

# Manchester Chinatown: Illustration Design Based on Research and Interview

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**Abstract:** Manchester Chinatown is one of the UK's Chinese communities with a rich culture and history. In order to better understand this community, I conducted surveys and interviews, and made illustrations based on the information obtained. Through these illustrations, we hope to show the diversity and vitality of Manchester Chinatown. This community is not only rich in culture and history, but also unique in community activities and cuisine. It is hoped that these illustrations will attract more people to Manchester Chinatown and experience this unique community.

**Keywords:** Manchester Chinatown, Research and Interview, Illustration Design

## 1. Introduction

I have come to Manchester for some time, so I have a lot of understanding and inspiration from here. Many Chinese students and international students choose to go to Manchester because it has a centuries-old history and cultural deposits. It is also an essential transport hub, and a centre of commerce, finance and industry. Manchester is the world's first industrial city where people can see the history of British industry.

The study will express and relate the catering culture of Chinatown, the lifestyle and state of local Chinese people, and the city's Chinese community. By this way, it reflects my understanding and inspiration of Chinatown in Manchester, and more people will have a new comprehending and cognition of Manchester city.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Manchester

Each city and country has its own story, which presents to the world in its way, these features are mysterious and diverse. Manchester is the first industrial city in the world and arguably the first modern city. The former town of cotton textile has become an international city. Manchester is a world-culturally compatible city, has cultural deposits of British and it is consistent with the cultures of the world. The people of Manchester city are warm and gentlemanly, and neither too fast nor too slow about their lives every day. In the evening, they meet with their friends in a bar, they drink wine and mould their temperament, are very easy and comfortable. The city's local people have both of British gentlemen style and relaxed style, as well as trendy young people who are chasing the latest trends. Nostalgia and innovation infiltrate into the lives of British people.

Manchester as the primary carrier, through the research and investigation of the local Chinese community, telling the history, culture, architecture, people's lifestyle of Chinatown in Manchester and so on.

### 2.2 Manchester Chinatown

#### 2.2.1 Chinatown's development

Chinatown, also known as "Huabu" and "Zhongguo Cheng", has a long history as the original stronghold of overseas Chinese. Due to language barriers and cultural differences, the original Chinese immigrants formed this unique urban settlement in the localisation process. Before the 16th century,

Chinatown was mainly distributed in countries around China. In the early 19th century, as the gold rush and the Pacific railway were built, a large number of Chinese came to North America, and Chinatown began to form in the United States and Canada. By the mid-19th century, Chinatown was almost all over the world. The Manchester Chinese District also has a long history, has become Britain's second largest, after London's Chinatown, and Europe's third-largest Chinatown, a testament to the city's vibrant Chinese community. Chinatown was located in the southern part of Manchester city; it was founded in 1786. The Chinatown is on the George Street and Faulkner Street, has been a stark symbol of Manchester since the late 1970s and the most concentrated Chinese community in northern England (a third of the people in northern England live in Manchester). (Figure 1) In the past five years, the number of Chinese students in Manchester has increased by 45 percent. At the start of the 19th century, Manchester city's Chinatown had just one or two laundries and snack bars. The first Chinese settlers arrived at the end of the 19th century and found work in the laundries trade. Much more arrived in the 1950s and established takeaways and restaurants in the city centre, originally to cater for Chinese workers. Nowadays, the Manchester city's Chinatown, which is not what it used to be, is full of all kinds of Chinese restaurants and ablaze with lights. On every weekend, supermarkets, restaurants, and Chinese pharmacies in here are all unusually busy. There are more than a dozen active groups throughout the city, covering arts and culture as well as business and education. Moreover, the Chinese New Year's lion dance performance is also the most significant annual event in Manchester's Chinatown, with grand scale, which attracts many foreign visitors. Big red lanterns in the Chinatown hang high, creating a strong festive atmosphere. Chinese people have a right tradition of working hard and frugality, and they have inherited China's rich culinary culture, at the same time they will carry forward these great traditions. In the 1970s, Chinese restaurants opened in the abandoned buildings in this area, and as the Chinese community grew and developed, various business operations and forms appeared. By the 1980s, Chinatown was thriving and expanding, with restaurants, supermarkets, barbershops, traditional Chinese medicine clinics and other stores, business was booming. The Chinese supermarket—Wing Fat, which locates on Faulkner Street of Chinatown, the store is striking, there are plenty of eastern commodities to choose. From fresh fruits and vegetables, Oriental vanilla and spices, to a wide range of catering equipment and daily necessities, these can satisfy most people's needs and provide many conveniences for international students. Chinese supermarkets provide home ingredients for these “living elsewhere”, allowing their stomachs to be soothed by their hometown. The Manchester Chinese centre was founded in 2005, was dedicated to providing English teaching, art and dance classes, sports activities, adult education and some services. The centre has led many projects, including the establishment of Chinese community archives.

