

Introducing our new co-editor: Ying Wang

The JoCAT editors

JoCAT would like to introduce a new co-editor. Ying Wang, from The University of Auckland, has recently been appointed as a co-editor. She joins the team of now seven editors, our coordinator and designer, and our copyeditors.

Introducing Ying Wang

Ying is currently working as a Research Fellow in the Centre for Arts and Social Transformation at The University of Auckland in Aotearoa New Zealand. She is focusing on arts-based research about well-being and leading Asian immigrant mental health projects.

Ying started her career in design but turned to creative arts therapy in 2015, graduating with a Master of Arts Therapy (Clinical) in 2017. She completed her PhD from the University of Auckland in 2021. To read more about Ying's path into creative arts therapy, please read her story below.

Ying is passionate about research from a critical/ decolonial perspective employing mixed-method approaches. Her previous research has focused on using culture in therapy and identity studies, utilising arts-based methods to explore these topics. As an immigrant arts therapist with English as a second language, Ying brings a deep understanding and sensitivity regarding the importance of cultural considerations in therapy and research.

Ying has several journal articles and book chapters published, and her new book, *Being Asian in Aotearoa: Moving between cultures through the arts*, has just been released by Palgrave Macmillan. You can read more about this publication here [<https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-031-32527-4>]

Ying's story: *100 Asians I met*

More than a decade ago, I was lost. I lost my identity as an Asian and my Chinese name because of my desire to fit into my first academic job in my adopted country, New Zealand. I stood at a crossroads, balancing my role as a design lecturer with the challenges of motherhood to two young children. One day, my Asian-faced children



came back from school in a low mood. Later, I found out that they confronted discrimination at school. My children's unpleasant experiences prompted me to transform my frustration from being lost and being suppressed as an Asian and my desire to protect my children into a creative endeavour.

Revisiting my childhood love for visual art and fuelled by a determination to share stories from my community, I launched a 100-day painting project – a collective



Ying Wang, *100 Asians I met*, 2013, oil on canvas, 1200 x 1500mm.

portrait of 100 Asians. With no concrete plan but the belief that unfamiliarity divides people, I aimed to use art to connect cultures. Over 100 days, I roamed Auckland's streets, inviting Asians I met to share their experiences and to let me paint them while listening to their stories. Many generously shared their stories – both the highs and lows of being Asian in New Zealand. I listened to these stories in their homes, backstage, offices, and even in the cosy corners of their kitchens or a quiet café table. The streets, too, became a stage for the heartfelt tales they shared.

Over the course of the project I painted 100 portraits, each accompanied by a story about being Asian in New Zealand. These stories were like mirrors for me, capturing common narratives of frustrations, traumas, and challenges, as well as growth, enlightenment, and appreciation. While listening to these narratives and painting the Asians I met, I grasped that this painting was also my self-portrait—as an Asian with displacement traumas, dreams, hopes, and a desire to find a sense of belonging on this immigration journey.

The realisation struck that art serves as a bridge – creativity transcending cultural divides. Motivated by this insight, I took a leap, leaving my design career to study

creative arts therapy. The journey aimed to understand the therapeutic potential of art, driven by a profound desire to empower myself and my community through the power of arts.

Through my study in arts therapy, my practice as a creative arts therapist and my current role as an arts-based researcher, the power of creativity became a tool for healing and discovery. My passion for using arts to facilitate connections and amplify voices grew stronger. This journey marked a transformative chapter – from design lecturer to advocate for the healing power of art, helping individuals to express themselves safely, to find their identities amidst root and adopted cultures, and to discover their sense of belonging in their new home.

Reflecting on the project of *100 Asians I met*, it marked a pivotal moment in my identity formation. Each encounter, with a unique story from each of the participants, helped fuel the flames of my belief in the transformative power of arts and stories. Today, I continue on this lifelong journey, leveraging that power of arts and stories. As an immigrant creative arts therapist and arts-based researcher, I channel my life experiences and passion for arts into a force for discovery, healing, and transformation.

Ying Wang, February 2024

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About the editors – see <https://www.jocat-online.org/team>



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