



We spoke with Jinyoung A. Jin, PhD, director of cultural programs, Charles B. Wang Center, about her role and the importance of sharing Asian and Asian-American culture with the community.



**WHAT IS YOUR ROLE AT SBU?**

I organize exhibitions and various public programs including performances, lectures, conferences, workshops, films and festivals. The programs are to encourage an ever-deeper understanding and enjoyment of Asian arts, culture, society, history and politics. Curating public programs is exciting, creative work. It involves constant research – staying aware of what’s going on in the world of Asian art and culture – as well as the ability to stop and synthesize the flood of information into coherent stories.

**WHAT DO YOU ENJOY MOST ABOUT YOUR WORK?**

I love the creative aspect of organizing exhibitions. It is like telling a story visually. To make truly compelling, thought-provoking, perhaps even thought-changing exhibitions, you need to achieve a mode of presentation that people across the board will understand. Developing that type of exhibition is very conceptual in nature and it’s also very creative. It requires a kind of imaginative visualization that is very different from just putting words on paper. That challenge is one of the most appealing things about putting together a roster of cultural programs at the Wang Center.

**WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS FOR YOUR PROGRAMING?**

The public’s general understanding of Asia is largely limited to a focus on the specific time, war, violence, poverty or recent politics. I believe that cultural discrimination is often created by ignorance and indifference. Often opportunities to see beyond the headlines are very limited, too. I want to allow students to step out of daily routines and engage in out-of-ordinary experiences through our cultural programs, which are often educational and entertaining at the same time. I want to make all my programs approachable by highlighting similarities between diverse cultures, but also celebrate the uniqueness of each.

**DESCRIBE THE IMPACT THE CENTER HAS HAD ON OUR COMMUNITY**

Although small in scale, the Wang Center has been showcasing quite unique and thought-provoking subject matters. Each program represents diverse aspects of Asian culture that are often neglected or inadequately represented. For instance, our latest exhibition presents engaging and provocatively emotional stories of immigrants and refugees through graphic novels (*Our Stories Carried Us Here*, through December 10). The mural exhibit, *Again* (on view through May 31, 2022), conveys a visually powerful message of hope and bonds against hate crimes and discrimination against Asian and Asian Americans during the ongoing threats of COVID-19. These exhibits are on display at a timely moment when we must engage with society’s complicated social and political contexts through diverse perspectives.

**HOW HAS SUPPORT FOR THE COMMUNITY BEEN EXPANDED?**

During the pandemic, I thought more about the meaning of “public” and who is our audience, and programming has definitely become fully evolved with creative implementations. We launched diverse virtual programs including virtual exhibitions, workshops, films and lectures that can be viewed at home, and tried to reach out beyond our local audiences. Our audience grew beyond local to global, inviting many visitors from all over the world. I encouraged digital user engagement by opening up avenues like viewer-submitted questions for talks/panels and downloadable art kits to supplement our digital offerings.

**WHAT’S NEXT FOR THE CENTER?**

I would love to see the Wang Center continue to grow locally, nationally and internationally by establishing more online platforms and publications. My major new initiative this year and onward is creating professionally produced video essays on Asian art and culture. The creation of this online content will encompass more audiences, unimpeded by borders, time zones and facilities. I truly want the Wang Center to connect the world and bring the audience, whoever and wherever they are, into a deeper understanding of Asian art and culture.


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