

藝術家的百種執迷

111 Artists Reveal Their Obsessions!

Preoccupations: Things Artists Do Anyway

泥人和李鴻輝的最新書作 / A bookwork by Cornelia Erdmann & Michael Lee

出版發布會 / Publication Launch

Kubrick 咖啡店 / Kubrick Bookshop Café

2008 年 7 月 19 日 (星期六) / Saturday, 19th of July 2008

下午三時正 至 四時三十分 / 3–4.30pm

由藝術家泥人和李鴻輝攜手編撰、泥人 laiyanPROJECTS 及 Studio Bibliothèque 協作出版的書作「Preoccupations: Things Artists Do Anyway」向讀者揭示藝術家在創作以外的執迷。書籍出版發布會謹訂於 2008 年 7 月 19 日 (星期六) 下午三時正至四時三十分假座 Kubrick 咖啡店舉行。

Preoccupations: Things Artists Do Anyway is a bookwork that explores the preoccupations of artists when they are not making art. It is conceived, compiled and edited by artists Cornelia Erdmann and Michael Lee Hong Hwee, jointly published by 泥人 laiyanPROJECTS and Studio Bibliothèque, and will be launched on Sat, 19 Jul 2008, 3 - 4.30pm, at Kubrick Bookshop Café.

翻閱英語字典，preoccupation 可解讀作讓人凝神貫注、全情投入的狀態、意念、感覺、物件、人物、地點、活動或事情，既可指奮發圖強，也可以是不能自拔的表現。這樣的沉迷見於可舒緩壓力的嗜好、無限擴充的收藏品、縈懷不滅的夢境、沉溺斷腸的感情、莫名興奮的戀物癖、甚至是無可救藥的強迫症。111 名從事視藝、文學、表演、電影、設計、建築創作的藝術家，以文字和圖象，在書中反思他們日常生活中從心而發、樂此不疲、甘心排除萬難的百種執迷。讀者可一邊細嚼其中的散文、詩句、日記、宣言、哲理、故事、說明和書信，一邊窺視他們的照片、速寫、插圖、圖表和電腦螢幕定格。精選篇章包括：

By definition, a 'preoccupation' is a state, condition, idea, feeling, object, person, place, activity or event on which a person expends extended time and energy, whether purposefully or helplessly. It may be a leisure activity that eases the tedium of work, a collection of things that one cannot stop expanding, a dream that one has frequently, a person to whom one is powerlessly connected, a fetish object that titillates one's sexual desires, or a obsessive-compulsive disorder beyond control. Each artist has a spread in the book to share on a preoccupation with text and image. This book project thus provides a platform for artists to reflect on and articulate things they do in their lives anyway, that is, without prompting from anyone or against all odds. The book is an archive of 'mini-autobiographies' that engage existing discussions on identity politics, auto/biographical criticism, relational aesthetics, creativity studies, leisure studies, book art, and reception studies. By offering a glimpse of the private lives of artists, this book provides insights to their art. In the book are 100 contributions by 111 international artists from the visual, literary and performing arts, including the applied arts of film, design and architecture. The writing genres include essay, poetry, diary entry, manifesto, truism, experimental narratives, instructions, letters. The images are in the various formats of photographs, sketches, illustrations, graphics, and computer screen shots. Of particular interest are:

- Basing in many places – sciSKEW (紐約 NY / 香港 HK / 上海 Shanghai / 新加坡 Singapore)
- Being a war-draft trainer – Kacey Wong (香港 Hong Kong)
- Compulsive fingers that type unstopably – Samantha Culp (香港 Hong Kong)
- Crucifix laid with bodies from Japanese porn – Joash Moo (新加坡 Singapore)
- Drawing tiny figures – Akinori Oishi (大阪 Osaka)
- Dust-making – Nina Lundström (魏瑪 Weimar)
- DVD boxed set – Mike Nicholson (倫敦 London)
- Gigantic pet frog – Chan Kai Yin (香港 Hong Kong)

- Gossip about a few contributors in the book – Brendan Goh (新加坡 Singapore)
- Lamenting on the art scene – Dutton & Swindells (哈德斯菲爾德 Huddersfield)
- Searching for an island – Map Office (香港 Hong Kong)
- Transverstism – Alfian Sa'at (新加坡 Singapore)

此書乃 STUDIO BIBLIOTHÈQUE 之 THINGS ARTISTS DO 的第四個項目，將於本年 7 月 23 至 29 日於香港書展隆重登場，香港藝術發展局展覽攤位有售。書作也是新加坡雙年展 2008 的延伸計劃之一，並將於本年 9 月開始在新加坡的 POST-MUSEUM 發售。

This book is the fourth project in the *Things Artists Do* exhibition/publication series of Studio Bibliothèque. This inaugural launch is held in conjunction with the Hong Kong Book Fair during 23–29 Jul 2008, and is featured in the Hong Kong Art Development Council booth in the book fair. The book will subsequently be launched as part of the outreach programme of Singapore Biennale 2008 at Post-Museum, in Sep 2008.

香港出版發布會詳情 Launch Information:

地點 Venue: Kubrick 咖啡店 / Kubrick Bookshop Café

香港油麻地眾坊街 3 號百老匯電影中心

Broadway Cinematheque, 3 Public Square St, Yau Ma Tei, HKSAR

日期 Date: 2008 年 7 月 19 日 (星期六) / Saturday, 19th of July 2008

時間 Time: 下午三時正 至 四時三十分 / 3–4.30pm

查詢 Contact: 編輯泥人 / Ms. Cornelia Erdmann, co-editor; (+852) 9276 5043, mail@corneliaerdmann.de

書本編輯、出版機構及各相關文化項目的詳細資料見於附錄一。

參與藝術家名單見於附錄二。

序言見於附錄三。

引言見於附錄四。

精選篇章見於附錄五。

For information on key personnel, organizations and event, see Appendix I.

For list of contributors, see Appendix II.

For book preface, see Appendix III

For book introduction, see Appendix IV.

For selected book spreads, see Appendix V.

附錄一 / Appendix I: 書本編輯、出版機構及相關文化項目 Information on key personnel, organizations and events

關於編輯 / About the editors

泥人 / Cornelia Erdmann

生長於德國法蘭克福，在德國魏瑪包浩斯大學考獲建築學士及公共藝術碩士。她自 2002 年開始醉心藝術創作，2003 年於瑞士蘇黎世聯邦理工學院擔任建築系講師，教授媒介建築，同時也在魏瑪包浩斯大學舉辦工作坊，並繼續她的媒介創作。2006 年 8 月她移居香港，從事各項藝術工作。她關心空間與社會之間的互動關係，透過作品表現城市生活的種種，以及她樂觀輕鬆的生活態度。

Cornelia Erdmann was born and brought up in Frankfurt, Germany. She received a degree in architecture in 2002 and a MFA in Public Art in 2005 from Bauhaus-University Weimar, Germany. Since 2002 Cornelia Erdmann is intensely involved in making art. In 2003 Cornelia Erdmann is a lecturer for «Mediatecture» at the Department of Architecture of the ETH in Zürich, Switzerland. At the same time she also teaches workshops at Bauhaus-University Weimar, and continues her work as a media-artist. In August 2006 Cornelia moves to Hong Kong. In her projects she is mainly interested in the interaction of space and society, scrutinising aspects of urbanity and life style – always bearing a small smile along the way.
www.corneliaerdmann.de

李鴻輝 / Michael Lee Hong Hwee

出生於新加坡，現於香港和新加坡工作。他透過照片裝置、模型、書籍、錄像、寫作及策展，研究慾望與空間的關係。他曾獲新加坡國家藝術理事會頒授 Young Artist Award (Visual Arts) 2005，表揚他在藝術上的貢獻。

Michael Lee Hong-Hwee is a Singapore-born artist currently based in Hong Kong and Singapore. Concerned with the relation between desire and space, he explores different forms and media, especially photographic installation, model-making, book-making, video, writing and curating. He was the recipient of Young Artist Award (Visual Arts) 2005, conferred by National Arts Council, Singapore.
studiobibliotheque.blogspot.com

關於泥人 laiyanPROJECTS / About 泥人 laiyanPROJECTS

泥人 laiyanPROJECTS 是一個結合藝術與設計的創意平台，由定居香港的德籍藝術家 Cornelia Erdmann 創辦，創作項目包括公共藝術、平面設計、藝術策展，以及有關文化工業的創意解難。

泥人 laiyanPROJECTS is a creative platform that fuses art and design within its practice, covering projects ranging from public art to graphic design, from art curation to imaginative problem solving in the creative industry. lai yan was founded by German artist Cornelia Erdmann based in Hong Kong.
corneliaerdmann.de/laiyan

關於 Studio Bibliothèque / About Studio Bibliothèque

StudioBibliothèque 是一個推動藝術創作、創意寫作、展覽策劃及互動學習的藝術空間，也是新加坡籍藝術家李鴻輝在香港的工作室。多份報刊曾刊登關於此藝術空間的專題報道，其中包括 iSh、南華早報、星期日南華早報、明報、明報周刊、新假期及生活區報。

