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**MAYOR BLOOMBERG, CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMISSIONER LEVIN
AND MUSEUM OF CHINESE IN AMERICA OFFICIALS OPEN NEW
MUSEUM WITH TRADITIONAL “EYE DOTTING” CEREMONY**

New \$8 Million, Green Venue is More Than Four Times the Size of Previous Location

Features Multiple Exhibition Galleries, Interactive Visitor Kiosks, a Multipurpose Auditorium and Classroom, Research Center, and Flexible Space for Public Programs

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, Cultural Affairs Commissioner Kate D. Levin, and Museum of Chinese in America Board Chair Jonathan Ligh and Director S. Alice Mong today opened the new Museum of Chinese in America. The 14,000-square-foot venue at 215 Centre Street is more than four times the size of the previous location. The City provided \$2.5 million for the \$8 million project. Mayor Bloomberg and museum officials participated in an ancient “eye dotting” ceremony, a tradition performed by dignitaries at the launch of a new institution to signify that it has sprung into being. The Museum of Chinese in America is dedicated to preserving and presenting the history and culture of people of Chinese descent in the United States. Joining Mayor Bloomberg at the opening ceremony, which took place at the Museum’s new home, were Playwright and Museum Trustee David Henry Hwang, Museum Co-founders John Kuo Wei Tchen and Charles Lai, and Maya Lin, a Museum trustee who designed the new building.

“It’s fitting that the long and rich story of Chinese culture in America is told in New York City, and it’s exciting that the museum that showcases it has such an extraordinary new home,” said Mayor Bloomberg. “New York City draws its vibrancy and richness from the diversity of its population, and people of Chinese descent have long played an integral role in shaping the City. By supporting cultural institutions like the Museum of Chinese in America and helping them expand, we celebrate New York City’s diversity now and for future generations.”

“This terrific public-private partnership has provided the Museum of Chinese in America with a unique space to match the dynamism of its programs,” said Commissioner Levin. “Thanks to the Museum’s ambitious vision, Maya Lin’s design genius, and tenacious support from the City and the lower Manhattan community, the Museum of Chinese in America will be able to dramatically expand its service to visitors from around the corner-and around the world.”

“From its community-based roots, The Museum of Chinese in America’s new home marks its emergence as a national institution,” said Museum of Chinese in America Board Chair Jonathan Ligh. “Our institutional capacity will increase six-fold and allow us to house a range of exhibitions

and programs to facilitate a deeper and broader dialogue about Chinese American history, identity, and culture.”

“The Museum of Chinese in America was established nearly 30 years ago by two Chinese Americans, co-founders Charles Lai and John Kuo Wei Tchen, who knew it was important to document and preserve the history of our Chinese American heritage and experience,” said Museum of Chinese in America Director S. Alice Mong. “Our new location will allow the Museum to look at that experience through many different lenses and bring 160 years of our history to vivid life through innovative art and history exhibitions, films, panels, and educational and cultural programs. We’re thankful to our Board of Trustees, to the City and State of New York and to our wonderful donors and foundation and corporate supporters for helping make this possible.”

The new Museum features multiple exhibition galleries, interactive display kiosks, a multipurpose auditorium and classroom, a research center, and a flexible space for multidisciplinary public programs. The Museum expects to achieve LEED Silver certification through the incorporation of two environmentally sustainable design solutions throughout the building. At the heart of the Museum is a historic sky-lit courtyard, which evokes traditional Chinese courtyards. The core exhibition wraps around the courtyard and short biographic films telling the stories of Chinese Americans through history – from the 1850’s to the present day – are projected onto the facing glass windows.

The Museum’s new home is the result of a public-private partnership among the Museum, the City and private funders. The New York City Department of Cultural Affairs provided \$2.5 million in funding for the project in partnership with the New York City Council and the Manhattan Borough President. The agency also provided extensive technical assistance to the Museum as plans for this ambitious expansion developed. Additional support was provided by the September 11th Fund and the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation.

Located just inside the main entrance is the Journey Wall, which features individual bronze plaques donated in honor or in memory of people of Chinese descent. Each tile is engraved with the name of a Chinese American family, highlighting both their Chinese place of origin as well as their current home in the United States. Transcending the traditional donor recognition wall, the Journey Wall illustrates personal journeys that describe the larger Diaspora of Chinese Americans throughout our country.

“The Museum of Chinese in America’s new space focuses attention on individuals and families of Chinese heritage who have made their homes throughout the country, and who are very much a part of the fabric of this nation,” said artist and Museum designer Maya Lin. “The space was designed to show the dynamic presentation of the Chinese American story, as an integral part of the greater, and continually evolving, American story.”

The tradition of “eye-dotting” originated in China around 400AD. According to Chinese custom, dabbing red ink onto the eye of a large, dancing dragon or lion brings the creature to life.

Mayor Bloomberg and Museum officials also unveiled the Museum’s new core exhibition, “With a Single Step: Stories in the Making of America,” a history of the Chinese American experience. The exhibition presents the diverse layers of the Chinese American experience while examining America’s journey as a nation of immigrants – an overview of Chinese in the United

States from the 19th century to the present, individual stories that reveal what it has meant to be Chinese in America at over time, and the physical traces and images of past generations left for us to consider, reflect on and reclaim.

The Museum of Chinese in America began as a community-based organization founded in 1980 by John Kuo Wei Tchen and Charles Lai and Chinese American artists, historians and students who felt that the memories of first-generation Chinese Americans would be lost without oral history, photo documentation, research, and collecting efforts. Now a focal point of the community's cultural life, the Museum has evolved into not only the keeper of the community's documented history, but the community's cultural history as well. The Museum's original location (which will continue to be used for archives and collections) is in the heart of Chinatown on the second floor of the historic, century-old school building that was once Public School 23.

Admission to the Museum is free this week through Saturday. Thereafter, it is \$7 for adults, and \$4 for students and seniors. Children under 12 are admitted for free. Through the Museum's Target First Thursdays program, Museum visitors will receive free admission every Thursday. For more information, visit www.MOCA.org.

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