

# Storytelling through Public Art with Boston Chinatown Community

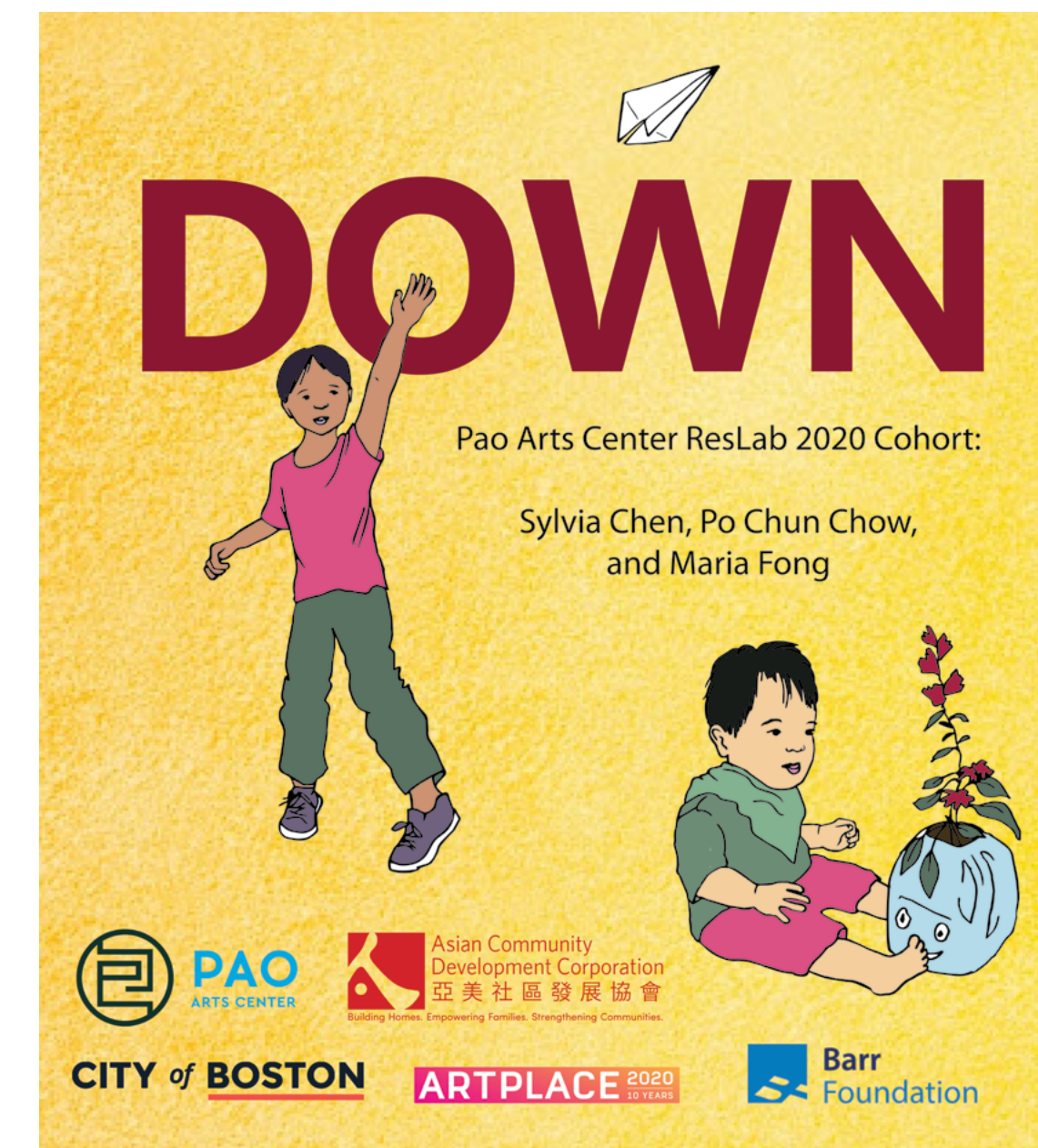
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## Introduction

For my summer scholars research, I collaboratively created a public art project in Boston Chinatown with a program called Residence Lab, organized by Pao Arts Center and Asian Community Development Corporation. Alongside two Chinatown residents, Po Chun and Sylvia, I addressed **pedestrian safety** on busy roads not designed for easy crossing.

I believe in the power of art to bring people together, voice silenced stories, and advocate within a longer history of activism. Through **storytelling and collaborative learning**, we build ethical and sustainable relationships. This community building is central to Chinatown's history as a site of Asian American **critical care**.



Digital poster design: includes artist statement and drawings of residents and children enjoying neighborhood.

## Organizing Through Mail Art

Pedestrians feeling unsafe stems from the design of traffic infrastructure around Chinatown. In addition to our sign appealing to individual drivers with posters saying "SLOW DOWN," we are advocating to the Boston Transportation Department to demand more **pedestrian safety infrastructure**. Participants in our project draw on worksheets, which we will compile and send to the Transportation Department. Their drawings show who needs to cross the street and where they are going in their community.

## Installation of posters at 35 Kneeland street; September 2020



## Chinatown Background

As a Tufts student, I am complicit in this institution's **gentrification** of the Chinatown neighborhood. Chinatown's small businesses and affordable housing are historically and presently **vulnerable to displacement**. The Big Dig construction bulldozed the homes of low-income immigrant families a decade ago, and now the highways surrounding Chinatown mean speeding cars, large intersections, and urban design not built for the safety of residents.

## Process

### Research

- artists who work in **participatory** or interactive ways
- history of youth advocacy for pedestrian safety

### Workshops and Co-Creation

- history of Boston Chinatown
- build relationships with residents
- site chosen by residents
- collectively brainstorm audience, medium, concept, and form.
- drawings based on photos used as references for stories about where residents go when they need to cross the street

### Chinatown Residents as Local Experts

Residence Lab recognizes the historical invalidation and underrepresentation of Chinatown residents' needs and experiences. Residents are **local experts** who have intimate and institutional knowledge. Residence Lab is committed to placemaking as a strategy for community agency. We center the experiences and values of the local community in order to create public spaces that promote the cultural identity and well-being of Chinatown.



## Acknowledgements

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