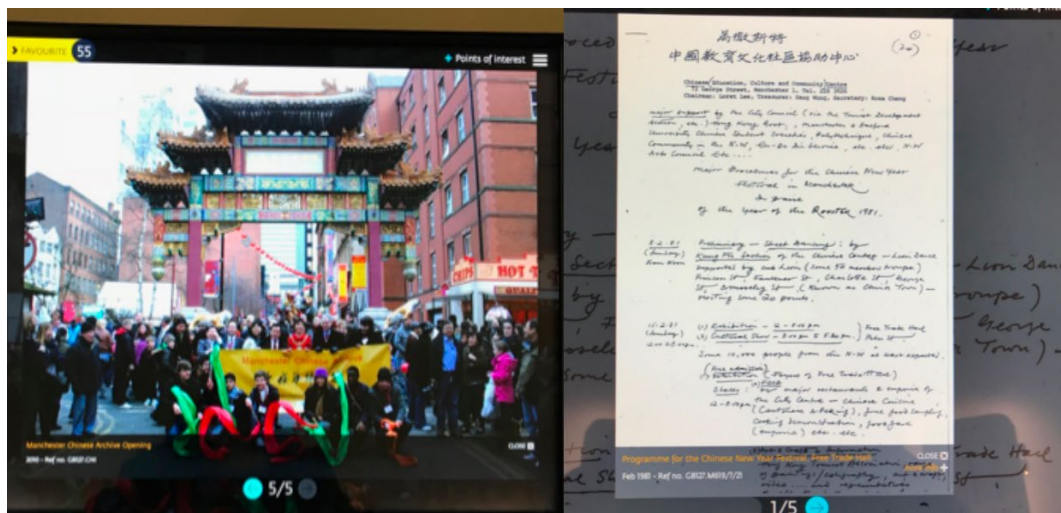


Figure 1: Manchester Central Library (Research form Manchester Central Library, 01/11/17)

Existing problems: Still stay in the Chinatown, often are some old nationals, who run a small business in here, with living and working, already cannot leave here. Another kind of left-behind Chinatown are some new immigrants who are not qualified to be a senior technical worker and for immigrants. Because of their poor language skills, they still hope to get help from their compatriots in Chinatown. Nowadays, higher-income Chinese groups are rushing out, especially after raising children. As the Chinese people continue to move out, Chinatown is becoming an Asian Chinatown. The decline of Chinese people in the Chinatown, another important reason is the gentrification of the community. With the construction of high-end communities and service facilities, the price of land in many places

has been raised, and a large number of historic buildings will be demolished. The second and third generations of the sons and daughters of overseas Chinese have been integrated into the British mainstream society through the high education bridge, at the same time they have also been out of the way from Chinatown. As a Chinese image of the group, Chinatown is often the first window for foreigners to know China. However, its weak and backward, with the rapid development of the modern China image has not been adapted to, and more and more the overseas Chinese image gap with higher education is also further and further away. Changing this situation is a question that some Chinese leaders in Britain are pondering. For example, Manchester's Chinatown, some plaques of many restaurants and stores are still the style and feel of the last century. Although traditional Chinese culture is preserved, it is far behind China today. Today's China, whether plaques or stores are following the international trend, fashionable and advanced. When it comes to restaurants' menu design, there is almost no design for the menu in Manchester's Chinatown. Most of them are merely printed Chinese characters on a piece of white paper, with rolling another layer of plastic. The font also has no design at all, which is entirely different from the fashionable design pursued in China. Moreover, also, most of the Cantonese restaurants in Manchester are played with Cantonese songs from the 1990s of last century in China. Of course, it makes sense to recall the classics, but it is a far cry from the songs that are now popular in China. <sup>[1]</sup> New hope: Under the premise of not destroying ancient architectural features, folk festival traditions and catering characteristics, proper development of tourism can at least promote the employment of compatriots in the Chinatown. At the same time, we should promote cultural exchanges, enrich the cultural connotation of Chinatown and promote the economic development of Chinatown, and keep up with the national image. <sup>[2]</sup>

