Good Medicine Picture Company
Presents

Forever, Chinatown
Documentary, USA, 2017 TRT: 26:40
Produced by James Q. Chan, Corey Tong
Directed by James Q. Chan

Forever, Chinatown is a co-production of
GOOD MEDICINE PICTURE COMPANY and INDEPENDENT TELEVISION SERVICE (ITVS)
presented in association with the CENTER FOR ASIAN AMERICAN MEDIA (CAAM),
with funding provided by CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING (CPB)

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New Zealand DocEdge Film Festival 2016
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Additional Festival, Exhibition and Broadcast Screenings: to be announced
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U.S. Broadcast (PBS/Public TV): World Channel May 2017 (TBA)
U.S. Educational Distribution: New Day Films

FOREVER, CHINATOWN
Documentary, USA, 2017 TRT: 26:40
Logline
Artist Frank Wong’s exquisitely detailed dioramas of the Chinatown of his childhood serve as portals to the past in a rapidly changing San Francisco.

Summary
Forever, Chinatown is a story of unknown, self-taught 81-year-old artist Frank Wong who has spent the past four decades recreating his fading memories by building romantic, extraordinarily detailed miniature models of the San Francisco Chinatown rooms of his youth.

This film takes the journey of one individual and maps it to a rapidly changing urban neighborhood from 1940s to present day. A meditation on memory, community, and preserving one's own legacy, Frank's three-dimensional miniature dioramas become rare portals into a historic neighborhood and a window to the artist's filtered and romanticized memories and emotional struggles. In his compromise with immortality, Frank announces plans to cremate his exquisite works with him upon his death in order to 'live inside them forever' in his afterlife.

Production Notes:
The film was shot on location inside the miniature worlds of Frank's artwork; in the rooms, streets and neighborhoods of San Francisco Chinatown and Downtown; in Honolulu Chinatown and Oahu, Hawaii.
Director Statement

As a Bay Area filmmaker with roots in China, Vietnam, a refugee camp in Indonesia, and early years in the Midwest, my sensibilities are shaped by my lived experiences of these transitory ideas of home. Of Frank Wong’s seven Chinatown dioramas, the unrefined Single Room Occupancy transported me viscerally back to my first makeshift bedroom in San Francisco: the hall closet of our studio apartment in the working-class Tenderloin district of my formative years. The sum of my family’s belongings fit inside this miniature apartment, and my imagination contracted and expanded within the boundaries of my twin-mattress-sized room. Under a canopy of coats and sweaters, my imaginary portals would open to daydreams of Dukes of Hazzard, my mother halfway around the world, and puppies. My childhood appreciation for little worlds, as well as my curiosity of people and places, merged with the happenstance introduction to Frank Wong’s Chinatown dioramas. A friend who works at the Chinese Historical Society, a beautiful Julia Morgan designed building, gave me a personal tour of the museum and in the basement level behind a locked door, sat these dioramas in the dark. A house is a reflection of an occupant’s autobiography, and my obsession to find the owner of these miniature worlds consumed me.

My first meeting with Frank was over lunch, a meal that lasted over six hours. Trust was built through comfort food, laughter, and tears at the Pork Chop House, a local popular diner from the 1940s on Jackson Street. It was evident that Frank, a consummate showman, has been camera-ready for most of his life.

Frank becomes our guide as we journey back with him to his nostalgic visions of his youth vis a vis his artwork and present-day Chinatown. Exquisite as they are, Frank’s lavish stories and dioramas are composites of one person’s romanticized experience of places. Because he is human and human memories are fallible, his is just one entry into the world of Chinatown, and, in an effort to show the larger perspective of Chinatown, archival footage was carefully selected to mirror the world of Frank’s miniatures.

I wanted the cinematography of the miniatures to place viewers inside the dioramas. As we travel back in time with the artist and navigate melodically through each of the miniatures, we are transported much like Dorothy arriving into Oz. These tiny Technicolor dreamscape worlds are culturally distinct interiors. Buddhist shrines, mahjong tables, plates of Asian food, stocked cabinets of Spam and Jell-O and See’s Candies, are all refreshing departures from the conventional Victorian dollhouse. Juxtaposed against this miniature world is a more improvised, unpolished reality capturing Frank through handheld vérité coverage.

