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INTERVIEW: Singaporean artist WeiXin Chong

WeiXin Chong is a fine artist making her way through the art world with a viewpoint informed by her practice, which deals with perception, superficiality and human relationships, often expressed through materials. She is currently engaged in a residency at the NTU-Center for Contemporary Art in Singapore. Xin will also be showing her work at START art Fair with **A.I. (London)** which opens to the public tomorrow.



Xin can you tell us about how you first began to make your work known to a wider audience. (If we could talk about formal and informal networks it would be great, e.g. how your college helped and how different informal 'art scenes' helped you.)



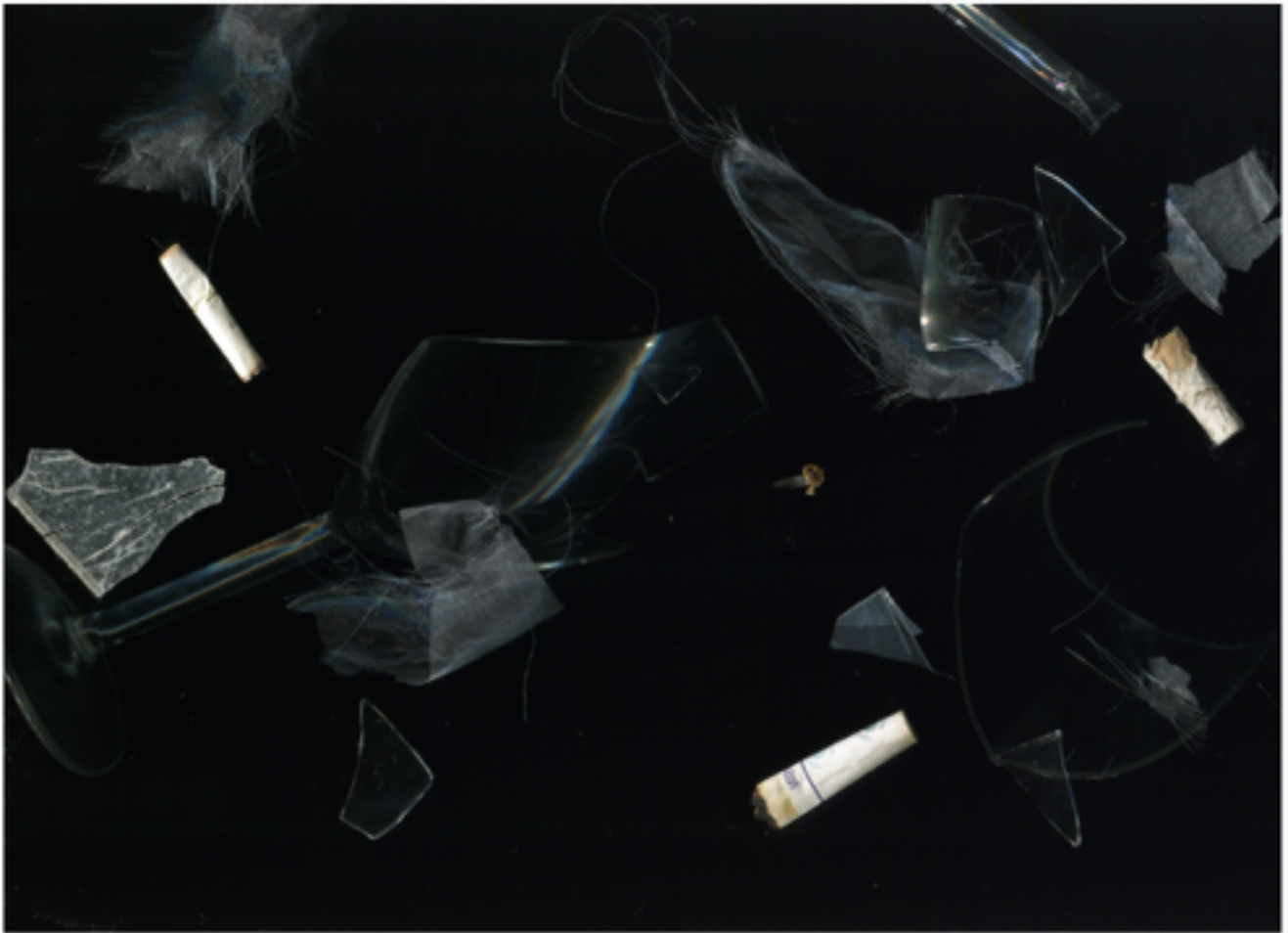
Xin: I first began showing work under the institutional support of my undergraduate alma mater, LASALLE. This was mostly in various school-related group shows, sometimes leading to exhibitions outside of the college and providing me with my first experiences of travelling to develop, make and put up work (Istanbul, New Zealand, Indonesia...). It was an important base for my understanding the process works go through to be presented to an audience; also the beginning of observing a wide spectrum of ways audiences interact with presented work. While I relied heavily on the institutional structure of the college in realising these first projects, culminating in a first solo exhibition in one of the gallery spaces of ICAS (Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore), I also began to be exposed to ways of working that grew out of more personal groups and informal communities.

