



## Inspire! Grants for Small Museums

Sample Application IGSM-249920-OMS-21  
Project Category: Community Anchors

### Chinese Culture Foundation of San Francisco

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$50,000
Amount of cost share:	\$50,110

The project description can be viewed in the IMLS Awarded Grants Search:  
<https://www.imls.gov/grants/awarded/igsm-249920-oms-21>

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Narrative
- Schedule of Completion

When preparing an application for the next deadline, be sure to follow the instructions in the most recent Notice of Funding Opportunity for the grant program and project category (if applicable) to which you are applying.

### **Project Justification**

The Chinese Culture Foundation of San Francisco (Chinese Culture Center, CCC) respectfully requests \$50,000 to support **XianRui: Cathy Lu (2021)**, a 7-month exhibition and a community co-designed Youth Engagement Program, exploring relevant topics that reflect on the state of Asian American identity and xenophobia facing the community.

This Community Anchor initiative aims to strengthen community connections and provide greater access to art for Chinatown youths and the community through timely programming that implement priorities identified in our 2020 - 2025 Strategic Plan (See “Strategic Plan Summary”) that focuses on the commissioning of high quality, socially relevant work from underserved artists, incubating our artists over time and creating long-lead collaborative relationships with community partners to foster opportunities to co-design meaningful projects.

### **Need**

Founded in 1965 and based in San Francisco’s Chinatown, CCC was established to advance cultural equity, broaden perspectives and understanding of Chinese diasporic cultures, and carve out a creative space for Chinatown’s artistic and cultural community in the wake of civil and immigrant rights movements. Over the past 55 years, CCC has served as the arts and cultural anchor for Chinatown and Asian Americans in the Bay Area, continuing this legacy of social justice. In the past decade, we work to shift predominant and limited cultural narratives around our communities by deeply investing in the work of underrepresented contemporary artists and increasing public access to art through culturally relevant programming. **XianRui (Founded in 2008)** became the nation’s first initiative that features work by pioneering, emerging and mid-career contemporary artists of Chinese descent. At the same time, we also began to invest in providing access to communities through building opportunities throughout the Chinatown neighborhood for the presentation of art, from public festivals in public parks, to pop-up programs in vacant storefronts to address the ongoing environmental factors affecting our neighborhood.

Our community has voiced a need to shape new narratives within our marginalized community, particularly for the younger generation. Chinatown is deeply under-resourced, home to 20,000 of the City’s poorest residents from diverse ethnic backgrounds including domestic violence survivors, Single Resident Occupants (families are crammed in single rooms, sharing kitchen & toilets/bathrooms), new immigrants, seniors, and service providers. Arts to empower creative voices has been historically disproportionate- Asian Americans are a third of the population in San Francisco, yet receive only 6% of arts City funding.<sup>1</sup> CCC is a recognized voice for cultural advocacy and trusted community anchor, and participates and benchmark our work informed by collaboration and studies from larger coalitions, such as Asian Pacific Islander (API) Council, a 55-member coalition of nonprofit organizations serving Asian and Pacific Islander communities advocacy groups. (See Supporting Document 2 for Support Letter from API Council) Today, COVID-19 have also deeply impacted both the overall economic depression and xenophobic and racist attacks on Asian immigrants, particularly Asian Americans and Chinatown, creating a groundswell of need for creative expression for youth and the community.

