

Preoccupations¹

- 1: an act of preoccupying; the state of being preoccupied
- 2 a: extreme or excessive concern with something
- 2 b: something that preoccupies one

¹ <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/preoccupation>

Preoccupations: Things Artists Do Anyway

111 Artists Reveal Their Passions

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Table of Contents

006	CORNELIA ERDMANN	PREFACE	090	MITHUN JAYARAM	Recording and Imagining	168	sciSKEW	home: home-sick, home-scapes, home-less...
010	MICHAEL LEE HONG HWEE	INTRODUCTION	092	SABRINA KOH	Cheating and Chatting	170	SHIAH CHYI YUN	Unthrowing
020	NADIM ABBAS	Process and Realisation	094	WILLIE KOH I	Followed the Directions	172	JACKLYN SOO	Beats and Buddies
022	ZULHARLI ADNAN	Unpacking Packaging	096	ALICE KOK	No Preoccupation but Meditation	174	TAN CHEE LAY	Poetics of Memory
024	AH HOCK & PENG YU	Cosmic Connection	098	MAX KONG	Toys: A Brief Chronology	176	ERIKA TAN	The Eyes and the Body
026	ANG SONG MING	Besides the Unnamable	100	kwodrent	Words and Things	178	MARGARET TAN	Searching
028	LIZ BACHHUBER	Balancing	102	LEON LAI	Art of Travel	180	MICHAEL TAN	The Crunch
030	LEONARD R. BACICH	Coffee and Me	104	DANA LAM	The Grinder	182	TAN PIN PIN	Save the Atriums!
032	SUSANNE BOSCH & JULIA DRAGANOVIC	Conversation	106	JAFFA LAM	Voluntarism as Vocation	184	YUK KING TAN	Gossipedia
034	OVVIAN CASTRILLO	Singing to One's Tunes	108	DANIEL LAU CHAK KWONG	The Ball and the Brush	186	TANG GUAN BEE	Lofty Lust
036	DAVID CHAN	Our Perspectives	110	CHRISTOPHER LAU	A Free Freelancer	188	TANG KWOK HIN I	I Think, Therefore I Think
038	CHAN KAI YIN	A Favourite Corner	112	MICHAEL LEE HONG HWEE	Typing as Prophecy	190	TANG LING NAH	Late Stargazer
040	KATHRINE CHAN SIM KUEN	Mind Stretching	114	LEUNG CHI WO & SARA WONG	BB	192	TAY KAY CHIN	The Way to the Heart
042	RANDY CHAN & KELLY CHENG	Burger Kings	116	MARTHA LIEW	In Awe of Horror	194	MATTHEW TEO	Dad and I
044	LILIAN CHEE	HouseWork	118	LIM KOK BOON	Snapping My Food	196	MARI TERAUCHI	Extraordinary Ordinary
046	CHEO CHAI HIANG	Sabrina	120	WILLIAM LIM SIEW WAI	Human Rights and Social Justice	198	HIRAM TO	Mr. Omidyar's Wonder Emporium
048	ADRIAN DAVID CHEOK	Kawaii Things	122	SUSIE LINGHAM	Spider-Fly; ...	200	PAMELA VOIGT	Buildings into Books
050	JOHN CHIA	Art of Food	124	JUSTIN LOKE	Watching Time Pass	202	JASON WEE	Butt
052	CHOI YAN CHI	Rare Images	126	LYNN CHARLOTTE LU	Best Friend	204	ANDREE WESCHLER	Witness
054	HEMAN CHONG	Other Worlds	128	CRISTIANO LUCETTI	Where I Design	206	KACEY WONG	War Game
056	CHONG LI CHUAN	Zen of Parenting	130	NINA LUNDSTRÖM	The Dustmaker	208	MAGDALEN WONG	Waiting
058	STEFEN CHOW	Photography: Climbing; Speaking	132	TERESA LUZIO	Eternal Longings	210	NICHOLAS Y. B. WONG	On Melancholy
060	CHUA CHYE TECK	Greenhouse	134	MAP OFFICE	Looking for an Island	212	SUSIE WONG	The Journey
062	GENEVIEVE CHUA	Frolicking with Danger	136	BURGETTE MATTHEWS	A Boat of One's Own	214	RICKY YEO	The Downloader
064	CHUN KAI FENG	Artists as Artist's Assistant	138	JOASH MOO	The Sacred in Profane Love	216	YEO SHIH YUN	Junkie
066	SAMANTHA CULP	Typing Fingers	140	ZARINA MUHAMMAD	Allure of White	218	YUEN KIN LEUNG	Artist as Masseur
068	NICOLE DEGENHARDT	Blood and Water	142	MICHAEL NICHOLSON	The DVD Boxed Set	222	YEUNG YANG	COMMENTARY
070	DUTTON & SWINDELLS	Loss of Irony	144	AKINORI OISHI	Drawaholic	232	About the Contributors	
072	CORNELIA ERDMANN	Bearing Fruits	146	JASON ONG	Food, Friends and Imperfect Pairings	246	Acknowledgements	
074	SILAS FONG	Curiosity and the Cat	148	JIMMY ONG	Reunion Dinners	248	Imprint	
076	BRENDAN GOH	The Love of Many	150	SHERMAN ONG	Three's a Company	250	Lovely Praise	
078	MICHELLE GOH CHOR SWAN	Drumming It Up	152	PAK SHUENG CHUEN	Object as Art			
080	STINE GONSHOLT	Small Is Big Enough	154	ROBERT PARTRIDGE	Cover It Up and Build It High			
082	ROBERT GUTH I	Like Bulldozers	156	:phunk studio	Rock's Legacies			
084	ANDREW S. GUTHRIE	The Answers Are in the Questions	158	JANE PORTER	Flat Tire			
086	han	Art of Movement	160	PAUL RAE	Specificities			
088	HONG SEK CHERN	Triangulation	162	SHUBIGI RAO	The Impossibility of Outdoing			
			164	EUDORA RUSLI	07.09.97			
			166	ALFIAN SA'AT	Failure Aesthetics			

