



## **WE ARE CLOSING DOWN ON 25-DEC-2012**

For decades we have traded from this premises. We have enjoyed our work and we would like to thank all our loyal and friendly clients for their support during this period.

We are sad and upset to have to close, but due to the earthquake strengthen work of the building, we are closing down this Christmas Eve.

因楼宇防震改造工程，本快餐店将于十二月二十五日结束营业。衷心感谢各界客户多年来的支持！

羊城快餐  
**YEUNG SHING**



## Welcome to try our new amazing add on menu

1. Singapore Style Stir Fry Noodle (Egg Noodle, Rice Noodle,  
Ho Fun, Udon or Vermicelli)  
with (Pork, Chicken, Beef or Mixed) \$8.50
2. Mee Goreng Flavour Stir Fry Noodle (Egg Noodle, Rice Noodle,  
Ho Fun, Udon or Vermicelli)  
with (Pork, Chicken, Beef or Mixed) ~~\$8.50~~ **\$9.00**
3. ~~Roast Duck on Steam Rice or Noodle Soup~~  
~~(Egg Noodle, Rice Noodle, Ho Fun, Udon or Vermicelli)~~ ~~\$9.50~~
4. Sweet Chilli Stir Fry with (Pork, Chicken or Beef)  
on Steam Rice \$9.00 \$10.50
5. Sichuan Hot & Spicy with (Pork, Chicken or Beef)  
on Steam Rice \$9.00
6. ~~Roast Spare Rib~~ or BBQ Pork on Steam Rice \$9.00
7. Crispy Pork on Steam Rice \$9.50
8. ~~Curry or Deep Fry Chicken Drumsticks (2 pieces)~~  
~~on Steam Rice~~ \$9.00
9. Orange Flavour with (Pork, Chicken or Beef)  
on Steam Rice \$9.00
10. ~~Beijing Flavour Sauce Stir Fry with (Pork, Chicken~~  
~~or Beef) on Steam Rice~~ **Sold out!!** \$9.00
11. Special Home Made Satay Sauce Stir Fry with (Pork,  
Chicken or Beef) on Steam Rice \$9.00

More on next page



12. Lemon Grass Flavour Stir Fry with (Pork, Chicken or Beef) on Steam Rice \$9.00
13. Spicy Garlic Sauce Stir Fry with (Pork, Chicken or Beef) on Steam Rice \$9.00
14. Spicy Chilli Sauce Stir Fry with (Pork, Chicken or Beef) on Steam Rice \$9.00
15. Black Pepper Sauce Stir Fry with (Pork, Chicken or Beef) on Steam Rice \$9.00
16. Black Bean Sauce Stir Fry with (Pork, Chicken or Beef) on Steam Rice \$9.00
17. Nasi Goreng Style Stir Fry with Rice or Noodle (Egg Noodle, Rice Noodle, Ho Fun, Udon or Vermicelli) \$9.50
18. Hot & Spicy Leek Stir Fry with (Pork, Chicken or Beef) on Steam Rice \$9.00
19. Soy Sauce & Oyster Sauce Stir Fry Rice or Noodle (Egg Noodle, Rice Noodle, Ho Fun, Udon or Vermicelli) with (Pork, Chicken, Beef or Mixed) \$8.50
20. Lemon Sauce Stir Fry with (Pork, Chicken or Beef) on Steam Rice \$9.00
21. Beef Brisket on Steam Rice or Noodle Soup (Egg Noodle, Rice Noodle, Ho Fun, Udon or Vermicelli) \$9.00
22. Hot Salt Pepper with (Pork Spare Rib, Chicken or Beef) on Steam Rice \$9.00
23. Dumpling Soup or Pan Fry Dumpling \$8.00
24. Hot & Spicy King Prawn in Shell ½ Doz \$10.00, 1 Doz \$20.00

## Collecting and Recollecting: The Memory Palace at 296 Willis Street

Dr Cherie Lacey

*"We can no more master the past than we can undo it. But we can reconcile ourselves to it. The form for this is the lament, which arises out of recollection." (Hannah Arendt)<sup>i</sup>*

The link between memory and place has historically attended the study of memory, with place long considered the most natural of all locations for memory.<sup>ii</sup> It's there in our attachment to memories (particularly childhood) of home, in the feeling of nostalgia (*nostos*=returning home, *algia*=pain; literally, an acute longing for home), in its externalisation (museums, monuments), in the way that we say "I can't quite place you", or of something that happened that "it took place". We find it in the ancient art of memorisation through the construction of what the Greeks called 'memory palaces',<sup>iii</sup> as well as the memory theatres of the Renaissance. As Julia Creet has said, "memory seeks its local habitations",<sup>iv</sup> and it takes up residence in places of significance, haunting them.<sup>v</sup> These sites are often referred to as "memory places",<sup>vi</sup> and are given this status because whatever event took place in them marked the subject in some profound and irreversible way.

