
Asian American Art Oral History Project


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Vincent Chung Interview

Pete Koszulinski
DePaul University

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Interviewer: Pete Koszulinski

Interviewee: Vincent Chung, graphic designer and author

Phone interview Chicago, IL

Date: 5/30/09 1:00pm

*Note: The following interview was conducted by a DePaul University undergraduate student enrolled in AAS 201: Asian American Arts & Culture during Spring quarter 2009 as part of the **Asian American Art Oral History** research project conducted by Laura Kina, Associate Professor Art, Media, & Design/Director Asian American Studies.*

Q 1 Can you tell me a little bit about yourself.

Yeah. My name is Vincent Chung and I am 30 years old. I am a graphic designer over at the Chicago Architecture Foundation and I do a lot of freelance writing on the side. I grew up in the South, which I feel does contribute to my identity, especially since moving to Chicago.

Q 2 How do you identify yourself, especially in context of the Asian-American community?

I guess I do identify myself as an Asian-American, especially since moving to Chicago that's been a pretty heavy artifact. I guess at a young age, I was involved with the underground hardcore punk community.

Q 3 When how and why did you first get involved with FAAIM?

When I first moved to Chicago I was interviewing for graphic design jobs. I sent my resume to this design firm called Atomic Kitchen. It turns out that the job posting was outdated and they didn't actually have a job there, but they brought me in an interview anyway only because they noticed I was Asian-American. And the people who ran the firm were starting a group called the Asian-American Artist Collective. They were networking, trying to get people together to do group projects. It turned out that the directors meeting was part of it as well and they needed a graphic designer and we hooked up at the first meeting there. It's also actually where I met Professor Kina.

Q 4 Could you tell me about your double life as a graphic designer and writer? Which do you prefer and why?

I don't really see it as a double life. Graphic design is more a day job and pays the bills and affords me time to write on the side. I definitely do a lot of graphic design on the side. Flyers for bands, or people that get older get business cards. Graphic design basically is a pretty practical art, so it's always been kind of an easy way to do things for friends or other people. There's a practical part in that as well writing as well. I write a lot for this website *flavorpill*. I write a lot of music reviews or things that are coming up. I don't really see it as a double life, it's more just someone needs some information or needs something designed. Which do I prefer? You get what you put in. You make it what you will. There's certain times when I'll explore some kind of creative outlet for myself, but a majority of the time it's kind of organizing something so it's readable. The same thing for writing, you can give or take what you get out of it creatively. There's not

really one I'd prefer over the other. If I had to pick one, I guess writing is something you can basically pull out a piece of paper and pen. It's one of the simplest forms of expression. So if I were stuck on an island, I'd be okay with just that.

Q 5 Do you ever address Asian American identity themes or histories in your work? If so, could you give an example?

In the far past, back in college I've done race-based school projects where my identity would play a role in it. I used to write a lot about race. Especially in the 90's within the punk community there was a 'zine culture. So I wrote a lot of articles in various 'zines about race.

Q 6 Have you ever been included in an exhibition that was contextualized as Asian-American or have you ever been labeled by someone else as an Asian-American artist?

One of the things from 'zine writing was there was a pretty big magazine outside of California called *Heartattack* and they decided to dedicate one issue towards race. I submitted a piece and it made it in the magazine and they came back later and asked me to become a regular columnist and what they did the first few years was they kind of wanted me - they didn't explicitly say this is going to be the Asian-American column, but they actually wanted topics about race, so I would bring that into the column every once in a while.

Q 7 Would you say that being identified as an Asian American artist is something important to you, or is it something that just kind of happened?

It certainly opened a lot of doors, and I don't know what Professor Kina would say to this, but it's always never been this huge part of me. I think mainly because when I was growing up I was fairly assimilated into punk culture which had its race problems. I don't know if you pay attention to Asian American art. There's this certain kind of identity crisis that -- I guess I'm digging myself in a hole here -- but there's a certain amount that comes off a little contrived. There are a lot of artists that are really stuck on that. Yeah, I used to feel that way when I was this really confused 15 year old, but that was half my lifetime ago, and I feel I've moved on to other issues.

Q 8 What are you currently working on?

I'm currently working for *flavorpill*, which I mentioned earlier. I've been hanging out with various friends and writing a lot of little screenplays. They're not really anything that will make itself into a final product but it was a really good way for me and my friends to have this fun project to do together. My day job is a graphic design job, it's an in-house where I work with marketing materials and I work with social media and all the networking sites. Since I'm one of the younger people in the place, I'm the one that comes up with a lot of the facebook writing. I'm not sure that's really all that creative.