Studio Bibliothèque facilitates experiments in making, writing, curating and learning. It is the Hong Kong-based working space of Singapore-born artist Michael Lee Hong Hwee. The studio has been featured in the media including in *iSh*, *Sunday Morning Post*, *South China Morning Post*, *Ming Pao Daily*, *Ming Pao Weekly*, *Weekend Weekly*, and *Take Me Home*.
studiobibliotheque.blogspot.com

關於 Things Artists Do / About Things Artists Do

Things Artists Do 由 Studio Bibliothèque 主辦，著重探討藝術家的身分，研究他們的創作歷程，是一個同時兼顧展覽與出版的藝術系列，藉此填補時下以大量調查、主題式藝術為主展覽與書籍的缺欠或盲點。系列的首三項展覽已完滿結束，分別為在 2007 年 5 至 6 月期間於 Studio Bibliothèque 舉行的「Autobibliophiles: Artists who make or use books」、本年 1 月於同一地點的「Eniminiminos: Artists who make things small」，以及在 3 至 4 月期間在合辦機構藝術公社舉行的「香港建築傷憐展：藝術家的空間詮釋」。本書乃系列的第四個項目。

Things Artists Do is an exhibition/publication series of Studio Bibliothèque. It aims to address the gap amidst the onslaught of survey, thematic art shows and books by focusing on the being, consumption and activities of artists. So far, three exhibitions in the series have been completed, respectively *Autobibliophiles: Artists who make or use books*, May-Jun 2007; and *Eniminiminos: Artists who make things small*, Jan 2008, both held in Studio Bibliothèque, and *Hong Kong Anarchitecture Bananas: Artists who reclaim space*, co-organised with and held in Artist Commune, Hong Kong in Mar-Apr 2008. This publication is the fourth project in the series.

studiobibliotheque.blogspot.com

關於香港書展 2008 / About Hong Kong Book Fair 2008

香港書展由香港貿易發展局主辦，每年七月假香港會議展覽中心舉行，展銷大量書籍、印刷品、文儀用品、光碟及多媒體產品。

The Hong Kong Book Fair is a fair organised by the Hong Kong Trade Development Council held usually in July at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, selling and exhibiting books, printed matter, stationery, printing, compact discs and other multimedia publishing.

www.hkbookfair.tdctrade.com

關於新加坡雙年展 2008 / About Singapore Biennale 2008

第二屆新加坡雙年展將以 Wonder 為題，於本年 9 月 11 日至 11 月 16 日期間於多個地點舉行。由 Fumio Nanjo 擔任藝術總監，Joselina Cruz 和 Matthew Ngui 聯合策展，雙年展雲集世界級的藝術家，當中包括 Han Op De Beek、Ilya 和 Emilia Kabakov，以及 Tang Ling Nah。

“Wonder” is the theme of the 2nd Singapore Biennale to be held at various venues during 11 Sep – 16 Nov 2008. Artistic-directed by Fumio Nanjo and co-curated by Joselina Cruz and Matthew Ngui, It will feature an international cast of contemporary artists including Han Op De Beek, Ilya and Emilia Kabakov, and Tang Ling Nah.

www.singaporebiennale.org

附錄二 / Appendix II: 參與藝術家名單 / List of Contributors

1. Nadim Abbas (香港 Hong Kong)
2. Zulharli Adnan (新加坡 Singapore)
3. Ah Hock and Peng Yu (新加坡 Singapore)
4. Ang Song Ming (新加坡 Singapore)
5. Liz Bachhuber (魏瑪 Weimar)
6. Leonard R. Bacich (紐約 New York)
7. Susanne Bosch (魏瑪 Weimar) and Julia Draganovic (柏林 Berlin)
8. Ovvian Castrillo (馬尼拉 Manila)
9. David Chan (新加坡 Singapore)
10. Chan Kai Yin (香港 Hong Kong)
11. Katherine Chan Sim Kuen (香港 Hong Kong)
12. Randy Chan and Kelley Cheng (新加坡 Singapore)
13. Lilian Chee (新加坡 Singapore)
14. Adrian David Cheok (新加坡 Singapore)
15. Cheo Chai Hiang (新加坡 Singapore)
16. John Chia (新加坡 Singapore)
17. Choi Yan Chi (香港 Hong Kong)
18. Heman Chong (柏林 Berlin / 新加坡 Singapore)
19. Chong Li Chuan (新加坡 Singapore)
20. Stefen Chow (新加坡 Singapore)
21. Chua Chye Teck (新加坡 Singapore)
22. Genevieve Chua (新加坡 Singapore)
23. Chun Kai Feng (新加坡 Singapore)
24. Samantha Culp (香港 Hong Kong)
25. Nicole Degenhardt (柏林 Berlin)
26. Dutton and Swindells (哈德斯菲爾德 Huddersfield)
27. Cornelia Erdmann (香港 Hong Kong)
28. Silas Fong (香港 Hong Kong)
29. Brendan Goh (新加坡 Singapore)
30. Michelle Goh Chor Swan (新加坡 Singapore)
31. Stine Gonsholt (奧斯陸 Oslo)
32. Robert Guth (悉尼 Sydney)
33. Andrew S. Guthrie (香港 Hong Kong)
34. han (新加坡 Singapore)
35. Hong Sek Chern (新加坡 Singapore)
36. Mithun Jayaram (班加羅爾 Bangalore)
37. Sabrina Koh (新加坡 Singapore)
38. Willie Koh (新加坡 Singapore)
39. Alice Kok (澳門 Macau)
40. Max Kong (新加坡 Singapore)
41. kwodrent (吉隆坡 Kuala Lumpur / 新加坡 Singapore)
42. Leon Lai (香港 Hong Kong)
43. Dana Lam (新加坡 Singapore)
44. Jaffa Lam (香港 Hong Kong)
45. Daniel Lau Chak Kwong (香港 Hong Kong)
46. Christopher Lau (香港 Hong Kong)
47. Michael Lee Hong Hwee (香港 Hong Kong / 新加坡 Singapore)
48. Leung Chi Wo and Sara Wong (香港 Hong Kong)

49. Martha Liew (悉尼 Sydney)
50. Lim Kok Boon (新加坡 Singapore)
51. William Lim Siew Wai (新加坡 Singapore)
52. Susie Lingham (倫敦 London / 新加坡 Singapore)
53. Justin Loke (新加坡 Singapore)
54. Lynn Charlotte Lu (新加坡 Singapore)
55. Cristiano Luchetti (香港 Hong Kong)
56. Nina Lundström (柏林 Berlin)
57. Teresa Luzio (卡爾達什·達賴尼亞 Caldas da Rainha)
58. Map Office (香港 Hong Kong)
59. Burgette Matthews (哈德斯菲爾德 Huddersfield)
60. Joash Moo (新加坡 Singapore)
61. Zarina Muhammad (新加坡 Singapore)
62. Michael Nicholson (倫敦 London)
63. Akinori Oishi (東京 Tokyo)
64. Jason Ong (新加坡 Singapore)
65. Jimmy Ong (紐約 New York)
66. Sherman Ong (新加坡 Singapore)
67. Pak Shueng Chuen (紐約 New York / 香港 Hong Kong)
68. Robert Partridge (雪菲爾 Sheffield)
69. :phunk studio (新加坡 Singapore)
70. Jane Porter (阿姆斯特丹 Amsterdam / 新加坡 Singapore)
71. Paul Rae (新加坡 Singapore)
72. Shubigi Rao (新加坡 Singapore)
73. Eudora Rusli (新加坡 Singapore)
74. Alfian Sa'at (新加坡 Singapore)
75. sciSKEW (紐約 New York / 香港 Hong Kong / 上海 Shanghai / 新加坡 Singapore)
76. Shiah Chyi Yun (新加坡 Singapore)
77. Jacklyn Soo (新加坡 Singapore)
78. Tan Chee Lay (新加坡 Singapore)
79. Erika Tan (倫敦 London)
80. Margaret Tan (新加坡 Singapore)
81. Michael Tan (新加坡 Singapore)
82. Tan Pin Pin (新加坡 Singapore)
83. Yuk King Tan (奧克蘭 Auckland / 香港 Hong Kong)
84. Tang Guan Bee (深圳 Shenzhen / 新加坡 Singapore)
85. Tang Kwok Hin (香港 Hong Kong)
86. Tang Ling Nah (新加坡 Singapore)
87. Tay Kay Chin (新加坡 Singapore)
88. Matthew Teo (新加坡 Singapore)
89. Mari Terauchi (東京 Tokyo)
90. Hiram To (香港 Hong Kong)
91. Pamela Voigt (魏瑪 Weimar)
92. Jason Wee (紐約 New York / 新加坡 Singapore)
93. Andree Weschler (新加坡 Singapore)
94. Kacey Wong (香港 Hong Kong)
95. Magdalen Wong (香港 Hong Kong)
96. Nicholas Y. B. Wong (香港 Hong Kong)
97. Susie Wong (新加坡 Singapore)
98. Ricky Yeo (新加坡 Singapore)
99. Yeo Shih Yun (新加坡 Singapore)
100. Yuen Kin Leung (香港 Hong Kong)