Although memory places or palaces are taken up at the level of imagination, they retain their point of origin in a physical or material place. Paul Ricoeur points out that all memory "insists" on having a starting point, which naturally becomes associated with a certain location.<sup>vii</sup> This relationship was described by Aristotle as being similar to a wax impression or imprint. At the moment of a singular, important event, it is as though a signifying mark is pressed into a tablet of wax, sealing the association between the memory and the place, at the same time leaving its mark imprinted on the soul/psyche of the individual.<sup>viii</sup> For Aristotle, it is the conjunction between the physical impression that occurs in an external location—the event that *takes place*—and the impression that is left on the psyche (or soul) of the individual that is the "crux of the entire problem of memory".<sup>ix</sup>

The act of remembering, then, at least in its conscious-phenomenological form, is often an attempt to return to that place, the original moment of the impression, what has become fixed in a certain time and place. Memory becomes an attempt to re-trace one's steps via a history of associations in order to find the first, signifying mark. This effort moves against the current of forgetting,<sup>x</sup> which Ricoeur refers to as a kind of "grinding into dust", or an erasure of the traces that remain after the event.<sup>xi</sup> Ricoeur's choice of words here should not be passed over too quickly. They invite us to regard the work involved in forgetting, forgetting as an (unconscious) act, which is the shadowy equivalent to the conscious work involved in recollection. Forgetting, in this sense, becomes a slow, repetitive movement, which

eventually transforms something materially present into something that cannot be grasped. The association with place, particularly with built space, is clear (and I can't help but wonder, for those of us living in these shaky isles, what happens when the 'special status' of a memory place acquires a new status as 'earthquake prone').

Although searching isn't necessarily finding, the search itself can be considered an act of duty. Memory, or rather the effort to recall, is an active resistance against the unconscious effort to forget, or the grinding into dust of the past. But this becomes a question of how we remember, or the technique of remembering, which is to be distinguished from what we remember or who is doing the remembering. The Greeks distinguished between two forms of memory: *mnēmē* and *anamnēsis*. The first refers to the kind of memory that we experience passively, that is to say, without conscious effort or labour. This is memory as repetition, as spontaneous recall, which is often experienced as the unwelcome intrusion of images in the mind, characteristic of the experience of trauma or PTSD. According to Henri Bergson, in this form of memory, the unconscious is the entity with all the power, which has the capacity to overwhelm consciousness with the memory-traces of an earlier event, often (or usually) against the will of the individual.

The other form outlined by Aristotle is *anamnēsis*, which is memory as recollection, as the object of a search. The *ana-* of *anamnēsis* also implies a kind of repetition—a returning to an earlier, lost moment, but this time it is an act of consciousness, directed against forgetting.<sup>xii</sup> To recollect is literally to gather up again, to reassemble, to collect things which were once together, but have since been separated, or (temporarily) lost.

In another sense, recollection is also a mental act, we recollect ourselves in the face of hard times. To recollect is to 'recover', to 'pull oneself together', to 'take heart'.<sup>xiii</sup> Etymology overlaps with contemporary neuroscience on this point, with the recent discovery that problems accessing our memories could lead to depression and PTSD. According to this hypothesis, our memories function as a ballast that steady us in times of stress; when people can't recall specific events from their past, they struggle to imagine or construct a future and find strategies to cope with the present, which—so the theory goes—can push them into a state of depression.<sup>xiv</sup>

