

**Xin Cheng  
selected works**

<http://xin-cheng.info>  
<http://small-workshop.info>  
<http://makeshifting.net>



In a world of excess production and consumption, Xin Cheng reflects on a society of waste and planned obsolescence. Fascinated by the makeshift, improvised creations of people who have made small, low-tech improvements to everyday living, Xin's work explores ideas around frugal living, sustainability, somatics, and art-making as a social practice. Committed to taking art outside of traditional gallery settings and into the community, Xin has undertaken fieldwork (research into the everyday resourcefulness of non-specialists), and initiated collaborative ventures in Cambodia, Taiwan, Korea, Japan, Czech Republic, Italy, Switzerland, Sweden, Germany, Mexico, and New Zealand.

Xin was born in Kunming, China in 1983, and moved to New Zealand in 1996. She studied biology and psychology, before going to art school, where 'the possibilities of walking, making, seeing, opened out' to her. Adopting a discursive and investigatory mode of working across a range of disciplines, Xin's practice includes walking, researching, workshops, collaboration, improvising, publishing, furniture-making, and living.

Words by Layla Tweedie-Cullen, <https://designassembly.org.nz/2017/11/10/being-human-notes-and-reflection-from-xin-cheng/>



**From the Northwest**  
Performative walk of handmade details in the mountain village of Topolò. The audience was invited to take off their shoes, like the children in the village. Performed in Italian by Alice Buosi

For *Stazione di Topolò XX*, 2013  
annual international arts festival in the village bordering Italy & Slovenia.

*'A saw horse made of a bent piece of tree trunk. It spoke to me a way of making that does not start with going to the hardware store with measurements in hand, but with wandering into the forest looking for a tree of the desired shape...'*







22 August 2020  
A pūkeko foraging and bathing amongst silt socks under the South-Western Motorway.  
Keith Hay Park, Puketāpapa



22 August 2020  
Silken door of a pūriri moth / pepetuna caterpillar burrow on a pūriri tree.  
Harbutt Reserve, Owairaka Mt Albert

22 August 2020  
Scum and clouds, before the stream goes underground  
Molly Green Reserve, Waikōwhai

### Stories from Te Auaunga Oakley Creek

is an ongoing project` I started early 2020, following my return to Auckland after living in Germany. It explores the tales of inter-species kinship and ecologies around Auckland's longest river, Te Auaunga Oakley Creek, which runs from Hillsborough via Wesley and out to the sea at Waterview. Since then, I have been participating in regular ecological restoration working bees with Friends of Oakley Creek, as well as walking around various sections of the creek, carefully observing the biota and collecting sonic, visual and physical materials (weeds and waste).

So far the works range from photography, print, video, sound and sculpture, and have been presented as multimedia installations offering multisensory experiences to incite curiosity and reveal the intricate more-than-human microcosmos that we live amongst.

Exhibited in

*Aotearoa Art Fair Projects*, Yu Mei Commercial Bay (curated by Micheal Do) 2022

*They Covered the House in Stories*, Te Tuhi, Auckland (curated by Amy Weng) 2021

AFM, Audio Foundation, 2021

<http://www.audiofoundation.org.nz/programmes/live-events/afm-works-by-eleanor-cooper-and-xin-cheng-22>

*Greywater*, Mokopōpaki, Auckland, 2020

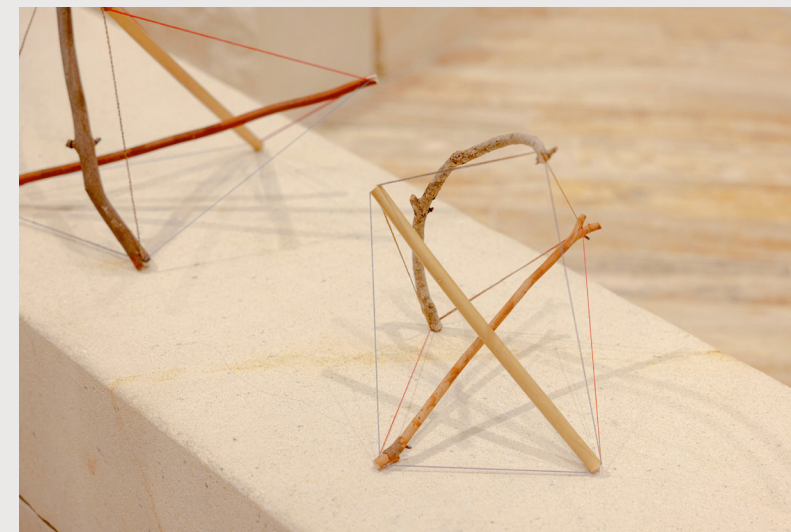
*Flows according to rocks*, Paludal, Christchurch, 2020





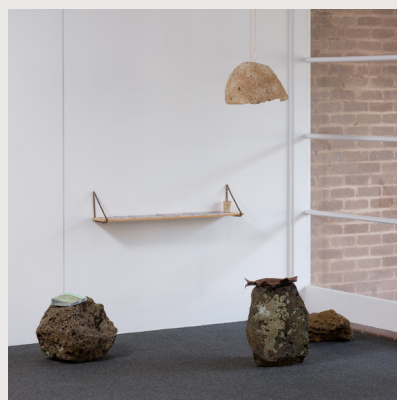


*Stories from Te Auaunga Oakley Creek, Summer–Autumn, 2021*  
mixed-media installation with single-channel sound (33 mins 47 secs), including papier mâché with old ecology notes and weeds from Harbutt Reserve; oak twig; string; sound recording includes a conversation with Wendy John, dancing of the wind and various karamū, whau, kahikatea trees, singing of the stream under Richardson Road, sound of an eel in Phyllis Reserve, flowing of Te Wai Unuroa o Wairaka, various birds, saxophone among oak trees by Oakley Waterfall, and cicada chorus  
sound sample:  
28'15" to 48'55  
<https://www.mixcloud.com/AFMixes/afm-there-not-here-03-12-may-2021>



