

September 24 2015 - January 31, 2016

Chinese Style:
Rediscovering
the Architecture
of **Poy Gum Lee**
1923-1968

中国风：
建筑大师**李锦沛**
1923-1968 作品回顾

MUSEUM
OF
CHINESE
IN
AMERICA



MUSEUM OF CHINESE IN AMERICA (MOCA)

MOCA's mission is to celebrate the living history of the Chinese experience in America, to inspire our diverse communities to contribute to America's evolving cultural narrative and civil society, and to empower and bridge our communities across generations, ethnicities, and geography through our dynamic stories.

MEMBERSHIP

MOCA is giving away 35 Annual Family Memberships (valued at \$125 each) to celebrate our 35th anniversary. Join our online mailing list at www.mocanyc.org for a chance to win a membership!

MOCA members see it first! Join as a member to enjoy exclusive exhibition preview invitations and many more benefits! Join online at mocanyc.org/membership or by phone at 855.955.MOCA.

MUSEUM
OF
CHINESE
IN
AMERICA

Museum Hours

Monday: Closed

Tuesday – Sunday: 11 am – 6 pm

Thursday: 11 am – 9 pm*

*Free admission: First Thursday of the month.

MOCA is closed on select holidays. Please check our website for updates.

Admission

General Admission: \$10

Seniors (65+) and Students (ID required): \$5

Children under 12 (in groups smaller than 10): FREE

MOCA Members: FREE

Hours, admission prices, and schedule of events are subject to change.

MOCA Free First Thursdays

Free gallery admission first Thursday of each month except on major holidays. Made possible through the generosity of the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs and the J.T. Tai & Co. Foundation.

VISIT

MOCA is located between Howard & Grand Streets; one block north of Canal Street.

By subway: N, Q, R, J, Z, and 6 trains to Canal Street; M9, M15, M103 buses. The nearest parking lot is located at Centre and Hester Streets.

Museum: 215 Centre Street, New York, NY 10013

855.955.MOCA | info@mocanyc.org

Collections & Research Center: 70 Mulberry Street, 2nd floor, New York, NY 10013

collections@mocanyc.org

ACCESSIBILITY

MOCA is committed to making its collection, buildings, programs and services accessible to audiences. Visit www.mocanyc.org/visit/accessibility for more information or contact the museum about how we can accommodate your specific needs.

access@mocanyc.org

Chinese Style: Rediscovering the Architecture of Poy Gum Lee, 1923–1968 and related programs are made possible with the generous support of S.H. Ho Foundation, Con Edison, Two Bridges Neighborhood Council, Michael Kaye, and public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York Legislature.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The curator wishes to acknowledge the following individuals for their invaluable contributions to the exhibition: The family of Poy Gum Lee: Elizabeth (Pinky) Chan, Kent Lee Jue, Kristin Eglinton, Bruce Ma; Museum of Chinese in America: Herb Tam, Andrew Rebatta, Yue Ma, Kevin Chu, Jade Chung; Mark Bussell; Jason Black; Charlotte Brooks; Michael Kaye; Cíntia Kou; Eric Ng; Victor Papa; Changxin Peng; Martina Salisbury and Nathan Linkous; Justin Yu; Ryan Bean, Kautz Family, YMCA Archives, University of Minnesota Libraries; and her colleagues at Two Bridges Neighborhood Council.

Foreword

In Fall 2015, the Museum of Chinese in America presents not one but two outstanding architecture exhibitions that document an un-named part of Chinese American history and culture—the aesthetics of our buildings and homes. Curator Kerri Culhane for *Chinese Style: Re-discovering the Architecture of Poy Gum Lee, 1923-1968* and Curator Stephen Fan for *SUB URBANISMS: Casino Urbanization, Chinatowns and the Contested American Landscape*, expand the resonances of their subjects and allow visitors to consider the determining forces driving the external and internal features of these buildings and houses. Through exhaustive research and critical approaches, these exhibitions illuminate aspects of Chinese American aesthetics and add layers of complexity to the intentions behind Chinese American cultural production.

Chinese Style: Re-discovering the Architecture of Poy Gum Lee, 1923-1968 presents architecture as a vessel for political associations and as a reckoning with shifting ideas of modern “Chineseness” through the work of a New York Chinatown prodigal son who trained in the U.S., worked in China, then returned to Chinatown to build some of its key civic buildings. Curator and architectural historian Kerri Culhane’s interest in Poy Gum Lee grew when she was conducting an architectural survey of Chinatown and found Lee’s name attributed to many of the buildings. The years-long research project into his work brought to light Lee’s important contributions in China and Chinatown, and offers a window into architectural thinking in New York Chinatown at a crucial juncture in its history.

Like *Chinese Style*, designer Stephen Fan’s project *SUB URBANISMS: Casino Urbanization, Chinatowns, and the Contested American Landscape*, an exhibition that was first presented at the Lyman Allyn Art Museum in New London, Connecticut focuses on architecture in a specific community, but one that is outside the traditional urban Chinatowns. His subject is no less than the American Dream, represented by suburban life and the single-family ranch house. Many recent Chinese immigrants or those who had been living in urban Chinatowns have moved into America’s suburbs, transforming the demographic and architectural landscape of these neighborhoods. A native of suburban Connecticut whose parents run a Chinese restaurant in Montville, Connecticut, Fan analyzes and interprets the physical alterations made

by Chinese casino workers to houses in one particular suburb outside the Mohegan Sun Casino in Southeastern Connecticut and how these alterations upend traditional notions of the American Dream.