And this brings us back to the ancient art of the memory palace, which seeks to memorise through a technique of impressing places and images on memory.<sup>xv</sup> This technique was used by the Greeks to ward off the threat of forgetting since, as neuroscience has rediscovered, memories serve a vital function and should be protected. In order to protect these memories, the orator Quintilian instructs us to construct a sort of mental storehouse, based on familiar (preferably childhood<sup>xvi</sup>) places, and furnish it with known objects or images "of a similitude as striking as possible", which arouse in us a strong emotional response. He tells us that "it is an assistance to the memory if places are stamped upon the mind", because when we return to a place after a period of time, a host of other, associated memories are called to consciousness.<sup>xvii</sup> Once we have built our memory palace and selected our *imagines agentes*, we can begin the art of recollection, a technique he describes in some detail:

The first notion is placed, as it were, in the forecourt; the second, let us say, in the atrium; the remainder are placed in order all around the impulvium, and committed not only to bedrooms and parlours, but even to statues and the like. This done, when it is required to revive the memory, one begins from the first place to run through all, demanding what has been entrusted to them, of which one will be reminded by the image. Thus, however numerous are the particulars which it is required to remember, all are linked one to another as in a chorus...We require therefore places, either real or imaginary, and images or simulacra which must be invented.<sup>xviii</sup>

This, of course, requires some effort. It is a practice, which works only on the basis of conscious repetition and recapitulation, and operates counter to the unconscious work of forgetting. However, it is different to that other form of repetition, memory as spontaneous recall, which operates upon, exerts power over, the subject. Both are responses to loss, and in their own way are a lament to the past and the impossibility of return. The act of recollection, however, given form in the memory palace, works by collecting, and *re*-collecting, images and objects from the past, refusing to let them turn to dust.

<sup>i</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*. London: Cape, 1970. p21

<sup>ii</sup> See, for example, Julia Creet, *Memory and Migration: Multidisciplinary Approaches to Memory Studies*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011; Pierre Nora, "Between History and Memory", in *Representations* No. 26 (1989), pp.7-24; Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2006; Frances A. Yates, *The Art of Memory*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974

<sup>iii</sup> Creet, p.3

<sup>iv</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3

<sup>v</sup> This idea of the past haunting the present is articulated in Derrida's notion of 'hauntology' (in his native French, a near homophone to 'ontology'). See Derrida's *Spectres of Marx*, New York: Routledge, 1993

<sup>vi</sup> See Pierre Nora's "Between History and Memory" (1989), and Frances A. Yates' *The Art of Memory* (1974)

<sup>vii</sup> Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, p.18

<sup>viii</sup> Aristotle, "On Memory and Reminiscence", in Richard McKeon (Ed.), *The Basic Works of Aristotle*. New York: Random House, 1941, pp.607-617

<sup>ix</sup> Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, p.17

<sup>x</sup> Taking my cue from Socrates here, who wrote that *anamnēsis* (as recollection) moves against the current of the river *Lēthē*. Quoted in Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, pp.27-28

<sup>xi</sup> Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, p.44

<sup>xii</sup> *Ibid.*, p.27-28

<sup>xiii</sup> Definition provided by Oxford English Dictionary

<sup>xiv</sup> David Robson, "Fade to Black", in *New Scientist*, Vol. 216 Issue 2885

<sup>xv</sup> Frances A. Yates, *The Art of Memory*, p.2

<sup>xvi</sup> "...whence it is that we remember better things seen in childhood" (see Yates, 1974, p.74)

<sup>xvii</sup> Quintilian. *Institutio oratoria*. XI, ii, 17-22

<sup>xviii</sup> *Ibid.*





296 WILLIS STREET  
TE ARO, WELLINGTON  
20 JULY 2013



02922

IN REPLY PLEASE QUOTE
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FOR ENQUIRIES PLEASE TELEPHONE
MR. Hawken
45-040 EXT.

WELLINGTON CITY CORPORATION TOWN PLANNING DEPARTMENT

P.O. Box 2199, WELLINGTON C.I. NEW ZEALAND.

18 June 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR - The Town Clerk  
REPORT FOR THE TOWN PLANNING COMMITTEE

Subject:- Dairy/Grocery Snack Bar - 296 Willis Street.

Applicant:- Stacey, Smith and Gibson, Barristers and Solicitors,  
P.O. Box 859, Wellington.

Site:- Existing dairy/grocery on the northern corner of the  
Palmer Street Willis Street intersection.

Proposal:- Is to extend the hours of business up until 12 p.m.  
on Fridays and Saturdays.