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.

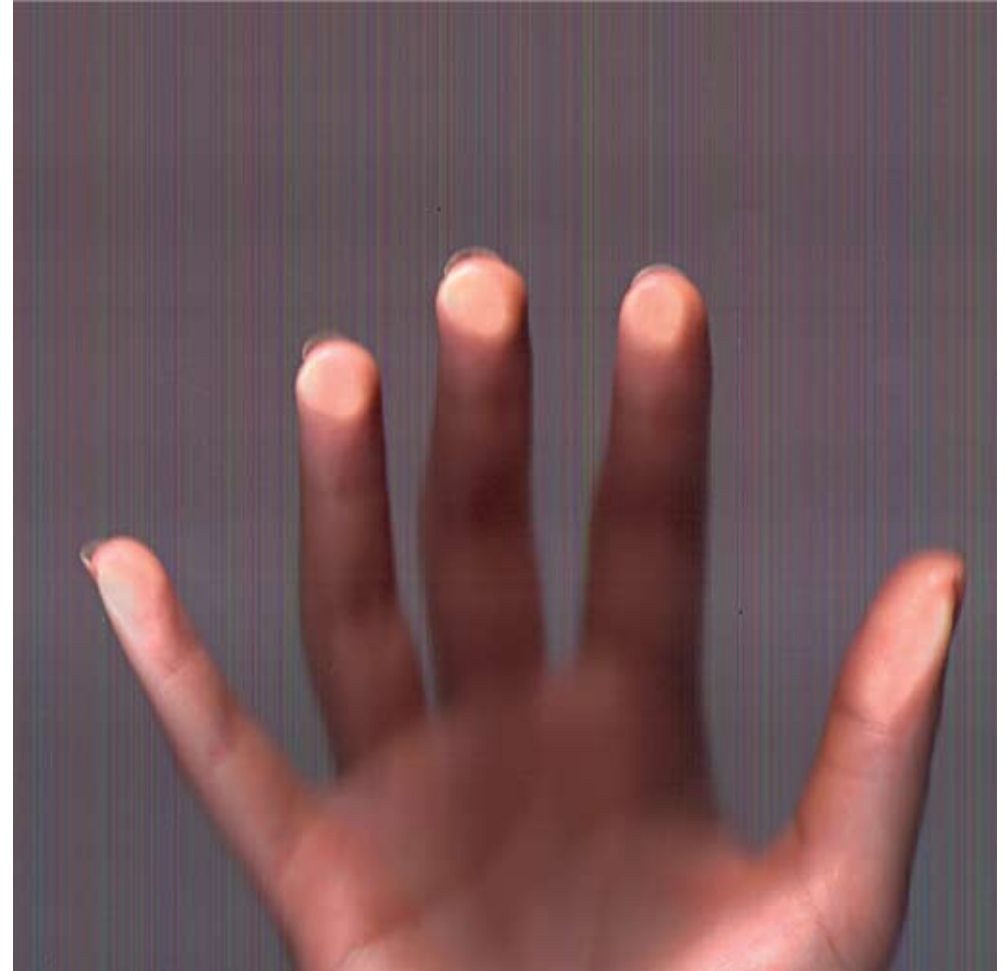
I've been typing for a long time. I grew up playing with my Dad's mint-green Hermes 3000 manual typewriters, but that was mostly keyboard pecking. In middle school, we had to take a touch-typing class to pass our computer requirement. I was really good. I'm still a pretty fast typist, on real or imaginary 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