This publication offers extended texts from the curators that elaborate on their projects' key themes. We thank Kerri Culhane and Stephen Fan for their essential contributions to the scholarship of architecture and aesthetics in Chinese communities in America.

We also wish to acknowledge the following for their support of these exhibitions:

SUB URBANISMS: Casino Urbanization, Chinatowns, and the Contested American Landscape and related programs are made possible from public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council and the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York Legislature. Additional support for the exhibition is provided by The Starr Foundation.

Chinese Style: Rediscovering the Architecture of Poy Gum Lee, 1923 - 1968 and related programs are made possible with the generous support of S.H. Ho Foundation, Con Edison, Two Bridges Neighborhood Council, Michael Kaye, and public funds from the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York Legislature.

Nancy Yao Maasbach
President

Herb Tam
Curator and Director of Exhibitions



Poy Gum Lee at the drafting table
(undated photo, possibly late 1930s).
Poy Gum Lee Archive.

Rediscovering the Architecture of Poy Gum Lee

Kerri Culhane

I. From Chinatown to China

When Poy Gum Lee was born into a merchant family at 13 Mott Street on January 14, 1900, Chinatown was confined to three small streets—Pell, Doyers and lower Mott. Lee grew up in a neighborhood that, for less than a quarter century, had been adapted for Chinese use and taste. By accretion, Chinese ornamental motifs were incorporated into the streetscapes of Chinatown, as carpenters and artisans, rather than architects, retrofitted existing tenements and townhouses into Chinese associations, restaurants, and general stores. The elaborately carved wooden screens or cast iron balconies helped establish the perceived boundaries of Chinatown, while creating an exotic ambiance that tourists believed was designed for their benefit.

One of those stores, Quong Yuen Shing, featured ornately carved woodwork imported from China; it was owned by Lee's father, Canton-born Lee Yick Dep (1864-1924). Poy Gum Lee was one of 15 children (12 surviving); he was the eldest of 11 born to Lee Yick Dep and his third wife, Ng She (1880-1943). In bachelor-filled Chinatown, the presence of a large Chinese family—with American-born children—was uncommon and remarkable. Constrained by the Chinese Exclusion Acts, the Lee family's merchant status afforded relative privilege within Chinatown. By the time Poy Gum Lee was a teenager, the family moved to the tenement above the family store at 32 Mott Street.

Lee mediated the worlds of an insular Chinatown and a cosmopolitan city. Lee's love of art from an early age led him to Dewitt Clinton High School, where he was captain of the "Art Team." After completing a three-year course in architectural construction and design at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, Lee continued his architecture studies at MIT over the summer of 1921, and in Columbia's Beaux-Arts Institute's night school in



Chinatown, ca. 1900.
Detroit Publishing, Library of Congress.

Lee Family Portrait,
ca. 1918. Poy Gum Lee
stands in the rear,
second from the left.
Poy Gum Lee Archive.



1922 and 1923, while gaining experience in architectural offices in New York and Chicago. A Beaux-Arts architectural education emphasized drawing and rendering skills; while architecture was considered a practical career, it would also allow Lee to express his creativity.

From 1918 to 1923, Lee's architectural education took him from New York to Boston, Chicago and Detroit; his work experience as a young architect came as draftsman, detailer and construction superintendent in the offices of well-known New York and Chicago firms: W.H. Rahmann & Sons; J.B. Snook & Sons; Edward D. Shank; Murphy, McGill & Hamlin; J.F. Jackson; and Ludlow & Peabody. Lee's first encounter with projects in China, though at a distance, came as a draftsman & detailer in the New York office of Murphy McGill & Hamlin from September 1921 to May 1922. During this time, Lee worked on the Augusta (Georgia) YMCA and Peking University (Beijing), both projects priming him for his career in China.

In late 1923, Lee's plans to move to China with his family were underway when a colleague at Ludlow & Peabody in New York told him of an opportunity at the Young Men's Christian Association's China Building Bureau. The YMCA had been trying for a year to hire a qualified architect to staff the Shanghai office; though Lee lacked the extensive experience they sought, his drawings, "poise ... and high degree of culture and refinement" were impressive. Hired in late October on a three-year contract, Lee and his family departed for China as planned on November 10, 1923.¹

As the first staff architect of the YMCA's China Building Bureau based in Shanghai, Lee was responsible for designing and overseeing construction of the new YMCA buildings throughout China.



Interior of Quong Yuen Shing, ca. 1920.
Postcard from the MOCA
Collection

Lee entered private practice in 1927, the same year the Chinese Society of Architects was founded in Shanghai, the first professional organization for architects in China. Like many of his contemporaries, Lee practiced in a range of styles befitting the pan-cultural experience of China in the 20s & 30s. With its concentration of foreign wealth and influence, 1920s Shanghai was fertile ground for hybrid styles of architecture to develop. European architects in Shanghai popularized art deco and International modernism, which was adapted locally with Chinese architectural elements and motifs.

