King James II.

Despite his promises to defend the government, the new king began to cause concerns over his Catholic and political views. On the one hand, James II demanded more resources for the army which was thought to have potentially been a tool for consolidating his own power, like his French and Spanish counterparts. Moreover, James attempted aggressively to impose the Catholic system on the existing establishment of the Church of England. Parliament refused to cooperate with the king over both issues.

James's bid to increase his power through bypassing Parliament as well as his stubborn Catholic stance resulted in widespread objection against him. Anger against the king boiled, so much so that in 1685 there was a rebellion by the Duke of Monmouth against him, in terms of the Battle of Sedgemoor. It failed. As a result, the king strove to further solidify his political and military domination, and to force his religious prejudice on the governmental structure. The situation eventually came to a breaking point when James's wife produced a son. There came a Catholic successor (National Army Museum, no date).

In 1688, seven peers of James's invited his protestant daughter Mary and her Dutch husband William III the Orange to the British throne. Thus, the couple came to

England, receiving no resistance. For William III, it was a strategic advantage to combine his resources of his native Netherlands and England in his struggle against the French King Louis XIV. With King William III and Queen Mary II in power, a series of reforms took place. As to the outcome of the Glorious Revolution, power was acceded from the monarch to Parliament. Britain became a constitutional monarchy and the monarch no longer had absolute power.

William Cavendish was one of the seven peers of James II, the Immortal Seven,[37] who wrote to William and Mary in 1688. After the royal couple took power, Cavendish was keen to display his loyalty to the new monarch. As the new King and Queen were widely known for their enthusiasm for Dutch Delftware, it was a smart move to imitate the royal couple's material taste. Therefore, the 1st Duke of Devonshire had made a conscious effort to acquire Delftware and decorate Chatsworth House with a substantial collection of the Dutch-made artifacts (Obee, 2008). In a wider context, the English upper class also acquired the taste for Delftware to show their allegiance to King William and Queen Mary. It is the Delftware collection that this research focuses on, in the case study of Chatsworth House. To unpack the Dutch-made artefacts, it is important to review pertinent cross-cultural history.

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[37] The rest are Henry Compton, Bishop of London, Richard Lumley, Baron Lumley, Thomas Osborne, first Earl of Danby, Edward Russell, Henry Sidney, and Charles Talbot, twelfth Earl of Shrewsbury (Tapsell, 2007).

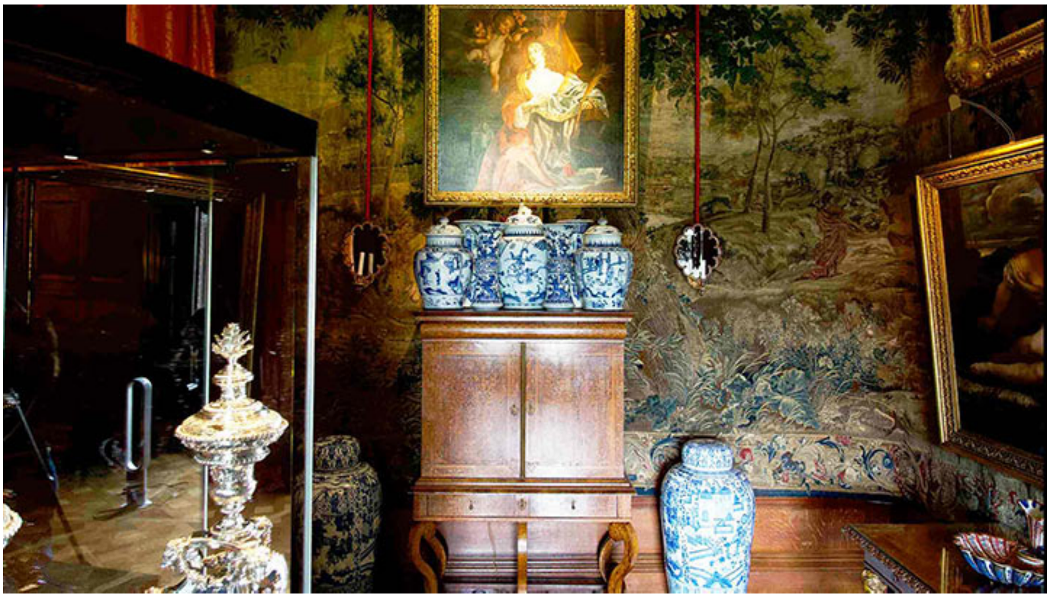

Fig 17: Image of Chatsworth House. A number of lidded and unlidded Chinese porcelain vases in the State Bedchamber. Chinese porcelain was highly appreciated in Europe before the recipe of it was discovered in the West.

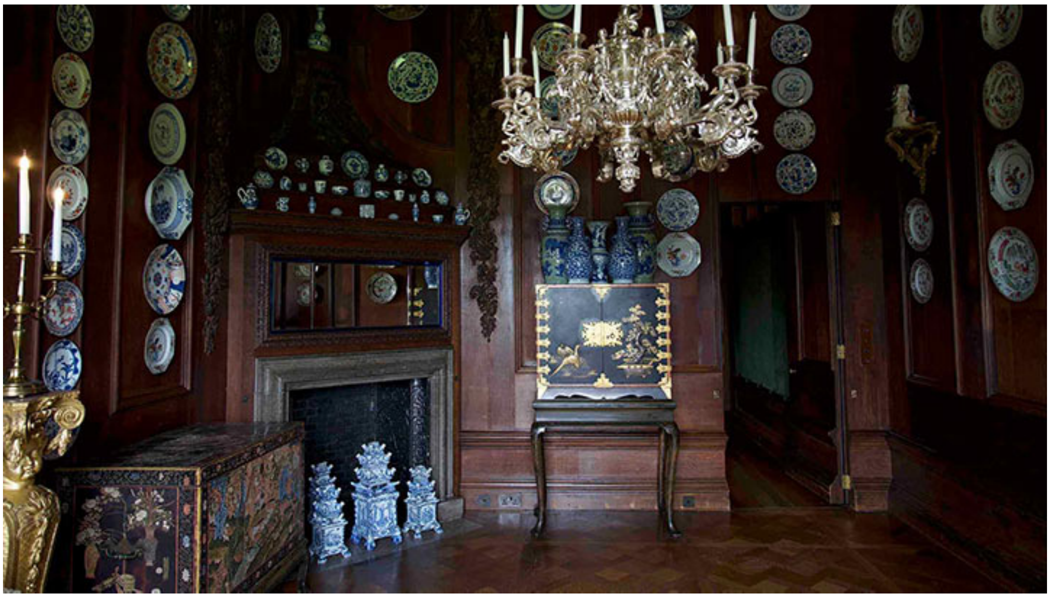

Fig 18: Image of Chatsworth House. Delftware vases on the floor alongside a Chinese lacquer, Chinese porcelain vases and a number of Oriental plates in the State Closet.

In the fourteenth century, potters in Jingdezhen, China, acquired the technology to produce pure porcelain. The key was to fire the clay at a very high temperature, at about 1300 degree Celsius in the kiln, for a translucency that was otherwise inimitable. Chinese porcelain became present in Europe via land, the Silk Road, in the late sixteenth century and in very limited quantities. In early seventeenth century, some Chinese porcelain was brought to the Netherlands through piracy. In 1603, as many as 100,000 pieces were looted from a ship in the Strait of Malacca and were made available in an Amsterdam auction House. The wealthy were keen to pay however much it would cost to get hold of the beautiful Chinese gems (Pound, 2020).

The demand for Chinese porcelain was indeed very high in a time in which the Dutch was developing itself to be a maritime superpower. The Dutch East India Company (VOC)[38] was established in the early seventeenth century. On the one hand, the Dutch aspired to have a legitimate trade relationship with China. After failed missions to establish a special business relationship with the Chinese Court in the second half of the seventeenth century, the Dutch turned to have Batavia, now Jakarta, as a base for their Chinese trade (Boxer, 1979). Like other Europeans, the Dutch had to comply with the demand of the Chinese. They paid homage as submissive tribute bearers to the Chinese Court, worked with Chinese middlemen in securing business and stayed away from the Chinese inland. In return, Chinese products including porcelain were shipped to Batavia, which was a Dutch colony (Pound, 2020).

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[38] Its full name in Dutch is Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie, and thus its abbreviation is VOC.

On the other hand, European craftsmen were eager to imitate Chinese porcelain albeit without the secret recipe. In Delft, the tin-glazed imitation, Delftware, was the most distinct and had an intriguing cross-cultural origin. Originally, the technique of dipping pottery in white glaze, as in tin-glazing, came from Iraq as a Chinese influence (Obee, 2008). Later, tin-glazing migrated to the then Islamic Spain. In the sixteenth century, the method travelled to Italy and later France. The French potters who were protestants later fled religious persecution to Antwerp. Later, the French craftsmen had to escape again, this time to Delft, because of their religion when the Catholic Spanish invaded some parts of the Low Land. By 1620, the craftsmen in Delft were making blue-and-white ceramic pieces that were later deemed as Delftware.

Due to its multicultural background of Chinese, Middle Eastern, Spanish, Italian, French and Dutch influences, Delftware had a curious façade. I was stunned by the distinct visuality of the vases when I first visited Chatsworth House. The Dutch artifacts came across to me as chimeras of mixed cultural and visual motifs, in which Chineseness was integrated in an intricate way. It is said that

> 'Dutch craftsmen borrowed shapes and decorative motifs of Chinese porcelain, but they also experimented with new forms and painted Dutch scenes on their products' (Royal Collection Trust, no date).

In China, porcelain for domestic use, foreign export and the royal consumption was predominantly made in Jingdezhen. Chinese porcelain imported through the Dutch East India Company then informed the making of Delftware. As Delft was one of the Company's operating locations, Chinese porcelain was available for potters to copy. The Chinese-made artefacts were so highly regarded and sought-after that regarding

Delftware '[…] it is important to bear in mind the main aim that obsessed Dutch potters: to emulate Chinese porcelain' (Fourest, 1980: 18).

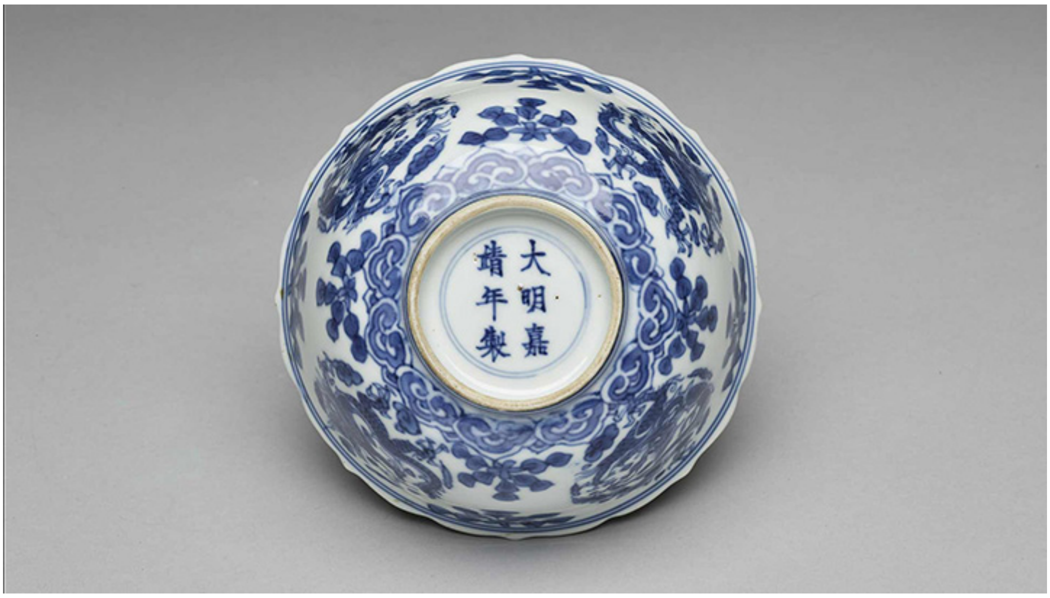

Fig 19: Image of Chinese porcelain. An example of a typical blue-and-white Ming Dynasty porcelain piece. As shown on the back of the bowl here, it says 'made in the Great Ming Dynasty under Jiajing reign.' (photo credit: the Palace Museum Taipei)

An imitation of Chinese porcelain, Delftware was in fact refined earthenware. The Dutch artefacts' blue-and white visual theme was a copy of porcelain from the Chinese Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) and Ching Dynasty (1644-1911). Nevertheless, such copying was not to the letter. Chinese-inspired motifs were mimicked but not entirely authentically. For instance, while the peach has been a Chinese symbol of longevity and thus has been used as a visual motif, Dutch potters painted oranges instead. Also, there was often painted depiction of idyllic Dutch countryside, rather than Chinese scenery, on Delftware objects (Pound, 2020).

Although Delftware was popular indeed in the Netherlands, it was English Princess Mary's patronage that led to the advancement of Delftware and its transition into a luxury product (Pound, 2020). Born in England, Mary Stuart, later Queen Mary II, moved to Holland at the age of fifteen for her marriage to William the Orange. The Stuart was widely known for her infatuation with gardening, Dutch Delftware and Chinese porcelain.

In the Netherlands, the Dutch East India Company enjoyed trade monopoly in Asia. The Company imported exotic and expensive products, such as porcelain, spices, silk and plants that were passionately collected by the Dutch upper class. Both the Dutch Court and the rich were enthusiastic in exploring new, foreign flowers and plants. It was fashionable for such individuals to have their private estate with a garden in which to cultivate rare and exotic specimens (Aronson, no date). In their free time, the Dutch upper class leisurely competed their gardening skills and their results.

At the royal palace of Het Loo,[39] botany played an important role in the daily life of the Court. To please Mary, William once asked the head gardener to source '[…] all the plants, bulbs and seeds of flowers made available to him now and in the future [...] if possible in every season'.[40] Mary's taste influenced that of William considerably. Both Het Loo and Hampton Court were filled with floral decorations when the couple were in residence.

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[39] Built in the late seventeenth century, Het Loo is a Dutch royal palace in the city of Apeldoorn.

[40] See: Aronson. (no date) *The Queen's Passion for Flowers.* Aronson. [Online] [Accessed 17 December 2019] https://www.aronson.com/the-queens-passion-for-flowers/

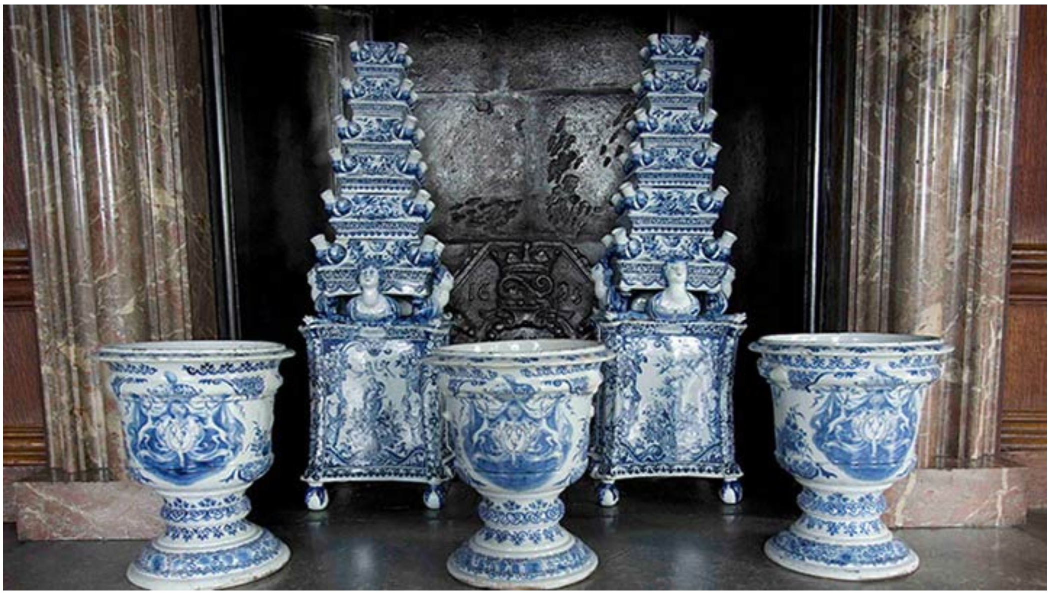

Fig 20: Image of Chatsworth House. An example of spouted Delftware vases beloved by Queen Mary – the two in the back, photographed in front of a fireplace. The spouts were for the cut stems of flowers. It was customary to decorate a fireplace with large Delftware vases in the summer.

It is understood that Queen Mary started the craze for Delftware in England (Pound, 2020). In a wider context, the royal couple started chinoiserie as a court fashion in the country.

> 'Indeed, English chinoiserie seems to have been entirely uninfluenced by the court until the advent of William and Mary in 1688 by which time the style was already established as a popular phenomenon' (Honour, 1961: 69).

Queen Mary was known for her commissioning of unique Delftware vases to show off her precious flowers. In tandem with the craze for both gardening and Delftware, such vases were deemed as portable gardens – easily put in rooms but not far from the garden. The Queen had spouted vases custom-made, among which the pyramid-like flower holders becoming the most distinct style. Influenced by Mary's distinctive taste, spouted flower vases[41] became tremendously fashionable and marked the peak of Delftware production (Pound, 2020). The flower vases' unique pyramid shape was inspired by Chinese pagodas and thus was of a structure of stacked parts on top of each other. What was also stacked together was the cross-cultural effort in the making of these vases. The situation of multiple contact zones is explored in my film set in Chatsworth House.

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[41] These spouted vases were predominantly made for the royal couple. See: Aronson. (no date) *Extraordinary Pair of Delftware Flower Vases.* Aronson. [Online] [Accessed 17 December 2019] https://www.aronson.com/extraordinary-pair-of-delftware-flower-vases/

Chapter 2.2

Notional Interlocution: May Narratives Abound

From the outset of this research, methodology and methods have been in the forefront of my mind. In Chapter 1, I have reviewed the pertinent history and historiographies (Aravamudan, 2011; Carey and Festa, 2009; Jenkins, 2013; Porter, 2010; Said, 1978) as well as identity in relation to diaspora (Ang, 2013; Hall, 1990). Given the analysis, it has been clear to me the importance of employing a methodological framework that is suitable for the context in which this PhD is situated. I need a system that can critically address the complexity and ambivalence of not only the eighteenth-century history of Sino-British/European relations, but also Chineseness as an identity.

As an essential thread of this PhD, my research informs my practice. The issues of relevant history, historiographies and Chineseness as an identity articulated in Chapter 1 all vitally point to plurality and subjectivity. As such, my research informs my methodological framework. It is crucial for this research to have a methodology and methods that are able to critically generate plurality and subjectivity in reinterpreting chinoiserie. That is to say, it is imperative to address multiplicity and personal voices in my response to chinoiserie through discourse/art practice. In tandem with this rationale, I create a new methodological framework that I name notional interlocution, which is a postcolonial strategy of fictional (auto)ethnography.

Reinterpretation: Constructivism, Art-based Research and Post-structuralism

My argument for my new methodological framework starts with its name: I wanted to have a shorter phrase to essentially encapsulate ‘an exchange of personal narratives as an outcome of fictional (auto)ethnography.’ Eventually, I chose notional interlocution because of its precise meaning. Notional means ‘existing only as an idea, not as something real’[42] and interlocution ‘interchange of speech.’[43] Therefore, notional interlocution etymologically means ‘an interchange of speech that exists only as an idea, not as something real.’

Furthermore, my claim for notional interlocution concerns the nature of this research. This PhD belongs to the research paradigm of constructivism. The constructivist approach is a form of qualitative research. Constructivism puts aside the belief in a single truth and, instead, advocates the importance of interpreting reality. In other words, there are multiple realities regarding one single event (Patel, 2015). Reality is to be interpreted, construed and made sense of by individuals. Meaning that is otherwise buried underneath an event and can be disclosed through interpretation. Thus, the account of a reality is plural rather than singular; and such accounts are subjective instead of objective (Patel, 2015). In a nutshell, constructivist approach in research calls for personal voices, multiple interpretations and perspectives. Notional interlocution has its foundation in constructivism.

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[42] See: Cambridge Dictionary. (no date) *notional*. [Online] [Accessed 16 August 2022] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/notional

[43] Merriam-Webster Dictionary. (no date) *interlocution*. [Online] [Accessed 16 August 2022] https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/interlocution

Another aspect of my PhD is that it is practice-based. Making art is intrinsic to my research. My PhD falls into the category of arts-based research. Arts-based research is '[…] a form of qualitative research in the human studies that employs the premises, procedures, and principles of the arts' (Given, 2008: 2). Considering the dynamics in which my research informs my art making in revisiting chinoiserie, my PhD resonates with artist/theorist Graeme Sullivan's claim that '[…] artistic research can reveal new insights through creative and critical practice' (2011: 82). That is to say, this research is meant to produce '[…] enhanced understanding through the communication of subjective realities or personal truths that can occur only through works of art' (Given, 2008: 2). The relationship between new historiographical insights and chinoiserie is one of criticality and is informed by my aim to problematise the subject matter. Seeking to create new narratives, my research through notional interlocution consequently

> […] involves the generation of doubts about the potential for disrupting or transgressing against, and the enhancement of uncertainty regarding presuppositions about the social world that have come to be taken for granted as contributing to a final reality' (Given, 2008: 3).

Whilst reviewing critical interpretive practice in relation to notional interlocution, it is imperative to consider post-structuralism. In essence, post-structuralism is an extension of structuralism. The linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1916, reprinted 2011) proposed semiotics as a way in which to delineate the structure of language, as explored previously. From the mid-twentieth century, there emerged a critical response to de Saussure's theory, in terms of post-structuralism. The literary theorist Roland Barthes points out that the relationship between a signifier and signified –

outlined by de Saussure – is unstable and thus meaning is always also unstable. It is no longer possible to claim a singular meaning of an expression (Munslow, 2000).

In Literary Criticism, post-structuralism recognises the role and agency of readers and calls for them to proactively reinterpret texts. The author loses the authority to dictate how their work is understood and hence *the death of the author* was famously proclaimed by Barthes in 1967. In this vein, readers create textual meaning from their reading through personal reinterpretation. A text would have different meanings to different individuals based upon their social and embodied circumstances and experiences of being in the world. Notional interlocution certainly draws from the post-structuralist emphasis on subjectivity, encompassing personal voices and questioning the author's/dominant narrative – and hence *interlocution*.

Contact Zones & Fictional (Auto)Ethnography

Having laid the foundation of notional interlocution in terms of its fundamental approaches, I am now deeper into establishing my methodological framework. In Chapter 1.1, I reviewed the relevant eighteenth-century Sino-British history in which chinoiserie flourished and thrived. In this section, I want to explore the relational aspect of reinterpreting chinoiserie and by extension its pertinent history. As this research aims to create new narratives, it is necessary to scrutinise the dynamics in which such new narratives will take place. I am in search of a theoretical tool of a historiographical portal through which to speak to the English colonial enterprise.

The literary theorist Mary Louise Pratt argues for contact zones (1991; 1992) based on her scrutiny of literature in Spanish and Portuguese languages with a focus on

South America. Drawing from her study of indigenous peoples' reaction to and interaction with the European colonisers in the New World, Pratt calls for attention to the relational aspect of such contact of the two parties. According to her, contact zones are defined as

> '[…] social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination – like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today' (1992: 4).

In Chapter 1.1, I have elaborated on relevant Sino-British history: the Chinese Court's dealings with the East India Company in terms of the Canton trade system across the eighteenth century, McCartney's Embassy to China and its failure in the 1790s, and the Opium Wars in the nineteenth century that threw Sino-British relations into the abyss of antagonism. As the two empires met, grappled and eventually clashed with each other, it is evident that these events were happenings in contact zones. China and Britain were in contact zones with each other.

As a key part of this research, my PhD extends the notion of contact zones. I argue that chinoiserie *was* itself a contact zone in which Chineseness as a visual language met with the British. That is to say, a contact zone is not necessarily tied to a physical bearing. Rather, it can be a metaphysical space in which two parties, metaphysical or otherwise – such as Chineseness and British colonial project – confront, dispute and struggle with each other. By asserting chinoiserie as a contact zone, I bring attention back to the representation of Chineseness in chinoiserie artefacts that this research focuses on.

Further into her explanation for contact zones, the literary scholar (1991; 1992) references a fascinating case. In the early twentieth century, a long letter dated in Cuzco, Peru and in 1613[44] was noticed by a scholar at the Danish Royal Archive. Addressed to the Spanish King Philip III, the twelve-hundred-page long document was written by a Quechua person named Guaman Poma. The bilingual[45] letter's title *The First New Chronicle and Good Government* shows a nod to the Spanish official document of new chronicles in which the Spanish conquest of America was documented. However, the reference is not the only evidence of the Andean's awareness of the coloniser's culture. Throughout the compilation of eight hundred pages of writing and four hundred pages of captioned drawings, Poma constructs a highly complex and expansive Andean-focused parallel world. For instance, tales from the Christian Bible are altered with the Andean in the centre: Cuzco, rather than Jerusalem, sits in the middle of the world. Amerindians are offspring of Noah. In addition, over two hundred pages, Inca and pre-Inca history is detailed, with the presence of Columbus included. Being acutely aware of the Spanish conquest and their establishing of empire in the Andean, Poma remarkably reinterprets relevant history and the religious scripture from an Andean perspective.

According to Pratt, this incredible letter is an example of an autoethnographic text which is one of the phenomena in contact zones. Precisely speaking, an autoethnographic text is

> '[…] a text in which people undertake to describe themselves in ways that engage with representations others have made of them. Thus if ethnographic

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[44] That was 40 years after the Spanish conquest (Pratt, 1991; 1992).

[45] It was written in Quechua and Spanish.

> texts are those in which European metropolitan subjects represent to themselves their others […], autoethnographic texts are representations that the so-defied others constructs in response to or in dialogue with those texts' (Pratt, 1991: 35).

I situate my response to chinoiserie as an autoethnographic text (Pratt, 1991). That is, responding to how Chineseness was represented in chinoiserie from an insider's point of view, although *the insider* is problematised when I review Chineseness as an identity. Crucially, I argue that notional interlocution *is* a phenomenon in contact zones – but not in a physical or factual way. To explain my argument, I shall carry on to address the personal and fictional aspects of my methodological framework.

Over the course of doing this PhD, I have slowly realised that my affinity with (auto)ethnography has informed my approach to reinterpreting chinoiserie. As mentioned in Chapter 1.3, in my practice outside of the PhD I have been working with individuals' lived experience and oral history regarding the Chinese diaspora. To me, the personal is a powerful tool to critique and challenge the grand narratives. My inclination for the personal certainly informs my emphasis on exploring identity in this research.

The cultural theorist Stuart Hall encapsulates that cultural identities are '[…] the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past' (1990: 225). Through (auto)ethnography, I establish the positional in the chinoiserie contact zone. In other words, I create new narratives based on individuals' identities, background and experience vis-à-vis the British colonial enterprise regarding the representation of Chineseness in chinoiserie.

As chinoiserie was a historical phenomenon, all relevant individuals are of course not around. And since the eighteenth century was a long time ago, no pertinent oral history is available. Therefore, how to conduct (auto)ethnography in this contemporary time is a question indeed. Considering that my PhD is of a constructivist (Patel, 2015), post-structuralist (Munslow, 2000) and art-based research (Given, 2008; Sullivan, 2011) nature, I argue for fictional (auto)ethnography: hence interlocution being *notional*.

As of notional interlocution, I construct narratives of relevant historical people based on their lived experience as I find it. Such new narratives are *fictional* as they are written by me but are informative because they are informed by the individuals' personal stories and backgrounds. In addition, I also have myself as a character playing myself in the films. By way of autoethnography, new narratives are created based on my perspective and life stories. In this critical vein, I concur with artist/ theorist Graeme Sullivan's claim that '[…] research can also be interactive and reflexive whereby imaginative insight is constructed from a creative and critical practice' (2011: 82).

In terms of Chineseness as a contact zone and fictional (auto)ethnography, I have established the relational and positional aspects of notional interlocution. Now my next step is to locate my methodological framework in the context of related postcolonial thinking.

Colonial & Postcolonial History

> ‘If colonial history, particularly in the nineteenth century, was the history of the imperial appropriation of the world, the history of the twentieth century has witnessed the peoples of the world taking power and control back for themselves. Postcolonial theory is itself a product of that dialectical process’ (Young, 2001: 4).

In order to unpack the dialectical process of postcolonial thinking, it is crucial to first and foremost review the history of colonialism. The essence of colonialism is

> ‘[…] when one nation subjugates another, conquering its population and exploiting it, often while forcing its own language and cultural values upon its people’ (Blakemore, 2019).

What often came hand in hand with colonialism is imperialism that is in a nutshell one country asserting power on another.

Colonialism has been a human condition for thousands of years, stretching all the way back to the ancient Greek and Roman times. And Europeans were not alone in playing the roles of colonisers. The Japanese Empire colonised Taiwan and Korea, as well as wreaked havoc across Asia until the end of the Second World War. After the War, the United States has been preoccupied with the business of neo-colonialism particularly in former colonised societies. Given the context of this research, it is modern European colonialism that is the focal point here.

In the fifteenth century, Europeans began to travel to oceans further afield, as of the Age of Discovery. In 1492, having set out for Asia, Christopher Columbus arrived in the Bahamas instead and claimed it to be part of Spain. The early phase of oceanic exploration was certainly dominated by the Portuguese and Spanish. The result was the vast European colonial project especially in south America: indigenous peoples were subject to lethal diseases, systematic exploitation, land grab through violence or deception, mass loss of life and irreversible termination of civilisations (Young, 2001).

Later, Europeans from other countries followed the footsteps of the Portuguese and Spanish in the project of globetrotting and colonialism. From the late sixteenth century, the Netherlands, England and France began to establish trade routes and colonies around the world. Their footprint spanned across Africa, South Asia, Southeast Asia, North America and Central America. In the Americas particularly, African slaves were pervasively used as the driving force of manpower on sugar and tobacco plantations. As competitors to one another, the Dutch, English and French also endeavoured to steal colonies and oceanic business from the Portuguese and Spanish. It was around this time that the East India Companies were founded by European nations as their national monopoly of international trade. The trend of eighteenth-century English chinoiserie situates in this historical context of booming overseas commerce, along with the Enlightenment and the culture of taste. As considered previously in Chapter 1.1, the Sino-British relations deteriorated into the abyss of colonialism in the nineteenth century – as of the Opium Wars and colonisation of Hong Kong to come.

In the nineteenth century, the European colonial project reached its peak, having expansive control across the globe. The British Empire alone boasted to have colonial territories so ubiquitously that it was 'the empire on which the sun never sets.' Colonialism and imperialism together forced domination, economic exploitation and coercive control on the colonised. In colonies, natural resources were extracted, and local industries were wiped out. In return, the colonised were forced to buy the final products made from raw materials from their own countries. As the psychiatrist/activist Frantz Fanon reminds us in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), it was through this brutal and exploitative mechanism based on inequality that Europe gained, established and enjoyed its incomparable wealth, cultures and civilisations.

In the twentieth century, the end of the Second World War (1937-1945) witnessed the reshuffle of global power. The hugely destructive war brought an end to the old empires that had been seemingly invincible, superior and unshakable. At the same time, the United States and the Soviet Union seized the moment to take over world power. Weakened by the War, the colonial empires struggled to retain control in the colonies (Young, 2001).

Resistance to colonialism is intrinsic to the history of colonialism. Postwar, self-determination started to take off as a movement across national borders. Colonies in Africa, Asia and Latin America commenced their individual projects to exit the colonial rule imposed on them. In 1945, the United Nations was founded on the consensus of respect for equal rights and self-determination. As the world sank deeper into the ideological division between the West (the First World) and the Soviet system (the Second World), the concept of the Third World – that of the colonised societies – emerged in the 1950s. Leaders from India, Egypt, Yugoslavia etc. attended the 1955 Bandung Conference that consolidated the determination of independence of the so-called Third World. Later in 1961, the Non-Aligned Movement was put in place. Independence in colonies was demanded, fought, and won through struggle, armed and unarmed, in the second half of the twentieth century (Young, 2001). Since then, the postcolonial project has ever been gathering momentum both in the real world and within academic debates.

Postcolonial Thinking & Articulations

> ‘Postcolonial theory takes many different shapes and interventions, but all share a fundamental claim: that the world we inhabit is impossible to understand except in relationship to the history of imperialism and colonial rule’ (Elam, 2019).

As a field of academic research, Postcolonialism, or Postcolonial Theory/Studies, deals with the aftermath of colonialism. Considering the historical context of English chinoiserie, my focus here is on the response to European colonialism. Postcolonialism has been most prevalent in the discipline of Literature, or Literary Studies. In the 1980s, there emerged debates regarding how to tackle the legacy of colonialism and imperialism. Edward Said (1978; 1993) discloses the breadth and depth of European colonial project, whilst Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988) provides an intricate critique of colonialism with Marxist ideas. In terms of the aftermath of British colonialism, Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy, and Rasheed Araeen address issues pertaining to diasporas of formerly colonised subjects in British society. In Britain, venues were established to open up dialogues about decolonising, physical and conceptual: notably, the now defunct Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies founded by Hall and the ongoing publication of the Third Text started by Araeen. Postcolonial thinking confronts Eurocentric perceptions of history and critically addresses this imbalance in how we review the past and by extension the present (Munslow, 2000).

As part of my argument for notional interlocution, my postcolonial strategy draws from the postcolonial thoughts that

> '[…] resist certainties and instead to ask questions: certainties tend to be based on the dominant view and this inevitably excludes the views of many others affected by post-colonial history' (Ramone, 2011: 4).

Here the focal point is the question of representation. I am especially interested in the confluence of constructivist and poststructuralist approaches and the postcolonial cause. My focus here is particularly on the postcolonial rationale of individuals seeking meaning, interpreting events and speaking for themselves. Such an act serves as a response to how history and narratives are constructed. Too often they are written by the victors, the conquerors, the ones in the position of power to narrate for others. Dealing with historicity – that is, history construed from a Western/European point of view, has been intrinsic to the postcolonial cause.

To establish the groundwork for my response to the British/European representation of Chineseness in chinoiserie, I review Said's *contrapuntal reading* (1993), Spivak's *subaltern's voices* (1988) and Achebe's *the balance of stories* (2000). Their postcolonial studies are wherein I formulate my methodological framework of notional interlocution in which to reinterpret the historic visual style.

Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) is responsible for introducing postcolonial argument to academic institutions. As articulated previously in Chapter 1.2, Said's theory (1978) brings into focus the Eastern other as perceived through the lens of Western colonisation and imperialism. He opposes to the understanding of history from a Western/European perspective. Furthermore, he warns us the dangerous

Eurocentric practice of representing non-Europeans: the power of representation correlates with the power of colonialism.

