Consuming Culture: Negotiating Asian Canadian Identities Through Food Culture and Art

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ABSTRACT

Consuming Culture: Negotiating Asian-Canadian Identities Through Food Culture and Art

Jessa Riel Alston-O'Connor

This thesis is a comparative analysis of two recent exhibitions about Asian Canadian food cultures by Montreal-based artists Karen Tam and Shié Kasai. Presented at the Montreal Arts Intercultural (MAI) Centre, Tam's *Gold Mountain Restaurant Montagne d'Or* (2004) and Kasai's *Survival Japanese Cooking* (2008) address issues of constructing, encountering and consuming the ethnic 'Other' in Canada specifically through Chinese and Japanese food and in the context of Montreal. I argue that these exhibitions served as interventions into critical discourses surrounding race and food both in Montreal and in Canada. The thesis begins by situating the works of art within Asian Canadian studies, food politics, food in art history and theories on cultural consumption, as well as discourses on ethnicity and cultural representation. This is followed by analyses of the varied ways in which the two artists approach Asian restaurant spaces in Montreal in order to subvert racist and stereotypical representations of Chinese and Japanese culture. Three key strategies used in their restaging of different Asian restaurants spaces are discussed: the display of racialized objects within museums and galleries, the intentional engagement of gallery visitors, and the use of ethnic humour. In these ways Tam and Kasai's exhibitions succeeded in prompting audiences to not only rethink stereotypes of Asian Canadian cultural identities mediated and fictionalized through food in Canada, but also to critically consider their own role as cultural consumers of ethnic food.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a comparative analysis of two recent exhibitions dealing with Asian Canadian food cultures by Montreal-based artists Karen Tam and Shié Kasai. It argues that both projects, first, encouraged audiences to critically engage with stereotypes of Asian Canadian cultural identities that are mediated and fictionalized through food in Canada; and second, in the process urged audiences to also question their own cultural consumption practices in relation to ethnicized spaces and foods. Both exhibitions were presented at the gallery of the Montreal Arts Intercultural (MAI) Centre in Montreal–one of Canada's most culturally diverse cities. Tam's 2004 *Gold Mountain Restaurant Montagne d'Or* invited visitors to step inside a typical Chop Suey restaurant built in the gallery. Kasai's 2008 multi-media exhibition *Survival Japanese Cooking* offered humorous and playful photography, video work, and interactive elements revolving around her interpretation of Montreal's love of sushi. Both addressed issues of constructing, encountering and consuming the ethnic 'Other' in Canada through Chinese and Japanese food in the specific context of Montreal.

The thesis has three main objectives framed as questions: What is at stake when serving or consuming chop suey or sushi in Canada?[1] What definitions of cultural identity are negotiated or performed within ethnic restaurants that serve these foods? And how are Asian Canadian artists engaging with restaurant spaces and foods as sites of cultural inquiry? The discussion is divided in four parts. Part I situates these projects

[1] Chop suey is a popular stir fried mixed vegetable dish in North American Chinese cuisine. Sushi is small combinations of vinegar, rice, raw fish and other ingredients including seaweed, vegetables and egg. For further reading see E.N.Anderson, Jr. and Marja L. Anderson, "Modern China: South," *Food in Chinese Culture: Anthropological and Historical Perspectives*, ed. K.C. Chang (New Haven :Yale University Press, 1977) and Kinjiro Omae and Yuzuru Tachibana, *The Book of Sushi*. (New York: Kodansha International, 1981).

within theoretical frameworks drawn from Asian Canadian studies and draws upon the politics of food, food in art history and theories surrounding cultural consumption. Framed within a postcolonial methodology, my analysis compares two different artistic approaches to the Asian restaurant space; and how both works contribute to identity politics within Asian Canadian studies.[2] The impetus for this project stemmed from my research interests in race politics and postcolonial discourse within both contemporary art and art history. Having gained a foundation in postcolonialism and First Nations contemporary art during my undergraduate degree at the University of Saskatchewan, I sought to expand my research at the graduate level by comparing Canadian artists who address race in the linguistically and culturally diverse context of Montreal. My thesis research has drawn from scholarship in several fields include Asian Canadian studies, food studies, and Asian Canadian history as well as interviews with curators and the artists. I have also consulted Asian Canadian exhibition catalogues and benefitted from attending and presenting my research at conferences on Asian Canadian studies, hybridity and immigration.[3]

Part II and III focus on the exhibitions by Shié Kasai and Karen Tam respectively, with an emphasis on key elements of the exhibitions including decor, photography, menus, and videos. Part IV offers a close analysis of the installation spaces of both exhibitions and examines three key strategies used in their restaging of imagined Asian restaurant spaces. The first strategy is the display of racialized objects within museums

[2] There is much debate concerning the use of a hyphen when spelling Asian Canadian. In recent scholarship and anthologies in Asian Canadian studies, including *Asian Canadian Writing: Beyond Autoethnography* edited by Eleanor Ty and Christl Verduyn, the hyphen is critically questioned and seen as problematic. As such, I have opted to follow this lead and not hyphenate Asian Canadian.

[3] These include the *Asian Canadian Graduate Student workshop*, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, June 2011; *History in the Making, The Immigrant Experience: A History of Communities in Transition,* History Graduate conference at Concordia University, March 2011, and *Contemporary Approaches to Hybridity* Conference, University of Toronto, October 2010.

and gallery displays. Here, I apply Jennifer Gonzalez's discussion of the politics of "epidermalization" of museum objects and artefacts to objects within both installations. The second strategy is the intentional engagement of publics, both through their participation within the exhibition spaces, and as part of the creative process of both artistic projects. The third and final strategy relates to the use of ethnic humour by both artists as a means of further engaging audiences in a palatable way while still subverting racism and stereotypical representations of Chinese and Japanese culture.

The artists' use of food as a means to address issues of Asian Canadian identity resulted in "ethnic" dining environments and experiences that were immediately familiar and accessible to Montreal audiences. Chinese and Japanese foods are two of the most mainstream and readily available forms of Asian food in Canada. The myriad of local restaurants that serve these cuisines indicate the popularity and accessibility of these foods in Montreal as well. Dishes such as California rolls and General Tao's Chicken have become familiar staples to customers as they are seemingly offered in every sushi shop and Chinese restaurant. Asian cuisine coupled with the decor of restaurant spaces is constructed as an imagined ideal of authenticity and exotic "Asianness" so as to appeal to the desires and curiosity of customers. Human geographer Shaun Naomi Tanaka points out that Japanese restaurants become a "medium to stage and negotiate authenticity through food, decor, and architecture," in which customers go to experience a taste of another place and culture. Thus, as a cultural landscape, the restaurant becomes a place where "social identities are created in the give and take of staff and customers, producers

and consumers."[4] Asian restaurants and the foods served and consumed within these spaces therefore offer a rich and provocative means of inviting the gallery visitor to reflect on constructions of race and ethnicity.

As Canada's third largest city, Montreal boasts the third largest multicultural population in the country.[5] However, the Chinese and Japanese communities in Montreal are relatively small and less attention has been paid to Asian Canadian history in Montreal compared to Vancouver and Toronto where Asian Canadian population is much larger.[6] In Montreal, 72,015 people identified Chinese as their heritage, while only 2,985 identified as Japanese, constituting less than 2% of the city's population of visible minority communities in 2006.[7] Within Montreal's population of 3.5 million, Chinese and Japanese communities are small compared to other major visible minority groups in

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[4] Shaun Naomi Tanaka, "Consuming the 'Oriental Other, 'Constructing the Cosmopolitan Canadian: Reinterpreting Japanese Culinary Culture in Toronto's Japanese Restaurants." (PhD diss., Queen's University, 2008), 14.

[5] Canada. Statistics Canada. *Table 2 Count, Percentage Distribution and Relative Ratio of Visible Minority Population, by Census Metropolitan Areas, 2006* (table). *Ethnic Origin and Visible Minorities, 2006 Census.* Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 97-562-XIE2006001. Ottawa. April 2 2008. http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2006 /as-sa/97-562/table/t2-eng.cfm (accessed January 4, 2011). Montreal's population of visible minorities was 11.6% in 2006, second only to Toronto's 42% and Vancouver's 17.3%.

[6] Canada. Statistics Canada. *Canada's Ethnocultural Mosaic, 2006 Census: Canada's Major Census Metropolitan Areas - Montréal: Third Largest Visible Minority Population. Ethnic Origin and Visible Minorities, 2006 Census.* Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 97-562-XIE2006001. Ottawa. April 2, 2008. http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2006/as-sa/97-562/p19-eng.cfm (accessed January 4, 2011). In comparison, the Chinese population in Vancouver was 381,500, representing 18.2% of Vancouver's total population. In Toronto, 9.6% of the city's population were Chinese; Canada. Statistics Canada. *Canada's Ethnocultural Mosaic, 2006 Census: Canada's Major Census Metropolitan Areas: Vancouver: Four in 10 Belonged to a Visible Minority Group. Ethnic Origin and Visible Minorities, 2006 Census.* Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 97-562-XIE2006001. Ottawa. April 2, 2008. http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/ 2006/as-sa/ 97-562/p24-eng.cfm (access January 5, 2011).

[7] Canada, Statistics Canada. *Canada's Ethnocultural Mosaic, 2006 Census: Canada's Major Census Metropolitan Areas: Montreal: Third largest visible minority population*. *Ethnic Origin and Visible Minorities, 2006 Census.* Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 97-562-XIE2006001. Ottawa. April 2, 2008. http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2006/as-sa/97-562/p19-eng.cfm (accessed January 5, 2011); Canada, Statistics Canada. *Montréal, Quebec (Code462)* (table). *2006 Community Profiles*. 2006 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 92-591-XWE. Ottawa. March 13, 2007. http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/prof/92-591/index.cfm?Lang=E (accessed June 10, 2011).

Montreal, including the largest Arab community in Canada at 98,885, accounting for 37% of Canada's Arab population.[8] The black community made up almost a third of Montreal's visible minorities with just over 169, 000 people, over 20% of Canada's black population.[9] Despite the modest size of their respective communities, the popularity of Chinese and Japanese restaurants in Montreal remains high.

Both Tam and Kasai live and work in Montreal and these artworks are valuable critical examinations of Asian food culture in a context where Asian Canadian experiences are not part of the popular narrative of the city and its history. Both offer different perspectives stemming from their personal histories with the city and with Asian food in Canada. This thesis sets out to demonstrate ways in which these artists engage with two popular styles of cuisine, while reflecting different personal perspectives, strategies and trajectories at the same time.

Ongoing research by Concordia Geography professor Alan Nash reveals indeterminate results on the explanations for the popularity of Chinese restaurants and sushi restaurants in Montreal. His study of ethnic restaurants in Montreal drawn from census records between 1951 and 2001 suggests that the cause for this popularity in ethnic cuisine is unclear. Some restaurants are owned and operated by immigrant populations in Montreal meeting the employment and dining needs of their respective communities, but many more are owned by proprietors of other ethnicities who seek to

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[8] Canada. Statistics Canada. *2006 Census Dictionary.* Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 92-566-XWE. Ottawa. February 14, 2007. http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/ref/dict/pop127-eng.cfm (accessed January 5, 2011). Statistics Canada uses the term "visible minorities" as it is defined by the *Employment Equity Act* as 'persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour"; Canada. Statistics Canada. *Canada's Ethnocultural Mosaic, 2006 Census: Canada's Major Census Metropolitan Areas - Montréal: Third Largest Visible Minority Population. Ethnic Origin and Visible Minorities, 2006 Census.* Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 97-562-XIE2006001. Ottawa. April 2, 2008. http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2006/as-sa/97-562/p19-eng.cfm (accessed January 4, 2011).

[9] Ibid.

cater to North American cosmopolitan dining trends.[10] Chinese and Japanese cuisine is not contingent on large populations of those ethnic communities, which is notable when compared with the availability of ethnic cuisine associated with much larger minority groups in Montreal such as the Middle Eastern and Arab communities, and the visibility of Middle Eastern food establishments including Amir's, Al-Taib, and Basha food chains across Montreal. Yet, despite the proportionately smaller Asian Canadian population in Montreal, Chinese restaurants and sushi restaurants are some of the most popular and prominent ethnic restaurants in the city.

Tam and Kasai are part of a community and circle of established, emerging and mid-career Asian Canadian artists and scholars working in the arts in Montreal. These include multidisciplinary artist Mary Sui Yee Wong and photographer and film maker Chih-Chien Wang, who both teach at Concordia in the Faculty of Fine Arts. Both artists, as well as Karen Tam, were part of the group exhibition "Rearranging Desires: Curating the Other Within" at the FOFA gallery in 2008, curated by Alice Ming Wai Jim. The same year Wang and Tam were featured in the first Quebec Triennial at the Montreal Museum of Contemporary Art.[11] It is also important to note the seminal role that Janet Lumb, the Artistic Director of the *Accès Asie Asian Heritage* festival in Montreal, played in making Asian Heritage Month in Canada a reality. Although it has been celebrated in the United States since 1979, thanks to the work of Lumb and a dedicated group of Asian Canadian cultural producers, in 2002, the Government of Canada officially declared the

[10]Alan Nash, "From Spaghetti to Sushi: An investigation of the growth of ethnic restaurants in Montreal 1051-2001," *Food, Culture and Society* 12: 1 (March 2009): 5-24.
[11]"The Quebec Triennial: Rien ne se perd, rien ne se crée, tout se transforme," Musée d'Art Contemporain de Montréal, accessed May 1, 2011, http://www.macm.org/en/expositions/49.html.

month of May to be Asian Heritage Month in Canada.[12] Together with emerging artists in Montreal art schools, Tam and Kasai are also part of this vibrant and growing social and cultural community.