新聞稿 — 請即時公佈 / PRESS RELEASE – For Immediate Release
PREOCCUPATIONS: THINGS ARTISTS DO ANYWAY
2008 年 6 月 30 日，香港 / June 30, 2008, Hong Kong

「**Preoccupations: Things Artists Do Anyway**」特別鳴謝以下單位的鼎力支持：
***Preoccupations: Things Artists Do Anyway* is realised with the support of:**
香港藝術發展局 / Hong Kong Arts Development Council
新加坡國家藝術理事會 / National Arts Council Singapore

「**Preoccupations: Things Artists Do Anyway**」乃以下計劃的一部分：
***Preoccupations: Things Artists Do Anyway* is part of:**
新加坡雙年展 2008 延伸計劃 / The outreach programme of the Singapore Biennale 2008

新聞稿 — 請即時公佈 / PRESS RELEASE – For Immediate Release
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附錄三 / Appendix III: 序言 / Book Preface

How to Doodle, or a Private View on an Artist's Everyday Life

CORNELIA ERDMANN

Artist, designer and curator; Founder, 混AilaiyanPROJECTS (Hong Kong)

Sometimes I wished I had more time. Time for doing art, time for going around town to see exhibitions, time to hang out in coffee shops, more time to have dinner with friends, more time to sew a new dress, more time to finally restore the antique chair, more time to exercise, more time to watch a movie and more time to spend with my family or simply to sleep and recover from all those busy times. Sometimes I wished just to do nothing for as long as I don't get bored. Is that really possible? Isn't here immediately the problem that my inner fantasy starts drawing pictures of things that I miss doing at that specific moment? I am mentally doodling and end up thinking about everything that I really would like to do, too, while 'wasting' my time. Anyway, the list of more-time-wishes seems to be endless. But a week has only seven days and a day only 24 hours. Which leaves us all in the same condition to structure our lives.

Artist is an Artist is an Artist?

I am analysing my preoccupied life as an artist from a very personal perspective. Or I am trying how to make a personal justification manual to survive as an artist with all those ventures to pursue and things you have to do. For this book project I am trying to contemplate what my preoccupations really are. What is it that I am doing all the time that is part of my work as an artist and what is part of the other existence or multiple existences that I live? Is there a distinction at all between all those lives? Is being preoccupied that very specific problem artists suffer from? Do we artists have to live that way, or otherwise we wouldn't practice art or live the artist's lifestyle? The state of being permanently preoccupied seems

a very typical condition in an artist's life. The other issue is that as an artist it is difficult to distinguish between your private identity and your professional and therefore very public life. Your selfhood is often part of your work, your personality drives your spirit and your character is often reflected in your artwork's complexion.

Where I am concerned, basically anything can contribute to my artistic endeavours. Preoccupations, things that I do when I am not necessarily an artist, are actually preoccupying most of my time, I think. People always say that if you are an artist, you are it fulltime, despite what you are actually doing. That is quite true. Doing art, being creative is my sustained interest – most of my activities are somehow incorporated into my creative process. Almost everything and anything I do engrosses my imaginative thoughts. Whether I want it or not, I am influenced by these activities; they define my life and structure my days. These preoccupations even parameter my work.

I remember the times when I denied that it had been a sort of vocation to me to do art, even though that might sound a little lofty here. I always had the urge to lead a well-rounded life. I tried out many different things, had many hobbies, was engaged politically and went out into the world with open eyes. Actually, I claim I am still doing it.

But how has my life changed since? My life is filled with major preoccupations and career dilemmas – struggling with different fulltime jobs at the same time: being a successful artist, earning money (as a graphic designer, a gallerist and curator or whatever comes along) and being a mother with a growing family. Most artists suffer from the same problem of juggling their livelihoods and finding simultaneously enough time to be productive in art.

In my case I often feel I need all these in my workload to be productive. The more things I do, the more I get done, the more ideas I have. It seems like a paradox that I somehow need all these activities for inspiration and motivation – to keep me going. The paradox of this love-hate relationship is that my preoccupations are distractions but also necessities.

I wake up early in the morning to the calls of my baby son; not getting up is not an option. He is right awake and wants Mummy alert and attentive. It's playtime. Then we have breakfast, but I am still sleepy; even the morning coffee doesn't wake me up anymore. While I sit on the ground running the train over the floor, I already start being preoccupied. I am enwrapped by thoughts of what I couldn't finish doing last night and what I have on my agenda: to be a good mum and have time for my kid, answer all those unanswered mails that have piled up in my mailbox, send out book printing quotation requests, get dressed, write my essay for this book, talk to clients, finish the graphic design job, write my curatorial statement for the next exhibition, cook lunch for the little one, extend the shopping list for what is missing in the house, listen to my son's needs, read quickly through the newspaper and think: this is a topic that triggers my interest, send out an invoice for outstanding payments – oh dear I am so tired – and in between I try to have a flash of wit for an art project that I wanted to realise for a long time. I start to contemplate. In the evening I intend to go to an opening downtown, but don't make it because hardly any of all my tasks and errands is done. It is just a normal day.

My days are full with necessities, errands and wishing-to-do-dreams. And I ask myself “Where is my space?” Where is the time (and space) that I have to be what I am? What defines that ‘space’? Are the preoccupations in the end that ‘space’?

I question myself whether this ‘space’ or these ‘activities’, or let’s call them preoccupations, are sometimes more a (self-)absorption? Or are they in reality the fundamentals of our lives? Or are preoccupations more passive daydreaming than active undertakings in the end? But ‘active’ can also mean my mind actively wanders, but I am not active at all. I am vital and devoted to what I do. Anyway, to be preoccupied is our existence.

It seems as if preoccupations are actually 24/7 pursuits on the one hand. And on the other hand they can also put your mind off daily routines. Spinning like a hamster in the wheel can also help to detach yourself from your creative muddle. Preoccupations then can become a sort of mental doodle.

Doodles are absent-minded scrawls or scribbles, usually executed in some unexpected place, such as the margin of a book or a manuscript or even on a table we sit at when we are preoccupied with some other activity. But what if the doodling itself becomes our preoccupation – a positive distraction from our occupation?

Often I would say it is hard to distinguish for an artist between occupation and preoccupation. Is it a preoccupation when I love to collect stickers on fruit or is it actually part of my occupation? Is it a hobby to love to cook and to experiment with ingredients or is it an artistic process? When I am working simultaneously as a curator, artist and designer, where am I the most creative? That means I am back at the paradox where all these different tasks inspire me for whatever I do in my other existence. I need them, love them as well as hate them sometimes, if I don’t have time again for the other.

In the end I think the main thing is to stretch and to find your passion and see how that can be made to work for you (and your work).



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附錄四 / Appendix IV: 引言 / Book Introduction

On Doing: Purposefully, Helplessly, Wishfully, Hopelessly, Endlessly....

MICHAEL LEE HONG HWEE

Visual artist; Founder, Studio Bibliothèque (Hong Kong/Singapore)

Hobbies appeal only to converts. Hearing people talk *about* their hobbies, however, can be curiously enlightening. This is particularly so if the obsessions are rare or come from those who are famous or have notable accomplishments, or if the hobbyists' sharing is passionate, animated, humorous, insightful or inventive. It certainly helps if they let slip a secret or two about themselves.

When Cornelia Erdmann suggested that we collaborate to explore the things artists do when they are not making art, I readily agreed because I was thrilled at the prospect of peeking into other artists' private lives. Of course there were the questions of whether artists would be willing to publicise their private passions and, if they would, whether their sharing might be too banal or obscene, or if the whole exercise had academic or artistic value. We went ahead anyway, with hazy ideas about the project's eventual form and constituents, not to mention its larger significance. Today, with a compilation of 100 reflective commentaries from 111 artists on their preoccupations, we realise that the eight months of preoccupying ourselves with this venture have been worth it, and my initial anxiety was unfounded. While researching on the subject of preoccupation and reviewing other artists' articulation of theirs, we began to recall and examine our habits, much to our own amusement.

Just as an unexamined life is not worth living, as Socrates claimed¹, *Preoccupations* aims to be a platform for artists to reflect on their life. We asked artists to think about the one thing they often do other than art without prompting from others or against all odds, and then share with us about it with text and image. These contributions are little stories of the artists' lives; they are 'autobiographical fragments.' The genre of autobiography (literally, 'self-life-writing') has long been a channel for self-expression, self-discovery and, just as

importantly, self-determination. One can change one's life by the acts of thinking and talking about it. For Laura Marcus, autobiography is not just "a topic, [but also] a resource and a site of struggle," which "enacts both analysis and cure."² By offering a glimpse into artists' private lives, this book contributes to both the understanding and the development of their art.