*Interbeing, 2022*  
Bamboo, wattle, eucalyptus, jacaranda, macrocarpa, mānuka, all windfall or weeded from Te Auaunga Friday Working Bees, string  
Overall dimensions variable  
(Image credit: 2022 Aotearoa Art Fair Projects, photo by Luke Foley-Martin)

Eleanor Cooper & Xin Cheng  
*Our Suburban Water Bodies: Tāmaki Makaurau, Aotearoa · Spring & Summer 2020*  
printed booklets, unlimited edition

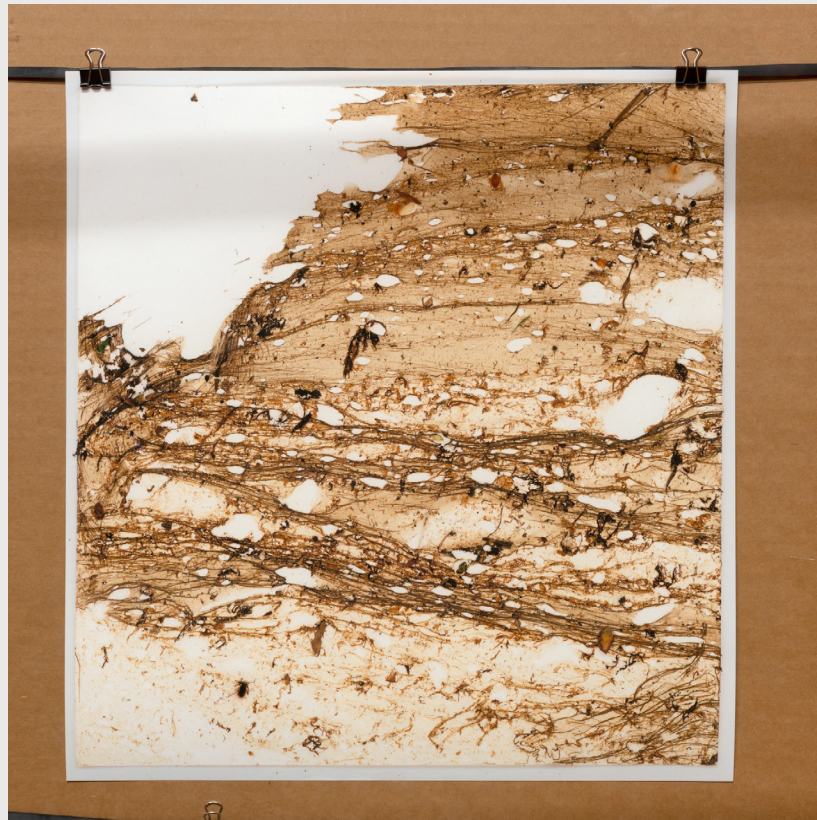


*Views of Te Auaunga Oakley Creek, 2021*  
Postcards, edition of 200  
Koha collected for  
Friends of Oakley Creek Te Auaunga



Presented at:  
*They Covered the House in Stories*, Te Tuhi, Auckland  
(curated by Amy Weng) 2021  
*Aotearoa Art Fair Projects*, Yu Mei Commercial Bay  
(curated by Micheal Do) 2022





*the grimeiest surface revealed the most intricate patterns, 2020 - 2022*  
Giclée prints on Ilford Galerie FineArt Smooth

Presented at:  
*Aotearoa Art Fair Projects*, Yu Mei Commercial Bay (curated by Micheal Do) 2022  
*Greywater*, Mokopōpaki, Auckland, 2020  
*Flows according to rocks*, Paludal, Christchurch, 2020

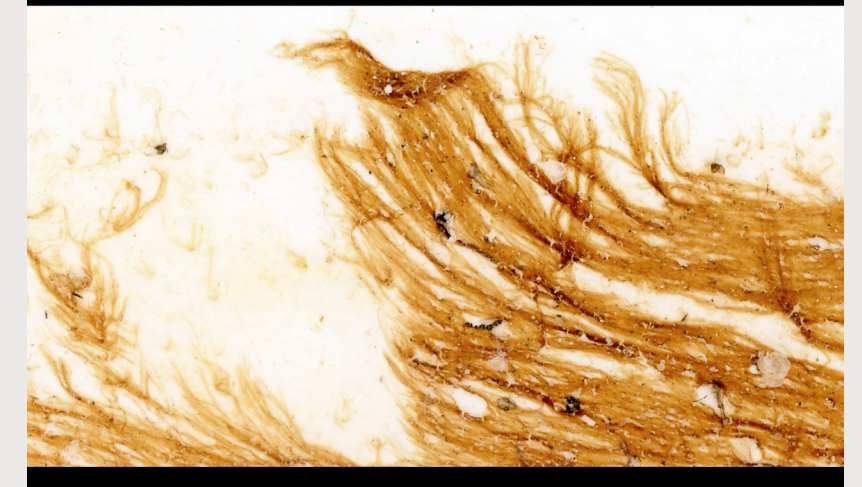
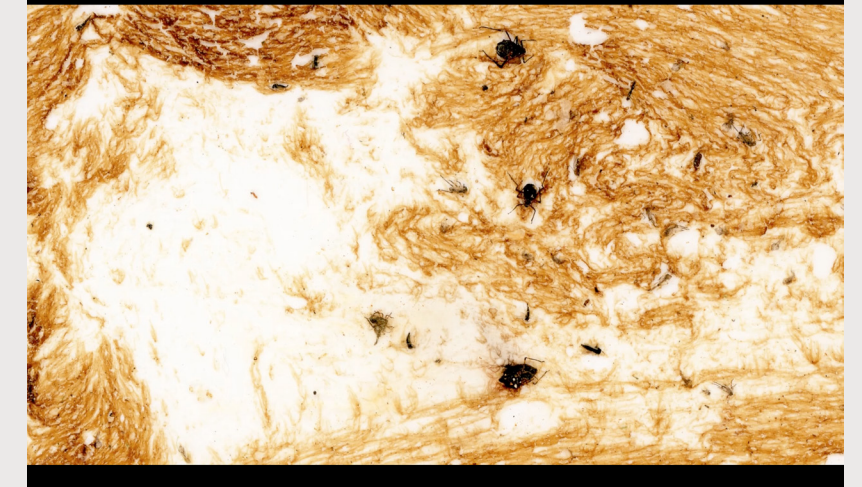
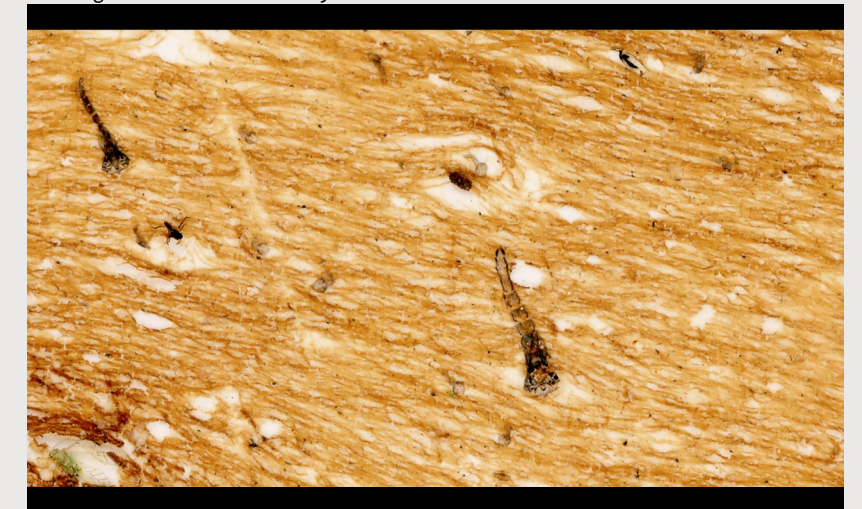