Previously I raised questions about Said's historiography (1978) of an all-pervasive European colonialism in my analysis of eighteenth-century Sino-British history. This is because the theorist's idea of Orientalism is based on his analysis of literature related to the nineteenth-century French and British colonial business in the Levant. This different historical context led to my exploration of relevant eighteenth-century Sino-British/European historiographies (Aravamudan, 2011; Carey and Festa, 2009; Jenkins, 2013; Porter, 2010). My intention here is to contextualise his *contrapuntal reading* (1993) as part of my methodological framework. It is intrinsic to my argument for notional interlocution that contrapuntal reading informs in part my postcolonial strategy whereby to reinterpret English chinoiserie in this research.

In *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Said explains that contrapuntal reading requires deciphering texts with an eye to seeing the whole picture. It is important to untangle intertwined histories patched together by the thread of colonialism and imperialism. Novels and literary tales alike are constructed on the basis of the victor's story. Colonial perspectives are, consciously or unconsciously, embedded in texts and fictions. In interpreting a text, it is thus crucial to proactively draw attention to, consider and disclose the colonised subjects' hidden existence, perspectives and forced/coerced roles in relation to the colonial project.

By this logic, Said (1993) examines *Mansfield Park* by Jane Austen. The novel was first published in 1814 and is set in the country house of the same name. Austen's character Sir Thomas Bertram of the stately home derives his wealth from his business in Antigua. Bertram's luxurious lifestyle is supported by the sugar trade facilitated by slavery across the Atlantic. And yet when he visits the sugar plantation eventually in Antigua, there is no mentioning of the inhumane trade system of which Bertram and in general the English upper class take advantage hugely. The focus throughout the fiction is solely on the privileged beneficiaries of the British colonial project, sugar business and slavery.

Said (1993) points out the situation in which the colonised others are cast as silent and having no voice. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge and disclose the colonised subjects when we read a text, so as to counter-narrative the colonial enterprise. Regarding Austen's fiction, Said argues that

> '[…] interpreting Jane Austen depends on *who* does the interpreting, *when* it is done, and no less important, from *where* it is done. […] The question is thus not only how to understand and with what to connect Austen's morality and its social basis, but *what* to read of it' (1993: 111).

In line with Said's criticism of Western narratives of non-European cultures, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak raises questions regarding the working of colonialism. In her intricate essay (1988) *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, the literary scholar critically considers the way in which Europeans conceive, study and represent other cultures. Informed by Antonio Gramsci's concept of subaltern, Spivak weaves a complex tapestry of a postcolonial response to the way in which narratives construct history. Further, the theorist employs Marxist, deconstructionist and feminist approaches to analysing the case of her native India vis-a-vis the British colonial administration (Munslow, 2000).

According to Spivak, the British/European academic interest in India is not innocent but is informed by the pursuit of economic and colonial interests. Through studies and knowledge production, Europeans *other* their colonial subjects in a way that is for their own gain. Spivak addresses the buried voices of the colonised, scrutinising Western writers including Marx, Foucault, Deleuze and Derrida. The literary theorist calls for attention to the lack of narratives of the subaltern. As a postcolonial objective, the mega picture painted by colonial narratives of the colonised has to be deconstructed with multiple tools and from multiple angles, such as class, gender and race, among other perspectives.

In tandem with the postcolonial argument for uncovering buried voices, the writer and literary critic Chinua Achebe calls for self-representation of colonised subjects. Achebe originally studied medicine on a scholarship in Nigeria during the British colonial rule when he came across English literature in which Africans are represented by European authors. Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1899) and Joyce Cary’s *Mister Johnson* (1939) particularly drew his attention as in the novels Africa and its people are portrayed as uncivilised, lesser and lacking in agency. Achebe hence transferred to major in English Literature at university, starting his literary path of addressing the postcolonial cause.

The writer is concerned with how African people are deprived of having their own voices and instead are exposed to narratives about themselves powered by European colonialism. Like a vicious cycle, the deficiency of self-representation helps perpetuate the colonial idea of an inferior other, such as derogatory description of Africans in literature. His *Things Fall Apart* (1958) is one of the first African novels – as written about and by Africans (Bacon, 2000). As a postcolonial strategy, Achebe depicts Africans through an African lens so as to repair Africans' self-perspective dented by colonialism. In his *Home and Exile* (2000), Achebe encapsulates such counter-text as *the balance of stories*. The postcolonial measure is in essence '[…] telling the story of his own oppressed people as a means to restoring identity and reclaiming power, and encouraging others to do the same' (Fetters, 2013).

Said's *contrapuntal reading* (1993), Spivak's *subaltern's voices* (1988) and Achebe's *the balance of stories* (2000) all shed light on the lack of voices of non-European other. They urge us to bring to focus the colonised subjects. As notional interlocution addresses the imbalance of representation of Chineseness in chinoiserie, I locate my postcolonial strategy within this theoretical context.

The concern of a lack of non-European perspective is central to artist Erika Tan's artist film *Sensing Obscurity I, II, III* (2012), a response to chinoiserie. The artwork was commissioned by *The Sinopticon: Contemporary Chinoiserie in Contemporary Art*, which was a major art project in response to the visual style. Created and curated by independent duo curators Day & Gluckman, the project had artists critically responding to local, English and European chinoiserie. In 2012, the commissioned and chosen artworks were exhibited across multiple venues in Plymouth. There was also a series of events including a symposium at V&A in London and residency/workshop at the Chinese Arts Centre in Manchester, a residency at OCAT Residency in Shenzhen, China, and so forth.

Tan's filmic work in three parts is set in Saltram House, a stately home near Plymouth, in the West Country. The country house was home to the Parker family and is said to be one of the best preserved early Georgian mansions (National Trust, no date). In the Chinese dressing room, there is an exquisite Chinese wallpaper from the mid-eighteenth century. The wallpaper is full of Chinese figures, mostly female, that are particularly tall/long, as of Long Eliza style (Cooper, no date). Saltram House is now a working museum and is owned by the National Trust.

Filmed in-situ in the mansion, the artwork '[…] seeks a post-colonial reclamation to the possibility of telling stories through the use of a multiplicity of narrative devices' (Tan, no date). Across the three parts of the filmic work, there is an array of visual strategies, including documentary and narrative film motifs, the cut-and-paste visual dynamic of hip-hop and chinoiserie (Tan, no date). The actors in the film are amateur and of East Asian heritage from the locality. Through the actors' performance and the visual techniques employed, the work explores the possible rise of China as global power and the opportunity to revisit history differently (Tan, no date).

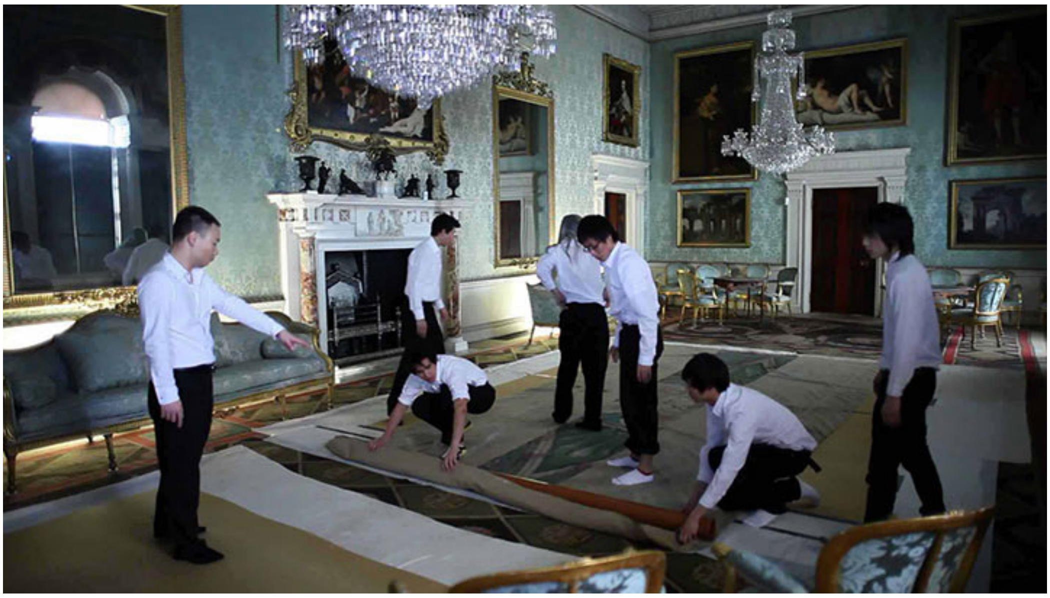

Fig 21: Film still from *Sensing Obscurity I* (2012). The classic Saloon, photographed here, was designed by the established architect Robert Adam who also worked on Harewood House alongside designer Thomas Chippendale, or *Chinese Chippendale*. (photo credit: Erika Tan)

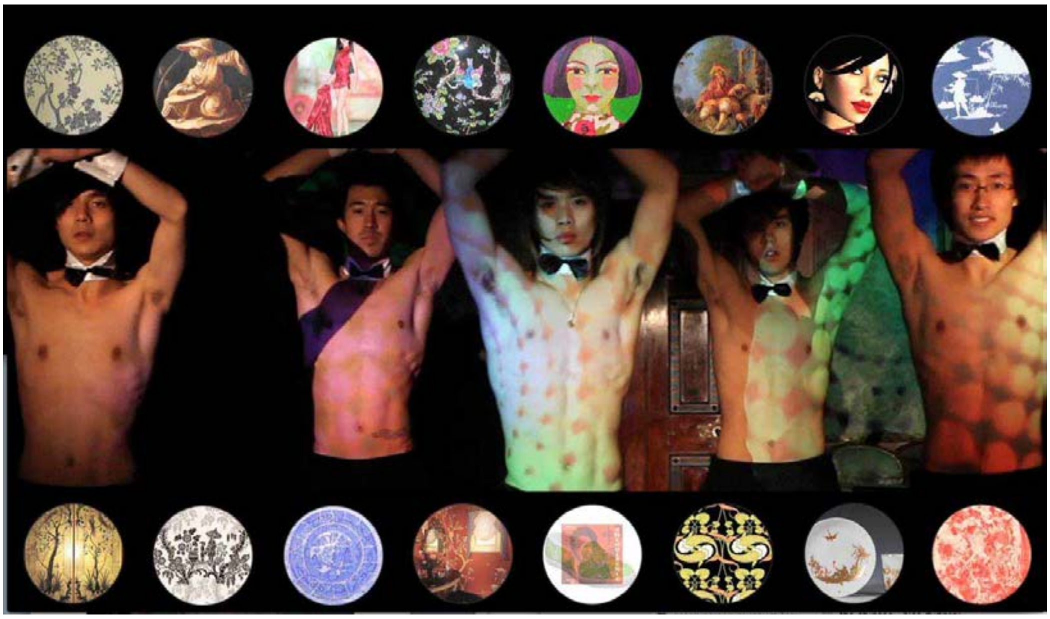

Fig 22: Film still from *Sensing Obscurity II* (2012)*.* Young men of East Asian heritage from the locality dance to music. Images of Chinese motifs are also present in the film alongside the performance. (photo credit: Erika Tan)

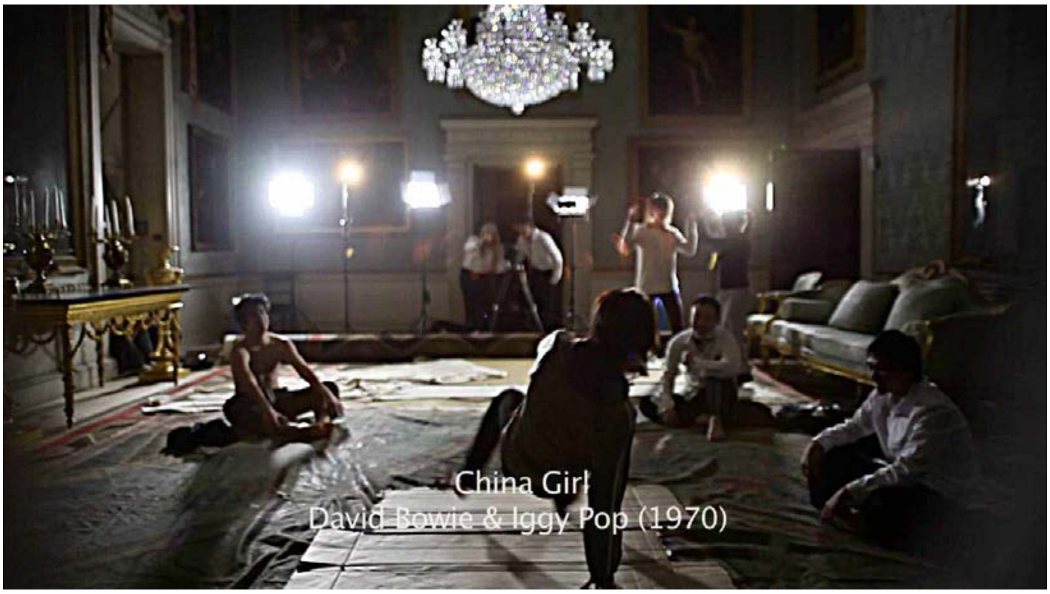

Fig 23: Film still from *Sensing Obscurity III* (2012)*.* The same crew of young East Asian men dance in the style of hip pop on the floor in the Saloon room. Names of films that reference Chinese people and culture are shown on the screen one by one. (photo credit: Erika Tan)

Tan and I choose to work with cultural heritage sites with chinoiserie collections. While Tan investigates the possible narratives around history through performance, I have a different approach in this research. Notional interlocution generates and articulates perspectives and narratives through text. This is because my focus is on reinterpreting history through discourse. As a postcolonial concern, I question the existing representation of Chineseness in chinoiserie. Central to my interrogation of the visual style is to provide historiographical insights in the form of textual narrative.

The question of representation in relation to chinoiserie is the focal point to artist Tsang Kin Wah in the same project, *The Sinopticon: Contemporary Chinoiserie in Contemporary Art*. In Tsang's early work, he often employs texts as his main material. Words are arranged in ways that constitute decorative patterns. Such visual content then fills up interior surfaces in designated exhibition spaces. As such, he '[…] brings to the fore contradictions between image and text, appearance and content' (Guggenheim, no date).

In *Sinopticon*, Tsang interrogates chinoiserie with regard to the representation of Chinese people. In his commissioned work *You are Extremely…*[46] (2012) the artist collects racist comments on Chinese people from the Internet in bulk and arranges the texts into a pattern similar to historic Chinese wallpaper. The whole image was painted on a wall as an exhibit at Plymouth Arts Centre in 2012. Due to the small font, the derogatory wordings are not comprehensible unless upon close reading. Here Tsang examines the prescribed stereotypes of Chinese people in the contemporary time. As one of the most popular chinoiserie products, Chinese wallpaper was hugely sought-after. Through juxtaposing the hostility towards Chinese people and the love for Chinese artefacts, the artist generates an uneasy tension that demands contemplation.

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[46] The full name of the work is *You Are Extremely Terrified of Them, But You Are Definitely Not a Racist.*

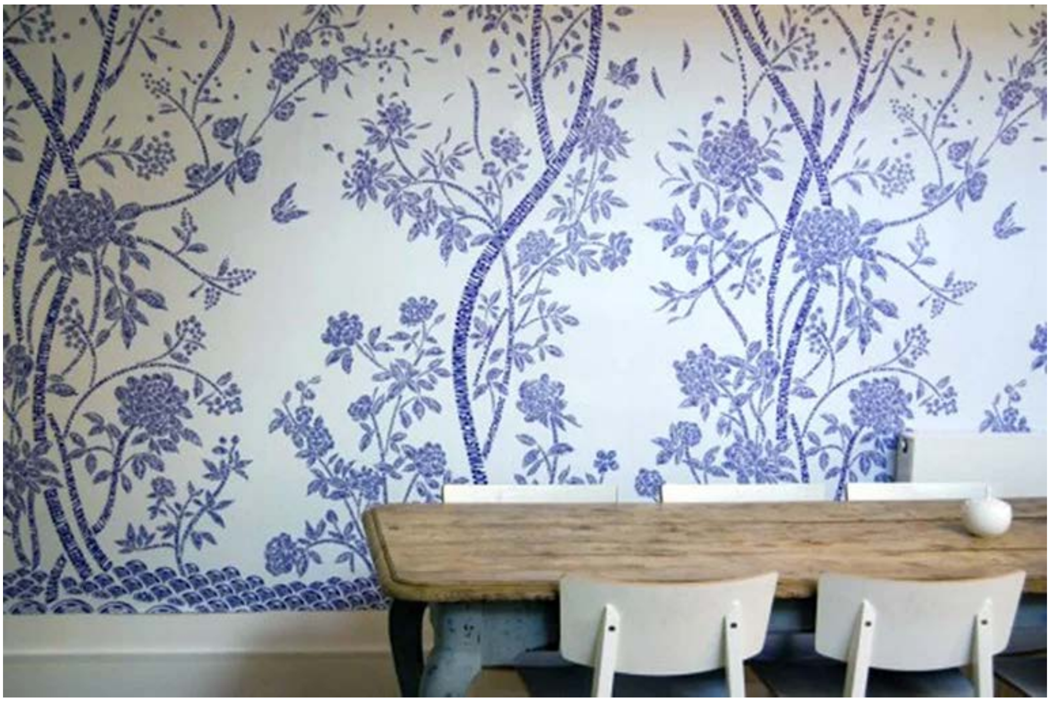

Fig 24: Image of *You are Extremely*…(Tsang, 2012). The work consists of racist slurs collected from the Internet that are arranged in a way similar to historic Chinese wallpaper. (photo credit: Tsang Kin Wah)

Multiple Voices

> "The question is also not that of merely 'correcting' the images whites have of non-whites, nor of reaching to the colonial territorial mind by simply reversing the situation and setting up an opposition that at best, will hold up a mirror to the Master's activities and preoccupations" (Trinh, 1991: 72).

Tsang's work (2012) on chinoiserie responds to racism against Chinese people in the present time. While such a call-out is necessary and important, my research is different from his project as I explore relevant eighteenth-century Sino-British history and historiographies. Also, this PhD is a thought experiment in that I suspend the narrative of the Chinese other being bullied by the West.

Despite the difference in our approaches, here I want to use Tsang's work (2012) to articulate a crucial aspect of notional interlocution that is multiple voices. Tsang's racist slurs from the Internet point to the supposedly Western antagonism against and negative perceptions of Chinese people. What I think this illustrates is the bigger picture of a binary opposition of a Western/European self and a Chinese other, and that the two are in a constant struggle of antipathy. In this precarious scenario, it is often, if not always, the Chinese other being on the receiving end of oppression from the West. The bully and bullied are fixated in their prescribed roles.

As articulated in Chapter 1, the Sino-British/European relations in the eighteenth century were very different from the nineteenth-century counterpart. China enjoyed a high position, culturally and materially. Foreign countries were desperate for Chinese goods and had to comply with the strict Chinese rules (Purdue, 2009). This situation changed when Britain invaded the Chinese Empire in the nineteenth century, in terms of the Opium Wars. Furthermore, there are multiple ways in which to understand relevant Sino-British history in eighteenth-century English chinoiserie. There are multiple historiographies at play (Aravamudan, 2011; Carey and Festa, 2009; Jenkins, 2013; Porter, 2010). What this means is there are multiple perspectives from which to explain the history.

Looking back, I vividly remember during the PhD I was once told by someone 'Don't go easy on them' after I explained to that person about my research. My understanding of the expression is 'Don't let the British off the hook easily regarding the colonial past.' The rhetoric, mentality and logic of *we and they* or, more precisely, *we versus they* was at play. Central to notional interlocution is to address the problem of duality in reinterpreting chinoiserie from a postcolonial perspective. At this point, I find it necessary to further argue for my methodological framework by contextualising multiple voices within postcolonial thinking.

Trinh T. Minh-ha is known for her critique on anthropology and ethnographic filmmaking in her non-conventional and poetic writing and filmmaking. The cross-disciplinary academic critically questions the Western gaze at non-Western subjects in terms of academic interest and challenges the power structure in which non-Europeans are subject to othering. The cultural theorist and filmmaker (1991) warns us the dangerous and yet common practice of binary narratives in documentary films. She reminds us that in documentaries often there is either one single voice or opposing views with the latter being supposed to present two sides of an event in question in a way of perceived objectivity. This leads to a binary situation of either unification or opposition, agreeing or disagreeing, supporting or clashing. The dualistic logic is so deeply ingrained in us that we are confined in this narrow black-and-white tunnel vision.

In tandem with her work as a theorist, the academic deals with the problem of duality in her filmmaking practice. Shot in six West African countries – Senegal, Mauritania, Togo, Mali, Burkina Faso and Benin – Trinh's film *Naked Spaces: Living is Round* (1985) is a contemplation on dwelling and living spaces. To contest the power imbalance in representing other – that is in this case her observing West African cultures, the theorist filmmaker manipulates the narration. There are three female voices in the film: that are the filmmaker herself/Trinh, a woman fluent with

Western philosophy and a third woman familiar with African literature. Each of them speaks about dwelling from their respective perspectives informed by their own cultural backgrounds. In the filmmaker’s words:

> ‘Some of us tend to consume the three as one because we are trained to not hearing how voices are positioned and to not having to deal with difference otherwise than opposition’ (Trinh, 1991: 150).

As an intentional tactic, the three voices/narrators are different from each other but in the meantime not opposing to each other. Through the strategy of three views, Trinh (1991) proposes *three modes of informing*. That is, three perspectives from which to explain, explore and convey. As a non-dualistic tool, the three opinions constitute a landscape of information that defies our habitual pattern of binary thinking, reading and perceiving. As a postcolonial tool, Trinh uses plurality to contest the treacherous terrain of a dualistic framework of self and other.

Intrinsic to my contestation for notional interlocution, I concur with Trinh’s method of multiplicity to challenge binary opposition. It is exponential in my research to articulate multiple narratives. That is to create new narratives from multiple perspectives from the British and Chinese sides in way that is not of binary opposition. As my research informs my practice, this rationale critically informs how I make the artist films regarding the case studies of the chosen cultural heritage sites. In other words, the method of plurality informs how I write the scripts/narratives for the films.

Having argued for *multiple voices* in relation to tackling self/other duality, now I would now like to explore inwardly. As I further argue for multiple voices and by extension notional interlocution, my contention here is to investigate *Chinese people* – or, Chineseness as an identity. In the artist Ting-Ting Cheng's moving image work *Copying Blue Willow* (no date), she painstakingly copies the willow pattern from porcelain plates onto disposable paper ones. The copying lasts approximately 75 hours. This work is a continuation of Cheng's previous project *Ten Thousand Chinese Things* (2015) in which the artist questions the cultural authenticity of the willow pattern, as well as the problem of power in Western fabrication of Asian artefacts.

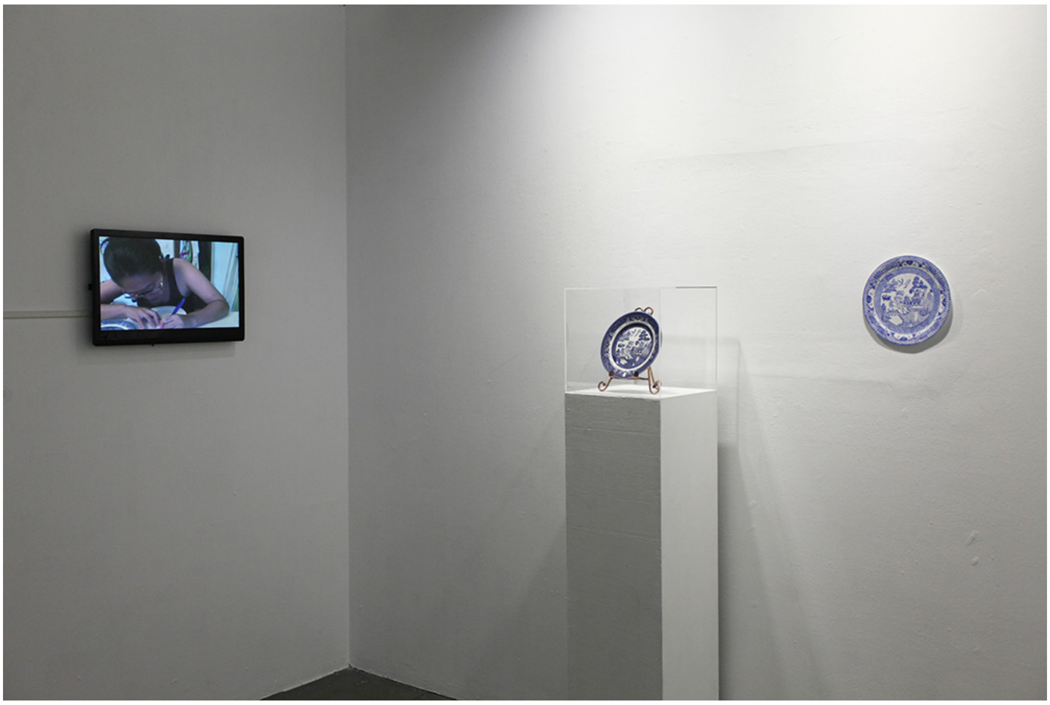

Fig 25: Image of Cheng's exhibition (no date). Cheng's transferred willow pattern plates and video of the laborious copying on display. (photo credit: Ting Ting Cheng)

Cheng's laborous act of copying is in my view an exploration of the notion of mimicry encapsulated by Bhabha (1984). In hindsight, the cultural theorist argues that through imitation of how colonial power represents the colonised subject, the colonised other can disrupt the asymmetric power structure fuelled by colonialism and imperialism. Through mimicry, Cheng also questions the authenticity of

Chineseness. As the willow pattern was a British product of imitating Chinese imagery and motif, it was in fact not a Chinese design.

What draws my attention the most is how Cheng brings in her personal background in deconstructing the willow pattern. In her own words, ‘It’s an ironic process of copying/learning about my culture through a European interpretation’ (Cheng, no date). As a UK-based Taiwanese artist, Cheng does not problematise her identity when referencing Chinese culture.

However, also as a UK-based Taiwanese artist myself, I find it imperative to question Chineseness as an identity in tandem with the interrogation of chinoiserie. Previously Chapter 1.3 explained that it is open to personal opinion and therefore does not have to conform to a singular narrative, imposed or otherwise. Chineseness as an identity should in fact be identities, catering to individual circumstances and viewpoints (Ang, 1994, 1998, 2001, 2013; Hall, 1990). As an extension of the subject matter, here I want to discuss Chinese identity/identities in the context of self-representation. My concern here is how to represent oneself vis-à-vis the colonial power in the chinoiserie contact zone.

Trinh T. Ming-Ha articulates that ‘For there can hardly be such a thing as an essential inside that can be homogeneously represented by all insiders […]’ (1991: 75). When one critically examines an identity or a culture, one is to find diversity within the entity. In Trinh’s words:

> “This is not to say that the historical “I” can be obscured or ignored, and that differentiation cannot be made; but that “I” is not unitary, culture has never

> been monolithic, and more or less is always in relation to a judging subject" (1991: 76).

The difference within a cultural identity challenges the binary concept of self and other. For a self is actually multiple selves. By arguing for multiple voices in tandem with diversifying cultural identity, I further crystalise my methodological framework. Through notional interlocution, I will open up new spaces through creating new narratives of multiple *Chinese others* in the three artist films.

* * *

In conclusion, I have reviewed the three chosen cultural heritage sites within a wider cultural and cross-cultural history. By doing do, I have pointed out the specific historical events related to the chinoiserie collections in situ that this research focuses on: George IV's use of chinoiserie interior at the Royal Pavilion to help him escape his duties and Macartney's embassy to China; the Chinese wallpaper at Harewood House in relation to the culture of taste; the Delftware at Chatsworth House and its multiple cultural influences. This historical analysis will inform what I examine in my artist films.

Informed by my review of pertinent historiographies (Aravamudan, 2011; Carey and Festa, 2009; Jenkins, 2013; Porter, 2010) and Chineseness as an identity (Ang, 2013; Hall, 1990), I sought to have plurality in narratives and perspective, and subjectivity. I aspired to have a methodological mechanism whereby to have an exchange of personal narratives through fictional (auto)ethnography. In tandem with the rationale, I developed a new methodological framework that I refer to as notional interlocution. Notional interlocution has its foundation in constructivism (Patel, 2015), post-structuralism (Munslow, 2000) and art-based research (Given, 2008; Sullivan, 2001). By extending Mary Louise Pratt's notion of contact zones (1991, 1992), my thesis defines Chineseness as a visual language as a contact zone.

Through extending the notion of (auto)ethnography (Pratt, 1991, 1992), I write new narratives of relevant historical individuals based on their personal stories and backgrounds. As such, my characters meet and confer with each other over the representation of Chineseness in my artist films. As to what the characters speak, I situate my methodological framework within the context of postcolonial voices as a response to European representation of non-Europeans (Achebe, 2000; Said, 1993; Spivak, 1988). I review artworks on chinoiserie (Cheng, no date; Tsang, 2012) in tandem with relevant postcolonial thinking (Trinh, 1991), By doing so, I further tackle the binary opposition regarding colonial self/Chinese other and Chineseness as identity, previously articulated in Chapter 1. Lastly, I argue for multiple voices as a way to diversify and nuance the narratives of the *Chinese self*. Via the methodological framework of notional interlocution, this research creates new narratives in response to chinoiserie through my art practice of filmmaking.

Chapter 3

Artist Films

Chapter 3 is an analysis of my three artist films respectively made at the three case studies of cultural heritage sites. The first film *This is China of a particular sort, I do not know* was filmed inside the Royal Pavilion Brighton. The royal palace was built by George IV and was furnished in the chinoiserie style across its interior. Throughout the film, historical individuals and myself explore Chineseness in relation to pertinent history. The idea of dream is addressed visually and textually throughout the work as the film's awareness of itself as an outcome of notional interlocution and thus a fiction. I also used philosophical ideas from Buddhism to deconstruct the chinoiserie design on site.

The second film *Another beautiful dream* was filmed at Harewood House, examining the Chinese wallpaper in-situ. Three historical persons and myself investigate self and other in response to the culture of taste. Speaking in the form of monologue, the characters show an awareness of being in another dream – after having been to the Pavilion. The use of my family photos as a way to explore self-representation gives this film a personal touch.

The third work *A note on Delftware* was filmed at Chatsworth House. Unlike *This is China*… and *Another beautiful dream*, this film does not comprise fictional speech of historical characters or new narratives generated through notional interlocution. Rather, it is of my commentary on the Delftware objects in situ and the multiple contact zones in relevant cross-cultural history. The non-fiction work addresses and is a reflection on ambiguity in postcolonial review of history.

Regarding my filmmaking in this PhD, I was responsible for all the aspects of the production: scriptwriting, camera operation, directing and editing/postproduction, except for the original music by the composer Ian Costabile. Throughout the films set at the Pavilion and Harewood House, my characters speak through voice-over. I commissioned and directed professional actors sourced from the Internet to voice act remotely. The only exception is William Alexander in the film set in the Pavilion. A senior academic from my department at university kindly recorded the role for me. As I play myself in these films, I did my own voice-acting and recorded it with help at the university.

There is no visual human presence in my films. Practically speaking, there was no resources to hire actors and extend filming hours. But the dominant reason is because I had no intention to make literal films like period dramas. Instead, I aspired to leave some space for imagination and contemplation.

Artist film, Notional Interlocution and Fictional/(Auto)Ethnography

I situate the three films as part of this research in the category of artist film. Since the 60s, the art scene has gone through a considerable transformation: the interaction and merging of art and moving images (Leighton, 2008: 7). Evolving with the wider cultural and social context, artist film has become a vehicle through which artists participate in debate on a range of issues. Given the nature of this research, I relate my films to artists' filmic work that engages in postcolonial review of history.

The artist Onyeka Igwe revisits Britain's colonial rule and archive in Nigeria. In *A So-Called Archive* (2020), Igwe explores the Colonial Film Unit that was an outlet of the colonial government's propaganda (Igwe, no date). Focusing on contemporary British society, the artist De'Anne Crooks also reviews the legacy of British colonialism. In *Great-ish: The Gaslighting of a Nation* (2020), Crooks reads her letter to her unborn child and articulates the postcolonial reality of living in Britain as part of the African diaspora (Walcott, no date). Although both Igwe and Crooks explore (post)colonialism in relation to Africa, I feel a sense of kinship to their work given our shared focus on postcolonialism.

In this research, filmmaking is the synthesiser in which new narratives in the form of film scripts are created to respond to the chinoiserie collections. *This is China of a particular sort, I do not know* and *Another beautiful dream* are fictions whose scripts were written *through* notional interlocution. And thus, the two films are fictions with fictional narratives. Both films manifest their filmic awareness as fictions through the characters' wandering in dreams. Also, the visual quality of the films conveys a sense of being in a dream/illusion as a result. On the other hand, *A note on Delftware* is a non-fiction work *reflecting on* notional interlocution as a postcolonial strategy. Due to its non-fictional nature, the theme of dream is not present in this film, visually or contextually. Instead, I used a realistic approach in *A note on Delftware* in terms of the aesthetics and narration. Through the three films, I experimented with and reviewed the new methodological framework I developed for this PhD.

As argued in Chapter 2, I created notional interlocution as a postcolonial strategy whereby to create personal narratives powered by fictional (auto)ethnography. It has its foundation in constructivism (Patel, 2015), post-structuralism (Munslow, 2000) and art-based research (Given, 2008; Sullivan, 2011). Mapping the positional and relational, I extended Pratt's (1991; 1992) notions of contact zones and autoethnography. I contextualised notional interlocution as a strategy of postcolonial voices by investigating *contrapuntal reading* (Said, 1993), *subaltern voices* (Spivak (1988) and *the balance of stories* (Achebe, 2000). Informed by Trinh 's *multiple voices* (1991), my methodological framework diversifies and nuances the *Chinese other* to tackle the binary picture of coloniser and colonised. This emphasis on plurality in perspective and subjectivity is informed by my findings from Chapter 1: in which I reviewed pertinent historiographies (Aravamudan, 2011; Carey and Festa, 2009; Jenkins, 2011; Porter, 2010) and Chineseness as an identity (Ang, 2013; Hall, 1990).

As reviewed in Chapter 1.3, I have had an affinity with oral history and lived experience as an artist. Personal stories to me are a powerful tool to challenge the grand narrative. Through putting forth personal lived experience of mine and others, I address subjectivity in my art practice. On this note, I feel resonant to the Film Studies scholar Catherine Russell's claim that

> '[a]utoethnography is a vehicle and a strategy for challenging imposed forms of identity and exploring the discursive possibilities of inauthentic subjectivities' (1999: 276).