### 2.2.2 Chinatown's restaurants

Many Chinatown is at the core of food, therefore for liking Chinese food and other Asian cuisines like Thai food, Vietnamese food and so on, Chinatown of all over the world often is the ideal place. The restaurant in Chinatown is not only an essential part of the local economy but also a social gathering place. If there is a breath of daily life in Chinese supermarkets, Chinese restaurants are the best place to celebrate "special days". China has always been speaking "food is the first necessity of the people", and no matter where Chinese people live, they cannot live without Chinese food and drink. Here have to mention in the 1950s, the British economy was booming, improvement of national consumption power and part of the British troops returned from the Far East, the habit of eating Chinese dishes, so the up in the development of Chinese food industry in significant strides. I have more experience and apperception in my life because I am studying in Manchester. I always go to Chinatown, and I experience and try these restaurants, such as Happy Seasons restaurant, Yang Sing restaurant, BBQ Chinese restaurant and so on. Manchester's Chinatown is dominated by southern Chinese cuisine, with Cantonese dishes and Sichuan dishes making up a relatively large proportion. Cantonese restaurants: Yang Sing restaurant, New Emperor restaurant, Happy Seasons restaurant, Pacific Restaurant and so on. Szechuan restaurants: Red & Hot Szechuan Cuisine restaurant, Szechuan Kitchen and so on. Of course, there are other cuisines, such as northeast cuisine, Hunan cuisine and so on. What is more, many restaurants now have fusion dishes to operate, in other words, including other Chinese cuisines. (Figure 2) Cantonese food has a little bit of sweet, Sichuan menu has a touch of spicy. While retaining the traditional Chinese flavour, it is also localised, catering to the tastes of local British people, with the combination of Chinese and Western. For example, Cantonese food in Manchester's Chinatown is lighter than that in China, and Sichuan food is less spicy. People are naturally gregarious animals. Apart from their hometown and motherland, people will gather together with people of their race or nation for various reasons. Overseas Chinese students and Chinese tourists could enjoy the taste of their hometown in Chinatown, and the thick homesickness complex springs stand vividly revealed on the paper. Foreigners can also eat Chinese food in here, through these large and small restaurants to understand Chinese cuisine, history and culture. <sup>[3]</sup>

Take Yang Sing restaurant as an example, and this year is the 40th anniversary of the establishment of Yang Sing, Yang Sing and Little Yang Sing are two high-end restaurants, the decoration is more upper-scale, warm and thoughtful service is a place for good friends or business guests casual parties. According to the literal interpretation, the city of Guangzhou is known as the city of Yangcheng, so Yang Sing represents Guangzhou, is about Cantonese cuisine. The "Yang" character of Yang's family is the "Yang" character of Yang Sing restaurant, which has a broad meaning. The Yang's family in Manchester city has high prestige and enjoys a reputation in Europe. It specialises in excellent dim sum and authentic Cantonese cuisine, and it has also awarded the best Cantonese restaurant in Manchester. Compared to Yang Sing restaurant, Chuan Guoxiang restaurant is more popular with Chinese overseas students. Chuan Guoxiang is a Chinese fusion restaurant in Chinatown. There are many kinds of dishes: Sichuan food, Dongbei cuisine, barbecue, hot pot and so on. The restaurant has a vast range of pasta

dishes, especially for beef noodles. The environment is spacious, and the price is moderate, can hold the classmate party, at the same time feeling the taste of hometown. At the end of the part is about Happy Seasons restaurant, it says that the restaurant belonged to an ordinary restaurant, and the owner was a Hong Kong native. Although the storefront is unremarkable, the dishes are relatively simple, and the dining environment in general, the guests are always full. The taste is delicious, the price is not expensive, probably about each £8.5, can be taken outside, super convenient. The three difference kind roast with boiled rice is the best popular, Meicai buckle pilaf, Fujian fried rice, and roast duck with rice chicken in soya sauce; both are very delicious and popular.



