

NICOLA HARWOOD & FRED WAH / High Muck a Muck: Playing Chinese

“High Muck a Muck: Playing Chinese” is an interactive poem: both a web and an installation project. It can found online at highmuckamuck.ca. Our title “Playing Chinese” suggests the complexities of mimesis at the vortex of diaspora and globalism while scrutinizing the reflective nature of “playing” with dreams: is the gold of “Gold Mountain” perhaps shifting back to Asia? And, beyond a Chinook jargon, what accoutrements of hybridity have we recuperated from the contact zone? As artists, how can we offer some mediation between history and what has become an increasingly “mixed up” world? “High Muck a Muck: Playing Chinese” plays with the notion of fakery, of imitation, of wearing the master’s clothes, and of a reversal of roles as white Canada now strives to serve a Chinese economic master. It expresses some of the internal community struggles that erupt between different generations and classes of immigrants and it challenges the racist paradigm of an all-white Canada into which Asian immigrants enter but are never fully allowed to arrive. The project deconstructs form by using a low-tech aesthetic within the gleam of the digital world and deconstructs subject matter by questioning the myth of immigration as a pathway to increased fortune and happiness. The journey may take you nowhere; the winnings of the game may be bitter. Home is now forever dispersed. The Pacific ocean is the real boss.

The High Muck a Muck Artist Collective includes: Fred Wah, Nicola Harwood, Jin Zhang, Thomas Loh, Bessie Wapp, Hiromoto Ita, Patrice Leung, Phillip Djwa. The project was sponsored by Oxygen Art Centre in Nelson, BC and funded by the Columbia Kootenay Cultural Alliance, Columbia Basin Trust, The City of Nelson, British Columbia Arts Council, The Canada Council for the Arts, The Vancouver Foundation, and the Creative BC Arts Innovation Fund.

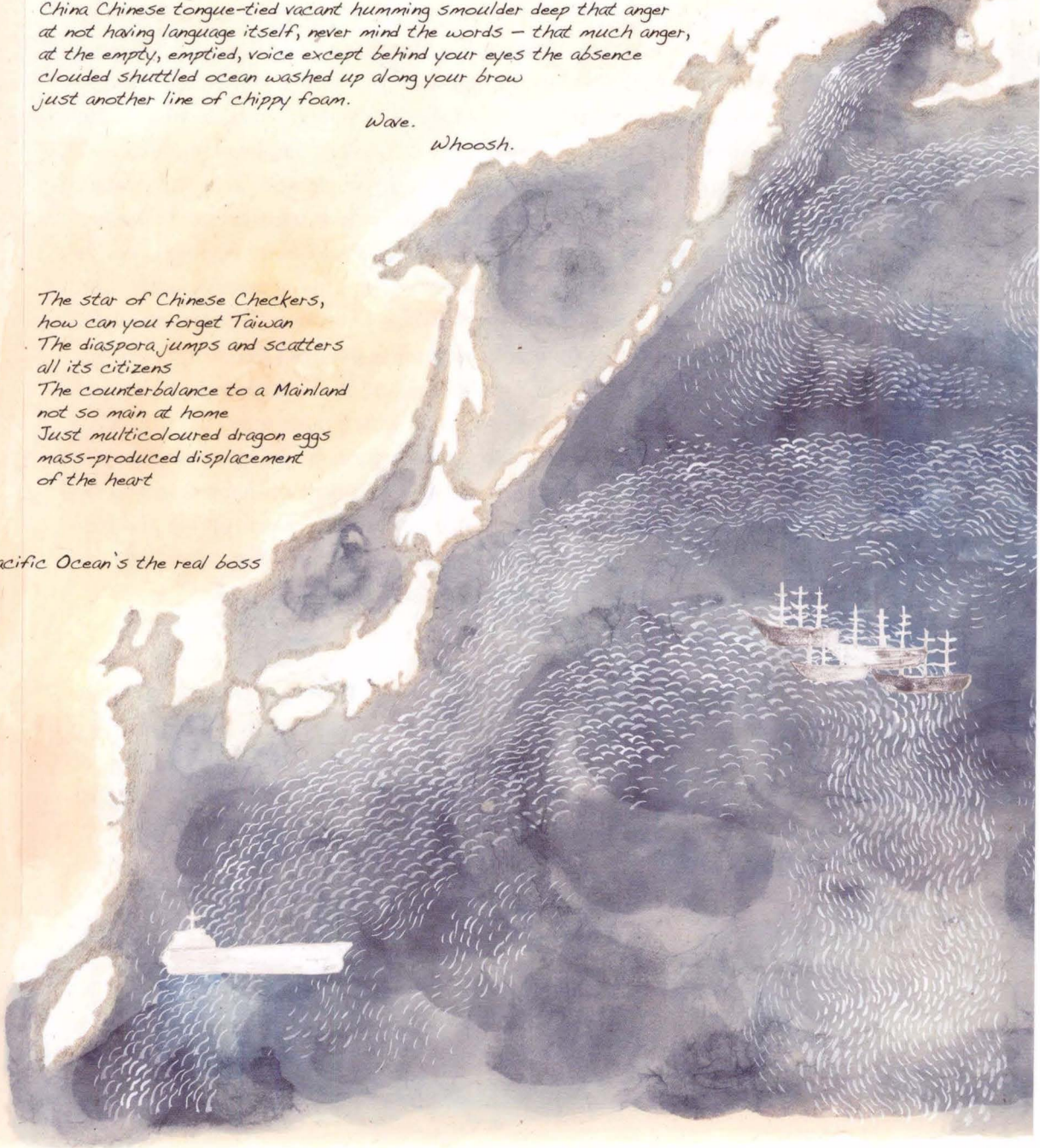
Through the same mouthless anger arriving there, here and back again stopped
stunned and caught in this double-bind of other information, Chinese-Canadian,
China Chinese tongue-tied vacant humming smoulder deep that anger
at not having language itself, never mind the words - that much anger,
at the empty, emptied, voice except behind your eyes the absence
clouded shuttled ocean washed up along your brow
just another line of chippy foam.

