

OUR JOURNEYS | OUR STORIES

Jason Phu



'Our Journeys | Our Stories is supported by the NSW Government through Create NSW.'

Georges River Council acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land in which the Georges River Local Government Area is situated – the Bidjegal people of the Eora Nation.

Cover Images: Jason Phu, *There is only today to eat a meal, tomorrow we can cook something different, and the day after that who knows where we will all be 2021*
Video, cookbook, zine

OUR JOURNEYS | OUR STORIES

Our Journeys | Our Stories explores the Chinese migration history of the Georges River area, interweaving social and cultural history with the work of contemporary Chinese-Australian artists Cindy Yuen-Zhe Chen, Guo Jian, Lindy Lee, Xiao Lu, Jason Phu, and Guan Wei.

This educational resource was created for *Our Journeys | Our Stories*, exhibited at Hurstville Museum & Gallery. It is designed to assist Visual Art and Visual Design teachers and students from years 5 - 12. The images and suggested activities are to be used together with relevant syllabus documents and teaching resources, and should be used as a guide for teachers, adjusting activities to suit the needs of their students.

A hard copy of the exhibition catalogue is also available for purchase at Hurstville Museum & Gallery and is a valuable tool that can be used alongside this resource.

For the *Our Journeys | Our Stories* exhibition Jason Phu created *There is only today to eat a meal, tomorrow we can cook something different, and the day after that who knows where we will all be*. Learn more about his practice and process for creating this work throughout this educational resource.

ARTIST Q&A

What advice would you give to a person who is passionate about their art making but doesn't know where to start? What is the best piece of advice you have been given?

I think the best thing is to just go to galleries and museums and look through books and look online. A lot of artmaking is just little bits of copying, figuring out how to make something, figuring out how someone else made something, whether it's aesthetically or physically. From there your mind naturally goes through these processes without you noticing. It is the same as training to be a chef or an athlete. Whether you want to pursue a career as an artist or simply make good art is another thing, to pursue a career as an artist comes with a whole other set of responsibilities outside of the actual making, you are basically running a small business by yourself, sometimes it is nice just to make art at home, it's what everyone should do everyday, much like people cook for themselves or go for a light jog.

Has your work undergone a particular development/transformation?

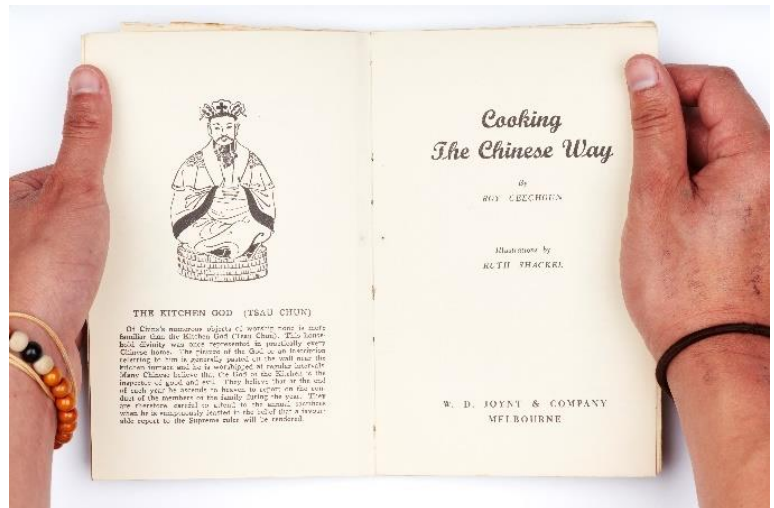
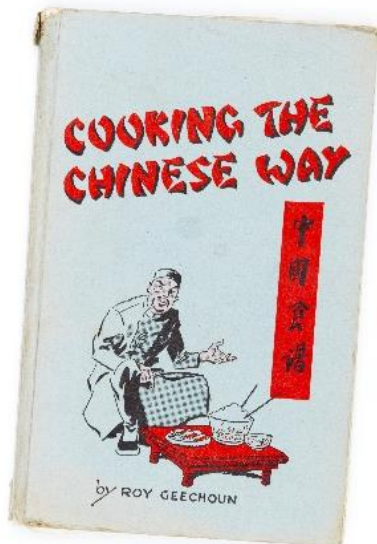
Yes it is always going through a development/transformation, but in the same way anyone else in their job and life goes through these changes. Sometimes people don't because of constraints outside of their control, and that is ok, but if you can you can't be afraid to go through constant change and to let go of things.

Do you plan for an exhibition or produce constantly and choose work for a particular exhibition?

I work best to deadlines, so I work to exhibitions. Many artists just produce constantly, we are very lucky in the arts to have a wide range of working methodologies that are acceptable.