Figure 2: Photograph and Picture (Photographic record by myself, 03/11/17)

### 2.2.3 Chinese catering culture

When we talk about food, Chinese people often have a proverb, “hunger breeds discontentment”, which means that food is a fundamental and primal desire. It should demonstrate the importance and unique nature of “eating” in Chinese life. There may not be any place in the world that has as great a variety of delicious fare as China. Judging from the artistic and technical aspects of cooking, except for Italy and France, perhaps the skills of chefs in other countries will not be recognised by the Chinese people. China not only has all kinds of cuisines, and in all areas with exotic cuisine, even three meals a day of homemade meals can also provide unique recipes and cooking. Due to China’s vast land and abundant resources, the products and lifestyle habits are different, which objectively lead to a variety of family cooking styles. Different areas and places will have different eating habits and methods. As a branch of learning and art form, diet has not only bred rich and excellent cooking techniques but also reflects the happy nature and characteristics of Chinese people themselves.

Nowadays, whether it is Chinese tourists, investors of China, or Chinese overseas students, are increasingly placed vision in a broader space and accustomed to the migration of modern life rhythm, homesickness is no longer an excellent theme of life. Chinese restaurants are not limited to Chinatown. There are distinctive Chinese restaurants called names in every part of Manchester city. Slowly, Chinatown has less weight in the lives of international students and Chinese people, and they no longer limit their lives in these blocks. <sup>[4]</sup> People get together or leave for a variety of reasons, and the flow of people never stops in Chinatown. However, the Chinatown of Manchester will always be here, retaining a trace of warmth and thought for some strangers.

## 2.3 Research and Interview

### 2.3.1 Yang Sing restaurant

(This person interviewed is the staff of Yang Sing restaurant)

(1) How many years have you lived in Manchester? Were you born in Manchester? Why did you choose to come to Manchester? “1.5 years. I was born in Hong Kong. I came here for working holiday.”

(2) Do you like Manchester? Why is that? “I love the culture here but not the weather. In Hong Kong, we are all too stressful about everything while here actually I only have working pressure but other than that everything is fine.”

(3) What reasons make you take this job? Do you like this job? “I was studying marketing management in my university so I am here to help the business with my knowledge. I love this job which can give me a lot of motivations and the colleagues all treat me very well.”

(4) What reasons make it successful? “We have our heart to run our business. We do not mind to put effort on marketing and promotion to let more people know about Yang Sing’s story and history.”

(5) Yang Sing restaurant is a Cantonese restaurant, what is the difference in taste between Yang Sing restaurant and domestic Cantonese food? Does it cater to the taste of native Britons? Or is it a combination of China and West? “Yang Sing’s dishes are Cantonese so it is a bit different compared with the food in Northern China. However, the dishes are similar to Hong Kong’s dishes so that I can eat here as well when I miss Hong Kong’s food.”

(6) Are these chefs hired from China or are they Chinese living in Manchester? “All the chefs here have legal identity to work here so basically they are all living here. We are also hiring some young British chefs to get trained.”

(7) What are the most popular dishes? What do Chinese people like best? What do foreigners like best? “I would say it is the Diced fillet steak with shallots flambèed with whiskey because you can actually see the fire. No matter the customers are Chinese or European and kids or elderly people, they all love to watch when the fire is on.”

(8) Have you ever been to China? Which place do you like in China? What kind of food / snacks do you like? “I have been China quite a few times but most of the time was only in the Southern China like Shenzhen. But I have been Shanghai as well. I like the XiaoLongBau with using the straw.”

(9) Do you speak more mandarin or more Cantonese in your ordinary life? “My mother language is Cantonese so I would say most of the time I speak Cantonese. However, we have some staff who can only speak Mandarin so in some occasion I have to speak Mandarin as well.”