*Suburban Water Bodies*, 2021

Single channel digital video, silent (2 mins 37 secs)

<https://vimeo.com/635920220/4b6134e591>

Commissioned by Janine Randerson, presented at *Fathomless: artists converse with the more-than-human*, online screening in association with Victoria University Wellington & Adam Art Gallery





**Making Like A Forest: Common Unity Project  
Aotearoa &  
Making Like a Forest: Manawa Karioi 2020**  
with Adam Ben-Dror

Two single-channel HD digital video with sound

Made with support from Creative New Zealand  
and Te Whare Hēra Residency

Exhibited in:  
*From the Ground Up: Community Cultivation and  
Commensality*. Dowse Art Museum, Hutt City, 2020  
(curated by Grace Ryder)  
Te tomo kōhua, Artspace Aotearoa, Auckland, 2021  
(curated by Blaine Western)  
Rear Window, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, Dunedin  
2022 (curated by Simon Palenski)

Two artist's films exploring how kindness and  
care is embodied within two local community  
initiatives, by follow the transformations that  
occur in both initiatives: composting, growing,  
foraging and harvesting.

The installation consider the public museum as a  
site for sharing precious local stories by offering a  
place to slow down and experience the moments  
of kinship between humans and the natural world  
and the possibilities for diverse co-existence and  
care with our local environments.

Common Unity Project Aotearoa is a Te  
Awakairangi Hutt Valley-based initiative where  
farms sprout in schools and prison grounds and  
the harvests are made into children's lunches by  
volunteers. Manawa Karioi, in Te Whanganui-  
a-Tara Wellington, is one of the region's oldest  
reforestation projects, where land is restored to  
a forest ecosystem through collective effort to be  
enjoyed by native birds and humans alike.

Interview with Zoë Heine  
[https://www.pantograph-punch.com/posts/  
making-like-a-forest](https://www.pantograph-punch.com/posts/making-like-a-forest)

Full Videos:  
<https://youtu.be/AHhcbllt1go>  
<https://youtu.be/-GMBjSBjGs8>







*Frugal Electronics*  
Facilitated by Adam Ben-Dror  
& Lee Nicholson

*Creative Mending Circle,*  
Facilitated by Stella  
Carruthers & Xin Cheng

<http://localmaking.org/>

<https://www.urbandreambrokerage.org.nz/a-place-for-local-making>

Media:  
<https://wellington.govt.nz/news-and-events/news-and-information/our-wellington/2022/04/a-place-for-local-making>  
<https://goodmagazine.co.nz/urban-dream-brokerage-presents-a-place-for-local-making/>

<https://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/CU2202/Soo176/urban-dream-brokerage-udb-presents-a-place-for-local-making.htm>





*Flora of the Future I* (with Eleanor Cooper)

Cyanotype on Lanaquarelle Hahnemühle

64 x 57cm

*Out of the Woods*

Tensegrity models with pinetrim, wilding pine, mānuka, rimu, plywood, pencils, twig, string, rubber bands



*Gradual Stiffening* (with thanks to a maker in

Phnom Penh and a boat-builder on Waiheke)

Cardboard, string, wood, stone, fixings

20 x 21 x 10.5cm



**'Greywater', 2020**

Duo exhibition with Eleanor Cooper  
Mokopōpaki, Auckland

Below from left to right:

*Picking up, Playing with* (detail)

Perspex, folders, wood, felt, cork, stone, rope, tyre, electrical connectors, cardboard, found journals, fixings

*Rapport* (with Eleanor Cooper)

Found plastic pipes, tyre, inner tubing, plastic strapping, fixings

*Unison of Opposites* (with Eleanor Cooper)

Found plastic pipes, plastic bracket, tyre, rope, inner tubing, plastic strapping, lamp, fixings