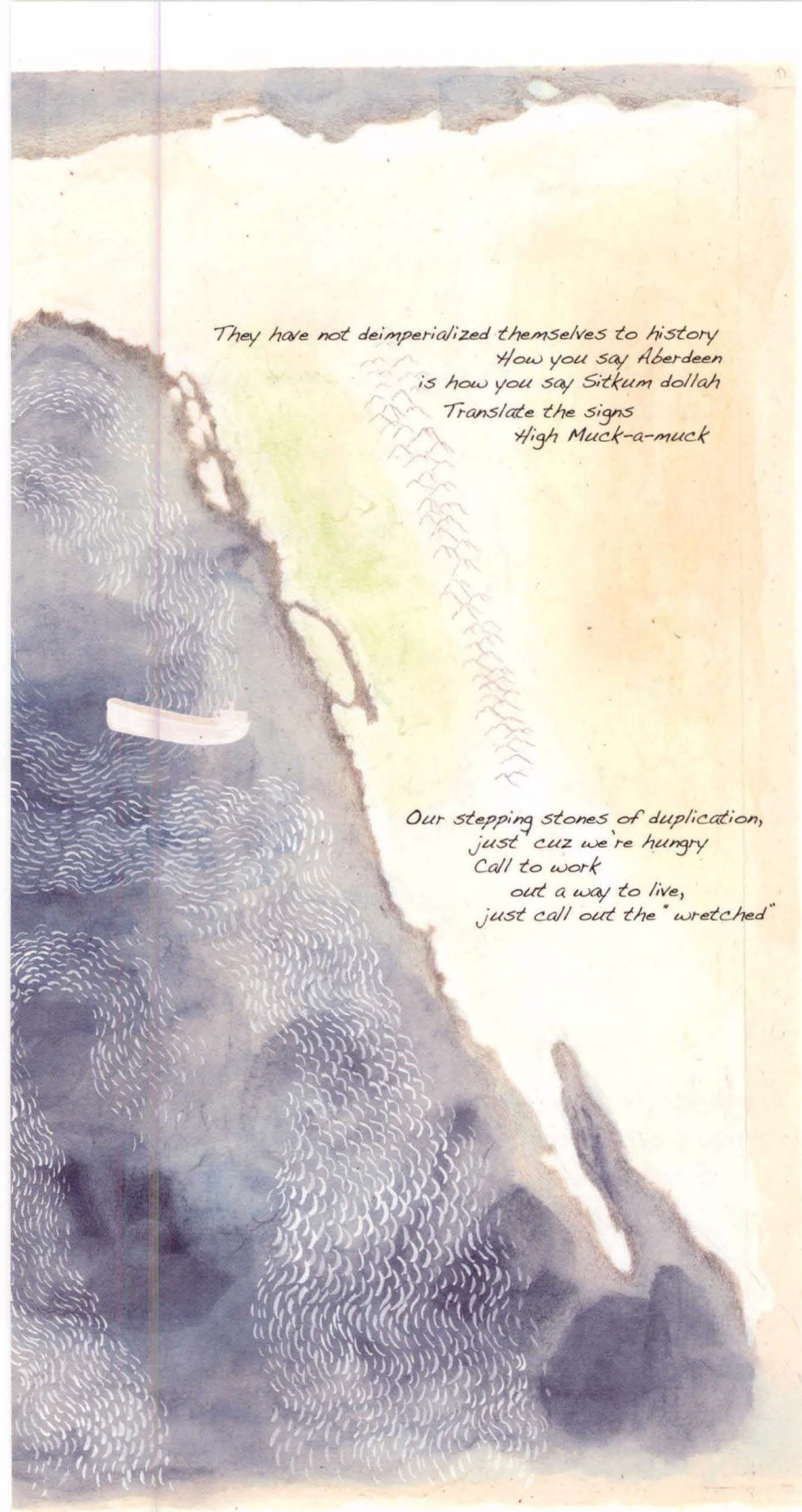
Wave.