(10) Chinese restaurants are very busy in most of the time. What do Chinese people like to do in Chinatown when they are not working? “They love to go casino. If you go to the casino here, you will find most of them are Chinese.”

(11) Telling your story or something funny that happened in Manchester. “I came to here for working holiday. However, my performance was recognised by Harry Yeung and Bonnie Yeung so we are working on the working visa. The happiest thing happened in this period must be that I met my girlfriend haha.”

(12) As a group of Chinese people, Chinatown is often the first window for foreigners to know China. It represents China, but it is not really China. It is a far cry from China’s burgeoning image. What do you think of that? What can be improved? “Chinese community is a big community here so we are all working together to improve the environment in Chinatown.”

(13) What impressed you most about Manchester’s Chinatown? “Must be Yang Sing because it is a huge building with nice environment. Moreover, it is my first workplace here.”

(14) What is your favorite restaurant besides your own restaurant? Why is that? “The spicy fish. I like spicy but I can not really eat spicy. Chinatown should have different style of dishes like Thai, Japanese or Vietnamese even though it called Chinatown.”

(15) What role does Manchester’s Chinatown play in Britain? What kind of impact? “This is the second biggest Chinatown in UK so if the people in UK would like to feel the Chinese culture or dishes, they must come here.”

(16) What is the status of Manchester’s Chinatown among Chinese people? What is the impact? “I think most of the Chinese who living here, working here or entertaining here are missing their home country—China/Hong Kong/Japan/Vietnam and so on. Moreover, the older Chinese may not be able to speak fluent English so if they are in Chinatown, at least they can find the people who can understand them.”

(17) If you become mayor of Manchester, what would you like to do to the city? What needs to be improved? “In Chinatown, there are a lot of different types of bad people. There are drug dealers, drug takers and homeless. The whole Chinatown is so dirty. If they do not assign more police to pest control here more often, it would be only dirtier and no one is willing to come to Chinatown. In some occasion, we found human faeces next to our building in our property area.”

(18) Yang Sing restaurant in Manchester's Chinatown is a "via sallywang" Chinese restaurant. Its overall image and style of decoration, furnishing and menu design are much more high-end than other Chinese restaurants. So, are these designs hired by domestic or foreign designers? "Most of the things we use are from England even designing. However, some equipments have to be bought from China or Hong Kong."

(19) Last year was the 40th anniversary of Yang Sing restaurant, what activities were held? "We had a disco event which was really successful. Most of the customers are our regular customers. Some of them have been eating here for 30 years which is even longer than my life. Our staff enjoyed the event as well because our staff had to dress up like 1970s as well and when they finished the shift, they all went to the disco floor to dance."

(20) "Yang Sing" and "Little Yang Sing" are both restaurants owned by Yang Sing restaurant. So, what are their similarities and differences? "We are totally different business actually. Many people think we are the same but we have different management team, promotions, owners, policies and dishes."

(21) Are there some activities on weekdays? Corporate annual meetings, wedding ceremonies? "We always have or willing to have different private dining in our restaurant because we have 4 different rooms for private hire. Most of them are either company do or family do."

### **2.3.2 Chuan Guoxiang restaurant**

(This person interviewed is the owner of Chuan Guoxiang restaurant)

(1) How many years have you lived in Manchester? Why did you choose to come to Manchester? About 15, 16 years. She is from Szechwan and comes here to work.

(2) Do you like Manchester? Why is that? Like. It is convenient to live in here.

(3) What reasons make you take this job? Do you like this job? Ancestral, her elder generation ran restaurants. She does not like this job, because too busy and too tired. She won't hope her children go into the restaurant business.

(4) How many years has Chuan Guoxiang restaurant been open? What reasons make it successful? 3 years. Most of the food materials are sent from China; Hotpot materials are formulated; Buy 12 live sheep each week at Manchester, very fresh.

(5) Chuan Guoxiang restaurant is a Sichuan food restaurant, what is the difference in taste between Chuan Guoxiang restaurant and domestic Sichuan food? Does it cater to the taste of native Britons? Or is it a combination of China and West? Sichuan cuisine is main, no different from domestic cuisine. No, mainly for Chinese people.