In this PhD, (auto)ethnography is essential to my creation of notional interlocution and my reinterpretation of chinoiserie. I locate my artistic method within the context of artworks with a similar approach. The artist Richard Fung explores his personal background of coming from a Chinese family in Trinidad and later migrating to Canada. In *The Way to My Father's Village* (1988) and *My Mother's Place* (1990) the artist investigates his parents' respective migratory trajectories. In *Sea in the Blood* (2000), Fung looks into loss in relation to illnesses: his family's hereditary history of having thalassemia and his partner's AIDS. In the three films, Fung uses autoethnography through his narration alongside family videos and photography (Cho, 2008). Similarly, the artist Mona Hatoum looks into issues informed by her life story: coming from a Palestinian background, the long-standing Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) and being in diaspora as a result. In *Measures of Distance* (1988), Hatoum juxtaposes footage of her mother showering and letters between her and her mother in Arabic with her own narration. Her autoethnographical video contemplates on '[…] displacement, disorientation and a tremendous sense of loss as a result of the separation caused by war '(MoMA, no date). Considering our shared use of (auto)ethnography, I relate my art practice to Fung and Hatoum's filmic work.

Through notional interlocution, I created new narratives through fictional (auto)ethnography. I wrote the film scripts of relevant historical individuals and myself conversing with each other or expressing ourselves in the form of monologue. As the historical individuals are no longer around, their lines in my films are fictional/written by me. The artist Patrick Keiller also uses fictional method in his artist films. Keiller examines landscape in relation to urbanism, economic and British history in *London* (1994), *Robinson in Space* (1997) and *Robinson in Ruins* (2010). In the trilogy, the artist uses an unnamed narrator to speak about the central character Robinson – both of them are unseen in the films (Lim, 2017). Through elaborating on the fictional character's personal experience, political stance and wandering, Keiller via the narrator articulates a criticism on Britain's contemporary social-economic situation. Similarly, the artist duo Straub & Huillet uses fictional characters in *History*

Lessons (1972), which is a filmic adaptation of Bertolt Brecht's unfinished work *The Business Affairs of Mr. Julius Caesar* (Aspell, 2017). In the artist film, a peasant, banker, jurist and writer – all fictional, from the Roman time address their lives the under the reign of Julius Caesar. By way of the fictional speech of the fictional characters, Straub & Huillet revisit Roman history in relation to the development of economics. Based on our fictional methods, I feel my practice is related to films of Keiller (1994, 1997, 2010) and Straub & Huillet (1972).

Through my postcolonial strategy of (auto)ethnography, reinterpretations of relevant history from various perspectives are formulated. The three films are the crystallisation of my exploration of the methodological mechanism. On this note, I concur with Trinh T. Minh-ha's (2013: 143) take on the relationship between theory and practice: 'I theorise with my films, not *about* them.'

Cast (in order of appearance across the three films)

I consciously chose historical individuals who in real life were related to the chinoiserie collections in this research to be my filmic characters. On the British side, there are George IV, George Macartney, William Alexander and 'Chinese' Chippendale. In history, they were respectively involved in the Pavilion, the first British Embassy to China and Harewood House. These characters have different involvement with and views on Chineseness as a visual language. Their viewpoints are based on their personal experience in the wider cultural and political context of British history this research looks into.

On the *Chinese side*, there are Ang, Chien-lung and myself. The reason for these characters is because I wanted to have different perspectives from which to explore and problematise Chineseness as an identity and as a visual language. Ang's unique background brings to the fore the ambivalence of both Chinese identity and Nationalists' identity in Taiwan. The Chinese Emperor played an important role in Macartney's Embassy and was responsible for the peak of Ching Dynasty. Through having Chien-lung in the films, I aspired to have a historical Chinese vantage point from which to review the Sino-British contact. As an exception, I am the only living/contemporary person in the cast. In the films, I do not articulate my opinions as such but raise questions and point out concerns. This is because ultimately my intention in this PhD is to generate viewpoints as possible ways to revisit history, rather than taking a stance.

Ang (approx. early to late twentieth century or early twenty-first century) was a childhood neighbour of mine in Taiwan. Ang was her last name. Surely, she had had a Manchu name and had adopted Ang as her Sinicised one. My parents called her Ang Ma Ma because she was much older and was roughly the generation of my grandparents. We lived in a modest estate in Yonghe, a Nationalist stronghold in Taipei. My mother used to visit her in her flat to discuss jewellery. Both were rare stones enthusiasts and fellows of the Nationalists' relocation to Taiwan. Because of her background, Ang had collections of Chinese royal jade and furniture from her family. Her story as a *newcomer* was far from ordinary. Ang was a distant cousin of Puyi, the last Emperor of the Chinese Ching Dynasty. In 1911, the Nationalists, led by Sun Yat-sen, overthrew the Ching Dynasty and ended the Chinese dynastic system of thousands of years. The new republic phase turned out to be full of turbulence and was plagued with domestic conflicts between warlords, the Japanese occupation and the Chinese Civil War that eventually saw the Nationalists moving to Taiwan. Ang's fascinating experience has stayed with me as oral history from my parents. I was only a small child when my family lived in the same estate as her before we moved away. I have no recollection of ever seeing her.

Chien-lung (1711-1799) was a Chinese Emperor and ruled between 1736 and 1795. The Ching Dynasty was established by the Manchurians who were not Han Chinese and had historically resided north of the Great Wall. In 1644, Chien-lung's great-grandfather, Shunzhi Emperor, conquered the Han Chinese-led Ming Dynasty and started the Manchu-led Ching Dynasty. As foreign invaders, the Manchurians had a tradition of adoring and adopting Chinese culture. Among the Ching rulers, Chien-lung was especially known for his love of Chinese arts, such as calligraphy, painting and literature. He obsessively stamped his signature chops on calligraphy and painting scrolls that he came across. The result is still visible on these artefacts that are on display in museums today.[47] Alongside his fascination with Chinese arts, he had expanded the national border of China to its largest ever and imposed strict rules within his Empire. This is roughly the current territory of China now (Rawski, 2004). Chien-lung's reign was the peak of the Ching Dynasty culturally, materially and militarily. When George Macartney and his Embassy arrived in China, it was Chien-lung who received the visiting entourage. Europeans were no strangers to the Chinese Emperor. He was surrounded by Jesuit missionaries with whose help the European palaces were built in the Summer Palace. To the Emperor, there was absolutely no need to trade with Britain, because China was already very wealthy and self-sufficient. After Chien-lung, the political situation of China went downhill, essentially because of foreign invasions starting with the Opium Wars. In 1911, the Ching Dynasty was overthrown by the Nationalists after ten failed attempts.

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[47] An example is available here: Columbia University. (no date) *The Qianlong Emperor: Collector and Connoisseur*. Columbia University. [Online image] [Accessed 7 June 2022] http://projects.mcah.columbia.edu/nanxuntu/html/art/qianlong.htm

Clare Chun-yu Liu (1985 – present) is myself indeed. I play myself as the artist director and PhD researcher of and in the films. I was born in Taiwan to parents of immigrant backgrounds. My father is Chinese Indonesian from Sumatra, and my maternal family relocated to Taiwan at the end of the Chinese Civil War. Having lived in Britain for a decade, Chineseness as an identity in relation to diaspora has been the focus of my preoccupation as an artist. Coming across the Royal Pavilion Brighton by accident several years ago ignited my fascination with English chinoiserie. Since then, I have longed to examine the visual style in tandem with the enigma of identity, and hence this PhD.

George IV (1762-1830) was a Prince, Prince Regent and eventually King of the UK. George is a good example of someone employing chinoiserie as a visual form to help evade reality. It is said that chinoiserie was used as a means of escape, thanks to '[…] its role as a counterpoint, as a refreshing or escapist element of otherness […]' (de Bruijn, 2016: 95). The prescribed otherness in the representation of Chineseness in its form, colour and layout and the use of it in a space enabled the mind to get away from the grip of an inconvenient reality. For George, governance of the country was not remotely as interesting and important as sensual pleasures, such as music, food, expensive, exotic objects and pursuing mistresses. He was widely condemned for his inability and reluctance to run the Kingdom, impulsive spending, lavish lifestyle and the huge debts from the long war with Napoleon which he actually won. The monarch took his love for chinoiserie to the next level, with his pleasure palace in which to withdraw. The interior of the Royal Pavilion Brighton was designed to be entirely chinoiserie, so as to provide a sense of illusion (Beevers, 2014). Chineseness here was rendered as a decorative prop and background to facilitate an alternative reality of gratification and getaway.

George Macartney (1737-1805) was a British diplomat with an impressive professional profile. He was envoy to Russia in 1763, Governor of Grenada in 1775, made a Peer in 1776, and Governor of Madras 1781 (British Museum: no date). He was created Earl for leading the first British Embassy to China in 1792 whose main purpose was

> '[…] gathering of as much information as possible about China. The fundamental reason for the fact-finding aspect of the Embassy was the urgent need for the East India Company to discover more about the Chinese economy and way of life in order to ascertain her potential as a market for Lancashire cottons and Indian manufactures to redress the imbalance of the trade in tea' (Wood, 1998: 98).

It took considerable time and negotiation for the Chinese Court and the incoming Embassy to reach an agreement as to exactly where and when to have a formal meeting. Once Chien-lung and Macartney finally met each other, the famous kowtow incident took place. As a compulsory requirement to show one's respect to Chinese emperors, kowtow required one to kneel down and prostrate completely over until the head touched the floor – three times (Halsall, 1998). Chien-lung and his Court expected Macartney to perform kowtow to the Emperor which was an absolute must-do for all people upon seeing the monarch. However, the British diplomat refused to comply with the Chinese rule and instead offered to perform the British equivalent of etiquette that was kneeling down on one leg. Neither agreement nor compromise was reached, and a seed of bitterness was sown. This incident of mutual dismay over kowtow was only one example of the two parties' different world views. Much more was to follow. The Embassy was unsuccessful except in gathering information (Crammer-Byng, 1962).

William Alexander (1767-1816) was one of the two appointed illustrators on Macartney's Embassy. As part of Britain's first government-level mission to China, Alexander's task

> '[…] was akin to that of the orientalist scholar in an Enlightenment project of gathering, categorizing, and translating foreign culture into something legible to a European audience' (Sloboda, 2008: 29).

The Embassy was subject to various restrictions of the Chinese authority and the decisions of the Emperor. The draughtsman and some members of the mission were not allowed to accompany Macartney to the historic event of meeting Chien-lung. Instead, they were placed in a house with no view of the outside world arranged by the Chinese Court. In terms of travelling within the country, the draughtman and others were permitted to sail on their boat. Relying on fellow colleagues' reports and sketches and his own views from the vessel, Alexander managed to produce a vast number of pictures about China. Besides, he also borrowed references from previous artists' work (Sloboda, 2008). His publications of visual descriptions from the trip proved to be successful and influential. In the late eighteenth century, the popularity of chinoiserie was on the decline in Britain (Loske, no date). As explained before, George IV's Royal Pavilion Brighton was a revival of chinoiserie in early nineteenth-century Britain. Alexander's pictures of China were responsible for inspiring some parts of the Pavilion's interior design (Loske, no date).

'Chinese' Chippendale (1718-1779) was responsible for providing a large number of pieces of furniture to Harewood House. Working with the architect Robert Adam, Chippendale sourced chinoiserie artefacts, including the Chinese-made wallpaper in the East Bedroom for the decorating project. Apart from obtaining Chinese-made furniture, the designer was widely praised for his European and chinoiserie design. His publication *The Gentleman and Cabinet-Maker's Director* (1754) was a huge success, significantly influencing his contemporaries.

Chippendale's design practice in relation to chinoiserie brings into focus the wider context of economic, social and cultural aspects of British life. In the eighteenth century, Britain experienced an unprecedented economic boom due to the advancement of maritime technology and the expansion of routes to faraway parts of the world (de Bruijin, 2017). Integral to this phenomenon was Britain's newly attained internal political stability, imperial growth through its East India Company and industrial excellence. The circulation of goods from oceans away was on a sharp rise and brought in huge profits, especially to the court, the upper class and to a new tier of individuals without inherited status in society. Eager to establish themselves in society and to assimilate into the landed gentry, the newly rich businesspeople resorted to buying land and building country houses, whilst keeping residencies in cities where business activities took place.

The life of aristocrats and self-made individuals alike in this time was characetrised by the rising consumer culture and the pursuit of taste (de Bruijn, 2016; Porter, 2002). It was a common practice to display one's wealth, connection and refinement through possessing exotic, expensive artefacts: '[…] persons of quality and distinction, who have taste and all that, are advised to have something foreign and superb.'[48] It was through the English East India Company that foreign goods including chinoiserie artifacts were available in Britain. The Company's primary goods were the ones to be sold openly in Britain, mainly tea. Parallel to that was the lucrative practice of private trade through which employees of all ranks were allowed to buy decorative arts often at the request of acquaintances of considerable wealth back in Britain. The high price and rarity of chinoiserie objects made all things Chinese a perfect fit within the British culture of taste.

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[48] See *The World*, September 20, no.38, vol.1, 1753, p.242.

Chapter 3.1

This is China of a particular sort, I do not know

2020, 34 minutes, colour digital video, sound

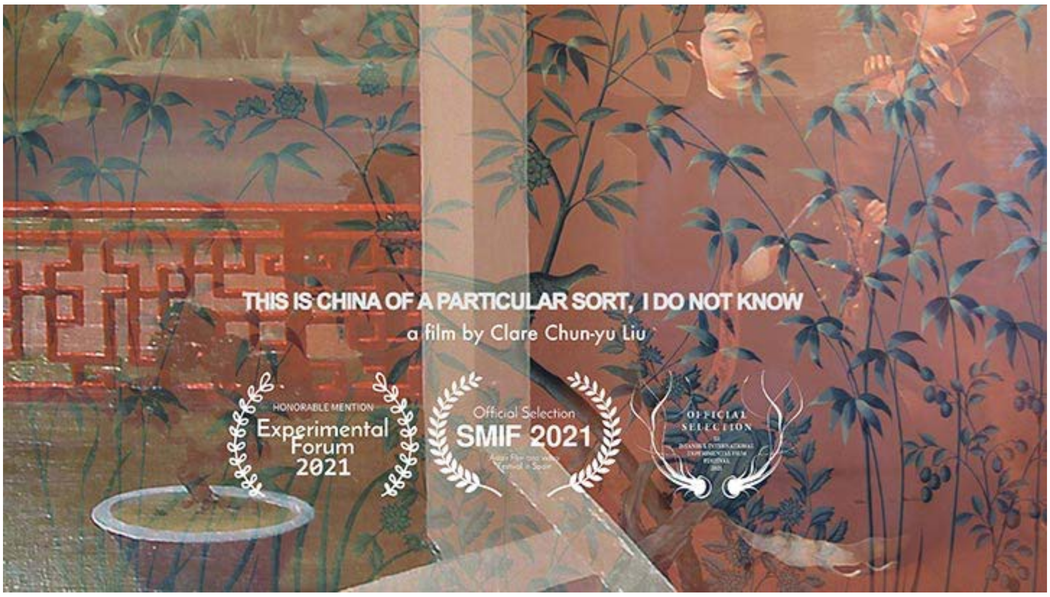
THIS IS CHINA OF A PARTICULAR SORT, I DO NOT KNOW
a film by Clare Chun-yu Liu
HONORABLE MENTION
Experimental Forum 2021
Official Selection
SMIF 2021
OFFICIAL SELECTION

Fig 26: Poster of *This is China of a particular sort, I do not know*.

Synopsis

This is China of a particular sort, I do not know is a postcolonial response to chinoiserie, a European decorative style imitating Chinese motifs popular in the eighteenth century. It is set and was entirely filmed at the Royal Pavilion Brighton, a pleasure palace built by George IV with its interior being entirely chinoiserie.

Across six parts, the artist herself and relevant historical individuals – George IV the British King, Chien-lung the Chinese Emperor who received the Macartney Embassy, George Macartney who led the first British Embassy to China, William Alexander the draughtsman from the Embassy, and Ang, a Ching Dynasty royal family member and also the artist's childhood neighbour in Taiwan – question, argue with and fail to understand each other over the representation of Chineseness in chinoiserie at the Pavilion.

* * *

This is China of a particular sort, I do not know is the longest film in this PhD – by far longer than the other works. And therefore, its analysis is much longer than that of the other two films. This is because the cultural heritage site presides over an expansive history: of George the IV who had it built, of Britain because it was a royal residence, and of Sino-British relations in terms of Macartney's Embassy. Drawing from the relevant personal, national and international historical context, I developed lines of enquiry to explore in six parts. As the topics are intertwined across the film, my analysis of the film is by theme rather than part. They are respectively: Dream & the Real/Illusion; Appearance, Emptiness and Existence; Cause and Effect & Interpretation of History; Xanadu, Interpretation and Imagination; and '[…] there is no one, sweet, old China for us to return to.'

The script was created through my methodological framework of notional interlocution, argued in Chapter 2. I used six characters. On the British side, there are George IV, George Macartney and William Alexander. On the 'Chinese' side, there are Ang, myself and Chien-lung. The five historical individuals and myself as the only contemporary person respond to the themes based on our respective lived experience. The result is a plethora of historiographies and reinterpretations of history pertinent to the chinoiserie interior at the Pavilion from multiple perspectives. Informed by Trinh T. Minh-ha's method of multiplicity (1991) reviewed in Chapter 2, the viewpoints are different but are not in a relation of binary opposition to each other.

The Pavilion was my first site to film in this research. The former royal palace was and still is available as a film location for hire outside of its opening hours. Both of its chinoiserie interior and Indian Mughal exterior are popular with filmic projects for their unique and extravagant designs. As the Pavilion is a working museum, productions renting the cultural heritage site must film in limited hours. The same rules of filming before or after opening times applied to me. After pleading the ethos of zero/micro-budget academic research and hence successfully haggling down the filming fee, I was allowed in with a DSLR camera.

Filming there on site was a real challenge. I could not use a dolly or lighting equipment due to the fragile flooring and no supply of electricity. Lighting was tricky. The Pavilion was particularly dark inside because it was built to be an alternative reality for George IV to evade the real world. There were barely any windows and natural light was considerably scarce. Under these precarious circumstances, I filmed and took photos in the rooms as much as I could across the palace for just over two hours in the morning. When I went through the clips and images afterwards on a computer, shock and despair permeated through me. They were shaky and unfocused, basically just unusable.

The limitation of the filming condition and the consequent poor quality of visual materials turned out to be an experimentation in creativity. It became clear that I had to discard the filmed footage and instead focus on the still images. After some heavy editing in Photoshop, some photos were almost in a reasonable shape. As I attempted to rescue and experiment with the images, I started to take down their opacity and juxtapose them. Layers of still photos began to fall into place and a sense of visual meaning started to emerge. I then realised that the imperfect images and by extension the formal aspect of the film were in a dialogue with the overarching theme of the film: Dream & the Real/Illusion. Funnily enough, this epiphany came around after my long hours of (re)working on the images. The process was so intense that I had dreams at night where I was *inside* the film, roaming across the newly edited frames.

To enrich the film, I commissioned the composer Ian Costabile to create original music. The musical piece was composed based on dream & the real/illusion. Throughout the film, Costabile's music responds to the images and adds another layer to the work.

Dream & the Real/Illusion

The exploration of dream permeates throughout *This is China of a particular sort, I do not know.* In Chapter 2, I argued for notional interlocution as my methodological framework. Through this postcolonial strategy I created new narratives through fictional (auto)ethnography. Thus, I wrote the film script of relevant historical individuals and myself conversing with each other or expressing themselves in the form of monologue.

Given chinoiserie being a historical phenomenon and some of my characters being 'based' in China and Taiwan, such interlocutions transcend time and space. In this critical vein, I wanted the film to have a sense of self-awareness that it is itself a fiction, as of fictional (auto)ethnography.

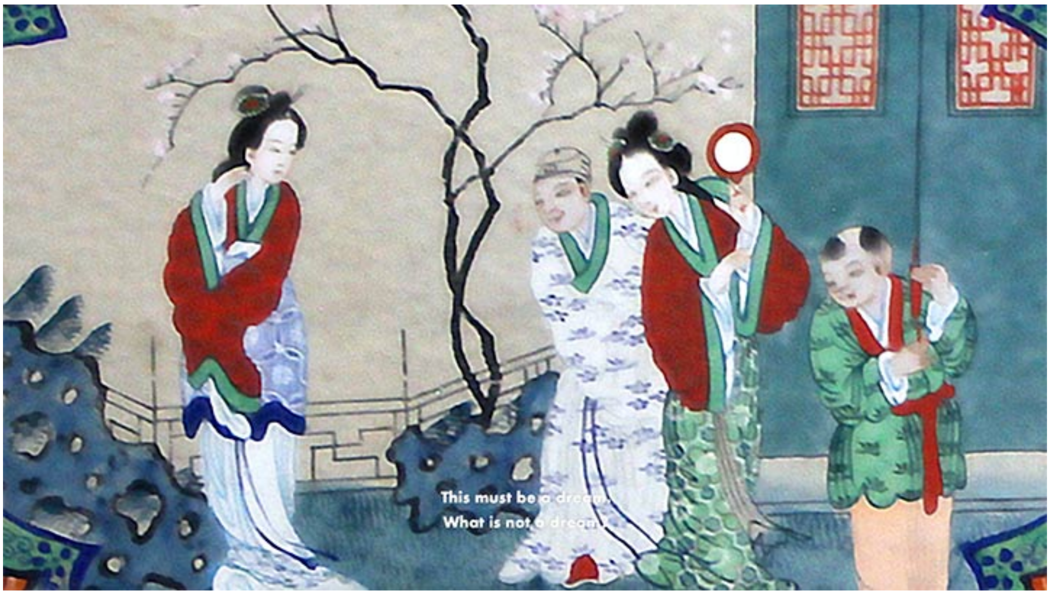
This must be a dream.
What is not a dream.

Fig 27: Film still from *This is China of a particular sort, I do not know*. This image is from a chinoiserie cabinet located in the King's Apartment at the Pavilion. Upon entering the dream-like chinoiserie contact zone at the Pavilion, Ang cannot help but proclaim, 'This must be a dream.' In response, George argues, 'What is not a dream.' The exchange between Ang and George on dream/the real/illusion persists across Part 1.

The visual aspect of the film implies a dream-like modality. Artistically speaking, this was made possible in the stage of editing/postproduction. I extensively took down the opacity of images so that they looked less solid. In some scenes such semi-translucent images were layered together which created a sense of dream and hallucination. The other technique I employed a lot in the film is close-up. I showed parts of the in-situ chinoiserie interior at a close range. Technically speaking, this is because many photos were blurry and only parts of them were clear enough to be used. The limited quality of visual materials pushed me to be creative and resourceful. In both techniques, still images were moved digitally, so as to create movements. This is how the theme of dream and hence the filmic awareness of itself as a fiction were explored visually throughout the work.

On the other hand, the film's self-perception comes through the characters' narration. In Part 1, Ang and George meet each for the first time. It starts as Ang claims, 'This must not be real.' In response, George asks, 'What is real?' This is my nod to the classic exchange in the film *the Matrix* (1999) where Neo painfully utters, 'This is not real' after taking the truth capsule. Experienced in traversing between the real world and the machine-manipulated illusion, Morpheus responds, 'What is real?' Although Ang and George do not have to decide between a red pill and a blue pill as such, they too grapple with the real/illusion/dream. My reference of *the Matrix* is because its enigma of living in an illusory world resonates with my film's awareness of itself as a fiction and hence the characters wondering whether they are in a dream.

In real life, Ang was born in Ching-Dynasty China and moved to Taiwan in the late 1940s with the Nationalists. Having visited Hanover, Scotland and Ireland, George IV spent most of his life in England. In the film, they are inside the Pavilion, or more precisely, in a timeless chinoiserie contact zone of artifacts from the palace. In the dialogue between Ang and George, they question where they are and compare their existence in the film to being in a dream. As the film unfolds, they refute with each other over their stance on the subject matter.

Similarly, Chien-lung opens Part 3, pronouncing ‘Where is this?’ The Chinese Emperor’s perplexity over location is understandable. In real life, Chien-lung received Macartney’s Embassy in 1792. Regarding the incoming British entourage as nothing but tribute bearers, he gifted them royal presents that greatly surpassed the presents the British had brought to him in quantity. Little did he know that such gifts would inspire in part the Pavilion to be built by George IV (Royal Collections, no date). In the film, when the Chinese Emperor finds himself in the chinoiserie contact zone in Part 3, naturally he is unable to locate himself, both in terms of time and place. In Part 6, Chien-lung bumps into Ang. In the unlikely reunion of the two Ching Dynasty royals, the Emperor raises the question of the here and now once more. But no answer is provided. The enigmatic feeling of being inside a dream pervades in the characters throughout the film. Thus I configured the film to be aware of itself as a fiction and as an outcome of notional interlocution.

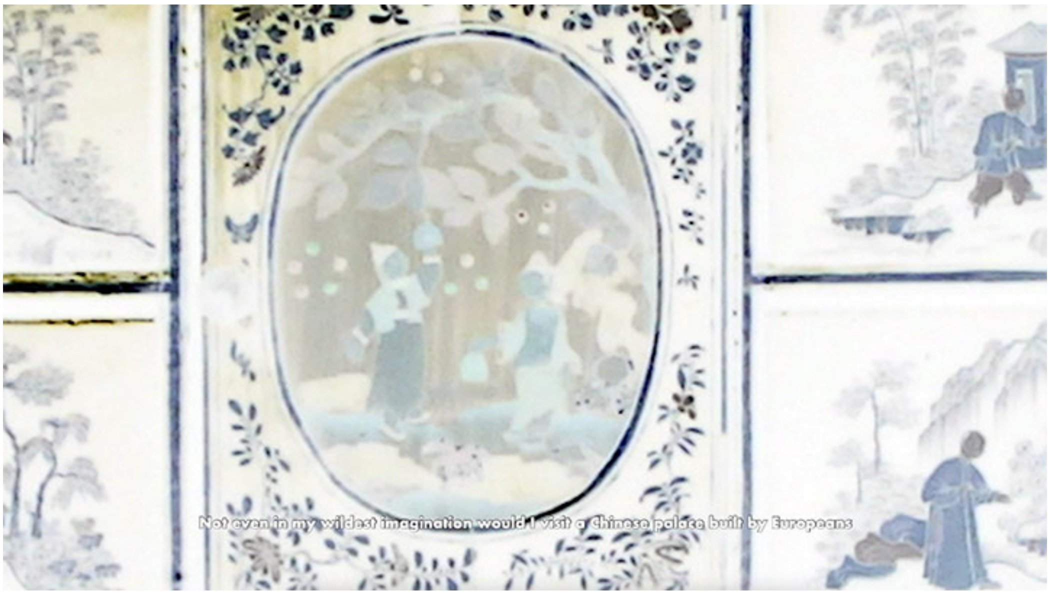

Fig 28: Film still from *This is China of a particular sort, I do not know*. In Part 6, Chien-lung’s confusion over time and space continues. The Emperor is also bewildered about the chinoiserie interior of the Pavilion. Here he says, ‘Not even in my wildest imagination would I visit a Chinese palace built by Europeans.’

Another aspect of the real/illusion/dream is George's desire to escape his responsibilities which has been explained in the case study of the Pavilion in Chapter 2 and in Cast here in Chapter 3. On this note, George's chinoiserie interior proposes an imaginary, illusory China: a China that lacks historical bearing, that is solely visual, that is invented on the basis of fantasy, that is for sensual entertainment. This is very different to Ang's experience of the *real* China as an exiled Ching royal. I was fascinated by the fact that they are multiple Chinas – not in any sense related to politics or any political debates. As mentioned previously in Chapter 1.3, Benedict Anderson's idea of *imagined communities* (1983) points out the making of a community/country in relation to individuals' identity and imagination. In this case, I was interested in different Chinas in relation to personal memory and history. Chinoiserie had opened my eyes to yet another type of China: a visual China.

Appearance, Emptiness and Existence

When I first visited the Pavilion a few years ago, the feeling of being overwhelmed by the grandeur of the chinoiserie interior permeated through me. As a student of Buddhism, I felt very much compelled to investigate this visual China in a philosophical approach. Here I refer to Buddhist philosophy because I don't see it as a religion. The Philosopher Mark Siderits in his *Buddhism as philosophy: An Introduction* (2007) articulates that similar to Western philosophy Buddhism tries to explain phenomena such as metaphysics. Accordingly, I use certain Buddhist philosophical ideas in this section to discuss chinoiserie.

George's Chineseness embedded in chinoiserie lacks authenticity. As previously reviewed in Chapter 2.1, the chinoiserie interior of the Pavilion is essentially a façade that looks Chinese and lacks in substance in terms of authentic Chinese materials or origins. To examine this superficial Chineseness, I considered the Buddhist explanation of appearance, emptiness and existence.

In Buddhism, much discussion revolves around the fundamental question: what is real (Newland, 1999)? When we see something, we tend to believe that which appears does appear as we see it. This is how we function in the physical world. However, seeing that which appears often leads to a misunderstanding: '[…] that there is something real behind the appearances, more primary and important somehow than the appearances themselves' (Olendzki, 2009). The point is not to deny the ontological experience of seeing something. Rather, the concern here is to clearly understand the workings of phenomena.

The appearance of phenomena tends to give onlookers a sense of solid existence. We are inclined to perceive what we see and know, be it physical or otherwise, as something that does not change. For instance, a chair is chair and will always be a chair. But as time goes by, the same chair acquires wear and tear, loses a leg and eventually ends up in a rubbish tip. Will it still be a chair as such? Would it be *the* same chair at all? And retrospectively, before the materials were made into this chair, where *was* the chair?

The answer is, according to Buddhism, all phenomena come and go and never stay the same. Everything is always changing, with or without our knowledge, to or not to our dismay. In this vein, appearances

> '[…] properly understood as impermanent, interdependent, and unsatisfying, are also devoid of the ontological underpinnings we are used to ascribing to

> everything in our world. All of it, without exception, is utterly devoid of self' (Olendzki, 2009).

In hindsight, this is how Buddhism encapsulates appearance. Because of the inherent emptiness that is impermanence, existence is always changing, and thus appearance is only superficial.

Returning to chinoiserie, in Part 1 Ang and George argue with each other about their respective China and Chineseness in relation to appearance, emptiness and existence. In real life, George was obsessed with collecting chinoiserie artefacts and in general material gems.

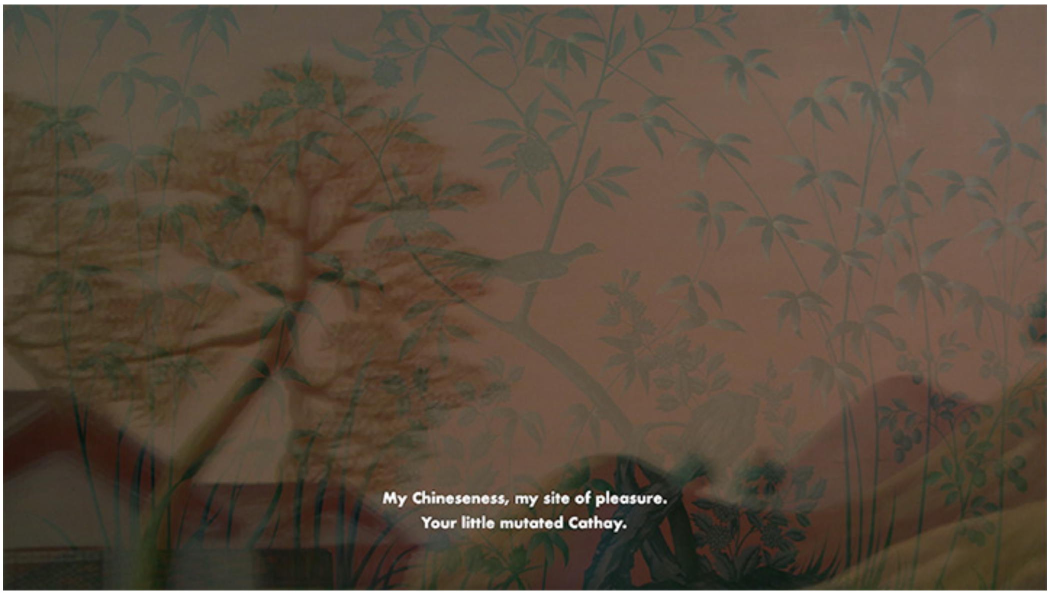
My Chineseness, my site of pleasure.
Your little mutated Cathay.

Fig 29: Film still from *This is China of a particular sort, I do not know*. In the film, George proudly professes, 'My Chineseness, my site of pleasure.' Ang avers, 'Your little mutated Cathay.' As their conversation proceeds, George will painfully realise his own mortality and the end of his pleasure palace of the Pavilion.

Ang questions his act of possessing chinoiserie, Chineseness as a visual language and the visual China. To add another layer to their quarrel, I considered a poem/song by

Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche, an established contemporary Buddhist teacher. In the film, I visually quoted the first of the four parts of *Self-appearing Illusion* (1998).

> All these forms – appearance emptiness
> Like a rainbow with its shining glow
> In the reaches of appearance emptiness
> Just let go and go where no mind goes[49]

The poem articulates the workings of form/appearance and emptiness/impermanence, as explained before. What we see is not solid because it is subject to change and will have an eventual end. By showing the poem, I deconstructed the Pavilion's chinoiserie interior for its lack of substance in terms of authenticity. Also, I deconstructed George IV's possessing of it, in terms of impermanence. In the film, George comes to the painful apprehension of his own mortality. In real life, he died in 1832 and his beloved Pavilion became a museum in the twentieth century. The chinoiserie-themed playground is no more. Even his bed is displayed to the public.

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[49] To see the whole lyrics/poem and listen to the song, go to: Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche. (no date) *Self-appearing Illusion*. *Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche*'s website. [Online] [Accessed 14 June 2022] https://www.ktgrinpoche.org/songs/all-these-forms

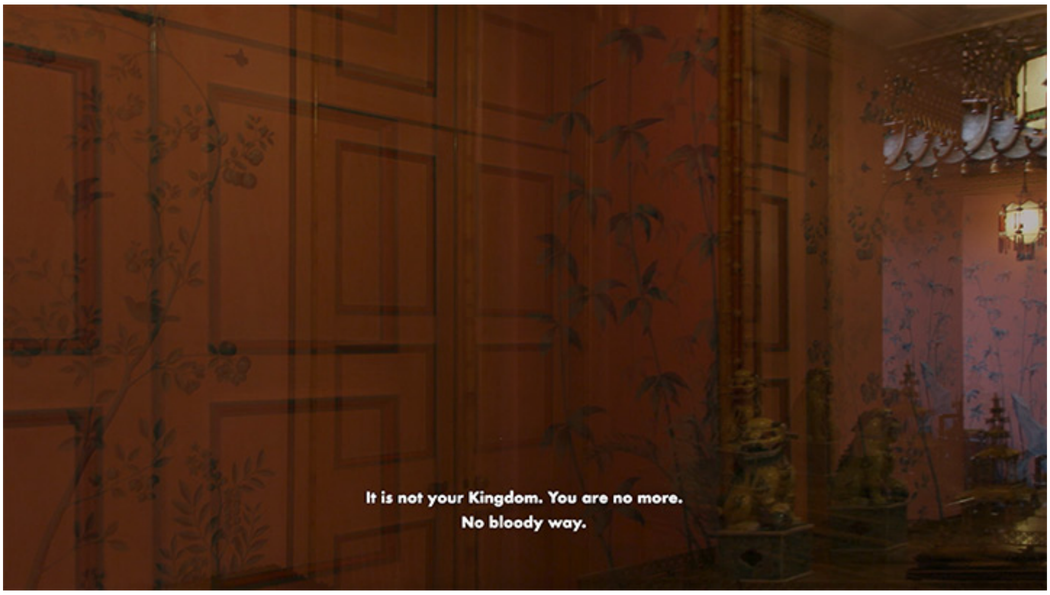

Fig 30: Film still from *This is China of a particular sort, I do not know*. In the film, Ang challenges George, saying, ‘It is not your Kingdom. You are no more.’ The British monarch does not take the truth very well.