***XianRui: Cathy Lu* Exhibition and Youth Engagement Program is a timely expansion of our anchor program identified in our 2020-25 Strategic Plan, XianRui, putting together our decade-long track record in incubating artists and building strong communities in order to meet our neighborhood’s urgent needs for reflecting on the state of Asian American identity and xenophobia facing the community.**

In our past projects, we learned that museums can play an active role in incubating artists and stewarding relationships to in order engage ethically, thoughtfully, and creatively in a way sustains communities. (See Supporting Document 5 for Past Project of Similar Nature). Our approach have accomplished great long term

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<sup>1</sup> San Francisco Supervisor Eric Mar Study on City Arts Funding, <http://www.culturalequitymatters.org/?p=187>retrieved, November 13, 2020.

success through previous collaborative projects such as, 2014 XianRui with Summer Mei-Ling Lee that propelled her artistic practice leading to a complex public art project in Chinatown, as well as our ongoing collaboration the Chinatown public housing nonprofit Chinatown Community Development Center (CCDC) to sustain a storefront studio space for community activation (See letters of Supporting Document 3 & 4 by Summer Lee and CCDC). By supporting the artist's vision and collaborating closely with the community, we can create bold art with community transformation.

Informed by best practices, we have selected and planned alongside an innovative lead artist, Cathy Lu, and community partner, Community Youth Center (CYC) to ensure project success. Cathy Lu is a noted local artist & educator whose work in ceramics, installation, and painting utilizes traditional Chinese art objects and symbols as a way to deconstruct Asian American identity, cultural authenticity, and the value placed on Asian lives and bodies, particularly women's. Lu herself also brings tremendous strengths to this process as a long time educator at community and collegiate levels and was selected because of her experience (See "Resume" for Artist CV attachment). This project also builds on foundation of community stakeholder that not only informs responsive programs that address the most relevant needs and issues of residents, but to help us learn how best to adapt and pivot to think about our work strategically over time and to ensure that artists continue to play a role in helping envision new possibilities for our futures together. This is why CCC has been fostering relationships with key youth program partner CYC and introduced them to Lu and her work well in advance of this project. Preliminary discussions with CYC have contributed to the design of "XianRui: Cathy Lu." (Please refer to Supporting Document 1 for Letter of Commitment in Attachment from CYC).

### **Benefit**

The project will directly impact Chinatown Youths identified by our community partner, Community Youth Center (CYC), as co-creators, participants, and audiences of a culturally relevant contemporary art project. With intentional outreach to reach underserved populations through bilingual printed postcards and brochures, the 7-Month free admission exhibition will also benefit the Chinatown community through providing increased access to art, serving new immigrants, the working class, youth and seniors in poverty in one of the densest urban communities in the country. As CCC is trusted space for dialogue, it will also serve diverse families in the Bay Area and regional, national and international visitors. Moreover, "XianRui: Cathy Lu" will benefit our lead artist, staff, and community partner as a collaborative capacity building and knowledge sharing through project co-design, implementing key checkpoints for evaluation and feedback. (See Schedule of Completion for Evaluation Checkpoints)

### **Strategic Plan Goals**

"XianRui: Cathy Lu," will directly advance our organizational commitment for the next five years in continuing to 1) Deepen development of socially relevant, cross-sector contemporary art; 2) Develop long-lead, meaningful collaborations with community partners within Chinatown and other underserved communities in San Francisco in order to co-design collaborative projects; 3) Develop and collaborate with contemporary artists on increasingly complex community projects, which exchange with community and is steeped in context of social justice; and 4) Program artist workshops to align with current exhibition and artistic projects.

### **IMLS Goals**

As a Community Anchor Project, "XianRui: Cathy Lu" and CCC's strategic plan foregrounds "the role of museums as essential partners in addressing the needs of their communities." The proposed project enhances our anchor programming, XianRui, to better serve the community through supporting underserved artists that empower community voices, while providing a way to strengthen community connections through well-supported partnerships.

"XianRui: Cathy Lu" also supports the larger IMLS goals to: 1) "Promote lifelong learning through cross-disciplinary and inquiry-based learning methods" by creating shared learning and co-design through engagement with community-based partners and artists; 2) "Strengthens the capacity of museums and libraries to improve the wellbeing of their communities" through sustained community engagement through creating a sharing

and listening culture between artist and partners during Evaluation Checkpoints and Final Sharing; 3) “Increase public access through policies and partnership” through bringing a high level of cultural competence to our work and maintaining an accessible and inclusive approach from outreach to project execution.