Karen Tam approaches Montreal through her experience of having been born here and raised in her parent's Chinese restaurant in the east end of Montreal. She is of a generation of artists from Montreal who are learning about their family's history in Canada, including their parents' and grand-parents' experience with the Chinese head tax.[13] Her work addresses the earlier immigration patterns of Asian people, discourses of diaspora, questions of bilingualism, and Chinese Chop Suey restaurants within the context of French neighbourhoods in Montreal, highlighting the linguistic divide of French and English politics in Quebec.[14] In contrast, Shié Kasai views sushi from her perspective as an immigrant to Canada. She explores the commodification of Japanese cuisine and studies the culinary tastes of residents of the Plateau Mont-Royal neighbourhood in order to better understand Montreal's love for sushi.[15] Both artists are

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[12] Citizenship and Immigration Canada,"Asian Heritage Month," Government of Canada, accessed July 15, 2011, http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/multiculturalism/asian/index.asp

[13] The Chinese head tax was a government policy that was created after the completion of the CPR railroad 1885, a project that had relied heavily on labourers from China. The tax was $50 per person, then in 1900 it was raised to $100 and finally in 1903 it was raised again to $500 per person. In 1923 the tax was abolished when the Chinese Immigration Act came into effect, essentially preventing most all immigration from China to Canada until the Act was terminated in 1947. For further reading, see *The Chinese in Canada*, by Peter Li.

[14] Karen Tam's multidisciplinary practice focuses on deconstructing Chineseness in spaces such as opium dens, restaurants and Zen lounges. Through paper cuts, rice bags, and other media, she challenges stereotypes and addresses the history of Chinese in Canada. Since completing her MFA at Concordia in 2002 she has gone on to exhibit her work in numerous Canadian and international solo and group exhibitions, international residency programs. She is currently working towards her PhD in Cultural Studies at the Centre for Cultural Studies, Goldsmiths, University of London. For more on her practice visit www.karentam.ca.

[15] Shié Kasai is a visual artist working in sculpture, installation and animation. She is originally from Sapporo, Japan and immigrated to Montréal in 1998 and completed her MFA at Concordia in 2002. She has had solo exhibitions at MAI (Montréal 2008) Articule (Montréal 2006) and Gallery 101 (Ottawa 2004). She has participated in residencies in Finland and Holland, and her work has been featured in group exhibitions in Japan, the Netherlands, and Canada. For more on her practice visit www.shiekasai.com.

interested in how Chinese and Japanese food in Montreal has become “take out,” commodified and readily available adaptations of Asian cuisine. In comparing these works, I will consider ways in which these artists responded to ethnic foods cultures differently and sought to engage publics to reflect on their own interactions with ethnic cuisines. Now that the artistic, historical and interdisciplinary contexts for these works have been outlined, my discussion will turn to an in-depth analysis of both exhibitions individually and in relation to one another.

The comparison of Tam and Kasai’s works in this thesis demonstrates the multiplicity of histories and meanings associated with ethnic foods. Chinese and Japanese cuisine and cultural histories in Canada are not homogenous, nor is there a single definition of Chinese or Japanese Canadian identity. Both of these exhibitions thus effectively complicated assumptions and relationships to Asian food culture in Montreal. Although Asian food has become mainstream and mass produced in Canada, *Gold Mountain Restaurant Montagne d’Or* and *Survival Japanese Cooking* emphasize that Chinese and Japanese foods and people’s relationships to these foods are not so similar at all.

Part I: Asian Canadian Art, and the Politics of Food

The exhibitions can be connected according to four fields of investigation: food, literature and art, Asian Canadian studies, and the Montreal social and cultural context. Food is pervasive in many areas of popular culture and is today a very interdisciplinary field of study. As food studies scholar Fabio Parasecoli explains, foods are "markers of power,

cultural capital, class, gender, ethnic, and religious identities."[16] The role of food in popular culture has historically been overlooked in academia. However this situation is changing with food studies gaining attention in interdisciplinary fields that combine history, anthropology, ethnography and cultural studies.[17]

Across social and cultural demographics, the engagement with food by Canadians is complex, and plays a key role in the construction and negotiation of ethnic and cultural identities. Food has strong cultural and personal significance for many people, whether it is due to memories of family members cooking in a particular style, or due to traditions of a particular cultural community. For example, the smells, tastes, and preparation of food, for new immigrants and long time residents alike, can be a source of comfort after relocating to a new place or even a new neighbourhood.[18] As Vancouver-based Japanese Canadian artist and professor Renay Egami explains, although cultural traditions may be lost in the process of immigration, assimilation, translation or with the passing of time and of generations, food traditions are often retained.[19] The abundance and accessibility of ethnic cuisine and restaurants in Montreal is mirrored in other urban Canadian centers, and even in many rural areas of the country. Chinese restaurants, for instance, are found in many small towns across Canada.[20] While food plays an important role in connecting with one's own traditions, but what is also emphasized in Tam and Kasai's exhibitions are the ways in which ethnic restaurants and the food that they serve have become a common way for people to come into contact with other cultures.

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[16] Fabio Parasecoli, *Bite me: Food in Popular Culture*, (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2008), 2.
[17] Ibid., 11.
[18] In our email interview on April 5,th 2011, Shié Kasai cites this as one of the reasons she seeks out, cooks, and questions Asian food while living in Montreal.
[19] Renay Egami, email to author, July 26, 2011.
[20] Lily Cho*, Eating Chinese: Culture on the Menu in Small Town Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010).

Restaurants are spaces that Laurier Turgeon and Madelaine Pastinelli argue offer "idealized contact with the different cultures of the world."[21] However, what Turgeon and Pastinelli overlook is the unspoken implication that this cultural contact is often between white and non-white people in Canada. The white and non-white racial dynamic is played out in many ethnic cultural exchanges across Canada including annual heritage festivals or cultural dance performances. In both Tam's and Kasai's exhibitions this dynamic of cultural performance and consumption is brought forward for critical consideration.

Despite its complicated and nuanced history, whiteness remains part of the dominant culture of Canada. In the early 1990s Himani Bannerji argued that this ideology of whiteness is in fact central to Canadian multiculturalism.[22] Canada's white hegemonic identity is rarely overtly discussed, despite the fact it is central to defining who is a "visible minority" because their difference, or "otherness", is always present in a society where white is the invisible norm.[23] Bannerji points out that ethnicity or the label of "ethnic" is not used to label Canadians with fair skin, or who appear white, but only those of colour or otherwise racialized and ethnicized identities such as Latin American, Greek, Italian or those of African descent.[24]James Frideres writes in a more recent article that little has changed today. Whiteness in Canada "operates by being invisible, so ubiquitous and entrenched as to appear natural and normative....Whiteness operates as the

[21] Laurier Turgeon and Madelaine Pastinelli, "'Eat the World': Post Colonial Encounters in Quebec City's Ethnic Restaurants," *Journal of American Folklore* 115, no. 456 (Spring 2002): 259.
[22] Himani Bannerji, On the Dark Side of the Nation: Politics of Multiculturalism and the State of 'Canada'," *The Dark Side of the Nation: Essays on Multiculturalism, Nationalism and Gender,* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2000), 110.
[23] Ibid., 96.
[24] Ibid.,112.

unmarked norm against which other identities are marked and realized."[25]

Thus within discussions of the representation of ethnicity in Canada today, one must consider ideas of whiteness because they continue to play a central role in determining what it is to be Canadian and what it is to be Other. The construct of "white" as a racial category has changed constantly and has been a controversial social and political issue in Canada and the United States since the nineteenth century, when slavery was dissolved in both countries and new waves of immigrants came to North America.[26] Vic Satzewich offers a historical approach to understanding the construct of whiteness, explaining how:

> Many groups of people that are today commonly identified as "white" (e.g. Ukrainians, Italians, Jews, Celts, Slavs, and Irish) did not enjoy membership in this category as little as two or three generations ago and that it is historically inaccurate to apply the concept of whiteness to all people of European ancestry uncritically, collectively, and trans-historically.[27]

To apply this to the context of Quebec, it is important to note the social marginalization of French-Canadians, even within Quebec and that whiteness was until recently a label reserved for English Canadians, not the French. A scathing critique of the social conditions of French Canadians was expressed in the controversial political manifesto *Nègres blancs d'Amérique,* written by FLQ member Pierre Vallières during his incarceration in the late 1960s. He likened the marginalization and prejudice of French Canadians to the experience of African Americans, arguing that French Canadians were

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[25] James Frideres, "Being White and Being Right: Critiquing Individual and Collective Privilege, " in *The Great White North: Exploring Whiteness, Privilege and Identity in Education*, edited by Paul R Carr and Darren E Lund (Rotterdam: Sense publishers, 2007), 45.

[26] It is worth noting that racial debates surrounding whiteness in both countries have different histories and their different histories of slavery and immigration has shaped these debates

[27] Vic Satzewich, "Whiteness Studies: Race, Diversity, and the New Essentialism," *Race and Racism in 21st century Canada: Continuity, Complexcity and Change,* edited by Sean P. Hier and B. Singh Bolaria, (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2007), 67.

treated as second-class citizens. Racial slurs towards French Canadians including "Speak White" were used by English Canadians, further reinforcing the idea that to be white was to speak English.[28] Whiteness and race has therefore played an important and complicated role in Quebec and in Canadian society as a whole. As I will discuss later, this has strongly perpetuated the image of Asian Canadians as exotic and Other, and has shaped the menus and representation of Asian ethnicity within restaurants space. This complex racial dynamic underlies both exhibitions as they question constructs of Asian identity and ethnic foods in relation to the unspoken hegemony of whiteness in Quebec and Canada.

Cultural consumption and the customer's relationship to ethnic restaurants can be linked to the presence of ethnic foods in supermarkets today. According to postcolonial scholar Deborah Root, the nature of consumer relationships with ethnic foods is one in which consuming ethnic foods as commodities in supermarkets have essentially replaced the lived experience with the world. She connects this to globalization and argues that through readily-accessible ethnic foods, the consumer "maintains a passive relation to the world" and consumption becomes a substitute for experience and active engagement with other people and cultures.[29] Consumers are presented with the convenience of buying a packaged sauce or noodle box at the grocery store as a means of experiencing another culture without history or context Root suggests the fascination with and consumption of foreign foods has become a substitute for lived experience with other cultures, focusing particularly on the ways in which advertising for so-called ethnic food products has

[28] Josée Makropoulos, "Speak White! Language and the Social Construction of Frenchness in Canada," *Racism, Eh? A Critical Inter-Disciplinary Anthology of Race and Racism in Canada*. edited by Camille A. Nelson and Charmaine A. Nelson. (Concord: Captus Press Inc, 2004), 249.
[29] Deborah Roots, "The Global Delicatessen," *Foodculture: Tasting Identities and Geographies in Art,* ed. Barbara Fischer (Toronto: YYZ Books; London: ArtLab, University of Waterloo Press, 1999), 141.

perpetuated this myth and by extension, has shaped the tastes of America.[30] She argues that the marketing and consumption of readily available ethnic foods can be likened to colonial history of commodifying the most desirable and palatable aspects of a colonized culture for the consumption of those in power.[31] Through these foods, culture is commodified, fragmented, and abstracted for Western customers to purchase and consume.[32] For example, Root points out that President's Choice brand "memories of" sauces are in fact selectively constructed 'memories' and flavours, presented without politics and the social experiences of those places:

> It seems frivolous and self-serving to imagine the world as little more than a vast shopping center. And picking and choosing only those elements you find desirable risks turning the world into a museum diorama, tidy and ready to function as little more than a sign that one has been promoted to a higher class.[33]

After Root, the commodification of ethnicity and culture through food creates a spectacle of culture, devoid of any historical and social context, or specificity of place. This erasure can begin to be addressed by recovering the "collective memory of foods" and the food ways or trajectories along which these food items have travelled. In doing so, we start to "undo the passivity enforced by advertising. By refusing the erasure of time and place, we begin to return to experience."[34] I argue that Tam and Kasai's practices offer gallery visitors a way to see past the similar spectacle of Japanese and Chinese culture that is served within restaurants, allowing us to reflect on the politics of these foods and the historical and social contexts from which they emerge and within which they are consumed.

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[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid., 144.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid., 145.

Distinct parallels can be drawn between Root's analysis of globalized grocery stores and the dynamics within Asian food restaurants. Customers need only order a dish off the menu to 'experience' another culture. Rarely is the history of Asian dishes, or the social context from which they emerge, presented to the customer. Instead, Asian culture is presented as a picturesque and exotic Other, in which politics and the racialized history of oppression have been erased. "Asia" is packaged and presented in a manner that appeals to the Western consumer, who passively experiences the exoticism of another culture during the short period of a meal without confronting the complex social and historical contexts of Asian restaurant spaces or the dishes they serve. I will return to this issue of history and social context later in the thesis.