**everyday resourcefulness**

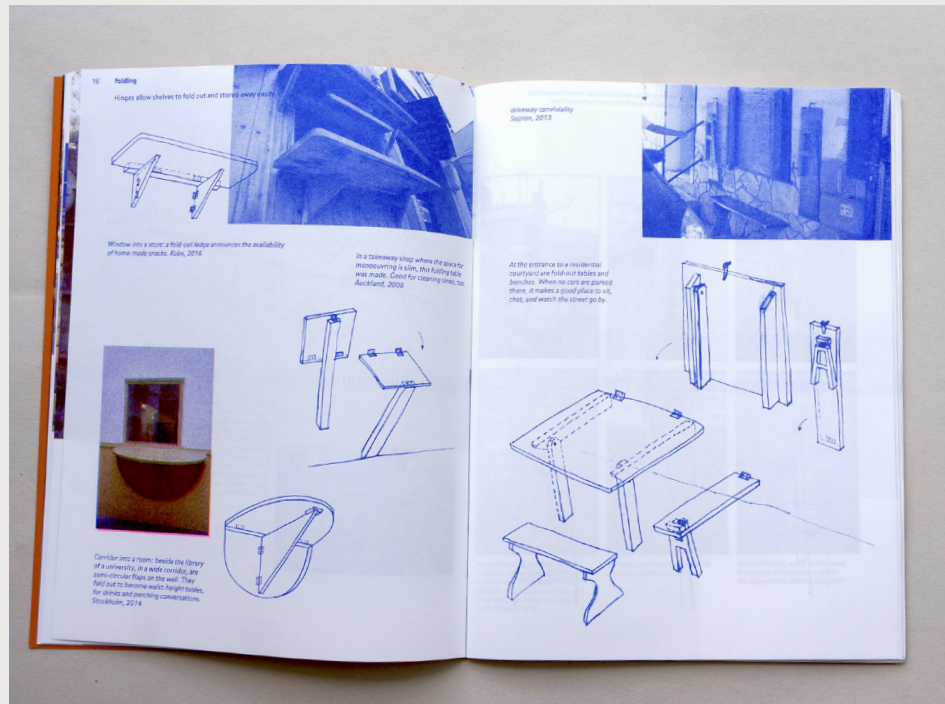
Field research since 2006

Research on everyday resourcefulness and improvisations, makeshift constructions, fixes and small modifications of private and urban spaces, made by non-specialists with frugal materials. Gathered from Asia-Pacific, Europe and Mexico, so far.

Stories published by Hainamana:  
<http://www.hainamana.com/encountering-everyday-resourcefulness-a-drifting-assemblage/>  
<https://www.hainamana.com/7-drifts-on-the-possibilities-of-shared-spaces/>





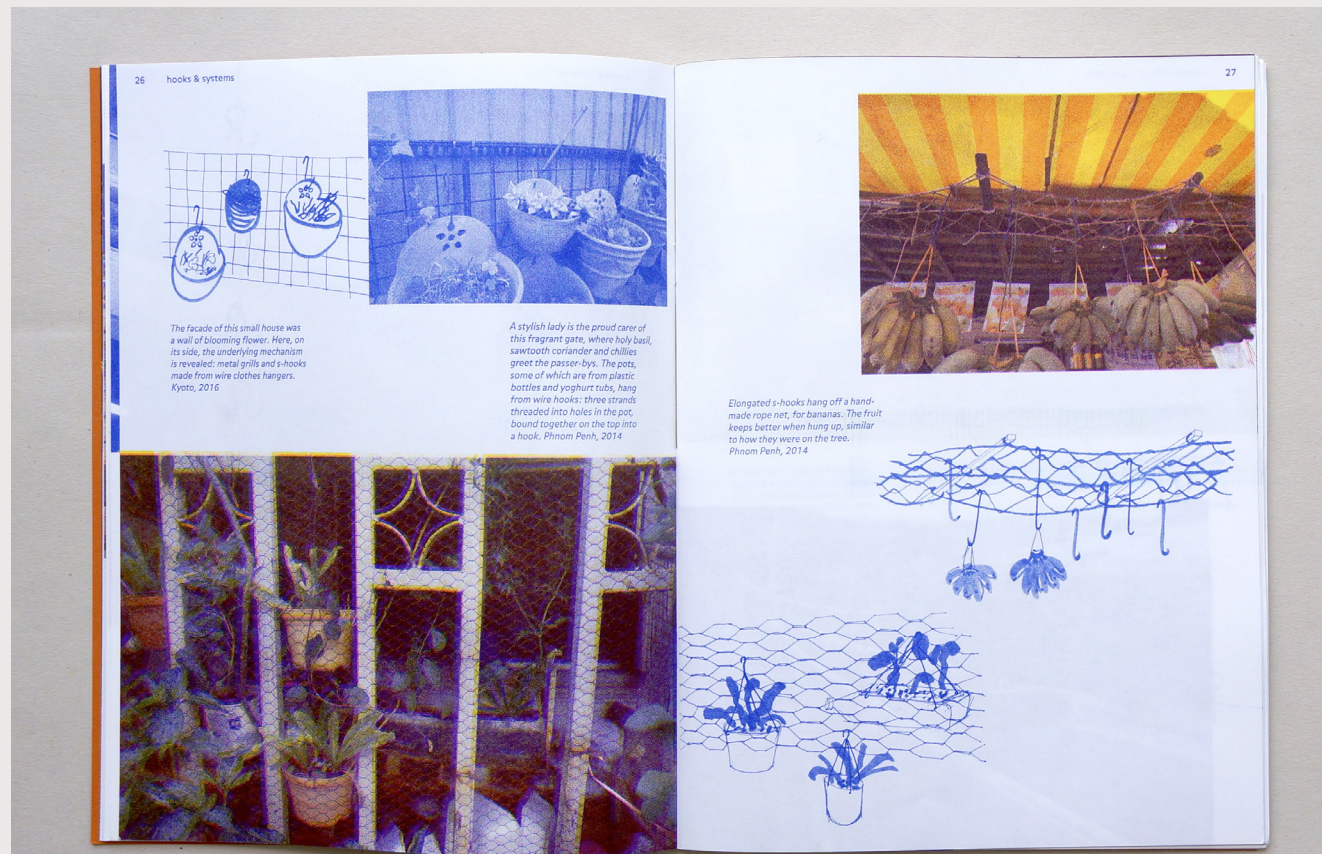


## a seedbag for resourcefulness

grew out of over twelve years of walking around urban environments in the Asia-Pacific and Europe, noticing small modifications of shared spaces and the interplay between the many maker-user-carer-hackers. A multi-part publication, Xin talked with urban theorist and musician Christopher Dell about the Berlin Wall and being a designer who wants to change themselves; artist Lucie Schroeder about nurturing kefir and sharing stories; programmer substack about UNIX design and thrifty living. The largest booklet, 'patterns of resourcefulness', is woven out of drawings, photos and stories of human(e) edges and myriads of piggybacking, to inspire caring and making of your own surroundings.