What is next?

I have a few solo shows and a few group shows this year. And then I will have a break.



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MATERIAL AND PRACTICE

Can you explain your technique; how you manipulate the medium?

I like to work in a wide range of mediums. When a project comes around I decide on what work I want to make and I research the techniques needed, often I will have to hire someone to help me manipulate the form, other times it will be within the realm of my techniques to try it out myself.

Can you give us an insight into your artistic process? Is your work pre-planned or created intuitively? How long does each work take to complete?

It is different every time. If it is a historically research heavy project, ethically the research comes first. If it is a painting show at a commercial gallery, I just paint as I go and work it out.

Where do you draw your inspiration or source for the idea which the artwork explores and/or expresses?

Artwork in galleries, novels, comics, tv, chatting to friends, learning about different subjects.

What do you want your work to do? Is there a particular reaction that you want to evoke?

Not particularly, I try to have different layers of meaning in my work so there is a little bit for everyone. Obviously sometimes some works are meant more for a group of people than another, for instance when I do work about Chinese Australian histories they are more for the Chinese Diaspora in Australia, but other diasporas might be able to relate.

FRAMES

- Cultural:** Constructs of identity, race, merging of historical and contemporary experience.
- Structural:** Visual symbols embedded in the material and form. Interpretation is conveyed throughout the artmaking process.
- Subjective:** Works are linked to memory and experience
- Postmodern:** Challenging the interpretation of historical objects, stories, and figures. Recontextualising historical objects by viewing them through a contemporary perspective on racism.

Forms – Digital, Documented Forms, Performance

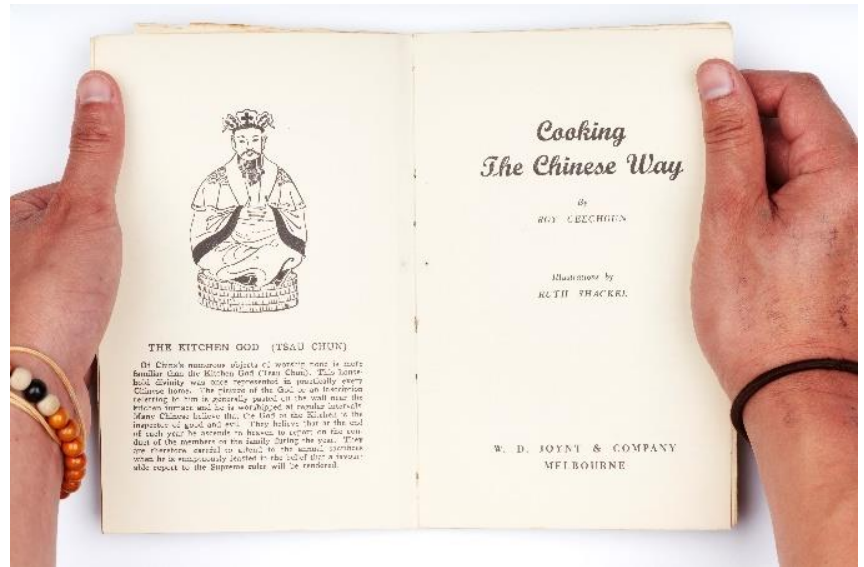
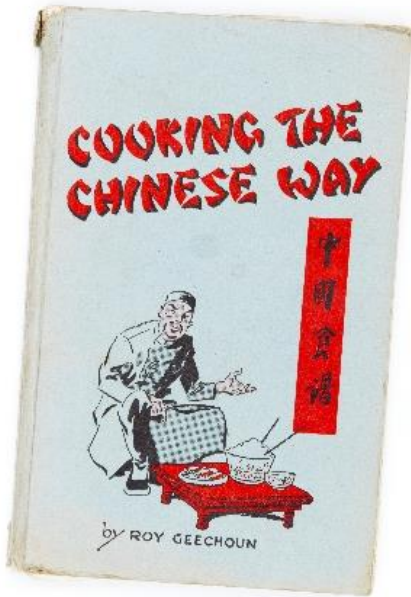
KEY WORDS

Collaboration – working with one or more people to create an artwork.

Diaspora – a group of people who moved from one country to live in another country.

Performance Art – a time-based artwork created when an artist completes a series of actions.

Documented Form – the documents that record an artwork, often the documents that record performance art. This could be photos, sound recordings or videos.



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There is only today to eat a meal, tomorrow we can cook something different, and the day after that who knows where we will all be 2021.
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QUESTIONS

STAGE 3

- Look at the photo of the book “Cooking the Chinese Way”. Does it remind you of any books that you have in your home?
- What everyday event has Jason Phu recorded in his photo series?
- Read the below quote by Jason Phu. Explain why you think he made an artwork about cooking a traditional Chinese meal?