With offices in Shanghai and Nanjing, the scope of Lee's stylistic references for private and public commissions reflects the era: from the picturesque and eclectic revivalism of the 1910s-30s, to emerging modernist styles. Though born and educated in America, Lee's architectural education—at Pratt, Columbia, and MIT—coincided with the emergence of architectural professionalism in China, and with the emergence of a modern Chinese style.

II. Chinese Style & Architectural Professionalism

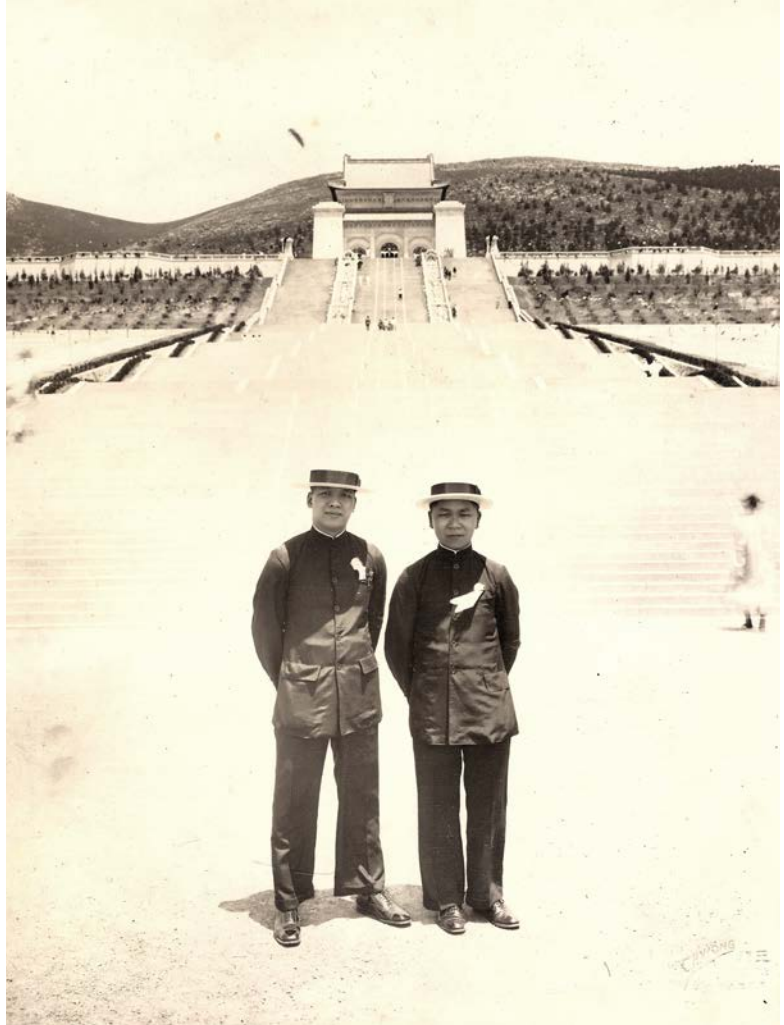
Architecture is a potent medium of cultural expression. How Chinese identity could or should be manifested through architecture in the Chinese Republic was a fundamental tension in the nascent Chinese architectural profession in the 1920s and 30s. As the Chinese Republic embraced western ideas and technologies in service of modernization—but sought to retain and express the essential elements of Chinese identity—a hybrid modern architecture emerged, fully reflective of the political and cultural ferment in China during the Nationalist era.



The first generation of Chinese architects formed the Society of Chinese Architects in Shanghai in 1927, the first professional membership association for architects practicing in China. Lee was founding treasurer & secretary, and served as president in 1930 & 1936. Lee's membership certificate, dated December of the 16th year of the Republic (1927), features a traditional Chinese architectural element, the *dougong*, or bracket set, as watermark. Poy Gum Lee Archive.

Lee paired the streamline moderne Wusong Quarantine Station with a Chinese-roofed tower, which served as a beacon to boats arriving on the river. Poy Gum Lee Archive.

The Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum in Nanjing (1926–1929), designed by University of Pennsylvania graduate Lu Yanzhi and completed by Poy Gum Lee (left), typified the hybrid modern Chinese style. Poy Gum Lee Archive.



There is no unifying style to fully describe the breadth of Chinese architectural history—in China prior to the rise of architectural professionalism, there is no such thing as the “Chinese Style.” In the twentieth century, the contemporary terms Neo-Chinese, Chinese Modern, Chinese Revival, Adaptive Chinese, Indigenous and Chinese style all referred to the same impulse to reflect Chinese culture within a modern architectural composition.

In the hybrid modern Chinese style of the 1920s and later, traditional Chinese spatial organization, program, and structure were superseded by western organization and building technologies; regionalism and the vast range and variety of Chinese architectural traditions were disregarded in favor of a visual, ornamental shorthand for “Chinese-ness”: the

stylistic elements unique to traditional architecture in China—heavy tiled roofs, upturned eaves, ornate carvings, and colorful stylized paintings. The *dougong*, or bracket set, a typical supporting feature of traditional timber-framed Chinese building, became a symbolic vestige of traditional Chinese architecture—the *dougong* was now cast of reinforced concrete, rather than hand cut from timber.

