

Discovery



ART WOK

CULTURE

Montréal installation artist Karen Tam is tempting the taste buds of Canadian gallery-goers with a tribute to family-run Chinese restaurants.

Most Canadian cities have at least one Chinese restaurant, and historically, they introduced many people to Asian culture. Tam, 28, who worked in her parents' Montréal restaurant as a teen, hopes her art will increase cross-cultural dialogue by encouraging viewers to reconsider ethnic stereotypes.

To prepare her shows, Tam interviews restaurateurs in the cities she visits and gathers second-hand furniture and fixtures to re-create typical 1960s decor, and

Delving into Chinese restaurant culture at the Alternator Gallery in Kelowna, B.C.

relay a message. Rice bags have stories and images of the Chinese contribution to building Canada's railways, while menus include racial slurs and the origins of dishes. She adds paper lanterns, culinary videos and tongue-in-cheek fortunes.

Tam says chain outlets and fusion eateries are replacing the older establishments her art evokes. "People tell me my work brings them back to when they were younger and went to the local Chinese restaurant," she says.

In the new year, Tam will take installations to Montréal, Brandon, Man., and London and Windsor in Ontario.

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