

AiRCAST #4

Chua Chye Teck

NTU CENTRE FOR
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Anna Lovecchio: Welcome to AiRCAST. AiRCAST takes us inside the Residencies Studios of NTU Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore, located right at the edge of a thick tropical forest in Gillman Barracks. On this podcast, we broadcast the inner lives of our Artists-in-Residence entering their studios during their residency and inviting them to share about ideas, materials, processes, influences and research methodologies behind their practice. I'm Anna Lovecchio. I'm a curator and Assistant Director for programmes at NTU CCA Singapore and I am your host for today.

In this episode, I converse with Artist-in-Residence Chua Chye Teck to learn about his open-minded relation to photography and the evolution of his artistic practice. Chye Teck is an attentive observer of the world with a keen eye for fleeting forms, makeshift compositions, and unconventional shapes that remain unnoticed by most of us. Drawing attention to the ephemeral, the discarded, and the overlooked, his work results from a prolonged visual and experiential quest. Throughout his practice, he has been shifting the aesthetic criteria that define the notion of beauty while also reflecting on the multiple processes of disappearance that unfold around us. In recent years, Chye Teck is developing a more experimental attitude towards the image-making process, creating works that respond to the specificity of a site, rather than to a subject matter, and reverberate with emotional vibrations. He has also become involved in several collaborations with other artists and he is cultivating a new fascination for cellphone cameras and the creative potential of off-the-shelf digital technologies.

Anna Lovecchio: Hi Chye Teck, I'm so happy to be talking to you about your 20 year journey as a practicing artist. As I like to do in this podcast, I would like to start by asking what made you want to become an artist, and how did art come to have a presence in your life?



Chua Chye Teck, portrait, 21 January 2022. Courtesy NTU CCA Singapore.

Chua Chye Teck: I became an artist in a very natural way. During high school, I was not good in academia. Once, we had arts and crafts classes and we were asked to make a paper mask. And somehow, I enjoyed making it. The teacher took the mask and praised me in front of the whole class. None of the other students were really putting effort into making a mask as it's a subject that you don't really need to pay attention to, and it won't help you in your academic achievement anyway. But from that incident, I felt that I was being acknowledged on what I can do. Also, because my family are carpenters, I am used to using my hands to make things. So, I guess, at the age when you need to make a decision on what to study after 'O' levels that was the only choice I had, because my academic results were not so good. I was introduced to art school, and cooking,

and I was planning on learning to cook at SHATEC. But, at the same time, my parents also supported my hobby in photography. So I started to take pictures. It was a very natural process to go into this direction, and the decision was to go to LASALLE College of the Arts Singapore to study design. But during a sculpture class in the foundation year, I connected to the process of making and questioning things, which I do all the time. So I decided to switch from doing graphic design to studying sculpture and that was how I started.

Anna Lovecchio: The backbone of your practice revolves around photography. But in the last few years, your approach to the image-making process has expanded beyond the specificity of the photographic medium itself, and we'll talk more about this later. For now, let's go back to these first years of your encounter with art. As you mentioned, you were toying with photography already in your teens and you were buying your own equipment and taking classes at community centres. And when you enrolled in fine arts, you chose sculpture, and graduated from LASALLE College of the Arts in 1996. After that, there were a few years of, let's say, exploration. First of all, you had to serve the military—which in Singapore takes up two hefty years of life for a male citizen—and then you briefly joined Plastic Kinetic Worms, an independent art space and collective. It was only around 2001 that photography rose to prominence in your practice. So you started with photography, and then you went to school and studied sculpture,

and even experimented with painting after graduation, before transitioning back to photography on your own terms. How did that come about?