Terms and Approaches

Some artists got it right away, submitting their contributions within minutes of our email invitation. Others took time to deliberate. Expectedly, many were preoccupied, or they might have been pondering over the layered meanings of the word 'preoccupation'. The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines 'preoccupation' in four forms: an *act of seizing*; a state of being absorbed; an extreme or excessive *concern*, and *something* that engages one's interest or attention³. That the word 'preoccupation' comprises 'pre' and 'occupation' adds a layer of complication. The prefix 'pre-' has both temporal and spatial dimensions. It may mean 'before' (e.g., *premature*) or 'earlier than' (e.g., *pre-dawn*), 'preparatory of' or 'prerequisite to' (e.g., *premedical*), or 'in advance of' (*predict*). It may mean physically being 'in front of' (e.g., *pre-axial*, *premolar*)⁴. A preoccupation may have an oppositional, if not complementary or causal, relationship to occupation (the 'proper' work), existing alternately of each other or simultaneously, in different places or the same. For some, it may be a leisure activity that eases the tedium of work, or a catalyst that spurs the creative process. For others, it is a compulsion they cannot help but have anyway. Most contributors were able to self-select a preoccupation to share, but some could not decide ("I have so many passions I don't know which one to talk about," went a few responses). Going with the flow, we worked with some of the artists to identify that single most important or unusual pastime, and encouraged others to discuss the relationships between their various obsessions.

We were promptly declined by some invitees who did not identify with the term 'artist' (e.g., "I'm a writer, not an artist," replied one). We define an 'artist' as any creative practitioner across the visual, literary and performing arts, including the applied arts of design, film and architecture. Assuming that there are shared threads in the artists' creative life, we hope to foreground these commonalities in this project. In this regard, we continue the spirit of Giorgio Vasari, whose seminal anthology of artists' biographies, *The Lives of the Painters, Sculptors, and Architects* (1568)⁵ was aimed, in part, at rescuing painting, sculpture and architecture from the oblivion of craft, in which these activities had hitherto been defined, into the realm of innovation and academia. A contemporary ally to our project in this regard is John Tusa, a broadcast journalist who interviewed 16 artists across painting, sculpture, photography, film, architecture, fiction, poetry, theatre and music, and concluded that their creative processes "exist in a strikingly shared framework of experience learned and won the hard way, seemingly regardless of the precise activity involved."⁶

We did our share of rejecting, particularly those contributions that read more like 'artist's statements' than 'autobiographical fragments'. Understandably, any attempt to separate life from art (preoccupation from occupation) may be good only for analysis but is ultimately rhetorical, contrived or futile. We were hence open to artists naming their preoccupations in areas of life concerns, artistic pursuits or, in many cases, where they overlap.

We included contributions on ‘repeat’ preoccupations (e.g., understandably, toys, music, pet dogs and cooking recur as favoured pastimes among the submissions) so long as they have been insightfully reflected on and interestingly represented.

The genre of autobiography has long been about the creation and consumption of inspirational texts of exemplary lives. The first-ever Western autobiography, *Confessions* (397–398 AD), in which Saint Augustine recounted his sinful youth and eventual conversion to Christianity⁷, arguably employed self-revelation as a means of exercising influence on others (in that case, to lead them towards salvation). If pre-modern autobiography presupposed individuals as subservient to higher cosmic powers, modern autobiography was regarded a project of self-discovery, beginning in the late 17th century, when self-awareness became a cultural point of focus. In the 1950s, the focus was on the essential properties of autobiography, as distinct from related (‘lesser’) forms like diaries, letters and memoirs. Thanks, in part, to the feminist movements from the 1960s onwards, the earlier privileging of the white, male perspective and emphasis on aesthetic limits and hierarchical differentiation gave way, in the 1970s, to a new focus on giving voice *to all*, especially minority groups, in their search for self-determination. For the first time, in major ways, women, blacks, gays, the poor and other marginalised communities exercised their rights to testify on their sufferings within different constraining contexts.

“One writes,” says Michel Foucault, “in order to become other than what one is.”⁸ Since the 1980s, theoretical frameworks like post-structuralism and postmodernism have been positing the self as necessarily fragmented, always incomplete, and endlessly modifiable⁹. Among contemporary artists, Lynn Herschman is a case in point. She invented a self-identity and lived this new ‘life’ for a few years, complete with a new name (Roberta Breitmore), handwriting, personality (incl. psychological problems), dressing sense, flat, and credit card. The blurring of lines between life and art, fact and fiction, in contemporary autobiography continues the role of an artist as a critic of social and aesthetic conventions.¹⁰

The contributions in this book present a wide range of creative methods and outcomes of reflecting on and representing aspects of one’s life. To provide clarity amidst the variety of contributor backgrounds and contribution styles, we decided on a design template with text on the left page and image on the right for each submission. In essence, we have imposed what Simon Morley, in his analysis of word-based art, might call a *trans-medial* relationship between the verbal and the visual. In this relationship, words and pictures exist separately from but are complementary to each other.¹¹ Despite or because of this rule, the diversity and creativity of the contributors come forth strongly. A few contributors leave one page blank: Chong Li Chuan’s blank image page reflects his Zen-like contentment as a new father). Others combine words and pictures on the same page: In his illustration, we see self-portraits of Michael Nicholson existing in, entering and exiting from different spaces in his home and imagination, alongside text commentary, as he represents his joy about his favoured DVD boxed set. Nicholson’s comics page exemplifies Morley’s second text-image relationship: the *multi-medial* relationship, in which text and image share the same space while having distinct spatial relations.¹² The third is the *mixed-media* relationship, in which text and image scramble into each other’s space.¹³ kwodrent’s ‘text-image’, a typographical layout of words on things that preoccupy her, and Eudora Rusli’s shape-poem are examples

here. Finally, there is the *inter-media* relationship, where the distinctions between text and image collapse.¹⁴ Dutton and Swindells’ diptych of words created as and revealed through neon light signages reminds us that language is ultimately visual.

In the following analysis, which raises salient issues and cites some (not all) contributions as examples, the main focus is on how text, image or both reveal shared and unique themes among the artists’ preoccupations. Especially where these are shared, they offer insight into the artists’ worlds.

The Work of Life in an Age of Contemporary Art

How do artists live? More or less like any other human being? In spite of their presumed free spirit, do they abide by certain principles in life? How can artists juggle artistic pursuits with their multiple interests, professional responsibilities and social roles? Susan Bee and Mira Schor argue that artists’ musings about their life have “everything to do with art *even* [my emphasis] when they least seem to fit the bill of an artist’s statement.”¹⁵ I say that precisely *because* (and *especially* when) artists are not talking directly about their art, they can be the least guarded about their creative processes and perhaps the most candid about what makes them tick.

The reality of everyday, mundane activities can be the cornerstone of creativity in artists’ life. Agatha Christie is said to get her best ideas while doing the dishes.¹⁶ Susie Wong’s daily journey to the coffee shop to take her breakfast and read the papers are crucial preparations for any given day. For others, such as Ah Hock and Peng Yu, Alice Kok and Tang Guan Bee, escaping into meditative moments or places is crucial to counterbalance the humdrum of daily life. The images they have contributed tend to serve as an indexical reference to their preoccupation: Photographs of scenic places illustrate and complement their textual sharing. Others use humour: By placing self-portraits on images of rocks at the coastline and playing with scale, Map Office engages self-depreciatory wit in sharing their ongoing and perhaps still futile search for an island to call their own.

If art mirrors life while transforming it, reflections on life can help in asserting one’s artistic identity as well. Nadim Abbas and Daniel Lau are both eloquent in relating their respective pastimes, namely, cooking and basketball, with their creative approaches. Abbas’ photograph of his set of knives, visibly well maintained, stored and displayed, suggests an underlying grid that manages the uncertainties of life and art. Lau uses an artwork image instead, which he feels is symbolic of his perceived connection between his favoured art form and sport. Considering the risks of revealing one’s income sources, Yuen Kin Leung’s text on specific services he offers and the prices he charges, alongside his advertisement poster – may be seen less a testimony of his financial problem or an instance of commercial opportunism than as an autobiographical self-determination of asserting his identity as an artist-masseur. Altruistic fulfillment seems fundamental to a couple of artists, namely, Christopher Lau, with his voluntary work, and Jaffa Lam, with her role in organising residency programmes, demonstrating the paradox that helping others, one is helping oneself.