(6) Are these chefs hired from China or are they Chinese living in Manchester? These cooks are from Szechwan. They come here on a work visa. They are married and have children in here.

(7) What are the most popular dishes? What do Chinese people like best? What do foreigners like best? That is too much. Some Chinese students can come for four or five days a week. Foreigners like hotpot and noodles.

(8) Which place do you like in China? What kind of food / snacks do you like? Szechwan.

(9) Do you speak more mandarin or more local dialect in your ordinary life? She spends 60 percent of her time speaking home dialect.

(10) Chinese restaurants are very busy in most of the time. What do you like to do when you are not working? She takes her children to the zoo and amusement park. She brings her children to learn Chinese.

(11) Telling your story or something funny that happened in Manchester. 1) Chinese students are very good and dislike Chinese tour groups. 2) She can see at a glance which students are new to Manchester when they order in this restaurant. 3) Homeless people in Manchester (Indians, Blacks) rob Chinese people's money and bags, and steal their bikes. 4) The Manchester Chinese Centre has free tour buses, and she takes her children to travel. 5) Cooks and waiters are busy every day. They need to prepare food, wash dishes, fold napkins and so on. Every day from 3:30 pm to 5:00 pm is the time for staff to eat and prepare.

(12) As a group of Chinese people, Chinatown is often the first window for foreigners to know

China. It represents China, but it is not really China. It is a far cry from China's burgeoning image. What do you think of that? What can be improved? In fact, Manchester's Chinatown pays a fixed fee to repair here every year. At the same time, they pay considerable attention to Chinese festivals. She thinks Manchester's Chinatown has a lack of direction boards and signs.

(13) What is your favorite restaurant besides your own restaurant? Why is that? No have, because she works in the restaurant every day. If she goes to different city, she will seek new and delicious food.

### **2.3.3 New Emperor restaurant**

(This person interviewed is the staff of New Emperor restaurant)

(1) How many years have you lived in Manchester? Why did you choose to come to Manchester? About 24 years. She comes from Hong Kong and follows her father to England.

(2) Do you like Manchester? Why is that? Well enough. There are fewer people in Manchester than in London, but the index of living is not very high.

(3) What reasons make you take this job? Do you like this job? Her friend's recommend. Well enough.

(4) New Emperor restaurant is a Cantonese restaurant, what is the difference in taste between New Emperor restaurant and domestic Cantonese food? Does it cater to the taste of native Britons? Or is it a combination of China and West? As Cantonese cuisine is light, it is acceptable for both Chinese people and British people. It tastes the same as Cantonese cuisine in China.

(5) Are these chefs hired from China or are they Chinese living in Manchester? They live in Manchester.

(6) What are the most popular dishes? What do Chinese people like best? What do foreigners like best? Chinese people like to order roast duck. Foreigners like to order boiled chicken with sauce.

(7) Which place do you like in China? What kind of food / snacks do you like? Hong Kong, wonton noodles.

(8) Do you speak more mandarin or more Cantonese in your ordinary life? She speaks more Cantonese.

(9) Telling your story or something funny that happened in Manchester. No have, she can not remember for the moment.

(10) As a group of Chinese people, Chinatown is often the first window for foreigners to know China. It represents China, but it is not really China. It is a far cry from China's burgeoning image. What do you think of that? What can be improved? She thinks no one does it and needs money to invest.

(11) Are there some activities on weekdays? Corporate annual meetings, wedding ceremonies? There are often.

### **2.3.4 Wong Wong Bakery & Café**

(This person interviewed is the staff of Wong Wong)

(1) How many years have you lived in Manchester? Why did you choose to come to Manchester? About 16 years. She is from Guangxi and comes here to get married.

(2) Do you like Manchester? Why is that? Like. Life is convenient, and she is used to living in here.

(3) Wong Wong Bakery & Café is a Hong Kong style bread store. Does it cater to the taste of native Britons? Or is it a combination of China and West? It is no different. Some British people also love it.

(4) Are these chefs hired from China or are they Chinese living in Manchester? They live in Manchester.

(5) What are the most popular dishes? Tuna Roll.