Comments:- (1) The premises have been used as a dairy/grocery  
snack bar for many years, and the extension of this  
use to allow for the sale of milkshakes and similar  
items was approved by Council in October 1962 with  
the condition that the hours of business were to be  
limited to 8 p.m. each night.

TOWN PLANNING  
COMMITTEE

7 JUL 1970

*Report prepared &  
referred to by Town  
Committee with the  
added condition that  
the applicant be  
required to provide  
suitable receptacles  
for the disposal  
of litter outside  
the premises*

(2) The property is adjoined on the northern side by a  
green-grocers, and the rear of the premises is  
approximately 30' from the nearest residence with a  
substantial brick storage building between the two  
properties.

(3) On inspection it was noted that the premises were not  
laid out along the lines of a coffee-bar or milkbar,  
but that they were more in the nature of a local  
dairy/grocery providing a take-away food service.

(4) It is the applicant's stated intention that the  
extended hours are simply to provide for additional  
service for the public.

(5) With the advent of the Motorway, the main shopping  
block in this area will go, and it is considered  
that there could well be a need for this extended  
service.

2

(6) It could be argued that a business of this type could  
attract undesirable elements to the locality. However,  
as the premises would not be classified as a coffee-  
bar or restaurant, from a Town Planning point of view,  
it is felt that this situation is unlikely to arise.

BY-LAWS & ELECTRICITY

9 JUL 1970

*Recommended to Affiliated  
COMMITTEE  
RCH*

(7) It is not considered that the extended hours on the  
two nights of the week requested will create any  
additional nuisance or loss of amenities to the  
adjoining residential properties.

15 JUN 1970

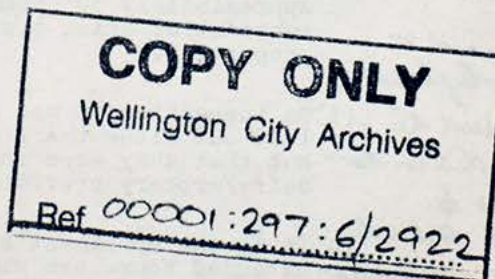
COMMITTEE  
REPORT ADOPTED  
RCH

Recommendation:- That the proposal be approved in principle subject to the following conditions:

- (1) Hours of operation are to be limited to the following:  
Sundays to Thursdays up to 8 p.m. in the evening.  
Friday and Saturday nights up until 12 p.m.
- (2) The City ByLaws and Plumbing and Drainage Regulations, 1959 are to be complied with in all respects.
- (3) Any requirements that the Health Branch may see fit to impose are to be complied with in all respects.

*K.W. Clarke.*

City Planner.



WE, THE UNDERSIGNED RESIDENTS IN THE VICINITY OF  
 296 WILLIS STREET STRONGLY OBJECT TO A SNACK BAR  
 BEING PERMITTED TO OPEN BECAUSE OF THE NUISANCE  
 WE FEEL WILL BE CREATED BY NOISE AND THE PRESENCE  
 OF UNDESIRABLE ELEMENTS WHICH ARE ASSOCIATED WITH  
 SUCH PLACES.



- x B. G. Paterson. (owner) 325 Willis St.
- ✓ } J. D. Gardener. } (owner) 18 Palmer St.
- ✓ } F. M. Scudler } owner 18 Palmer St
- ✓ } H. D. Dutton } owner 37 Palmer St
- ✓ W. J. Raymond Lessee 19 Palmer St
- ✓ M. D. Lauchlan Lessee 21 Palmer St
- ✓ M. Barrett owner 24 Palmer St
- x Mary K Hyde owner 26 Palmer St.
- ✓ Kate Horwood owner 24 Palmer St
- ✓ T. K. O'Connell owner 25 Palmer St
- ✓ J. Cahill owner 331 Willis St.
- ✓ H. B. Hamilton Tenant 298 Palmer St
- ✓ J. L. Leonard Ltd owner 327 Willis St
- ✓ J. E. O'Connell owner 323 - - -
- ✓ Mrs. M. E. Skppard 9, Palmer St Lessee
- ✓ Mrs D. A. Jean Tenant 11 Palmer St
- ✓ (Mrs) G. Corcoran, Lessee - Tenant 12 Palmer St, Valley Road
- ✓ A. M. Glinchey Tenant 14 Palmer St.
- x D. Sanders owner 10 Palmer St
- ✓ Mrs V. Wind Tenant. 107 Able Smith St.