Especially for those who find themselves endlessly or helplessly preoccupied, the lines between one preoccupation and another, life and art, text and image, are interestingly fuzzy. As globetrotters, members of sciSKEW collaborative constantly and cyclically experience homesickness (missing home) and sickhomeness (tired of home), with their work being, at least in part, ways of assuaging the highs and lows of frequent relocation. This is vividly manifest in their research sketch of a proposed table design to serve the multiple functions for working, resting, hosting parties and storage, while being collapsible into a piece of sculpture. For Randy Chan and Kelley Cheng, the use of third-person references in 'objectifying' themselves and their experiences is strategic. From the description of their days as schoolmates, their initial plans to become artists, forays into separate architecture-related fields and current collaboration in operating a pub, appended with a portrait of them squarely seated and photographed on camera, we surmise a moment in the ongoing, probably life-long process of managing aspirations and resources, frustrations and humour, gain and loss. A few contributors find it impossible to separately discuss their seemingly opposing preoccupations: Lilian Chee's symbiotic engagement in housework and academic work and Stefan Chow's involvement in photography, mountain climbing and giving inspirational speeches, are cases that fruitfully problematise our project's brief for artists to isolate one preoccupation to share.

From Obsession to Aesthetic

Ironically, obsession is a subject of much obsessing across academic disciplines. Psychoanalysts regard obsessive-compulsive disorders (better known as OCDs), such as the hand-washing ritual, as symptoms of distress: the inevitable returns of unresolved emotional conflicts, curable only by way of recalling and revisiting the traumatic events.¹⁷ Karl Marx argued that many of human beings' preoccupations in the modern world are clues to and tools of capitalist subjugation; work, salary and leisure, for Marx, are among ways the rich continually sustain their superior existence over the poor, whose liberation calls for revolting against such a system.¹⁸ Philosophers since Socrates have regarded worldly obsessions pejoratively, as indications of the disability to recognise higher truths that exist only in abstract terms. Liberation, for metaphysicians, requires constant reflection of one's life in order to gain mastery over it. In their respective ways, much of academic discourse agrees that obsessions are a problem to be identified, understood and overcome.

Art can be an outlet for relating and reconciling contradictory impulses, and artists know this well. In his biographical study on Leonardo da Vinci, Sigmund Freud concluded that sublimation, or the process of channelling one's (sexual) desire into productive activities like sports, art and scholarship, is the key to turning a personal crisis into socially contributive work.¹⁹ But what makes one obsession clinically destructive and another artistic? Is an artist's obsession necessarily artistic? Or, are all great art the outcome of necessary obsessions and obsessing?

An agreement across creative disciplines is that there exist links between the abstract realm of ideas and the concrete world of objects. Artists may use things as physical material for creation or keep them in a collection. Wise people, says Laurence Sterne, tend to have

"hobbyhorses": "their coins and their cockle-shells, their drums and their trumpets, their fiddles, their pallets, their maggots and their butterflies."²⁰ For contemporary writer Alain de Botton, for instance, his large desk serves not just the practical function of holding up his many books without his study appearing messy, but also a psychological "promise" that "whatever book [he is] working on could, whatever its current chaos, one day end up as ordered, calm, and expansive as the desk already is."²¹ Among our book's contributors are avid collectors: Ricky Yeo, the perpetual downloader of Internet images; Zulharli Adnan, who is fascinated with underwear packaging; Choi Yan Chi, the collector of rare images; and the trash junkies in Shiah Chih Yun, Yeo Shih Yun and Cornelia Erdmann. Their sharing questions all easy conclusions of obsessing about things, including seeming rubbish, as a problem. Objects, to them, have sentimental appeal and transformative potential.

In Akinori Oishi's obsessive drawing of small figures, the line between life and art is unclear and perhaps inevitably so. What one person regards as unnecessary, abnormal or harmful may be fundamental to the existence and creativity of another; the image of his hand deftly at work is indexical to both the artist and the individual *in* Oishi. Paul Rae's confession about his tendency to be immersed in everything rather than some things, the latter tendency of which he regards as commonly expected of an artist, has an aesthetic resembling how the (his) mind works: constantly shifting between topics, between specifics and generalities, between rules and experimentations, between theory and experience. The multiple narratives in Rae's text are outcomes of a mind that fluidly traverses the intellectual and the personal. Dana Lam and Samantha Culp, the only two contributors who referred to their preoccupations as OCDs – teeth grinding and typing fingers, respectively – culminated in heartfelt prose and haunting imagery that have uncanny resemblance.

Obsessions are decipherable only in context. Social restrictions can simultaneously fuel and squash a taboo desire, leading to a range of guilty pleasures and gratifying transgressions. Joash Moo's citation of a biblical quote and mapping of a collage of naked bodies on a crucifix cleverly straddles pornography and art, blasphemy and homage. Alfian Sa'at subverts social norms through brutal honesty from an 'outsider' position: He confesses to his cross-dressing habit with a self-portrait in drag, an alter ego he calls "a ridiculous failure." His 'aesthetics of failure' is a critique of a society he suggests as overly celebratory of success, perfection and conformity. He makes personal preference and social critique one and the same thing, as does Moo, who additionally fuses the seemingly conflicting roles of compliance and resistance.

Relating Self and Others

Artists' reflections on relationship never fail to reveal their paradoxical desires to be individuals and also part of a larger community. Without surprise, the family is a recurrent point of reflection among the contributions. Matthew Teo's self-identity is inflected off his professed love for and observed similarity with his father. For Katherine Chan and Nicole Degenhardt, the obligatory ties to their families are a constant subject of ambivalence. For Eudora Rusli, a family tragedy continually haunts her and drives her art. What one fails to resolve in life may be better understood through an aesthetic.

The social circle of an artist involves complex deliberations of desire and disappointment. On the one hand, some artists, at least some of the time, savour the solitude to develop their distinctive practice, to make work. On the other hand, basic networking, including showcasing one's work publicly, is inevitable. How do artists find their balance between personal and social time? Leonardo da Vinci, according to Vasari, used to dress up a lizard with appendages in order to frighten his friends,²² amusing himself and others at the same time. Some of the contributions to this book are indeed shared preoccupations based on friendship (e.g., Susanne Bosch and Julia Draganovich's joy in chatting with each other) and loving commitments (e.g., Leung Chi Wo and Sara Wong's pet dog). Such activities are imbued with shared memories and aspirations about the future. In his diary-like reflections on meals shared with three friends, Jason Ong reflects on the inevitable gap between reality and his desire for perfect relationships. If desire makes the world go round, it is hardly ever graspable: This is evident in Teresa Luzio's constant yearning for everlasting love and Genevieve Chua's virtual relationship with a stranger, which she calls "Frolicking with Danger." For William Lim, paying attention to the justice and rights of his fellow human beings has become an issue of concern lately, after years of focusing on issues more architectural. For others, the art circle is a constant site of interest. Brendan Goh attempts to make a persuasive case for gossiping about fellow artists. His carefully constructed graphic hovers between being an in-depth psychoanalytic report, an airline's flight routes, and a mindless yet telling doodle.

If all human beings are depressives to varying extents, certainly not all are comfortable enough to admit it openly. Beneath Chan Kai Yin's lightly humorous recollection of his late pet seems to be understandably continued sorrow about its departure from his life. In this book, we also find contributions that deal with grief head on. Brief words and an image of (her?) wrinkled skin lend a poetic dimension to the overwhelming sadness in Andree Weschler's painful realisation of her aging. Despite the dilemma he has observed in his literary life – joyful periods coinciding with little writing and melancholic moments being more conducive for literary production – Nicholas Y. B. Wong reveals that sadness is an intrinsic condition for (his) art and life. The image of a clown he uses to supplement his text is analogical to the little ironies of life: The saddest people make the best clowns; sadness can be beautiful. Self-absorption, once grasped and shared, can seem endearingly human and thus, powerfully liberating.

Beyond self-reportage, autobiography can be a speculative project of planning, creating and changing one's life. This function is especially critical in relation to the age-old expectation of autobiography to speak about the truth and nothing but the truth. For this project, I do not have the resources to ascertain the 'objective truth value' of each claim. Nor do I think it is important to do so. This project regards imagination and physical reality as equally valid points of entry and departure, and that a blend of fiction and fact as the fundament of creativity and insight. In this regard, Willie Koh's recollection of a trip to his idol's grave is an important autobiographical record even though it exists in the artist's imagination and here, on paper, and has never been executed (as he shared with me privately). That his submitted image was lifted with permission from a fellow fan's blog, which was in turn modified from another website about their common idol, makes for interesting discus-

sions on the relation between truth and appropriation, private and collective obsessions.

The book is a platform of choice for presenting this project. Stéphane Mallarmé calls the book a "spiritual instrument," a scared object that can reconcile the modernist breakthroughs of the intellectual and the individual with the ancient sense of the sensual and the communal.²³ This book is not meant to be an instructional manual offering a selection of hobbies, or a prescription on things one can do to fill time. (That role is well served by the wide selection of existing books and other mass media on subjects of all kinds.) This anthology of mini-autobiographies is aimed instead as an assemblage of ideas about the creative life, serving as a point in continuous cycles of discoveries and rediscoveries: The contributors attempt to understand and articulate their preoccupations; readers encounter these and begin grasping their own and, if conditions allow, also start sharing theirs with others.