(6) Which place do you like in China? What kind of food / snacks do you like? Guangxi.

(7) Do you speak more mandarin or more Cantonese in your ordinary life? Almost two.

(8) Are there some activities on weekdays? Corporate annual meetings, wedding ceremonies?

Someone order the cake for their birthday or an annual party

**3. Conclusion**

Chinatown with a long history in Manchester city, it has developed into a landmark catering leisure area with its characteristic and specification. Southern cuisines dominate these restaurants, but also has been localised and reformed. The city's local people have both of British gentlemen style and vintage style, as well as trendy young people who are chasing the latest trends. The city's buildings are new and old coexistence, for example, the historic Town Hall, the fashion complex Spinningfields, the local English bars and so on. I particular, the in-depth interviews and exploration of Chinatown have found that the industrious and unsophisticated qualities of the Chinese people are deeply rooted. They not only adapt to city's local lifestyle and system but also bring Chinese catering culture to Manchester city and even the world. At the same time Manchester city's local people have also adapted to the traditional Chinese cuisine and culture. They are compatible with each other.

**4. My work**

I will through ways of interview and photograph, take notes and summary, focus on the lifestyle and habits of local people, refer to pictures to complete the works. And it presents the food culture and characteristic of Chinatown in Manchester city by illustration. And I will learn to Olivier Kugler (Figure 3) and Grayson Perry (Figure 4)'s illustration style and form of the interview, find suits own illustration feature to express the content of this study.

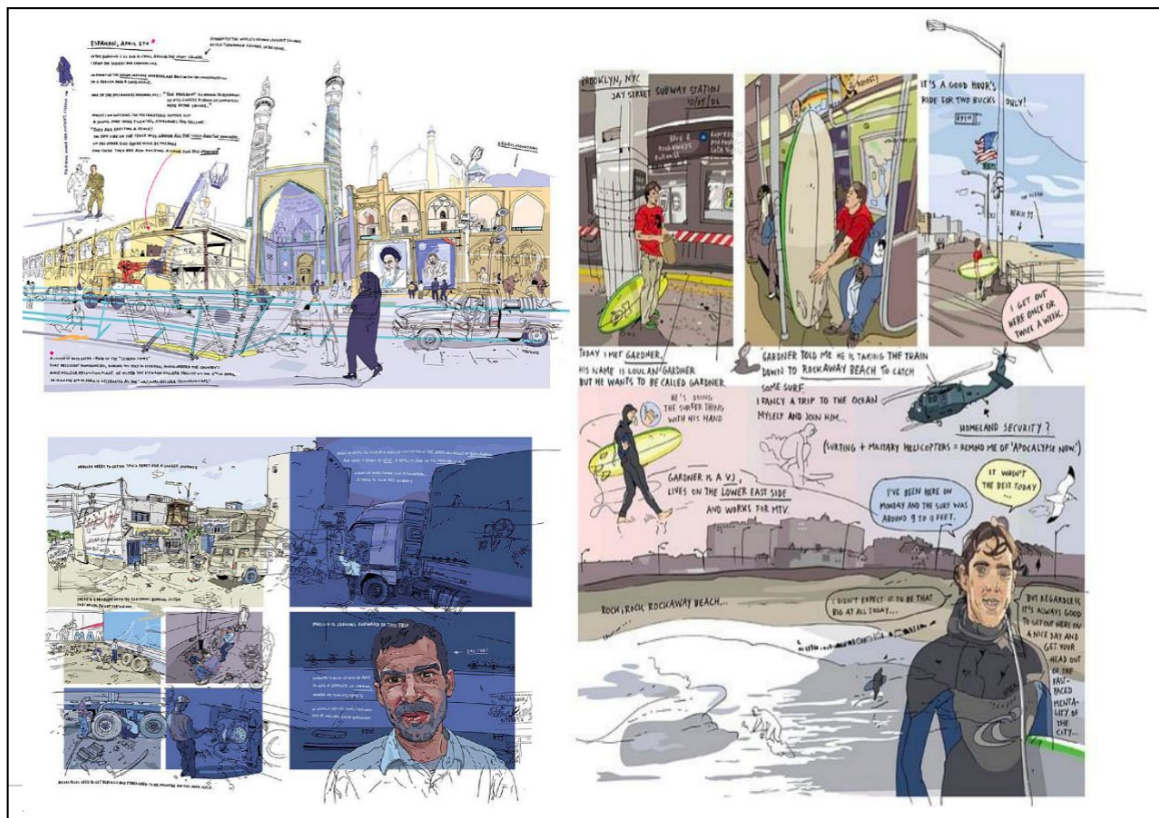


Figure 3: Olivier Kugler (2009), illustration with color marker (Accessed on google images, 28/10/17)