Food in Contemporary Art

The representation and use of food in art dates back centuries, but in recent decades there has been an attempt by artists and curators to unpack the complex relationships people have with food in contemporary society. During the 1960s and 1970s, food itself became a popular medium in contemporary art, especially in North America and in Europe. In Dusseldorf in 1968, Daniel Spoerri founded *Eat Art*, a restaurant-performance space-gallery that became a meeting place for artists who were interested in the mixing of art and life and in exploring food as material and subject-matter for their art practices.[35] In the United States, artists like Gordon Matta-Clark opened a non-profit restaurant experiment, the restaurant *Food* in New York City in 1971, where conceptual recipes and thematic meals were served for free by artists and

[35] Renate Buschmann et al., forward, *Eating the Universe/ Vom Essen in der Kunst,* ed. Magdalena Holzhey, Renate Buschmann, Ulrike Groos, Beate Ermacora, Elke Krasny, Nikolai Wojtko, and Christiane Boje (Düsseldorf: Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, 2009), 228.

guest chefs. One such example included a 'bone meal' with veal and mushroom stuffed bones, which were then washed and sent home with customers after the meal.[36] In more recent years, international contemporary artists such as Judith Samen, Mika Rottenberg and Paul McCarthy use food to explore fundamental sensory experiences, including the cooking, production and waste of food, and the visceral qualities of food as artistic material.[37] While not closely related to these movements, Tam and Kasai's work may be read within the context of the history of food in contemporary art.

Such critical and creative interest in food has also become a trend in the Canadian art scene. Since the 1980s there has been a growing interest in studying food in popular culture, art, film, and literature in Canada.[38] The food-related interests of Canadian artists and curators range from looking at the representation of food, to the phenomenological experience of eating food, to the political relationships brought to light through food. For example, Toronto-based photographer Thomas Blanchard creates photographs of food items to draw attention to the biopolitics of food production and to the health and environmental impact of processed foods and corporate farming in North America.[39] Montreal-based Italian-born artist Massimo Guerrera, a finalist for the 2004 Sobey Award, uses food relationally in his works in order to examine the body, consumer society and to inspire interpersonal experiences.[40] In 2003, the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery in Vancouver presented *Test Kitchen*, a group exhibition that traced food and

[36] Ulrike Groos, "Optimism at Table: Notes on a Selection of Artist's Restaurants, Eateries, and Bars," in Holzhey et al., *Eating the Universe: Vom Essen in der Kunst*, 250.
[37] For further reading on their practices and other artist in this international exhibition,, see ibid.
[38] Fischer, 21.
[39] Thomas Blanchard, "Artist statement," Artist website, access May 3 2011, http://www.tblanchardphoto.com/.
[40] "Massimo Guerrera," Centre Internationale de l'Art Contemporain, accessed June 2 2011, "http://www.ciac.ca/en/massimo-guerrera,

cooking as metaphors in art since the 1990s.[41] More recently in 2010, the Visualeyez performance art festival in Edmonton focused on food as the theme for its eleventh annual festival and featured many participatory and collaborative performances.[42] Montreal-based, Taiwanese artist Chih-Chien Wang's photography includes traces of food scraps and familiar objects to mark time.[43] Numerous other Asian Canadian artists also use food, in conversation with Asian American film makers and Asian Canadian scholars and writers. Together they are confronting the issues and political stakes surrounding race and ethnicity that are not always addressed in mainstream Canadian art, literature, and society. I will return to this question of situating food and art within Asian Canadian studies, and cultural production and politics.

An interest in the sensory experience of art led Canadian curator and scholar Jim Drobnick to focus his research and curating practice on the engagement of the senses in art. He has researched and written about contemporary edible art practices, and co-founded the curatorial collective Displaycult along with Jennifer Fisher. Together they have curated group exhibitions that explore the potential of non-visual senses. Each project and conference produced by Displaycult seeks to push the boundaries on how art and the world can be interpreted and experienced through those senses which are often overlooked, such as hearing and smell.[44] These artists and exhibitions demonstrate the ongoing complex and diverse significance that food continues to play in Canadian contemporary art.

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[41]"Test Kitchen," Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, accessed April 29 2011, http://www.belkin.ubc.ca/satellite/test-kitchen.
[42] For more information on the Visualeyez festival visit,http://www.visualeyez.org/.
[43] Alice Ming Wai Jim, "Domestic Trajectories," *Ciel Variable* 71 (March 2006): 8-15, accessed July 2 2011, http://www.chihchienwang.com/texts/2006_CielVariable_DomesticTrajectories.pdf.
[44] These include the power of scent in *reminiSCENT* at FADO in Toronto in 2003 and an emphasis on hearing and art in *Aural Cultures* at the Walter Phillips Gallery in Banff in 2005.

While Tam and Kasai's work should be considered within the context of this ongoing food-art dialogue, their use of food differs significantly from that of other food art movements because they purposefully omit actual edible food from their exhibitions. Instead the focus of these exhibitions is on the symbols, the accoutrements and the history of restaurants as culinary institutions, framed through each artist's personal adaptation of menus and decor and each artist's perspective on the recipes and representations of Asian culture that have become synonymous with Chinese or Japanese culinary experiences. Without the familiar tastes and smells of the very dishes that are central to restaurant spaces, their works become visual, corporeal, and experiential in different ways. The focus lies not in the visceral nature of food, the act of ingesting it, or the economic or environmental politics of food production, but rather the cultural significance of ethnic food and its political and social implications. As both artists explore restaurants (whether sushi or chop suey) and the tastes and assumptions of the consumer, they create a dialogue that invites audiences to engage with issues pertaining to Asian Canadian identity and food without eating it. Tam and Kasai prompt audiences to reflect on *how* and *why* these foods are eaten.

Despite not involving actual food in their works, Tam and Kasai are among a growing number of Canadian artists and exhibitions over the past fifteen years who have focused on food and its relation to identity, history and ethnicity. Emblematic of this was "Foodculture" was an exhibition in 1997 at ArtLab in London, Ontario that focused heavily on ethnicity and the cultural significance of food. The anthology that grew out of this exhibition bridged the gap in critical discussions of culture and consumption previously left unexplored. As exhibition curator Barbara Fisher writes, food serves as a

"conflictual terrain between eating and being, between consumption and cultural identity."[45] Food is recognized, therefore, as a critical site where important questions of race and culture in Canadian are played out, while restaurants become spaces or sites where culture is consumed and at the same time challenged.

Food and Asian Canadian Art

Within the larger context of Asian Canadian art, there is an ongoing discussion between artists and cultural producers who have turned to Asian restaurants in order to question constructions of Asian culture in Canada. Between 2004 and 2007, Montreal-based artist Shelly Low's *Self-Serve at La Pagode Royale,* a photographic series, incorporated Chinese eating utensils with self-portraiture. In her images, the artist subverted stereotypical racial signifiers such as slanted eyes or a round face. Holding angled porcelain Chinese soup spoons and Chinese plates up to her own eyes and face, she drew attention to the physical characteristics and objects that have become stereotypical Asian symbols in popular culture and in racist representations of Asian Canadians. Like Tam, Low also referenced her own family's history with their Chinese Polynesian restaurant, but Low did so through edible food stuffs. For example, she built a towering pagoda from rice crispy squares.[46] Millie Chen (based in both Ontario and Buffalo, New York) has also used Chinese eating utensils and the kitchen environment in her practice in the early 1990s in her installations *Eat* (1992) and *Cook* (1995). Vancouver-based Japanese Canadian artist Renay Egami alludes to food and its connection to memory, immigration, assimilation, and Japanese Canadian history. In her

[45] Barbara Fischer, ed, *Foodculture: Tasting Identities and Geographies in Art* (Toronto: YYZ Books ; London: ArtLab, University of Western Ontario, 1999), 25.
[46] Iris Yudai*, "*Self-Serve at *La Pagode Royale*: by Shelly Low October 13 – November 18 2006**,"** *Critical Distance* 12, no.1, http://www.aceart.org/shelly-low%E2%80%99s-meta-restaurant/#more-554.

installation *A Peaceful Penetration* (1998), gallery visitors open a home freezer to reveal sea animals, frozen food stuffs, and to hear the voice of the artist's late father singing traditional Japanese folk songs. Akin to both opening a chest of memories and to gathering food from her mother's freezer, Egami's work is a metaphor for the tension between preservation and assimilation; it attempts to preserve culture and memory, while acknowledging the slippages of cultural translation that occur with assimilation.[47] Based in London, Ontario, Jamelie Hassan created *The Hong-Kong, for Dave and Lucy* in 1984 to commemorate the Chinese restaurant of friends that had been destroyed by racially-motivated arson.[48] Vancouver artist Kira Wu's series *From the Gallery to my House: 12 Chinese Restaurants on East Hastings Street* (2007) documented the street fronts of restaurants as a means to explore the aesthetics of restaurant decor and shifting demographics in her neighbourhood, as well as to highlight the restaurant as an interracial meeting place.[49] Tam and Kasai are among this growing younger generation of artists and cultural producers who engage with food as a marker of identity, as food serves to reproduce and construct social, political, and cultural identities.[50]

Perspectives on the Restaurant

Across disciplines in the arts and in Asian Canadian scholarship, the restaurant has been an important setting for discussions about ethnicity and identity. Within the literary arts, the restaurant has long been a favoured setting where Asian-Canadian

[47] Renay Egami, email to the author, July 26, 2011.
[48] Jamelie Hassan, "The Hong-Kong, for Dave and Lucy,' in *Foodculture,* ed. Barbara Fischer, 120-121.
[49]Kira Wu, "Artist Statement" *Redress Express*. cur. Alice Ming Wai Jim, exhibition catalogue (Vancouver: Vancouver International Centre of Contemporary Asian Art, 2007), 18. Wu, Low, and Tam were included in the 2007 group exhibition *Redress Express*: *Chinese Restaurants and the Head Tax in Canada* at Centre A which this exhibition catalogue accompanied
[50] Tanaka, 18.

writers, including Sky Lee, Fred Wah and Paul Yee have chosen to explore relations between food, ethnicity and culture in a variety of ways.[51] In her analysis of Fred Wah's poetry for instance, literary scholar Lily Cho asserts that Wah uses the setting of the restaurant in *Diamond Grill* as a site to explore not only history but also transgenerational memory among Chinese Canadians.[52] The writings of both Fred Wah and Haruko Okano focus on the restaurant menu as a place where cultures intersect and hybridity is reflected.[53] According to literary scholar Enoch Padolsky, writers including Lee, Wah, and Yee view food as a way not only to explore who one is but also to situate oneself within cultural spaces with what he notes as "important and sometimes problematic cultural boundaries" where food becomes an important means of "engaging the complex issues of individual belonging, group relations, gender, class, race, ethnicity and the state of Canadian society and the world as a whole."[54] Padolsky suggests that food in literature "provides a terrain...for sorting out what is happening in the complex relationship between ethnicity and Canadian cross-cultural spaces," and I would argue that this is also true in contemporary art.[55]

In her own research on the history of Chinese Canadian restaurants and menus, Lily Cho argues that restaurants are in fact a place that in part produces, rather than reflects, the notion of Chineseness.[56] She argues that restaurants are places where Chineseness is created for Western customers, and that "this Chineseness comes to stand

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[51] Enoch Padolsky, "You Are Where You Eat: Ethnicity, Food and Cross-Cultural Spaces," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 37, no. 2 (2005): 26. For further reading on Asian Canadian writers, see Eleanor Ty, and Christl Verduyn, eds, *Canadian Writing Beyond Autoethnography* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press: 2008).
[52] Lily Cho, *On Eating Chinese,* (PhD Diss., University of Alberta, 2003), 25.
[53] Ibid., 249.
[54] Padolsky, 19.
[55] Ibid. 21.
[56] Lily Cho, *Eating Chinese: Culture on the Menu in Small Town Canada*, 13.

in for Chineseness in general in Canadian culture" and replaces the image of a timeless static Chinese identity that "settler colonial" Canadians have come to expect.[57] This is an issue similarly explored by Tam and Kasai through their interrogation of food, further demonstrating the significance of these issues to the larger Asian North American community.

Parallel interests in food are evident in Asian American film making. For example, Yau Ching raises questions about Asian American film makers who explore the effects of diaspora on one's experience of and desire for food, framing it within the context of globalization. She also questions how cooking and food culture fit into a Chinese identity, as a means of both perpetuating and resisting stereotypes. In relation to the gesture of preparing vegetables in Ang Lee's 1994 film *Eat Drink Man Woman*, Yau concludes that "food thus serves as an index of the imaginary heritage passed on, the racial symbolism, the alimentary sign of Chineseness."[58] The projects by Tam and Kasai are part of these ongoing discussions, as they too question and explore the meaning associated with Chinese and Japanese food and restaurants, as this thesis will demonstrate. Building on Yau's suggestion that meals can become "sites of intervention in images of Asian identity," I argue that Kasai's and Tam's projects demonstrate the politicized nature of restaurant spaces where stereotypes and notions of authenticity can be deconstructed.[59] More specifically, they use food and the restaurant space to question how Chinese and Japanese culture is both represented and imagined in Canadian society.

