

MAH

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SANTA CRUZ MAH AWARDED HEWLETT 50 ARTS COMMISSION

A new media work will focus on Santa Cruz Chinatowns and premiere in 2024

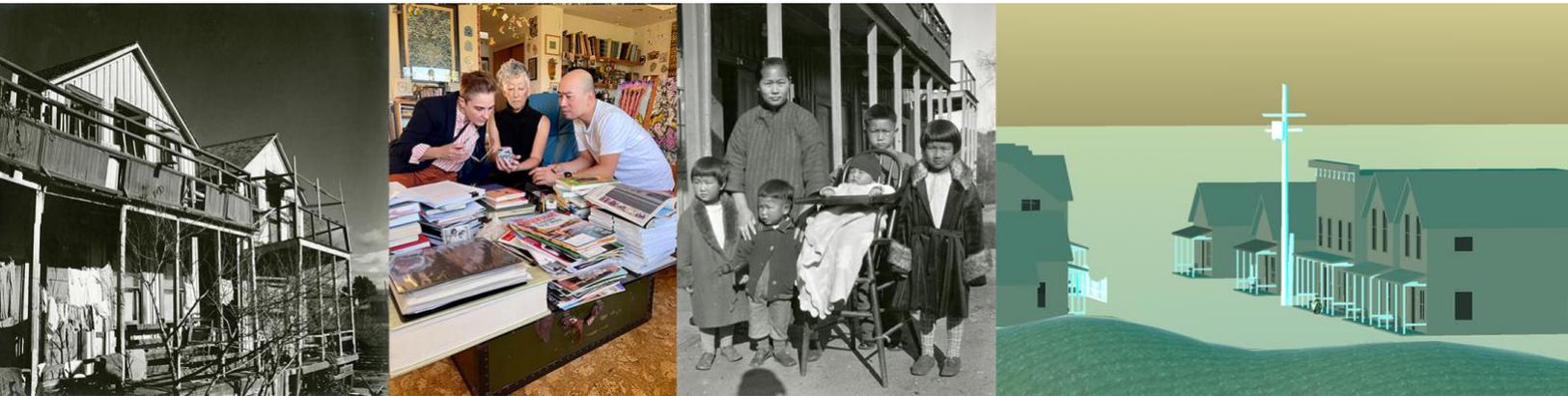


IMAGE CREDITS (LEFT TO RIGHT): SANTA CRUZ CHINATOWN, 1941, PHOTO COURTESY THE ESTATE OF GEORGE LEE; ARTISTS SUSANA RUIZ, KAREN TEI YAMASHITA, AND HUY TRUONG, PHOTO COURTESY THE ARTISTS; GUE SHEE LEE WITH HER CHILDREN, 1931, PHOTO BY ALICE HALSEY, COURTESY THE ESTATE OF GEORGE LEE; DIGITAL RECONSTRUCTION OF THE LAST SANTA CRUZ CHINATOWN, PHOTO COURTESY THE ARTISTS.

SANTA CRUZ, CA (October 26, 2022) — The **Santa Cruz Museum of Art & History (MAH)** is pleased to announce that it has been selected as one of ten recipients of this year's **Hewlett 50 Arts Commissions** in Media Arts, a program of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The MAH will receive \$150,000 to create a new project in collaboration with local artists **Huy Truong**, **Susana Ruiz**, and **Karen Tei Yamashita** related to the history of Santa Cruz Chinatowns.

"We are honored to receive this grant that furthers our commitment to interdisciplinary collaboration and the sharing of untold or little-known stories of Santa Cruz County," said Robb Woulfe, MAH's executive director. "This project continues our efforts to connect people, art, and history well beyond the museum walls, and to use public space to exchange ideas and build community."

With the grant, the MAH will commission artists Truong and Ruiz to create "The Last Chinatown" (working title), an interactive public memorial and augmented reality film that speaks to the rich narrative landscape of Santa Cruz through the lens of historical erasure with a focus on its last Chinatown. The project is a performative interpretation of an original story by Yamashita supported with insights from community members and historical documents. The final work will incorporate theatre and gameplay and will be experienced on mobile devices, including augmented reality glasses, at historically important sites in downtown Santa Cruz to render visible the lives, legacies, and labors of those who lived there.

As part of the project, Truong and Ruiz will also work closely with a number of history-makers and leaders in the Santa Cruz AAPI community, including **George Ow Jr.**, an elder and one of the last residents with memories of living in the last Chinatown. As Ow explains, Chinatown may have been a ghetto, but it was also a haven not only for the Chinese but for Black people, Mexican people, Filipino people, and other groups for whom it wasn't safe or legal to live elsewhere in Santa Cruz. Thus, Chinatown in Santa Cruz and Chinatowns across the country were not a space solely devoted to marginalization, but a place where Chinese culture and traditions could be preserved and passed down from generation to generation, as well as revised and transformed in diasporic and multicultural contexts.