Drawing illustrations in this group of the original idea are also hope to let more people understand and know Manchester's Chinatown, through diet and cultural experience, understanding of a different kind of Chinatown and its deeper meaning behind it. Taking Manchester city as the primary narrative carrier, the history, culture, architecture and people's lifestyle of the city's Chinatown are narrated through the investigation and research of the local Chinese community. (Figure 5)





Figure 4: Grayson Perry, *The vanity of small differences* (2012), *The Walthamstow Tapestry* (Image from book of the vanity of small differences, 20/10/17)

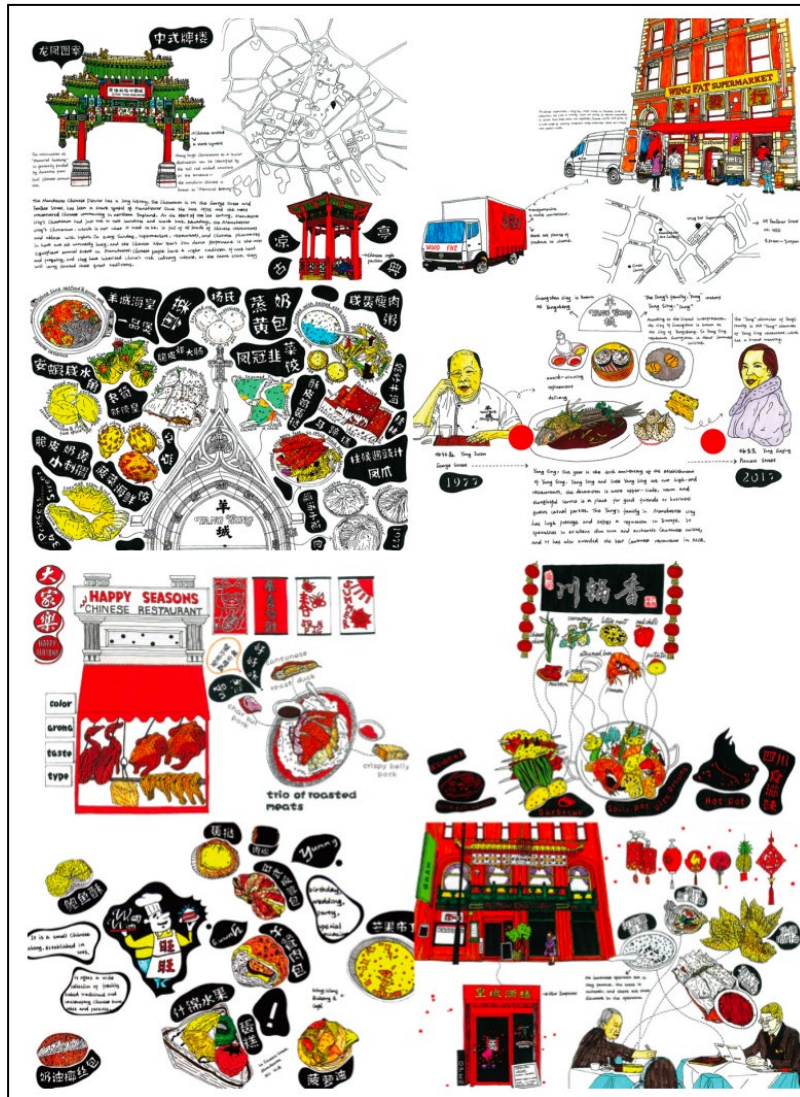


Figure 5: Manchester Chinatown: Illustration Design

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