



## **First Son Portraits By C.D. Hoy**

**at Presentation House Gallery  
September 4 to October 17, 1999**

**Curator Faith Moosang  
Assistance from Barkerville Historic Town**

This exhibition of portraits by photographer Chow Dong Hoy is ultimately a celebration of one man's indomitable will and spirited sense of adventure. Born in Guangdong province in 1885, C.D. Hoy was only seventeen-years-old when he immigrated to the western shores of Canada. His journey, which was undertaken to alleviate the poverty of his family in China, led him away from Vancouver into the Interior of British Columbia by 1905. There, Hoy was variously employed as a gold-miner in the town of Barkerville, a fur-trader near Fort St. John and a railroad surveyman near Tete Jaune Cache.

In 1909, after a season of limited success as a miner in Barkerville, Hoy took up a camera and began to take portraits of other Chinese miners who lived and worked in the town. These portraits were printed onto postcard stock and sent back to the sitters' families in China as a reassuring gesture of survival and possible success in the New World. From these beginnings, Hoy's clientele grew to include the Carrier and Chilcotin Natives who lived in the Interior as well as the Caucasian people who had migrated to the area.

This exhibition presents eighty one black and white images including a number of self-portraits. As one of the few non-white photographers of his time, Hoy's contribution to the demographic record is unique. The portraits illucidate not only the faces but the clothes, the work, and the rough-hewn materials of the frontier; scarred, strong looking hands, log piles, axes and weather-beaten structures abound in these portraits. Here, in Hoy's photographs the subjects sit front and centre in their own stories and with their own vitality. Hoy's camera captured the enduring presence of the Interior Native people and the dignity of the Chinese immigrants. They are personal records meant for a very private audience and as such, they lack the pretense of many historical photographs that were taken of the exotic "other."

This exhibition is accompanied by a book about C.D. Hoy that includes even more of his portraits, a lengthy essay about Hoy's unique position within the realm of historical photography in Canada, and a foreword by author Paul Yee.

On **Saturday, September 11 at 2:00 p.m.**, curator and author **Faith Moosang** will present a talk about Hoy's portraits and his life. This talk will be followed by a reception and a book launch, which is a joint publishing venture between Presentation House Gallery and Arsenal Pulp Press. This is a free event and all are welcome.



Photo credits for all images: C.D. Hoy, untitled photo, ca. 1910s. Courtesy Barkerville Historic Town

*First Son: Portraits by C.D. Hoy* is supported by Barkerville Historic Town and The Friends of Barkerville, the Government of British Columbia through the British Columbia Heritage Trust, The Hamber Foundation, the School of Media Arts at Emily Carr Institute of Art & Design, and the Canada Council for the Arts.

Gallery Hours: Wed. – Sun, 12-5pm; Thurs, 12-9pm. Closed Monday and Tuesday. Admission by donation.

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