Chua Chye Teck: So in 2000, or 2001, I went back to LASALLE College of the Arts to do my Bachelor of Arts. Back then, I was doing painting and sculpture and I was trying to find a medium that I can settle down with. I don't know why but I felt that I needed a medium to settle down with. One situation that attracted me were things on the street, leftover or make-do situations by people leaving things on the street. Most of them are rubbish, or junk, made by people who collect things and then pile them on the street, usually around Sungei Road. So these leftover situations attracted me a lot, but I did not know how to process them in my art making. This is one reason: I realised photography is a tool by which I can document and show people how I look at things. Another reason is because of my mother who spent quite a lot of money to buy equipment for me, not just a set of cameras. I became obsessed, and started collecting cameras. So using her money, I collected cameras. But these cameras have been left untouched since I was a teenager. I felt bad and I felt that I should use them again, and learn how to use them as a tool in my art making. In that period of time, I also took documentation photos for fellow artists like Tang Da Wu, Vincent Leow, and Lee Wen, during their performance festivals. Once, Da Wu saw my images and commented that I had a special eye for seeing things. I guess that also



Chua Chye Teck, *Paradise*, photographs, 2006-2013. Courtesy the artist.

encouraged me to shift, somehow. I'm not sure how intentional [the comment] was. It was just a casual comment from someone that is so senior and respected in the Singaporean art scene, but it encouraged me. So I guess I took on this journey. It was not an easy process because I had to learn from scratch.

Anna Lovecchio: You mentioned that in these early years after you decided to embrace photography, you were also experiencing a certain loneliness in Singapore, a sense of solitude within your practice, and that it was very helpful for you to do a residency in Berlin in 2009, at the Künstlerhaus Bethanien, where you realised you were not alone. What was the role of photography in the local art scene in Singapore back then, and how did the residency in Berlin help you to see things in a different way?

Chua Chye Teck: Back then, photography was not commonly used by artists in Singapore as main [medium] in their in art-making practice. You have photographers who do documentary or street photography; they gather to form a group and have constant meetings, but a lot of them mostly use cameras as a tool to document an event, so it's not exactly what I'm interested in – I'm interested in the medium itself, and how complex this medium is. At the same time, there was a gallery that started to focus on photography, but it was still very generalised. The only person then I knew of who was focusing on photography was Robert Zhao. Then, slowly, there were more and more people because of the NTU Arts, Design and Media courses. And so you have young photographers appearing, or artists using photography as a medium coming out of ADM. Back then, the UOB Painting of the Year [Competition] had a section open for photography where photography could compete with painting. Francis Ng won a Southeast Asia award with a photograph, and I think that also brought up the fact that a lot of people who knew photography wanted to be part of this [scene]. But I still felt like I could not connect to such practice of photography. To me, when [I] take a picture and the other guy takes a picture, how can I, as an artist, be able to call that art, when his is not [considered] art? So I always had this question. I felt lonely in the practice. I also felt that way because the process of understanding how to use photography is a bit slow. Personally, as an artist, I get less attention compared to artists who, back then, were called multidisciplinary media artists. Somehow I realised they got more attention and shows because they can do a lot of things. If you are specialized in one thing, I think people do not know how to use you. So I felt a bit uncomfortable. You could have been practicing for almost

10 years, but if you don't get that attention, you will feel unsure about your own practice. So when I got the award for the Künstlerhaus Bethanien residency in Berlin, supported by the National Arts Council, I felt quite encouraged, because there were people in the scene who still supported what I'm doing. I was even selected by the team in Berlin, so that encouraged me too. Also, because I don't have a full-time job in Singapore, even now I'm freelancing and supporting my art, I am not so sure how long this journey can go. It can be tiring because 10 years pass and then what else? Can I keep on going? So, when I met fellow international artists in Berlin, artists around my age, 30 over years old, and still surviving... I see a lot of them who, besides working as an artist, have a family and a child to support. It made me feel that I am not alone and that this way of living, to be an artist, could be done. I guess that also encouraged me to continue.

