



## FEATURES

### >> INTERVIEWS

#### >> ARTIST PROFILES

#### >> HISTORY & THEORY

#### >> THINK

## FILTER FEATURES

### ☐ SECTION

—select section—

### ☐ DATE

FROM:

TO:

EXEX: 1/30/2012

### ☐ KEYWORD

>> Search features

2013.02.14 Thu, by Xue Tan Translated by: Xue Tan

## Spring Workshop's Time Moderation(s)

>> print

Xue Tan interviews Mimi Brown, founder of Spring Workshop, and Heman Chong, curator of Spring Workshop's inaugural program, Moderation(s).

In contrast to the hectic pace of Hong Kong's art world, where everything is about dealing and improving art infrastructure, in Wong Chuk Hang, on Hong Kong Island's southern-side, a new non-profit art space, Spring Workshop, opened its airy loft doors recently with a year-long project — Moderation(s) — a collaboration between Spring and Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam. Singaporean artist, writer and curator, **Heman Chong**, was invited by Witte de With director, Defne Ayas, to shape the program.

The founder of Spring Workshop, Californian Mimi Brown, is a music composer formerly based in New York. She moved to Hong Kong eight years ago, and found her passion in fostering the city's art scene, including serving on the board of Asian Art Archive and as an advisor at Para/Site Art Space.

Mimi Brown talks to Xue Tan of Randian on the initiatives of Spring Workshop for the first time.

**What inspired you to found Spring Workshop? How did you realize the need for an artist residency in Hong Kong?**

After I had been in Hong Kong for a few years, I realized that my favorite days were spent in the company of the artists, thinkers and organizers of Hong Kong's art scene. I found kindred spirits who were interested in learning and experiencing new things together.

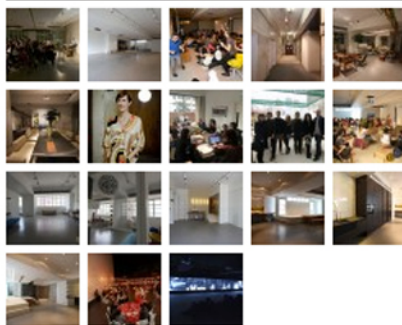
From there, the desire to create a residency program came from three main motivations: as a musician, I view visual art through a musical lens and I am constantly trying to understand the how and why behind the artwork I see. As I know many people share this interest, I hope having a residency program allows Hong Kong's cultural audience opportunities for deeper insight into the how and why of the artist's process than we would gain from simply seeing a finished work on a wall.

This residency program allows artists and thinkers to stay longer in Hong Kong than might otherwise be possible. Extended time here means Spring's residents can engage more deeply with this city and its artists, and vice versa. For example, the Obie-award-winning New York composer and writer, Michael Friedman, used his month-long residency at Spring to interview over 40 Hong Kongers — artists, professors, financiers, domestic helpers and many others — and then composed music whose lyrics were all quotations from [them], brilliantly woven together into a tapestry of songs. This sort of engagement is also illustrated by the current residency at Spring of curators Max Andrews and Mariana Canepa Luna of the Barcelona-based curatorial duo Latitudes. Max and Mariana have chosen to study four Hong Kong artists and are spending multiple days with each artist, experiencing the city through the artists' eyes and getting to know them more closely than the usual quick studio visit on an international research trip would permit.

**What are the long-term goals of Spring Workshop? What is your vision for Spring in a three-year plan?**

Spring is a five-year non-profit arts initiative. Spring aims to experiment with the way art is created, enjoyed and supported.

In terms of creation, this means Spring works closely with artists and partner organizations to realize their projects as fully as possible. The space itself was designed with the goal of allowing artists to delve into their processes in a comfortable environment. For local artists and organizations, we hope to connect them to new relationships and projects. For international residents, we hope to allow them a deeper engagement with the city and community of Hong Kong.



[See all photos \(19\)](#)

We have set a five-year timeline for Spring because we want to see if what we are providing is useful to the people of Hong Kong. We intend to stay agile and attuned to Hong Kong's public and its organizations with the intention of adding what's needed in a complementary way instead of replicating what already exists.

#### **How do you see your relationship with Hong Kong personally?**

Truly, I am in love with this city. For me, it is a many-layered wonder city, meant to be explored. From the aural enjoyment of the many languages spoken here to the banyan trees sending out roots that engulf the street-side temples and their incense pots to the kites that soar over the peaks and among the glittering skyscrapers lining Victoria Harbor to the fascinating history of the city and her multitude of different neighborhoods and foods and stories and people, I feel I will never reach the end of things to learn here.