For and on behalf of  
 J. S. BROOKSBANK & COMPANY (Australasia) LTD.

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 Wellington City Archives  
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296 WILLIS STREET  
TE ARO, WELLINGTON  
8 FEBRUARY 2013

## AN INVOCATION

Daylight stars rip through solemn curtains  
As an old floor groans  
And remembers the invisible weight  
of many soles and a thousand dances.

Those impossible patches to reach  
While hiding in the backroom  
Are actually quite close to the heart,  
Frayed in the net of the morning sun.

Dust, grease, guts and glory! Here's an inventory:  
Frozen chips, Pall Mall Reds and a lime milkshake,  
Wok n' roll and that damn ham machine  
Are useless things left here for me.

Start spreading the news -- I've lost count of sleepless nights  
Bad habits gifted from generations before.  
Quiet desire is loose change  
That's measured in quarter hour blocks.

As I slip through states of mind,  
Dirty clothes, swollen days and punch drunk conversations,  
I remember unlikely faces  
White noise feeds back into my skull.

Silence is Golden.  
The eternal sleep of everything (there is no time)  
wakes me up  
and changes everything.

These little town blues are longing to stay.  
The past has us pinned against the wall whispering  
"You're not welcome here anymore. Get out."  
Wait a minute -- is this a story or a statement?

Hang loose kiddo  
And dig your toes into the lino even though  
the next whatever will threaten to shake and break you.  
You don't need a fucking sticker on your door to tell you that.

KAL





296 WILLIS STREET  
TE ARO, WELLINGTON  
1979 / 1980



~~XX/XX XXXXX~~ Street  
Te Aro 6011  
Wellington  
New Zealand

17 January 2015

Dear Kerry Ann,

Today I passed by the front of 296 Willis Street, the site of the Gold Coin Cafe, your family's corner takeaway and home in the 1980s. The 'earthquake-prone' building has been demolished. There is no trace of the 1880s white house, the Gold Coin Cafe or the Yeung Shing Restaurant at the site. All that is left is a vacant lot where a new apartment complex is under construction. I imagine that you feel nostalgic to see your former residence come to an end. Possibly every time you pass by, elusive smells, sounds, images and anecdotes will cross your mind. All those memories linked to that place would have been lost without you making 'THE UNAVAILABLE MEMORY OF GOLD COIN CAFE'.

I remember the day that you proposed your concept to me for 'HITHER AND TITHER', the exhibition that I was curating at Enjoy Gallery which explored notions of migration and settlement in New Zealand. You told me that the Gold Coin Cafe was one of the earliest Chinese eateries in Wellington and that your parents followed in the tradition of their parents who upon immigrating to Wellington in the 1940s set up some of the first Chinese Restaurants. The Gold Coin Cafe was a business but also the place you called home.

Digging into your family's past, beyond your research on a specific urban space related to Wellington's Chinese community, perhaps made you recall and discover both pleasant and unpleasant experiences. I think that you were really lucky to find a good amount of memorabilia of the cafe, especially considering that many restaurant owners didn't take the time to document their businesses simply because they were too busy. The photographs, menus, window signage and small domestic objects are testimony of what once was 296 Willis Street. Between the objects that you recollected was a lovely family portrait that has a Chinese coin in the background and where your mother is holding you with a big smile. I love it. You were a little baby and you look so much like your mum now. Beautiful.

Chinese coins are a recurrent element in your installation. I remember a couple of paper-cut 'yuans' hanging from the ceiling of Enjoy Gallery and other designs to supposedly ward off evil and draw in health and prosperity. There were also birds, bats, flowers, lizards, roosters and a tiger, which was my favourite. I found quite symbolic that the colour blue of the paper-cuts, which reminded me of the sky, was the result of a time process - all the images were taken from posters that you recovered on site from the old Yeung Shing Restaurant that were faded blue by the sun. There is an interplay of different tempos in the piece: the past is represented by the old imagery that you recovered, the very present occurs while viewing the work,

while the future is an imagined blue sky through the set of paper-cuts in which a myriad of possibilities could be drawn and imagined.