Anna Lovecchio: I think it's interesting that for someone like you, whose practice has been quite solitary for many years, to be invigorated by meeting other people and having a broader outlook than what the local art scene could offer you then, when photography was quite pigeonholed in its own category and it was not easy to transition or be accepted in the visual arts/fine arts scene. Luckily, things have changed a lot today. Still thinking about your beginning with photography, you also mentioned to me that there was no easy access to resources in Singapore. You started practicing before the internet age, so you were quite limited in your access to other artists and practices back then. But among the two important influences that you always mention, there are two influential post-war photographers. One is Daido Moriyama, a Japanese street photographer who captured the dark side of urban life in post-war Japan, focusing on its vibrancy, and chaos, and creating this gritty, grainy, technically unconventional black and white images. You also point to Bernd and Hilla Becher, who are the founders of the Düsseldorf School of Photography and their approach is very different. They famously catalogued industrial architecture that was being dismissed in Northern Europe and the United States with a very rigorous formalist approach. When I think of these two photographic practices, I can hardly think of anything more different, because Daido Moriyama is all about chaos, improvisation, sensuality, and the work of the Bechers, on the contrary, convey a sense of order, detachment and it has a total control on the technicalities of the image-making process. I am curious to ask you how these two very different practices have nourished your imagination. What have you assimilated from them?



Chua Chye Teck, *Memories*, photographs, 2015. Courtesy the artist.

Chua Chye Teck: Like I mentioned, when I shifted to photography, I saw a lot of situations in the street that I needed to capture. The only way to capture [them] that I knew was how I looked at them. I needed to minimize a lot of the perspective distortion from the lens so that [the image] is very straight-on, and somehow this approach was similar to the Düsseldorf School of Photography, and I enjoyed looking at their images. I feel that this was why my approach became more and more organized. Before I went to Berlin, I was really into this straight-on photography. I didn't really carry a camera with me, yet I always found situations [to capture], so I will return with a bigger camera and then capture them – I was using a medium format back then. I guess this habit of organizing came from my two years of army training, and then also, the five years [spent] in commercial advertising photography working as an assistant, where everything needed to be very organized. Slowly, this influences your lifestyle. So I guess it's not a style that you can just apply, because these are a lot of details. Especially for the German Düsseldorf style of photography where a lot of details are cropped out and removed so that the subject you want to shoot is clear. There is no other disturbing elements inside, even the lighting is always very flat, and there is not too much contrast in the image. I think advertising photography showed me how to do this, because advertising uses so much technical skill, like making the food look juicy, but not oily. You need to craft one-by-one the droplets outside the beer bottle to make it look like the beer is cold, to make you want to drink it. I guess that training built my strong foundation in looking at things. About Daido Moriyama, for a long time, I have been really interested in the

concept of wabi-sabi in Japanese culture, and this impermanent and rotting beauty. All these things really attract me. There are also influences from my interest in Buddhist philosophy, because these impermanent things [that] have affected the Japanese culture are very meditative, and especially in wabi-sabi, you always highlight this. That's why when you look at Daido Moriyama's images, they are grainy, and they highlight things that we always think are not beautiful... movements, and sometimes it's a straight-on-to-your-face kind of look. When I understood how he shot all these images in the street—he doesn't even look through the viewfinder, he just snaps as he feels—it reminded me that in Chinese philosophy it's like when the tool, the camera, and the photographer become one, there is no separation. This saying comes from the ancient swordsmen fight, the martial arts, where there are two people and then they become one, no longer separate. There is a kind of being, inside this concept. So, you can see its presence in these images. I see both styles of photography almost like the conscious and subconscious mind working. Both are one, they are not separate. If you want to talk about philosophy, then it comes from the Tao philosophy of yin and yang, where both become one, no longer separate. To me, they are not really opposing each other but they are formed as a whole, and they are together. Maybe you are just in the middle and join both different ways of working.

Anna Lovecchio: In fact, as you mentioned, Buddhism and Taoism, and other forms of spirituality have had a strong impact on your life and are part of your everyday life. They also influence your working practice. There is one series

that you've done not long ago, which very explicitly references this cultural landscape. It's called *Scholar's Rocks* [2013-2018], and is currently on view at the NUS Museum in the exhibition, *Fistful of Colours: Moments of Chinese Cosmopolitanism*, curated by Fang-Tze Hsu. In this series, you take cement debris from construction sites around Singapore, and you place them on custom-made wooden bases. Do you want to say something about this work and how spirituality is part of your practice?