### **Project Work Plan:**

#### **Activities & Evaluation**

The project will include Lu’s 7-month solo exhibition in our 3,000 sq/ft Visual Arts Center gallery, co-designed Youth Engagement Programming with CYC youth which will utilize ceramic workshops as a mechanism to explore themes identified in planning discussions with the partners, quarterly project evaluation, as well as a culminating online publication and final sharing panel, documenting and evaluating the process and product of the project.

#### **Summary of Project Sequence**

The Program envisions activities built upon Outreach, Exhibition, Co-designed Youth Engagement Program, Evaluation Checkpoints, and Final Archive & Sharing. (See “Schedule of Project Completion”)

1. Pre-grant September 2020-August 2021: Outreach & Learning, Project Planning
2. September - November 2021: Exhibition Design Period
3. November 2021 - June 2022: Exhibition Installation Period
4. September - January 2022 - Youth Program Co-Design Period
5. February - June 2022 - Youth Programming Period
6. March - June 2022 : Documentation & Interviews
7. Throughout and at end of project: Evaluation Checkpoints
8. July - August 2022: Culmination & Archive
9. August 2022: Final Sharing

#### **Risk Mitigation on Community-Based Projects**

One of the risks in any artistic partnership is that there may be challenges in finding the right fit between artists and partners, in shepherding and holding community relationships, and in community members feeling like there was not a reciprocal exchange in a creative process. This is why CCC has been fostering relationships with CYC (and other community partners) to understand current challenges and barriers, and introducing them to Lu and her work well in advance of this project. CCC is a community anchor, with a high level of cultural fluency and knowledge of the neighborhood. Over the last decade, CCC has been more intentional to develop and sustain cross-sector relationships in order to better provide access to the arts. As a result, we have established best practices and learnings from artist-community relationships, which this project will build upon. We are confident that this combination of early consensus building, curatorial and artistic skills, and institutional stewardship of relationships before and after projects will set us up for success.

#### **Project Staff and Partners**

Hoi Leung, curator, and Jenny Leung, Executive Director, will be the CCC co-leads for “XianRui” to plan, implement and manage the project.

We will engage artist Cathy Lu and community partner, CYC, in order to co-design and implement youth engagement activities. Hoi will work closely with her artistic team (Program Associate and Exhibition & Gallery Manager) to carry out project evaluations with Lu, youth participants, and broader public audiences and Jenny will facilitate assessments with CYC through regular check-ins to ensure that the program remains adaptive and impactful. CCC has been working closely with CYC to set priorities for the program, envision its design, and set a base of trust and mutual understanding--whether for XianRui or future collaborative work. CYC will help identify a critical area for creative exploration and facilitate and co-design the process with Lu and CCC’s artistic team.

#### **Resources Required**

Key resources will be needed to support CCC's Executive Director for project oversight, CCC curator to facilitate interactions between artist and community partners, Community Partner Community Center staff for youth programming co-design, CCC program staff for project implementation, and CCC communication staff for project marketing. We will allocate necessary resources in material and personnel towards exhibition and program production, staffing, outreach, communication and marketing, documentation, language accessibility, and online archive. (See "Project Budget" and "Budget Justification"). We also require resources to support the artist, exhibition materials, which will be supported by other support specifically Fleishhacker Foundation and the SF Arts Commission. As part of CCC's organizational model, we collaborate with artists through increasingly complex projects, growing from smaller to larger ones. In addition, our collaboration with CYC has deepened over time. As a result, we have the trusted working relationships that can steward this project forward. We feel confident that we will be able to carry out these activities with CCC leadership and partners involved.

### **Project Tracking & Sharing**

CCC will document and track progress in XianRui and related programs through built-in Evaluation Checkpoints with CCC Staff, Partner, and artists, as well as through videography, photography, community surveys. The project will also be culminated, archived, and shared through an online publication as well as a final sharing panel to reflect on the project and steward project sustainability.