“I could never talk to my grandma because she spoke three of the languages I didn’t and I spoke two of the ones she didn’t. My dad spoke all five and would translate. Every time I saw her she would say “oh, he’s grown,” and I would reply “thank you grandma.” My mum could speak two of the languages, understand one of them and read another if needed. My dad would tell me stories before I went to bed and my mum would make sure I studied hard. Wherever I was in the world, the wok would be heating up oil and the exhaust fan would be on.”

Jason Phu

STAGE 4

- Describe the actions that Jason Phu undertook to complete his artwork *There is only today to eat a meal, tomorrow we can cook something different, and the day after that who knows where we will all be*.
- List the materials and tools that Jason Phu used to create his artwork. **Hint** – they are not all traditional art materials.
- “Cooking the Chinese Way” was written by the chef Roy Geechoun who lived and worked in Bendigo Victoria. It was published in 1948 and was written to introduce Australians to Chinese cooking. Why do you think Jason Phu chose this object in the exhibition *Our Journeys | Our Stories* to create an artwork about?
- How does the act of cooking a traditional Chinese meal reflect Jason Phu’s personal experiences?

STAGE 5

- Jason Phu’s artwork *There is only today to eat a meal, tomorrow we can cook something different, and the day after that who knows where we will all be* was a time-based performance, the act of creating a recipe from “Cooking the Chinese Way”. This act was documented through video which was included in the exhibition *Our Journeys | Our Stories*. Which part of this work do you think was the most important to the artist?
- Which part of this work do you think was the most important to the audience?
- Many of Jason Phu’s videos were taken using a phone camera. Describe the style of these videos.
- How do you think the style of the videos and the use of a phone camera draw audiences into the artwork?

STAGE 6

- How does Jason Phu’s artmaking practice challenge traditional ideas about art?
- As well as creating his own time-based and documented artwork, he encourages audiences to do the same and then share the results using social media. How does this break down the distinction between artist-audience-artwork and world?
- Jason Phu created *There is only today to eat a meal, tomorrow we can cook something different, and the day after that who knows where we will all be* in response to the museum object “Cooking the Chinese Way”. How has he recontextualized the book in his work?

DISCUSSION

How has Jason Phu challenged mainstream versions of the history of the Chinese Diaspora in Australia?

ESSAY QUESTIONS

Explore ways in which artists challenge their audiences to question traditional or mainstream points of view.

Discuss ways in which artists use artworks to explore personal experiences.

ACTIVITY

Material



*Digital camera,
computer, Internet*



*Kitchen &
ingredients*

Process

1. Visit Jason Phu's Instagram account (@titsmcgee66).
2. As a class or individually cook one of the recipes from "Cooking the Chinese Way".
3. Document your process using photos and videos.

FURTHER RESOURCES

Jason Phu's website

www.jasonphu.com/

Chalkhorse – Jason Phu

www.chalkhorse.com.au/artists/jason-phu-3

Art Collector – 'Pull focus with Jason Phu'

<https://artcollector.net.au/video-pull-focus-with-jason-phu/>

MCA – 'The artist, the historian and the case of the Chinese bushranger'

www.mca.com.au/stories-and-ideas/artist-historian-and-case-chinese-bushranger/

ABC News – 'A new exhibition explores the history and legacy of the anti-Chinese race riots at Lambing Flats'

www.abc.net.au/news/2018-07-21/chinese-australian-exhibition-on-lambing-flat-race-riots/9999630

GETTING TO HURSTVILLE MUSEUM & GALLERY

Parking

There is limited free 2 hour parking next to Hurstville Museum & Gallery, via MacMahon Street. Please note the time restrictions and rules on all street signs when parking.

By public transport

Train services to Hurstville run on the South Coast and Eastern Suburbs & Illawarra lines. Both the Bus Interchange and Hurstville Station are a 5 minute walk to Hurstville Museum & Gallery. For further details and to plan your trip, visit: www.transportnsw.info/trip

Accessibility

The MacMahon Street carpark contains one accessible parking space. All public areas within the Hurstville Museum & Gallery building are wheelchair accessible and companion animals are welcome. A wheelchair accessible bathroom is located in the Main Gallery. This bathroom contains a fold-down baby change table. Hurstville Museum & Gallery is a Companion Card affiliated venue and accepts Companion Cards for our ticketed events.

Contact details

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Find us on:

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Instagram: [hurstvillemuseumgallery](https://www.instagram.com/hurstvillemuseumgallery)

Blog: hurstvillemuseumgallery.wordpress.com

Back cover image: *Teapot and basket* (c. 1890-1920)
White china, bamboo and straw.
Courtesy of North Sydney Heritage Centre, Stanton Library.