The sonic aspect of the installation also transported me through time. The sound of people speaking Chinese, the chopping and frying, the swinging of a saloon-style door accompanied with the aroma of spring rolls that your mum kindly cooked for the opening night, made me think of your lifetime at the Gold Coin Cafe. I imagined you as a child in the backroom of 'the shop' (as you called it), watching telly, smelling the delicious aroma of a lemon chicken or a chow mein. 296 Willis Street was for you where home and business, leisure and work, East meets West and interacted.

This interaction between different systems or transcultural circuits was something that I intended to explore with 'HITHER AND TITHER': I have been interested in migration topics since years ago, perhaps because I have lived in different countries and because the immigration phenomenon in Mexico is so strong. The title of the exhibition came from an expression designed to draw attention to things that mutate from one place or situation, implying proximity and distance, 'displacement' and 'placement'. 'THE UNAVAILABLE MEMORY OF GOLD COIN CAFE' involved all those ideas. While your installation references your personal memories from a very specific place that has disappeared, I considered that it goes farther by creating an alternative microhistory of Cantonese migrant legacy and urban settlement in flux in Wellington City.

Introduced and popularized by Italian historians like Carlo Ginzburg in the 1970s, microhistory is a method that gives special attention to individual relationships and small units of research: a family, a small community, a person or a single event. Microhistorians reduce their scale of observation to those things that were excluded from official stories or grand narratives. Let's say that they give special attention to each leaf that comprises a tree, trying to find the answers of a system in small structures. In order to understand and register a concrete reality you have to produce something akin to Ginzburg's methodology. While exploring your own particular family story, your project talks about the Chinese migrants who have come since the 1800s to find their 'golden opportunity here' and have enriched Aotearoa's culture. Your artistic practice bringing into light the stories of Chinese New Zealanders through family and business stories, celebrates its presence and history in Wellington.

I'm happy to know, dear Kerry Ann, that 'THE UNAVAILABLE MEMORY OF GOLD COIN CAFE' will be re-exhibited at Pataka Museum in the 'IMAGINE ASIA' exhibition and I can't wait to see the work displayed again in a different context. Let's meet up and catch up over a yum char session soon.

Cheers,

*Claudia Arozqueta*

Claudia Arozqueta



296 WILLIS STREET  
TE ARO, WELLINGTON  
21 FEBRUARY 2014

Leaders In Real Estate.

296 Willis Street



## New Development Coming Soon!

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296 WILLIS STREET  
TE ARO, WELLINGTON  
17 SEPTEMBER 2014



HELL BANK NOTE  
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No J 023456