Chua Chye Teck: Back then, when I was doing photography, most of the time I'm carrying a compact camera with me and taking pictures. I always look at all the leftover concrete on the roadside anywhere in Singapore and I think it's a material that's very hard to dispose. A lot of times, you can find a broken piece that people threw [away] under a tree, or left on the side of the road. So it attracted me, somehow, and I kept taking pictures of them. I felt that I could not show what I saw in this concrete, the form of the concrete, and I felt that there was a limitation in photography. When you take pictures of a concrete, it still looks like a concrete, it will not highlight the form. So I decided to borrow the concept of 'scholar's rock'. I did not go and search for all these fragments of concrete. I have my normal routine where I walk past all these roads, and maybe I'll pay more attention to the concrete, and if the form is right, I will collect them. They are not big because I'll carry them in my bag. I pick them, I spend time with them, and then I get leftover wood from my father's factory. My father is a carpenter so we have a lot of leftover wood, and I only use wood that is from the Tembusu tree, sold to us to make cutting boards. These two materials have very strong connections with Singapore, the local tree and the torn-down concrete. What I do is I study the form of the scholar's rock, and the base is to extend the form, so as to highlight [it]. I realised that it works because the base highlights the rock that looks a little bit like a mountain, and you can make the base so that it becomes a platform to give more attention to the form. As you know, I committed to photography in 2001, my role had changed from someone who creates to someone who takes pictures. I did not want to go back to sculpture without a reason... I think I needed a reason. So I guess [I found] a very good reason [to] shift, because I felt there was a limitation in photography. At the same time, I also had the urge to carve, because carving is very meditative for me. That is how I work. I decided to shift, to return to using my hands to carve again, for this project. It's still similar to photography, where in photography, you just capture the image, you observe the image, but you don't create. It's the same because

you just make a form that highlights, you don't really create. You don't destroy the material, you just make the base, and the base can always detach from the form. So it's quite interesting how this concrete went from something on the street with no value, to something in a museum showcase. Before [the exhibition], that showcase was showing some very expensive Chinese antiques. What I was interested in is beauty, not just in material that have value but in materials that have no value at all. So it came very close to the concept of wabi-sabi.

Anna Lovecchio: And this work is part of this quite interesting and radical move that you made a few years ago that, if I may say so, almost liberated you from a certain fidelity to photography itself. While I was preparing for this conversation, I was doing research on your work and realised that your website is frozen in time. It ends in 2016, with a book you published called *Beyond Wilderness*, which is a black and white photography series that captured the intricacy of disappearing forests in Singapore. This is, in a way, a conventional photography book. It is a long series, it has a very specific precise subject matter, and it took almost two years for you to develop. That was 2016, and then nothing else is shown on your website. All the works you have done after that relinquish these staples of a certain conventional photography school: working with a subject matter, working with seriality, so on and so forth. So what happened after 2016 that brought you in a very different mental space?

Chua Chye Teck: In 2016, when the *Beyond Wilderness* book was almost finished, I was diagnosed with thyroid cancer. I guess something changed, not just in my body but also my mind. I also ended a very long relationship, and everything became more solitary again. I spent more time alone, because it was very stressful for me, and I needed to relax. I started wanting to go back to making things with my hands and I kept thinking on why I have always been tied down by the theme that I was working on always, constantly, from my earlier works, from *Dear let me do the cleaning*, *Wonderland* and *Eternity*, to *Beyond Wilderness* and *Paradise*—all these are social commentary works that focus a lot on how our environment changes. Every time I have a theme, I photograph subjects that we removed when we progressed as a nation. At the same time, because I am interested in photography as a medium, if I keep approaching all these subjects like that, I will start to lock myself into that approach. I guess I do not want the theme to hold me down. I think I've come to a point where I do not want to make comments anymore. There are more and more young people



Chua Chye Teck, *Beyond Wilderness*, photobook, 2016. Courtesy the artist.