It is important to articulate here that my deconstructing of the Pavilion’s interior and George himself in relation to appearance, emptiness and existence happens at the cost of Ang. Because in the film the Ching royal addresses these philosophical ideas, referencing her own impermanence in her dialogue with George. In real life, Ang’s ‘real’ China of the dynastic era came to an end in 1911. And most likely she is no longer around anymore. In the film, she is thoroughly aware of the mortality of both her family’s Dynasty and of her own life.

To round up the philosophical discussion on appearance, emptiness and existence, I visually quoted a section of *the Diamond Sutra* (Price and Wong, 2005: 53) at the end of Part 1.

> Thus should ye think of all this fleeting world:
> A star at dawn, a bubble in a stream;
> A flash of lightning in a summer cloud,

A flickering lamp, a phantom, and a dream.

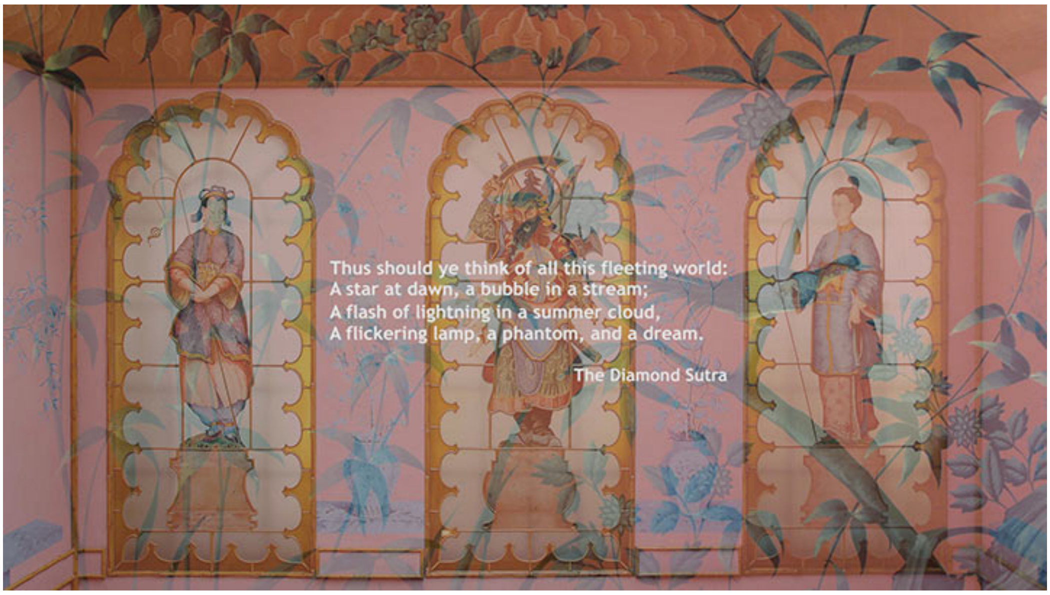
Thus should ye think of all this fleeting world:
A star at dawn, a bubble in a stream;
A flash of lightning in a summer cloud,
A flickering lamp, a phantom, and a dream.
The Diamond Sutra

Fig 31: Film still from *This is China of a particular sort, I do not know*. I show a part of the Diamond Sutra on the juxtaposition of the painted chinoiserie wallpaper from the Long Gallery and the three Chinese characters on the landing of the North staircase at the Pavilion.

Known for its sharp wisdom, the sutra '[…] helps cut through our perceptions of the world and its illusion' (Daley, 2016). Indeed, the Buddhist poem urgently tells us to bear in mind the law of impermanence in our dealing with the world. Everything is always changing. Nothing stays the same. It is all like a dream. Through applying appearance, emptiness and existence to the dialogue between George and Ang, I inevitably deconstructed both parties. The idea of impermanence deconstructs the British self and the 'Chinese' other, as both perished in real life and tackle their mortality in the film.

In Part 2, I interview Ang over a cup of tea. In this fictional conversation, we discuss the diaspora of the Nationalists' relocation to Taiwan, as well as possessing and impermanence. As an extension of exploring impermanence, Ang relates the topic to

Chineseness as an identity. In real life, for Ang, being a Manchurian must have placed her in an awkward position vis-a-vis Chineseness. The Manchus had their own nomadic culture and were historically close to the Mongolians – both were very different from the Han Chinese culture. As a Ching royal family member, she might have felt ambivalent towards the Manchus' hegemony over Han Chinese cultural traditions as Ching's heyday had long gone in her time. Later, she was likely to have been perceived as part of the Nationalists' relocation from the mainland in Taiwan, and part of the ethnic minority that lacked voices in the Han-dominant Taiwanese society.

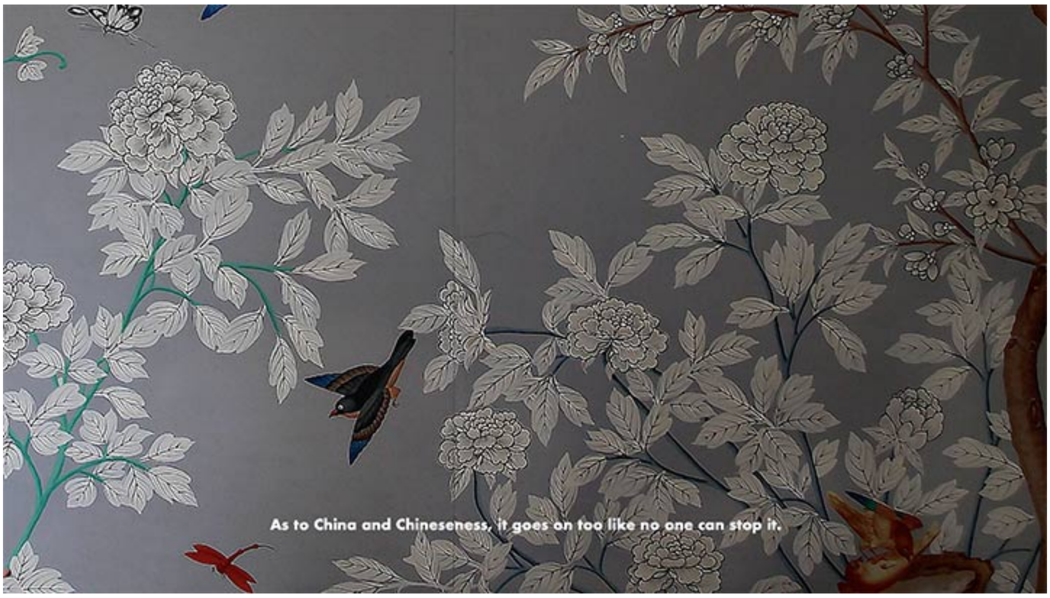

Fig 32: Film still from *This is China of a particular sort, I do not know*. According to Ang, 'As to China and Chineseness, it goes on too like no one can stop it.'

In real life, Ang's identity had shifted in line with the changing wider political and cultural context. Such shifting/movement was itself a manifestation of impermanence. In the film, my neighbour views Chineseness as always in the making: it is always changing, like an organism. The Ching royal compares the changing politics and shifting identity to a running river that knows no end. Informed by her lived experience, she concludes that to possess is to relinquish, to possess is to let go, to possess is to set free.

To wrap up the discussion of impermanence, I returned to the theme at the very end of the film. Although Rumi came from the tradition of the Sufi Islamic faith, some of his work overlaps with Buddhist philosophy. Here I visually quoted the thirteenth-century Persian poet's work *This World Which Is Made of Our Love for Emptiness* in the epilogue.

> Praise to the emptiness that blanks out existence. Existence:
> This place made from our love for that emptiness!
>
> Yet somehow comes emptiness,
> this existence goes.
>
> Praise to that happening, over and over!
> For years I pulled my own existence out of emptiness.
>
> Then one swoop, one swing of the arm,
> that work is over.
>
> Free of who I was, free of presence, free of dangerous fear, hope,
> free of mountainous wanting.
>
> The here-and-now mountain is a tiny piece of a piece of straw

blown off into emptiness.

These words I'm saying so much begin to lose meaning: Existence, emptiness, mountain, straw:

Words and what they try to say swept
out the window, down the slant of the roof.

Cause and Effect & Interpretation of History

In Part 3, Chien-lung and George Macartney converse with each other over pertinent history between themselves and between the two empires. The focus here is on how to interpret history in terms of perspective and from a later time.

In real life, they met each other on Macartney's Embassy to China in the early 1790s. The British diplomatic mission was a failure because it did not secure any trade relations with the Eastern kingdom. Nevertheless, the Embassy managed to gather information and learn the inner workings of the Chinese Court. This was the first time Europeans set foot on inland China, although only a part of the entourage was allowed to make their way by land. The Embassy was the first time China and Britain encountered each other at an official and governmental level. This was also the first time the two counties were in a contact zone outside of the Canton trade system which was operated strictly on Chinese terms.

Coming from disparate cultural and political contexts, Chien-lung and Macartney experienced clashes of cultures. For the Chinese Emperor, it was his role to show compassion for men from afar by showering the British with gifts (Cramme-Byng, 1962). This is because the Middle Kingdom had long enjoyed cultural and material superiority vis-a-vis its neighbours. As to international trade, it was not necessary but could be tolerated in the logic of tribute paying. For this reason, nothing other than the existing Canton trade system was possible (Cramme-Byng, 1962). Macartney's world views could not have been more different from that of Chien-lung's. Britain's success of maritime business over the world had fuelled the country's desire for further expansion of trade. Due to the vast volume of imported Chinese tea, it was of upmost importance for Macartney to revert the trade deficit by securing special business treaties with Chien-lung.

It is in this historical context that the Chinese Emperor and British diplomat meet each other in the film. However, they do not know their location or the time. This is because they are in a chinoiserie contact zone in which time/year and place are unknown. They are in a dream-like setting against the background of chinoiserie artifacts from the Pavilion. Visually speaking, I used a mixture of close-up images of objects and layering of photos reduced in opacity.

In the film, Chien-lung and Macartney articulate their respective accomplishments with pride. In real life, the Chinese Emperor had expanded the Chinese territory to its largest, having conquered lands neighbouring China. Both the monarch and his empire were at their peak. For Macartney, it is nothing but extraordinary that his Embassy has penetrated inland China and collected useful information for further use. On this note, I wanted to critique the prevalent (re)view of world history from a Western/European perspective.

The literary scholar Mary Louise Pratt (1991; 1992) reminds us of the European practice of *planetary consciousness* particularly common in the eighteenth century. The phenomenon saw 'European travel and exploration writings analysed in connection with European economics and political expansion since around 1750s' (Pratt, 1992: 4). Essentially, it was Eurocentrism being the perspective from which history was written. In the film, Chien-lung challenges the Eurocentric point of view. The Emperor asserts to Macartney that his Middle Kingdom does not wait around to receive his entourage, does not exist to be explored by his team and does not present themselves as his oceanic expansion. Rather, the Middle Kingdom exists solely for its own purpose.

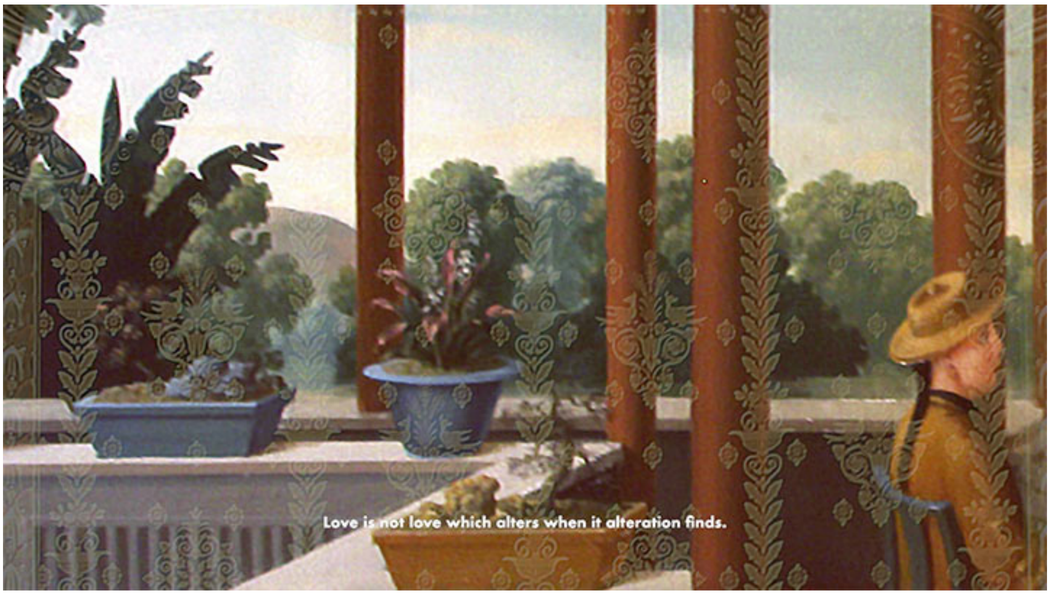
Love is not love which alters when it alteration finds.

Fig 33: Film still from *This is China of a particular sort, I do not know*. Chien-lung explores the mystery of love turning into animosity, reciting a stanza from Shakespeare's *Sonnet 116*: 'Love is not love which alters when it alteration finds.'

Another contention between the two characters is about reviewing history from a later time. It was reviewed in Chapter 1.1 that the Sino-British relations deteriorated after the Embassy, so much so that in 1842 the British invaded China, in terms of the

First Opium War. I found it incredible that within four to five decades Britain's attitude towards China had changed so drastically, from fascination with Chinese products and hence chinoiserie to fierce antagonism and full-swing military attack. In the film, Macartney stresses that it is out of love for Chinese things that he and his entourage came all the way to the Middle Kingdom. The diplomat's affirmation is despite that he is aware of the Opium War that will happen in the future. In response, Chien-lung questions Macartney's real motive behind the Embassy and demands to know whether the diplomatic mission is related to the colonisation that is to happen in 1842. The Chinese Emperor quotes, 'Love is not love which alters when it alternation finds.' Here I referenced Shakespeare's *Sonnet 116*, a work on love. The famous stanza tells us that love perseveres even when one party leaves or changes their mind and thus the relationship is compromised (Nelson, 1984). But does it work like that? Whilst I had no intention to provide a definite answer or a didactic explanation, my strategy was to further explore the enigma of love.

In relation to love, Chien-lung discusses his beloved Old Summer Palace.[50] As reviewed previously in Chapter 1.1, Jesuit missionaries had their footprint in China and the Chinese Court in the Ching Dynasty. They introduced Western/European knowledge, from science to architecture, to the Manchu royal family. With their help, Chien-lung famously had European palaces built in the Old Summer Palace. In the film, in response to Macartney's claim of Britain's love for Chinese culture and products, the Emperor points out that he adores European culture and arts, but has never thought of invading Europe. The Old Summer Palace is a good manifestation that genuine love does not turn into aggression. The investigation of love is to further unfold towards the end of the film.

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[50] which is also known as *Yuanmingyuan* in Mandarin

The theme of reviewing history from a later time continues well into Part 6. Chien-lung and Ang hold different views on the Sino-British relations regarding chinoiserie although they share the familial background. Essentially, Ang believes that the visual style is similar to mapping, a colonial tool used as a preparation for land grab and invasion. History to her is a linear progression of events. A happens before B and therefore A results in B. For Chien-lung, this belief is an intellectual trap. It is dangerous to apply the cause-and-effect logic to analysing history in a wholesale way. Afterall, what we do is merely interpret history. And therefore, it is not reasonable to categorically associate the eighteenth-century phenomenon of chinoiserie with Britain's colonisation of Hong Kong in the nineteenth century.

Chien-lung and Ang's exchange about the relationship between the pre-colonial and the colonial was informed by the multiple historiographies discussed in Chapter 1.2. I considered Said's *Orientalism* (1978), *a Sinocentric perspective* (Porter, 2010), *Enlightenment Orientalism* (Aravamudan, 2011), *Postcolonial Enlightenment* (Carey and Festa, 2009), and *Prehistory of Orientalism* (Jenkins, 2013). Through my review, I uncovered different historiographical views on the relationship between the eighteenth-century period and the nineteenth-century colonisation in the case of Sino-British relations.

Returning to Chien-lung's Old Summer Palace, the Second Opium War (1856-1860) saw the British and French troops extensively burn the Ching royal family's most magnificent garden complex. The European solders smashed and looted invaluable treasures of artefacts and architectural parts en masse. This is the reason for the widespread dispersal of Chinese Ching antiques in Western museums and private collections. The brutal destruction had left the site as '[…] little more than collections of rubble amid a network of tranquil lakes' (French and Holland, 2021). In Part 6, the Emperor finds out the tragedy through Ang and thus laments 'Love is not love which alters when it alternation finds.'

Xanadu, Interpretation and Imagination

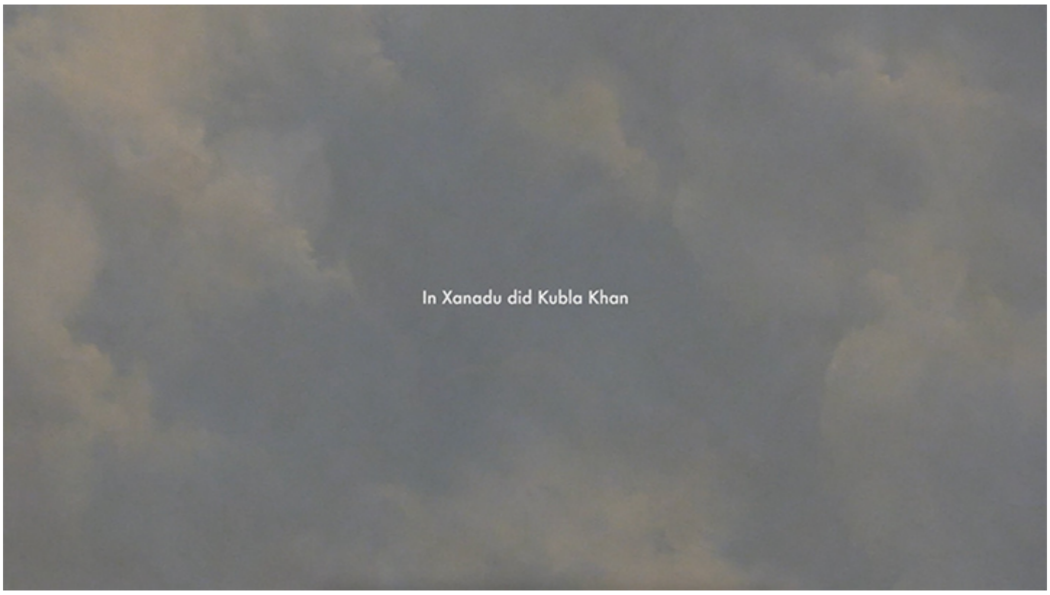
In Xanadu did Kubla Khan

Fig 34: Film still from *This is China of a particular sort, I do not know*. As a European construct, Xanadu has become a synonym of an idealised, distant place. In reality, it was a Mongolian/Chinese city.

Unlike the rest of the film, Part 4 has no narration. I visually showed a section of *Xanadu: Kubla Khan. Or, A Vision in a Dream. A Fragment* (1816). Against the background of moving clouds in the sky, each line of the selected part of the poetic work appears consecutively in the frame. The clouds and sky are from still photos of the sky-looking ceiling in the Saloon Room, reduced in opacity, juxtaposed and made to move in postproduction. The resulting visual effect expresses a sense of dream and imagination.

> In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
> A stately pleasure-dome decree:
> Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
> Through caverns measureless to man
> Down to a sunless sea.
>
> So twice five miles of fertile ground
> With walls and towers were girdled round:
> And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
> Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
> And here were forests ancient as the hills,
> Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

The poem was written by Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834). The British poet is known for his involvement in English Romantic poetry. His work expresses '[…] visionary imagination, lyric intensity and philosophical profundity' (Lloyd, no date). It was in Somerset that the poetic work was composed by Coleridge. The poem indicates that *Kubla Khan* was dreamed – whilst the literary giant was under the influence of opium (Vulliamy, 1990). As a frequent opium user since the age of nineteen, Coleridge beheld Xanadu in his drug-fuelled vision.

I used the poem here because of its implication. According to the Merriam Webster dictionary, Xanadu refers to 'an idyllic, exotic, or luxurious place.' Coleridge's

> ‘[…] fantastic description of an exotic utopia fired public imagination and ultimately contributed to the transition of "Xanadu" from a name to a generalized term for an idyllic place. The Xanadu in the poem was inspired by Shang-tu, the summer residence of Mongolian general and statesman Kublai Khan (grandson of Genghis Khan).’[51]

As a grandson of Genghis Khan, Kubla Khan (1215-1294) enjoyed the legacy of the Mongolian Empire that his grandfather had established. Kubla Khan successfully conquered China and began the first non-Han rule on Chinese soil.[52] Xanadu, or Shang-tu, was where he established the Yuan Dynasty (1217-1368) in the thirteenth century. Xanadu was geographically north of the Great Wall and was in present-day Mongolia (Unesco, no date).

The historic Chinese/Mongolian capital has captivated the Europeans for many centuries. Xanadu was famously visited by Marco Polo (1245-1324) in the thirteenth century. The Venetian befriended Kubla Khan and later wrote *The Travels of Marco Polo* (c.1300). The classic travelogue has introduced European writers and the general public alike to the faraway empire. Having never set foot on Chinese soil, Coleridge then imagined and interpreted Xanadu with the help of opium. It is said that *Kubla Khan* ‘[…] is also a classic case of European fantasizing about the exotic and luxurious East’ (Brians, no date).

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[51] See: Merriam Webster dictionary. (no date) *Xanadu.* Merriam Webster dictionary. [Online] [Accessed 20 June 2022] https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Xanadu

[52] The second and the last non-Han Chinese Dynasty was the Manchu-ruled Ching Dynasty.

Through quoting *Kubla Khan* in Part 4, I brought into focus the problematic practice of interpreting and imagining a foreign place. In this vein, I was curious to explore the correlation between what Xanadu or by extension China was *actually* like and the reproduction of it, be it in the written form or visually. This enquiry paves the contextual basis for Part 5, where William Alexander delivers a monologue based on relevant history.

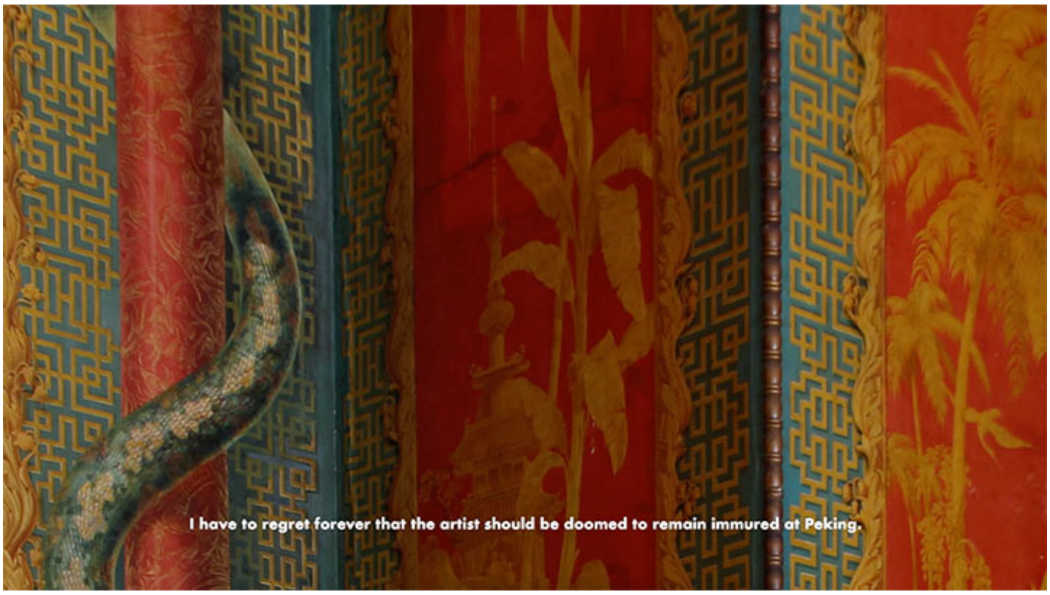

Fig 35: Film still from *This is China of a particular sort, I do not know*. In real life, William Alexander the illustrator of the Embassy did not have the opportunity to witness Macartney meeting Chien-lung because of the restrictions imposed by the Chinese court. Here, he laments, 'I have to regret forever that the artist should be doomed to remain immured at Peking.' However, the draughtsman later managed to produce many pictures of the historic event without being there.

As reviewed previously in Chapter 2.2, William Alexander (1767-1816) was one of the two appointed draughtsmen as part of Macartney's Embassy, Britain's first diplomatic and trade mission to China. Macartney's negotiation with the Chinese Court over where and when to meet Chien-lung was anything but smooth. It became certain that the junior draughtsman was not allowed to travel inland in China. Only a small number of the Embassy members were permitted to the audience with the Chinese Emperor in Chengdu, the royal summer retreat. Left behind in Beijing, Alexander and others were confined in a house with very tall walls, strictly arranged by the Chinese authority (Loske, no date).

However, whilst in China Alexander managed to produce watercolours of historical events, such as Macartney meeting Chien-lung and other significant scenes without being there. The draughtsman employed second-hand information and basic sketches from his fellow Embassy staff who attended the occasions. By the same logic, he also made visual accounts of the Great Wall. The historian Frances Wood (1998: 120) explains that

> ‘It is well-known that Alexander produced many watercolours of places that he did not see himself. His view of the great lake at the centre of the imperial park at Chengde was based on the sketches and watercolours made by Lieutenant Henry William Parish, an artillery officer attached to the Embassy. Parish made wonderful plans of events such as a bird eye’s view of the imperial tent and crowds gathered for the meeting between Macartney and the Qianlong emperor […]’.

Moreover, Alexander created drawings of Chinese civilian life in detail based on his observation from the Embassy boat. Although being far from the shore, he was able to compose visual descriptions

> ‘[…] of waterside life, of crowds of villagers and curly-tailed dogs gathered to watch the passage of barges full of foreigners, of rice fields and graves, of buildings and canal constructions like bridges, locks and ‘inclined planes’ with winches and capstans […]’ (Wood, 1998: 99).

Overall, Alexander was tremendously prolific, making over two thousand sketches of China during the trip (Loske, no date).

What fascinated me the most about William Alexander is that long after the Embassy he still produced visual reproductions of China. In fact, he managed to live on his pictorial work of the Asian Empire for eight years

> '[…] through the production of illustrations, watercolours and vignettes of 'Chinese' scenes created from combinations of figures, building and landscapes seen on the voyage' (Wood, 1998: 101).

He carried on producing engravings more than ten years after the Embassy. His *Custome of China* (1805), a series of forty-eight etchings with commentary was a huge success.

The draughtsman's pictures of China not only captured the attention of the British general public but also influenced decorative arts. George IV's designer Frederick Crace used some of Alexander's images from *Custome of China* (1805) to furnish the Music Room at the Pavilion. Architectural structure and scenery were transferred from the visual publication to the wall panels. However, Crace's reworking of the 'original' pictures of Alexander's was interpretive. The images were rendered essentially in red and gold – more dramatic than Alexander's description.

It is interesting that Alexander's visual work was already an interpretation of China based on second-hand information and imagination to some extent. Such semi-authentic depictions of the Asian state were then reinterpreted, made more theatrical and installed at the Pavilion. In this case, China was behind layers of interpretation and imagination. In this critical vein, I could not help but wonder, how would Alexander find China, his pictures and Crace's reworking of his work at the Pavilion? I was curious to consider the draughtsman's point of view through my methodological mechanism of notional interlocution.

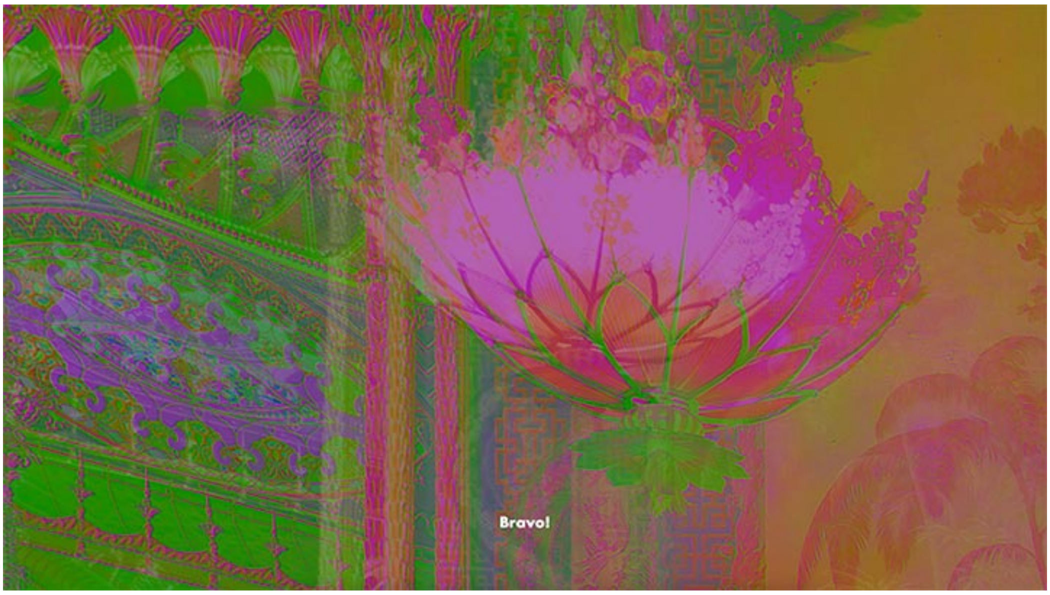

Fig 36: Film still from *This is China of a particular sort, I do not know*. In the film, William Alexander is fully aware of the interpretative nature of his visual work on China. The prolific illustrator is supportive of Fredrick Crace's reworking of his pictures for the interior of the Music Room, picture here. Thus, he cheerfully cries out, 'Bravo.'

In the film, Alexander references Xanadu in Polo's travelogue and Coleridge's poem. To him, the former was an in-person experience, the latter was an opium-fuelled hallucination – and the two scenarios are equal in importance. Informed by his experience of travelling to China and producing numerous pictures of the distant country, the illustrator expresses endorsement in interpretation as a legitimate form of knowing and describing a foreign land. It is down to an individual's freedom and agency. And henceforth, insistence on authenticity is not necessary.

It fascinated me very much to draw a parallel between Xanadu by Polo and Coleridge as well as Chinese scenes by Alexander and Crace. In both cases, Xanadu/China was negotiated between experiencing/seeing and interpretation/imagination by different individuals. The faraway empire has been subject to being depicted and felt via different approaches. It was clear to me that this is in parallel to the case of the visual style. Perhaps in a sense Chineseness as a visual language was not about authenticity, but a celebration of interpretation, imagination, and creativity in terms of chinoiserie.

In tandem with the contextual exploration, I visually manipulated the still photos of the chinoiserie panels by Crace I had taken in the Music Room. The first half of Part 5 appears relatively realistic; whereas, the second half comprises heavily edited images. This is because I wanted to address Alexander's view as he starts to elaborate it. Technically speaking, I inverted the images, took down their opacity and in some cases juxtaposed multiples of them together in postproduction. The resulting frames convey a sense of hallucination and fantasy.

'[...] there is no one, sweet, old China for us to return to.'

At the end of Part 6, Ang and Chien-lung bid farewell to each other after a long discussion about interpretation of history, as reviewed earlier. In tandem with the dream/the real/illusion theme, the Ching royals feel a sense of disorientation as to where they came from and where they are heading to. Nevertheless, Chien-lung and Ang know that it is late and they need to *go back*. Ang says to the Emperor, 'Before we part our ways, there is no one, sweet, old China for us to return to. You know that, right?'

The historian Alun Munslow (2006) points out the problematic nature of postcolonial history. As one of the postcolonial agendas is to re-construct and reconnect with the past of the non-Western/European, it is inherently difficult, if not infeasible. This is because ultimately, we are not able to completely strip history of the perspective it is written from. Whilst we attempt to rebuild a history without the colonial vantage point, the very effort is itself a perspective. Strictly speaking, it is not attainable to look back at the past without a viewpoint, and thus there is no pure history as such. In Munslow's words,

> '[…] we can hope that here may be an escape back to the real (in the case of Said the 'real Orient' rather than the Western construct of it). But being aware of history's self-construction suggests that this is epistemologically impossible' (2006: 199).

In this critical vein, I ended the film leaving Chien-lung and Ang with no historically pure China to return to. Visually, I showed an entrance/exit leading to an unknown place with layered images of Chinese wallpaper in the last frame of Part 6.

