

**From:** "Johnston, Sadhu" <Sadhu.Johnston@vancouver.ca>

**To:** "Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"

**CC:** "City Manager's Correspondence Group - DL"

**Date:** 3/17/2020 8:22:21 PM

**Subject:** New public artwork in Chinatown shines a light on Chinese Canadian cultural heritage

Dear Mayor and Council,

Tomorrow, a new public artwork will be installed on the building-side of 475 Main Street. We have decided to hold off on sending our news release to media but wanted to provide you with the information:

### **New public artwork in Chinatown shines a light on Chinese Canadian cultural heritage**

- A new neon artwork by award-winning Canadian artist and curator, Paul Wong, honouring the history of Cantonese migrants will be installed at 475 Main Street on March 18, 2020
- The piece is designed to promote discussion around the significance of, and challenge to, Chinese language and culture in the neighbourhood.
- The neon artwork displays the Chinese characters 鹹水哥 华, which translates to "Saltwater City Vancouver." It commemorates the award-winning Canadian artist and curator's early memories of the neighbourhood.
- The site, between Hastings and Pender, parallel to Main Street on the west side, was chosen by public vote in January 2019. It has particular historical significance as a former location of Vancouver City Hall (1889-1929) where mayors and councillors used the legal power of the City to enact and expand laws negatively targeting Chinese residents.
- "Saltwater City Vancouver/鹹水哥 华" was developed by Wong as part of his year-long residency "身在街 /Occupying Chinatown" at the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden (2018–2019) commissioned by the City of Vancouver Public Art Program.
- The launch of Wong's residency in April 2018 coincided with the City of Vancouver's formal apology for historical discrimination against Chinese residents in Vancouver. During the residency the artist has translated and examined over 700 letters and artifacts from his late mother Suk-Fong Wong, using them as a source of inspiration to realize workshops, performances, and artworks in photography, video, and sculpture including his neon work "Saltwater City Vancouver/鹹水哥 华".
- The letters and artworks were presented as part of his exhibition "淑芬嘛 /Suk-Fong Nay Ho Mah / Suk-Fong, How Are You?" at Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden in 2019, and provided an account of China's shifting cultural and political landscapes told through the personal perspectives of Wong's family, offering a unique understanding of China's transformation in the late-twentieth century.
- Saltwater City Vancouver/鹹水哥 华 is a Public Art project commissioned by the City of Vancouver Public Art Program in partnership with Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden, and is supported by The Prospero Group and the Audain Art Foundation.

Best,  
Sadhu

Sadhu Aufochs Johnston | City Manager  
Office of the City Manager | City of Vancouver  
604.873.7627 | [sadhu.johnston@vancouver.ca](mailto:sadhu.johnston@vancouver.ca)

Pronouns: he, him, his



*The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh peoples.*