TEN THOUSAND  
DOLLARS



No J 023456

TEN THOUSAND

MADE IN CHINA

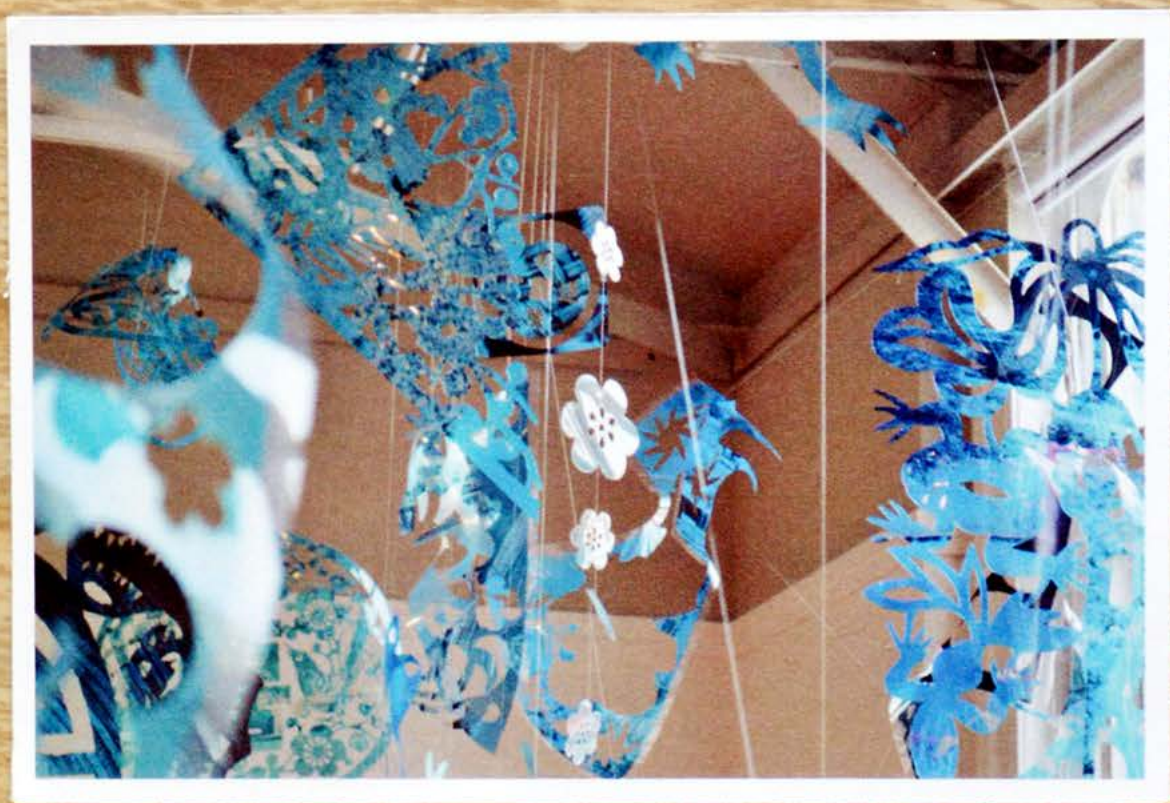


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THE UNAVAILABLE  
MEMORY OF  
GOLD COIN CAFE  
KERRY ANN LEE

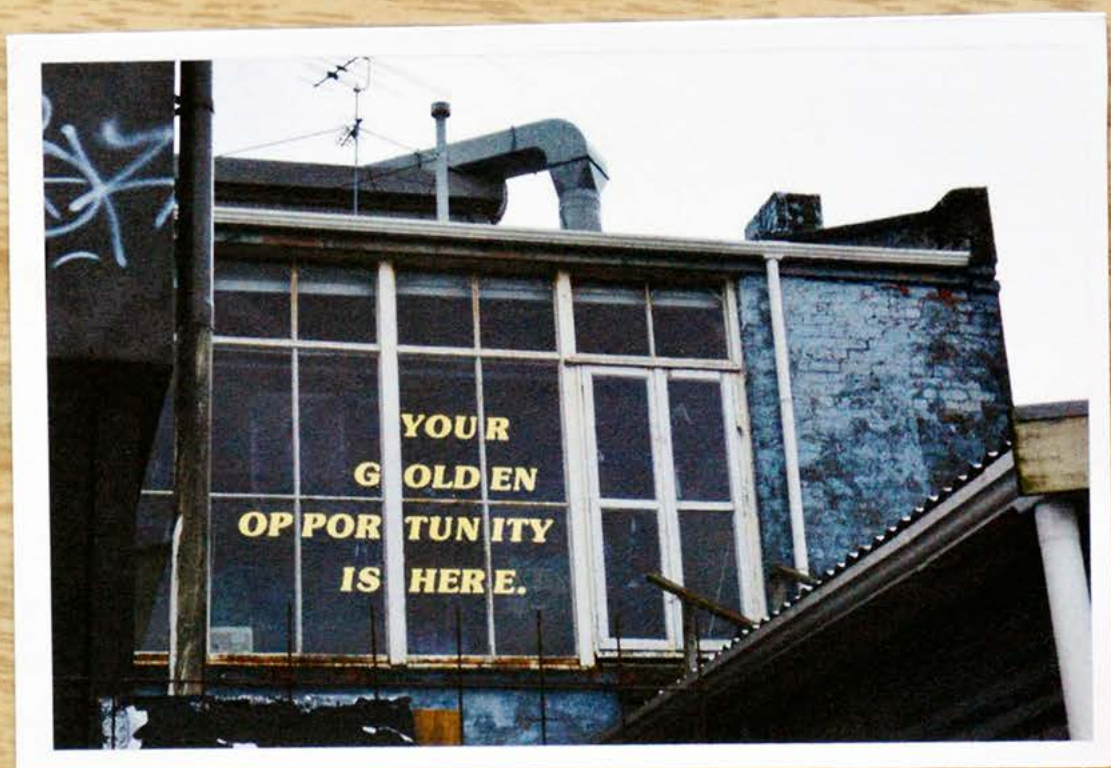


THE UNAVAILABLE  
MEMORY OF  
GOLD COIN CAFE  
KERRY ANN LEE



THE UNAVAILABLE  
MEMORY OF  
GOLD COIN CAFE  
KERRY ANN LEE





THE UNAVAILABLE  
MEMORY OF  
GOLD COIN CAFE  
KERRY ANN LEE

# THE UNAVAILABLE MEMORY OF GOLD COIN CAFÉ

KERRY ANN LEE

*"A lived-in landscape becomes a place, which implies intimacy; a once lived in landscape can be a place, if explored, or remain a landscape, if simply observed."*