We are hardly exhaustive in covering the range of preoccupations and related issues. We can claim success, however, if our book inspires in our readers a series of intellectual and emotional journeys in different directions and intensities. We hope readers will giggle, laugh aloud, smile, raise their eyebrows, roll their eyes, feel relieved, look skyward, rub their chins, frown, cry, wonder, drop their jaws, scream, drop their glasses, suspect, stick their tongues out, scratch their heads, stop what they are doing, scorn, look inward, remember the past, start something new, and continue what they have started as they go through this book. In them we want to stir reflections about their own habits and obsessions, ambitions and anxieties, with which they have long engaged, have never envisioned before, or have once entertained.

Notes:

¹ Plato, *Apology: The Death of Socrates* (London: LeClue, 2008).

² Laura Marcus, *Auto/biography Discourses: Theory, Criticism, Practice* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), p. 9.

³ Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (Available at <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/preoccupation>).

⁴ *Ibid.* (Available at <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pre>).

⁵ Giorgio Vasari, *Vasari's Lives of the Artists: Biographies of the Most Eminent Architects, Painters, and Sculptors of Italy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1946).

⁶ John Tusa, *On Creativity: Interviews Exploring the Process* (London: Methuen, 2004), p. 7.

⁷ Saint Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions* (London: Penguin, 1961).

⁸ Charles Ruas, "Archéologie d'une passion," *Magazine Littéraire*, no. 221 (Jul-Aug. 1985): 100-105; translated as "An Interview with Michel Foucault," in Michel Foucault, *Death and the Labyrinth: The Works of Raymond Roussel*, trans. Charles Ruas (London: Athlone Press, 1986), 169-86 (quotation on 182), quoted by David Halperin, *Saint Foucault* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 228.

⁹ Barbara Steiner and Jun Yang, "Writing Identity: On Autobiography in Art," in Barbara Steiner and Jun Yang (Eds.), *AUTOBIOGRAPHY* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004), pp. 10-28.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 16-18.

¹¹ Simon Morley, *Writing on the Wall: Word and Image in Modern Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003), pp. 9-17.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Susan Bee and Mira Schor (Eds.), *M/E/A/N/I/N/G: An Anthology of Artist's Writings, Theory, and Criticism* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2000), p. 39.

¹⁶ Dan Crowe and Philip Oltermann, "Their maggots and their butterflies," in Dan Crowe and Philip Oltermann (Eds.), *How I Write: The Secret Lives of Author* (New York: Rizzoli, 2007), p. 12.

¹⁷ Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo: Some Points of Agreement between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1950/1913).

¹⁸ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (London: Penguin, 2002/1848).

¹⁹ Sigmund Freud, *Leonardo Da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1989).

²⁰ Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (New York: Penguin, 2003), first published in 1759, and here cited from Dan and Oltermann, "Their maggots..." p. 12.

²¹ Alain de Botton, "A Large Desk," in Crowe and Oltermann (Eds.), *How I Write*, p. 39.

²² Gabriele Guercio, *Art as Existence: The Artist's Monograph and Its Project* (London: The MIT Press, 2006), p. 29.

²³ Stéphane Mallarmé, "The Book, Spiritual Instrument" (1895) in Jerome Rothenberg and David Guss (Eds.), *The Book, Spiritual Instrument* (New York: Granary Books, 1996), p. 20.

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附錄五 / Appendix V:
精選篇章 / Select book spreads

A Favourite Corner

CHAN KAI YIN

Illustrator and visual artist; Chairman, Hong Kong Society of Illustrators (Hong Kong)

I have long been fond of looking at animals, and looking after them.

From nature documentaries such as *National Geographic* and *Animal Planet*, we know animals are powerful beings living in a world of their own: Sometimes, they feed. Other times, they breed. At times, they kill.

I enjoy being an outsider, observing animals in their environments. I have kept tanks of fishes and turtles. I also had a Budgett's Frog, whom I named Big Mouth Dude.

When he first arrived at my home, Big Mouth Dude was the size of a HKD5 coin (about 2.5cm). He looked cute, like a piece of pudding with legs and a big mouth. Big Mouth Dude's daily routine involved remaining still at one corner of an 8 x 8-inch glass tank – until I introduced three or four live fishes into the tank. Whenever I did that, he immediately tensed up and grabbed the fishes with his arms into his mouth. With his large mouth, he had no problem taking in everything at one go – including, once, my fingers. Fortunately, he was small then, or I might have died from bleeding.

At his largest, he was the length of a human palm (about 13cm). Whether in a small or big tank, Big Mouth preferred to remain in one corner.

Two winters ago, he stopped eating. When he left, he was also in his favourite corner.

Translated from Chinese by Michael Lee Hong Hwee



Photography: Climbing: Speaking

STEFEN CHOW

Photographer, climber and motivational speaker; Lead Trainer, 8th Pinnacle (Singapore)

I always find immense joy to live my passions, and it is a blessing to share them.

When I started mountaineering in 2001, I was still an undergraduate in a student mountaineering club. My fellow mountaineers and I were very passionate about the outdoors, and we wanted to share our experiences, so as to benefit other students.

I approached numerous schools, and a common response was: “Why should we listen to you?”

My answer: “Because we are free?”

By the time I graduated from my engineering course in 2003, I had given about 50 talks in schools to students from all levels, up to audiences of 2,000 at one time.

My talks were not about convincing students to go out and climb mountains. Yes, the topic revolved around the challenges we faced during our training, but the deeper lessons were about challenging our limits and relating to others.

In the beginning the talks were given free, but when teachers and students told me that my talks motivated them and moved them, I then considered this as a possible career path.

Each time I stood on stage, with all eyes on me, I knew I was being evaluated and hence I felt the need to push myself further to do better for the next talk. I preached about living one's passions, and each time I gave a talk, not only did I inspire others but I also inspired myself.

After summiting Everest in 2005, I decided to pursue two of my strongest

passions, photography and speaking, to see how far I can take them.

Photography and public speaking seem to be very different professions, even contradictory. The former demands that one observes and be a fly on the wall; the latter requires one to be in the centre of attention and evoke a change in the audience's mind-set through the talk. One calls for introversion; the other the extreme opposite.

But to me, both passions go hand in hand as they demand the distillation of my perspectives to the purest form. When I speak publicly or train corporate professionals, it is often a two-way conversation, from which I also learn from others, and that influences the way I see things.

Photography is similar, except that my camera has become my mouthpiece and my photographs, my voice.

058

© 2004 Stefan Chow
7000m on Mount Cho Oyu, Tibet



Typing Fingers

SAMANTHA CULP

Writer and visual artist; Co-founder, Embassy Projects (Hong Kong/New Haven)

My preoccupation is typing. Not typing on a computer, though I do that all the time. I mean my hands just typing on their own. On the side of my purse, on the bed sheets at night, on the surface of a table, on the inside of my closed fist. Sometimes on sheer air.

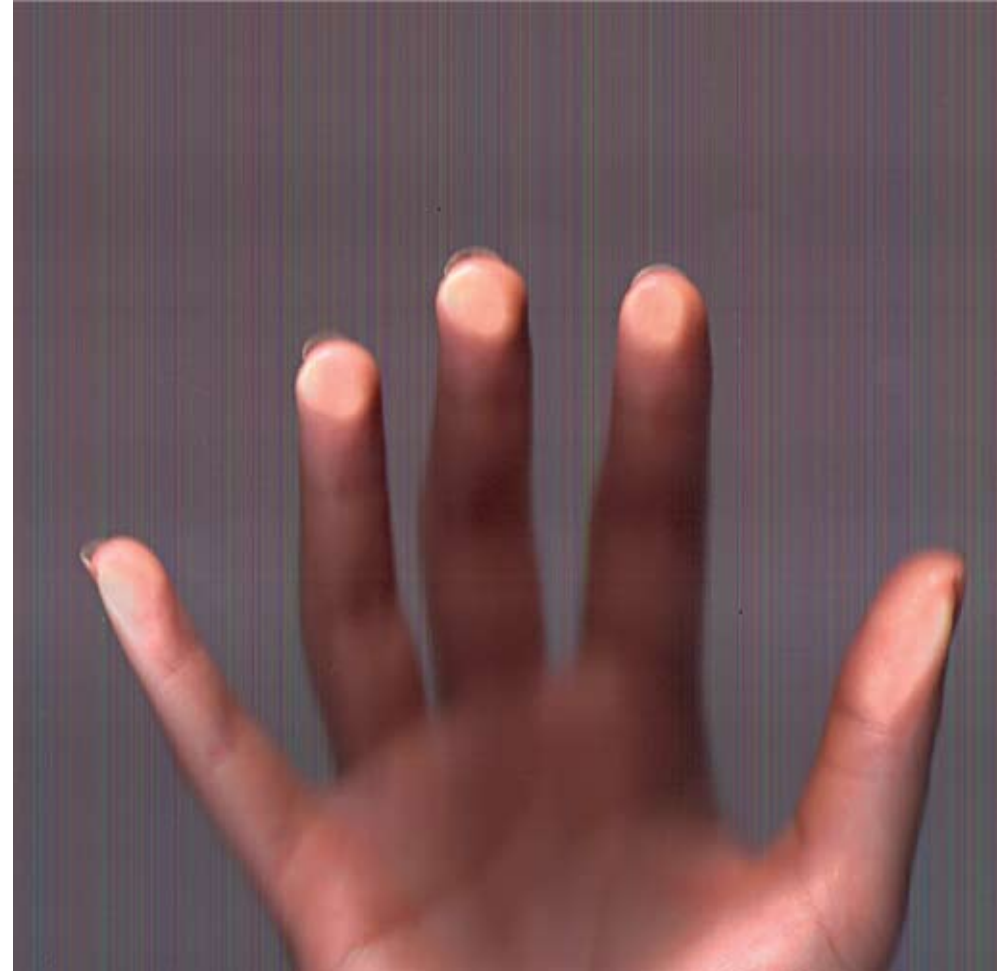
I've been typing for a long time. I grew up playing with my Dad's mint-green Hermes 3000 manual typewriters, but that was mostly keyboard pecking. In middle school, we had to take a touch-typing class to pass our computer requirement. I was really good. I'm still a pretty fast typist, on real or imaginary keyboards. I think that class permanently attached an invisible keyboard to the undersides of my hands. But I don't know when they started typing on my knees, on the car steering wheel, on empty space.