The Chinese style of the 1920s and 30s descended, ironically, from a picturesque Oriental revivalism promoted by American and European missionary architects in China in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. New York-based architect Henry K. Murphy, principal of Murphy & Dana (later Murphy McGill & Hamlin) was perhaps the foremost architectural proponent of the incorporation of Chinese architectural elements into modern construction in the early Nationalist period. His “Chinese Adaptive” architecture primarily consisted of adding Chinese style roofs to western style buildings, with ornament inspired by the Imperial City in Peking (Beijing)—yet another irony, the use of Imperial architectural precedents to symbolize Republican China.ⁱⁱ

The First Generation

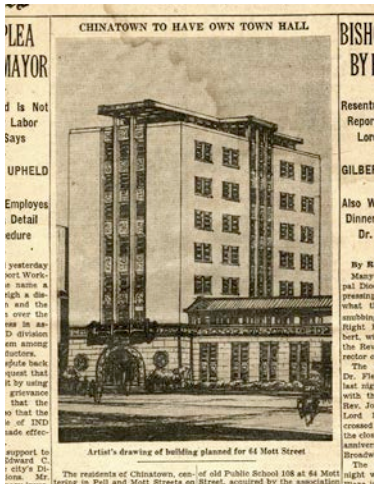
For millennia, building in China adhered to regional craft traditions—architecture did not exist as a profession. During the first decades of the twentieth century, many young Chinese were sent abroad to American and European architecture and engineering schools with the intention of bringing back needed skills to a modernizing China; these architects were to become members of the first generation [第一代] of professional architects in China, and among them was Poy Gum Lee.

The first generation of Chinese architects was heavily influenced by western representations of Chinese-ness. Notably, in the late 1910s and early 1920s, the Murphy office employed several of the leading practitioners of the first generation, including Lu Yanzhi, Fan Wenzhao [Robert Fan], Dong Dayou, Zhao Shen, and Poy Gum Lee. As draftsman and detailer in Murphy’s New York office in 1921-22, Lee was assigned to the Peking University project, detailing “Chinese Adaptive” buildings two years before Lee ever set foot in China.

III. From China to Chinatown

Lee’s successful career in China was cut short by the Japanese occupation (1937-1945) and the unrelenting Chinese Civil War. Repatriated to New York in 1945, Lee embarked on a new phase of his career that had brought architectural modernism from China to Chinatown.

By the 1940s, the first generation was moving away from the “big roofs” and the modern Chinese style, embracing mid-century modernism and



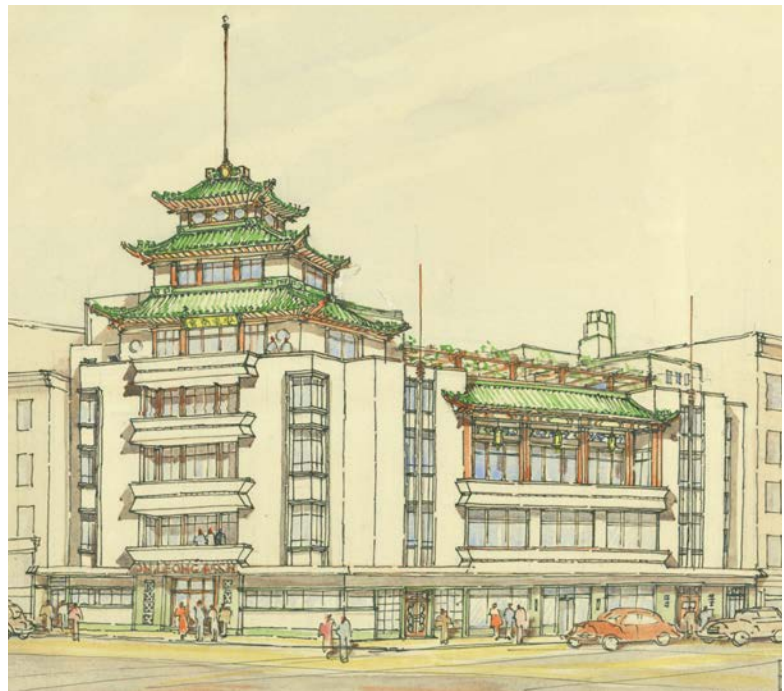
Lee's first design in Chinatown, the CCBA (1947), reflects his aesthetic shift toward mid century modernism, with restrained references to Chinese ornamental motifs. Clipping from the *New York Times* in the Poy Gum Lee Archive.

Lee's design for the On Leong Tong (1948), with pagoda roof and art deco detailing, harkens back to the hybrid modern Chinese style of the 20s & 30s. Poy Gum Lee Archive.

the Bauhaus. Lee, too, was moving away from the Chinese roofs and ornament. Returning to Chinatown in the 1940s, however, Lee found himself in the center of a Nationalist stronghold, and his patrons, the civic leaders of Chinatown, were keen to distinguish themselves from the Communists during the height of the Red Scare.ⁱⁱⁱ Recently the National style of China, the modern Chinese style of architecture—big roofs, temple tiles, colorful paintings—formed a cultural bulwark against accusations of Communism, which was associated more closely with a stripped Soviet modernism.