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[57] Ibid.,35.
[58] Ching Yau,"Can I have MSG, an Egg roll to Suck on and Asian American Media on the Side?" in Fischer, *Foodculture: Tasting Identities and Geographies in Art*, 155. Note: Yau Ching is read in Chinese with last name first. This order is retained in the body text of this thesis.
[59]Barbara Fischer, introduction, in *Foodculture,* ed. Barbara Fischer, 25.

In doing so, these artists and their works make noteworthy contributions to discussions taking places within Asian Canadian Studies.

Asian Canadian Studies and Forgotten Histories

Asian Canadian Studies as a cultural movement and interdisciplinary field of study has grown since the 1970s and continues to expand. As the editor of the first Asian Canadian Studies anthology, Guy Beauregard explains, "Contemporary Asian Canadian projects have not sprung fully formed in our midst. They do not speak to a self-evident collective identity. They have not been produced in already-formed and securely institutionalized Asian Canadian Studies programs."[60] Given this situation, he suggests that "Asian Canadian studies projects may matter now precisely because they have been developed and continue to operate in such unsettled terrain."[61] Alice Ming Wai Jim's recent article "Asian Canadian Art Matters*"* focuses on the role of art in the "political project" that is Asian Canadian studies. Following this, she designates Asian Canadian art as part of this political project, defining Asian Canadian Art as:

> critical work that deals with aspects of Asian Canadian history or socio-cultural formation with an awareness of the social movements, cultural activism and intellectual histories since the early 1970s which have enabled the category as a site of knowledge production.[62]

In her argument for the importance and ongoing relevance of Asian Canadian art today, she highlights key exhibitions, conferences, and debates regarding race and Asian

[60] Guy Beauregard, "Asian Canadian Studies Unfinished Projects," *Canadian Literature* 199 (Winter 2008): 12.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Alice Ming Wai Jim, "Asian Canadian Art Matters, " Asia Art Archive website, accessed March 15, 2011.http://www.aaa.org.hk/newsletter_detail.aspx?newsletter_id=863.

Canadian identity over the past decade.[63] These scholars and artists, including Tam and Kasai, thus are all part of the larger political project of Asian Canadian studies and cultural production.

Scholars in Asian Canadian Studies from across disciplines have placed a strong emphasis on history and the historical racialization of Asian Canadians as an important foundation to the discussion of Asian Canadian artistic and literary production.[64] As Chinese Canadian historian Peter Li has argued, "aside from the indigenous peoples, no racial or ethnic group in Canada has experienced such harsh treatment as the Chinese."[65] Throughout much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Chinese and Japanese people in Canada were faced with institutional racism and oppressed as second class citizens. Denied immigration and civil rights, the Chinese were faced with legalized head taxes; the Japanese were interned during the Second World War, and all of their property, possessions, and businesses seized by the government.[66] Li argues that despite a long history in Canada, Chinese Canadians are still seen as foreigners in Canada and, as many scholars have duly noted, so too are Japanese Canadians and other visible minorities and ethnic cultural groups.[67]

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[63] Ibid. Some of the key events, exhibitions and publications she cites include: the conferences *In Visible Colours* (1989), *It's a Cultural Thing/Minquon Panchayat (1993)* and *Writing Thru Race* (1994), and the exhibitions and catalogues *Yellow Peril: Reconsidered* (1990) organized by Paul Wong, *Racy, Sexy: Race, Culture, Sexuality* (1993) co-organized by Henry Tsang and others, Monika Kin Gagnon's book *Other Conundrums: Race, Culture, and Canadian Art* (Vancouver: Arsenal Press, 2000) and Xiaoping Li's edited anthology*, Voices Rising: Asian Canadian Cultural Activism* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007).

[64] See, for example the 2007 special edition of *Amerasia* journal "Pacific Canada: Beyond the 49th Parallel" (33, no. 2) which focused on the very history Asian American and Asian Canadian Studies themselves.

[65] Peter Li, *The Chinese in Canada*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Oxford University Press Canada, 1998), 5.

[66] For further details on the Japanese Internment and oppression during the Second World War, see Roy Miki, *Justice in Our Time: The Japanese Canadian Redress Settlement* (Vancouver: Talon Books and the National Assembly of Japanese Canadians, 1991).

[67] Li, 4.

According to Li, a critical look to the past is essential for understanding how race has developed in Canadian society and how history continues to impact Chinese Canadians. He argues that Chinese Canadians have not yet been fully accepted and embraced as Canadians. They continue to be viewed as 'Chinese', as belonging to a foreign race that is different than European-Canadian. Furthermore, multicultural policies have done little to shake these biases and distortions that remain "ingrained in the cultural fabric of Canada."[68] For Li, it is imperative to look to societal structures throughout Canada's history of racialized oppression and institutional racism towards the Chinese community in order to understand the roots of these ongoing stereotypes. He underscores that there is a need to "study racial minorities as products of social relations in a societal context, and not as primordial cultural transplants".[69] Constructions of race do not form in isolation, and therefore historical context is a key element to discussions of the present social realities.

Sociologist Xiaoping Li supports this emphasis on the importance of historical inquiry, arguing that historical material has continued to provide creative material for writers, artists, playwrights, performance artists, song writers, and poets. Cultural activists view this collective history as "a site of resistance and communal rejuvenation" to counter invisibility and to challenge distorted representations in history and in the public eye.[70] The telling of history was one strategy among many used during the Japanese Redress movement in order to raise awareness of the injustices towards Japanese Canadians during the Second World War: telling one's own story served to

[68] Xiaoping Li, *Voices Rising: Asian Canadian Cultural Activism* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), xiii.
[69] Ibid., xii.
[70] Ibid., 36.

"challenge the view of history as the property of privileged groups."[71] The omission of Asian Canadian history from the canonized Canadian historic narrative is further evidence of the relevance of Tam and Kasai's projects. This history has shaped how Asian Canadian people have come to be perceived as exotic or Other. The history of the racialization of Chinese and Japanese communities in Canada is an important aspect of these artworks about food and food spaces, adding an important layer to this discussion.

As case studies, the exhibitions by Tam and Kasai refer to some of those local and larger stories that contribute to the narrative of Asian Canadian history and how images of these communities are constructed. Both exhibitions closely reference Canadian history, bringing a distinctive site specificity to their work by focusing on Asian food and culture within a Montreal context. Asian Canadians were more historically based on the West Coast of North America due to labour shortages and the construction of the railroad in the mid nineteenth century. The Asian Canadian demographic remains high in that region today, and many researchers and cultural producers have focused on Asian Canadian histories and perspectives. However, in Montreal the histories of Chinese and Japanese Canadians remain obscure, and have had to be learned. Tam's family moved to Canada in the early 1900s and her great-grandfather was required to pay the head tax. Through her family and her studies she learned about the history of Chinese Canadians; Kasai immigrated to Canada in 1998, and has no family history in Western Canada.[72] The artists' experiences and personal histories with immigration are thus very different from one another but are not uncommon for many Canadians. There is no guarantee that

[71] Ibid., 41.
[72] John Jung, *Sweet and Sour: Life in Chinese Family Restaurants* (Cypress: Yin and Yang Press, 2010), 218.

gallery visitors already possess a knowledge of Chinese and Japanese history in Canada or have personal connections to these racialized histories. Nevertheless, these histories have shaped racial relations and identities in Canada and, whether overtly or not, these histories overlay the consumption and exchange that takes place within Chinese and Japanese restaurants. To not discuss and engage with the racialized history of Canada is to risk perpetuating stereotypes, prejudices, and ignorance of the oppression of communities who have been a part of Canada since before Confederation. Thus, the works of Tam and Kasai are important not only because they critically discuss the constructs of Asian Canadian identities, but also because they invite the viewer to critically consider their own assumptions or ignorance of racialized histories in Canada.

Part II: A Detailed Look at *Survival Japanese Cooking*

This detailed analysis of Shié Kasai's multimedia installation focuses on her work and situates it within the racial and cultural politics of Montreal. With the 2008 exhibition at the MAI, Kasai's critical exploration is site specific in its focus on the Montreal neighbourhood she settled in, the Plateau Mont-Royal, and her observations of popular sushi restaurants in this area. While the ubiquitous "sushi to go" shops, restaurants and chains including the Sushi Shop appear to offer Montreal a variety of Japanese food options, Kasai sees it as a thoroughly Canadian idea of Japanese cuisine.[73] Subsequently the artist set herself on a mission to try to understand what constitutes Québecois and Canadian food and to investigate how so-called ethnic foods have impacted the culinary and cultural tastes of Canadians.

[73] Shié Kasai, email interview, April 5 2011. By 2008 Shié Kasai's exhibition was one installation of her larger project, *Survival Japanese Cooking,* and had grown in size and scope from its first incantation in Holland in 2006.

Kasai immigrated as an adult to Canada from Japan in 1998. She began this project as means of exploring cultural crossover, and to find comfort and familiarity in a foreign country.[74] As food is so closely tied to culture and feelings of home, and is difficult to recreate in a new place, she sought to create familiar Japanese dishes using only locally accessible ingredients. Substituting and combining new ingredients and flavours, she attempted to create foods that were still familiar and comforting, even in a new environment. These attempts at creating 'survival' foods in a new environment and mimicking familiar dishes with new ingredients ultimately lead to slippages in the translation of food and culture, and through humour, Kasai's works challenge the ideals of authenticity accompanying Japanese food served in Canada.

Kasai's exhibition featured many components including video, photography, displays and interactive activities**.** A playful and domestic ambiance was then created with graphic prints of food staples including slices of toast, jam, and condiment jars, and a kitchen table installation that featured an interactive paper template activity for visitors. However, the two primary components of *Survival Japanese Cooking* were photographs of sushi sculpture in which the artist presents her versions of uniquely Canadian sushi, and surveys constituting field research she conducted with local residents on their food preferences which significantly shaped her ideas for the subsequent exhibition. Sushi was a historical method of preserving raw fish in Japan, but sushi today is recognized as an aesthetic assembly of vinegar rice, fish or vegetable wrapped in seaweed, and in Montreal

[74] *Survival Japanese Cooking* is an ongoing project that first began during "This Neck of the Woods", a week-long artist residency in Rotterdam Holland in 2006 at a Canadian themed camping site. She also created a small cookbook from this experience Shié Kasai, *Survival Japanese Cookbook.* (Montreal: Montreal Arts Interculturel, 2008), 1.

has become especially trendy since the 1980s as it did across North America.[75] For her creations, Kasai approached her research-creation with a pseudo-scientific methodology, using the favourite foods mentioned in the survey results as the inspiration and foundational research for each Canadian sushi work she created. Her Canadian sushi were fusions of rice with including maple syrup, hot dogs, samosas and donuts, exaggerating and highlighting the culinary stereotypes and hybrid nature of Canadian Japanese food. In doing so, Kasai's work speaks to the construct of culture within sushi restaurants.

Both Tam and Kasai challenge Asian food in similar ways, questioning how these dishes have become Westernized commodities devoid of historical contexts. Many diners are not versed in Asian culinary traditions and do not know the Japanese, Canadian, or hybrid Asian/Canadian origins of many of their favourite dishes on the menu, nor are they necessarily fully aware of the oppression and institutional racism imposed upon these communities for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These ethnicized foods are produced and consumed without an accompanying knowledge of social or political contexts and histories as part of the intercultural game of exchange between the profit-seeking restaurant owners and their customers.

Discovering a wide variety of perspectives on what food in Canada means to those she surveyed, Kasai further drew attention to how Montrealers in the Plateau Mont-Royal neighbourhood (or "Plateau"), view their own regional and Canadian cuisine in relation to the abundance of ethnic options available in cosmopolitan cities today. The Plateau, a residential neighbourhood with commercial arteries, is an area spread across a

[75] Tanaka, 22; Lesley Chesterman. "One Way to Describe Montreal Sushi? Confused," *The Montreal Gazette*, November 27, 2010, http://www.montrealgazette.com/business/describe+Montreal+sushi+Confused/3890752/story.html

ridge on the east side of Mont Royal, famous in Montreal as a trendy, hip, eclectic, and culturally-diverse part of the city.[76] Its streets are lined with the iconic spiral iron staircases and balconies, leading up to Victorian stone facades with colourful roofs. In this neighbourhood, students and families can take in Montreal smoked meat and Portuguese chicken rotisseries, share the streets with Hungarian butchers and all night greasy diners. Boulevard Saint Laurent is one of the main streets that runs through the area and is the longest street in Montreal. Linking the south and north shores of the island, it is renowned for its history as a 'cultural corridor' for immigrant communities, and was the historical dividing line between Montreal's French and English neighbourhoods. Parks Canada recognizes the street as a heritage site, citing as one of its many important characteristics its ethnic diversity: "In the collective psyche of Montréal, Boulevard Saint-Laurent is the immigrant corridor, the Jewish and Italian tailors, Chinese and Greek restaurants and a multitude of exotic small retail businesses."[77] By labelling the area as 'exotic', this description further demonstrates how culture and ethnicity are valued as commodities in this neighbourhood. In addition to serving the members of many given cultural communities, the area is a tourist attraction in itself.