It's mostly subconscious; throughout the day I periodically become aware that my hands are subtly repeating some pattern, and then try to 'feel out' which invisible keys my fingers are targeting. Usually it clicks into place quite easily, as I'm repeating some words or phrases that I've recently heard or said. It could be quite random; a snatch of overheard conversation ("Turn left here.") or items that have been bouncing around my mental to-do list ("Printer ink"). Often when watching a movie, I end up typing a line of dialogue or plot-related term: "She's gone," "Look out!", "astronaut". Sometimes it's a bit stranger – a rhyme or word without a clear source. "Never sever." "So sorry safari." "Oblique." Sometimes it seems like my fingers have just chosen words that have a pleasing arrangement of letters, and the words/phrases are usually short, probably to better allow fast repetition and simple mus-

cle memory. I am probably typing much more than I actually realise. Usually when I'm sitting next to my boyfriend on a couch or theatre seat or plane, my hand in his or resting on his leg, he'll ask what I'm typing, and I'm surprised to find I've been doing it at all.

The big question is why. For me, someone on the OCD spectrum, is it just a nervous muscular reflex that somehow got wedded to a motor-linguistic framework? Considering my frustrated relationship to 'writing' (i.e., I hate it, but I have to do it anyway), is this an anxiety that my fingers are working out for me, in the only blind, primitive way they know how? Is it an impulse, even on the corporeal level, to grab meanings from the world and freeze them in static form? Or is it something different entirely? Maybe my body is trying to tell me something, and one day I will finally understand what it has to say.

066



Art of Movement

han
Visual artist and photographer (Singapore)

Google “han dancing” while clicking “I’m Feeling Lucky” on www.google.com (NSFW), turn up the volume~!

artist’s statement is on the page

han. dancing. dancing!



Capturing the Paradoxical Moment

SABRINA KOH

Visual artist and writer (Singapore)

tristan's intangible thoughts... says:
u Noe..how ppl like food/ shopping/
wakeboarding etc
tristan's intangible thoughts... says:
wat do i Like
she says:
giggle
she says:
hmmm
she says:
u like to read
she says:
think
she says:
bt sumtime
she says:
u prefer to do anything bt read and think

tristan's intangible thoughts... says:
oi
tristan's intangible thoughts... says:
dun bi funny ah

she says:
lol
she says:
bt is the truth
she says:
hmmm

tristan's intangible thoughts... says:
so i either read/ think/ anything bud
read n think

she says:
lol

tristan's intangible thoughts... says:
someone once said i like aloneness

tristan's intangible thoughts... says:
true?

she says:
hmm nt true ba

tristan's intangible thoughts... says:
that very alone space n tym..eg. in uk
i ownself go grocery then go a beer n walk
back alone hostel
tristan's intangible thoughts... says:
y nt true

she says:
hmm
she says:
i dun think u like aloness
she says:
u seems scared of alone
she says:
u probably do things alone
she says:
bt u don't like them
she says:
ur poems mostly full of that aloness
shea says:
bt is fill with worry
she says:
anxiety
she says:
fear
she says:
so i dun think u enjoy aloness
she says:
u just pretend to like them
she says:
so u won't be afraid
she says:
lol

092

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Traffic Light



Looking for an Island

MAP OFFICE

Design and research platform (Hong Kong)

...



The Sacred in Profane Love

JOASH MOO

Visual artist and writer (Singapore)

We know that the whole of creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved.

— Romans 8:22-23



The DVD Boxed Set

MICHAEL NICHOLSON

Graphic artist, writer and publisher; Senior Lecturer, College for The Creative Arts, Surrey Institute of Art & Design University (London)

A child of the televisual 1960's – when we followed our American cousins down the rabbit-hole of the cathode ray tube – I have long held a delight for and fascination with the 'little box in the corner'. The goggle-box – the idiot's lantern – Television – TV.

The strangely intimate relationship one can have with the domestic TV screen and the worlds inside it has sustained me through life's hardest, bleakest times, unemployment and broken relationships – as well as the cold winter nights and summer baked-meat city days when the blinds can be pulled shut and escape sought.

The writer Harlan Ellison termed it "the glass teat" – and nurture it does, in a particularly undemanding way.

The squeeze of a button and I am transported.

Strangely, in recent years, I have actually worked on the other side of the lens – storyboarding for commercials, TV and film. And, unlike many of the jaded professionals around me, whiling their way through yet another arse-numbing day's filming – progressing at a positively glacial pace – I was thrilled by every faltering minute of the process. Every fluffed line and lost temper and stale afternoon doughnut off the trolley.

And then Mama Technology offered me the sweetest gift with the invention of the digital video disc – DVD. My shelves swell with splendid chubby containers of same – that new leisure phenomenon – boxed sets. Friends of fan-obsessive and busy urbanites alike. Miss an episode last night? A hole in your collection? The silvery discs are there to cure those viewing problems, allowing you to watch, rewatch and pause in

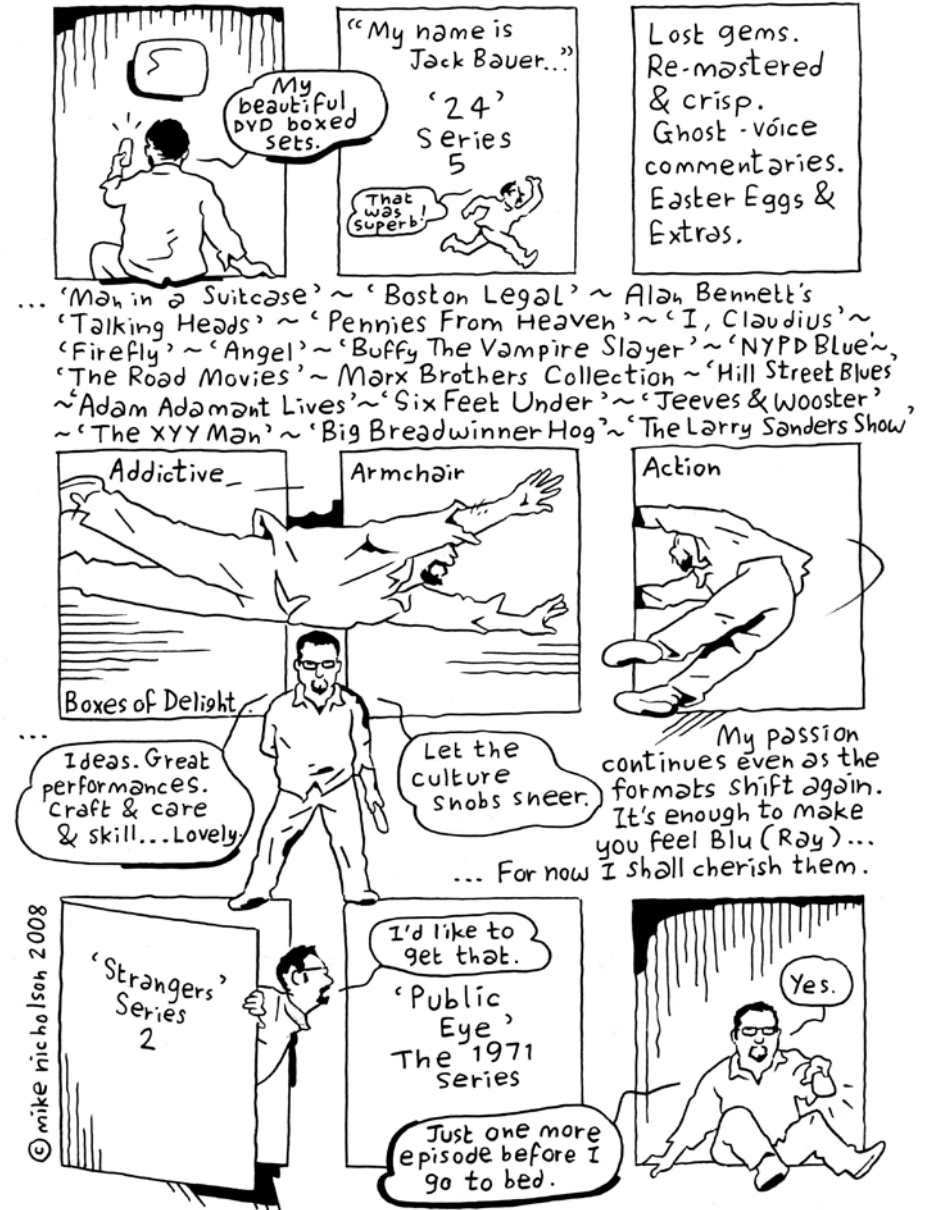
a flawless pin-sharp moment.

