



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Yiddish theatre meets Kung Fu film in artist Shellie Zhang's new neon light installation at the FENTSTER Gallery on College Street

Chinese-Canadian artist Shellie Zhang explores how Toronto's Jewish and Chinese communities fostered their cultural identities on the same site—a theatre at the corner of Spadina and Dundas built in 1921 as a showcase for Yiddish theatre.

Toronto, ON, February 28, 2018 – In a striking new neon light installation for the FENTSTER window gallery, Toronto-based and Beijing-born multidisciplinary artist Shellie Zhang reimagines marquee signage representing two significant cultural institutions established by Chinese and Jewish newcomers to Toronto.

Running from **February 26 to May 22, 2018**, *A Place for Wholesome Amusement* opens with a free event on **Thursday, March 15 from 7 to 9 PM**. FENTSTER is located in the storefront window of the Jewish community, Makom: Creative Downtown Judaism, 402 College Street, Toronto. The exhibition is curated by **Donna Bernardo-Ceriz, Dara Solomon and Evelyn Tauben**.

To create this site-specific exhibition, Zhang was invited to mine the extensive holdings of the UJA Federation's Ontario Jewish Archives, Blankenstein Family Heritage Centre (OJA) for intersections between Chinese and Jewish histories in Toronto. Her research led to the building on the north-east corner of Dundas and Spadina, the Standard Theatre, the first purpose-built Yiddish theatre in Canada. Five decades later, the theatre hosted the Golden Harvest Theatre, a cinema featuring Hong Kong films – primarily kung fu, action thrillers, and comedies. About this site, Zhang said, "There is something very special about the fact that this building was home to two different spaces that offered cultural and language connections for those who sought it. This wonderful energy that extended across time resonated with me."

Accompanied by reproductions of archival materials and historic details from over seventy-five years of the building's continuous operation as an entertainment venue (including as the Victory Burlesque from 1961-1975), the exhibition surfaces immigrant narratives embedded in the architecture of the Kensington Market-Chinatown neighbourhood, revealing little-known points of connection and breaking down siloed conversations about our city's past.

Presented by FENTSTER and The Ontario Jewish Archives, Blankenstein Family Heritage Centre
Featured in Myseum Intersections

FENTSTER
A WINDOW ONTO JEWISH LIFE THROUGH ART

 Ontario Jewish Archives
Blankenstein Family Heritage Centre
UJA Federation of Greater Toronto

MYSEUM: INTER
SECTIONS

[IMAGE: Detail of *A Place for Wholesome Amusement* by Shellie Zhang, 2018]

ABOUT THE ARTIST

[Shellie Zhang](#) (b. 1991, Beijing, China) is a multidisciplinary artist based in Toronto, Canada. She has exhibited at venues including WORKJAM (Beijing), Scope Art Fair (Switzerland) and Public House of Art (Netherlands). She is a recipient of grants such as the RBC Museum Emerging Professional Grant, the Toronto Arts Council's Visual Projects grant, and the Canada Council's Project Grant to Visual Artists. Recent projects include a residency at the Art Gallery of Ontario with EMILIA-AMALIA, the 2017 Creative Time Summit, and an ongoing yearlong peer mentorship program with Whippersnapper Gallery.

RELATED PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Walking Tours Inspired by *A Place for Wholesome Amusement*

All tours depart from FENTSTER (402 College Street) at 11 AM

Stories of Spadina with a Spin

Sunday, May 6

Travel back in time to an era when Kensington Market was a thriving Jewish village teeming with kosher bakeries, synagogues, and social clubs. On this tour, Jewish Toronto's past is brought to life. Visits to the architectural gems are supplemented by photographs from the OJA's holdings as vivid reminders of a once vibrant community. In honour of the annual Jane's Walk, we're putting a new spin on OJA's popular Stories of Spadina walking tour - departing from FENTSTER and making a special stop at the former home of the Standard Theatre and the Golden Harvest Theatre. *FREE | No registration required*

Discover Little-Known Stories of Toronto's Chinese & Jewish Past & Present

Sunday, April 29 and May 13

Inspired by Shellie Zhang's FENTSTER installation, the Ontario Jewish Archives has teamed up with Toronto's leading historian on Chinatown and experienced tour guide, **Arlene Chan**. She has published seven books about the history, culture, and traditions of the Chinese in Canada. Chan and the OJA's **Miriam Borden** will share insights into the Jewish and Chinese past of Kensington Market and Spadina with a special focus on the building at the corner of Dundas and Spadina that is the subject of the exhibition, *A Place for Wholesome Amusement*. The tour will begin with a brief curator talk at FENTSTER. *\$15 (\$12 for students / seniors)*

Presented by FENTSTER & Ontario Jewish Archives, Blankenstein Family Heritage Centre

For more information and to register for walking tours: www.fentster.org

ABOUT THE PRESENTERS

Presenting rotating site-specific installations of contemporary art connected to the Jewish experience, **FENTSTER** (Yiddish for "window") is a new independent artist-run exhibition space located in the storefront window of grassroots community **[Makom: Creative Downtown Judaism](#)**, fusing Jewish tradition and progressive values.

FENTSTER exhibitions are on view 24/7 at 402 College Street.

[The Ontario Jewish Archives, Blankenstein Family Heritage Centre](#), a department of UJA Federation, is the largest repository of Jewish life in Canada. The OJA acquires, preserves and makes accessible the records that chronicle our province's Jewish history.

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For further information and high resolution images, contact:

Evelyn Tauben

Curator

FENTSTER @ Makom

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