Kasai tailored her exhibition according to her survey results, questioning how people in this area define Canadian and Québecois food, and how they relate various "ethnic" foods. The result of Kasai's pseudo-ethnographic study is a series of endearing advertisement-like photographs. Part of the power of these visual works is that the senses join in – scent and taste are imagined as part of the viewing experience of each image. As

[76] "Plateau Mont Royal," Tourism Montreal, accessed Mach 21 2011. http://www.tourisme-montreal.org/Discover-montreal/Neighbourhoods/Plateau-Mont-Royal
[77] Parks Canada "Boulevard St Laurent- the Main of Montreal," Government of Canada, modified June 10, 2009, http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/culture/proj/main/intro.aspx.

part of her study of the Plateau, Kasai exhibited photo documentation of the myriad of local sushi restaurants and an accompanying binder displaying each take-away menu. Survey questions and statistics were printed in a booklet with pie charts of resident demographics and trends in food preferences. The main photography series was the centrepiece of the exhibition, featuring her own adaptations of Canadian and Japanese ingredients, creating a new fusion of humourous 'Canadian' sushi. For example, *Everybody's favourite restaurant is Indian and then Japanese or Thai* (fig. 1) – reflects the survey results that Kasai gathered and incorporated on the walls of the gallery. For this photograph, she created a cucumber sushi inside a samosa, with a Thai wrap on the side situating it locally with a post card of Montreal's Olympic stadium in the background. Together, the seven photographs offered a glimpse into the public popularity of sushi and ethnic foods in Montreal, representing visually and humorously the preferences of those neighbourhood residents surveyed by Kasai for the project.

Several of her works address the Montreal and Quebec context more directly. *QC vs. Canada* playfully hints at a rather serious longstanding political division within Canadian society (fig. 2). *Lafleur Hot-dog* references Lafleur, a Quebec-owned fast food chain founded in 1961, famous for its hot dogs and poutine (fig. 3). [78] Kasai chose to create sushi using the iconic La Fleur hot dog, making reference to the popularity of 'steamé' or steamed hot dogs in Montreal.[79] Inspired by the regional tradition and industry of sugaring off in Quebec, Kasai created Sugar Shack sushi in *Cabane à Sucre* (fig. 4). Sugar shacks or 'cabane à sucre' are popular attractions during maple sap season in early spring in Quebec when maple syrup producers invite visitors to their farms to

[78] "News," LaFleur restaurant website, access 20 July 2011. http://www.restaurantlafleur.com/News-en-5.php.
[79] Kasai, email interview.

enjoy hearty meals flavoured with fresh maple. In Kasai's surveys, maple syrup came in third place when respondents were asked what food they felt was authentically Canadian.[80] However, Sugar Maple trees in fact only grow naturally in eastern North America, with Quebec, Ontario, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick providing 80% of the world's supply. Of that, Quebec produces 90%.[81] As such, maple has become entrenched in traditional Quebecois activities and dishes. Respondents to Kasai's survey also noted that they enjoy maple with breakfast foods such as eggs and bacon and other cabane à sucre favourites, and therefore Kasai sought to reflect these preferences in this image.[82]

Other photographs address Canadian stereotypes or traditions, through the depiction of objects made with sushi rice in a broader sense. Making reference to the popularity of Christmas celebrations in Canada, Kasai took the Yule or Christmas Log cake, an old French Christmas tradition that is still very popular in Quebec and gave it a twist in *Bûche de Noël* (fig. 5). Choosing a symbol of Christmas food after observing how popular Christmas celebrations are in Canadian society, she created a roll of sushi rice, meant to mimic a tree log, accented with mushrooms and tree boughs as one might see in a cookbook or holiday food advertisement.[83] *Tim's* acknowledges the popular 'Canadian' coffee and donut giant and home grown fast food chain named after the Tim Horton , a popular Canadian NHL hockey player who began his twenty hockey career in the 1950s (fig. 6). Kasai was inspired by "Mister Donut," the most popular donut chain in Japan where dim sum is also served. Considering the ever-increasing popularity of sushi

[80] According to Kasai's survey results, 37% suggested "Poutine",18% stated "hybrid, 13% wrote maple syrup, 11% were 'not sure' and the remaining 40% of respondents suggested 'Other,' including a long list of foods such as hamburgers, bacon, eggs, tourtière, meat, potato, tarte au sucre, moose, smoked meat, bison, cheese curd and more.
[81] "The Maple Syrup Industry in Ontario." Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs, accessed June 29 2011, http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/facts/maple.htm.
[82] Kasai, email interview.
[83] Ibid.

in Montreal and across Canada, Kasai plays with the idea that perhaps one day Tim Horton's will also begin to sell sushi.[84] Within the iconic box of Tim Horton's donuts, Kasai inserted her own white donut ring sculpted out of sushi rice. *Horn of Plenty* illustrates the North American iconic image of a harvest cornucopia of plenty (fig. 7). Finally, Kasai also reproduced these images on clothing items, coffee mugs, and hats, and arranged them as a store display, effectively exaggerating the commodified nature of Japanese food in the West and stressing the paradox of a food that is both widely available yet still valued as something exotic in Canada.[85]

Each of these images plays with ideas of dominant Canadian and Quebecois culture and culinary preferences, juxtaposing and fusing them with Japanese cuisine. Making reference to the trend in fusion cooking from the 1990s, Kasai combines unlikely ingredients and symbols to create humourous and playfully exaggerated sushi creations.[86] The resulting multi-media exhibition stages an environment of play and whimsy in order to interrogate assumptions about Japanese food in Canada and stimulate further cultural reflection. Her works raise questions about the possibility or impossibility of distinct societies within Canada and Quebec, about the role of hybridity in Asian cuisine in Canada, and probes into ideals of the intercultural "mix" of Quebec, as the province strives to distinguish its approach to diversity from that of Canadian federal multiculturalism.[87]

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[84] Ibid.
[85] Chesterman, " One Way to Describe Montreal Sushi? Confused."
[86] Lesley Chesterman. "Fusion Power; If Other Chefs from Hogtown Have Even an Ounce of the Talent and Charisma of Festival Star Susur Lee, Local Food Lovers are in for Some Great Dining," *The Montreal Gazette,* February 20, 2008.
[87] Alice Ming Wai Jim, "Global Art Histories in Canada: A Preliminary Report," *Negotiations in a Vacant Lot: Studying the Visual in Canada*, ed. Lynda Jessup, Keri Cronin, and Kirsty Robertson (Montreal; Kingston, ON: McGill-Queen's University Press, forthcoming 2011).

Although the exhibition is a palatable and delight-filled exploration of fusion culture, according to Jim, the political climate in Quebec during the time when these works were created and exhibited cast a darker layer of meaning over the work, suggesting an ironic twist to the playful intercultural picture Kasai presents.[88] During this period, the media was saturated with stories about 'reasonable accommodation' debates taking place in Quebec in 2006 and 2007. The town of Herouxville pasted a contentious code of dress and behaviour for immigrants, while questions were being asked about accommodating the religious and cultural interests of minority communities including Muslim and Jewish communities in Montreal. In response, Premier Jean Charet launched the *Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences* led by separatist historian Gérard Bouchard and federalist philosopher Charles Taylor. The commission traveled across the province to assess the situation that had become increasingly controversial in the media and to discuss how minority communities in Quebec should be treated.[89] In 2008 the Bouchard -Taylor report was released and it found that the media was at fault for fuelling fear and xenophobic attitudes surrounding reasonable accommodations and the report stated that "no information allows us to confirm that discrimination is more prevalent in Québec than elsewhere."[90] However, the scholar of Sociology and Equity Gada Mahrouse has argued that in many ways the commission, and the public debates and hearings that were part of the process, served to fuel public perceptions of a threatening multicultural crisis in Quebec society, in much

[88] Ibid.
[89] "Montrealers Attend Forum on Reasonable Accommodation," CBC News website, February 16, 2007 http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/story/2007/02/16/reasonable-accommodation.html
[90] J. Heinrich,"The Bottom Line: Use Common Sense," *The Montreal Gazette*, May 23, 2008, accessed July 19 , 2011, http://www.canada.com/montrealgazette/news/story.html?id=be48dc50-dce4-4a8b-9f69-e7dcb850e2ee.

the same way that the media was accused of inflaming public perception.[91] Montreal-based and Quebecois visitors to the gallery for Kasai's exhibition would have been aware of these debates, as is evident in one art critic wrote in his review of Kasai's exhibition: "No, it's not another episode of 'Take that Herouxville' and no, it's not Trudeau's idea of multiculturalism. If it's accommodement raisonnable, then we're in trouble."[92] These political discussions are therefore part of the social context in which these works were read and received during this period in Montreal.

Although Kasai's images do hint at the distinctly Montreal and Quebecois context in which she lives and creates her work, she does not overtly respond to the racism and xenophobia that was part of much of the francophone media coverage of these cultural debates during this period in Montreal. That important critique is left unspoken and unaddressed, and the viewer is therefore left to grapple with that public discussion without guidance or response from the artist or her works. I would argue that this controversial political and racialized context is a key aspect to reading the significance of Kasai's exhibition. The central argument of this thesis is that the exhibitions by Tam and Kasai encouraged consumers to critically question and engage with the politics of the ethnic foods they eat, and I would argue that these political issues and connections came forward as separate from curatorial or artistic intentions. Despite the fact that Kasai did not intentionally delve deeper into the politics of interculturalism, multiculturalism, and racial tensions in Quebec, it could have been an interesting opportunity for curators and programmers at the MAI to ground her exhibition as a timely and relevant response to the

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[91] Gada Mahrouse, "'Reasonable accommodation' in Québec: the limits of participation and dialogue," *Race & Class* 52: 85 (2010): 94.
[92] Michael Connors, "Sushi Heart Attack," *The Concordian,* December 2, 2008, http://theconcordian.com/2008/12/sushi-heart-attack/, accessed March 7, 2011, cited in Jim.

darker racial debates occurring in Quebec during this period. In doing so, her exhibition could have been framed as a useful means of unravelling these issues and, in turn, such a reference to current events could have offered a rich and complicated subtext to her pseudo-ethnographic study of ethnicity and food culture in Quebec and Canada.

Part III: Karen Tam's *Gold Mountain Restaurant Montagne D'Or*

This section presents a detailed discussion of Karen Tam's installation, highlighting the family unit and those Chinese Canadian historical narratives that are central to her work. In contrast to Kasai's exhibition, Tam's installation at the MAI took the idea of the Asian restaurant even further by completely transforming the gallery into a chop suey restaurant (fig. 8).[93] While both Tam and Kasai's works address the restaurant space, Kasai only hints at the restaurant while Tam physically constructed a restaurant within the gallery, similar in appearance to a movie set where the gallery visitor is invited to play, role play, and reflect on their status as consumer. Karen Tam's family history is tied to the Chinese restaurant industry dating back to 1908 when her paternal great-grandfather came to Canada and eventually opened his own Chinese food restaurant.[94] Her restaurant series began as part of her MFA thesis project in 2002. With her parents' decision to sell their restaurant, Tam sought to document the business where she had spent much of her childhood.[95] This endeavour would be foundational to a series of larger restaurant installations that toured Canada, including the *Golden Mountain Restaurant*

[93] In our interview on March 6, 2010, Tam explained Chop Suey restaurants as a genre of restaurants were the only kind of Chinese restaurant available across most of Canada until the 1960s. Since then, other styles including Szechuan, Polynesian, and buffet styles have become trendy and popular.
[94] John Jung, *Sweet and Sour: Life in Chinese Family Restaurants* (Cypress: Yin and Yang Press, 2010), 218.
[95] Day's Lee, "Memories of a Chinese-Canadian Restaurant," *Gold Mountain Restaurant Montagne d'Or* (Montreal: Montreal Arts Interculturel, 2004), 39.

Montagne d'Or at the Montreal Arts Interculturel in 2004. The title is after the Chinese name given to Canada by the Chinese labourers who, by law, were only allowed to work in industries such as the railroad, mining, and the service industry, including food and laundry services. The term Gold Mountain (or *Gumsan*) came to represent the hope and the dreams of generations of Chinese about their lives in Canada.[96]

Tam's exhibition space was filled with such iconic details of stereotypical "Chineseness" as Chinese dragons, shelves of tea pots and red lanterns, and even the clichés of lucky waving cats. Visitors were even free to walk through the kitchen, an area of the restaurant that customers seldom see, to gain a peak 'behind the scenes' into the private spaces of the restaurant and where the restaurant staff engages with the production of 'Chinese food' and by extension Chineseness for the customer (fig. 9).

Throughout the installation, Tam critiques the constructed space and the fictionalized imaginary of the Chinese restaurant by incorporating subtle textual elements as a strategy, thus bringing up the issues of racism, cultural translation and slippages relating to the impossibility of translation, especially within a space that markets commodified representations of ethnicity.[97] A jar of fortune cookie paper fortunes on the counter made reference to the popular cookie typically served as desert in Chinese restaurants. Instead of words of wisdom each paper, Tam used these fortunes to draw attention to histories that are not discussed or acknowledged in the restaurant space. They were fortunes written by Tam that address the unspoken and unsettling histories of the exploitation of Asian Canadians. These included historical facts about the oppression of

[96] Jung, 217.
[97] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Translation as Culture," *Parallax* 6, no.1 (January 2000): 13. Cultural translation is an important concept in postcolonial studies on which Gayatri Spivak has theorized extensively.

and racism towards the Chinese community since their arrival in Canada as railroad labourers in the mid 1800s. Sobering facts such as 'One Chinaman died for every mile of track laid' highlighted the difficult histories that are rendered invisible in the exotic interior of the restaurant.

