



**Xin Cheng**  
<http://xin-cheng.info>

Since 2006 I have been researching and decolonizing everyday resourcefulness: small modifications of shared spaces through frugal transformations of local resources. This was possible through residencies and collaborative projects in New Zealand, Cambodia, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Italy and Germany.

While the field research yields a growing photographic archive, the focus is beyond aesthetics: on the stories and practices which open up our imagination. The stories, while humble, become poignant amongst a society of capitalistic production and throwaway consumption. Told together, they suggest more active ways of relating with our local surroundings as maker-carer-user-hackers, in an ecology where we are all co-creating.

Often I work discursively with interdisciplinary practitioners, exploring multiple, joyful perspectives and the significance of these practices across cultures and the changing times we live in.

My practice is thus multidisciplinary, depending on the context: sculptural installations, workshops, performative walks and talks, videos, writings, drawings, publications.



**From the Northwest**

performative walk telling stories of making and handmade details observed around the mountain village of Topolo. The audience was invited to take off their shoes, like the children, where walking slowly allow us the sensual pleasures of various surfaces of the paths.

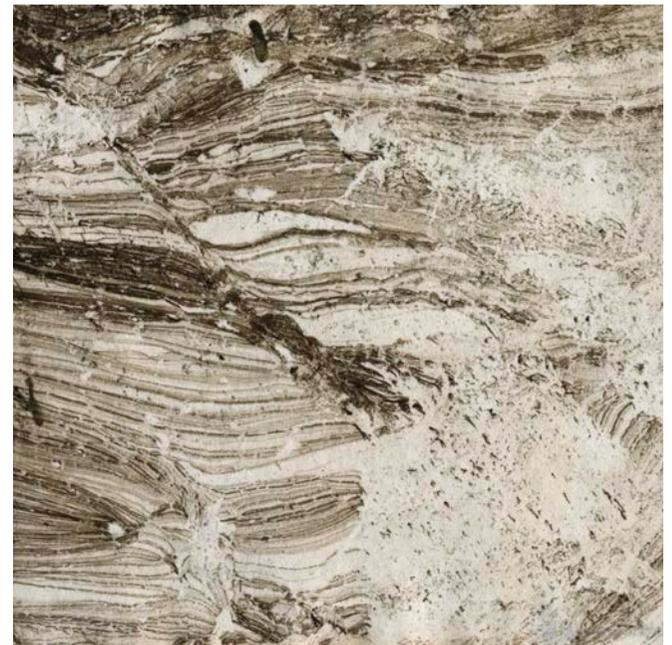
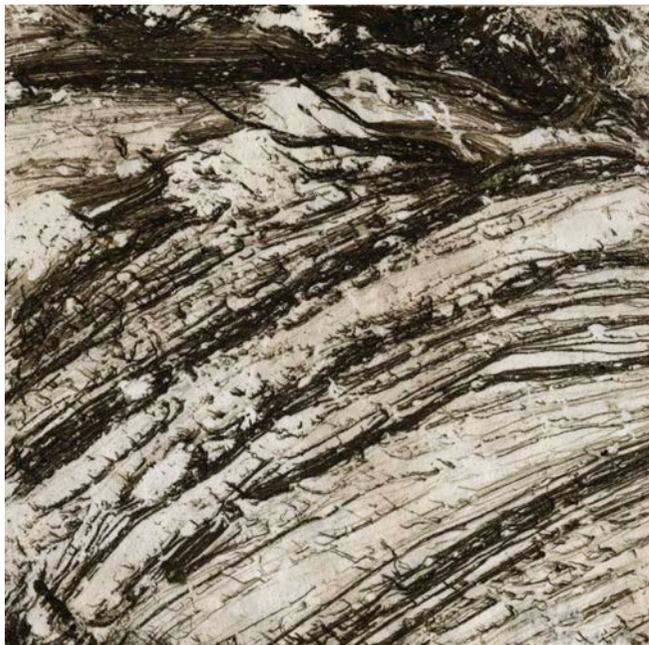
Performed in Italian by Alice Buosi  
 Part of *Stazione di Topolo XX*, annual international arts festival in the village bordering Italy & Slovenia.  
 2013

*'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..'*



**the grimeiest surface revealed the most intricate patterns)**

drawings on paper, made by the confluence of water and wind and everything inbetween: car exhaust, pollen, rust, algae etc. at the outlet of Tempelhofer Field Rainwater Basin, Berlin, 2018