#### **Interview with Heman Chong**

Moderation(s) is an elastic project that among other things stands on the development of a series of artist residencies, it involves conferences, tours, exhibitions and fiction writing. Singaporean artist Heman Chong is the acting curator, but he much prefer to call himself the moderator among participants and events. The first project in the program — Incidents of Travels is curated by Barcelona based curator duo Latitudes, who was invited to spend a month in Hong Kong. For their residency, the duo chose four Hong Kong artists to guide tours to assorted places in the city which influences their art practice.

#### **How did you decide on your project for Spring?**

I was invited by Defne, who had already discussed collaborating with Mimi for a long time. From the very beginning, it was clear to me that I did not want to do an exhibition — that was the starting point. Then we moved into a situation where we thought it would be better to do a program that expands for a year, instead of one thing. There weren't many discussions, mainly fixing dates. We decided to have three slots in Spring, which is more suitable for residencies, and three in Rotterdam to develop other kind of programs.

When the first project emerged, we were talking about books, so we decided to have the library, and we made accessible the list of books. People would be invited to build their own libraries. It is a Do It Yourself action, and there is a lot of DIY actions to the project.

Because of the number of people involved in the project, it became messy. I think at many points it will fail. There will be many mistakes, simply because we are dealing with so many different things at once. It's also important for me to push the limits of an institution, so it becomes larger than itself. I am interested in somehow expanding the capacity of the institution to encapsulate such a process.

#### **Moderation(s) seems a rather liberal form of an art program, what possibilities do you expect to see during its progress?**

There is something I strongly believe in life — people need to be generous with others, I can't stand the situation where everyone becomes self-centered and turn selfish with sources, personality and all that. I truly believe knowledge should be free. Whatever concept and ideas we generated, should belong to everybody, that's my only aspiration for the group, they could be convinced to think beyond their own concerns and projects, and involve themselves in a much larger framework.

#### **For the art world we have today, do you think you are too idealistic ?**

It is important to be idealistic, and to be realistic. I think we can do both at the same time.

There is something very evident in my works, that is: no process of resistance. I never take on the position of resistance. I find it so more interesting to navigate a situation without having to resist anything.

We do this everyday as human beings, we play different roles. For example, having a baby and family is the most utopian idea one can have.

#### **Would you say the program can be framed within relational aesthetics?**

My references are much deeper than something that is sort of "trendy", or based around a distinct production we can sense in the 90s, which has dealt with a few artists.

I don't think it's sensible to reject that cannon, so I will just use it. If it was convenient, people would think about it in that way, I don't really give a shit about it. I'm not interested to form this cosmos of my own work, as much as allowing interpretations in many levels and different layers and times.

#### **How do you see Moderation(s) in the context of Hong Kong. How does it provide the needs of this specific art scene?**

The key is not to provide answers for Hong Kong — that would be a disaster. What is interesting is to produce a space in which we can develop questions for each other.

I am also very influenced by Cosmin Costinas's attitude with Para/Site Art Space towards Hong Kong. He is not trying to be the messiah to save Hong Kong — there is nothing to save. What we can do is



to increase the possibilities for things to become interesting.

#### What will be the final form of the exhibition?

We are having a group show in Witte de With at the end of December, which will involve a lot of works, a full-blown show. We don't commission any works: every work is already made. We are having this show to conceptualize the works within a certain format. The title is "The Part of the Story Where a Part Becomes a Part of Something Else." Let's say — taking this teacup lid — showing it apart from the cup, somewhere else — how does it make sense, in relation to this iPhone for example?

Moderation(s) is also about challenging identity and politics: How can you say certain things such as: "I am a Chinese artist living in Hong Kong; I do this kind of work," — How easy it is to destroy and challenge that. By shifting one thing, everything else goes crazy. I constantly tell the participants, are you sure you want to say this? In a way, there is a lot of production of speech. How does speech become a tool to negotiate our self with the things around us? That is the most interesting point in art practice for me.



[>> print](#)

[<< Back to features](#)

---

**Keywords:** artist residency, arts initiative, Defne Ayas, Heman Chong, Hong Kong, interview, Mimi Brown, Moderation(s), Spring Workshop, The Part of the Story Where a Part Becomes a Part of Something Else, Witte de With, xue tan,

---



[About Us](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Legal Notes](#)

[Ethics Policy](#)

[Copyright Notice](#)