In the edit room, the approach was more narrative and less bio-pic documentary structure. We orbit around Frank’s alter ego, The God of Longevity, and his compromise with immortality by paralleling Frank’s wish to cremate his artwork with him when he dies so he may “live in them forever”.

Instead of explanations from talking heads, the story is revealed through cinematic visuals, period music, symphonic sounds of the neighborhood, and most importantly, quiet emotional pauses that permeate the film. Additionally, I chose to have the community be the voice of authority rather than bringing in the customary historian to speak on the value of the artwork and the history of Chinatown. They form our ‘Greek Chorus’ with their comments, and through them we move between individual and collective memories of place and time, between composites and historical facts.
The use of music to underscore each diorama as a distinct memory was influenced by Tennessee Williams’s *The Glass Menagerie*: “In memory everything seems to happen to music.” Peggy Lee’s sentimental ballad “The Folks Who Live on the Hill” captures the emotional essence. Pink Martini and Thomas Lauderdale’s original score was the perfect sound for Frank and the dioramas: energetic, melancholy, nostalgic.

The film needed to seamlessly weave together three equal parts: the contours of the artist’s life, the intimacy of his artwork, and the heart and soul of the film, Chinatown. It is important to highlight encroaching change to this historic neighborhood from the hyper-gentrification that is sweeping through San Francisco. Those displaced by rising housing costs, conversions, and upscale redevelopment are often invisible voices that go unheard, becoming only a statistical number in the harsh realities of Bay Area housing. We end on portraits of a few of Chinatown’s community members – Dorothy, in front of the Spofford Alley apartment she was born in 82 years ago; Joshua, a fifth-generation Chinatown resident who was recently evicted from his apartment on Clay Street; Julie and her infant son, in front of her family’s and Chinatown’s oldest beloved restaurant ‘Sam Wo’; Ms. Deng, 65-year-old Chinese banjo street musician, focusing on the strength of the threatened community, its human pillars.

Through the detailed world of Frank Wong’s dioramas, we explore the evolution of a Chinese-American community that is intimately interwoven with the history of its city. *Forever, Chinatown* is Frank’s state of mind, it is a commentary on the encroaching changes to the neighborhood, and it is a love letter to a beloved community and city.

-James Q. Chan
FOREVER, CHINATOWN  KEY CREW

James Q. Chan (Producer, Director) is a San Francisco-based filmmaker who has collaborated on Emmy- and Grammy-winning projects. His film mentorship/training began alongside two-time Academy-Award winning filmmakers Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman (THE TIMES OF HARVEY MILK, THE CELLULOID CLOSET). Producing credits with Epstein & Friedman include History Channel's 10 DAYS THAT UNEXPECTEDLY CHANGED AMERICA (Emmy Award; 2006 Outstanding Non-Fiction Series), HOWL (Sundance 2010 Opening Night; National Board of Review Freedom of Expression Award). Recent producing work include films about— a child IT protégé :PUCK AND THE RIDDLE OF CODES (IDFA 2014; Dutch Television VPRO); father & son reconciliation ISTINMA (Best Short, 2014 American Indian Film Festival; Smithsonian Institute Native Showcase); U.S. immigration law impacts on bi-national same-sex couples ENTRY DENIED (Jury Award, Best Short, 2012 Provincetown); love & equality RIGHT DOWN THE LINE music video (Bonnie Raitt, Grammy 2013). Prior to filmmaking, James worked as a SAG/AFTRA Union Talent Agent. His refugee/working class background, love for nature shows, and memories of his mother’s cooking shape his sensibilities in all of his stories. James is the founder of Good Medicine Picture Company.