making similar comments, I think I'm ready to move on. At that period of time, I was invited by two young curators, Selene Yap and Cheng Jia Yun. They rented a shopping mall built in the late 1980s, early 1990s. This shopping centre was not new to me because I grew up with it, and everything inside still remained, the accents of the era, of that period. They rented a strange room that had very high ceilings, and the floor was raw. When you first go into the space, there was a very mouldy smell, and you could see mushrooms growing on the floor. So we knew we had to remove all these things and we had to cleanse the place a bit with sage. The wall of the space was painted a different colour, pink, and they left a mark of the signage being pulled out. At that time, I did not have an idea of what I wanted to do, but it was my first time to be invited to react to a space like that. [Being invited] was not new to me, but it was the first time someone saw the potential of photography and of my practice, and invited me to work in a space like that. I refused to put up a work that did not have a relationship with the space. I wanted to make a work that related to the space, so for example, posters falling off from a leftover situation. I selected images from my past work I made in Berlin, and all these images don't really have a very strong identity. They were flowers, cars, or just buildings. It was like a landscape poster, it could be anywhere. What I did was I printed them on newsprint and put wallpaper glue on them. It's not a strong glue, so some of [the newsprint] was coming off. It was very beautiful to me because as the evening sun came, it created a very poetic situation. The work was interacting with the space. The work itself, it doesn't have a very strong identity and that is very different from when you go to a gallery or museum, where you look at the work and you forget about the history of the space. For

this situation, my work is just supporting the space. The space is about six to eight meters tall. I realised the only things [able] to catch the attention of the audience coming into the space were objects in the centre of the space. So I printed a lot of my images on newsprint, and folded them almost like the way we would fold newspapers when we are done reading. Then, I let them stand by themselves in the space. I am very cautious about the form of the fold because I don't want to make it look too intentional. It should be very subtle, casual, like you've just folded and left it, or just thrown them on the floor so that they are standing like the shape of 'A'. They are just left there, and one of them is a bigger print that is almost falling off from the wall, creating a sculptural landscape. I want to create things that are almost like an image, but they are also sculpture. So they have this dual personality, which I get attracted to a lot. I'm also attracted to photographic images that almost look like a painting. This is something that I am focusing on now... how to push the medium, or to develop this, or explore, this medium of photography and go towards something that I'm not very sure of.

Anna Lovecchio: You're definitely blurring boundaries, which is very fascinating. So photography is not just an image now, it becomes a sculptural presence in the space. You're using images, prints, you are giving them a sculptural presence in the space, and you're also responding to what you encounter in the space, rather than to preconceived ideas that you might have in your mind. As you said, you're also blurring the boundaries between photography and painting, creating this kind of ambiguity. And this is so different from your early approach, and it's such an interesting trajectory that you are pursuing. I would like to come closer

to what you have been working on during the residency. Because the last few months have seen you quite busy working on two main projects, which are going to trigger my next question on collaboration. One is *Something Similar*, a project you developed with Liu Liling for an independent art space called Starch. The other project is the exhibition *Inside the Wild Cube*, which closed last weekend, the second exhibition you made with Progressive Disintegrations, a collaborative group composed by yourself, Wei Leng Tay, Hilmi Johandi and Marc Gloede. For long you have been a solitary maker, so this recent surge in collaborative undertakings is quite striking. Can you share about the dynamics that underlie these two forms of collaboration, and how collaboration is informing your practice?

Chua Chye Teck: I think by removing the theme, you become more free... It's not about me anymore. In the past, my work was very strong [in expressing] my personality. The subject [matter] is sometimes a metaphor that I use to represent a portrait of myself. So when I remove this, I'm open to seeing how we can work with people. When I first met Liu Liling, she had a background in painting but photography was becoming one of her main mediums. Because she does not

have a very strong technical background in photography, she is very open to any type of manipulation. She used this inkjet printer to just print tone of colour halfway before stopping the machine, and this creates images that are almost like a painting of a mood. Sometimes she even prints on material where the ink doesn't really dry out, and then you have staining and dust... it's a very painterly effect. She is painting with inkjet printer, it's almost like how we use the light sensitive paper in a dark room to create photograms. When I saw her work in the beginning, I was not sure whether I liked it or not. Sometimes, when she texts me, and show me some of her images, I am not sure about the medium, whether it's a photograph or not, or what she has done with it. Slowly I find myself very attracted to this imagery, this way of working, and partly because I am interested in photography, how people work with it. It also attracted me to reflect on my own practice. Should I be so serious with my camera? Can I just deconstruct this technique that I have built up, this professional technique, and then highlight certain kinds of imperfection in the technique? My project with Liling started off with sharing images through WhatsApp. Sometimes we are responding to each other, or we share things we see in our daily life. It's interesting that we started to just communicate with images. We did talk about maybe doing a show together