Whoosh.

The star of Chinese Checkers,
how can you forget Taiwan
The diaspora jumps and scatters
all its citizens
The counterbalance to a Mainland
not so main at home
Just multicoloured dragon eggs
mass-produced displacement
of the heart

Pacific Ocean's the real boss

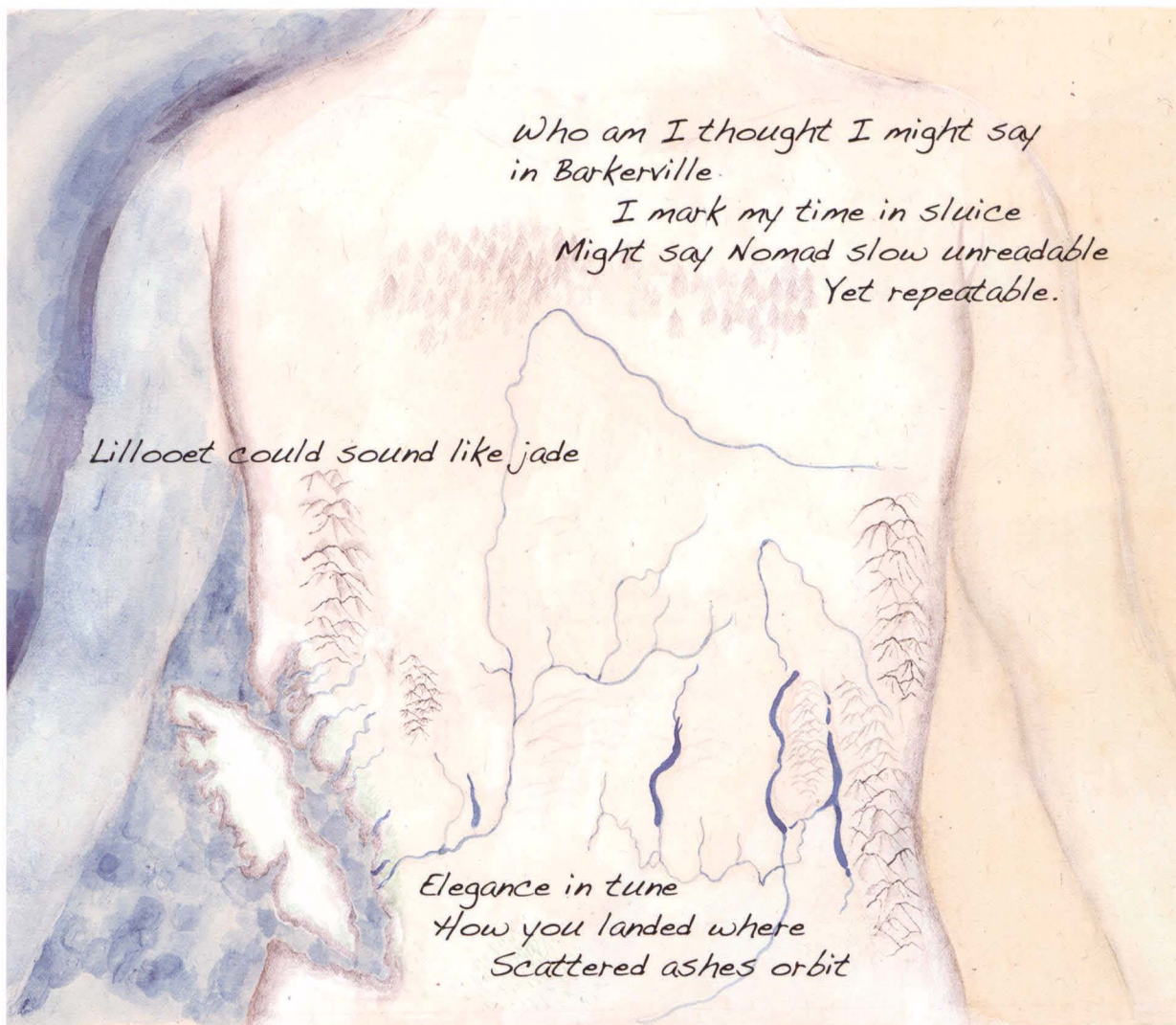




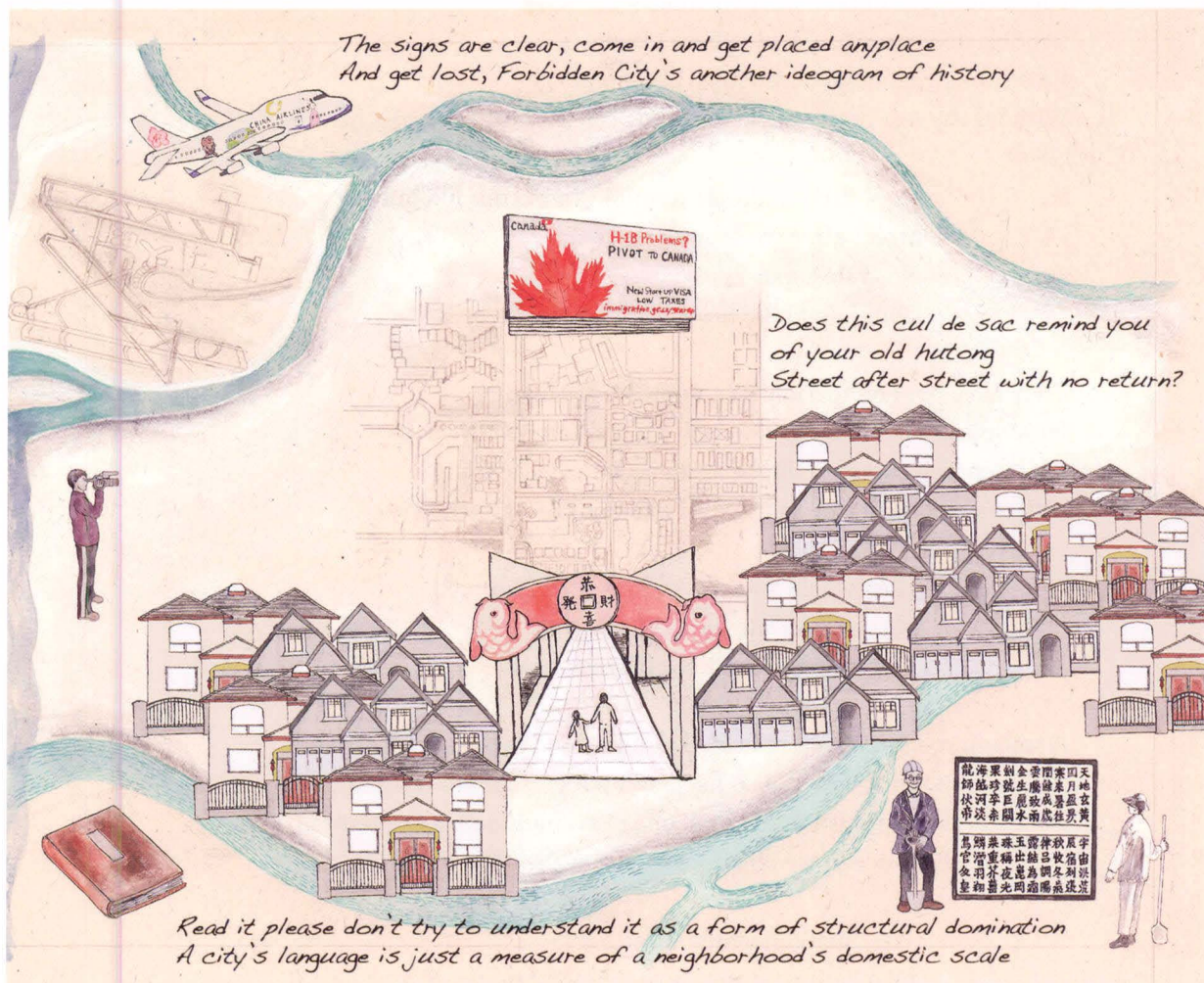
They have not deimperialized themselves to history
How you say Aberdeen
is how you say Sitkum dollah
Translate the signs
High Muck-a-muck

Our stepping stones of duplication,
just cuz we're hungry
Call to work
out a way to live,
just call out the "wretched"

Painting by Tomoyo Ihaya,
design by Nicola Harwood,
text by Fred Wah. *Pacific Rim*,
2014, ink and watercolour on
paper, original size: 18" × 14"



Painting by Tomoyo Ihaya, design by Nicola Harwood, text by Fred Wah. British Columbia, 2014, ink and watercolour on paper, original size: 18" x 14"



Painting by Tomoyo Ihaya, design by Nicola Harwood, text by Fred Wah. Richmond, 2014,
ink and watercolour on paper, original size: 18" x 14"