It was the start of participating in and collaborating in various group events. Since then I'm increasingly aware of focusing on individuals- people to work with, communicate with and share with, who give rise to new ideas and projects.

What I've enjoyed and gained from most is learning that smaller groups of committed people can create the time and space in working together that allows for a more connected and truly collaborative experience. Even when working with established institutions, it is finding such personal dynamics that can transform a work experience, from detachment to rich engagement.

Xin, your work touches often on what we might call the 'materiality' of human experience – highlighting the surface, superficial way we engage with each other and the world by showing organic things represented in a very artificial way, like your work Copse. I'd love to ask you about how your observations of the art world have informed your work.





Xin: I often feel a pang of guilt at not keeping up more carefully with the current motions of the art world, but at the same time I recognise it as a coping mechanism for dealing with the vast information-overload that characterises almost every field of contemporary production. I secretly relate art world trends to those of seasonal fashion, a comparison that includes current mass-production modes for over-consumptive lifestyle models. I like blatant superficiality and decorative duplicity; it appears fresher and much more direct and honest than striving to create a presumptuous apparent depth of content. It's as treacherous as the 'no-make-up' makeup philosophy: try too hard to look like you're not trying at all, while all purporting to be appreciative of the 'natural'. It's these treacherous surfaces, signifiers of propriety and legitimacy and social approval, that fascinate me. They're always in my mind while I'm working.

You can see WeiXin Chong work along with fellow artists Nicole Stott, Sarah Choo Jing, Fiona Struengmann, Johan Dehlin, and IDN on the A.I. stand at START art fair 10th-13th September 2015 Saatchi Art Gallery

About The Artist

WeiXin Chong's (b.1988) work is drawn from fascination with the stylisation of natural elements, digital and organic memory systems and the relationship between surface and perceived superficiality. The artist sees these concerns as material metaphors for human social relationships and the psychology behind the structures and projections of power, value and desire. Interactions of the digital and the organic, and the effects and methods of reproducing and manipulating images across materials, are core to her practice.

Chong lives and works in Singapore. She is currently an artist in residence at the Centre of Contemporary Art, Singapore (Aug-Nov 2015). The artist recently completed an MA in Fine Art, Printmaking at Royal College of Art, London.

Her works are exhibited internationally including London, Paris, Vienna, Seoul and Singapore. In 2015, the artist presented a showcase at ArtStage Singapore (South-East Asian platform) as well as participated in the Urban Explorations- Singapour en France Festival. She has been awarded several awards & scholarships: 2011 McNally Award for Excellence in Art (Lasalle College of the Arts valedictorian award) 2011 Tan Ean Kiam Postgraduate Bursary, Tan Kah Kee Foundation, 2010 Lasalle College of the Arts scholarship (final year studies, B.A. Hons program), 2009 Georgette Chen Arts Scholarship, National Arts Council.



About Mark Westall

Mark Westall is the founder and editor of FAD magazine, a curation of the world's most interesting culture, and Creative Director of FAD Agency, a strategy & creative agency working with brands to solve business problems using cultural tools. In 2008 following his passion for art he founded what has grown to become FAD magazine. FAD magazine is internationally recognized as a key figure within the emerging and contemporary art world, and has been selected as official partner by organizations as diverse as Moniker Art Fair, START, Volta and Christie's. In addition Mark is a columnist for City Magazine.

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