

2007/08 Worldstudio AIGA Scholarships Coyne Family Foundation Award



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Photography
Graduate Student
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Diversity and multiculturalism have always been at the very core of my personal life, my professional work, and my art. I was born in Hong Kong, and we emigrated to the U.S. when I was small child. I grew up in a small industrial city in upstate New York, where my parents found work in Chinese restaurants. As a 1.5-generation immigrant, I have always negotiated multiple—and often opposing—cultures, values and vantage points. I remember being explicitly told by my parents that I couldn't be an artist, that I should pursue mathematics or computers. As women, as immigrants, as people of color, as queers, we are taught by our society and sometimes even our parents to not take up space, to not "rock the boat." I am still unlearning these lessons. I still catch myself apologizing. This is why it is so important to me to work in cultural advocacy, education and the arts, to create opportunities for underrepresented voices, and to dismantle the privilege of the norm.



Worldstudio
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the professional association for design

KA-MAN TSE

Photography



Visibility and representation are driving forces in my artwork. My photographs address issues within the Chinese community in New York, and on a global yet personal scale, in Hong Kong. In 2002, I began photographing mom-and-pop Chinese restaurants where my parents, friends and I had worked. Currently I am photographing small businesses in New York Chinatown, along with spaces and landscapes in Hong Kong undergoing the threat of erasure due to gentrification and global economics.

I began photographing at the decommissioned Kai Tak Airport in Kowloon in 2004. A site of memory for my family and others emigrating, it is the location of departure from which our world is altered, and as an artist, my point of entry to explore a personal history. My work has progressed outside of Kai Tak, moving into an old barber shop in an alley behind a new four-star hotel, the housing projects where my father grew up, the rooms we leave untouched when they pass away.

As a freelancer, I work with organizations that focus on diversity, equal opportunity, access to the arts, and social justice. As a contributing photographer for *Hyphen*, an Asian-American magazine, I recently made portraits of Filipino WWII Veterans who have been denied full benefits as American Veterans. Working on this feature, I was reminded how important these stories are, that visibility is absolutely crucial.



As the Creative Director of *dirtypop* Magazine, my job is to find and promote a diverse staff of writers, designers and artists that are typically underrepresented in mainstream media. *dirtypop* is an independently published magazine on pop culture, art and politics that serves the LGBT community and people of color, creating a larger forum for discussion.

Aside from *dirtypop*, I have focused my energies on community-based, social justice organizations dedicated to the arts and cultural advocacy. I have worked with the Groundswell Community Mural Project on anti-violence arts education as well as the Fifth Avenue Committee in Brooklyn. Currently I am a Teaching Assistant at the International Center for Photography, and the Assistant Director of Photography at the Jewish Community Center in Manhattan. These experiences keep me connected and inform my drive to work as an artist and an advocate.

In graduate school, I will continue to focus on my community through art, through mastering a language of visual intimacy with spaces, objects, memory, and history. I will become better equipped as an artist and a cultural advocate to work on community building, particularly immigrant communities, queer youth, and young women, and to develop more sustainable arts education and visual literacy programs.