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CHOI YAN CHI

received her BFA and MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1976 and 1978 respectively. She taught at the Hong Kong Polytechnic from 1979 to 1986 and at the Design Department of the Institute of Vocational Education from 1998 to 2002. She joined Hong Kong Baptist University in 2002. In 1993, she represented Hong Kong at the 1st Asia Pacific Triennial Exhibition in Australia. She was named Artist of the Year in 1998 by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council. Four exhibition catalogues and a book of her works have been published by art galleries and art centres. choiyanchi@netvigator.com

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CHONG LI CHUAN

is a composer and sonic artist. He graduated from Goldsmiths College, University of London, with a Bachelor of Music in 1999 and a Master of Music (Composition) in 2000. Between 2001 and 2005, he was a postgraduate researcher in electroacoustic composition at the Stanley Glasser Electronic Music Studios (EMS) in Goldsmiths College. His research interests include, but are not limited to, acoustic ecology, aurality, listening, sound and semblance, the aesthetics of noise and silence, musicking, identity formation, gender, performativity, embodiment, and post-structuralism. He is an academic staff at the Republic Polytechnic, Singapore. www.angelfire.com/electronic/phase/

STEFEN CHOW

was born in Malaysia and raised in Singapore, and he graduated with honours in mechanical engineering from the National University of Singapore in 2003. In 2005, he became one of the few in the world to summit Mount Everest. His photo essay of the journey was published internationally and exhibited in museums. He is today a photographer with international news agencies. Chow is also a motivational speaker: He is currently a lead trainer with the 8th Pinacle and has trained regional banks and government agencies on teamwork and leadership. www.stefenchow.com

CHUA CHYE TECK

is a visual artist whose preferred medium is photography. He has been exploring the themes of housing, habitation, the evolution of urbanism in Singapore and its impact on residents. In 2004, he was also awarded a Certificate of Distinction in Photography in the 24th UOB Painting of the Year Competition. In 2002, he represented Singapore in Asian Comments, a 24-hour photography event held in the city centre of Copenhagen organised by the Asia-Europe Foundation. His exhibitions between 1996 and 2006 include photography, sculpture and paintings, in Singapore, Bangladesh, Italy and Malaysia. www.chyeteck.farm.sg

