

Native Tongues Outcome Report

a.) *Interview Relatives:* This summer, I unexpectedly had the opportunity to visit many of my relatives in person. Rather than conduct remote interviews, I stayed with family, chatted over tea, and shared meals in Sichuan, Xi'an, and Shanghai, China. My father's side of the family speaks the Leshan dialect, my mother's side speaks the Shanghai dialect, my great aunt speaks the Shaanxi dialect, and we all know Putonghua, which my brother and I speak with an American twist. During my time in China, I used a digital camera to gather various images and sounds that would end up in my mood board.

b.) *Research:* After hearing family stories (topics included "Basic Elements in Chinese watercolors," "The Chinese Cure to the Cold," "I used to engineer Torpedoes," "Our family squandered its wealth during the Opium Wars," "Shooting dogs during the Cultural Revolution," and more), I began to wonder about the starting point to my unique set of knowledge. Who decides what I learn and how I learn it? The Western base and Eastern base for learning must have significant differences—what are they? Does knowledge come in the form of definitions or correlations? Is it more about individual identities or relationships between entities? What are the inputs and outputs, the machine being the body? What is the relationship between body and brain? My maternal grandmother had a lot to say about the body and "qi" in Chinese medicine, and while I'd never taken much of her healing tricks seriously, I began to read what my trusted sources (e.g. TED and NPR) had to say about rational decisions versus gut feelings. Should I trust my gut? I went down many rabbit holes reading countless articles on related stories, sciences, and philosophies.

c.) *Combine and Create:* How do I illustrate knowledge and learning? Visually, my piece grew from my short black and white animation of a tongue (visit <http://rsx3cd.tumblr.com/>). The grant allowed me to continue using Photoshop and Premiere to experiment with digital photography and hand-drawn illustrations throughout the summer. The narrative I arrived on is based on a seed. In my story, adult figures or "aunties" feed the child narrator a seed, and she swallows faithfully. Growing a plant inside her body is a simple metaphor for growing her knowledge and expanding her worldview through digesting new information and experiences.

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My original idea about mother tongues and roots of knowledge took off and led to a whole summer of brainstorming and divergent thinking. I asked more questions than I could answer, and did way more reading, writing, and thinking than making.

Moving forward, I would love to photograph in the cadaver lab. This summer, I had trouble making animated work look finished, so I hope to add dimension through incorporating rich photographs shot in film. I've been looking at the photography of Joel-Peter Witkin, who arranged body parts into still lives. While the subject matter is undeniably morbid, I am neither repulsed by gruesome visuals nor overwhelmed by the thought of death. His pictures allow me to closely examine lifeless parts minus the blood and gore. I wonder if dissected guts can be portrayed with a similar serenity. I'm glad this grant challenged me to ask substantial questions in conjunction with artistic questions, and I hope to continue to explore personal answers in inventive ways.

Expenditures

\$240 Creative Cloud, 1 year at student price
\$125 Canon EF 50mm f/1.8 STM Lens
\$ 50 18 inch LED light table

\$415 Total

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