Her re-creation of seemingly typical restaurant menus was Tam's most acute critique of the racism and stereotypes that are part of the history of Chinese restaurants and foods in Canada. Within the table menus, she presented the histories of the most popular Chinese entrees interspersed with definitions of numerous racial slurs that have been used against Chinese Canadians. Tam created the menus to reveal the hybrid nature of the origins of many dishes, bringing the history of these dishes to the forefront. By emphasizing these often overlooked histories of popular Chinese dishes, she presented the constructed nature of those restaurant spaces that combine, adapt and recreate traditional elements in a North American context (fig. 10).

The study of the Chinese restaurant menu has also been explored in other disciplinary contexts by Asian Canadian scholars. Lily Cho's research into the history of the menu in small-town prairie Chinese restaurants is one such example. Cho stresses that menus "present a comforting, palatable Chineseness which can be reproduced and disseminated through the institution of the restaurant."[98] She suggests that menus reveal more about whiteness than they do about Chineseness, that they reflect white expectations of Chinese while also presenting "Canadian" menu options that include hamburgers and fries. Cho argues that menus in "their scripting of 'Canadian' for Canadians" have the potential to challenge ideas or expectations of authenticity and

[98] Cho, *On Eating Chinese*, 127.

Chineseness.[99] For instance, 'Western' or 'Canadian' dishes appear in Chinese restaurant menus dating back to the mid twentieth century, even in small town restaurant menus, and also in Tam's menus. Cho proposes that this definition of 'Canadian' food by Chinese restauranteurs is an example of restauranteurs situating their food and business within a white context, reflecting back the presumed logic of customers and thus highlighting the Eurocentricity of Canadian society that conflicts with its image as a welcoming multicultural society.[100] Menus attest to a self-consciously false image of Chinese culture that Chinese diasporic subjects negotiate in order for their business to survive. Through the menu they determine how Chinese culture is reproduced, constructed, and served back to the white customer. Significantly for Cho, this production of an inauthentic Chinese culture may be read as a strategy of resistance.[101] She argues that restaurant owners use the menu in such a way that it creates a version of culture that is "palatable and frustrates the [consumer's] desire for an authentic Chinese", in other words the menu intentionally mediates the cultural experience while mocking the idea of authenticity.[102]

Cultural theorist Rey Chow elaborates on this idea of intentionally presenting a constructed version of Chineseness to the consumer, likening it to Orientalist narratives intended to satisfy Western tastes and desires.[103] While postcolonial theorist Edward Said spoke of a romantic representation imposed upon the East by the West, this form of Orientalism appears at first glance to be self imposed. Effectively supporting Cho's argument, Chow suggests that this manufacturing or self-Orientalizing can be read as a

[99] Ibid.,146.
[100] Cho, *Eating Chinese: Culture on the Menu in Small Town Canada,* 55.
[101] Ibid., 71.
[102] Ibid., 70.
[103] Rey Chow, "Have you Eaten? Inspired by an Exhibit," *Amerasia* 31, no.1 (2005): 20.

necessary part of the production/consumption relationship of a restaurant business, and "the desire to be desired."[104] She explains that within these spaces Orientalism can be vital to the livelihoods of those who work in the restaurant industry and at the same time be a novelty for those who come to consume these manufactured versions of Chinese culture.[105]

In the menus and throughout her restaurant, Tam's aim was to "deconstruct and reconstruct a fictive, imagined space of Chinese culture in Canada: a 'translation of a translation."[106] Tam used the menu as a text to resist racial stereotypes by subverting and playing with them, and by deconstructing the histories of common 'Chinese' dishes. Her intentional exaggeration of the hybrid nature of these restaurants emphasized the blend of tradition, Western stereotypes and assumptions about the East that make up the imagined Chinese space. She combined low-end decor items like a Molson light-up clock with high-end bonsai trees, intricate lanterns and formal high-class white table settings. The bar itself is generally not found within a restaurant setting in China, but has been adopted as a Western restaurant convention within Chinese restaurants to appeal to the North American customer (fig. 11).[107] Her menus also highlighted the influence of Western tastes in the creation of many typical dishes found on restaurant menus today. In doing so, Tam's installation succeeded in confronting the viewer with the constructed nature of the restaurant space, making visible the roots of the fictive, packaged definitions of culture that restaurant employees and customers seek to produce and consume within the Chinese restaurant.

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[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid., 21.
[106] Karen Tam, Interview, March 6, 2010.
[107] Françoise Belu, "The Empire and the Middle Kingdom, or the Dream Exchange," in *Gold Mountain Restaurant Montagne d'Or,* (Montreal: Montreal Arts Interculturel, 2004), 15.

Part IV: Key Strategies: "Space" for Consumption, Participation and Laughter

This section discusses both exhibitions together, evaluating how the racialized nature of food and restaurant culture functions when displayed in installation works. I also consider how public participation was key to both exhibitions and discuss the power of ethnic humour in both works. As artists who interrogate ideas of ethnicity and culture in their installation works, Tam and Kasai may be linked with a larger group of artists across North America who also use installation and display in order to critically discuss culture and race.[108] Both artists emphasize the racialization of the objects they display within their installations, and the cultural assumptions that are associated with Asian food. In many ways, food and other cultural symbols may be read as substitutes for the racialized body within both exhibitions and in academic discourse.

Displaying and Consuming the Other

The politics surrounding the display of racialized objects has been significant to the history of museum collections and displays, and continues to be relevant for the study of commodities and material culture. Art historian Jennifer Gonzalez argues that within the visual discourse of race, material culture, artefacts and commodity consumption all participate in the construction of race.[109] She suggests such objects come to stand in for racialized bodies.[110] In these circumstances, objects can become *epidermalized* or transformed. Gonzalez argues that

> just as living humans can be conflated with material culture, so material culture can acquire the racial status of humans. Objects, in other words, can become

[108] Jennifer Gonzalez, *Subject to Display: Reframing Race in Contemporary Installation Art* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008), 8.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Ibid., 5.

> *epidermalized*. The process of epidermalization is one in which the object is positioned in history, in a collection, in the marketplace, or in a museum display as racially defined. [111]

The epidermalized object has consequently become equated with a racial group, racialized as though the object itself had adopted a racial skin. Gonzalez also emphasizes that such racially-charged objects draw attention to the importance that the collection and display of images and artefacts have played in national stories and histories, and thus remain a primary means by which a nation defines and categorizes the cultures of its citizens.[112] She goes on to argue that "objects come to stand in for subjects not merely in the form of the commodity fetish, but as part of a larger system of material and image culture that circulates as a prosthesis of race discourse through practices of collection, exchange and exhibition."[113] While her discussion focuses on the politics of display of racialized objects and artefacts within museum settings, I would argue that a similar epidermalization occurs outside the gallery and that many objects and forms of material culture within everyday life have become synonymous with racialized others, therefore complicating the politics of engaging and consuming such objects, including ethnic foods and restaurants.

Gonzalez's discussion of the nature of epidermalized or racialized objects and the politics of their display offers a framework to understand the objects within Tam and Kasai's installations. Sushi, egg rolls, sushi shops and Chop Suey restaurants are ethnicized foods and spaces that have retained cultural and racial associations in Canada as 'other', as foreign objects from China and Japan. Both artists engage with these foods as examples of popular racialized markers: they ask the viewer to think critically about

[111] Ibid.
[112] Ibid., 2.
[113] Ibid., 5.

the problematics surrounding these objects and spaces and challenge them to question the meaning behind their consumption. Kasai even prompts viewers to rethink how they view tropes of 'Canadian' and 'Quebecois' foods, re-envisioning these as ethnic cuisines alongside those from other regions and forcing members of these dominant groups to reflect on their own background as similarly ethnicized rather than normative and therefore separate from Canadian discussions of ethnicity.[114] By bringing in Canadians and Quebecois as ethnic groups, Kasai effectively inserts her project into the confusing and complicated conversations about the politics of consuming ethnic identities in Canada.

Both artists call attention to how restaurants function as spaces for cultural consumption, challenging complacent understandings of Chinese and Japanese cuisine in similar ways, as these foods have become Westernized commodities devoid of their historical contexts. Through food, one can taste 'the Other' and sample the flavours of another culture. Within a restaurant space foreign dishes may be experienced and an illusion of exotic culture is constructed. Some scholars argue that these sites showcase the colonialist tendencies of customers to consume that which seems exotic and foreign. In their research on ethnic restaurants in Quebec City for instance, Turgeon Pastinelli

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[114]Canada. Statistics Canada. "Ethnic Origin." *2006 Census Dictionary.* Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 92-566-XWE. Ottawa. February 14, 2007 http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2006/ref/dict/pop030-eng.cfm (accessed March 15, 2011). "Ethnic origin", as defined by Statisticss Canada, refers to "the ethnic or cultural origins of the respondent's ancestors" emphasizing immigration and ancestry and invites Canadians to choose how they wish to self identify. Ongoing scholarly debate looks at how Canadian and Quebecois have been included in recent years as ethnic choices on the census, and the controversy and impact that this has had in how Canadians self identify. The Association of Canadian Studies has published numerous issues critically questioning ethnicity and diversity in Canada, and also the complexity of ethnicity in Quebec society. For further reading, see ""Canadian" as an Ethnic Category: Implications for Multiculturalism and National Unity" by Sociologist and Human Rights scholar Rhoda E Howard-Hassman in Identity and Belonging: Rethinking Race and Ethnicity in Canadian Society ,edited by Sean P. Hier and B. Singh Bolaria.(Toronto: Canadian Scholar's Press, 2006.), as she argues for Canadian as ethnicity, emphasizing ethnicity as socially constructed and adopted by those who live here, rather than defining ethnicity by where one comes from abroad.

argued that the variety of ethnic restaurants in this city acted as "microspaces of intercultural encounter and exchange" where the exotic was made familiar, and one could essentially consume the world."[115] They likened customers to colonialist tourists, 'travelling' through cultural encounters and consumption.[116]

In her book *Culinary Tourism,* folklorist Lucy M. Long takes this concept of travel a step further in relation to the role food plays in cultural tourism. She explains that culinary tourism is a form of cultural tourism, whereby food is the "subject and medium, destination and vehicle, for tourism."[117] Food offers alternatives for those who have neither the time nor the finances required to travel but seek an exotic experience close to home. Without physically travelling, individuals frequently use food to explore new cultures and satisfy their curiosity about others, and in turn ethnic groups can use food to package and 'sell' attractive constructs of their histories.[118] Restaurants, festivals, grocers, cookbooks, and cooking shows on television are all examples where culinary tourism can be observed, and Long argues that these sites

> serve as interfaces between individuals and cultures, highlighting the self-reflexive potential of such sites and the possibility for dynamic, negotiated interactions within them. Often, these exchanges reveal more about the consumer than about the 'other'.[119]

These exchanges are evident within Tam and Kasai's installations and offer important opportunities for gallery visitors to reflect upon the stakes of cultural exchange and consumption that take place every day in ethnic food spaces.

Tanaka's research in food studies and Japanese food culture in Toronto suggests

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[115] Turgeon, 251.
[116] Ibid., 259.
[117] Long Lucy M., "Culinary Tourism: A Folkloristic Perspective on Eating and Otherness," in *Culinary Tourism,* ed. Lucy M. Long (Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press 2004), 20.
[118] Ibid., 20.
[119] Ibid., 32.

that the restaurant space may be read as a site of cultural performance, where authenticity and social identities are created and negotiated through food and decor.[120] Illusions of ethnic or cultural authenticity are constructed within ethnic restaurants, and Tanaka argues that these socially constructed environments of 'authenticity' play a role in legitimizing ethnic foods, race, and racism in North America.[121] She proposes that the popularity of ethnic cuisine "detracts attention, covers up the tensions, systemic inequality, unequal relations of power in the production and consumption of such cultural practices" effectively complicating the politics of consumption even further.[122] Connecting ethnic foods with historical systems of domination and exploitation, she writes that these cuisines are "divorced from the social relations and geographies of their production by culinary tourists."[123]

These erasures and cultural performances are made visible is different ways within Tam and Kasai's installation spaces. In her restaurant space, Tam effectively demonstrates how Chinese culture and cuisine are performed or adapted to suit the Western customer. She draws attention to the allure of bonsai trees and bamboo, glowing lanterns and dragons that speaks to the orientalist fascination with the East (fig. 8 and fig. 12). This ambience keeps customers coming back to these restaurants, and keeps restaurant owners in business. The texts of her menus communicate the constructed, hybridized nature of the origins of many dishes (of which many customers may have not been aware), including crab rangoons, egg foo young, sweet and sour pork and ginger beef. The origins of many such dishes are closely tied to the history of the Chinese

[120] Tanaka, 14.
[121] Ibid., 49.
[122] Ibid., 47.
[123] Ibid., 104.

labourers along the North American railroads and also to the tastes of white customers and Chinese restaurants over the twentieth century (fig. 10). Sushi also has a hybrid history that is often overlooked. Tanaka points out that while there is an assumption in the West among sushi connoisseurs that a "traditional and authentic sushi" exists, she argues that the history of sushi reveals it to be a food that has always changed, been modified, and become a hybrid of influences.[124] Both Tam and Kasai stress how these foods and spaces are simultaneously 'Asian' and 'Canadian,' highlighting the challenge of negotiating between both identities and emphasizing the impossibility of 'authenticity' within these restaurant spaces. In short, both works question the very concept of cultural authenticity.