– Lucy Lippard, *The Lure of the Local* (1997)

*The Unavailable Memory of Gold Coin Café* is the untold story of 296 Willis Street – the site of my parents' business and former family home in Wellington from 1978 - 1986.

This work explores Cantonese settlement, memory, material, loss and my family's connection to the city. In 1978 my newly married parents purchased a business uptown called Nancy's Snack Bar, and reinvented it as a Chinese café takeaway known as the Gold Coin Café. They worked hard to raise three kids in this place then sold up in 1986. That was our dynasty. Here's my mum on the topic:

*"My favourite dish was a European one – porterhouse steak! Because I'd have Chinese food all the time at home I just liked European food. Gold Coin Café's favourite for the customers was the lemon chicken. Spices were unavailable because of the imports so everything was very simple. We had chow mein, egg foo young, fried rice and sweet and sour so all the Chinese restaurants kept to those basics. Customers weren't ready for adventurous food in those days because they didn't travel that much and we didn't have a lot of Asian migrants in the country. It was only when we sold the Gold Coin Café, then a whole lot of different nationalities' restaurants and cafes started up in the late 1980s. We had it quite good in the early 80s because there were less takeaways and cafés.*

*There wasn't that heavy competition and you had your own customers. We had the Black Power and the Mongrel Mob and the skinheads and the white-collar people from government departments up Willis Street and they all came at certain times. They'd always come at the same time, sit in the same chair and eat the same meal and you'd know how to serve those people because they were your clientele who ate out all the time so back then business was easy to run.*

*As a family business you would never had problems with staff and work was ongoing. They all knew Chinese were very hard working and respectable, and put in long hours. Everyone pitched in and helped out in the family, all the kids and grandmothers, everybody helped out."*

– Esther Lee, *Home Made* (2007)

The current owners are another Chinese family who also lived upstairs and manage the Yeung Shing Restaurant below. One day my friend Amos called to tell me that the building was stickered as an earthquake risk and closed down. Hot off the back of disaster capitalism, the verdict was that it was more economical to demolish and rebuild than to re-strengthen.

I would learn that the site had always been in flux. The City Archives recorded it as 'Lot #46' belonging to a Mr. Thompson and was built around 1886-88. The first documentation of 296 Willis

Street was the proposal of a 'Refreshment Room' to be established on the premises in 1960. This elicited backlash and a written petition from neighbours objecting on the grounds that it would be a 'public nuisance' and elicit 'undesirable elements' to the area.

The history of the building is significant in documenting social change and the shift from a residential to commercial zone of the city. In 1972, Nancy Wall of Nancy's Snack Bar successfully won an appeal to the Town Clerk to extend her opening hours to 11pm on a weeknight to cater for a growing number of customers up that end of town who were 'taking out' for lunch. Objections were overturned on the grounds that the area would be a busy thoroughfare anyway with the newly developed motorway in the area. The Wellington Inner City Bypass has since irrevocably altered this historic neighborhood.

The title refers to *The Unavailable Memory of*, a piano score by composer John Cage composed on one staff of music drawing attention to empty space. This seemed fitting as my visitation to 'Gold Coin Café' on the eve of its imminent destruction felt like a haunting, documented through field recordings resonating pure quietness inside the fated building.

*The Unavailable Memory of Gold Coin Cafe* was first exhibited at Enjoy Public Art Gallery in Wellington in 2013 and again at Pataka Art + Museum in Porirua in 2015. The artwork comprises of a large freeform installation of plastic 'paper cuts' featuring photographic images rescued from the site and lucky Chinese symbols (plastic protects and 'future-proof' ephemeral things like menus), a 'reconstructed soundtrack' of restaurant noises, ambient sound and conversations played through audio cassette tape, and this catalogue of found materials that you are holding.

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*The Unavailable Memory of Gold Coin Café*  
Limited edition catalogue

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