On Lee's resume, he noted that most of his work was "confined to the Chinatown area of New York City, where I best can be of service to my Chinese people." Though Lee was employed as Senior Architect with the New York City Housing Authority from 1951-1962, he worked on scores of projects for private clients between 1946-1968. The abundance of drawings and blueprints he left behind are evidence of a prolific talent who was the go-to architect for projects of all scales, from signage and storefront design to apartment remodelings and new construction in and around the city.

By early 1947, Lee was engaged by the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA) to lead the committee to design and build a new Chinese Community Center. Lee's design, a boxy modernist block with



modest Chinese decorative motifs, was aligned with the new direction he was taking during the 1940s. Remarking on Lee's proposed design, his brother-in-law in Shanghai congratulated Lee on having "the honour to introduce Chinese architecture to the United States."^{iv}

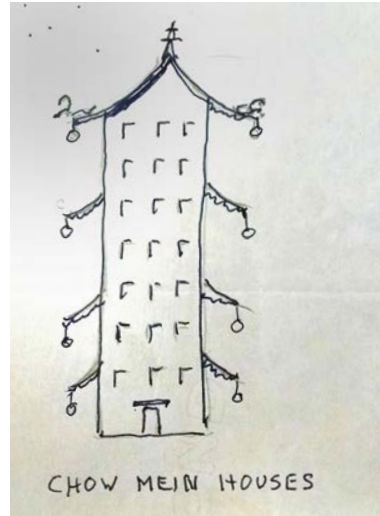
In May 1948, Lee produced color presentation drawings of two versions of his proposed design for a new On Leong Tong building at the corner of Mott and Canal. The most iconic building in Chinatown, the pagoda-topped On Leong Tong building typified Lee's Chinese modern style—*The New York Times* described it as being "built along both Chinese and American lines."

As would be the case for both of Lee's major projects in Chinatown, while Lee clearly developed the concepts and overall design direction for the work, the built versions of the On Leong Tong (Andrew J. Thomas) and CCBA (Andrew S. Yuen) are attributed to other architects. No conclusive evidence has revealed the reason for the last minute substitutions.

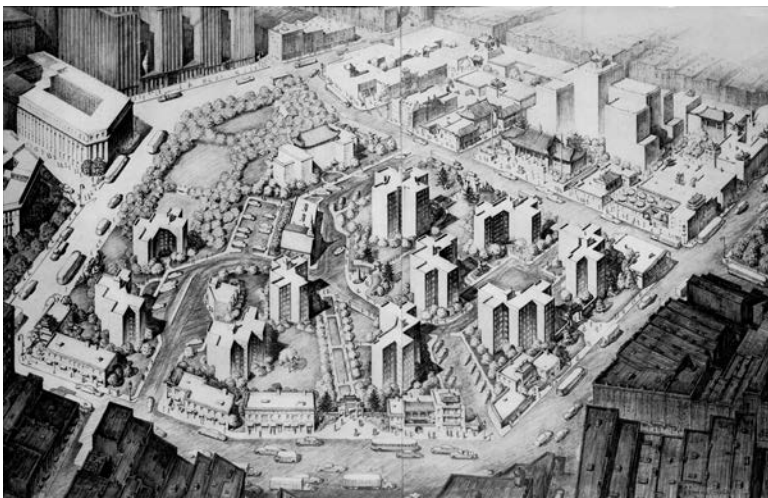
Upon its opening, it was noted in *The New York Times* that the building was a "forerunner" of other buildings proposed in the neighborhood, which would "fit neatly into the design" of China Village, a proposal to replace the historic core of Chinatown through urban renewal, and to incorporate Chinese decorative elements into the new construction.^v

IV. China Village

As proposed by the New York State Division of Housing in 1950, the China Village Title I Urban Renewal Plan would have replaced 15 acres of the historic core of Chinatown with towers-in-the-park style housing blocks, blatantly ridiculed by Robert Moses and New York City Housing



Robert Moses openly ridiculed the China Village Plan. He and NYCHA's director General T.F. Farrell filed this "architect's rendering" of "Chow Mein Houses"—a play on NYCHA's project naming convention, in May 1950. New York City Housing Authority Papers, Box 68C3, Folder 1. The LaGuardia and Wagner Archives, LaGuardia Community College/The City University of New York.



The State's China Village Urban Renewal Plan was promoted by the American Legion and other Chinatown organizations as a means of providing better housing for the Chinese veterans returning from the war. A consequence of the American-Chinese alliance in WWII was an end to the Chinese Exclusion Acts, enabling Chinese wives to immigrate to America for the first time. New York State Housing Plan, 1951.

Much of Lee's work in the 1950s was aligned with the goals of the China Village Plan. Hoy Sun Ning Yung did not add the Chinese roof proposed by Lee for their already imposing Sun Lau building at the bend in Mott Street (1953), but Lee reworked the upper floors of the Lee Family Association in 1950, the former On Leong Tong building at 41 Mott Street (right). Poy Gum Lee Archive.



