

Artist Statement

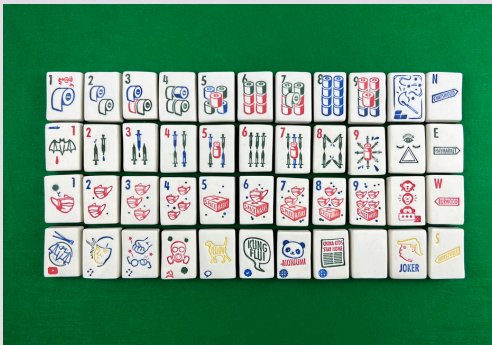
Title: *I'm not racist but... (Australian Mahjong), 2021.*

Medium: Porcelain Tiles, underglaze.

Dimensions: Variable

When the Coronavirus became more prevalent in Australia, so too did the underlying racism that unfortunately still exists in some individuals. During the early days of the ongoing pandemic, some media outlets reported on incidents involving the abuse of Asians by non-Asians, both verbally and physically.

Chen's artwork, "*I'm not racist, but...*" explores the themes of casual racism in Australia and the notion of playing "the game", through model migrant behaviour. Using the quintessential Chinese game of mahjong as the premise for her artwork, Chen subverts the three traditional suits – honour, wind, flowers and joker tiles – through the use of imagery that capture the state of intolerance as a result of COVID. Represented on these porcelain tiles are symbols and words that reflect the slurs, stereotypes, casual racist remarks, and patronising platitudes that COVID has reinvigorated.



I'm not racist but... (Australian Mahjong), 2021

Title: *I'm not racist but...(Australian Mahjong- Photographic Series), 2022.*

Medium: Photographic prints x3

Dimensions: 594 x 841 mm (A1)

I'm not racist but...(You really all do look the same), 2022.

I'm not racist but...(One of Us), 2022.

I'm not racist but...(Go back to where you came from), 2022.

This series of photographs is a visual essay of some of Chen's personal experiences, encounters, memories, and reflections upon what it was like to be growing up as an Asian-born Chinese (ABC) teenager in Australia during the 1990's. It was a divisive era in Australian politics, when political leaders such as Pauline Hanson would create fear and mistrust of the Asian Australian population through her steadfast racist rhetoric.

The photographs are intended to accompany the original porcelain mahjong tiles and provide a glimpse into the artist's own cross-cultural experience as an Asian Australian. Selected tiles from Chen's mahjong artwork are also featured in the photographic essay, to highlight different narratives including identity, stereotypes and the struggle for acceptance.

It is also a celebration of the artist's rich and important cultural heritage, with a distinctive nostalgic undertone that is carried through in each of the images. Photographed in Chen's childhood family home, the artworks feature favoured childhood Asian snacks and mementos, placed in and amongst the porcelain mahjong tiles.



I'm not racist but...(Go back to where you came from)
594 x 841 mm (A1)
2022



I'm not racist but...(One of Us)
594 x 841 mm (A1)
2022



I'm not racist but...(You really all do look the same)
594 x 841 mm (A1)
2022

Title: *Blue and White Vase Series, 2023*

Medium: 3D printed porcelain with hand assembled reliefs

Dimensions: Variable

The vases in this series represent the cross-pollination of culture, ideas, aesthetics, and technology. They are contemporary interpretations of traditional Chinese porcelain vases, that have a rich history in both East and Western culture.

Historically, the surface of Chinese vases was painted with cobalt blue pigment and featured decorations ranging from symbolic floral and animal motifs, Chinese symbols with various meanings, as well as landscapes and lifestyle scenes.

Chinoiserie, a decorative interior style that emerged in the 17th century, appropriated the aesthetics and imagery of popular East Asian design for the European market. These designs featured prominently on traditionally styled Chinese vases. To emphasise this cross-cultural exchange, the artist has further appropriated this concept by decorating the surfaces of the vases with a combination of floral species, which carry great significance in both Chinese and Australian culture respectively. They also feature Chinese characters that capture the essence of positive cultural exchange.

The vases represent a tangible dialogue between the two cultures.

The vase bodies are printed in porcelain using a 3D ceramic printer, a relatively new technology, while the cobalt floral reliefs have been created using a long-standing traditional hand building and casting technique. The amalgamation of modern production techniques alongside traditional craft skill is an acknowledgement of the contemporary world in which we live. We continue to follow traditions that have served us in the past, while also embracing new traditions that enhance our culture, keeping it relevant and progressive, to ensure they continue into the future.



Blue and White Vase Series, (Double Gourd), 250mm dia x 450mm, 2023



Blue and White Vase Series, (Begonia), 210mm dia x 350mm, 2023