Corey Tong (Producer) is a producer, writer, producers rep and programming/acquisitions consultant. He is an executive producer of the Oscar®-nominated, Emmy-winning LAST DAY OF FREEDOM (2015); producer of FOREVER, CHINATOWN (2016, ITVS-CAAM co-prod); producer of drama THE LAND HAS EYES (Fiji-USA, 2004; Sundance; PBS, official Oscar® submission from Fiji); producer of the doc BEYOND THE TEAM (USA, 2012, Frameline); producer/co-writer of THE GATHERING PLACE, a drama in development set in Hong Kong, Tokyo, San Francisco and Hawaii. He is also creator/producer of a Brazilian and an Asia-Pacific Ocean culinary series in development, and has consulted on over 15 international documentaries, feature films and TV programs that have screened globally. The former director of the San Francisco Int'l Asian American FF (CAAMFest) and former IFFCON director of special projects (international co-prod packaging), Corey has also worked with many media content producers, distributors, festivals/juries including: ArcLight/Pacific Theatres (US); Frameline (US); OutFest (US); Regent/Here! Releasing (US); Shaw Media (Hong Kong); HAF (Hong Kong-Asia Film Forum); PPP (Busan FF co-prod market, S. Korea); DGFK e.v. Arts Foundation (Berlin); Forum des Images (Paris), SF Film Society/SIFF, Larsen Assoc PR.

Jeff den Broeder (Director of Photography) is a San Francisco based director, cinematographer and editor. In addition to artist profile films, he writes and produces highly effective original television and integrated identity campaigns for global brands (Oakland Museum of California, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, Citrix). Comfortable in water as he is on land, den Broeder is one of the founders of SeaLevel TV, a short format documentary series featuring exceptional people that flourish in and around seaside regions.

Michael Palmieri (Editor/Miniatures Cinematographer) is a director, cinematographer and editor. His first two feature length documentaries, OCTOBER COUNTRY and OFF LABEL were directing collaborations with the filmmaker and photographer Donal Mosher and have won numerous awards both in the US and abroad, including Best U.S. Documentary at Silverdocs and an Independent Spirit Award nomination for best documentary in 2009 for their first film "October Country”. He also directs commercials and music videos and resides in Portland, Oregon. A wide selection of Mr. Palmieri's work can be found at michaelpalmieri.com.
**Pink Martini & Thomas Lauderdale** (Original Music and Score) Thomas Lauderdale was raised on a plant nursery in rural Indiana. He began piano lessons at age six with Patricia Garrison. When his family moved to Portland in 1982, he began studying with Sylvia Killman, who to this day continues to serve as his coach and mentor. He has appeared as soloist with numerous orchestras and ensembles, including the Oregon Symphony, the Seattle Symphony, the Portland Youth Philharmonic, Chamber Music Northwest and Oregon Ballet Theatre (where he collaborated with choreographer James Canfield and visual artists Storm Tharp and Malia Jensen on a ballet based on Felix Salten’s *Bambi*, written in 1923). Active in Oregon politics since a student at U.S. Grant High School (where he was student body president), Thomas served under Portland Mayor Bud Clark and Oregon governor Neil Goldschmidt. Instead of running for political office, Lauderdale founded the “little orchestra” called Pink Martini in 1994 to play political fundraisers for progressive causes such as civil rights, the environment, affordable housing and public broadcasting. In addition to his work with Pink Martini, Lauderdale collaborates with international superstar and singing sensation Meow Meow, the surf band Satan’s Pilgrims and novelist/writer Tom Spanbauer. In Spring 2008, Lauderdale completed his first film score for Chiara Clemente’s documentary *Our City Dreams*, a portrait of five New York City-based women artists of different generations. In 2008, he performed as the featured piano soloist in Beethoven’s Choral Fantasia with the Choral Arts Ensemble of Portland under the direction of Roger Doyle, and Gershwin’s Piano Concerto in F with the Oregon Symphony under the direction of Christoph Campestrini. In 2011 Lauderdale again appeared as the featured soloist with the Oregon Symphony, this time under the direction of the tremendous Carlos Kalmar. Lauderdale currently serves on the boards of the Oregon Symphony and Pioneer Courthouse Square in Portland, Oregon. He lives in Portland, Oregon.

**Jeremiah Moore** (Sound Design/Sound Editor) designs, edits and mixes sound at Jeremiah Moore Sound, his San Francisco studio. He works across the disciplines of film, theater, radio, interactive, mobile and site-specific installation, with attention to environment, detail and creative process. He is currently working on a year-long sound-image timelapse of urban trees with Rachel Strickland, and has created sonic experiences for The Residents (Eskimo in Constellation Surround, Exploratorium) and Ai WeiWei (@LARGE, Alcatraz). He has provided sound design and mix for many documentary films including 2014 Oscar-shortlisted SLOMO (dir. Josh Izenberg, prod. Amanda Micheli), and 2016 Oscar® Nominated LAST DAY OF FREEDOM (dirs. Dee Hibbert-Jones and Nomi Talisman).