In keeping with China Village era proposal to emphasize Chinese style buildings, Lee revised his proposal for the CCBA's Chinese Community Center on Mott Street in 1957, adding a large Chinese roof. Two years later, the final design by Andrew S. Yuen clearly reflected the influence of Lee's 1957 design. Poy Gum Lee Archive.



Authority chairman T.F. Farrell as the "Chow Mein Houses." A Chinese cultural museum supported by the China Institute and a fringe of low-rise commercial and cultural buildings with Chinese details would help retain the feeling of "authenticity."^{vi}

Most of Lee's Chinatown work in the 1950s reflected the stylistic aims of the China Village Plan. During the China Village era, the design for the CCBA's Chinatown Community Center changed dramatically to create a more distinctly "Chinese" building featuring a full-blown Chinese roof. The composition is not unlike that of the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum Lee helped complete in 1929; given the CCBA's allegiance to the Nationalist

government of China, this would not be a coincidence. Working with fellow architect Wei Foo Chun, Lee signed this image as “delineator” rather than architect, but is listed as architect and architectural consultant on other documents.

The final version of the CCBA, built in 1959-1960, is attributed to Andrew S. Yuen. The Chinese Community Center, like the On Leong Tong building, is yet another example of how Lee’s architectural precedents clearly influenced the final design. It is unclear why the last-minute switch—the expense of the Chinese roof has been a suggestion for the change; the final defeat of the China Village Plan, which the Lee & Chun design was clearly intended to help fulfill, is yet another possible explanation.

In 1959, Lee was engaged by the Kimlau Post of the American Legion to design a monument to commemorate Chinese American World War II hero pilot Benjamin Ralph Kimlau. Lee chose to design a traditional Chinese ceremonial gate in a stripped modern style, creating a modern memorial and gateway to Chinatown.

The Pagoda Theater on East Broadway & Catherine Street was the last new building in Chinatown designed by Lee to be constructed. Designed in 1963 and built for a consortium of businessmen just beyond the traditional confines of the historic core of Chinatown, the asymmetrical theater incorporated a few of Lee’s recurrent elements, including the tower with hexagonal windows and stylized metal screens. The pagoda roof lacked the scale, substance, and integration of Lee’s earlier efforts, and the result was more kitsch than any of Lee’s earlier work. Nevertheless, it was a landmark in Chinatown until it was demolished in the early 1990s.

V. Lee’s Legacy

As the first Chinese American architect to design for Chinese American clients in Chinatown, Lee’s modernist approach influenced the changing local architectural aesthetic from 1946-1968. Lee’s hand is visible in the major civic architecture of Chinatown post 1945, which incorporates stylistically Chinese motifs into mid-century modern buildings. To date, Lee’s work and impact on Chinatown has been little known and possibly misunderstood. Chinatown buildings that referenced Chinese stylistic elements—temple tile roofs, upturned eaves, and ornamented balconies—have long been considered quaint Orientalist caricatures for the benefit of tourists.

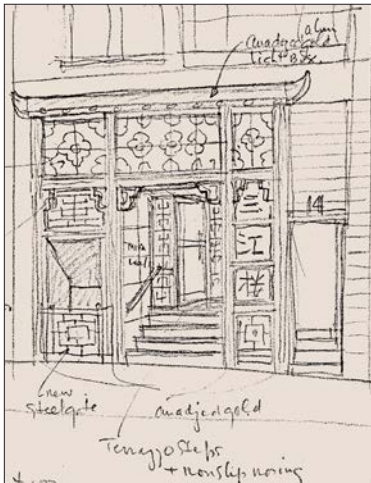
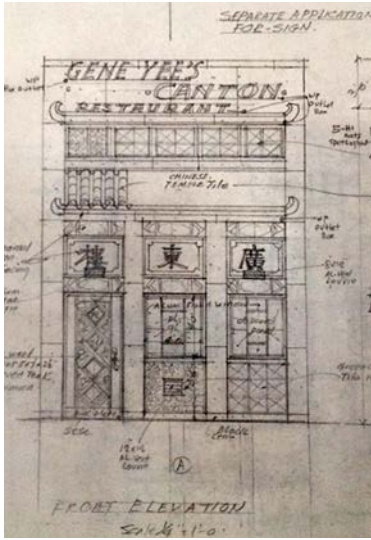
Lee’s major work in both China and New York demonstrates his capability in expressing a fully integrated modern Chinese style, distinct from the vernacular and kitsch Orientalism associated with what Robert Moses’ and cronies in the 1950s dismissed as “Chow Mein Houses”