Chapter 3.2

Another beautiful dream

2022, 14 minutes, colour digital video, sound

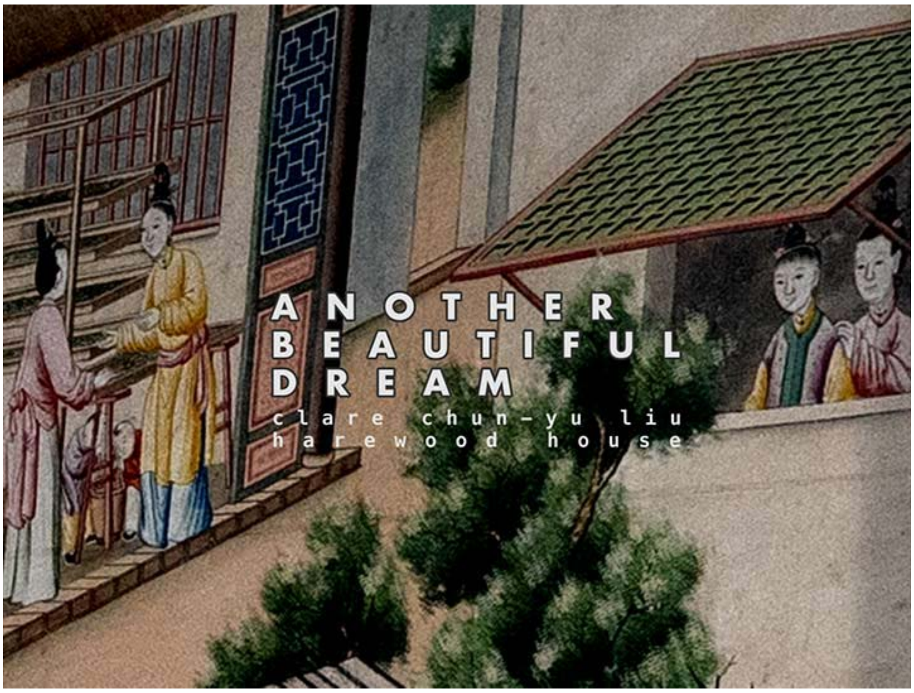

Fig 37: Poster of *Another beautiful dream.*

Synopsis

Another beautiful dream is a postcolonial response to chinoiserie, questioning the representation of Chineseness in the visual style. Filmed in-situ, this work revisits the Chinese wallpaper from the eighteenth century at Harewood House, a stately home. Integral to the culture of taste, exotic artefacts such as Chinese wallpaper furnished houses of the landed gentry and enabled them to closely experiment with the foreign. Through exploring the other and thus establishing the self, modern British identity took shape in the heyday of maritime commerce.

Across the film, there are four monologues by ‘Chinese’ Chippendale, the designer sourcing and hanging the wallpaper, Chinese Emperor Chien-lung, the artist herself and Ang, the artist’s childhood neighbour in Taipei with a Chinese Ching royal, Manchurian and Taiwanese background. The four characters critique the Chinese wallpaper in relation to self and other from their perspectives informed by their lived experience.

The artistic strategy of juxtaposing chinoiserie with my personal and familial photography serves to further explore self and other. As the wallpaper was made in China for export purpose, self-representation is at stake. The use of my personal photos questions how one represents oneself in the present and how that negotiates self-representation from the past. Visually, the film is characterised by a personal touch because of the personal photos and therefore is less *dreamy* than *This is China of a particular sort, I do not know.*

* * *

Another beautiful dream presents my second cultural heritage site filmed in this PhD. I used some personal connections to start a conversation with the Collections Department. After a couple of research visits, I was kindly permitted in with a camera. The filming condition at Harewood House was similar to that of the Royal Pavilion. I was allowed in before the opening time in the morning and needed to finish when the visitors started to come in. As my focus was on the Chinese wallpaper in the East Bedroom, the filming was a lot more straightforward. I did not have to go from room to room. Having learnt the lesson from filming at the Pavilion, this time I concentrated on taking photos of the artefact across the East Bedroom. Filming in terms of taking moving images as such was not feasible because of my very short time inside the house and the physical limitation of my one-person operation. Thus, *filming* in the case of Harewood House and by extension this PhD was in fact taking still photography. Furthermore, the interior in the East Bedroom and essentially the whole site was arranged in a way most suitable for the designated visitor route. It was not possible to remove the heavy barriers on the floor. Nonetheless, it was feasible to avoid the barriers in terms of camera angles when I took still photos around. As to lighting, thankfully the member of staff from the Collections Department who supervised my photo taking was able to open the curtains in the East Bedroom for a short time. The natural light was very helpful for my images to be of a reasonable quality.

Another beautiful dream is much shorter than *This is China of a particular sort, I do not know*. This is because my focus on Harewood House as a case study is solely on one artefact, the Chinese wallpaper located in the East Bedroom. The Chinese-made wallpaper is a manifestation of the English culture of taste in the eighteenth century facilitated by the East India Company. Exotic products from further afield, including Chinese-made artefacts, were imported by the Company. The wealthy collected and installed such gems at home, exploring their British self in relation to Chinese other and by extension the wider world (de Bruijn, 2017).

In the case of the wallpaper in Harewood House, the problem of (self)representation is at stake since the artefact was made in China. The Chineseness as a visual language embedded in the wallpaper was created by Chinese craftsmen for export purpose. Based on this historical context, my exploration in the film is centred on self and other. In order to unpack what is in the film in writing here, I dissect the lines of enquiries into: Self and Other: Self-Representation; Self and Other: the Sinophone & Ang's Chineseness; and Self and Other: I/Self & Inappropriate(d) Other.

The script was created through my methodological mechanism of notional interlocution, encapsulated previously in Chapter 2. The three historical individuals and myself as the only living person examine Chinese wallpaper in relation to the quandary of self and other based on our own lived experience in the form of monologue. The result is deconstruction of self and other in multiple ways.

Similar to *This is China of a particular sort, I do not know*, *Another beautiful dream* is enriched by its bespoke soundtrack. I commissioned the composer Ian Costabile to create original music for the work. Costabile's music interacts with the frames and lays an additional layer to the film.

There are five visual texts of still frames across the film, sandwiched between the monologues visually and contextually. The texts do not belong to any characters and instead serve as the inner voice of the film. They are a combination of quotes and my own writing. I did not reference the sources of the quotes in the still frames, considering the nature of the work. Like *This is China of a particular sort, I do not know*, *Another beautiful dream* is a fiction. And therefore, this film is similarly imbued with the theme of dream – as its title suggests. In this light, I thought referencing the sources of the quotes *on the spot* would compromise the dreamy atmosphere and thus I consciously chose to show the bibliography at the end of the film.

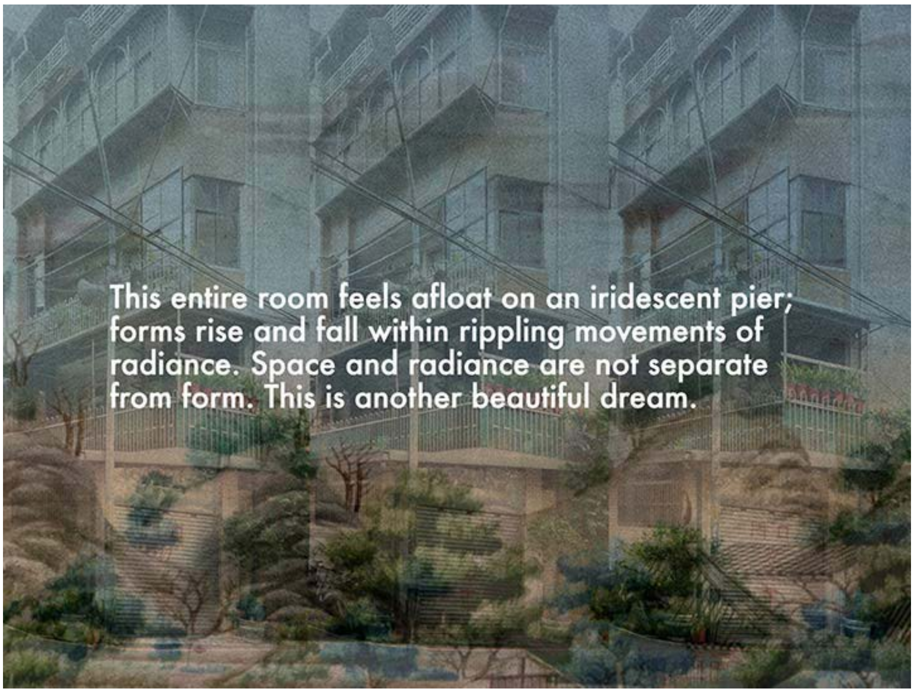
This entire room feels afloat on an iridescent pier;
forms rise and fall within rippling movements of
radiance. Space and radiance are not separate
from form. This is another beautiful dream.

Fig 38: Film still from *Another beautiful dream.* The second visual text is a quote from Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche's *In Love with the World: A Monk's Journey Through the Bardos of Living and Dying* (2019: 230). In the book, the Buddhist monk compares his inner experience as a wandering ascetic to being in dreams. Similarly, my film is aware of itself being a fiction and thus a dream.

Contextually speaking, *Another beautiful dream* is a more personal piece of work than the previous film. To explore the conundrum of self and other, the characters and myself investigate chinoiserie in relation to ourselves. Such an approach then informed how I visually made the film. So as for an intimate setting, I chose the frame ratio of 4:3, rather than my usual use of 16:9.

Self & Other: Self-Representation

Visually speaking, the theme of dream continues in *Another beautiful dream.* Like in *This is China of a particular sort, I do not know*, the theme of dream manifests the film's self-awareness as a fiction. Artistically, I employed the technique of taking down images' opacity and layering them. However, my use of juxtaposition is less prevalent here than in the film set in the Pavilion. This is because in this film I also visually explored self-representation, drawing from the pertinent historical and cultural context.

As explored in Chapter 2.1, the Chinese wallpaper at Harewood house was a product of the eighteenth-century British phenomenon: the culture of taste. Faced with a widening world and growing piles of money, the rich sought markers of status and distinction. Henceforth, they turned to embellishing themselves in their search for identity, both vis-a-vis themselves, among each other and in the face of the outside world. It was out of '[…] a sense of intellectual and sensual curiosity […] equated with physical travel and exploration with the widening of mental physical horizons […]' (de Bruijn, 2017: 63) that chinoiserie was a token of taste. It was in this context that throughout the eighteenth century chinoiserie provided a gateway for the wealthy to travel, experiment with and imagine China and by extension the whole world '[…] in which Englishness must be measured and tested' (Jenkins, 2013: 7). Whilst wealthy British individuals played themselves, chinoiserie artefacts, including the Chinese wallpaper in the Harewood House, were assigned the role of other in the former's soul-searching exploration.

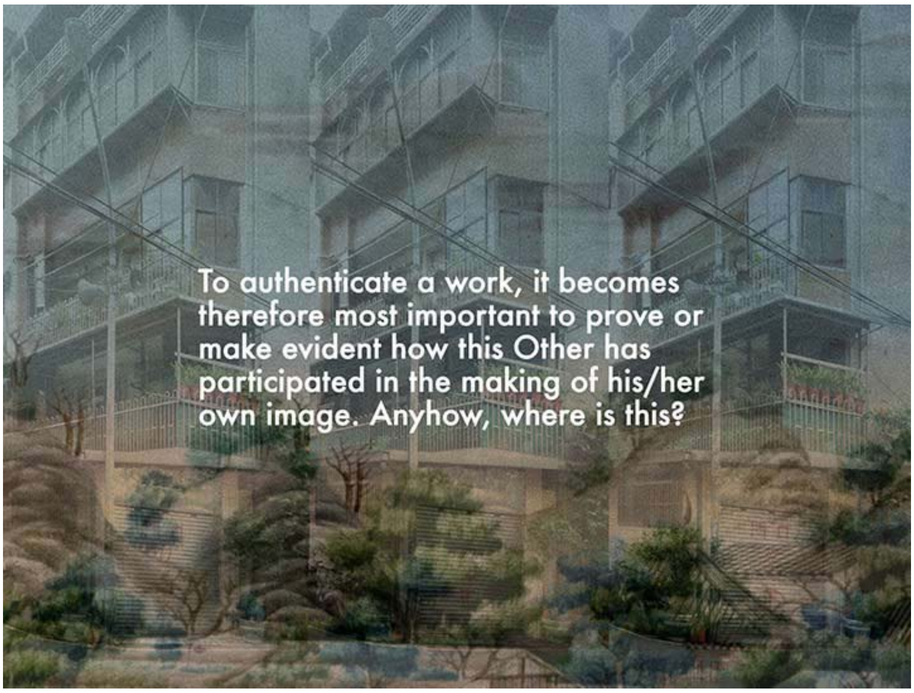
To authenticate a work, it becomes therefore most important to prove or make evident how this Other has participated in the making of his/her own image. Anyhow, where is this?

Fig 39: Film still from *Another beautiful dream.* The first visual text. The question of 'where is this?' is a reference to the film being a fiction and dream.

To interrogate the enigma of self and other drawing from the pertinent context just explained, I was curious about the relational aspect at play. My curiosity was essentially centered on two questions: how to challenge the prescribed roles of British self and Chinese other? And, as the wallpaper was made in China, how to deal with historical self-representation from the contemporary time in the film? To tackle the queries, I considered theorist and filmmaker Trinh T. Minh-ha's study.

Trinh (1991: 67) reminds us that 'To authenticate a work, it becomes therefore most important to prove or make evident how this Other has participated in the making of his/her own image [..].' I showed this quote in the first visual text to address the intricate relationship between self and other in the representation of the latter. In the case of the wallpaper in Harewood House, the artefact was indeed made by Chinese craftsmen in China – but for the purpose of European export. This contextual background complicates the wallpaper in terms of authenticity in relation to the participation of the *Chinese other*.

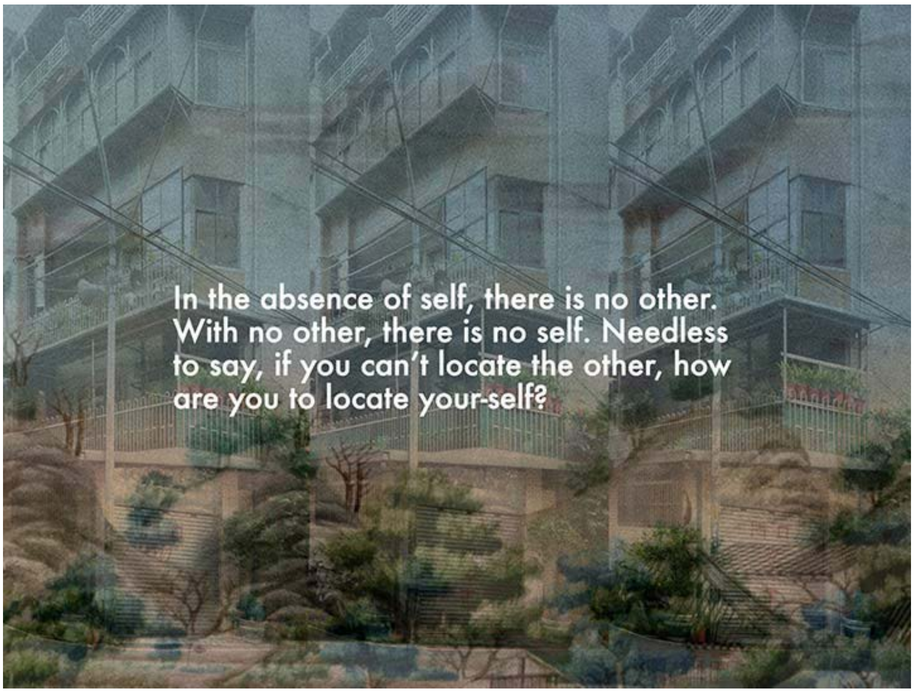
In the absence of self, there is no other.
With no other, there is no self. Needless
to say, if you can't locate the other, how
are you to locate your-self?

Fig 40: Film still from *Another beautiful dream.* The third visual text. Across the five visual texts, the building, digitally replicated here, in the background is where Ang and my family used to live in Taipei. In the foreground is part of the Chinese wallpaper from the East Bedroom.

In the third visual text, I quoted, alongside my own writing, ‘If you can’t locate the other, how are you to locate your-self?’ (Trinh, 1991: 73). The relationship between the British self and Chinese other was one of dynamic. To situate themselves in the widening world, wealthy British people played with Chinese products, or more precisely the (self)representation of Chineseness. Without the Chinese other, the British self might not have been able to be located. As participants in the phenomenon, Chinese artisans then self-represented Chineseness in artefacts.

To respond to this intricate quandary of (self)representation in relation to self and other from this contemporary time, I decided to visually juxtapose images of the wallpaper with my personal and familial photography. Through the artistic strategy of using my own photos, I questioned how one represents oneself in the present and how that negotiates self-representation from the past.

Because of the pandemic, I had not visited Taiwan for a long time. That means I could not take new photos for my filmmaking in this PhD. Therefore, I had to rely on images from before the global health crisis. Going through my hard drive, I was surprised to find out that there were so few photos taken *at home*. Home as Taiwan where I grew up and left in my twenties. And home as Britain where I grew up as an adult and had lived for ten years. Most images I had were from overseas holidays or going abroad for work. At the end, I employed some photos of my old family homes in Taiwan, with my Chinese relatives in Chongqing, China, as well as with my brother in Seattle, USA.

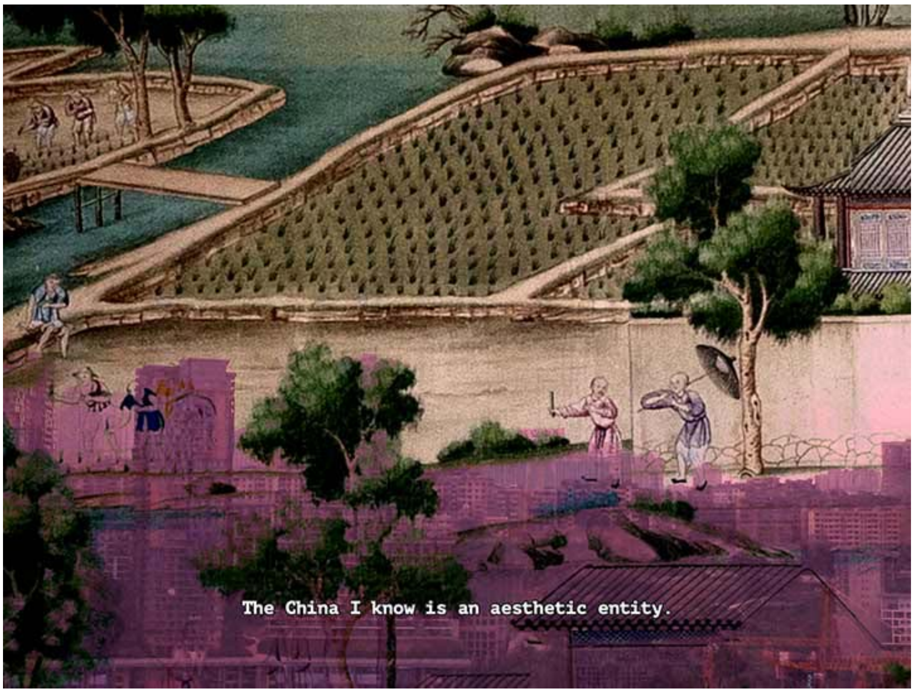
The China I know is an aesthetic entity.

Fig 41: Film still from *Another beautiful dream.* The cityscape in the frame is Chongqing along the famous tourist attraction in the riverbank area, Hongyadong. The other layer is part of the Chinese wallpaper in-situ in the East bedroom.

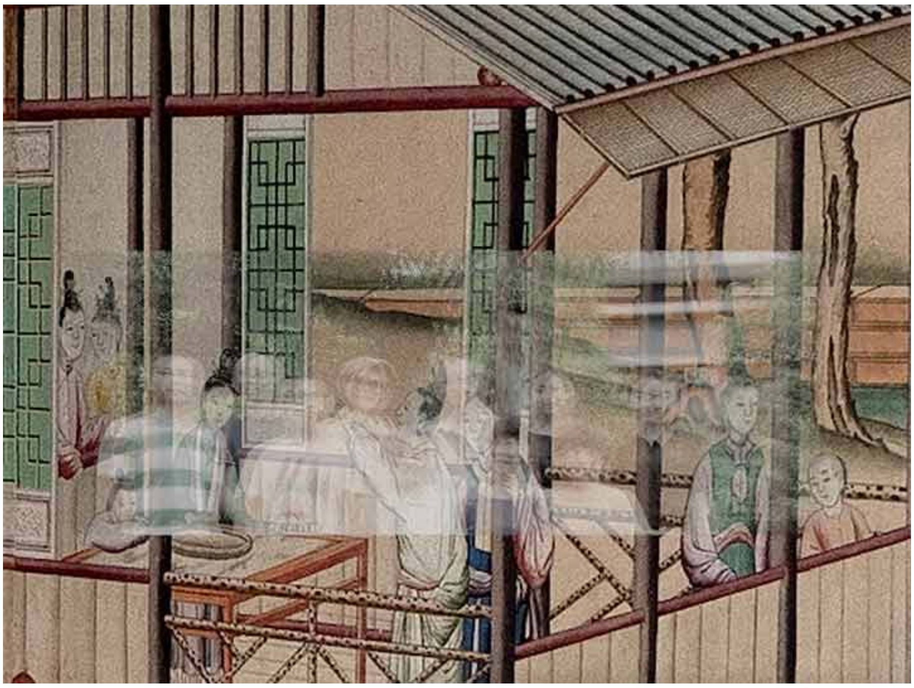

Fig 42: Film still from *Another beautiful dream.* The photo in the middle was taken with my Chinese relatives in Chongqing in 2017. It's my first and the only time seeing them so far. In the frame, my family photo is layered with a scene from the wallpaper. It looks as if my family members were inside the wooden structure.

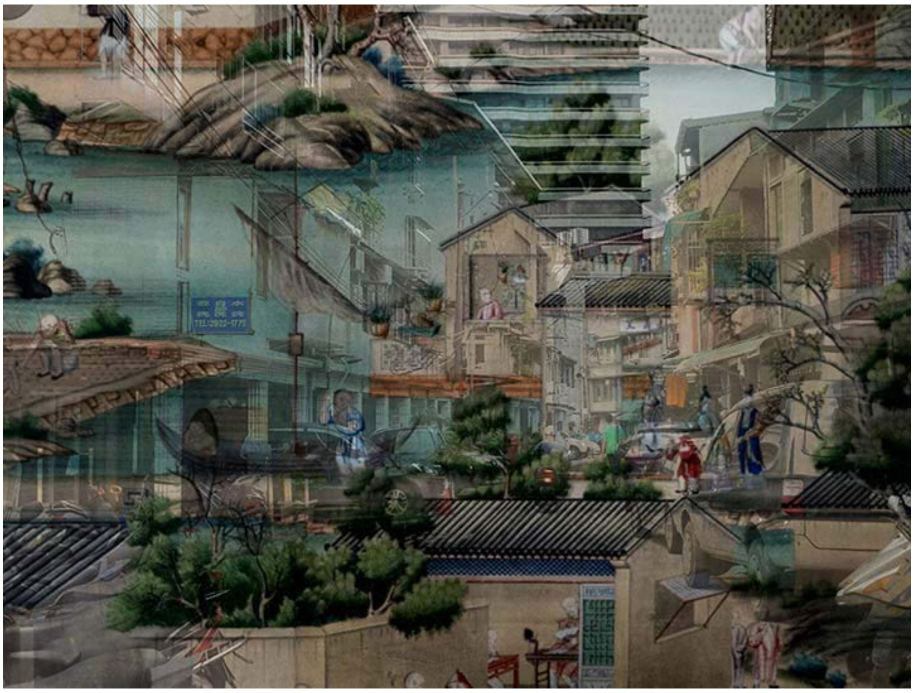

Fig 43: Film still from *Another beautiful dream.* Just before the PhD, I spent the summer of 2017 in Taiwan. Out of nostalgia, I went back to all the properties where I had lived and took photos of them and the surroundings. My family and I lived in the house on the right in the photo for a few years when I was in primary school. The images of my old house/street and the wallpaper blend with each other, creating a multilayered frame.

Self and Other: the Sinophone & Ang's Chineseness

Another aspect of self and other I investigated in *Another beautiful dream* is Chineseness. Chien-lung and Ang consider the topic in relation to the wallpaper from their respective perspectives. Ang, in particular, addresses the issue of Chineseness as an identity. Here I brought to the fore the *Chinese other* in terms of identity politics. My focus was to problematise it in relation to self and other in analytical detail.

The literary scholar Shu-mei Shih (2011) proposes to rethink Chinese culture and its boundary. Reviewing Chinese history with a focus on the Ching Dynasty, Shih calls for a different historiographical viewpoint. As reviewed previously in terms of Rey Chow's (1998) *the logic of wound*, the general contemporary Chinese narrative about itself vis-à-vis the West is one of victimhood. By this logic, the Chinese other has been on the receiving end of Western despotism ever since the First Opium War (1839-1842). The Western physical invasion then and non-physical oppression now have defined the Chinese people in relation to the world. Nonetheless, Shih (2011) contests that Ching Dynasty's expansion of territory to twofold in the eighteen century speaks of a different history. Ching's pre-Opium-War continental colonialism has been overlooked, whilst only Europeans' oceanic colonialism has been seen as *real* colonial projects. Shin (2011) asserts that in both cases, the colonialisation forced different peoples and cultures to assimilate into the dominant colonising cultures.

On this note, Shih articulates (2011) that there should be Sinophone Studies, like Anglophone and Francophone studies. It is necessary to take into consideration China's settler colonialism across Asia, migration abroad and multilingualism within China. In the literary scholar's words, Sinophone Studies (2011: 711)

> '[…] disrupts the chain of equivalence established, since the rise of nation-states, among language, culture, ethnicity, and nationality and explores the protean, kaleidoscopic, creative, and overlapping margins of China and Chineseness, America and Americanness, […] Taiwan and Taiwanness, […]'

The concept of the Sinophone is based on shared history, and transcends ethnicity and national borders. That is to say, Manchurians, Mongolians, Chinese Americans and Taiwanese can *all* be subjects of Sinophone Studies. Although first and foremost as a definition and an academic field, the concept of the Sinophone also applies to the investigation of identity and culture (Shih, 2011).

Returning to *Another beautiful dream,* I wanted to question the dichotomy of self and other through referring to Ang's unique background. Thus she remarks in the film,

> 'I was a self of the Self, an other of the Other, or an inferior copy of either. The changing hands of politics determined my location, shifting from the conquered headquarters to the absolute margin.'

Because in real life she was part of the ruling Manchu/non-Han family of China, and later a marginalised ethnic minority from the Nationalists' relocation in Taiwan. According to the Sinophone, the Ching royal's Manchurianness, Chineseness and Taiwaneseness would have been fluid. She was an insider and/or an outsider. But she could also be an ersatz of either. Contingent on the political situation, Ang was either, neither or both self and other. In the film, I used Ang's lived experience and ever-changing identity as a result of the shifting politics to destabilise the fixed roles of self and other in the scenario of the culture of taste. My childhood neighbour's identity is to be further explored in the following section.

Self and Other: I/Self & Inappropriate(d) Other

Alongside deconstructing the *Chinese other* through problematising Ang's identity, I challenged the relationship between self and other by problematising the idea of 'I/self.' In the fourth visual text, I revisited the travel of Marco Polo after discussing it with Xanadu in the previous film. Over the centuries, Polo's travelogue and experience have become a synonym of visiting somewhere distant and outlandish.

But reversely, when the Venetian arrived at somewhere foreign and exotic, he must have come across as foreign and exotic there and then. The perception of the foreign goes both ways. What is at play here is the problematic practice of using oneself as the reference point and hence the self-centered perspective. These are also the problems in the roles of the British self and Chinese other in the culture of taste.

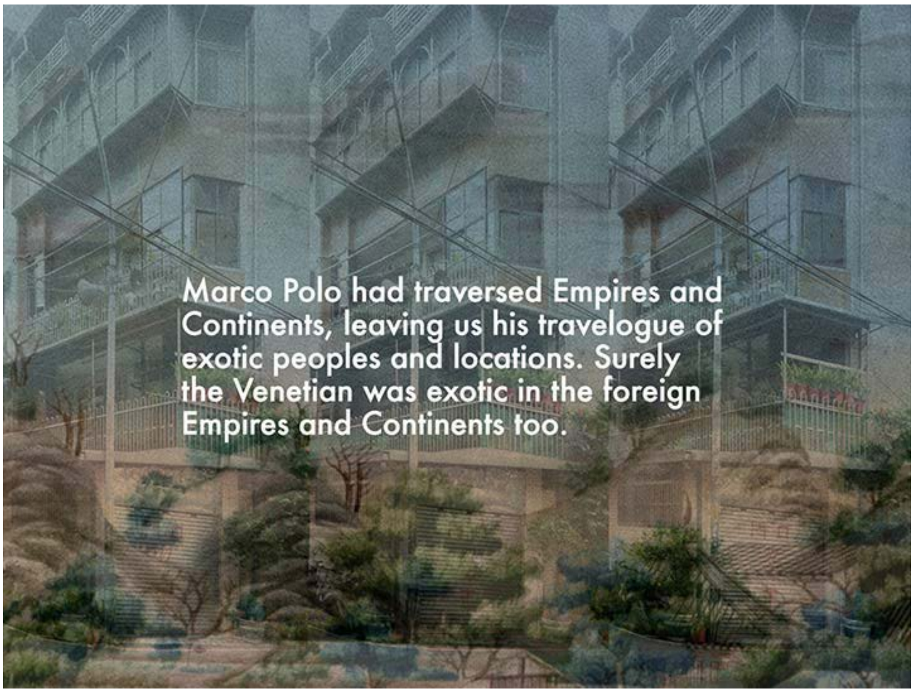
Marco Polo had traversed Empires and Continents, leaving us his travelogue of exotic peoples and locations. Surely the Venetian was exotic in the foreign Empires and Continents too.

Fig 44: Film still from *Another beautiful dream.* The fourth visual text is of my own writing.

Throughout the film, all the characters elaborate on *I* or *self* based on their lived experiences and hence opinions. In the beginning of the film, 'Chinese' Chippendale introduces Harewood house, the culture of taste and himself. The celebrated cabinet-maker proudly proclaims that the decorating scheme in the Yorkshire stately home only used the best architects and designers '[…] including myself.' Being this fabulous self, Chippendale further asserts himself to be a furniture maker, cultural agent and taste facilitator.

In Chien-lung's monologue, he expresses his bewilderment at seeing his Empire depicted over the wallpaper on the wall. As explained before, wallpaper was only made for export purpose and did not exist in China then. In the film set in the Pavilion, Chien-lung asserts to Macartney that he and his Empire do not wait around be part of the British oceanic expansion. In line with his previous stance, the Emperor disagrees with the European audience-oriented nature of the wallpaper, or, precisely Chineseness as a visual language. In the film, he reiterates that, 'Our existence is solely for our own purpose. For a celestial purpose.' Here, the Chinese other is instead a Chinese self that lives a life for his/her own purpose.

In my monologue, I position the self-and-other dichotomy within the notion of contact zone (Pratt, 1991, 1992). By this logic, the Chinese wallpaper is/was a contact zone in which the British self and Chinese other meet and grapple with each other. As reviewed before, when the wallpaper was made in the eighteenth century there was no threat of military invasion in the physical Sino-British contact zone. However, it was representation that Chineseness is and was subject to in chinoiserie artefacts. The reason for me to use both present and past tenses in the analysis and in the film is because the artefacts are still around, unlike the historical Sino-British contact zone. Ultimately, the self-and-other quandary comes down to from whose perspective one is to view the contact. Thus, at the end of monologue, I argue, 'But who is foreign to whom in the contact zone?'

Earlier I explored Ang's Chineseness in relation to the Sinophone as part of my discussion about the enigma of self and other. I also wanted to investigate Ang's identity in connection with Trinh. T. Minh-ha's notion of Inappropriate(d) Other.

Trinh’s argument centres on the intricate question: how does one represent one’s culture to a foreign audience? What is at stake is the interrelation between self and other. The cultural theorist (1991: 74) articulates that

> ‘She refuses to reduce herself to an Other, and her reflections to a mere outsider’s objective reasoning or insider’s subjective feeling. She knows […], that she is not an outsider like the foreign outsider.’

In the context of an (non-Western/European) other self-representing to a (Western/European) self, the binary classification of self and other puts what comprises this other at risk. The risk of being subject to one dimensionality, ‘For there can hardly be such a thing as an essential inside that can be homogeneously represented by all insiders […]’ (Trinh, 1991: 75). Therefore, the antidote to essentialism in self-representation is the exploration and communication of subjectivity. And Trinh (1991) reminds us that this works both ways: both self and other shall not be subject to an essential representation. On this note, Ang’s changing identity as a Manchurian, Chinese and Taiwanese speaks volume of the unreliable nature of an essential Chinese other/insider. Thus, at the end of the film, Ang proclaims, ‘[…] there is an the Inappropriate(d) Other within every I, which I can testify to be very true given my existence. How would being British self negotiate that?’ In this critical vein, both an essential self and other are deconstructed.

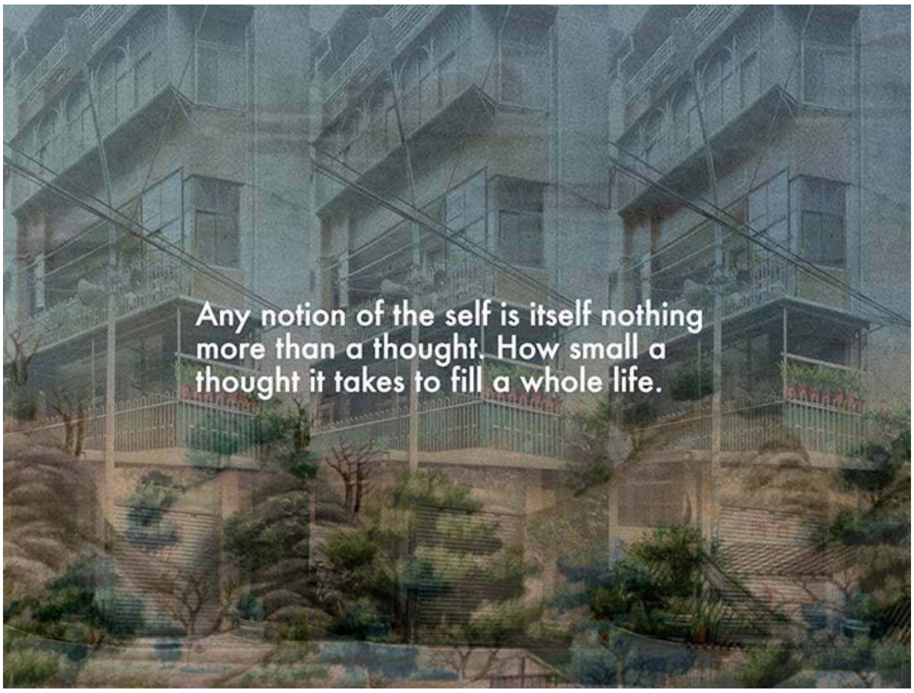
Any notion of the self is itself nothing more than a thought. How small a thought it takes to fill a whole life.

Fig 45: Film still from *Another beautiful dream.* The fifth visual text.

The fifth and last visual text is at the end of the film and before end credits. I quoted the late Buddhist teacher Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, ‘Any notion of the self is nothing more than a thought’ (2007: 133). Here I reference the Buddhist concept of the self. As reviewed in the analysis of the film set in the Pavilion, all phenomena are always changing, so is the self. There is no solid self because our body and mind are always shifting. And therefore, our perception of the self as a stable self is only our perception, a thought (Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, 2007). Through referencing the Buddhist idea of self, I deconstructed self, or, all selves, once again after exploring Trinh T. Minh-ha’s (1991) concept of Inappropriate(d) Other.