**Penelope Wong** (Associate Producer) With 25+ years in marketing & branding, Penelope Wong was CEO of Wong•Wong•Boyack (acquired by Havas), a relationship marketing firm, with clients NIKE, Cisco, Hewlett-Packard, Wells Fargo, SF Giants, Visa, sina.com and Disney. Previously with Ogilvy & Mather Direct, clients have included Pixar, Mattel and Amex. She also developed and personified the brand “Jennifer Wong” for The Franklin Mint. An author/writer on the subject of everything from food to fashion and change management, Wong is now focused on film. She is Associate Producer of the Academy Award®-nominated documentary short “Last Day of Freedom,” a key investor in Projector (a start-up bringing together leading filmmakers, brands, and non-profits in a new way) and a consultant on a bio-pic being developed around several MFK Fisher memoirs. An award-winning screenwriter for “The Shanghai Café” (based on her grandfather’s spending 10 years in San Quentin for a murder he did NOT commit), she is at work on a narrative short about her parents titled “The Other Wife.” She serves on the board of San Francisco Film Society, Oakland Museum of California, Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History, and the Greater San Francisco YMCA. She and her husband, Tim Kochis, reside in both San Francisco and Santa Barbara.
PROJECT ADVISORS:

Santhosh Daniel is a writer, producer and creative consultant specializing in strategic communications, social enterprise and independent media and arts. He is founder of the creative collective Compound and co-founder of Projector, a social innovation and storytelling media initiative. His professional experience includes work with The Global Film Initiative as well as partners such as Smithsonian, Medium, Virgin America and U.S. Department of State, and also creation of the original children’s series Red Violet and CityStudio, a multi-disciplinary urban identity and creative media project. Santhosh currently serves on the Board of Directors for Cal Humanities and as Board President for the Puerto Rico Film Society, and has also served as an expert panelist for various media funds, including the San Francisco Arts Commission, European Audiovisual Entrepreneurs, California Documentary Project and Headlands Artist Residency. He has a B.A. in English from the University of Washington and a M.F.A. in English from the University of Iowa Writers’ Workshop.

Rob Epstein & Jeffrey Friedman are among the few directors, writers, and producers in the independent film world traversing non-fiction and scripted narrative. Between them, they have garnered Academy Awards, Emmy Awards, Peabody Awards, and a Guggenheim Fellowship. In addition, they have had career retrospectives at the Institute of Contemporary Art in London and at the Taipei International Film Festival in Taiwan. Their films include COMMON THREADS: STORIES FROM THE QUILT; THE CELLULOID CLOSET (Teddy Award, 1995 Berlinale); PARAGRAPH 175 (FIPRESCI Award, 2000 Berlinale); HOWL (2010 Berlinale); LOVELACE; BATTLE OF AMFAR. Friedman began his career in the editing rooms of landmark films as RAGING BULL and THE EXORCIST. His distinguished career as film editor most recently includes work on the Academy nominee short documentary KINGS POINT. Friedman has taught in the graduate film program at Stanford University and at California College of the Arts. Epstein began his career on the landmark film WORD IS OUT and continued making groundbreaking films addressing gay life in the US. His Oscar-winning THE TIMES OF HARVEY MILK was deemed culturally and historically significant by the United States of Library of Congress and selected for preservation in the National Film Registry in 2012. Epstein currently is a professor and Chair of the Film Program at California College of the Arts. He currently serves on the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Board of Governors and the Sundance Institute Board of Trustees. Epstein & Friedman will serve as content advisors for this project.

Melanie Y. Ide is a principal at Ralph Appelbaum Associates, Inc., a multi-disciplinary, international planning and design firm with active projects in over twenty countries. Ide is currently designing exhibitions for the new National Museum of African American History and Culture (Smithsonian Inst.) in Washington, D.C., recently opened Pacific Hall at the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum in Honolulu, and is designing a new modern and contemporary art museum in the Middle East/North Africa region. Her built work, which includes the Museum of Natural History in New York and the Clinton Presidential Library and Museum in Little Rock, AR, has spanned natural history, cultural history, art, science and technology, has garnered over three dozen awards and has been featured in numerous publications. Originally from the San Francisco Bay Area and Hawaii, Melanie has taught graduate and undergraduate courses at Parsons The New School for Design and is an architect now based in New York. Ide will serve as advisor of cultural and art content and strategic public and private engagement.