CCC has also made it a regular practice to create mini documentaries as part of each major program that incorporate project footage and interviews with artists and community members, allowing us to more broadly share information about our work to audiences, global supporters, funders, peer organizations, and public agencies. (See Supporting Document 5 for past documentation examples) As we have learned through our strategic planning process, using these tools to better communicate (and understand for ourselves) the impact of the projects and our overarching theory of change, is something that we will more clearly embed within this process.

### **Project Results:**

#### **Intended Result**

Through XianRui: Cathy Lu, CCC will accomplish the following in order to address community needs:

- 1) Address immediate community needs through sparking dialogue on relevant topics that reflect on the state of Asian American identity and xenophobia facing the community
- 2) Deeply invest in the work of a significant local, Chinese American artist at a key point in her career through a major solo exhibition and a thoroughly supported collaborative community project. A key part of our role as a cultural anchor is to create supportive systems that transform how we think about how we engage with artists so that they can help us build new cultural narratives about and with our community.
- 3) Increase the collaborating youth from CYC's sense of agency in addressing racism facing them and their community through creative tools. At a moment when Chinatown faces increased marginalization through xenophobia and racism, artistic work that highlights youth stories, engages their creative voice, gives them critical and inventive tools to re-examine their neighborhood, and creates supportive and facilitated spaces to work together has the potential to have tremendous impact. These approaches can increase a sense of well being, connection to the neighborhood and one another, and encouragement to contend with the world.
- 4) Deepen our connection and build capacity amongst community partners such as CYC by creating a trusting and resilient long term partnership where art can play a crucial role in maintaining a sense of connection and belonging.

### **Data Collection and Report & Attitude Change**

CCC will measure impact towards its goals through quantitative & qualitative measurements. Data collected by: tracking attendance, surveys, interviews, informal feedback and Evaluation Checkpoints with social partners & project team. Preliminary performance indicators are multi-tiered between CCC Staff, artist, community partners,

and general audience. These metrics will be revisited and updated with Lu and CYC as we prepare to launch the project and will be evaluated midway and after through surveys and interviews with youth participants, Lu, and CYC:

	Data Collection	Change
Staff	Informal Feedback Evaluation Meetings Deliverable completion	Build capacity to lead collaborative work between artist and community Develop new insight and best practices Deeper community connections
Audience	Attendance # Online engagement # Survey Informal Feedback	Greater racial understanding & positive change in attitude toward diverse communities Positive change of attitude towards role of art & cultural assets in the community Feel a deeper sense of belonging
Artist	Interviews Informal Feedback Evaluation Interviews	Developed skills in cross-sector relationships Deeper community connections Greater understanding of artist role in community participation
Partner	Interviews Informal Feedback Evaluation Interviews Surveys to staff and youth	Increased capacity & partnership in artistic projects Deeper investment & more equitable resources for the community

**Tangible Product**

XianRui: Cathy Lu will result in:

- 1) One 7-month long powerful and socially relevant exhibition of ceramic and installation works
- 2) A new co-designed youth engagement program to complement exhibition
- 3) Printed bilingual marketing materials outreached to Chinatown
- 4) An online archive of text, video, photographic documentation that will be collected and shared with our audiences and partners
- 5) Reports art Evaluation Checkpoint conducted between project team and partner.
- 6) A Final sharing between project team, artist, and community partners

**Sustaining Benefit**

Sustaining the benefits of the project will involve continued mentorship, conversation, programming, and assessment. Based on the success of past XianRui projects, the exhibition and public facing elements of the project will be paired with CCC’s advocacy of Lu’s work behind the scenes, introductions to collectors and other curators, and work to place her work with other institutions. With CYC, final sharing and discussions with participants and partners will be key to setting up the next iterations of the project and identifying ongoing programmatic connections. CCC will build the project’s learnings into the organization’s best practices and utilize them to design future programming.