Chapter 3.3

A note on Delftware (2022)

2022, 10 minutes, colour digital video, sound

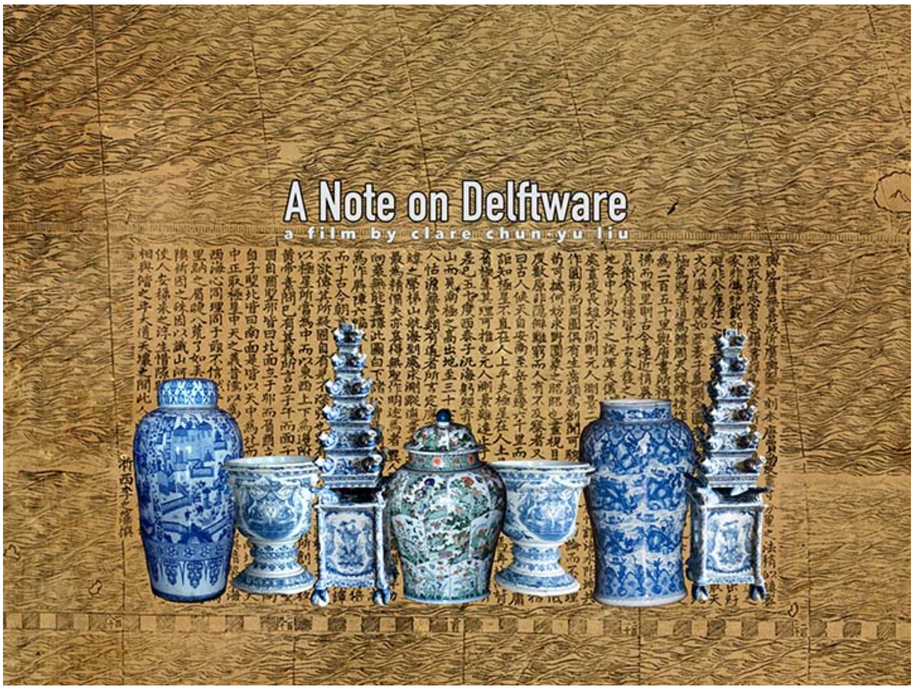
A Note on Delftware
a film by clare chun-yu liu

Fig 46: Poster of *A Note on Delftware.*

Synopsis

A note on Delftware is a contemplation on chinoiserie and the postcolonial review of history. Unlike *This is China*… and *Another beautiful dream*, the film comprises only my narration in a non-fictional approach. Filmed on-site, this work investigates the Delftware collections at Chatsworth House, a stately home. Delftware was a Dutch imitation of Chinese porcelain popular in the seventeenth century. The curious vases comprise the Chinese blue-and-white pattern, as well as Middle Eastern, and Dutch visual motifs. The cross-cultural products were made a fashion by English Princess Mary in both England and the Netherlands.

The visual strategy of using Matteo Ricci's world map serves to further explore Delftware's trajectory and the nuances in the postcolonial project. Through crafting the map, the Jesuit missionary introduced European knowledge of the globe as a sphere to the Chinese in the seventeenth century. However, he enlisted the help of Chinese knowledge of geography. By de-centering China on the map, Ricci inevitably also flattened Europe.

* * *

A note on Delftware was my third and last case study of cultural heritage sites in this PhD. I was introduced to the Collections Department at Chatsworth and the conversation about filming on site took off smoothly. However, the Covid 19 pandemic wreaked havoc on my plan. It turned out the agreed filming day was the very day the UK went into the first national lockdown. It was only after 6 months that I was kindly allowed in to gather the visual materials that I needed. Another hurdle in the process was that some of Chatsworth's Delftware objects were on loan for the exhibition *WonderWare* at Kunstmuseum Den Haag. The major survey exhibition on Delftware got hold of a substantial number of Dutch-made artifacts from the Netherlands and beyond. As Queen Mary was the key patron in promoting the ceramic style, naturally Chatsworth House's Delftware collections were borrowed for their premium quality. As a result, I only worked with the remaining vases in situ in the house.

The filming conditions were fairly similar to the previous two cultural heritage sites. I was able to come in with a camera before the opening hours under the supervision of an allocated member of staff. As the Delftware vases were scattered across the house on the upper floor, I went from room to room. In line with the previous situations, *filming* here meant taking still images of the artefacts. It was not possible to actually film under the condition of working solo, without extensive equipment and within a short space of time. The lighting inside the house was essentially natural light from the outside. Thankfully there were big windows in each room and therefore lighting was not a problem. Like the other historic museums, the house had a visitor route fenced off by barriers. Due to the limitation of time, it was not possible to remove the heavy barriers on the floor for my photography. Therefore, I was careful with my camera angles so as to take satisfactory photos.

A note on Delftware is the shortest film in this PhD. This is because the focus here is solely on the Delftware collections in situ. The Dutch-made artefacts were products of cross-cultural histories. As explained in Chapter 2.1, Delftware was an imitation of Chinese porcelain in the Netherlands. The Chinese-made gems were purchased in Canton by the Dutch East India Company and came through Jakarta to the Netherlands. The demand for the import known for its translucency was so high that local potters began to imitate it. Without the recipe of porcelain, Delft-based potters used earthenware instead in the seventeenth century. The Chinese ceramic motif of blue-and white pattern was then mixed with visual languages of other cultures: the Middle Eastern influence through the then Islamic Spain, Italian and French craftsmen as well as Dutch imageries. Delftware was indeed a chimera of multiple cultural influences and hence its unique appearance.

The particular cultural and thus visual background of Delftware made me think hard as to how to revisit it from a postcolonial perspective. As my methodological framework was informed by the idea of contact zones (Pratt, 1991; 1992), I originally thought about reinterpreting chinoiserie collections from the *Chinese side* like in the other two films. However, the concept of the Dutch coloniser and Chinese other did not resonate with the pertinent historical context of multi-cultural contact. I began to consider whether notional interlocution was the best framework in which to respond to the Delftware objects. At the end, I decided to reflect on the relevant historical context in relation to the coloniser/colonised framework in the film through narrating my consideration as myself/the artist of the work. In other words, rather than generating different perspectives as possible ways to reinterpret related history, I took a step back to (re)consider the postcolonial review of history and its boundary. On this note, *A note on Delftware* offers a different approach in which to respond to chinoiserie from the two previous films.

In line with the context just explained*, A note on Delftware* was made in a non-fictional approach, unlike the other two films. The script was created *not* through notional interlocution. As the last part of the trilogy, this film comes across as *sobering-up* after being in dreams: there is no fiction involved and hence no *dreaming* of historical characters as such. Thus, I did not textually or visually explore the theme of dream like I had done in the other films.

Artistically speaking, I did not utilise the method of decreasing opacity of images to create a sense of the scenario being dreamy. Rather, I digitally cropped out the Chinese porcelain and Delftware artefacts from their backgrounds. The cut-out images are solid and travel on the world map. Similar to the previous two films, I moved still images around in postproduction to create a sense of movement throughout *A note on Delftware*. Through my overall artistic strategy, I presented the historic objects realistically and showed them traversing the world – as they had done so in history.

Kunyu Wanguo Quantu:[53] The Chinese World Map by European

> 'Ricci's Chinese world maps are the first Jesuit works that brought a version of late Renaissance European cosmology, cartography, and world geography into the Chinese intellectual arena' (Zhang, 2015: 29).

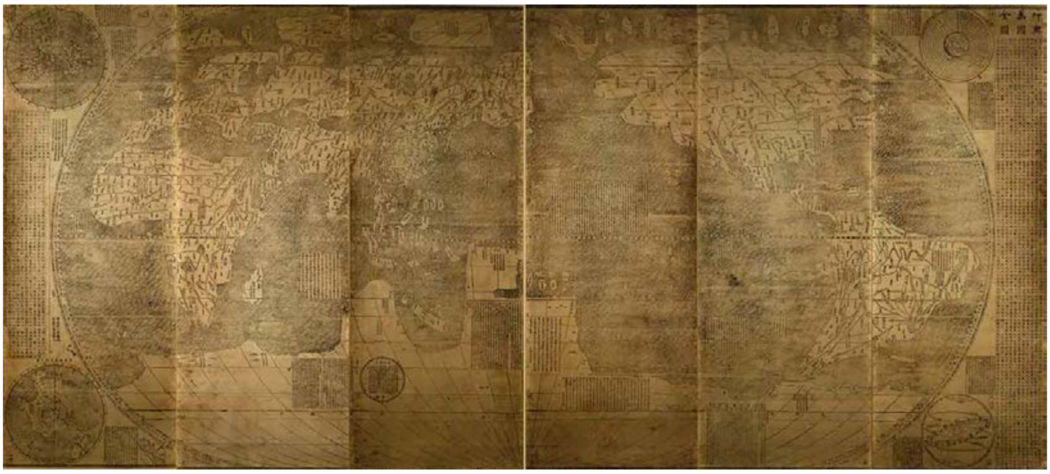

Fig 47: Image of Kunyu Wanguo Quantu. The original map of from 1602 by Matteo Ricci. (photo credit: public domain via Wiki Commons)

In the film, Chinese porcelain and Delftware artefacts from Chatsworth House are placed against the background of the world map by Matteo Ricci. By doing so, I visualised the geographical trajectory which the objects had taken. The idea of using *a* world map came to my mind early in the process of editing the film. But *which* map to use presented a quandary. Instead of using a contemporary map or Google map indeed, I employed the historic world map because it is roughly from the same era of the Dutch objects.

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[53] In Mandarin, it is 坤輿萬國全圖, literally meaning a complete map of ten thousand countries.

On the other hand, by way of *Kunyu Wanguo Quantu* I laid an additional layer of context to the film. It was a common belief in China that the earth was a flat square with China right in the middle and other countries in the margin (Baddeley, 1917). By this logic, the Asian Kingdom presided over the majority of the world in size – and in influence. In the late sixteenth century and early seventeenth century,[54] this Sinocentric planetary view was challenged by Ricci's world map.

The Jesuit missionary was preoccupied with spreading Christianity in China in light of the religious Reformation back in Europe. With an eye to finding out how to preach the foreign religion, Ricci endeavoured to familiarise himself with Chinese culture, language and custom. In his observation, Chinese intellectuals' thirst for new knowledge was a place he could occupy. Therefore, Ricci began to impart his understanding of sciences to attract potential converts (Zhang, 2015). It was in this context that the missionary translated and developed the world map based on his late European Renaissance knowledge (Baddeley, 1917). In order for the local audience to understand, the Jesuit inscribed legends and made room on the right-hand side of the map to explain the project in the Chinese language. His aim was to have the map printed and put in circulation throughout the Asian kingdom which then would encourage curiosity about Christianity.

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[54] 1584 saw the first edition of the map, and 1599 the second. In 1602, both the third and fourth editions came around (Baddeley, 1917).

What I found most intriguing about *Kunyu Wanguo Quantu* is the complexity and entanglement of relevant history behind it. The map depicted the earth as a sphere which was contrary to the Sinocentric concept widely embraced then in China. The Asian state was no longer in the middle of the world or incorrectly immense. But by de-centering China, the missionary inevitably de-centred Europe too, as the European continent was also not central in the world.

This situation was further complicated by how to understand the historical context. The historian Qiong Zhang (2015) reminds us that the master narrative of the Jesuits' achievement of transmitting superior European knowledge to China was essentially produced by themselves. The religious sect kept diaries and produced other written documents about their accomplishments in China for the readership of their European headquarters. Ironically, the Eurocentric perspective held by the missionaries was deconstructed by their visual introduction of the earth as a centre-less globe.

Furthermore, Ricci was not the lone contributor to the project. The missionary was responsible for translating his European map that lacked precise understanding of Asia into *Kunyu Wanguo Quantu* (Zhang, 2015). His Chinese collaborators' knowledge of geographical details of China and surrounding Asian countries filled up the gap that Ricci could not address. The world map was in fact a result of the collaborative efforts of both Ricci/the European and the Chinese (Zhang, 2015).

The complex history and its implication behind *Kunyu Wanguo Quantu* present a flattened world in which both Sinocentric and Eurocentric viewpoints were deconstructed by the very map. The entanglement of history and subsequent ambivalence in analysing it in a postcolonial framework is to be further explored in the following section.

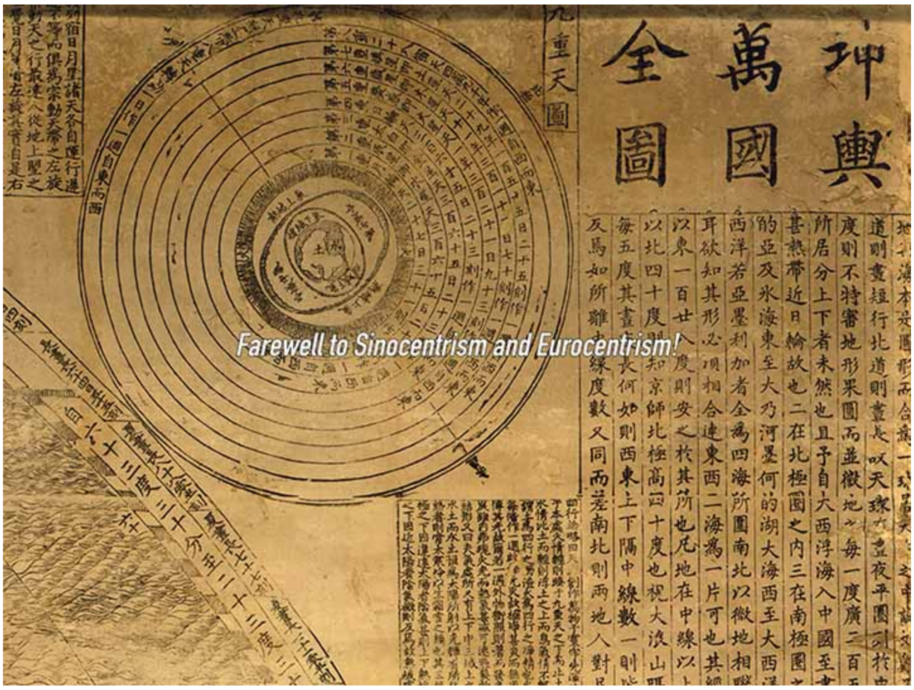

Fig 48: Film still from *A note on Delftware*. At the end of part 1 where I discuss the background of the map, I visually show 'Farewell to Sinocentrism and Eurocentrism!.' The background is the upper-right corner of the map where Ricci's writing in Mandarin starts to explain about the mechanism of the chart.

Reflection on Notional Interlocution & Postcolonial Review of History

As both the Pavilion's interior and Harewood House's Chinese wallpaper have direct contextual links to Britain's historical contact with China, I reinterpreted the chinoiserie objects on the two sites referencing the notion of contact zone. The chinoiserie contact zones in the two films address the historical contact zones in real life. However, Chatsworth House's Delftware collections present a different case. Chineseness as a visual language embedded in the Dutch objects had traversed and was mixed with multiple cultures. There were multiple contact zones in the trajectory. And importantly, unlike the Sino-British relations, the Dutch did not colonise China.[55] Instead, the Dutch colonised present-day Indonesia and used Jakarta as a base to trade with China.

Whilst making *A note on Delftware*, I was at a loss as to how to address the *problem* of multiple contact zones. The cross-cultural history of the Delftware does not illustrate a scenario of a Dutch self and Chinese other. Rather, there were Dutch, Chinese, Iraqi, Spanish, Italian and French selves and/or others at play. I grappled with how to tackle this specific context through the methodological mechanism of notional interlocution. My perplexity then evolved into the question of whether it would be possible or meaningful at all to review this history from a postcolonial perspective. It slowly became clear to me that this contextual ambivalence was an opportunity to reflect on the postcolonial project itself. I then decided to explore the boundary of postcolonial reviewing of history in a non-fictional approach.

In the film, I explain the cross-cultural history of the Delftware artefacts, including the role of Chinese porcelain in the development of the Dutch objects. Since there are Chinese porcelain pieces at Chatsworth House, I used the images of them in my explanation of the pertinent history. Similar to the other two films, there is a lack of my opinion in *A note on Delftware.* My narration does not offer any instructive perspective or didactic conclusion. In this film, I point out the ambivalence in revisiting the Delftware pieces in a coloniser/colonised framework given the relevant historical context.

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[55] Although in the seventeenth century the Dutch did temporarily occupy Taiwan and attempted to force China to open trade ports but to no avail.

Regarding the approach in which to make *A note on Delftware*, I very much concurred with Ien Ang's view (2001: 2):

> 'The diasporic intellectual acts as a perpetual party-pooper here because her impulse is to point to ambiguities, complexities and contradictions, to complicate matters rather than provide formulate for solutions, to blur distinctions between colonizer and colonized, dominant and subordinate, oppressor and oppressed.'

The cultural theorist (2001) articulates the necessity to question the binary nature in the postcolonial project and to address what cannot fall into the easy framework of a coloniser self and colonised other. As reviewed in Chapter 1.3, in terms of Chineseness as an identity I identify with the diaspora, given my personal and familial experience. Therefore, I felt a sense of kinship with the position for diasporic individuals to reflect on the postcolonial project signposted by Ien Ang (2001).

On the other hand, Ien Ang's view (2001) resonates with what Rey Chow (1998) calls the *logic of wound*, explored previously in my articulation of this PhD as a thought experiment. By considering the ambivalence in the history pertaining to the Delftware objects, I suspend the narrative of the Chinese other being on the receiving end of Western/European oppression. The result is there being neither a European coloniser self nor Chinese colonised other in place.

At this point, I feel compelled to look back at the historiographies explored in Chapter 1.2: Said's *Orientalism* (1978) delineates a binary picture of European coloniser and Eastern other. Whereas Aravamudan's *Enlightenment Orientalism* (2011), Carey and Festa's *Postcolonial Enlightenment* (2009) and Jenkins's *Prehistory* *of Orientalism* (2013) direct us to focus on the situation within Britain/Europe. And Porter's study (2010) provides a *Sinocentric historiography*. All these perspectives from which to revisit history are deconstructed in *A note on Delftware*. This is because, in hindsight, my use of *Kunyu Wanguo Quantu* deconstructs both Sinocentrism and Eurocentrism. And my reflection through narration rejects the narrative of colonial Dutch/European self and colonised Chinese other.

In this critical vein, I relate to Trinh T. Minh-ha's (Chen, 1992) strategy in relation to her own filmic work. As explained previously in Chapter 2.2, Trinh's film *Naked Space: Living is Round* (1985) explores dwelling and space in multiple West African cultures. The documentary offers a critical contemplation on the self/other tension in academic research where anthropologists represent their subject. Through both narrative and filmic manipulation, Trinh questions the position of power in relation to representation. Whilst she deconstructs the Western gaze, she inevitably also deconstructs the filmmaker that is herself. According to her, such a *deep clean* is necessary because it makes it possible for other individuals

> '[…] to reflect on their own struggle and to use the tools offered so as to further it on their own terms. […] Hence, these tools are sometimes also appropriated and turned against the very filmmaker or writer, which is a risk I am willing to take' (Chen, 1992: 85).

* * *

To conclude, I have reviewed my three artist films respectively filmed at the three cultural heritage sites as part of this PhD. Through my artist films, I revisited English chinoiserie from a perspective informed by postcolonialism and my Taiwanese and Chinese diasporic background.

The three films are the crystalisation of Chapter 1 and Chapter 2. The historical review in Chapter 1.1 is connected to the historical background of the three sites – and thus the topics explored in the three films. My examination of relevant historiographies in Chapter 1.2 and Chineseness as an identity in Chapter 1.3 informed my development of notional interlocution, the methodological framework in this research. Through notional interlocution, I explored topics deriving from the historical context of the heritage sites in *This is China*… and *Another beautiful dream*. I generated a plethora of perspectives through the characters' and my own narratives informed by our respective lived experience. In *A note on Delftware*, however, the script was not created through notional interlocution. In a non-fictional manner, I commented on the ambivalence in reviewing the Delftware artefacts in a coloniser/colonised framework, given the objects' cross-cultural background. This approach is different from creating plural perspectives in *This is China*… and *Another beautiful dream*. Through the non-fictional approach, I took a step back to rethink about the research, in terms of the boundary of notional interlocution. Concurring with Ien Ang's view (2001: 2), I argue that articulating ambivalence in the coloniser/colonised structure is also part of the postcolonial review of history.

Visually speaking, the three films have different artistic strategies as part of their exploration of their respective topics. Intrinsic to *This is China*… and *Another beautiful dream* is my investigation of dream as a theme. This is because the two films are fictions with fictional narratives. I have the two films aware of themselves as fictions through my scriptwriting and manipulation of frames. Given its context, *Another beautiful dream* also visually explores self-representation besides dream. My personal and familial photos are mixed with the imagery of Chinese wallpaper in question. As to *A note on Delftware*, I have a realistic artistic strategy in response to my non-fictional approach in making the film.

Conclusion

This practice-based fine art PhD aims to reinterpret English chinoiserie from a perspective informed by postcolonial thinking and my background of coming from Taiwan and the Chinese diaspora through art practice. Essentially, my research asks why Chineseness as a visual language was represented the way it was in eighteenth-century English chinoiserie and how to create new narratives through art practice in response to it. Central to my PhD as a thought experiment is my suspension of the narrative of the Chinese other being on the receiving end of Western oppression, or *the logic of wound* (Chow, 1998). That is to say, tackling and dismantling binary oppositionality in how to understand relevant history - *and* my response to it - is pivotal in this research.

It was through filmmaking and particularly scriptwriting that I revisited the chinoiserie collections within the selected cultural heritage sites as my case studies. As my research informs my practice in this PhD, I examined relevant contexts in order to develop suitable methods and methodology for my filmmaking. I set out to explore three important lines of enquiries: the history pertaining to Chineseness as a visual language in English chinoiserie, how to reinterpret such history, and Chinesenesness as an identity. My historical review of pertinent Sino-British/European relations ranged from Jesuits' work in and depictions of China in the seventeenth century to the British colonisation of Hong Kong in the nineteenth century. My findings disclosed that insufficient knowledge, fantasy, imagination and propaganda of the Asian state produced inaccurate accounts of China in Europe (de Bruijn, 2016, 2017; Honour, 1961; Jenkins, 2013; Porter, 1999). As a result, Chineseness as a visual language in chinoiserie was unstable, shifting and self-contradictory (de Bruijn, 2016, 2017; Honour, 1961). These circumstances were in correlation with Britain's and Europe's internal situations and external contact with the outside world (de Bruijn, 2016, 2017; Ramsey, 2001). Another factor was China's strict trade policy that gave foreigners very little access to inland China (Purdue, 2009).

As the eighteen-century Sino-British relations were free from aggression, I explored how to reinterpret eighteenth-century pre-colonial contact between the two countries from a postcolonial viewpoint. Edwards Said's *Orientalism* (1978) offered a binary logic with its focus on the nineteenth-century European colonisation of the Levant. My review of his study led me to examine relevant eighteenth-century historiographies, viewpoints from which to analyse the cross-cultural phenomenon of English chinoiserie: Aravamudan's *Enlightenment Orientalism* (2011), Carey and Festa's *Postcolonial Enlightenment* (2009), Porter's *Sinocentric perspective* (2010) and Jenkins's *Prehistory of Orientalism* (2013). Through my examination of these historiographies, I supported my suspension of *the logic of wound* (Chow, 1998) that is the Chinese as a victim of Western oppression.

My problematisation of Chineseness as an identity began with a historical review of relevant events: Chinese migration during Ching Dynasty, Japanese colonisation (Dirlik, 2018), the Nationalist rule (Kagan, 1982), post-democratisation and the current situation with China (BBC, 2022). My findings showed the complexity of Taiwanese identity in relation to Chineseness: a lot of politics and politicising, and the resulting divide between Fujianese/Hakka and Nationalists, local Taiwanese and incoming mainlanders. I further problematised Chineseness as an identity through exploring identity in relation to diaspora (Ang, 1994, 1998, 2001, 2013; Hall, 1990). I deconstructed Chineseness as a singular, fixed and prescribed identity. I also reviewed my art practice and articulated the significance of oral history and personal experience to me as an artist. Overall, my findings pointed to multiple, personal and diasporic viewpoints, and therefore multiple Chinas/Chinese identities.

My examination of pertinent historiographies, Chineseness as an identity and my art practice pointed to *multiplicity* in narrative and perspective, and *subjectivity.* Based on this emphasis, I created a new methodological framework that I refer to as notional interlocution, a postcolonial strategy of fictional (auto)ethnography. I laid the foundation of my methodological framework in constructivism (Patel, 2015), post-structuralism (Munslow, 2000) and art-based research (Given, 2008; Sullivan, 2011). Furthermore, I extended Mary Louise Pratt's notions of contact zones and autoethnography (1991, 1992). I argued that Chineseness as a visual language was a contact zone and notional interlocution is a phenomenon in contact zones. As a strategy of postcolonial voices, my methodological framework is informed by Achebe's *the balance of stories* (2000), Said's *contrapuntal reading* (1993) and Spivak's *subaltern voices* (1988). Lastly, I argued for *multiple voices* (Trinh, 1991) as part of notional interlocution to diversify and nuance the narratives of the *Chinese other* in tandem with my review of artworks on chinoiserie (Cheng, no date; Tsang, 2012).

My investigation of the three chosen cultural heritage sites put forth the historical events in relation to their chinoiserie collections: Macartney's Embassy to China and George IV's chinoiserie interior at the Royal Pavilion; the culture of taste and the

Chinese wallpaper at Harewood House; the Delftware artefacts at Chatsworth House and their cross-cultural background.

My three artist films crystalised my thus-far findings. Through and on notional interlocution, I wrote the films scripts for the three films in response to the three chinoiserie collections at the cultural heritage sites. *This is China of a particular sort, I do not know* was filmed at the Pavilion, *Another beautiful dream* Harewood House, and *A note on Delftware* Chatsworth House.

Through notional interlocution, I wrote the film scripts for *This is China*… and *Another beautiful dream*: new narratives of relevant historical individuals from China, Taiwan and Britain and myself based on our personal stories and backgrounds. As such, my characters and myself meet and confer with each other over the representation of Chineseness in the films. Through the characters' and my own narratives, I explored a number of topics deriving from the historical contexts of the heritage sites and generated a plethora of perspectives informed by our respective lived experiences. Alongside the topics deriving from pertinent history of the chinoiserie objects in situ, my characters also talk about their confused and confusing feelings of being inside a dream. This is because the two films are fictions with fictional narratives, as an outcome of notional interlocution. The two films are aware of themselves as fictions through my scriptwriting and manipulation of the frames.

Visually speaking, central to *This is China*… and *Another beautiful dream* is my exploration of dream as a theme, as I have just explained. I juxtaposed layers of images reduced in opacity which convey a sense of dream and illusion. This visual strategy is especially manifest in *This is China*… As to *Another beautiful dream*, the film also visually explores self-representation besides dream, given its context. My personal and familial photos are mixed with the imagery of Chinese wallpaper in question in the film.

My third film, *A note on Delftware* was *not* created through notional interlocution. Rather, the film offers a reflection on the methodological framework. It explores the Delftware objects' cross-cultural history, ambivalence and postcolonial review of history in a non-fictional way through my narration. This non-fictional approach is different and offers an alternative postcolonial vision from that of in the other two films. This is because I wanted to be critical of the history of the Delftware artefacts and the fact that it does not fit it to a coloniser/colonised framework. Visually speaking, I employed a realistic artistic strategy in response to my non-fictional approach in making the film, in line with the nature of the work.

As I set this PhD as a thought experiment based on my suspension of the narrative of the Chinese other as victim of Western oppression, I deconstructed the binary oppositions of British/European coloniser/self and Chinese colonised other in the three films. In *This is China*… and *Another beautiful dream,* the dismantling is through the plural perspectives generated by way of notional interlocution. The new narratives are in response to topics deriving from the historical contexts – and hence deconstruct aspects of the binary structure. In *This is China*… , I deconstructed the chionoiserie interior, relevant history and some of the film characters over several threads: appearance and the Buddhist concept of emptiness, interpreting history in terms of cause and effect, the liberty of interpretation and imagination, as well as the difficulty/impossibility to reinterpret history without a perspective. In *Another* *beautiful dream*, I deconstructed the concept of self and other by exploring the Sinophone in relation to Ang's Chineseness, and Trinh T. Minh-ha's notion of Inappropriate(d) other (1991). In *A note on Delftware*, I deconstructed both Sinocentrism and Eurocentrism by reviewing Matteo Ricci's world map, as well as reflecting on notional interlocution and the postcolonial review of history in a non-fictional way. On this note, my three artist films are open-ended and philosophical, and create new spaces in which to revisit English chinoiserie.

My three artist films form a trilogy because of their shared subject matter of exploring English chinoiserie. In particular, *This is China*… and *Another beautiful dream* constitute a sequel as they are both fictions as an outcome of notional interlocution – and share characters. Both films can be reviewed independently and seen as independent works.

This PhD have three areas of contribution to knowledge. Firstly, my research advances a reinterpretation of English chinoiserie through a postcolonial lens and from a Taiwanese/Chinese diasporic perspective. To the best of my knowledge, the confluence of chinoiserie, Visual Art, Chinese Studies, and Postcolonial Theory has not been examined in the form of a practice-based PhD in fine art and this is the first research of its kind.

Secondly, I created a new methodological framework: notional interlocution, primarily based on my extension of Pratt's notions of contact zones and autoethnography (1991, 1992). As my PhD sits within practice-based fine art research, notional interlocution contributes a methodological approach to the field. I believe my key methodological innovation also might contribute to other fields and contexts: for instance, creative writing, and reinterpreting different collections and historical contexts. On this note, I look forward to future researchers employing notional interlocution in their research.

Through my postcolonial strategy of fictional (auto)ethnography, I made two artist films whereby to generate new narratives in response to the chinoiserie collections in situ at two cultural heritage sites. By way of my methodological framework and filmmaking, I produced plural perspectives to open spaces in which to revisit related history. I also made a third film to reflect on notional interlocution in relation to the third case study. The third film was made in a non-fictional way with my narration.

Apart from the new narratives, the visual aspect is also intrinsic to my filmmaking. I manipulated images of chinoiserie from the three sites based on their respective historical contexts and themes: juxtaposed images in relation to illusion/dream in *This is China…*, layering my personal photos with that of chinoiserie in connection with self-representation in *Another beautiful dream*, and a realistic approach in respect of non-fiction in *A note on Delftware.* The image-making part of this PhD produces meaning that traditional text-based research does not.

Thirdly, my PhD adds an additional layer to the wider context of the ongoing postcolonial project of revisiting history, especially for its philosophical approach and focus on pre-colonial history.

It was outside of the scope of this research to examine the gendered perception of Chineseness in chinoiserie. In Chapter 1.1, my historical review briefly explained the phenomenon of English chinoiserie being associated with femininity in the second half of the eighteenth century (Alayrac-Fielding, 2009; de Bruijn, 2017). This situation was in the wider context of the visual style increasingly on the receiving end of critique for its exuberance and exaggeration (Porter, 2002). It would be my recommendation for future researchers to revisit chinoiserie from a gender or a combination of postcolonial and gender perspectives.

This PhD has been a fruitful journey of working with theory and practice. As an artist, I have broadened my practice and deepened the dynamic between my thinking and making in a way that I might not have anticipated or envisaged otherwise. From the outset, it was my wish to work with narrative and image as an artist when I began to experiment with moving images several years ago. Having read English Literature for my first degree, I was driven by a desire to combine the textual and visual, narrative writing and image making, ideas and art in my practice. And indeed, I had been making work in this direction before the PhD. This research has pushed and challenged me to work at a much larger scale and in much greater depth. Looking back, my aspiration has materialised in the form of researching, scriptwriting, filming/editing and writing this thesis. In particular, the scriptwriting part of the research was especially invigorating and has opened up a new horizon for me as an artist.

As a result of the renewed scale and depth, my practice has evolved in terms of dissemination. Previously my work had mostly been shown as part of fine art exhibitions/screenings. Since the PhD, it has been a valuable learning experience to navigate and partake in film festivals – essentially to rethink distribution as an artist. Because the lead time for participating in film festivals is very long, so far only my first film *This is China..* has been disseminated in this context. Thus far, *This is China*… has also been part of exhibitions at home and abroad, see Appendix B.

Since this research commenced, it has been in the back of my mind to explore chinoiserie in other European countries sometime in the future. That means different cultural, social and historical contexts at a national and cross-cultural level to grapple and work with. On this front, I am keeping an open mind regarding what will happen post-PhD.

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Appendix A: Film Scripts

Film script of *This is China of a particular sort, I do not know*

Director: In real life, Ann was my childhood neighbour from downstairs in Taiwan. I had not reached school age yet. She was a far cousin of Puyi, the last Chinese Emperor, and escaped during the Chinese Civil War to Taiwan with the very people who overthrew her family's dynasty. Ann was Manchurian, Chinese, Taiwanese, and no doubt the best person to talk to about China and Chineseness…

1

Ann meeting George IV

an unlikely encounter across time and space

on China, Chineseness and existence

Ann: This must not be real.

George: What is real?

Ann: Where is this?

George: China.

Ann: This must be a dream.

George: What is not a dream?

Ann: Is this China?

George: Yes, my China.

George: This is China of a particular sort.

Ann: This is China I do not know.

George: I am George, the British King.

Ann: I am Ann, a cousin of the last Chinese Emperor.

George + Ann: Or so I thought.

George: This is Chineseness of a particular sort.

Ann: This is Chineseness I do not know.

George + Ann: Whose China is this?

George: China at my disposal.

Ann: China on your proposal.

George: China on display.

Ann: China in disarray.

George + Ann: Whose Chineseness is this?

George: My Chineseness, my site of pleasure.
Ann: Your little mutated Cathay.

George: What is Chineseness?
Ann: What is Chineseness after all?

George: Mountain, river, the willow pattern.
Ann: In the making, no more.

George: Welcome to my China.
Ann: Behold, my China.

George + Ann: Which China?

Ann: O my China. The dynasty, my Ch’ing.
George: O my China. Bamboo, lotus, pink.

Ann: 1644 to 1911.
George: Now and forever.

Ann: In 1911 I lost my China.

George: I would never lose my China.

Ann: You have never owned China. This is form.

George: Form is existence.

Ann: You have never owned China. This is appearance.

George: Appearance is existence.

Ann: You have never owned China. This is emptiness.

George: Emptiness is existence.

All these forms—appearance emptiness

Like a rainbow with its shining glow

In the reaches of appearance emptiness

Just let go and go where no mind goes

Ann: O my China. The Republic.

George: O my China. The Pavilion.

Ann: 1912, 1949 and beyond.

George: Past, present and future.

Ann: Long life, my Republic.

George: Long life, my Kingdom.

Ann: It is not your Kingdom. You are no more.

George: No bloody way.

Ann: Behold, a museum it is now.

George: I am no more.