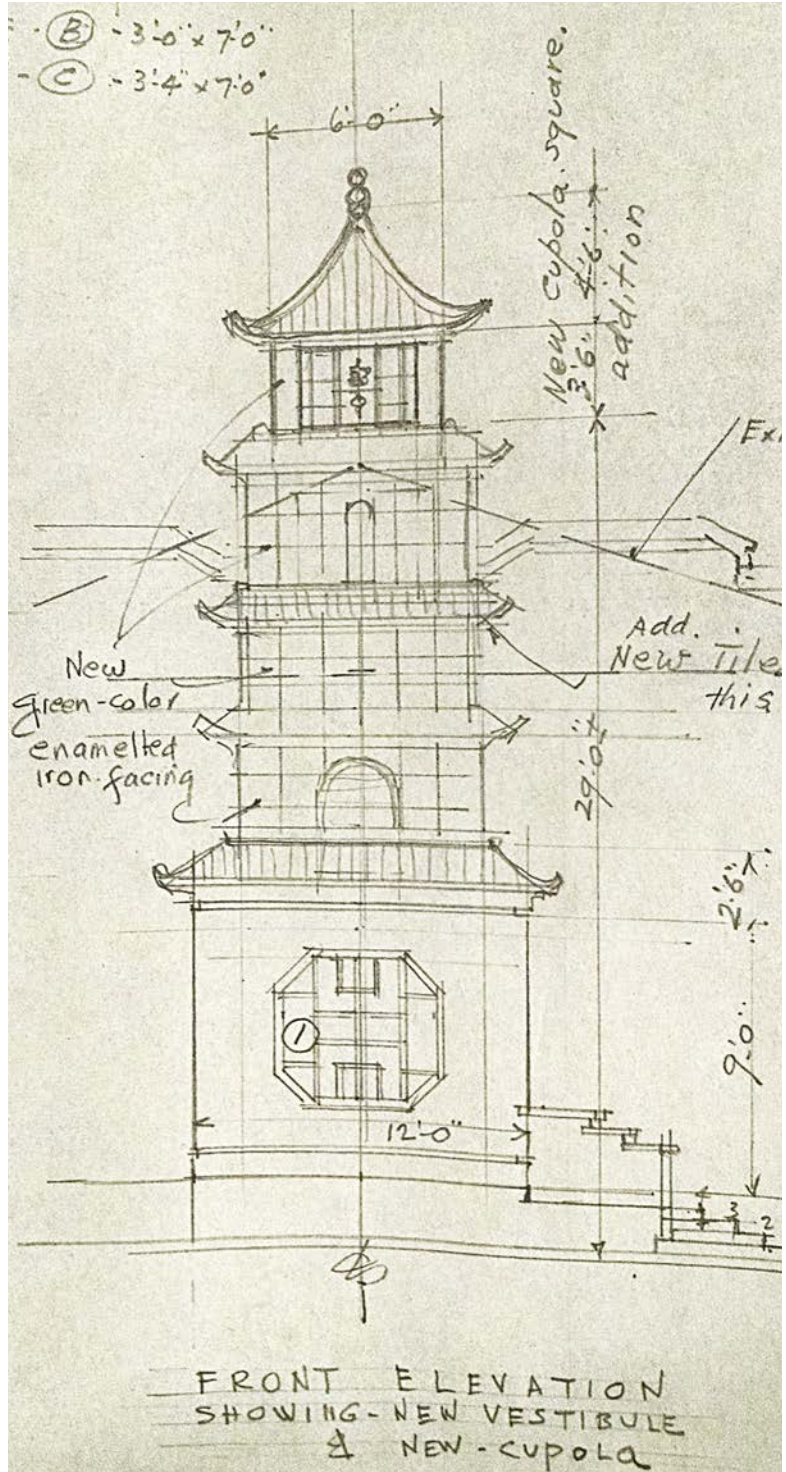
Lee designed the Kimlau Monument (1959–1962) as a stripped modern take on a ceremonial *pailou/pilau*. Photo by Mark Bussell.



The Pagoda Theater (1963–64) was the last new Lee commission built in Chinatown, straddling the boundary between the modern Chinese style and Orientalist kitsch. Poy Gum Lee Archive.



Three Lee designs for Chinese restaurant facades. Right: King Wah Restaurant, Huntington, NY (1954; pencil on tracing paper, detail). Top: Gene Yee's Canton Restaurant, 265 West 45th Street (1964; pencil on vellum, detail). Bottom: Perspective sketch of Ping-Wo Restaurant, 14 Mott Street (ca. 1967; pencil on tracing paper). Poy Gum Lee Archive.



architecture. Yet much of Lee’s work in New York—largely unrealized or since destroyed—was in fact in service of the many restaurants and small businesses that culturally and visibly defined Chinatown and the Chinese American economy, and which, like the Pagoda Theater, straddled the boundary between a modern Chinese style and Orientalism.

As noted in the headline of Lee’s obituary on the front page of the *Chinese-American Times*, “Architect P.G. Lee Bridged Two Cultures.”^{vii} A son of Chinatown, Lee brought western modern architecture and technology to China, and reimported them to Chinatown, inflected with the ideals of the Chinese Republic—a celebration the achievements of Chinese culture and its embrace of modernity.

ⁱ Charles A. Herschleb to Charles W. Harvey, October 20, 1923. Records of YMCA International Work in China, Box 67. Kautz Family YMCA Archives. University of Minnesota.

ⁱⁱ Jeffrey W. Cody. 2001. *Building in China: Henry K. Murphy’s “Adaptive Architecture”*, 1914-1935. University of Washington Press.

ⁱⁱⁱ Charlotte Brooks. 2014. *Between Mao and McCarthy: Chinese American Politics in the Cold War Years*. University of Chicago Press. pp. 129-132.