"The Last Chinatown" is slated for a public premiere in Santa Cruz in the spring of 2024, with a preview of the work scheduled to be shown at the MAH's "Frequency" digital arts festival from September 21-24, 2023. Additional support for this project is provided by the Arts Research Institute (ARI) at UC Santa Cruz.

More information about the Hewlett 50 Arts Commissions can be found at: hewlett.org/50Commissions.

ABOUT THE HEWLETT 50 ARTS COMMISSIONS

Launched in 2017 in celebration of the Hewlett Foundation's fiftieth anniversary, the Hewlett 50 Arts Commissions is a five-year, \$8 million commissioning initiative that is the largest of its kind in the United States. The initiative supports the creation of 50 exceptional works of performing arts and their premiere in the Bay Area through grants of \$150,000 to Bay Area nonprofit organizations. Nonprofit organizations receive funding to achieve their creative vision in partnership with the commissioned artists, who may be based anywhere in the world. The ultimate beneficiaries of the program are local audiences, who are among the first to see important new works premiered in their communities.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Huy Truong is an Emmy Award nominated director of photography, media artist, and creative producer with extensive experience in feature films, television series, documentary, and mixed reality production. Truong's research interests include emergent aesthetics and technologies of cinematography and new approaches to storytelling that include Mixed and Extended Reality and participatory co-creation. Truong has worked on multiple award-winning shows, including: director of photography of the documentary feature GRAB (Sundance Official Selection, PBS), directed by renown Indigenous filmmaker Billy Luther; director of photography and co-producer of TIG (Sundance Official Selection, Netflix), nominated for a GLAAD Media Award; and director of photography of MAPPLETHORPE: LOOK AT THE PICTURES (Sundance Official Selection, HBO), which received two Emmy Award nominations, including one for Outstanding Cinematography. Truong was Artist-in-Residence at the Cooper Union Telerobotic Theatre where he worked with renown media artist Adrienne Wortzel on the intersection of art and robotics. With Ruiz, he is a founding partner of the multiple award-winning Take Action Games, an artist's studio with a portfolio traversing games, art, activism, and storytelling.

Susana Ruiz is an Assistant Professor at UCSC, where she teaches in the Film and Digital Media Department, the Digital Arts and New Media Program, and the Social Documentation Program. Her work is concerned with how the intersection of art practice, playful design, and digital storytelling can enable useful approaches to social activism, aesthetics, and public pedagogy. She holds an MFA from the Interactive Media and Games program at the University of Southern California (USC) and a Ph.D. from USC's Media Arts + Practice program. She is a founding partner of Take Action Games (TAG), an artists' studio based in Santa Cruz and Los Angeles that creates linkages between games and the histories and practices of documentary

film, performance arts, and participatory culture. TAG has garnered numerous awards, including the Games for Change Audience Award, the Adobe MAX Award for Social Responsibility, Honoree status in the Webby Award's Activism Category, and the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences' Governors Award (the Emmy's highest honor) in collaboration with MTV Networks. TAG's work has also been covered by press outlets such as National Public Radio, the New York Times, BBC News, ABC World News, the Washington Post, Jezebel, and Mashable.

Karen Tei Yamashita is an American author and scholar. She is the author of ten books, including *I Hotel*, recipient of the 2011 California Book Award, the American Book Award, the Asian Pacific American Librarians Association Award, the Association for Asian American Studies Book Award, and a finalist for the National Book Award. Her books include *Through the Arc of the Rain Forest* (1990), which received the American Book Award, and *Brazil-Maru*, named by the Village Voice as one of the 25 best books of 1992. *Tropic of Orange* (1997), was a finalist for the Paterson Fiction Prize, and she followed that with *Circle K Cycles* (2001), a book based on her research on the Brazilian community in Japan. *Letters to Memory* (2017) examines her own family's experience in a Japanese-American internment camp during World War II through letters, stories, photographs, official documents, art, journals, and other personal records found in the family archive. *Sansei and Sensibility* (2020), is a collection of short stories about growing up and living in Japanese America. She is Emerita Professor at the University of California at Santa Cruz (UCSC), where she held positions in Literature, Social Documentation in Film and Digital Media, and Critical Race and Ethnic Studies.

ABOUT THE MAH

The MAH is a thriving community gathering place that offers a full slate of art and history exhibitions, visual and performing artworks, public festivals, education and outreach programs, and cultural celebrations in collaboration with its many partners. It maintains a permanent collection of regionally significant art and artifacts, a research library, a historical archive, and historic sites including the Evergreen Cemetery, Octagon Building, and Davenport Jail. It is also home to Abbott Square, a vibrant public plaza on the museum's doorstep that offers food, social events, and year-round creative happenings.

ABOUT THE ARTS RESEARCH INSTITUTE

The Arts Research Institute at UC Santa Cruz supports UC faculty, graduate, and undergraduate students involved in creative research, scholarship, and publicly-engaged practice. They are particularly interested in fostering critical interdisciplinary collaborations that reach across disciplines and genres and engage a broad range of off-campus partners, organizations, and communities. They are committed to supporting the diverse artists and scholars of our campus in an environment of respect, support, innovation, and exploration.

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