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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Chinatown WORK, 2006

Eric Schuldenfrei & Marisa Yiu

Free and open to the public

April 18th – May 21st, Evenings 7:30–11pm

First site installation: HSBC Facade on Canal Street (58 Bowery Branch)

Opening reception: April 18th at Storefront for Art and Architecture

Marisa Yiu and Eric Schuldenfrei are designers who focus on the intersection of art, architecture, and global politics. In particular their interest lies in examining the ways in which the built environment and constructs of labor shape social relationships, network systems, and connections between participatory design and civic engagement. In their current work, art and technology are components utilized to engage and inform the viewer. The work encourages individuals to be more active in shaping the city, public space, and the world around us.

Chinatown WORK, 2006 is an interactive public art installation for multiple sites in Chinatown. Silhouettes of pedestrians mix the footage of interior work spaces with time-lapse exterior street images of unique areas that define New York's Chinatown contemporary work culture. The piece focuses on those industries that helped to establish and provide immigrants' employment in New York in the past and still today. The interactive and responsive installation encourages community participation in the changing landscape of Chinatown while celebrating the people who made and still are contributing to this exceptional part of Lower Manhattan. The first site installation is at the HSBC facade on Canal Street (58 Bowery Branch). The artists are also planning for installations at other sites in Chinatown for the summer of 2006. With 3-form material solutions, Marisa Yiu and Eric Schuldenfrei are working to develop a socially and environmentally conscious material for the optimum keying of the technological needs of this project.

OPENING RECEPTION:

Tuesday, April 18th, 8-10pm at the Storefront for Art and Architecture,
97 Kenmare Street, between Mulberry and Lafayette Streets

Trains: 6 to Spring; N/R to Prince; B/D/F/V to Broadway-Lafayette Street

For more information and to RSVP: info@eskyiu.com

Reception sponsored by Chivas Regal

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An earlier gathering with the artists takes place at 7:30pm to open the Installation at the HSBC Canal Street facade at the 58 Bowery Branch of HSBC

Trains: N/Q/R, J/M/Z, 4/6, A/C/E, 1/9 Canal Street

The Public Arts installation is made possible by the generous support of the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council Grant for Art in Public Spaces, the September 11th Fund, the Manhattan Community Arts Fund supported by the Department of Cultural Affairs, 3-form material solutions and Asian American Arts Centre. The project is endorsed by the Rebuild Chinatown Initiative (RCI), Explore Chinatown Campaign and assisted by Chinatown Partnership LDC. First site provided by HSBC at Canal Street facade at the 58 Bowery Branch.

The artists and designers wish to thank the many supporters that have helped to realize this project. A comprehensive list will be provided at the launch and will be posted on their website: www.eskyiu.com





Project description

The textile-apparel-retail chain is based on an intense mixture of high technology, physical labor, economy, and efficiency that constantly responds to or anticipates the demand of market dynamics. From the fall of 2000 to the spring of 2001, a garment factory in Chinatown was filmed for a project relating to the study of the physical nature of the global apparel assembly industry. Two months after the tragic events of September 11th, the factory was forced to close due to many external pressures. A study done by the Asian America Federation of New York in the first two weeks after September 11th noted that three-quarters of the workforce in Chinatown, nearly 25,000 workers, lost their jobs. In 2001, there were approximately 500 garment factories in Chinatown, and now, according to the New York State Department of Labor, there are only about 100 left. Not only were many jobs lost; the sense of place and the nature of community activity were significantly effected. As one of the employees stated, "it allowed us a flexible schedule, to drop our kids off, come to work and be around a community of people." In the last quarter of 2002, more than 90% of the surveyed restaurants, garment factories, and retail stores anticipated an inability to recover to their pre-September 11th levels.

Five years later, Eric Schuldenfrei and Marisa Yiu explored and filmed many areas of contemporary street life including food markets, herb stores, pharmacies, jewelry storefronts, and specialty stores, from banking activities to construction work, in order to ask questions about how Chinatown is doing today and where it is heading. Concurrently, with the owners, manufacturers', and employees' permission (at times difficult to obtain), the artists were allowed to film and document the interiors of garment factories, laundries, and restaurants that are typically hidden to the public. In the public art installation *Chinatown WORK, 2006*, silhouettes of pedestrians mix the footage of interior work spaces of with time-lapse exterior street images of unique areas that define the work culture of New York's contemporary Chinatown. The piece focuses on industries that have helped to establish immigrants and provide them with employment in the past and present, and requires public and community participation to reveal more of the private and interior landscape of the culture of work through their interaction.

For the light box component of the piece, Marisa Yiu and Eric Schuldenfrei collaborated with 3-form material solutions and October Ai to construct a sewn map of lower Manhattan depicting the area of Chinatown, while marking places relevant to their research onto bolts of Linea Vert fabric. The fabric was then laid into 3-form material solution's eco-resin, a specially formulated translucent polyester resin that is environmentally friendly and engineered to incorporate 40% recycled material. The first installation site is at the HSBC facade on Canal Street (58 Bowery Branch). The artists are also planning for other sites in Chinatown for the summer and fall of 2006 to engage different areas, invigorate other public spaces, and ultimately celebrate the people that make Chinatown work.