GENEVIEVE CHUA'S

main form of expression is drawing, specifically, pencil on paper. Other mediums such as paint, writing and photography help fuel her work in different manners of artistic resolve. She works from the following point-of-departures: sexuality in women; psychological horror films; mise en scène; desire; and a lack of colour. In 2003/2004, she received the National Arts Council's Georgette Chen Scholarship and represented Singapore at the ASEAN Youth Exhibition, and has been exhibiting in various venues since. She recently held a well-received solo exhibition, As Brutal As, at La Liberia, Singapore. www.genchua.com

CHUN KAI FENG

is a Singapore-based emerging artist whose interest lies in the notions of private/public spaces. His drawings and meticulously crafted miniatures work as psychological metaphors and speak of the need for individuality and freedom along with conflicting desires for security and relationship with community. Chun held his first solo exhibition entitled Me, Myself and All at the Esplanade, Singapore in 2007. www.nextstoplaputa.com

SAMANTHA CULP

was born in Los Angeles, California. After graduating with an honours degree in literature from Yale University, she taught literature and cultural studies for two years as a Yale-China Fellow at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. She is currently based in Hong Kong, where she writes on arts and culture for international publications, curates exhibitions and film programmes, and works on both independent and institution-based film and art projects. In 2007, Samantha was a FUSE artist-in-residence at the media arts organisation Videotage, and was recently elected to join their board of directors. www.samanthaculp.com

NICOLE DEGENHARDT

duate of the Bauhaus-University, Weimar/GER and the University of the Arts Berlin (MA Art in Context) with focus on video and installation in the framework of interdisciplinary practices. She involves scientific contexts, institutional environment and curatorial activities in her artwork. She lives and works in Berlin and is represented by Stedefreund, Berlin [www.stedefreund-berlin.de]. She has most recently exhibited at Art Athina, Athens 2008; artTransponder, Berlin 2008; Berliner Kunstsalon, 2007; Rubelle & Norman Schafner Gallery New York, 2006; Berlin Medical Historical Museum, 2005. www.stedefreund-berlin.de

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DUTTON & SWINDELLS

comprises Steve Dutton and Steve Swindells, who have worked together on exhibitions, projects and publications since 1998. Dutton is Professor in Creative Practice at Coventry University, while Swindells is a Reader in Contemporary Art at the University of Huddersfield, both in the United Kingdom. The duo recently completed a three-month artist-in-residence programme at Ssamzie Space in Seoul. Their work has no restrictions on media. s.dutton@coventry.ac.uk; s.p.swindells@hud.ac.uk

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was born and brought up in Frankfurt, Germany. She studied and worked in England, Germany and Japan, received a Master's degree in architecture in 2002 and an MFA in Public Art in 2005 from Bauhaus-University Weimar, Germany. In August 2006, she moved to Hong Kong where she continues her art and design practice. Her works have been shown in international galleries, film festivals and exhibitions. She is mainly interested in the interaction of space and society, scrutinising aspects of urbanity and lifestyle – but always bearing a small smile along the way. www.corneliaerdmann.de

SILAS FONG

was born in Hong Kong. He received his BA (Hons) Visual Arts in 2008 from the Academy of Visual Arts, Hong Kong Baptist University. In the same year, he completed a student exchange programme at the University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands. For the past few years, Fong has worked with mixed media, photography and installation. Recently, he has experimented with video, sound and poetry. He is interested in daily life, perception, a sense of time, emotion and relationship and the mass media. www.silasfong.com

BRENDAN GOH

writes, makes art, designs, and curates. He first trained at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts and subsequently, pursued sculpture at the LASALLE-SIA College of the Arts, Singapore, where he graduated with a BA Fine Arts in 2007. He has written for and edited a number of projects, most recently an artist's book entitled Trace, with Susie Wong. Brendan was a recipient of the Singapore Hokkien Huay Kuan's Arts and Cultural Scholarship in 2004 and the