While Tam explored these concepts as they are expressed within the elements and decor of the public restaurant, Kasai's interrogation of food and cultural consumption focused on both the restaurant and individual experience, or preference, for these foods. Her photographs of her Canadian sushi sculptures questioned what aspects of Japanese and Canadian culture are consumed by the other, and which stereotypes about culture and food linger. Her twenty seven photographs of the abundance of local sushi shops near her home (fig. 13), combined with images of sushi hot dogs and sushi donuts (fig. 14), playfully centered on the popularity and mass production of sushi. Within the same space, Kasai also focused on familiar domestic spaces. Instead of recreating a setting for 'eating out' at the sushi restaurants she surveyed, a table setting in the middle of the space invited the familial or communal act of gathering around the kitchen table (fig. 15). Visitors were invited to prepare paper models of homemade sushi. Despite the fact they were only made of paper, this gesture nonetheless conjured up associations with home

[124] Ibid., 25.

cooking, and the preparing and consumption of meals. A looping video of a domestic fridge perpetually refilling and depleting extended the home kitchen scene within the exhibition space (fig. 16). Combined with her study of sushi restaurant menus and documentation, Kasai explored Japanese food culture and the Canadian interest for ethnic cuisines in personal, public and commercial levels.

There is a similar intentional absence of edible food or restaurant personnel in both installations, heightening the significance of each food-related element of the exhibitions, including both artists' incorporation of video into their exhibitions. This absence of food or physical Asian bodies was instead replaced by video in both exhibitions, effectively standing in for the lived experience and interaction and offering another degree of separation in much the same way Deborah Root argued ethnic food replaces lived connections and experience, as discussed earlier in Part I.[125] In Kasai's exhibition space a small television featured a video she had filmed over a six month period: during a forty minute video loop, the artist herself is seen eating over ninety mouthfuls of various foods over and over, thereby introducing not only her own presence into her ethnographic study of food, but also the repetitive act of eating into the exhibition space.[126]

In Tam's work, projections within the restaurant kitchen space featured family members demonstrating cooking techniques, including her father teaching how to make plum sauce and other recipes from the menu of her family's restaurant. Also on view were a series of interviews she had conducted with local restaurant owners, thus incorporating the voices and stories of some of the thousands of Chinese business owners

[125] See page 6.
[126] Kasai, email interview.

who make their livelihood in the restaurant business. Through her videos, Tam effectively reinserted the personal and private into the public space of the Chinese restaurant. Although there is no fresh food or people in either of these installations, the infinite looping of these videos reinserted the human element into the exhibition space, however virtual. This human presence that is integral to the life and function of restaurant encouraged the viewer to consider not only what they themselves eat, but also the lived experiences, personal narratives and perspectives of those who are closely related to these food and restaurant histories.

Public Engagement and Participation

A key strategy in both Tam and Kasai's exhibitions is the active participation of the viewer. As Claire Bishop explains, participatory art often exhibits a desire to "create an active subject, one who will be empowered by the experience of physical or symbolic participation".[127] Within both Tam and Kasai's exhibitions, the visitor was met with what Bishop describes as a "sensory immediacy," a key element within many installation spaces, wherein the visitor is summoned to actively experience and participate in the work rather than simply view it.[128] Jacques Rancière argues that critical art serves to bring awareness to dominant systems in order that the viewer may become a 'conscious agent' in transforming such mechanisms in society.[129] In effect, he argues that critical art can help viewers to become aware and actively conscious of political and social conditions and systems. This rings true in both Tam and Kasai's exhibitions, as elements throughout both spaces asked viewers to question their own engagement within ethnic

[127] Claire Bishop, *Participation*, (London: Whitechapel; Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 12.
[128] Claire Bishop, *Installation Art: A Critical History* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 11.
[129] Jacques Rancière, "Problems and Transformation in Critical Art,"in Bishop, *Participation,* 83,

food spaces, their own role as consumers and the preconceptions about Asian culture and identity in Canada.

While visitor participation was a key element in both exhibitions, these works did not fit under the rubric of relational aesthetics coined by Nicolas Bourriaud. Audience engagement in these two exhibitions is focused on the art objects within the space, and the ways in which each visitor is invited to sit, touch, and move about the space and interact with the art itself rather than with fellow visitors. In these works, the politics of display was most important–not service. According to Bourriaud, relational aesthetics focuses on human relations and interactions as the site for the artwork and art objects are not the focus.[130] Neither Tam's nor Kasai's exhibitions were created as social events as most relational aesthetic works strive to be. These works were not events, but they were not autonomous either, as the visitor was invited to interact with and manipulate the objects as they moved through both exhibition spaces.

In Karen Tam's installation, the visitor entered an immersive environment, where, to borrow Bishop's explanation of such artworks, the viewer was not disembodied but asked to experience the work sensually; Bishop has argued that such direct sensual experience is a key characteristic of installation art.[131] In Tam's space, the visitor immediately assumed the familiar role of a customer. Through play and role-play, the visitor was invited to linger at the tables to read the place mats or to browse Tam's alternative menus. The space presented the familiar tropes of a restaurant environment that are recognizable and resonate with most Canadians who have eaten in this type of restaurant. Tam's work summoned the audience to replay their own role in the

[130] Nicholas Bourriard, "Relational Aesthetics," in Bishop, *Participation,* 165.
[131] Ibid.

simulation, and in doing so they were then pushed to critically examine their own assumptions and ideas of Chinese food and culture in the West.

The interior decor and memorabilia is a combination of texts and objects created by Tam herself, such as the menus and the fortune cookies. Bishop's text stresses that the use of found materials that are worn and show traces of previous use or ownership serve to further trigger memories and association in the viewer's mind.[132] Tam's incorporation of old restaurant memorabilia and decor added additional layers of history and memory to the space, and the deliberate lack of restaurant personnel or actual food further served to highlight that which is consumed without criticism every day in such a restaurant space. Like a dream, Tam's space felt familiar yet slightly uncomfortable. Her insertion of unsettling historical facts and the deconstruction of racial stereotypes disrupted the illusion of familiarity. Thus the viewer was pulled from the dream to critically engage with the work.

Inviting participation from local restaurant owners and from her own family provided another layer of engagement that was important in this exhibition, as well as other restaurant installations in the series by Tam. In doing so, she incorporated and built upon the personal and familial experiences that are inseparable from the public institution of the Chinese restaurant in Canada. Throughout the creative stages of the installation, Tam conducted countless interviews with her parents and other restaurant owners, and these proved to be foundational to the video projections previously discussed. She also included in the gallery everyday items borrowed from friends and family who have owned or still run Chinese restaurants in Montreal. In this way, she actively sought the

[132] Ibid.

contributions of the Chinese restaurant community in order to create this work, offering the public a sense of agency and ownership as contributors to this exhibition.

In contrast, Kasai did not create an installation of a complete sushi restaurant environment, but opted instead for a combination of displayed images, media works and a small installation of an iconic domestic space: the kitchen table. Together, these elements evoked the *idea* of the sushi restaurant space or eating at home without recreating an exact replica of a sushi restaurant or home kitchen environment. Nevertheless, similar to Tam, Kasai did actively ask the public to engage and contribute to the exhibition. She sought the feedback and perspectives of residents of the Plateau neighbourhood through her surveys, which directly influenced the outcome of the sushi photographs she created, and the scope of the exhibition overall. While the table in Tam's artwork was a place for the visitor to read her texts or interact with fabricated menus, Kasai's kitchen table was a site for creation. The viewing public was invited to physically construct their own version of Canadian sushi: cutting paper, colouring and gluing on small bamboo cutting boards and then leaving their models behind on display in the exhibition or taking them home. As such, the table installation was not created to offer a simulation or movie set-like restaurant for the visitor, but it was constructed to be a familiar domestic environment in which the simulation of food and cooking might be re-created, and where the visitor might directly contribute to the handmade work of the exhibition. To summarize, each artist took different approaches to engaging communities in Montreal and their gallery audiences, prompting others to actively contribute to the discussion, create and make sense of Asian Canadian foods and food spaces.

Humour

Within these restaged environments alluding to Asian restaurant spaces, not only did these artists focus on food as racialized objects and actively engage audiences with their work, they further drew participants into the work through a third important strategy: the use of ethnic humour in order to communicate underlying themes of racism and ethnicity related to food in Canada. Tam and Kasai's works inspire a smile or a laugh, opening up discussion surrounding the sobering history and social reality of racial politics in Canada. Through humour, the audience is confronted with issues of ethnicity and cultural consumption in a nonthreatening way. While humour has been employed for centuries in the arts and in literature, it has been a notable strategy within postmodernism and contemporary art. Art critic Jennifer Higgie explains that over the past forty years, humour has been used as an important strategy to "embody alienation of displacement, disrupt convention, and to explore power relations in terms of gender, sexuality, class, taste or racial and cultural identities."[133] Humour has the ability to address emotionally and socially difficult subject matter and has been an effective tool for the feminist and gay rights movements, and race and identity politics.[134]

As an effective strategy of rebellion or resistance humour, Joseph Boskin argued in his 1997 book *Rebellious Laughter: People's Humour in American Culture*, can

> operate for and against, deny or affirm, oppress or liberate. On the one hand, it reinforces pejorative images; on the other, it facilitates the inversion of such stereotypes. Just as it has been utilized as a weapon of insult and persecution, so too, has humour been implemented as a device of subversion and protest.[135]

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[133] Jennifer Higgie, *The Artist's Joke* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007), 12.
[134] Ibid.,15.
[135] Joseph Boskin, *Rebellious Laughter: People's Humour in American Culture* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse, University Press, 1997), np, quoted in Susanne Reichl and Mark Stein, *Cheeky Fictions: Laughter and the Postcolonial* (Amsterdam: Editions Rodop BV, 2005), 11.

According to art educator and scholar Sheri Klein, humour has the potential to "disrupt our expectations and association in both subtle and obvious ways"; when humour is subversive, "it aims to disrupt our assumptions, emotions...ways of knowing and the world as we know it... art that evokes laughter is a wake-up call for consciousness and a reminder that humour, like illusions, may bear uncanny truths."[136] Together these complementary arguments offer a framework for discussing the ways in which humour is used in both exhibitions.

The power of humour as a strategy to address stereotypes and oppression is not uncommon among Canadian artists of colour whose work addresses race. This is an especially important strategy in the practices of many First Nations artists including Cree/Saulteaux/Métis artist Lori Blondeau, who also exhibited at the MAI. Her performances appropriate racist stereotypes of indigenous women such as the 'Indian princess' by replacing it with her comical cow-girl/Pocahontas character Belle Sauvage. Blondeau also re-appropriates the slur 'squaw' in her photo series *Cosmosquaw,* which parodies the covers of typical beauty magazines like *Cosmopolitan* magazine.[137] Multi-disciplinary Cree artist Kent Monkman's paintings and performances as the flamboyant Miss Chief Eagle Testickle often make humourous and pointed commentaries on racist and gender stereotypes, turning colonial images of cowboys and Indians inside out.[138] In what Carl Beam named the 'Trickster shift,' First Nations artists use humour often, "the ultimate goal of which is a radical shift in viewer perspective and even political

[136] Sheri Klein, *Art and Laughter, Art and Laughter* (New York: IB Rauris, 2007), 13; Ibid., 132.
[137] For further information on Blondeau's practice see Lynne Bell, "Scandalous Personas, Difficult Knowledge, Restless Images: the Words of Lori Blondeau,"Canadian Art (Winter 2004). Accessed June 8 2011. http://www.canadianart.ca/art/features/2004/12/09/259/1.
[138] For more information see Peter Gessell, "Aboriginal Art with Attitude," *The Ottawa Citizen*, July 30, 2007,.http://kentmonkman.com/images/press/ottawacitizen-jul30-2007.pdf.

positioning by imagining and imaging alternative viewpoints."[139] As Allan Ryan explains, since the 1980s artists have been using humour to address clichés, stereotypes, and outdated notions of 'Indianness' so that these representations may be reclaimed and reinvested with new ideas.[140] He argues that the use of humour and irony by First Nations artists in Canada to address these stereotypes have served to unveil "not only their ideological underpinnings but also the way in which historical misconceptions have hindered cross-cultural understanding and interaction."[141] German scholar Ulrike Erichsen further explains the productive quality that humour can have within contexts of cultural conflict. As these artists work to address and confront racism and stereotypes, the humour in their work functions as what Erichsen calls an "an outlet for criticism."[142] Humour can draw attention to multi-layered comic situations and "cultural barriers than need to be overcome in order to fully understand the text, and thus can encourage intercultural communication and understanding."[143] In other words, humour can be a powerful and effective strategy for drawing attention to cultural, social and political issues, and opening up dialogues between communities.

