

# King Tsin Restaurant

Presents

## “Grandmother Series”

Photography by Robert Welsh



As a supporter of Art Attack, Solano Avenue's First Friday Artwalk, King Tsin Restaurant will have a special Mother's Day exhibit of photography by Robert Welsh. The “grandmother series” will be featured on all the restaurant walls.

**Come in and enjoy happy hour prices until 9 PM for Art Attack on Friday May 1.**

Bring your Mother for a Mother's Day brunch, lunch or dinner the following weekend, May 9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup>. **King Tsin will give all the lucky moms a long stem red rose in honor of Mother's Day.**

King Tsin Lounge

[www.kingtsinrestaurant.com](http://www.kingtsinrestaurant.com)

1699 Solano Avenue | Berkeley, CA 94707

Open Daily: 11 AM – 9 PM | Happy Hour: 4 PM -7 PM

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Photography can be purchased through

**A Different Day Gallery**

1233 Solano Avenue | Albany, CA 94706

[www.aDifferentDayGallery.com](http://www.aDifferentDayGallery.com) | 510-868-4904



**Robert Welsh**  
**ARTIST'S STATEMENT**  
**CHAN SOO LOOK, THE GRANDMOTHER SERIES**

Chan Soo Look is my wife's grandmother. She lives in San Francisco's Chinatown. Born in Zhongshan, China in 1903, she came from poor parents who sold her into concubinage when she was 18 years old. As a concubine, she enjoyed a life of privilege as the fourth wife of a well-to-do businessman. That privileged life lasted until her husband died right before the Communists came into power in 1949. Chan Soo Look remained in China, living with her son and his family in Zhongshan and helping to raise his seven children. She was brought to the United States by her eldest daughter in 1970, at the age of 67. I met her in 1988, and she became family when I married her granddaughter in 1991. I call her "Pawh-Pawh," Cantonese for "grandmother."

During family visits I would notice her surroundings and her personal objects that make up the household. My experience in her home has been akin to the idea of what some scholars call "auto-topography": how the material objects with which people surround themselves articulate something of their lives and personalities.

Pawh-Pawh's belongings – furniture, momentos, clothing worn soft, a battered mop, chipped teacups - suggest the value of the old, the used, and the imperfect. Entering her world betrays a dramatic contrast to the values of contemporary society, which insists on the young, the new, and the perfect. I do not presume to translate her experiences, but I can take the viewer into her home and allow her possessions to reveal fragmented parts of her story. They, too, will preserve the mystery of her life, so that we might ponder what this 98-year-old immigrant woman contemplates as she sits at her altar with her offerings of fruit, flowers, and incense.

When I am photographing Pawh-Pawh's "relics," I am reminded of my own mother's familiar things - her pajamas, her cups, her pillows, her cooking utensils, the pantry; objects and places that I never documented during her life. As I see how the family takes care of Pawh-Pawh, I feel the dedication and respect for this long-lived elder. For me, she is not only a grandmother, but also a figure of continuity, the living origin of a family story.

**Epilogue:** Pawh-Pawh passed away in December of 2001 at the age of ninety-nine, and left behind five generations. I have begun to photograph in the homes of my mother-in-law's relatives and women friends to continue the study of "auto-topography" of Chinese widows.

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