George + Ann: Oh boy, this is death

Ann: They display your bed.

George: They freaking touch my bed.

Ann: Gone it is.

George: All gone, indeed.

Ann: Bygone it is.

George: Bygone, truly.

George: This must be an illusion.

Ann: What is not an illusion?

Thus should ye think of all this fleeting world:

A star at dawn, a bubble in a stream;

A flash of lightening in a summer cloud,

A flickering lamp, a phantom, and a dream.

2

interview with Ann over a cuppa

an unlikely reunion across time and space

on the diaspora, possession and impermanence

Ann: So, tell me, what is this film about?

Director: A few years ago, I visited the Pavilion here in Britain. It was a crazy experience. Inside it was all chinoiserie. I know you are not too sure about this French word…

Ann: I guess its English translation would be Chinese-sque or Chinese-ish?

Director: How can it be translated into Mandarin though?

Ann: Oh lord, it would be like China travelling from France via Britain back to China…

Director: Which China?

Ann: Or more precisely, the representation of Chineseness.

Director: Indeed. But the which-China question is too political. We can’t talk about it on camera.

Ann: That is self-censorship. How pathetic.

Director: Truly, but I am just being sensible. When you come from a society where politics is everything in everywhere, you become an *apolitical* person. Like Switzerland, basically.

Ann: So, what is your stance then?

Director: My stance is having no stance. My side is taking no side.

Ann: Hmm that sounds rather shrewd.

Director: Also, I never discuss politics in my work. Essentially, I am interviewing you as part of my PhD.

Ann: Bloody hell.

Director: So I understand that you lived downstairs in the building in Yung-he, Taipei. We were neighbours. My parents visited you often, especially my mother…

Ann: Oh yes, they were good fellows. Your mother and I exchanged ideas about jewelry a lot because I had loads of royal Chinese jade from my family. We came from the same background. After all, we were rootless souls from the diaspora.

Director: It was a turbulent time in 1949. Two million people relocated from the mainland to Taiwan. It hasn't been easy to negotiate the diaspora at a personal and collective level. It's an on-going history.

Ann: You negotiate by negotiating.

Director: I was about five when you lived downstairs. Then my family moved away.

Ann: I was in my 80s back then. Of course, now I am no more.

Director: Back to chinoiserie. What is your take on it, based on your personal background? Obviously, you have experienced dynastic China, Nationalist China on the mainland and then in Taiwan - as a Ching royal!

Ann: We are just by-gones. I am a by-gone.

Director: You mean royal people? They don't always end up well. Look at the tsars….and the French Revolution…

Ann: I am glad my end wasn't too brutal although I am not too sure about Puyi on the mainland, that poor thing. He was made a puppet emperor in the Forbidden City, *his* Forbidden City.

Director: After visiting the Pavilion, I kept thinking about you, in terms of how you would react to this European version of China and Chineseness because your family did own China. It feels to me that there is more than one China, if you know what I mean.

Ann: Indeed, before 1911. It was a family-run business for three hundred years.

Director: 267 to be precise.

Ann: What has happened, as I have observed, is that dynasty after dynasty, government after government, life goes on. As to China and Chineseness, it goes on too like no one can stop it. You think Chineseness died after a dynasty perished, but it didn't. It just carried on into the next chapter of time. When each dynasty came to an end, there was great chaos. But out of the turbulence, something new was born. Something nascent emerged. And that's the beauty of it. The beauty of time. The beauty of life. The never-ending energy that drives us. Even though it's beyond our horizon to witness it. Our limited horizon, of course.

Director: So you think Chineseness is something in flux?

Ann: Oh yes, always in the making, thriving and shifting. Like a river. A restless river. A river that knows no end. If you assume that it’s something fixed, then you are certainly wrong.

Director: But what about chinoiserie?

Ann: Oh dear. Obviously, on paper it is some kind of Chineseness in materiality. It dwells in some physical form that we can see. But does it have any spirit? I mean you can have Chineseness in stuff, but you don’t have the spirit of it. What can you do without spirit? What can you do without a soul? It’s an empty shell.

Director: Spirit spirit spirit, so Chinese.

Ann: Why reproducing another culture and even making it grand?

Director: To make is to possess. To produce is to possess.

Ann: Why possessing though? Chien-lung had made it clear that he didn’t want or need any stuff from Britain, sending the Macartney Embassy back. Here he said: “I set no value on object strange or ingenious, and I have no use for your country’s manufactures.” But why did the British have to possess, to possess China, to possess Chineseness?

Director: Good question.

Ann: I can tell you. To possess is to relinquish. To possess is to let go. To possess is to set free.

3

between Chien-lung and George Macartney

the contact zone of the first British embassy to China

beyond the kowtow question

Chien-lung: Where is this? Anyhow, I shall stress once more: strange and costly objects do not interest me.

Macartney: We are here to open up a dynasty. We are here to open up a trade. We are here to open up a contact zone. This is *the* contact zone.

Chien-lung: I set no value on objects strange or ingenious and have no use for your country’s manufactures.

Macartney: Alas, the Middle kingdom, you and I cannot be farther from each other. In the contact zone that me and my entourage arrived from England. In Rehe where you and I are with your Majesty Chien-lung. In the Tartar palace where we refute fruitlessly.

Chien-lung: My Celestial Empire and people did not wait around to receive you and your cohort. We did not exist for you to explore us, nor did we present ourselves as part of your oceanic expansion.

Macartney: We are now masters of geography of the north east coast of China, and have now acquired a knowledge of the Yellow Sea which was never before navigated by European ships.

Chien-lung: Your Natural Philosopher, Experimental Scientist, Painter, Draughtman, Metallurgist, Gardener and Botanist are collecting information of my interior in disguise of honouring natural science – while I confine East India Companies to some trading ports and times outside the city gates of Canton. It is not a surprise to me that this European practice of inland exploration was the prelude to European colonization of the world.

Macartney: Colonisation later indeed, I admit. But, here and now, on this Embassy, we wish to trade with you on equal terms which you might not agree with – because we want to and *need* to make more money more easily – but essentially this is out of our *love* for your silk, porcelain, wallpaper, furniture and tea. Love!

Chien-lung: Love is not love which alters when it alteration finds. Can you really testify to this love?

Macartney: I have been in a friendly conversation with Voltaire in Geneva and signed a trade treaty with Catherine the Great in Russia but have never encountered such a stubborn man, although his manner is dignified, but affable and condescending, and his reception of us has been very gracious and satisfactory. He is a very fine old gentleman, still healthy and vigorous.

Chien-lung: It is my practice of courtesy to provide you with tender cherishing of men from afar. Tribute bearers come to me from Asia via land and sea, truly admiring not just the material, but also the cultural of my Manchurian Empire.

Here and now, no empire is more powerful than Ch'ing dynasty under my reign: I am the largest, wealthiest and the most populous contiguous political entity in the world. You to me are one of the tribute envoys. Therefore, I feel obliged, like a father, to shower you, your entourage and King with royal gifts. Some of the presents will inspire this Chinese-like palace to be built…That's something I did not foresee.

The failure of your Embassy is inevitable. History and future tell me that different world views do not negotiate peacefully, but only through cannon and bullet. It is utterly disheartening that your Empire will violate mine in years to come. Your relentless commerce, dualistic modernity and monopoly of them have ever come to persist at an ideological and physical level.

For now, farewell. Our paths are destined to part.

4

Xanadu

Kubla Khan. Or, A Vision in a Dream. A Fragment.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:

Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.

So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round:
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Enfolding sunny spots of green

5

monologue of William Alexander draughtsman on Macartney's embassy to China on interpretation, imagination and Xanadu

Based on my fellows' spoken and visual accounts, I made my drawings of Macartney meeting Chien-lung, without being there. I was left behind in Peking while the historic event took place in Rehe. They confined me in a house surrounded by impenetrable walls. To have been within 50 miles of the famous Great Wall, to have seen that which might have been the boast of a man's grandson I have to regret forever that the artist should be doomed to remain immured at Peking.

One might wonder how I produced all the sketches of China – the people, landscape, industries and so forth – without much travelling on Chinese soil. In fact, I continued to create engravings of the Middle Kingdom ten years after the trip. Well, I made my observation from our vessel, *Hindostan*, from a distance, and incorporated my imagination and interpretation. Such imageries of China then being translated again here in the Pavilion. Perhaps to your surprise, certainly not to mine, that my version of the faraway Kingdom was made even more exotic by a later artist, rendered here in red and gold. Bravo!

Xanadu was visited by Polo in his journey and by Coleridge in his vision, thereby the travelogue and poetry – that we adore and celebrate equally lovingly. What Xanadu was like is not of utmost importance. It's not just about seeing and experiencing, but also telling and interpreting. What is the point in dismissing interpretation as inauthentic?

6

Ann and Chien-lung bumping into each other
a family rendezvous across time and space
on interpretation, history and Chineseness

Ann: I didn't expect to see you here.

Chien-lung: I didn't expect to be here either. What a place.

Ann: What a place, indeed, with two Chinese royals in it.

Chien-lung: My 60-year reign is the most successful dynasty of conquest throughout Chinese history. We have presided over the invasion of Inner Asia, over Mongolia, Tibet and Shinjiang. As a Manchurian Emperor, I received a traditional Chinese education and have installed Chinese language and culture in most regions I have conquered. This application and preservation of Chineseness, of course, is a balancing act. I adore the Chinese civilisation especially the literature and art, but in the meantime demand absolute control of the Chinese population and territory.

Ann: Needless to say, that is all in the past.

Chien-lung: In the past, truly. As to the here and now, what year is it? Not even in my wildest imagination would I visit a Chinese palace built by Europeans and Chineseness presented by the British.

Ann: You…call this Chinese?

Chien-lung: I…don't have the right word for it, if any. It's kind of Chinese and *something*. I don't know what that something is…, nor am I aware of why it is here…

Ann: Chinoiserie it is, meaning this Chinese-influenced European style. It's a French word which explains how inauthentic it is as an interpretation with a borrowed name.

Chien-lung: Blimey! But there is something about it to the eyes. A kind of beauty. A kind of pulsation it causes. A kind of something that sends ripples in the river of my mind.

Ann: Look at the Chinese characters written here. They do not make sense to me at all.

I am not standing alone in dismissing this style for its lack of authenticity. Even British poet William Whitehead remarked that ‘chinoiserie is not Chinese at all, but rather a fabrication of European designers’. I don’t know how this might come across to you, because you are from generations back.

Chien-lung: I am old but not that old.

Ann: To me this particular version of Chineseness is not from China, given that I have witnessed multiple Chinas myself. Chinas in different hands, ideologies and geographies.

Chien-lung: What do you mean? My China would fall apart after me?

Ann: Oh dear, you have a lot of history to catch up on.

Chien-lung: Future you mean?

Ann: Looking around, I see these Chinese figures and landscape are alien, looking neither *really* Chinese nor *really* European. It seems to be some kind of genetic mutation gone wrong. In my experience, not a single Chinese person looks so…weird with such slit eyes, dramatic eyebrows and sharp jaws; not a single Chinese scenery appears to be so unnatural.

Chien-lung: You mean Chineseness represented here *as* this extensive visual theme?

Ann: That is a good point. Reducing Chineseness to a decorative role, to a recreational purpose, to a corner of silence, to a background behind happenings. It is nothing but a political act to me, a gesture of colonization, or precisely, pre-colonisation, as Hong Kong was later colonised by Britain from 1842.

Chien-lung: I get you. A happens before B and therefore A results in B. It makes sense on paper. But there is a danger in here, an intellectual trap. By this logic, our Ch’ing dynasty was founded only in order to perish; our lives began merely in order to end. You can even say I started my reign solely to receive Macartney which is absolutely laughable. Alas, cause and effect. When we look back at history and try to make meaning out of it, don’t forget that what we do is merely interpreting and there is always a space between past and its interpretations. It is in this space that we dwell and thrive as a species.

Ann: Well…But surely this representation of Chineseness was a prologue to the military invasion of China. Before physically subduing a foreign territory, one is to possess it visually and symbolically. This is what mapping does at the service of colonialism and imperialism. It is to this end that delineating and studying a foreign country takes place. As to chinoiserie, it was not through gun and bullet but through being subject to representation that China began the chapter of humiliation.

Chien-lung: I have formed a close, friendly bond with a number of Jesuit missionaries. With their help, I had European pavilions built in my beloved Yuanming Yuan, but truth to be told it never came across my mind to conquer Europe.

Ann: But Yuanming Yuan was later looted and burnt by the French and British.

Chien-lung: Alas, love is not love which alters when it alteration finds…

Ann: What's that?

Chien-lung: The day is no longer young. I think I am going to head back. It was unexpected to meet with you, and I had a jolly time. It's always heart-warming to know your family even from generations away.

Ann: It's also time for me to call it a day, a day of speaking to dead people, my goodness. Before we part our ways, there is no one, sweet, old China for us to return to. You know that, right?

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Mary Louise Pratt, *Contact Zone*

Rumi, *This World Which Is Made of Our Love for Emptiness*

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Kubla Khan. Or, A Vision in a Dream. A Fragment*

Shu-mei Shih, Chien-hsin Tsai, and Brian Bernards (edited), *Sinophone Studies: A Critical Reader*

Srinivas Aravamudan, *Enlightenment Orientalism: Resisting the Rise of the Novel*

William Shakespeare, *Sonnet 116*

Film script of *Another beautiful dream*

[To authenticate a work, it becomes therefore most important to prove or make evident how this Other has participated in the making of his/her own image. Anyhow, where is this?]

'chinese' chippendale

british empire

Harewood House it is, designed by *the* best architects and designers of the time, including myself. Nevertheless, I am not only a furniture maker, but also a cultural agent and a taste facilitator. I am known for installing Chineseness, consolidating our imagination of and longing for the faraway Kingdom into physical forms in the context of domestic dwelling. Henceforth, Chinese Chippendale being my nickname.

Through decorating I transform interior spaces into China, somewhere like China, or China *by proxy*. In such a setting the landed gentry explores and experiments with the Middle Kingdom at a close range. It is said that persons of quality and distinction, who have taste and all that, are advised to have something foreign and superb.

This wallpaper was made in China by local hands depicting the country and then brought over to Harewood House. The China I know is an aesthetic entity. The imageries of the people, landscape and industries never fail to serve as a fertile source of imagination and fantasy. As a result of the ever-growing maritime technology and commerce, chinoiserie is meant to be. This wallpaper is a telling example that such representation of Chineseness is the fruit of cultural and mercantile interaction.

[This entire room feels afloat on an iridescent pier; forms rise and fall within rippling movements of radiance. Space and radiance are not separate from form. This is another beautiful dream.]

emperor chien-lung

chinese ching dynasty

Behold, my Manchurian Empire. But why on the walls? Chineseness for a decorative purpose is nothing but a delicate issue. It is clear to me that this strange business of Chinese wallpaper is to have my Manchurian Empire and people posing for a European audience. My Celestial Empire and people certainly do not go about as inspiration for your domestic decoration scheme in the name of taste. Our existence is solely for our own purpose. For a Celestial purpose.

Chinese wallpaper has been appropriated by many narratives, most notably in the service of imagining the eastern as irrational, weak and feminised. Yet I can see here my government officers and Celestial civilians are painted *about* the way they are to my knowledge. Maybe this is a rare case?

[In the absence of self, there is no other. With no other, there is no self. Needless to say, if you can't locate the other, how are you to locate your-self?]

clare chun-yu liu

taiwan / united kingdom

How to locate oneself is the question indeed. To me chinoiserie is comically outlandish and bizarrely beautiful. There is something about it that cannot be put down in words. In the meantime, it's peculiar to look at chinoiserie as someone of Chinese heritage. As a Taiwanese person at large, I can't help but question Chineseness, in terms of identity and representation. Unfortunately, in Taiwan and beyond, Chineseness has been hijacked by political debates. Alas, thankfully being away locates me in the river of fluidity.

As I am revisiting chinoiserie from a postcolonial perspective, it is clear to me that this Chinese wallpaper is/was *itself* a contact zone in which Chineseness is/was confronted by the British colonial enterprise. Wherein I locate self/Self and other/Other. Suffice to say, this metaphysical scenario is mirrored by the physical contact zone in Canton where the English East India Company came face to face with the Ching Dynasty in the eighteenth century. It is said that the formation of modern British identity back then was through a complicated process by way of encounter and contact with the foreign. But who was foreign to whom in the contact zone?

[Marco Polo had traversed Empires and Continents, leaving us his travelogue of exotic peoples and locations. Surely the Venetian was exotic in the foreign Empires and Continents too.]

ang

chinese ching dynasty / taiwan

For some reason, destiny has ferried me through the boundary of reality and fiction, lived experience and dreaming, mundanity and imagination. I was a Ching royal family member, a Chinese, a Manchurian, and a Taiwanese. Relocating to Taiwan at the end of the Chinese Civil War with the Nationalists who had overthrown my family was only ridiculous. Nonetheless through absurdity you arrive at reality without guile. Since then, I had managed to blend into the crowds of the Han Chinese immigrants, lying low in the manic political review of history of the newly postcolonial island. Somehow my Manchurian identity was merely a cultural curiosity and no longer a political problem. The sole problem was to grapple with this impossible life of mine, whilst I was alive.

As to the enigma of self and other in relation to Chineseness, needless to say that I was a self of the Self, an other of the Other, or an inferior copy of either. The changing hands of politics determined my location, shifting from the conquered headquarters to the absolute margin.

Behold, Chinese people, industries and landscape standing as decoration across the wallpaper. It is bizarre to confront this visual representation of Chineseness as the foreign, as an Other in the theatre of English taste culture. It is clear to me that some humans have been cast as objects, while other humans have been given the privilege to become subjects.

Just when the self rejoices at their self-endowed privilege, I am afraid no celebration is necessary. It is said that an Inappropriate(d) Other has agency, claims and negotiates her own identity. And every self and other is in itself inappropriate. That is, there is an Inappropriate(d) Other within every I, which I can testify to be very true given my existence. How would the British Self have negotiated that?

[Any notion of the self is itself nothing more than a thought. How small a thought it takes to fill a whole life.]

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Edward Said, *Orientalism*

Emily de Bruijn, *Virtual Travel and Virtuous Objects: Chinoiserie and the Country House*

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Helen Clifford, *Chinese Wallpaper from Canton to Country House*

Ien Ang, *On not speaking Chinese*

J.D. Hooker (editor), *Journal of the Rt Hon Sir Joseph Bank~~s~~*

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Kenneth Powell, *Harewood House: Surviving with Interest*

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*

Mary Louise Pratt, *Arts of the Contact Zone*

Peter C. Perdue, *The Rise & Fall of the Canton Trade System*

Rey Chow, *The Rey Chow Reader*

Robert Markley, *China and the English Enlightenment: Literature, Aesthetics, and Commerce*

Stuart Hall, *Questions of Cultural Identity*

Thomas Chippendale, *The Gentleman and Cabinet-maker's Director*

Trinh T. Minh-ha, *When the Moon Waxes Red: Representation, Gender and Cultural Politics*

Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*

Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche, *In Love with the World: A Monk's Journey Through the Bardos of Living and Dying*

Film script of *A note on Delftware*

1

In the early seventeenth century, the third and fourth editions of *Kunyu Wanguo Quantu* were produced in Ming-Dynasty China. Through the map, the Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci introduced the world as a globe. This concept was contrary to the Chinese idea that the earth was a flat square with the Middle Kingdom in the centre, presiding over the world by size and influence.

It is said that *Kunyu Wanguo Quantu* presented and represented advanced European science. But the project was in fact a collaboration. Ricci consulted his Chinese friends and benefitted from their knowledge about China and nearby Asian countries in creating the map.

In the planetary sphere, the Middle Kingdom was no longer in the middle of the world or falsely immense. The Jesuit indeed decentred China. But by doing so, he also deconstructed Eurocentrism – for Europe was not central in relation to other countries either.

[*Farewell to Sinocentrism and Eurocentrism!*]

2

In as early as the fourteenth century, porcelain started to be produced in China. Potters in Jingdezhen figured out the recipe and kept it as a secret. They produced porcelain for civilians, the royal family and foreign trade. Before the maritime era, Chinese porcelain reached Europe in small quantities via the silk road.

Among other Europeans, the Dutch fell in love with the translucent gem. In 1602, the Dutch looted a boat full of Chinese porcelain in the Strait of Malacca. More than 100,000 pieces were made available for sale at auction in Amsterdam. It was a sensation for the wealthy to get hold of the rare artifacts and the price ran high.

In the meantime, the Dutch East India Company was founded, when the country became an oceanic superpower. As the name suggests, the Company traded in Asia. Through legitimate business route with China, the Dutch purchased and brought home Chinese porcelain from Canton through Jakarta.

In the Dutch Republic, Chinese porcelain was so popular that local potters tried to imitate it without the recipe. By 1620, blue-and-white ceramic pieces were produced in Delft, as of Delftware, which was in fact refined earthenware with cross-cultural influences: the blue-and-white pattern was Chinese from the Ming and Ching Dynasties. The tin-glazing technique came from Iraq, migrated to Islamic Spain and later to Italy and France. The process eventually came to Delft when the French potters fled over because of their religious faith.

Eventually, it was the English Princess Mary who took the ceramic style to the next level in terms of design and popularity. In 1688, Mary and her Dutch husband William became the English monarch, as of the Glorious Revolution. To show their loyalty to the new king and queen, the Cavendish family collected and displayed the Delftware vases here in Chatsworth House.

3

I have been wondering how to revisit Chineseness as a visual language in these Delftware vases from a postcolonial perspective.

[*According to Mary Louise Pratt, the power relation is often asymmetrical in a contact zone, such as between a coloniser and the colonised.*]

The idea of contact zone delineates two parties grappling with each other. Given the relevant history of Delftware, it doesn't make sense to apply the framework of a coloniser and colonised to analysing these objects of various cultures and influences. Also, there were multiple contact zones in place. There were Dutch, Chinese, Iraqi, Spanish, Italian and French selves and/or others at play, which manifests in the intricate and mixed look of the objects, visually and materially.

Looking back, I set out to review chinoiserie artefacts from a postcolonial perspective. Little did I know that I would be addressing the ambivalence in the history of the Delftware objects and exploring the boundary of postcolonial review of history. The result is there being neither a European coloniser nor a colonised Chinese other on the horizon.

[*Neither a European coloniser nor a colonised Chinese other on the horizon.*]

CAMERA DIRECTING EDITING SCRIPT VOICEOVER Clare Chun-yu Liu

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Extraordinary Pairs of Delftware Flower Vases Routes

The City of Delft in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

The Origins of Dutch Delftware

The Queen's Passion for Flowers

VOC and the Asian Trading

Cath Pound, *Delftware Porcelain – the Global Story of a Dutch Icon*

Hannah Obee, *Baroque Exuberance: Delftware Flower Vases at Chatsworth*

John Frederick Baddeley, *Father Matteo Ricci's Chinese World-Maps, 1584-1608*

Mary Louise Pratt, *Arts of the Contact Zone*

Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation

Qiong Zhang, *Making the New World Their Own: Chinese Encounters with Jesuit Science in the Age of Discovery*.

Image of *Kunyu Wanguo Quantu by Matteo Ricci All panels* is public domain via Wiki Commons from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kunyu_Wanguo_Quantu_by_Matteo_Ricci_All_panels.jpg

Appendix B: Exhibition and Festival Documentations

2022 New Art Exchange Open, UK [on-site exhibition]

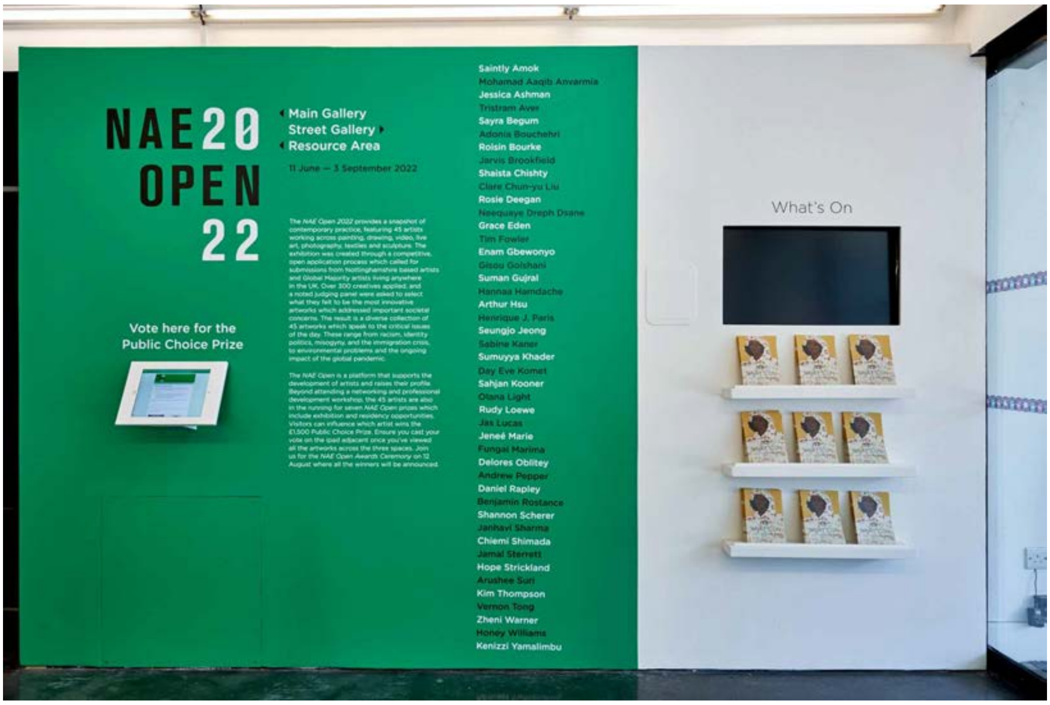

NAE 2022 OPEN
Main Gallery
Street Gallery
Resource Area
11 June — 3 September 2022
Vote here for the Public Choice Prize
Saintly Amok
Mohamad Aaqib Anvarmia
Jessica Ashman
Tristram Aver
Sayra Begum
Adonis Bouchehri
Roisin Bourke
Jarvis Brookfield
Shaista Chishty
Clare Chun-yu Liu
Rosie Deegan
Neequaye Dreph Dsane
Grace Eden
Tim Fowler
Enam Gbewonyo
Gisou Golshani
Suman Gujral
Hannaa Hamdache
Arthur Hsu
Henrique J. Paris
Seungjo Jeong
Sabine Kaner
Sumuyya Khader
Day Eve Komet
Sahjan Kooner
Olana Light
Rudy Loewe
Jas Lucas
Jeneé Marie
Fungai Marima
Delores Oblitey
Andrew Pepper
Daniel Rapley
Benjamin Rostance
Shannon Scherer
Janhavi Sharma
Chiemi Shimada
Jamal Sterrett
Hope Strickland
Arushee Suri
Kim Thompson
Vernon Tong
Zheni Warner
Honey Williams
Kenizzi Yamalimbu
What's On

Fig 49: Exhibition image.

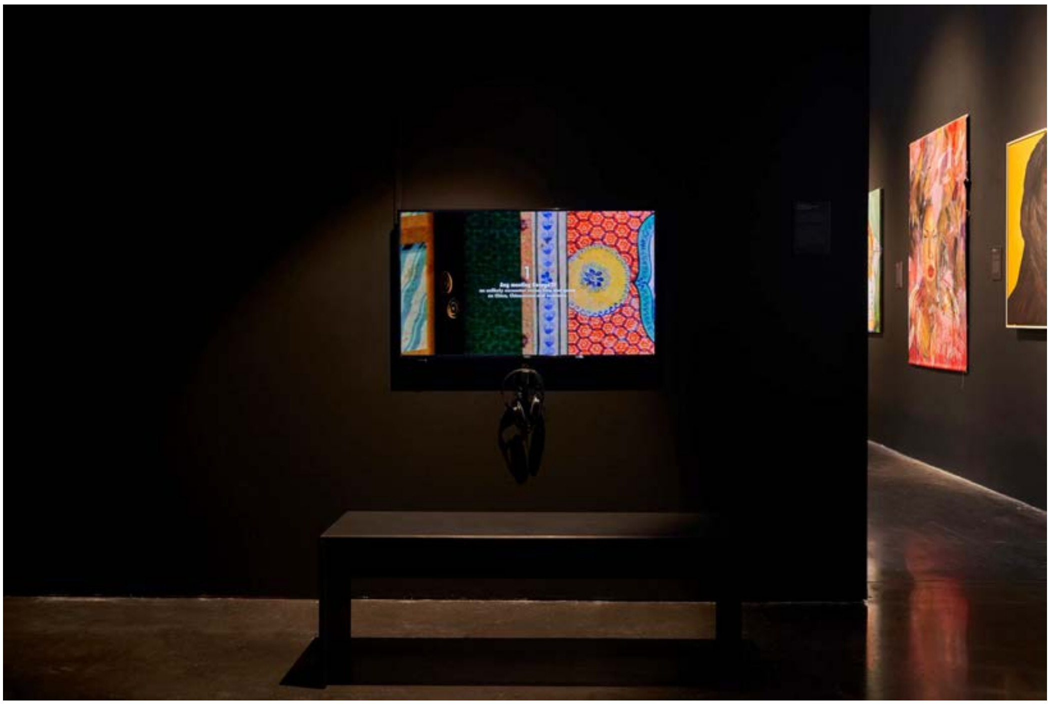


Fig 50: Exhibition/installation image.

2022 Clare Chun-yu Liu artist films screening, de Art Center, China [on-site screening with virtual Q&A]

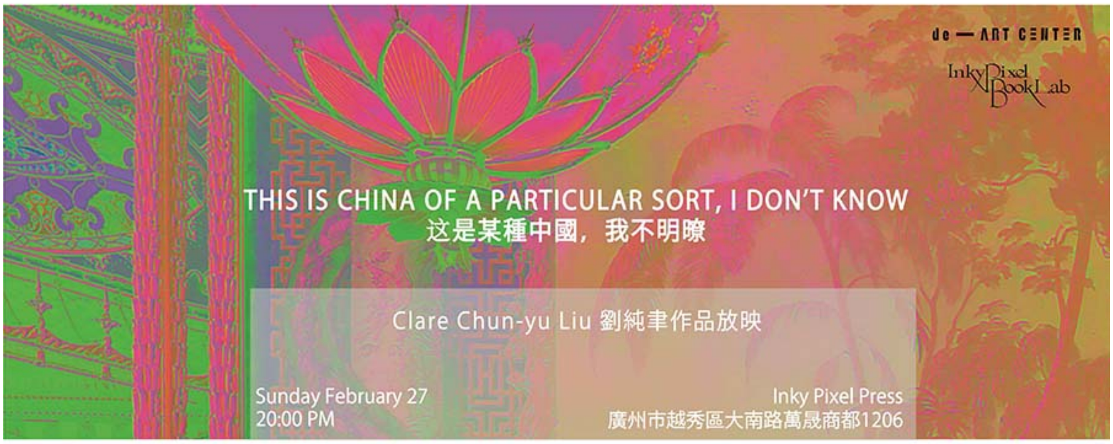

de — ART CENTER
Inky Pixel X Book Lab
THIS IS CHINA OF A PARTICULAR SORT, I DON'T KNOW
这是某種中國，我不明瞭
Clare Chun-yu Liu 劉純聿作品放映
Sunday February 27
20:00 PM
Inky Pixel Press
廣州市越秀區大南路萬晟商都1206

Fig 51: Screening event promotional material.

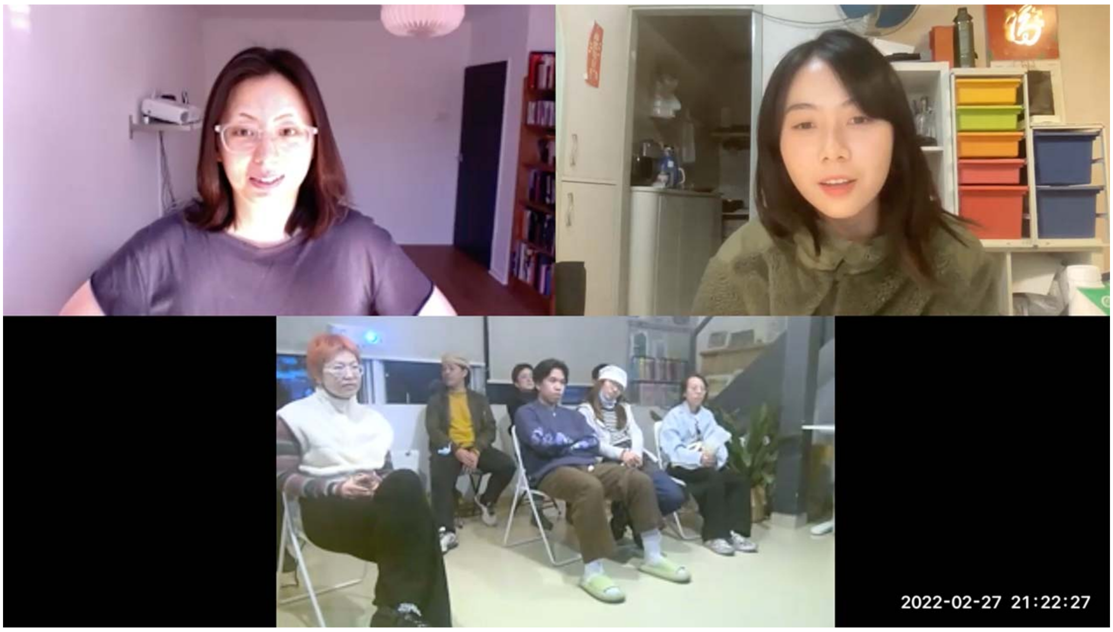
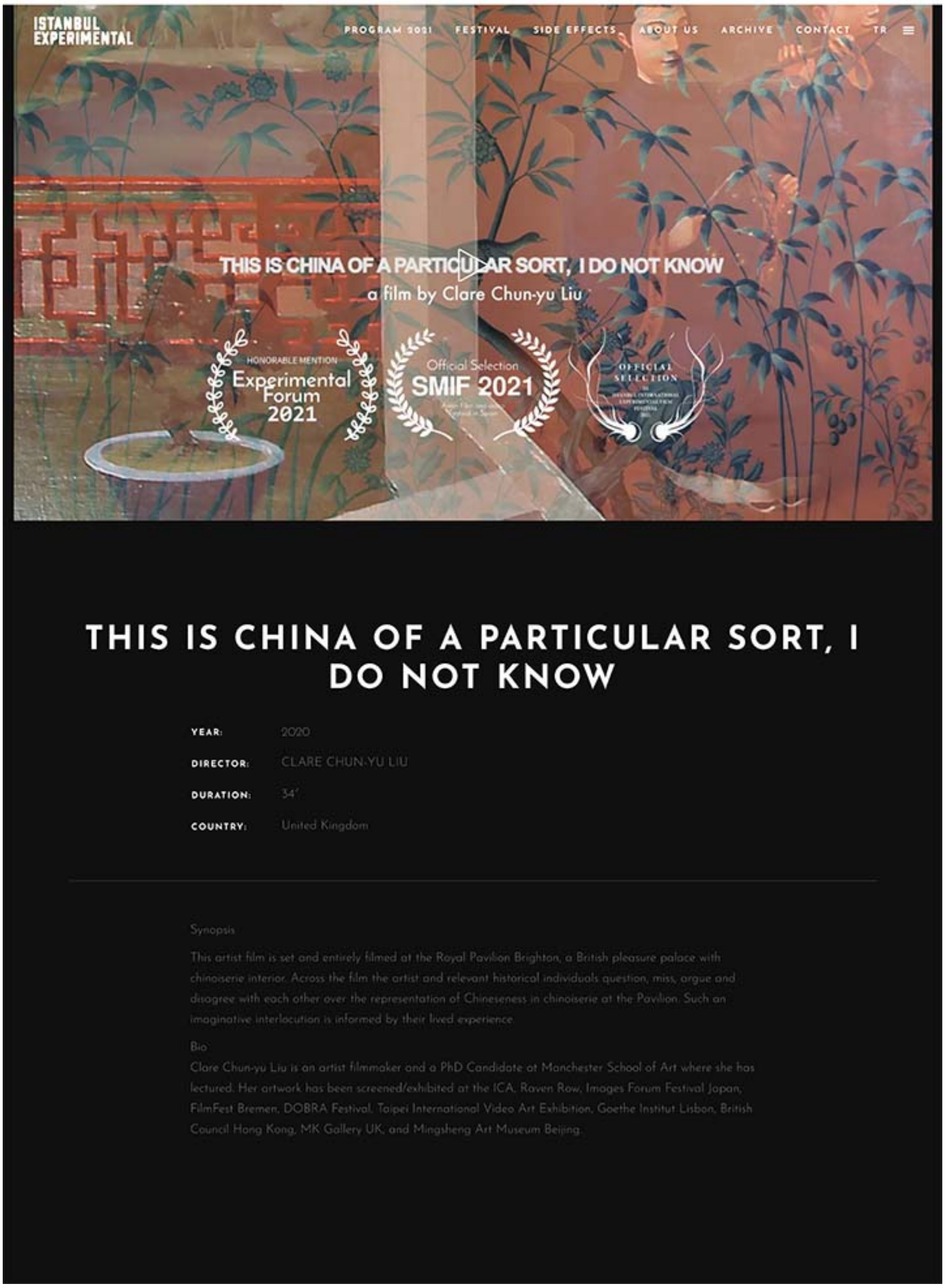

2022-02-27 21:22:27

Fig 52: Screenshot of the post-screening Q&A.