Chua Chye Teck, *Beyond Wilderness*, photographs, 2016. Courtesy the artist.

and it became a reality when Moses Tan invited her to do a show in his space to deal with the concept of dialogue. I was brought in because we already had a dialogue, in a way. Our project *Something Similar* started out of these two persons texting each other, sharing images in the phone. It's interesting. That is a photographic medium but because of technology, you can exchange [images] very fast. At the same time, we are also losing this feeling of touch, with papers, and this very intimate experience with a book where you can fold it, and all that. So the idea came to us of making two accordion books with a ratio slightly bigger than phone size [since] we had all these small images from our phones. One book belonged to me and had all my images and the other belonged to her, and when you flip both books at the same time, you can see [that] our images are having a conversation. And at the same time, you can see how we influenced each other in seeing things during the process of viewing, or when you flip the book... the image changes. From that book concept, we started to expand to the space. We had a dialogue with the space. That's how the idea of creating images that fit [the space came about], because the space itself is also quite high. It is a two-storey space, but you have a lot of piping around which makes it difficult to just put a work on the wall. On top of the wall, there is aircon piping so it's not as clean as a white cube gallery or a museum. The only way to make our work comfortable is to fit our work very well within the space so that it looks like it's part of the space. Interestingly, we were also not creating an image that is strong [in character]. We were using all these textures that we shot with our phone. I have an image of sawdust on a black background and what I did was to use the texture of the sawdust and recreate it, and clone it, in Photoshop, until it became quite a big print, almost two-meter high, maybe 80cm wide, which fit right into the pillar of the wall, like part of the architecture. And it looked like a galaxy to me. [Again] I started to play with the situation, playing with what I want, and because of this project, I started to create. It also made me start to have interest in phones, using phones as a medium in my practice, because they have cameras. What can we do with this camera phone besides using the image in Instagram? This project with Liling is different because it's become more personal, and we are influencing each other's work. Whereas *Inside the Wild Cube*, it's the second project we have done together, with Wei Leng, Hilmi, and Mark. This time, we started from the concept of a white cube gallery, and we are exhibiting in a space that is a formerly commercial gallery. So you have all this white light, white walls, and cement floor. We are basing our approach on this concept of the white cube, to create a work [about it]. What I find interesting is when I work with people like that... with artists, or a group of artists, their work helps me to see my work in a different

perspective. If I am doing a solo show, all these concepts, the theme, it's all built by me. It can just be only me, but if you work with people, you can't control how they make their work. At the same time, when your works are put together, that creates a new dialogue. It works in a certain way and it makes you see differently. I find it is interesting, but at the same time, you still need your solitary time to make your work. When you work with people too long, you get tired too. So you need to go back [to your own self]. I guess these are two different things. It's only recently that I opened up to collaboration and to working with people, but I still want to explore and have more time to make my own work.

Anna Lovecchio: What really impressed me about these two projects is, in a way, the sincerity of their outcome. Sometimes when people collaborate, they do that because they have a common goal, or they already share a very similar vision. But in these two cases, I see artistic practices coming together and influencing each other while maintaining their own individuality. It's a creative ecosystem where things grow together, and they only function in response to each other. But they're also individual. There is never this moment of evaporation of the individuality into some kind of collective statement. But there is this very close,



Chua Chye Teck, *Residencies OPEN*, installation view, 20 January 2022. Courtesy NTU CCA Singapore.

transformative relation. In the podcast we did with Yeo Siew Hua, a couple of weeks ago, he said something that I find quite beautiful. He said that for him, if a collaboration is not transformative, it's a fake. It doesn't work. Which I think is a very meaningful way to approach collaboration and collaborative projects. As we are coming to a close, my final question is going to be about the project you made for Residencies OPEN, the open studio session we held in January during the Singapore Art Week. For that project you brought to your studio all the artworks that are currently stored in your apartment, and you "displayed" them in their packaging materials, wooden crates, bubble wraps, tissue paper, so on and so forth. There was no hanging obviously and the works were mostly leaning against the walls or on the floor, clustered according to the exhibitions: each cluster of artworks were grouped according to the exhibition for which they were made. It was a sort of 'reticent retrospective', if I may say so. I think this project speaks a lot about your preoccupation with space, with the burden of storage, and also with your notion of the expiration of objects, including your own artworks.