Gone are the days of the dreary video tape cassette – its tangled unreliability, its crummy quality and pitted pictures. Welcome through the crisp DVD window, a window onto newly restored old favourites and, most intriguing of all, a resurfaced prehistory of TV shows, movies and other delights unseen during the early decades of video-led 'home entertainment'. The most obscure characters and shows are resurrected.

So, blessed be the telly ghosts of old – rising to the top of the bubbling zeitgoo... Shimmering bubbles of frivolous popped culture from long ago – or at least from last year. The compact nature and expansive content of this format has me entranced – and its influence trickles into my own work, whether written or visual, in themes of nostalgia, childhood inspiration and cultural cross-over.

I am the pop cultural ambassador for Stoke Newington, London N16 after all. How could it not?

Squeeze the button ~ content snaps into view ...



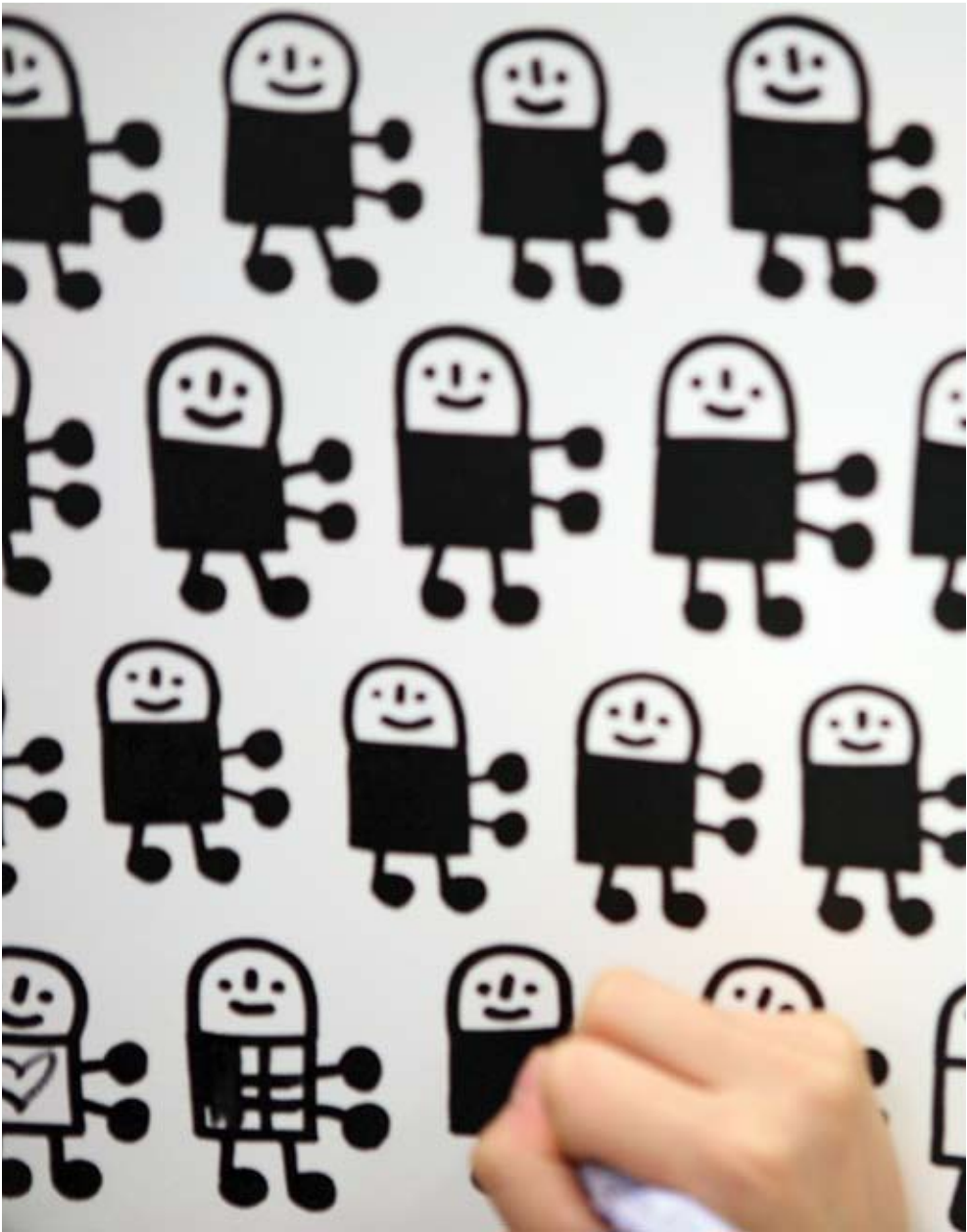
Drawaholic

AKINORI OISHI

Graphic artist; Lecturer, Department of Information Design, Kyoto University of Art and Design (Osaka)

I love to draw over my small people again and again. It's like the Copy-and-Paste function in word processors. I take my time. No two figures are exactly the same. I am happy only when I fill the big white canvas.

I am drawaholic.



Failure Aesthetics

ALFIAN SA'AT

Playwright and poet; Artistic Director, Teater Ekamatra, Singapore (Singapore)

I like to drag.

I don't know why, really, because I have no transgender aspirations. But I like to put on women's clothes and cosmetics and a wig. And I like visible seams in the illusion.

My sideburns, my stubble, the hair on my shins. The lining of my bra pads, runs in my stockings, a twisted spaghetti strap.

I like to look seedy, trashy and incomplete. I like my transformation to be flawed, careless and ruinous.

I feel triumphant walking around like a ridiculous failure. If you live in a city like mine, you'll understand why.



Dad and I

MATTHEW TEO

Photographer (Singapore)

Ah Pa is cheeky and so am I.
Ah Pa is horny and so am I.
Ah Pa doesn't like to flash his nipples and so don't I.
Ah Pa is so much just like me.
And that is why I love my Ah Pa all the same.



War Game

KACEY WONG

Visual artist and war-game trainer; Assistant Professor, School of Design, Hong Kong Polytechnic University (Hong Kong)

One of the most important preoccupations in my life besides art is war game, or survival game. Every Sunday morning I put on my camouflage military uniform and train with my teammates at game sites located in the countryside. It is a hobby I started 14 years ago. I was interested in various types of martial arts such as karate, jujitsu, judo, kendo and Filipino stick fighting, until I came across war game, for which my fascination remains until now.

War game is the modern equivalent of ancient martial arts. Just as kendo swordsmen practise their swordsmanship with wooden or bamboo swords, modern soldiers go into simulated battles with their mock rifles. I organise and run a war-game team of about 20 people and serve as the captain and coach. As the captain I get to practise my leadership skills and as the coach I am responsible for training the players. We practise various types of military simulation exercises during the winter when the weather is cool. During the summer we move indoors and hire various training facilities located in industrial areas to train in close-quarter battle techniques, for example.

Many people often mistaken war-game players to be lovers of violence. I disagree. Because of this common misunderstanding, I tend to keep my preoccupation a secret. Simply compare: In traditional martial arts such as kendo, the practitioner may receive a strike by a large bamboo sword in the head or stomach, but a war-game player may merely get hit by a 6mm plastic ball bearing. Now, tell me, which is more violent? I suppose it is the symbolism of war that frightens people. Real war is a

scary thing and people don't equate it with a sport.

In the past 14 years of practising war games I must have died more than 2,000 simulated deaths. That is why I call war game the 'game of death'. Like other great martial arts, war game teaches one to be disciplined, patient, respectful, courageous, honourable, self-confident, team-spirited and more. The entire code of the Way of the Warrior is written so it helps one to build character. War game is not so much different from art practice. Both require creativity, an aesthetic sense, technique, planning and 100% concentration. The main difference is whatever happens in war games happens so quickly it demands urgent reaction and speed, whereas in fine arts one gets the time and space to think.

Every Sunday after a war game I return home with a smile and become a peace-loving citizen, finding everything in society wonderful since I know nobody is trying to kill me, and life is just simply great.

206

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Portrait of Kacey Wong as a War-game Trainer, photo by Almond Chu

For more information, please go to: www.force5.hk