Published by Materialverlag – HFBK, Hamburg with support from Creative New Zealand, 2019.  
risograph and laser printed paper, edition of 200

I took the photos, drew, wrote, transcribed interviews, edited, designed and printed the books, with typographic advice from Wigger Bierma.





### Seeing Like A Forest

Single-channel HD digital video, colour, sound,  
duration 34 min 31 sec.

Camera: Jesús Pulpón

Calligraphy: Wigger Bierma

made with thanks to Creative New Zealand

Shown at:

*Composting the Universe*, B-05/ Kunst-Kultur-Natur,  
Monatbaur, Germany, 2019

(curated by Simone Kessler, Lucie Schroeder,  
Johanna Blees)

*what if we did stuff together?* Papakura Art Gallery,  
Auckland 2020

*Spheres: An Online Video Project*, Christchurch Art  
Gallery, Christchurch, 2020

(curated by Melanie Oliver and Nathan Pohio)

*So Close / So Far*, Hypercultural Passengers,  
Hamburg, Germany, 2021

(curated by Michael Kress)

*Doing Earth*, MOM Art Space, Hamburg, Germany,  
2022 (curated by Dagmar Rauwald)

While living in Hamburg for three years, I  
reflected on over a decade of research observing  
the small modifications to shared spaces made  
by non-specialists, around the Asia-Pacific  
and Europe. Interweaving places and practices  
through a poetry of patience, opening up  
wormholes between different spots on the earth,  
the work tells many stories of locals adapting  
their communal environments with inventive  
resourcefulness and heartwarming waste  
minimisation.

Excerpt: <https://vimeo.com/356604681>

Full: <https://vimeo.com/387055741>





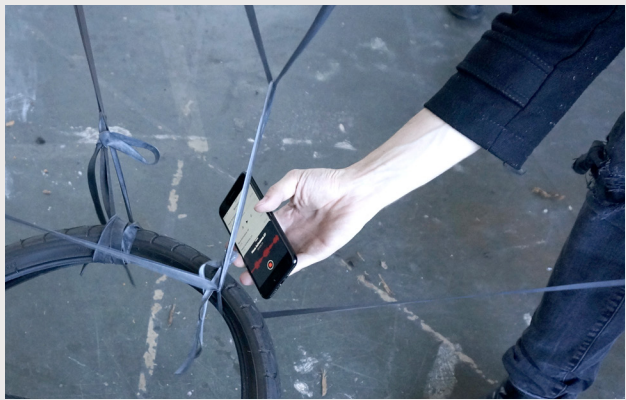
**everyday resourcefulness workshops**

ongoing series since 2014, involving performative story-telling, resourceful improvisation, deep listening exercises to reconsider our relationship to our material surrounds

Left column: with Year 1 design students, Hamburg University of Fine Arts (HFBK) Hamburg, 2018

Middle column: at community garden Gartendeck St Pauli, Hamburg with materials from the garden shed autumn 2017 & 2018

Right column with hackerspace Rancho Electronico, Mexico City, 2017



Professor Valentina Karga wrote afterwards:  
*Xin introduced the Deep Listening exercise which I found to be an amazing tool for the unlearning of unconscious habits. There, we experienced collectively the difference between hearing and consciously listening. The workshop was very well-received in the class. We shared a very engaging discussion about collaboration, activating urban spaces and the responsibility of users. The students picked up some concepts and tools which has been actively put into use.*



**everyday resourcefulness workshops (cont')**

ongoing series since 2014, involving performative story-telling, resourceful improvisation, card game-invention & walking-together to reconsider our relationship to our material surrounds

A convivial afternoon with maker-space FabCOOP, Seoul, Korea. 2015









### Resonanz

Performance with *Elastic Space* by Jozefina Frljić & Natalia Golubtsova, with musicians Tam Pham & Goran Lazarević. Choreography: Sigrid Bohlens  
<https://youtu.be/EYw6oHNdXHk>  
<https://youtu.be/wnV9UwKixbo>



### Elastic Space

Interactive installation, used bike inner tubes  
Xin Cheng



### Rubber Trails

2-channel video installation  
Jesús Pulpón, Xin Cheng  
<https://vimeo.com/387570076>  
<https://vimeo.com/389148425>