Chua Chye Teck, Residencies OPEN, installation view, 20 January 2022. Courtesy NTU CCA Singapore.

Chua Chye Teck: I am working with responding to the studio space in NTU CCA, and as you know, I've been busy with one project after another. For this open studio, I didn't have ideas, but I was looking at things when I was at home, sitting down in the middle of night. I am looking at all my old works lying against the wall, and sometimes I put them together, organize them, and I realised that there is still a kind of aesthetic [about them] even though they were not opened up. Even if the work itself wrapped up with all these plastic sheets and bubble wrap was not showing. And because of this shape, when you arrange them, [the works] look very minimalistic and, again, I realised they are leftover artworks. I don't have a proper humidity controlled room, and I live in a three-room flat. I don't want my work to eat up my space, I want to have a proper living space. There is also a period when the weather in Singapore starts to get rainy every day, and you can find fungus growing. So I started to question... was there a point in keeping these works after an exhibition? Is there a point in investing in very expensive mounting glass? What are the minimalistic things that I can do when the exhibition is torn down? I can give [things] away as raw material people can use. So came the idea of moving all these things... because I have works [that are] almost more than 15-year old lying around in my space, it was a good occasion to shift them out of my house, and look at them in the studio. The idea of bringing them there, and organising them became something that I was curious about how it would turn out. Yet, at the same time, I feel that when people say, "oh, for your open studio, why don't you open up all your works, and show past works?" I feel that there is no reason why I should do it. It's not the right time. So it's nice just to leave them wrapped, and arranged in different groups. There is a group lying against the wall for every [past] exhibition. What I do is I still rearrange them, and compose them like a rhythm in the space. Also, because we opened the studio during [Singapore] Art Week, suddenly there's a rush for art everywhere, and people are coming to look for art. I think I'm a bit rebellious in that way... I decided not to show [anything], and see how many people can really see the beauty of simplified shapes and the freedom in all these wrapped-up things. People who come in expecting a work hanging on the wall, they will just basically walk in and out of the studio, and I don't need to spend time talking to them. Because of this approach, I still get people who are really interested in what I'm doing, so we have a good time discussing and talking. Slowly, I'll reveal some of my work to them. It's something that I was not so sure about, but I got some results and feedback. I think it's good in that way. Yeah.

Anna Lovecchio: Absolutely, it was great. Some people definitely were confused by the layout for they thought it was a storage space, which is exactly what you were working on. So, that was all from me. Thank you so much Chye Teck. It has been very nice to have you in residence these months and to witness this very productive period in your career. Thank you so much.

Chua Chye Teck: Thank you

Anna Lovecchio: You listened to AiRCAST, a podcast of NTU Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore, a national research centre for contemporary art of Nanyang Technological University. To find out more about our programmes, visit our website at www.ntu.ccasingapore.org, you can sign up to our newsletter, or follow us on your favourite social media platforms. And of course, if you'd like to hear the voices and thoughts of our other Artists-in-Residence, do subscribe to this podcast.

AiRCAST is produced by NTU CCA Singapore with the support of National Arts Council Singapore. This episode featured artist Chua Chye Teck in conversation with myself, Anna Lovecchio. I am also the editor of this podcast series. The Programme Manager is Kristine Tan, the Audio Engineer, Ashwin Ashley Menon. The intro and the outro were composed by our previous Artist-in-Residence Tini Aliman with field recordings taken at different times of the day in the beautiful forest around us. This episode was recorded on the 2nd of March 2022. Thank you for listening.



Chua Chye Teck recording AiRCAST, 2 March 2022. Courtesy NTU CCA Singapore.