Chi-hui Yang is a film curator and educator based in New York. Yang sits on the selection committee for MoMA’s Documentary Fortnight, and is the president of the board of directors of the Flaherty Film Seminar. From 2000 to 2010, he was the Director and Programmer of the San Francisco International Asian American Film Festival, the largest showcase of its kind in the US. Yang is also the programmer of Cinema Asian America on Comcast On-Demand, a Visiting Scholar at New York University’s
Asian/Pacific/American Institute, and an adjunct professor at Hunter College and Columbia University. His current educational projects include Asian Americans in NY: Film and Literature, an NEH-funded summer institute for K-12 educators to be held in July 2015; the Oberhausen Seminar, a week-long examination of contemporary artists cinema held at the Oberhausen Film Festival in Germany; and a mentorship/public programming initiative examining race, experimental forms, and the work of American artists of color.

"A beautiful love letter to Chinatown... heartbreakingly tender, evocative."
B. Ruby Rich (Professor, Film & Digital Media, UC Santa Cruz; Editor, Film Quarterly; Author, “New Queer Cinema”, “Chick Flicks”)

"...lovely, rich...full of such detail and unspoken gaps...a complex portrait of a man and his memory"
Sandip Roy (Journalist, KALW, NPR, Huffington Post, New American Media; Author, “Don’t Let Him Know”)

"Exquisite...heart-warming"
(Brenda Wong Aoki, Award-winning Playwright, Performer, Storyteller, founding faculty member; Institute for Diversity in the Arts at Stanford University)

"Can the past ever be retrieved? All mortals fail, but often in the artist’s valiant effort something else is achieved. In the case of Frank Wong’s dioramas of his childhood memories, as captured by James Q. Chan, it is the murmurs of the heart expressed through the smallest of things."
Andrew Lam (Journalist, Editor, New American Media; Author "Birds of Paradise Lost", "East Eats West: Writing in Two Hemispheres")

"...one of the most beautiful and touching documentaries that I have ever seen"
Dana Summers (Shuffle Online)
FOREVER, CHINATOWN
Broadcast Credits / Full Crew and Acknowledgments

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Auntie Mame, Warner Brothers
Flower Drum Song, Universal Pictures
The Keys to the Kingdom, 20th Century Fox
Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo, Warner Brothers

Music Courtesy of

“But Now I’m Back” (Instrumental)
Music and Lyrics by Alex Marashian and Thomas M. Lauderdale
Published by Alex Marashian Music (ASCAP) and Thomas Lauderdale Music (ASCAP)
From the Pink Martini album Splendor in the Grass, courtesy of Heinz Records © 2016

“Everywhere” (Instrumental)
Music and Lyrics by China Forbes and Thomas M. Lauderdale
Published by Wow and Dazzle Music (ASCAP) and Thomas Lauderdale Music (ASCAP)
From the Pink Martini album Hey Eugene, courtesy of Heinz Records © 2016

"The Folks Who Live On The Hill"
performed by Peggy Lee
Courtesy of Capitol Records under license from Universal Music Enterprises
Words and Music by OSCAR II HAMMERSTEIN, JEROME KERN (ASCAP)
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“BU LIAO QING” (“Love Without End”)
Performed by the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra
Words and Music by QIN TAO, FOOK LING WONG (CASH, MUST)
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Special thanks to Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra for providing the audio recording

The Filmmakers Thank
Frank Wong
Peter Kenichi Yamamoto
Bing, Wendy and Jeremy Zhu
Chinese Historical Society of America

Greg Chew
Stephen Gong
Melody Hom
Pamela Kong and Ajay Kapur
Thomas Lauderdale
John Lightfoot
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This project was made possible with support from

California Humanities  
Pacific Pioneer Fund  
San Francisco Foundation

Additional Support

AARP  
DAE Advertising

Forever, Chinatown is a co-production of GOOD MEDICINE PICTURE COMPANY and INDEPENDENT TELEVISION SERVICE (ITVS) presented in association with the CENTER FOR ASIAN AMERICAN MEDIA (CAAM), with funding provided by CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING (CPB)

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