

Famous New York Chinatown street known for violent past gets a makeover

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There are around 2.3 million Chinese living in the United States and they are also the third largest foreign born group. Many of these immigrants are settled in New York's Chinatown in Manhattan. One street in particular, Doyers, has long captured the imagination of artists, in part, because of its violent history.

CGTN's Karina Huber reports.



Doyers Street in New York's Chinatown is canvas to Chinese artist Chen Dongfan. Over a period of eight days, he transformed its concrete into 445 square meters of color.

It was commissioned by New York City's Department of Transportation and Chinatown Partnership to commemorate the Chinese community in New York.

“This street has a history of more than 100 years, and I tried to use painting to portray this street – it's a pretty difficult task. The name of the work is ‘The Song of Dragon and Flowers.’ Like its literal meaning, I believe dragons and flowers represent Chinatown's spirits,” said Dongfan.

Doyers Street is one of the oldest streets in New York City home to the first wave of Chinese immigrants. It's a small street with a corner known as “bloody angle”. It was one of the deadliest streets in American history.

Chinese immigrants first came to New York in the mid-1800s, settling in lower Manhattan alongside other immigrant groups. Many of them started legitimate businesses, mainly restaurants and laundromats.

But there was also some vice.

“There were different ‘tongs,’ or associations, that were rivals and there were a few incidents that kind of sparked a lot of violence,” said Herb Tam, Curator at the Museum of Chinese in America.

In the 1930s, police officers told The New York Times there were more violent deaths on this street corner than any other intersection in the U.S.

That dark period is long gone, but its history of illicit activities is part of what makes the street so appealing today.

Now, you’ll find trendy speakeasies serving absinthe as well as the oldest dim sum restaurant in New York, [Nom Wah Tea Parlor](#), that draws crowds throughout the week.

“I think Doyers is very symbolic of Chinatown, for some reason. I think it has to do with the curve, the interesting shape of it and it’s also stood the test of time in a lot of ways. A lot of the old feel of Chinatown is still there,” said Tam.

With the new mural, there’s even more reason to visit the enchanting street. But the clock is ticking. It will only be on view until November.

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