2021 Istanbul Experimental Film Festival, Turkey [on-site screening]


ISTANBUL EXPERIMENTAL
PROGRAM 2021
FESTIVAL
SIDE EFFECTS
ABOUT US
ARCHIVE
CONTACT
TR
THIS IS CHINA OF A PARTICULAR SORT, I DO NOT KNOW
a film by Clare Chun-yu Liu
HONORABLE MENTION
Experimental Forum 2021
Official Selection
SMIF 2021
OFFICIAL SELECTION

THIS IS CHINA OF A PARTICULAR SORT, I DO NOT KNOW

YEAR: 2020

DIRECTOR: CLARE CHUN-YU LIU

DURATION: 34'

COUNTRY: United Kingdom

Synopsis

This artist film is set and entirely filmed at the Royal Pavilion Brighton, a British pleasure palace with chinoiserie interior. Across the film the artist and relevant historical individuals question, miss, argue and disagree with each other over the representation of Chineseness in chinoiserie at the Pavilion. Such an imaginative interlocution is informed by their lived experience

Bio

Clare Chun-yu Liu is an artist filmmaker and a PhD Candidate at Manchester School of Art where she has lectured. Her artwork has been screened/exhibited at the ICA, Raven Row, Images Forum Festival Japan, FilmFest Bremen, DOBRA Festival, Taipei International Video Art Exhibition, Goethe Institut Lisbon, British Council Hong Kong, MK Gallery UK, and Mingsheng Art Museum Beijing.

Fig 53: Screenshot of the festival website.

2021 Busan International Video Art Festival, South Korea [on-site exhibition]

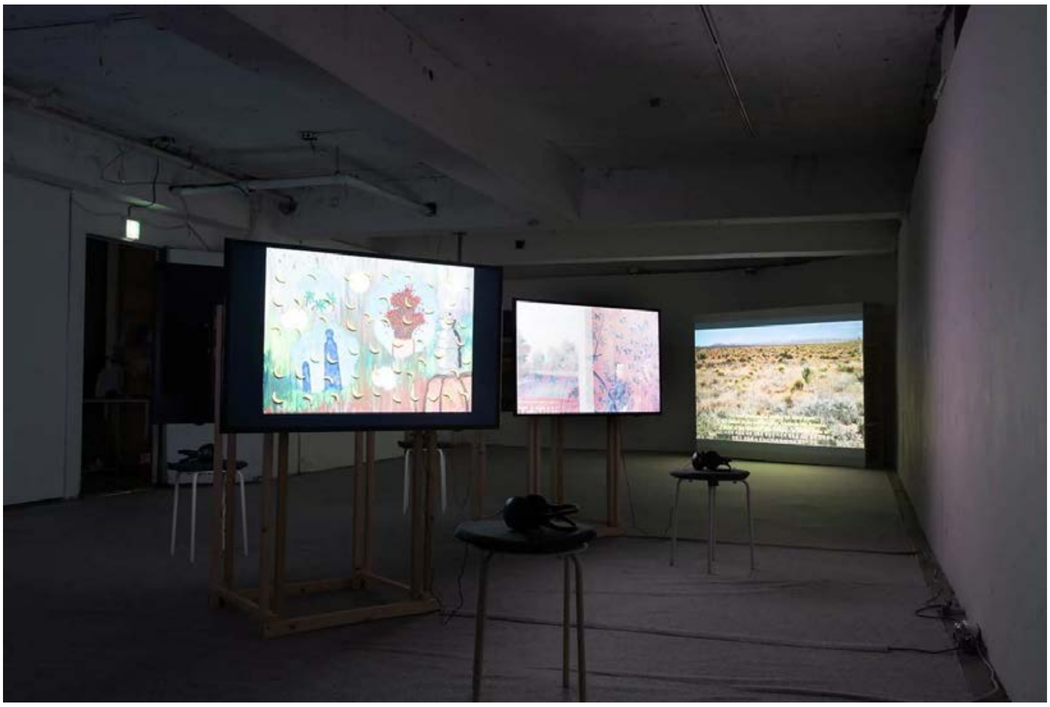


Fig 54: Exhibition image.

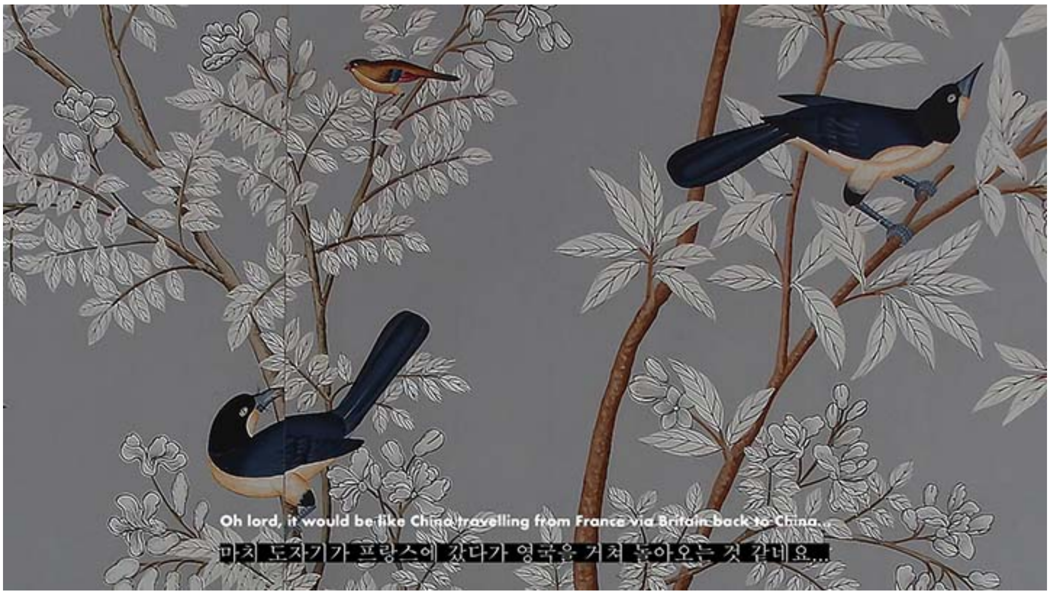
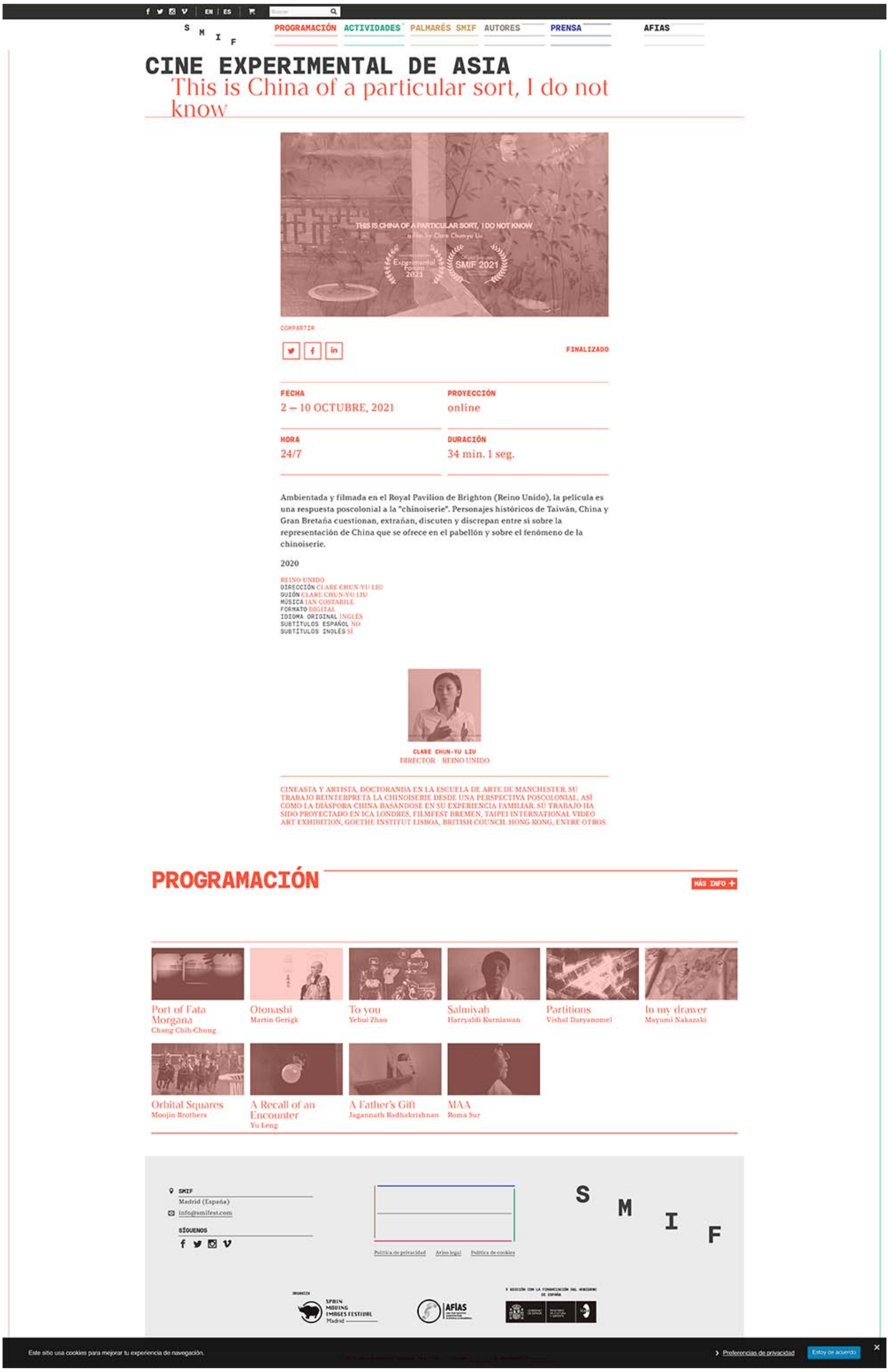

Oh lord, it would be like China travelling from France via Britain back to China...
마치 도자기가 프랑스에 갔다가 영국을 거쳐 돌아오는 것 같네요...

Fig 55: Film still with Korean subtitle.

2021 SMIF: Asian Film and Video Festival, Spain [online screening]


EN | ES
S M I F
PROGRAMACIÓN
ACTIVIDADES
PALMARÉS SMIF
AUTORES
PRENSA
AFIAS
THIS IS CHINA OF A PARTICULAR SORT, I DO NOT KNOW
Experimental Forum 2021
SMIF 2021
COMPARTIR
FINALIZADO
MÁS INFO +
Política de privacidad
Aviso legal
Política de cookies
SPAIN MOVING IMAGES FESTIVAL Madrid
AFÍAS
Preferencias de privacidad
Estoy de acuerdo

CINE EXPERIMENTAL DE ASIA

This is China of a particular sort, I do not know

FECHA
2 – 10 OCTUBRE, 2021

PROYECCIÓN
online

HORA
24/7

DURACIÓN
34 min. 1 seg.

Ambientada y filmada en el Royal Pavilion de Brighton (Reino Unido), la pelicula es una respuesta poscolonial a la "chinoiserie". Personajes históricos de Taiwán, China y Gran Bretaña cuestionan, extrañan, discuten y discrepan entre si sobre la representación de China que se ofrece en el pabellón y sobre el fenómeno de la chinoiserie.

2020

REINO UNIDO
DIRECCIÓN CLARE CHUN-YU LIU
GUIÓN CLARE CHUN-YU LIU
MÚSICA IAN COSTABILE
FORMATO DIGITAL
IDIOMA ORIGINAL INGLÉS
SUBTÍTULOS ESPAÑOL NO
SUBTÍTULOS INGLÉS SÍ

CLARE CHUN-YU LIU
DIRECTOR REINO UNIDO

CINEASTA Y ARTISTA, DOCTORANDA EN LA ESCUELA DE ARTE DE MANCHESTER. SU TRABAJO REINTERPRETA LA CHINOISERIE DESDE UNA PERSPECTIVA POSCOLONIAL, ASÍ COMO LA DIÁSPORA CHINA BASÁNDOSE EN SU EXPERIENCIA FAMILIAR. SU TRABAJO HA SIDO PROYECTADO EN ICA LONDRES, FILMFEST BREMEN, TAIPEI INTERNATIONAL VIDEO ART EXHIBITION, GOETHE INSTITUT LISBOA, BRITISH COUNCIL HONG KONG, ENTRE OTROS.

PROGRAMACIÓN

Port of Fata Morgana
Chang Chih-Chung

Otonashi
Martin Gerigk

To you
Yehui Zhao

Salmiyah
Harryaldi Kurniawan

Partitions
Vishal Daryanomel

In my drawer
Mayumi Nakazaki

Orbital Squares
Moojin Brothers

A Recall of an Encounter
Yu Leng

A Father's Gift
Jagannath Radhakrishnan

MAA
Roma Sur

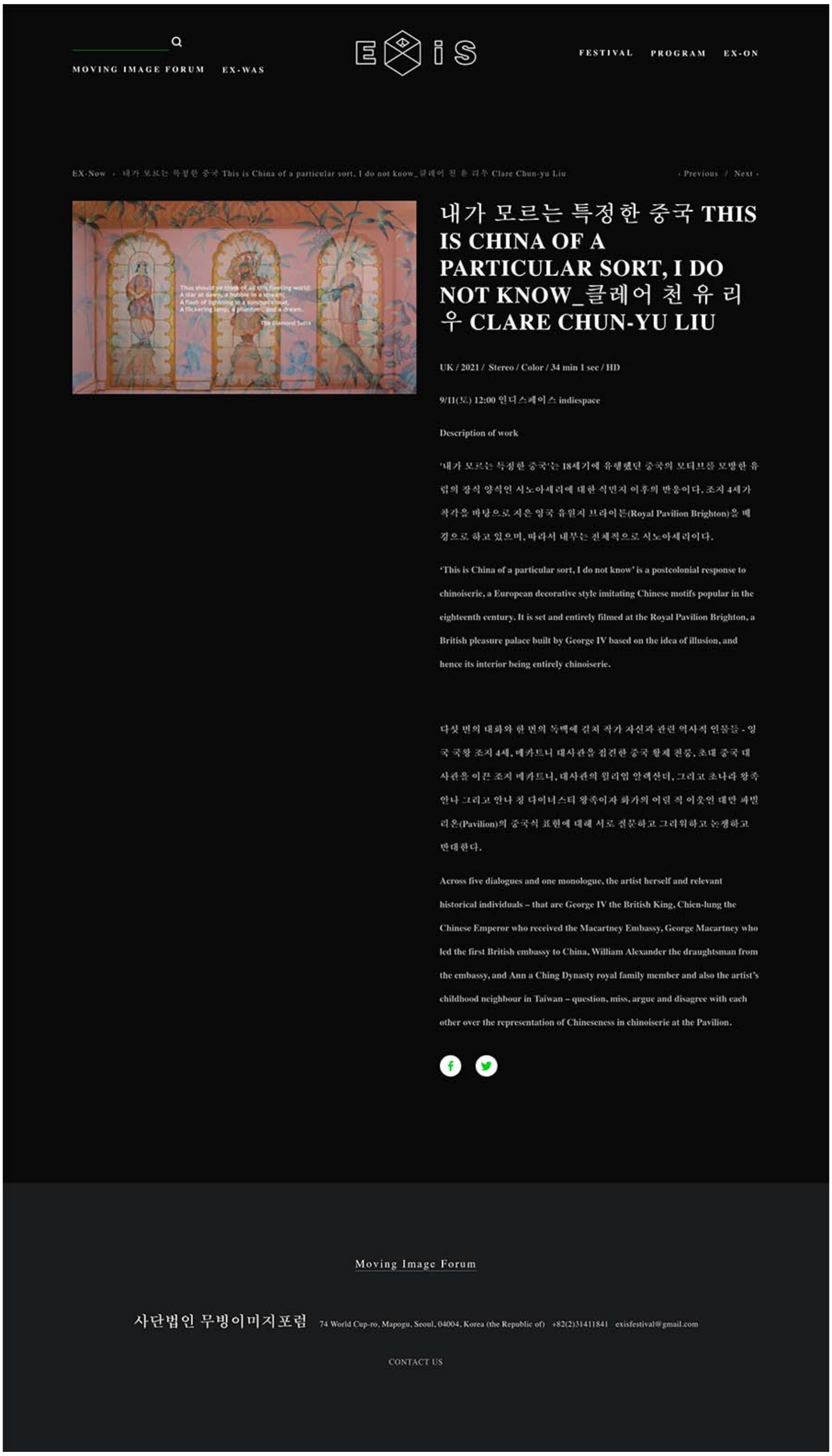
SMIF
Madrid (España)
info@smifest.com

SÍGUENOS

Este sitio usa cookies para mejorar tu experiencia de navegación.

Fig 56: Screenshot of the festival website.

2021 EX-IS, South Korea [on-site screening]



EX-Now › 내가 모르는 특정한 중국 This is China of a particular sort, I do not know_클레어 천 유 리우 Clare Chun-yu Liu

‹ Previous / Next ›

내가 모르는 특정한 중국 THIS IS CHINA OF A PARTICULAR SORT, I DO NOT KNOW_클레어 천 유 리우 CLARE CHUN-YU LIU

UK / 2021 / Stereo / Color / 34 min 1 sec / HD

9/11(토) 12:00 인디스페이스 indiespace

Description of work

'내가 모르는 특정한 중국'는 18세기에 유행했던 중국의 모티브를 모방한 유럽의 장식 양식인 시노아세리에 대한 식민지 이후의 반응이다. 조지 4세가 착각을 바탕으로 지은 영국 유원지 브라이튼(Royal Pavilion Brighton)을 배경으로 하고 있으며, 따라서 내부는 전체적으로 시노아세리이다.

'This is China of a particular sort, I do not know' is a postcolonial response to chinoiserie, a European decorative style imitating Chinese motifs popular in the eighteenth century. It is set and entirely filmed at the Royal Pavilion Brighton, a British pleasure palace built by George IV based on the idea of illusion, and hence its interior being entirely chinoiserie.

다섯 번의 대화와 한 번의 독백에 걸쳐 작가 자신과 관련 역사적 인물들 - 영국 국왕 조지 4세, 메카트니 대사관을 접견한 중국 황제 건륭, 초대 중국 대사관을 이끈 조지 메카트니, 대사관의 윌리엄 알렉산더, 그리고 청나라 왕족 안나 그리고 안나 청 다이너스티 왕족이자 화가의 어릴 적 이웃인 대만 파빌리온(Pavilion)의 중국식 표현에 대해 서로 질문하고 그리워하고 논쟁하고 반대한다.

Across five dialogues and one monologue, the artist herself and relevant historical individuals – that are George IV the British King, Chien-lung the Chinese Emperor who received the Macartney Embassy, George Macartney who led the first British embassy to China, William Alexander the draughtsman from the embassy, and Ann a Ching Dynasty royal family member and also the artist's childhood neighbour in Taiwan – question, miss, argue and disagree with each other over the representation of Chineseness in chinoiserie at the Pavilion.

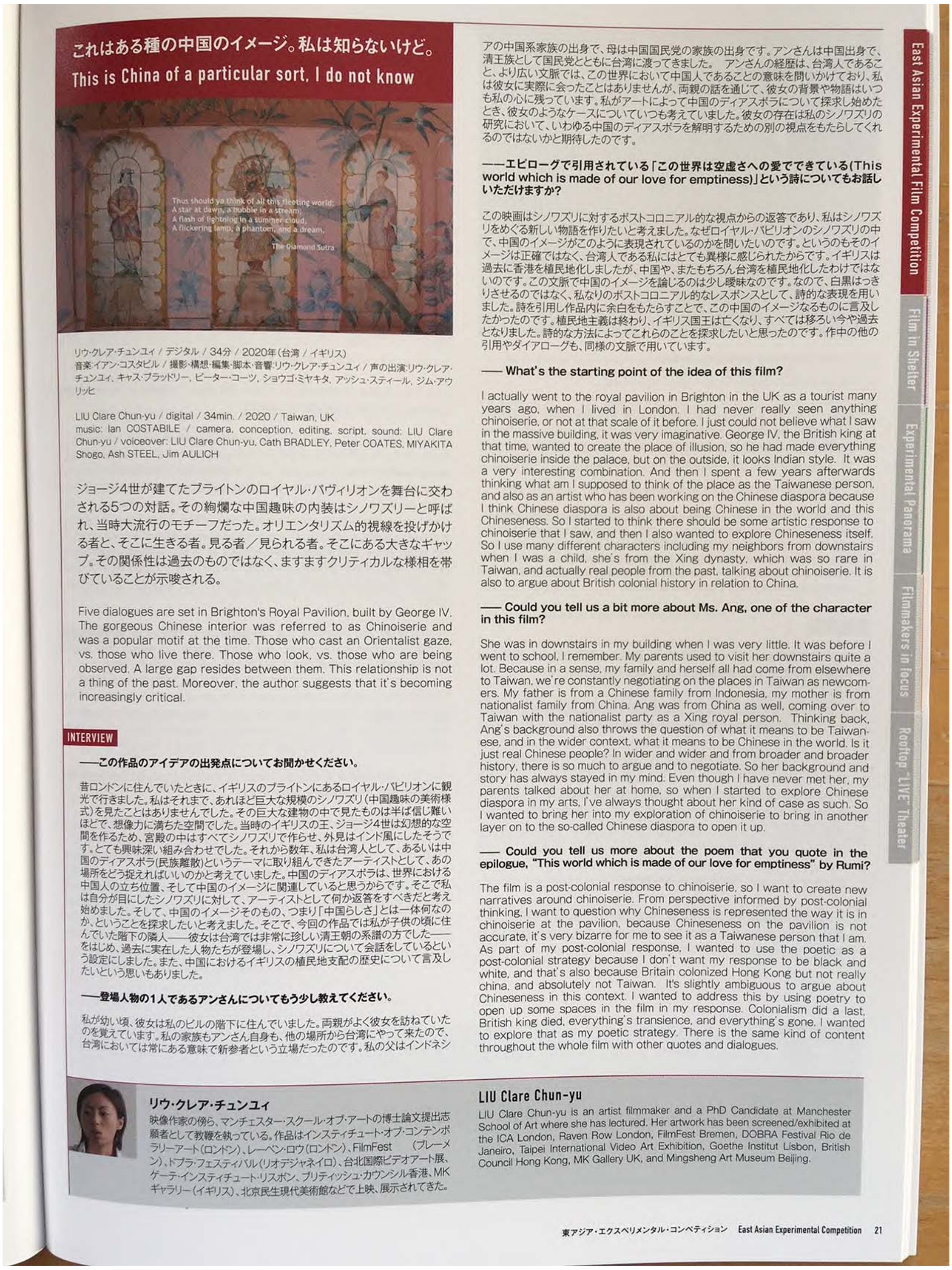
Moving Image Forum

사단법인 무빙이미지포럼 74 World Cup-ro, Mapogu, Seoul, 04004, Korea (the Republic of) +82(2)31411841 exisfestival@gmail.com

CONTACT US

Fig 57: Screenshot of the festival website.

2021 Image Forum Festival, Japan [on-site screening]



これはある種の中国のイメージ。私は知らないけど。

This is China of a particular sort, I do not know

Thus should ye think of all this fleeting world:
A star at dawn, a bubble in a stream;
A flash of lightning in a summer cloud,
A flickering lamp, a phantom, and a dream.

The Diamond Sutra

リウ・クレア・チュンユィ / デジタル / 34分 / 2020年（台湾 / イギリス）
音楽:イアン・コスタビル / 撮影・構想・編集・脚本・音響:リウ・クレア・チュンユィ / 声の出演:リウ・クレア・チュンユィ、キャス・ブラッドリー、ピーター・コーツ、ショウゴ・ミヤキタ、アッシュ・スティール、ジム・アウリッヒ

LIU Clare Chun-yu / digital / 34min. / 2020 / Taiwan, UK
music: Ian COSTABILE / camera, conception, editing, script, sound: LIU Clare Chun-yu / voiceover: LIU Clare Chun-yu, Cath BRADLEY, Peter COATES, MIYAKITA Shogo, Ash STEEL, Jim AULICH

ジョージ4世が建てたブライトンのロイヤル・パヴィリオンを舞台に交わされる5つの対話。その絢爛な中国趣味の内装はシノワズリーと呼ばれ、当時大流行のモチーフだった。オリエンタリズム的視線を投げかける者と、そこに生きる者。見る者／見られる者。そこにある大きなギャップ。その関係性は過去のものではなく、ますますクリティカルな様相を帯びていることが示唆される。

Five dialogues are set in Brighton's Royal Pavilion, built by George IV. The gorgeous Chinese interior was referred to as Chinoiserie and was a popular motif at the time. Those who cast an Orientalist gaze, vs. those who live there. Those who look, vs. those who are being observed. A large gap resides between them. This relationship is not a thing of the past. Moreover, the author suggests that it's becoming increasingly critical.

INTERVIEW

――この作品のアイデアの出発点についてお聞かせください。

昔ロンドンに住んでいたときに、イギリスのブライトンにあるロイヤル・パビリオンに観光で行きました。私はそれまで、あれほど巨大な規模のシノワズリ（中国趣味の美術様式）を見たことはありませんでした。その巨大な建物の中で見たものは半ば信じ難いほどで、想像力に満ちた空間でした。当時のイギリスの王、ジョージ4世は幻想的な空間を作るため、宮殿の中はすべてシノワズリで作らせ、外見はインド風にしたそうです。とても興味深い組み合わせでした。それから数年、私は台湾人として、あるいは中国のディアスポラ(民族離散)というテーマに取り組んできたアーティストとして、あの場所をどう捉えればいいのかと考えていました。中国のディアスポラは、世界における中国人の立ち位置、そして中国のイメージに関連していると思うからです。そこで私は自分が目にしたシノワズリに対して、アーティストとして何か返答をすべきだと考え始めました。そして、中国のイメージそのもの、つまり「中国らしさ」とは一体何なのか、ということを探求したいと考えました。そこで、今回の作品では私が子供の頃に住んでいた階下の隣人――彼女は台湾では非常に珍しい清王朝の系譜の方でした――をはじめ、過去に実在した人物たちが登場し、シノワズリについて会話をしているという設定にしました。また、中国におけるイギリスの植民地支配の歴史について言及したいという思いもありました。

――登場人物の1人であるアンさんについてもう少し教えてください。

私が幼い頃、彼女は私のビルの階下に住んでいました。両親がよく彼女を訪ねていたのを覚えています。私の家族もアンさん自身も、他の場所から台湾にやって来たので、台湾においては常にある意味で新参者という立場だったのです。私の父はインドネシアの中国系家族の出身で、母は中国国民党の家族の出身です。アンさんは中国出身で、清王族として国民党とともに台湾に渡ってきました。 アンさんの経歴は、台湾人であること、より広い文脈では、この世界において中国人であることの意味を問いかけており、私は彼女に実際に会ったことはありませんが、両親の話を通じて、彼女の背景や物語はいつも私の心に残っています。私がアートによって中国のディアスポラについて探求し始めたとき、彼女のようなケースについていつも考えていました。彼女の存在は私のシノワズリの研究において、いわゆる中国のディアスポラを解明するための別の視点をもたらしてくれるのではないかと期待したのです。

――エピローグで引用されている「この世界は空虚さへの愛でできている(This world which is made of our love for emptiness)」という詩についてもお話しいただけますか?

この映画はシノワズリに対するポストコロニアル的な視点からの返答であり、私はシノワズリをめぐる新しい物語を作りたいと考えました。なぜロイヤル・パビリオンのシノワズリの中で、中国のイメージがこのように表現されているのかを問いたいのです。というのもそのイメージは正確ではなく、台湾人である私にはとても異様に感じられたからです。イギリスは過去に香港を植民地化しましたが、中国や、またもちろん台湾を植民地化したわけではないのです。この文脈で中国のイメージを論じるのは少し曖昧なのです。なので、白黒はっきりさせるのではなく、私なりのポストコロニアル的なレスポンスとして、詩的な表現を用いました。詩を引用し作品内に余白をもたらすことで、この中国のイメージなるものに言及したかったのです。植民地主義は終わり、イギリス国王は亡くなり、すべては移ろい今や過去となりました。詩的な方法によってこれらのことを探求したいと思ったのです。作中の他の引用やダイアローグも、同様の文脈で用いています。

―― What's the starting point of the idea of this film?

I actually went to the royal pavilion in Brighton in the UK as a tourist many years ago, when I lived in London. I had never really seen anything chinoiserie, or not at that scale of it before. I just could not believe what I saw in the massive building, it was very imaginative. George IV, the British king at that time, wanted to create the place of illusion, so he had made everything chinoiserie inside the palace, but on the outside, it looks Indian style. It was a very interesting combination. And then I spent a few years afterwards thinking what am I supposed to think of the place as the Taiwanese person, and also as an artist who has been working on the Chinese diaspora because I think Chinese diaspora is also about being Chinese in the world and this Chineseness. So I started to think there should be some artistic response to chinoiserie that I saw, and then I also wanted to explore Chineseness itself. So I use many different characters including my neighbors from downstairs when I was a child, she's from the Xing dynasty, which was so rare in Taiwan, and actually real people from the past, talking about chinoiserie. It is also to argue about British colonial history in relation to China.

―― Could you tell us a bit more about Ms. Ang, one of the character in this film?

She was in downstairs in my building when I was very little. It was before I went to school, I remember. My parents used to visit her downstairs quite a lot. Because in a sense, my family and herself all had come from elsewhere to Taiwan, we're constantly negotiating on the places in Taiwan as newcomers. My father is from a Chinese family from Indonesia, my mother is from nationalist family from China. Ang was from China as well, coming over to Taiwan with the nationalist party as a Xing royal person. Thinking back, Ang's background also throws the question of what it means to be Taiwanese, and in the wider context, what it means to be Chinese in the world. Is it just real Chinese people? In wider and wider and from broader and broader history, there is so much to argue and to negotiate. So her background and story has always stayed in my mind. Even though I have never met her, my parents talked about her at home, so when I started to explore Chinese diaspora in my arts, I've always thought about her kind of case as such. So I wanted to bring her into my exploration of chinoiserie to bring in another layer on to the so-called Chinese diaspora to open it up.

―― Could you tell us more about the poem that you quote in the epilogue, "This world which is made of our love for emptiness" by Rumi?

The film is a post-colonial response to chinoiserie, so I want to create new narratives around chinoiserie. From perspective informed by post-colonial thinking, I want to question why Chineseness is represented the way it is in chinoiserie at the pavilion, because Chineseness on the pavilion is not accurate, it's very bizarre for me to see it as a Taiwanese person that I am. As part of my post-colonial response, I wanted to use the poetic as a post-colonial strategy because I don't want my response to be black and white, and that's also because Britain colonized Hong Kong but not really china, and absolutely not Taiwan. It's slightly ambiguous to argue about Chineseness in this context. I wanted to address this by using poetry to open up some spaces in the film in my response. Colonialism did a last, British king died, everything's transience, and everything's gone. I wanted to explore that as my poetic strategy. There is the same kind of content throughout the whole film with other quotes and dialogues.

リウ・クレア・チュンユィ

映像作家の傍ら、マンチェスター・スクール・オブ・アートの博士論文提出志願者として教鞭を執っている。作品はインスティチュート・オブ・コンテンポラリーアート（ロンドン）、レーベン・ロウ（ロンドン）、FilmFest　（ブレーメン）、ドブラ・フェスティバル（リオデジャネイロ）、台北国際ビデオアート展、ゲーテ・インスティチュート・リスボン、ブリティッシュ・カウンシル香港、MKギャラリー（イギリス）、北京民生現代美術館などで上映、展示されてきた。

LIU Clare Chun-yu

LIU Clare Chun-yu is an artist filmmaker and a PhD Candidate at Manchester School of Art where she has lectured. Her artwork has been screened/exhibited at the ICA London, Raven Row London, FilmFest Bremen, DOBRA Festival Rio de Janeiro, Taipei International Video Art Exhibition, Goethe Institut Lisbon, British Council Hong Kong, MK Gallery UK, and Mingsheng Art Museum Beijing.

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Fig 58: Image of my interview in the festival catalogue.