



NOMINEE

Su-Ying Lee takes art to unlikely places

[DEIRDRE KELLY](#)

The Globe and Mail

Published Thursday, May. 16 2013, 5:07 PM EDT

Last updated Thursday, May. 16 2013, 5:07 PM EDT

Staging art exhibitions inside a revolving door at Metro Hall or a Queen Street West corner store in Toronto is how Su-Ying Lee makes visual art accessible to the uninitiated.

“I’m aiming for groups of the curious and those who may find my projects by happenstance,” say the 44-year-old curator, who was born in Taipei but grew up in Toronto’s Chinatown and also in Niagara Falls, Ont.

“Necessity is the mother of invention,” she continues. “... I’ve often responded to the resources at hand and limitations I’ve been handed to work within unlikely spaces.”

Lee became interested in curating as an art and art history major at the University of Toronto’s Mississauga (UTM) campus from 1998 through 2003.

A mentoring relationship established with Barbara Fischer, then the curator at UTM’s Blackwood Gallery, led Lee to pursue graduate studies in the university’s curatorial program, with which Fischer is affiliated.

The program accepts just three candidates yearly, each of whom is expected to produce a major exhibition as part of his or her course of study.

Lee was accepted, and after graduating in 2011 she went on to become an assistant curator at the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art, after serving as curator-in-residence at the the University of Toronto’s Justina M. Barnicke Gallery, where Fischer is today senior curator.

Besides her gallery work, Lee operates an independent curating enterprise called Under New Management, which seeks to present art in unusual places.

The inaugural project took place in 2010 in a corner store located close to Trinity Bellwoods Park in Toronto.

Lee had disguised the location as a video rental store, but instead of Hollywood blockbusters the pop-up had on display art and art videos made by local artists. The rental fees were pay what you can.

Conceived with fellow curator Suzanne Carte-Blanchenot, the video store concept has since travelled to not-for-profit artist run centres across Canada, some as far as the Yukon.

Next summer, Lee and co-curator Jennifer Davis will unveil another site-specific piece that they are developing with Jimenez Lai, an architect, graphic novelist and artist based in Chicago.

The new work, like Lee's others, will take place in an unexpected Toronto location.

"It will straddle public and private space, art and architecture in an alley way," Lee says. "I make exhibitions and other projects that involve connecting art to new spaces and viewers."