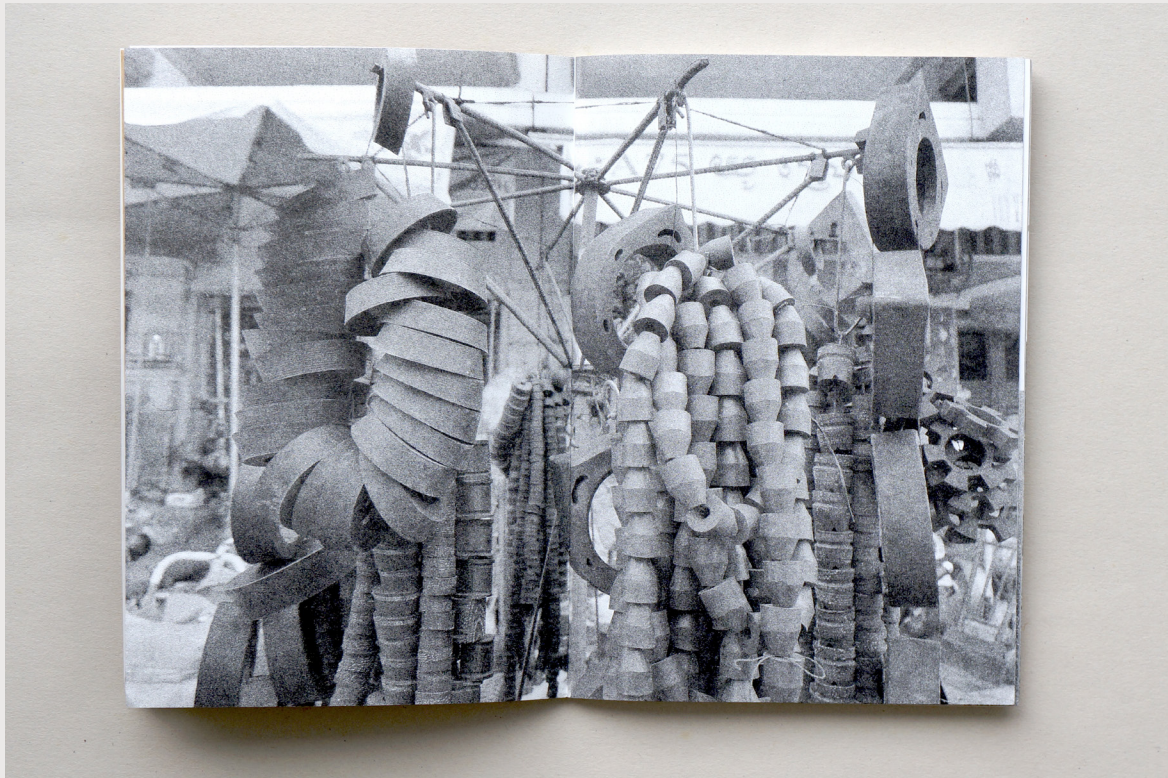
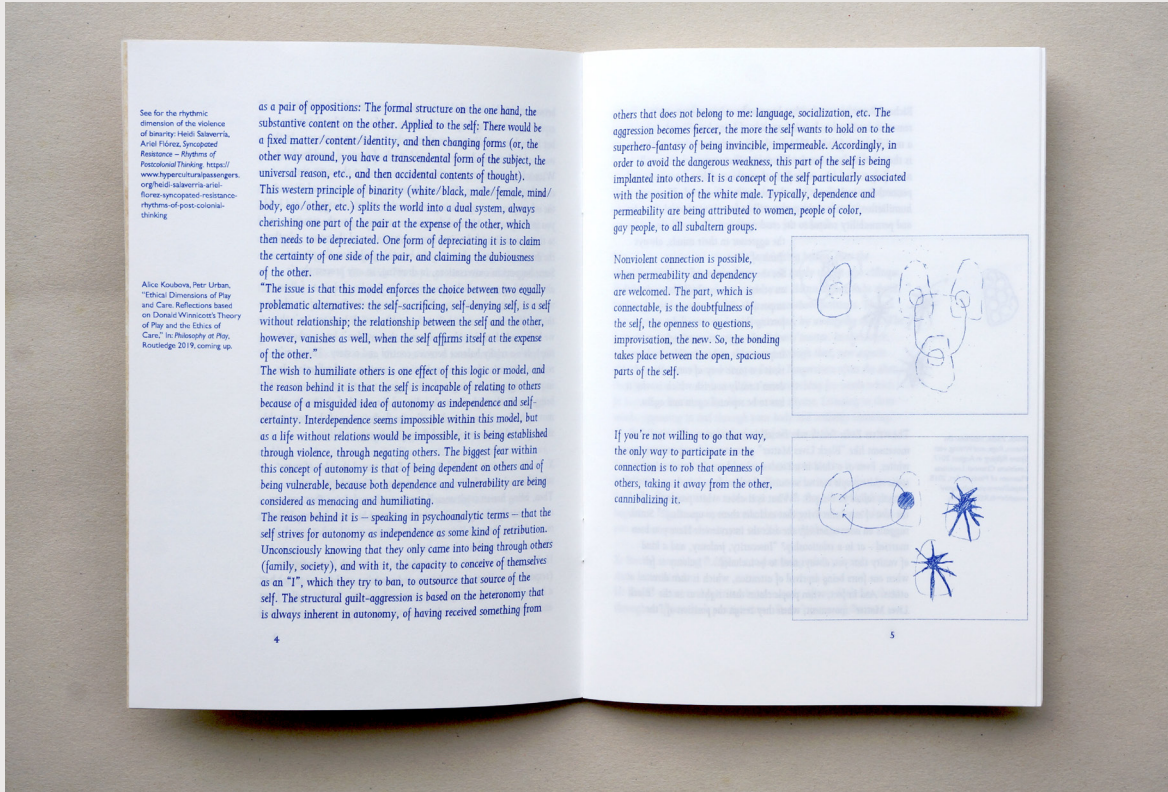
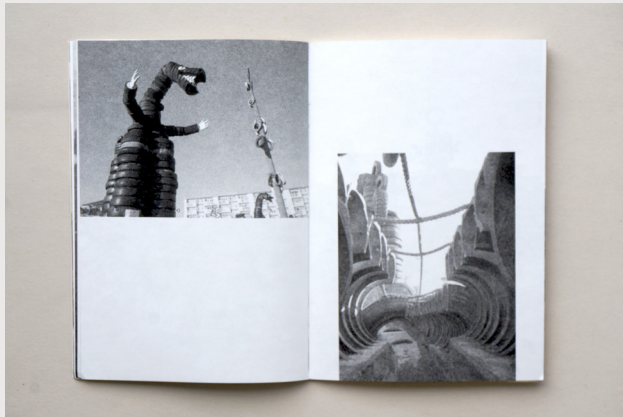
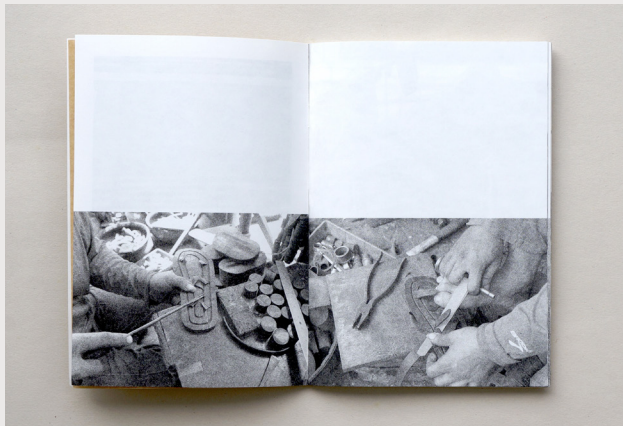
### Following the Rubber Trails (Auf den Spuren des Gummis)