While the politics and histories of First Nations people in Canada is different than those of Asian Canadian communities, the strategy of ethnic humour is are nevertheless similar. Just as many contemporary First Nations artists use humour and play in order to address racial constructs, stereotypes and misconceptions about their communities,Tam and Kasai's works offered playful and purposeful exaggerations of the stereotypes and

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[139] Allan J Ryan, *Trickster Shift: Humour and Irony in Contemporary Native Art* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1999), 5.
[140] Ibid.,14.
[141] Ibid.
[142] Ulrike Erischen, "Smiling in the Face of Adversity," in *Cheeky Fictions: Laughter and the Postcolonial* edited by Susanne Reichl and Mark Stein (Amsterdam: Editions Rodop BV, 2005), 30.
[143] Ibid.

myths of Asian identity and ethnicity for the gallery visitor to engage with. Tam and Kasai are thus part of a wider cross−cultural circle of artists who utilize ethnic humour as an important strategy to discuss racism, ethnicity and difficult histories in Canada. Throughout their exhibitions Tam and Kasai used ethnic humour and parody to highlight stereotypes and misrepresented histories of Chinese and Japanese Canadians as they have been translated and packaged into food and restaurant spaces. Sheri Klein defines parody as a form of humour that "gently mock[s] art, cultural and historical icons through appropriating and altering images, and layering them with new meanings."[144] Within her parody of the highly constructed cultural environments of Chinese Chop Suey restaurants, Tam exaggerated the clichés and the stereotypes associated with these businesses, inserting her own dark ethnic humour and playfulness as a strategy for engaging with histories of racism and oppression and the performance of Chinese culture. Unsettling aspects of Chinese Canadian history were embedded in the decor of the restaurant space beyond her fabricated menus or fortune cookies. For example, custom made place mats on each table featured a poem written by Tam titled "Conquering the World Through our Food" highlighting some of the stereotypes and racial slurs associated with Chinese culture.[145] The light-hearted poem plays on fears of yellow peril and the 'Yellow Army' invading the West, by incorporating stereotypes of rat-eating, Opium dens and racial slurs including 'Chinaman' and 'maggot eaters' interwoven with such iconic Asian imagery as sunsets, birds, bamboo, dragons and flowers. The gallery visitor is thus met with multiple subversive, humorous elements, each intended to disrupt the illusion and reveal the constructed nature of the Chinese restaurant.

[144] Klein, 13.
[145] See Appendix A.

In comparison, Kasai utilized visual puns and parodies through her Canadian sushi works, creating versions of Japanese foods using Canadian symbols such as Tim Horton's coffee or maple sugar in order to playfully draw attention to the iconic sushi stereotype. Her works exaggerated and juxtaposed 'Canadian' and 'Quebecois' elements as they come into contact with Asian food, and demonstrates how, as Shaun Tanaka has concluded in her own research, Japanese and Japanese Canadian culture remain positioned outside the 'norm' despite the fact that Asian Canadians are a significant demographic force in Canadian society and are part of Canada's past and present.[146]

Conclusion

Both Karen Tam and Shié Kasai's exhibitions prompted guests to engage with ideas of Asian identity within restaurant spaces through a multi-faceted approach to the installation space. Through playful photographs of 'Canadian' sushi and subversive menus and by restaging a seemingly familiar space that invited engagement from the gallery visitor, both artists posed critical questions about race and ethnicity in Quebec and Canada and challenged histories and representations of Asia that are often swept aside or suspended within exotically decorated restaurants.

Neither Tam nor Kasai took an aggressive or confrontational approach to Asian stereotypes and racism, but instead invited the visitor to begin to critically examine representations that are often taken for granted. Through parody and puns, they opened up a non-threatening but important dialogue with audiences about the ways in which ethnicity is constructed and encountered in consumer culture in Canada, and how

[146] Tanaka, 47.

histories are overlooked or left unexamined in the process. The works are humourous yet serious, shedding light on uncomfortable realities, dark histories and racial inequalities that are connected to some of Canadian's favourite ethnic foods. These exhibitions were two responses to ongoing debates and often overlooked racialized histories that have shaped Canadian society. They helped audiences to critically reflect on these cultural contexts by offering a point of access to these histories. Along with works by Asian-Canadian writers, film makers, and other cultural producers, these exhibitions serve as interventions into the critical discourse surrounding race and food, and ask what it means to be a minority in Quebec and in Canada. The works of Tam and Kasai required gallery visitors to reconsider their own role as cultural consumers and re-evaluate constructions of ethnicity and race embedded in ethnic food and restaurants in contemporary North American society.

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APPENDIX A

The following poem is an example of Tam's use of subversive, humorous text throughout her exhibition. This poem was printed on the center of typical paper placemats as part of each table setting in her restaurant installation.

Conquering the World Through our Food

Karen Tam

Conquering your world through our food
The Yellow Army marches on
Chinaman, Chinaman, eat dead rats!
Chew them up,
Like gingersnaps

Hark to the sunsets of my youth
Flock of birds,
Roast duck, tonight?
Something sinister with the fish
Cross the bridge
Empress of the Orient, I wish

Mandarins and monkeys prancing through the night
Breathing dragons and bamboo groves,
Opium dens, coral pink sky,
Chrysanthemums, begonias, and eggrolls too!

A dream will disappear
Light the Lanterns, Maggot-Eaters,
I know the blue seas have turned into mulberry
Orchards and back again thrice.
Thank you, come again!

FIGURES

Figure 1: Shié Kasai. *Everybody's Favourite Restaurant is Indian and Then Japanese or Thai,* 2008, Chromogenic print. Photo courtesy of the artist.

Figure 2: Shié Kasai. *Québec vs. Canada.* 2008, Chromogenic print. Photo courtesy of the artist.

Figure 3: Shié Kasai. *Lafleur Hotdog,* 2008. Chromogenic print. Photo courtesy of the artist.

Figure 4: Shié Kasai. *Cabane à Sucre*, 2008. Chromogenic prints. Photo courtesy of the artist.

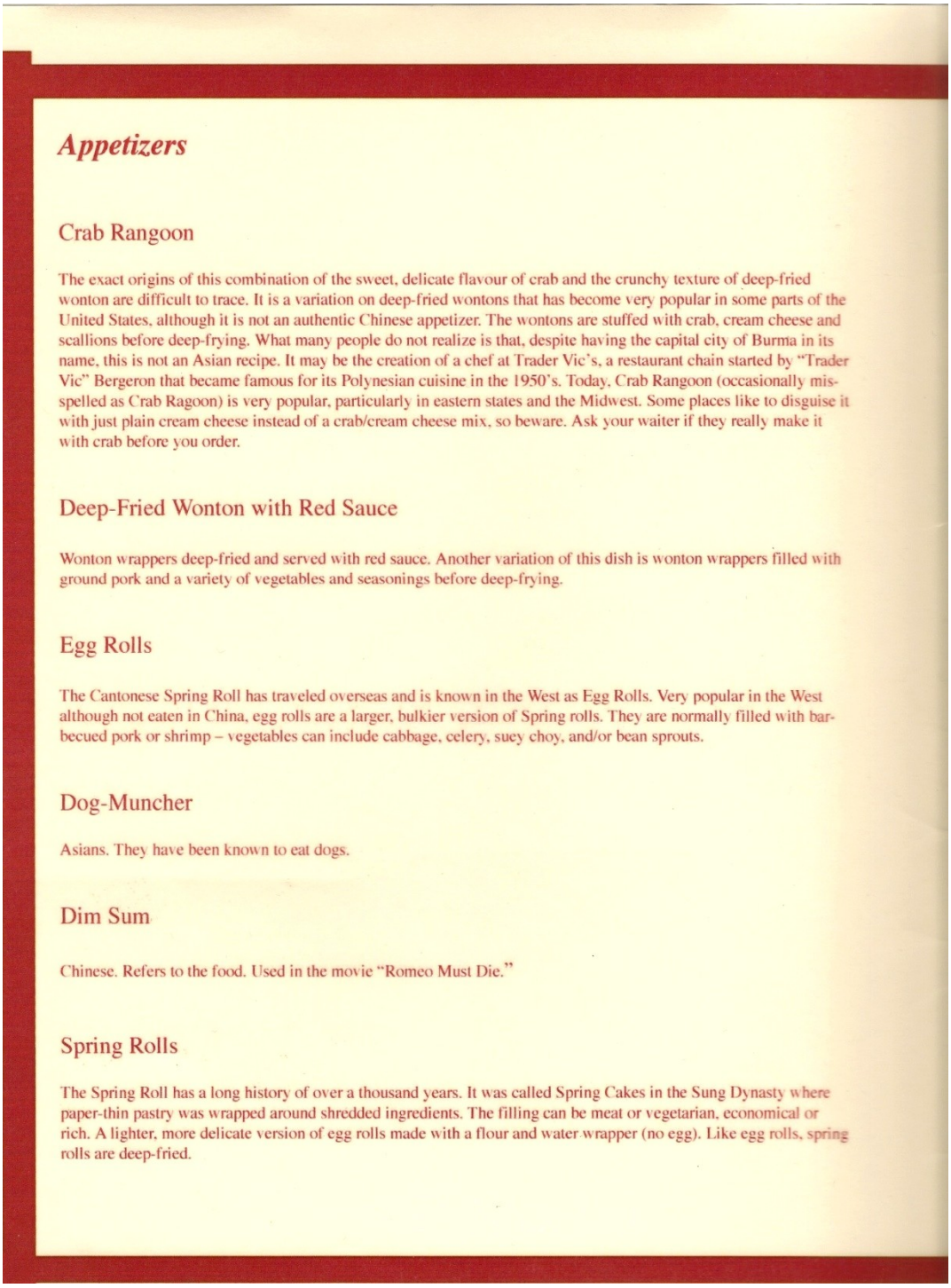
Figure 5: Shié Kasai. *Bûche de Noël,* 2008. Chromogenic prints. Photo courtesy of the artist.

Figure 6: Shié Kasai. *Tim's.* 2008. Chromogenic print. Photo courtesy of the artist.

Figure 7: Shié Kasai. *Horn of Plenty,* 2008. Chromogenic print. Photo courtesy of the artist.

Figure 8: Karen Tam. Installation view of *Gold Mountain Restaurant Montagne d'Or*, 2008. Photo courtesy of the artist.

Figure 9: Karen Tam. Installation view of the kitchen in *Gold Mountain Restaurant Montagne d'Or*, 2008. Photo courtesy of the artist.



Appetizers

Crab Rangoon

The exact origins of this combination of the sweet, delicate flavour of crab and the crunchy texture of deep-fried wonton are difficult to trace. It is a variation on deep-fried wontons that has become very popular in some parts of the United States, although it is not an authentic Chinese appetizer. The wontons are stuffed with crab, cream cheese and scallions before deep-frying. What many people do not realize is that, despite having the capital city of Burma in its name, this is not an Asian recipe. It may be the creation of a chef at Trader Vic's, a restaurant chain started by "Trader Vic" Bergeron that became famous for its Polynesian cuisine in the 1950's. Today, Crab Rangoon (occasionally mis-spelled as Crab Ragoon) is very popular, particularly in eastern states and the Midwest. Some places like to disguise it with just plain cream cheese instead of a crab/cream cheese mix, so beware. Ask your waiter if they really make it with crab before you order.

Deep-Fried Wonton with Red Sauce

Wonton wrappers deep-fried and served with red sauce. Another variation of this dish is wonton wrappers filled with ground pork and a variety of vegetables and seasonings before deep-frying.

Egg Rolls

The Cantonese Spring Roll has traveled overseas and is known in the West as Egg Rolls. Very popular in the West although not eaten in China, egg rolls are a larger, bulkier version of Spring rolls. They are normally filled with bar-becued pork or shrimp – vegetables can include cabbage, celery, suey choy, and/or bean sprouts.

Dog-Muncher

Asians. They have been known to eat dogs.

Dim Sum

Chinese. Refers to the food. Used in the movie "Romeo Must Die."

Spring Rolls

The Spring Roll has a long history of over a thousand years. It was called Spring Cakes in the Sung Dynasty where paper-thin pastry was wrapped around shredded ingredients. The filling can be meat or vegetarian, economical or rich. A lighter, more delicate version of egg rolls made with a flour and water wrapper (no egg). Like egg rolls, spring rolls are deep-fried.

Figure 10: Sample page of restaurant menu by Karen Tam, 2008. Photo courtesy of the artist.

Figure 11: Karen Tam. Installation of the counter and foyer of *Gold Mountain Restaurant Montagne d'Or*, 2008. Photo courtesy of the artist.

Figure 12: Karen Tam. Installation view of foyer and decor of *Gold Mountain Restaurant Montagne d'Or*, 2008. Photo courtesy of the artist.

Figure 13: Shié Kasai. *Sushi Stores.* 27 chromogenic prints, *Survival Japanese Cooking,* 2006. Photo courtesy of the artist.

Figure 14: Shié Kasai. Installation view of Canadian Sushi series and commodity items. *Survival Japanese Cooking,* 2006. Photo courtesy of the artist.

Figure 15: Shié Kasai. Installation view of the *Dining Room* and *Sushi Stores*, *Survival Japanese Cooking,* 2006. Photo courtesy of the artist.

Figure 16: Shié Kasai. Installation view and video projection of *Fridge*, 1 minute video loop. Photo courtesy of the artist.