

425 NORTH LOS ANGELES STREET | LOS ANGELES, CA 90012 | TEL: 213 485-8567 | WWW.CAMLA.ORG

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CONTACT: Linh Duong

(213) 485-8568/PR@camla.org



Captured in Chinatown lobby card (1935),
courtesy of "Hollywood Chinese: The Arthur Dong Collection"

Hollywood Chinese: The Arthur Dong Collection

Oct. 24, 2009 – May 30, 2010

MEDIA PREVIEW DAY

Tues., Oct. 20, 2009, 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.

THE CHINESE AMERICAN MUSEUM PARTNERS WITH ACADEMY AWARD®-NOMINATED FILMMAKER ARTHUR DONG ON A GROUNDBREAKING EXHIBITION ABOUT HOLLYWOOD'S FORGOTTEN PAST

(LOS ANGELES, Oct. 1, 2009) – Buried beneath the glittering façade of the world's most fabled industry beats the stories of an obscure chapter from Hollywood's golden past. On view beginning Oct. 24, 2009 through May 30, 2010, the Chinese American Museum (CAM) at the El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument will awaken these dormant stories in a dramatic new exhibition titled, ***Hollywood Chinese: The Arthur Dong Collection***, based on the critically-acclaimed, award-winning documentary, *Hollywood Chinese* (2007), by Oscar®-nominated filmmaker, Arthur Dong.

Captured and interpreted through the lens of the Chinese American experience, *Hollywood Chinese: The Arthur Dong Collection* explores the rich yet largely unknown, century-deep history of Chinese American cinematic contributions, both in front of and behind the camera, while offering

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vivid depictions of how the Chinese have been imagined in Hollywood movies throughout the decades. A singular collection of classic and contemporary movie memorabilia including vintage movie posters, lobby cards, film stills, scripts, press materials and even a genuine Oscar® statuette won by Chinese American Cinematographer, James Wong Howe, on loan courtesy of Don Lee, will be on public display. Arthur Dong serves as the guest curator for this exhibition.

“At the very heart of it, this exhibition is both a behind-the-scenes probe on the history of Chinese and Chinese American contributions in motion picture history as well as a long-overdue tribute to their pioneering and contemporary filmmaking achievements over the past century,” notes Dr. Pauline Wong, CAM's Executive Director. “But equally as important, this exhibition will help to inform our communities about the transformative role of race and media and the immense power it continues to have in shaping public perception of Chinese American identity.”

Since the early 1900s and continuing to present-day, a tangled web of race and representation has existed between Hollywood and the Chinese working in the film industry. The dual, conflicting identities of Chinatown, perceived by early Hollywood as being both dark and mysterious, dangerous and sinister, found expression in iconic films such as Roman Polanski's *Chinatown* (1974) and a string of “B” movies such as *Captured in Chinatown* (1935). Portrayals of martial arts heroes and exotic vixens were immortalized in roles played by Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan, Nancy Kwan and Anna May Wong. The casting of non-Asian actors and actresses to play Asian roles was an industry practice that paved the way for the yellowface phenomenon exemplified in popular classics such as *The Good Earth* (1937), where German-born Luise Rainer played a Chinese peasant (beating out legendary actress Anna May Wong for the role), and the Charlie Chan detective series, where Swedish actor Warner Oland, among others, solved mysteries while dispensing fortune-cookie proverbs.

A three-dimensional adaptation of the documentary, the exhibition will give the public unprecedented access to nearly 200 pieces of movie memorabilia, many being shown in public for the first time, drawn from Dong's own private collection, amassed during the 10-year research for his production. Although not an exhaustive archive covering the Chinese in American feature films, the exhibition does represent a vibrant sampling of the largest known collection on the subject –over 1,000 items– owned by a single collector.

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"I didn't set out to produce a definitive encyclopedic treatment of the topic, but rather, an examination of the first century of Hollywood history as seen through the lens of a dozen or so Chinese and Chinese American film artists—as well as some non-Asians who played Chinese in yellowface," explains Arthur Dong. "My research strategy reflected this storyline and visitors to this exhibition might find that it weighs more on particular personalities, films, and topics, while others are either lightly touched upon or not mentioned at all. There's still so much to discover and document and it has been a fascinating process to take my collection out of file cabinets and into a public arena."

Among the many exhibition highlights are the surviving archive of pioneer Chinese American filmmaker James B. Leong, who produced the 1921 film, *Lotus Blossom*; rare production photos from the recently discovered 1916 film, *The Curse of the Quon Gwon*, the earliest known feature film directed by an Asian American, San Francisco native, Marion Wong; and a section devoted to the cross-over success of Nancy Kwan, one of Hollywood's most visible Eurasian actresses who played a pivotal role in driving the acceptance of Asian actors in major Hollywood film roles.

The exhibition will span two gallery floors, as well as a portion of the first floor, organized into a series of themes that define early Chinese American film-making-- and whose social impact continues to reverberate in today's generation of Asian film artists. Blog-like quotes from Arthur Dong stream across gallery walls to offer a personalized dimension to this multi-sensory exhibition spotlighting wall-size vintage movie posters of iconic albeit sometimes racially-insensitive films.

A portion of the first floor will convert into a wall-of-fame highlighting a distinguished company of Chinese and Chinese American Academy Award® winners including Ang Lee (*Brokeback Mountain*, 2005), winner and five-time nominee, documentarian Freida Lee Mock (*Maya Lin: A Strong Clear Vision*, 1994) and two-time winner and ten-time nominee, James Wong Howe (*The Rose Tattoo*, 1950) (*Hud*, 1963). On display for a limited time only, Howe's first Oscar® statuette won for his cinematography work in the movie, *The Rose Tattoo*, will serve as the crowning centerpiece for this area. A selection of film excerpts, including the documentary *Hollywood Chinese*, will be available in a viewing station and projection wall for visitors to enjoy.