Frappant Galerie, Hamburg, Germany, 2019  
I instigated this multi-disciplinary exhibition with seven local practitioners of film, music, dance, performance and philosophy, tracing rubber as matter-in-transformation, and brought together the multifarious beings, practices, stories from Hamburg, Tokyo to Phnom Pehn.

Xin Cheng



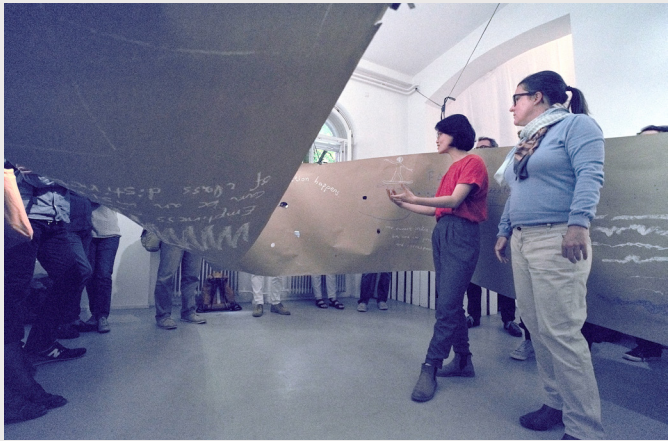




**Elastic Dialogues | Rubber Stories**

artist's book, corresponding with the three-part exhibition,  
*Following the Rubber Trails*

Published as a part of *A Seedbag for Resourcefulness*,  
Materialverlag–HFBK Hamburg, 2019  
PDF: [https://futuretao.lololol.net/Dantian\\_ChengXin](https://futuretao.lololol.net/Dantian_ChengXin)



**Elastic Dialogues**

walking, text exchange, drawing-installation, performative talk  
with philosopher Heidi Salaverria

*Following the Rubber Trails*  
Frappant Galerie, Hamburg, Germany  
2019

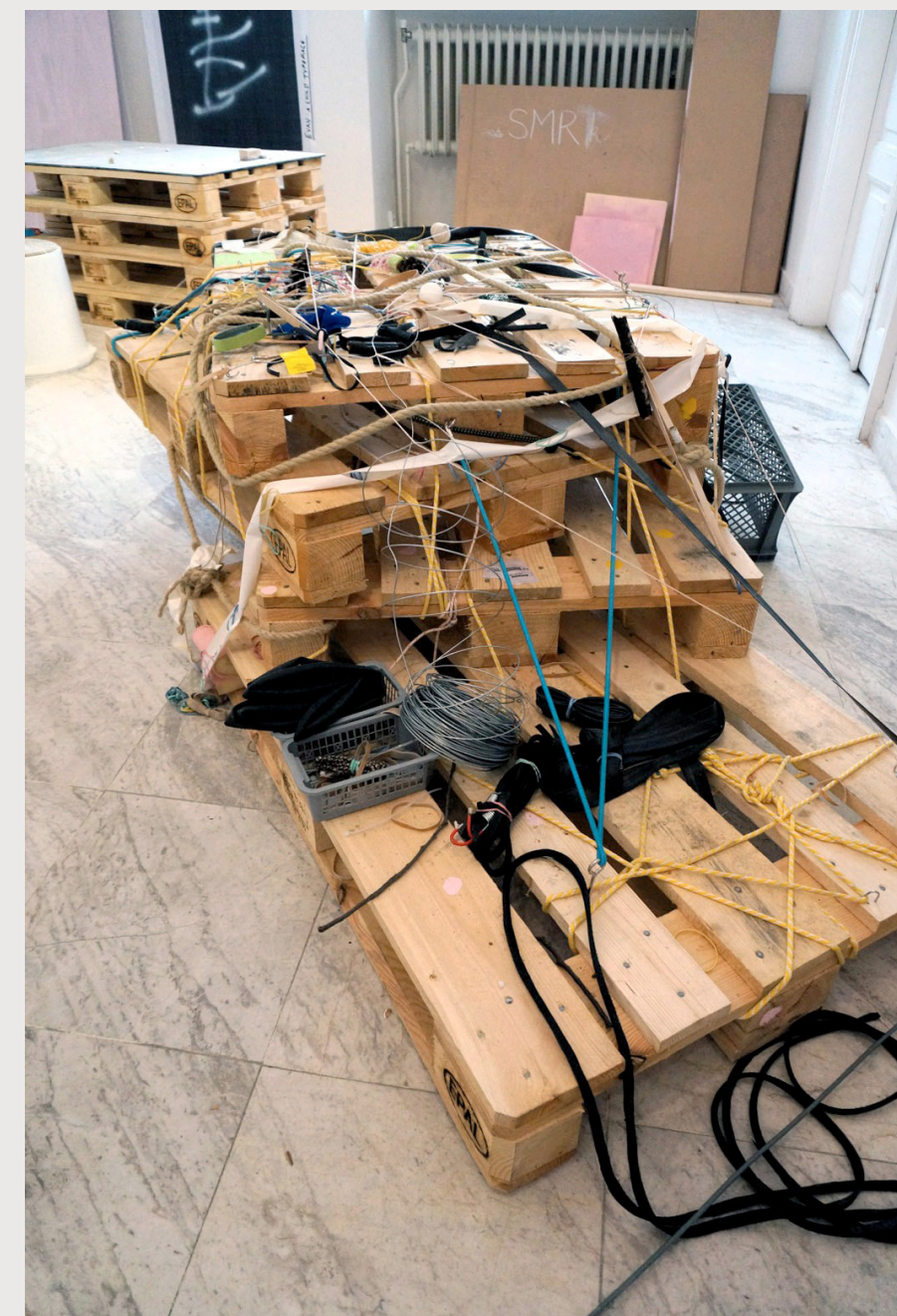




# **a stimulus terrain! for widening the margin of play**

part of *distracted workshop*, a split/fountain exhibition project  
26th International Biennial of Graphic Design Brno, Czech Republic, 2014  
with Chris Berthelsen