^{iv} James Choye to Poy Gum Lee. Letter dated June 24, 1947. Poy Gum Lee Archive.

^v *New York Times*, November 7, 1950

^{vi} New York City Housing Authority Papers, Box 68C3, Folder 1. The LaGuardia and Wagner Archives, LaGuardia Community College/The City University of New York; New York State Housing Plan, 1951.

^{vii} Lee Obituary, *Chinese-American Times*. Vol. XIX, No. 5&6 (May-June 1968), front page.



Lee’s unrealized design for a Chinese theater and hotel on Doyers Street typified his integration of Chinese motifs with modern architecture (1967; pencil on paper). Poy Gum Lee Archive.

Public Programs

MOCA's signature public programs are for everyone, including expert panels, performances, films, workshops, and literary readings. Join MOCA today!

Rediscovering the Architecture of Poy Gum Lee

Thursday, October 8, 2015,
6:30 pm

It's hard to miss the On Leong Tong building on Mott and Canal. With its pagoda façade and ornamented balconies, this iconic building originally designed by Chinese American architect Poy Gum Lee reveals the distinct hybrid modern architectural style often referred to as "Chinese modern." Through Poy Gum Lee's body of work in Chinatown and in China, guest curator Kerri Culhane illuminates Lee's influence on the architectural aesthetics in Chinatown, the cultural and political impulses behind this architecture style, and the role of the built environment as an expression of identity.

Walking Tour: Poy Gum Lee's Chinatown

Sunday, October 18, 2015, 1:00 pm

See what Chinatown looked like in 1963, at the time of the completion of the Pagoda Theater. Guest curator Kerri Culhane leads a walking tour of Chinatown that traces architect Poy Gum Lee's life and highlights his work and influence on the architecture of Chinatown.

Is There a "Right" Way to Live in a Home?: Re-imagining the American Dream

Thursday, October 22, 2015,
6:30 pm

The single family detached house with a front lawn is synonymous with the suburban American dream. Maintaining a perfectly mowed lawn became part of the suburban code of conduct and a symbol of affluence. In the suburban Connecticut

neighborhoods adjacent to Mohegan Sun casino, Chinese casino workers have transformed single family homes into multifamily communities, and many front lawns have become places to grow vegetables, socialize, and even dry fish. Stephen Fan, guest curator of *SUB URBANISMS* unpacks the origins and implications of these interventions to domestic architecture and landscape and what they mean to our prevailing norms of beauty, order, and socio-cultural ideals of home.

Chinese American "Returnees"

Sunday, November 8, 2015,
2:30 pm

Born in New York City to Chinese immigrant parents in 1900, Poy Gum Lee and his family moved to China in 1923. Armed with an architectural education from Pratt Institute, MIT, and Columbia University, he embarked on a professional career in China. Lee's story is far from unique. Census and immigration statistics suggest that 15-20% of all Chinese American citizens in the first half of the 20th century left the United States for China. Charlotte Brooks, author of the forthcoming *Immigrants from America: The Chinese American Second Generation in China, 1900-1949*, examines the important roles Chinese American "returnees" played in shaping the Republic

of China during this time of immense change in China.

Please check the website for public program updates.

Guided Gallery Tours

EVERY SATURDAY, 3:00 PM

Museum educators will take you on an in-depth exploration of the permanent and special exhibitions. Stop by a MOCACREATE art workshop first. Separate Chinatown walking tours are also available.

Chinatown Walking Tours

Chinatown Architecture:

Urban Transformations

Sat, October 3, 10, 17, 24; Sat, November 7 & 14, 1:00 pm

Where can you find a Chinese theatre in the backyard of a Dutch brewery, tenements hidden from plain sight, a factory turned museum, and a 127-year-old family business? Explore the centuries of history that lie behind the brick and mortar facades of some of Chinatown's most celebrated buildings, both preserved and long gone.

From Coffeehouses to Banquet Halls:

Sat, October 31;
Sat, November 21, 1:00 pm

Restaurants have always played an essential role in NYC's Chinatown. Trace the evolution of eateries in Chinatown, highlighting stories of diversity—the flavors of China's regional cuisines converging in New York City; stories of legacy—Chinatown's sons and daughters who grow up to be entrepreneurs and restaurateurs; and stories of evolution—a constant weaving between the classic and modern, the old and the new.

Education Highlights

Enjoy MOCACREATE drop-in art workshops every 1st and 3rd Saturday of the month, from 1 - 4 pm. A fun afternoon of art-making for all ages. Paint, build, craft, and design your way through the museum.

Chinatown Places and Spaces

October 3 & 17

Investigate how buildings in Chinatown are more than meets the eye! Uncover their stories and construct your very own building facade out of wacky materials.

Build it Green!

November 7 & 21

Discover new ways to make your neighborhood more eco-friendly. Put your knowledge to the test by designing your own DREAM green home or public space, while still conserving resources!

Tiny Terrariums

December 5 & 19

Bring the outside in by creating a one of a kind terrarium using moss, soil, clay, and more! These miniature worlds are their own ecosystem, and make the perfect gift for a friend or family member.

What's your Cause?

January 16

Using MOCA's collection as your inspiration, learn the basics of printmaking. Create art that takes a stand and inspires others to take action!