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A full schedule of public programs designed to provide visitors with a more in-depth understanding and enjoyment of the exhibition, including panel discussions, book signings and film screenings, will be offered through May 2010. All the programs are free to the public though reservations are required. A full-colored exhibition catalog featuring an essay authored by Academy Award®-nominated filmmaker Renee Tajima-Pena (*Who Killed Vincent Chin*, 1988) will be available for purchase at the CAM gift shop, as well as posters and DVDS of *Hollywood Chinese*.

Major funding for the *Hollywood Chinese: The Arthur Dong Collection* exhibition has been generously provided by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. Additional funding was providing by the CAM Education Fund, Nissan Foundation, Community Redevelopment Agency / Los Angeles, The Gee Family Foundation, Cecilia Nakamura Arts Fund, El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument, and Friends of the Chinese American Museum.

[High resolution digital images of the exhibit are available upon request]

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MEDIA PREVIEW DAY

CAM is hosting a special *Media Preview Day* on Tuesday, Oct. 20th, 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. in anticipation of the *Hollywood Chinese: The Arthur Dong Collection* exhibition opening. Media will be treated to a private viewing of the exhibition before it opens to the public and will have access to Arthur Dong as well as CAM representatives for interviews. All attending media will receive a complimentary exhibition catalogue. Light snacks and refreshments will be provided.

RED CARPET OPENING RECEPTION

Hollywood Chinese: The Arthur Dong Collection exhibition will debut to a Hollywood-style grand opening on Friday, Oct. 23, 2009, 6-8 p.m. at the Chinese American Museum. Presented in partnership with the El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument, the private, celebratory evening will include celebrity guests, delicious refreshments, and an exclusive opportunity to preview this blockbuster exhibition before it opens to the general public.

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ABOUT ARTHUR DONG

Arthur Dong previously co-curated the exhibition, *Chop Suey on Wax: The Flower Drum Song Album* (2006), for the Chinese Historical Society Museum in San Francisco. His film, *Hollywood Chinese* (2007), is the final installment of a trilogy, which also includes *Sewing Woman* (1982) and *Forbidden City, U.S.A.* (1989), that focuses on Chinese America. His other film collection, *Stories from the War on Homosexuality* (2003), brings together his documentaries *Family Fundamentals* (2002), *Licensed to Kill* (1997), and *Coming Out Under Fire* (1994). Dong's work has been honored with an Academy Award® nomination, three Sundance awards, five Emmy nominations, the Peabody Award, the Berlin Film Festival's Teddy Award, Asia's Golden Horse Award, as well as a number of public service awards, including the Historymakers Award from the Chinese American Museum. He has also earned two Rockefeller Fellowships in Media and a Guggenheim Fellowship in Film. Dong served on the Board of Governors of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, representing the Documentary Branch, and currently represents the Academy on the National Film Preservation Board at the Library of Congress.

ABOUT HOLLYWOOD CHINESE (THE DOCUMENTARY)

Winner of the 2007 Golden Horse Award for Best Documentary, Asia's equivalent to the Oscars®, *Hollywood Chinese* (2007) is a captivating revelation on a little-known chapter of cinema: the Chinese in American feature films. From the first Chinese American film produced in 1916, to Ang Lee's triumphant *Brokeback Mountain* nine decades later, *Hollywood Chinese* presents a fascinating portrait of actors, directors, writers, and iconic images to show how the Chinese have been imagined in movies, and how filmmakers have and continue to navigate an industry that was often ignorant about race, but at times paradoxically receptive. The story of *Hollywood Chinese* is told through eleven of the industry's most accomplished Chinese and Chinese American film artists who share personal accounts of working in film. Ang Lee, Wayne Wang, Joan Chen, David Henry Hwang, Justin Lin, B.D. Wong, Nancy Kwan, Tsai Chin, Lisa Lu, James Hong, and Amy Tan are among the storytellers who have wrestled with being the other in Hollywood. Non-Asian personalities are also featured to point out the controversy over portraying the Chinese in yellowface. Two-time Oscar® winner Luise Rainer (*The Good Earth*, 1937), character actor Christopher Lee (*Fu Manchu*, 1960-65), and 1940s matinee idol Turhan Bey (*Dragon Seed*, 1944) give first-hand recollections on being yellow on the silver screen. *Hollywood Chinese* was produced, directed, written, and edited by Arthur Dong.

ABOUT THE CHINESE AMERICAN MUSEUM

The Chinese American Museum (CAM) is jointly developed and operated by the Friends of the Chinese American Museum (FCAM) and El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument, a department of the City of Los Angeles. Located within the El Pueblo Plaza in downtown Los Angeles, CAM is housed in the last surviving structure of the City's original Chinatown. CAM's mission is to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of America's diverse heritage by researching, preserving, and sharing the history, rich cultural legacy, and continuing contributions of Chinese Americans. The Chinese American Museum is located at 425 North Los Angeles Street in El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument, across from Union Station. Hours are 10 a.m.– 3 p.m., Tuesday – Sunday. Admissions are suggested donations of \$3 for adults and \$2 for seniors and students. Members are admitted free. For more information about the Museum, please visit our new website at www.camla.org or follow up on:

Facebook: search for "Chinese American Museum"

Flickr: http://www.flickr.com/photos/camla_org

Twitter: ChinAmerMuseum