Participatory installation and furniture, and one day workshop : *starting something we cannot finish*, in response to the project's focus on activities fostering the creative process.





**Dry, Summer (lenses and laminates)**

laminated flotsam and jetsam and formerly alive beings from Tempelhofer Field Rainwater Basin

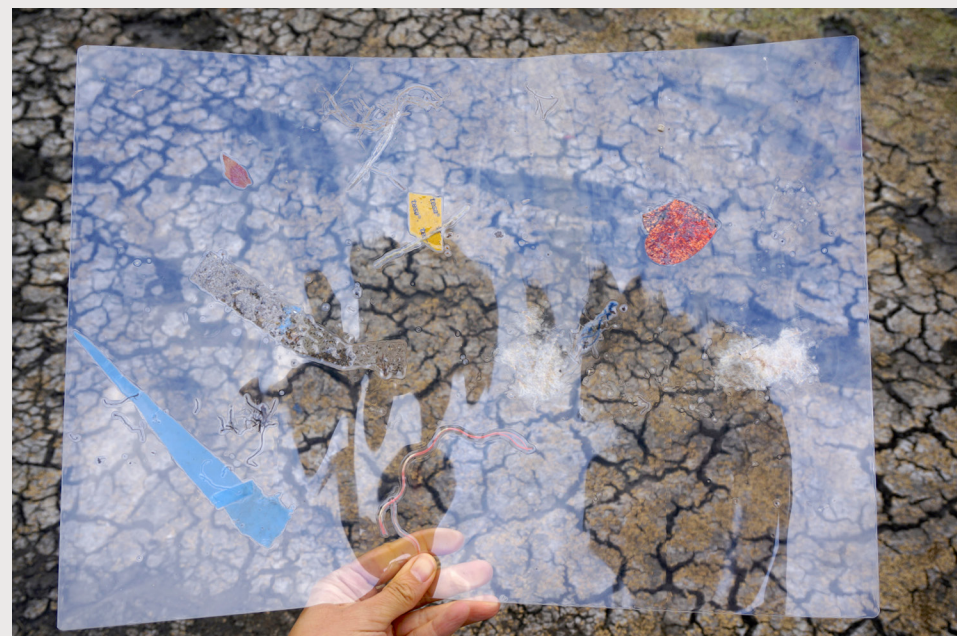
September Open Weeks of Floating University, Berlin, 2018  
Composting the Universe, B-05, Monatbaur, Germany, 2019

Walking around the cracking hummus, picking up flotsam and jetsam into a bag, scattering them inbetween sheets of plastic laminate, pressing everything through a heated slot. Suddenly, trash and dirt became a transparent surface, a surface, unlike the water, can be safely picked up, touched and put next to the eyes. They became lenses for seeing the rest of the world with.

There are blindspots, filtered colours, muddles, blurs—is that a petal, or a broken balloon? A cluster of poly-styrene bubbles, or dried up Wasserlinsen? The lacy wings of a dragon y, or once upon a time a tampon?

Here are frozen glimpses of a micro-cosmos, the human and more-than-human, dried and preserved. When they were immersed in water, we may have worried about the liquid contaminating our skin. But for the algae and the schools of tiny swimming bugs, this is the world they dwell in.

Xin Cheng





**Propositions for Freedom Farmers**

Mixed media installation with recycled materials and edible native plants

Freedom Farmers  
Auckland Art Gallery, Auckland  
Curated by Natasha Conland  
2013



Responding to the theme of sustainability and “artists growing ideas”, I contributed a showcase of DIY, makeshift constructions and communal environments, sourced from research and travels, free for the public to replicate in their own homes.

video interview: <https://www.aucklandartgallery.com/page/freedom-farmers-xin-cheng-propositions>



Xin Cheng

**Stories of Becoming, 2022**

interactive performance and story-telling, remote  
collaboration with FangHui Huang / IMMA  
as a part of *Island Bar – Ratava*, Taipei Performing Arts  
Centre, Taipei, Taiwan  
curated by Joyce Ho

Written response by Harvey Bruce Milligan  
<https://contemporaryhum.com/writing/stories-of-becoming/>





## Recent Essays on Xin Cheng

2022 Harvey Bruce Milligan, *Stories of Becoming*  
*Xin Cheng at IsLand Bar – Ratava, Taipei Performing Arts Centre*, Contemporary Hum  
<https://contemporaryhum.com/writing/stories-of-becoming>

2021 Robyn Maree Pickens, *Reparative Intimacy*, ArtNow,  
<https://artnow.nz/essays/reparative-intimacy>

2020 Zoë Heine, *Making Like a Forest: An Interview with Xin Cheng and Adam Ben-Dror*,  
Pantograph Punch  
<https://www.pantograph-punch.com/posts/making-like-a-forest>

2020 Lance Pearce, *Social Imagination: Xin Cheng's Seeing Like a Forest*, Contemporary Hum  
<https://www.contemporaryhum.com/lance-pearce-xin-cheng>

2019 Jari Niesner, *The Discreet Charm of Chance*, Contemporary Hum  
<https://www.contemporaryhum.com/jari-niesner-on-xin-cheng>