September Open Weeks, Floating University Berlin, Germany 2018

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

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

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

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

Exhibited during the *September Open Weeks of Floating University Berlin*, 2018 & *Composting the Universe*, B-05/ Kunst-Kultur-Natur, Monatbaur, 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.*

*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.*





### Seeing Like A Forest

35 minute moving-image meditation  
made with Jesús Pulpón, 2019

*Composting the Universe*, B-05/ Kunst-  
Kultur-Natur, Monatshaus, Germany, 2019  
*what if we did stuff together?* Papakura Art  
Gallery, Auckland 2020

*'The earth is a form of writing, a geography of  
which we had forgotten that we ourselves are  
the co-authors.'*

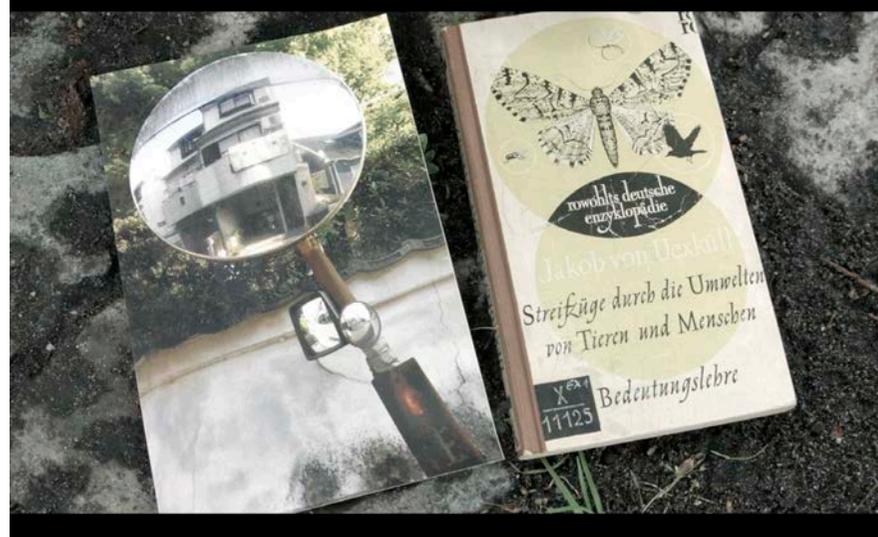
*Georges Perec, 'co-' added by xin*

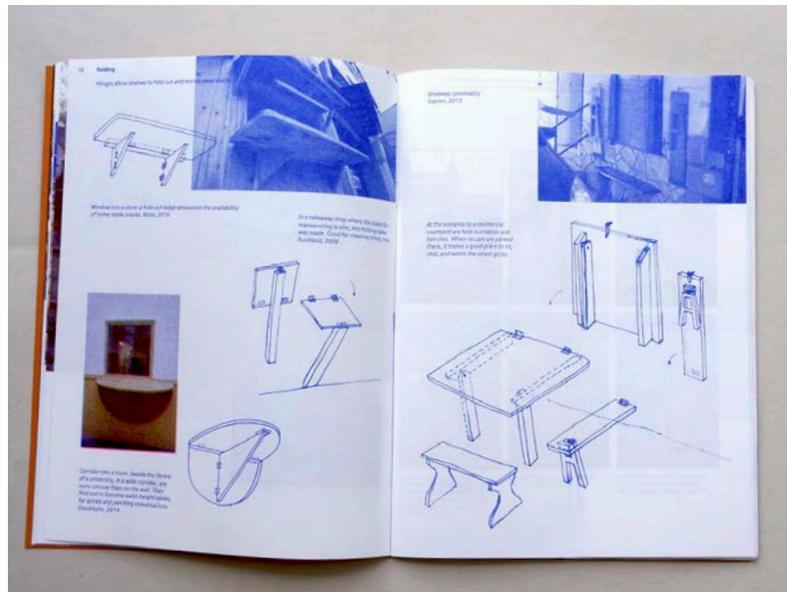


A way of seeing design and urban spaces  
not as a fixed thing, but as an unfinished  
open field, which change, grow, and  
decompose through use and making,  
always in flux, like a forest.

Stories of small modifications of shared  
spaces at the edges of public and private,  
between Hamburg and the Asia-Pacific.

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



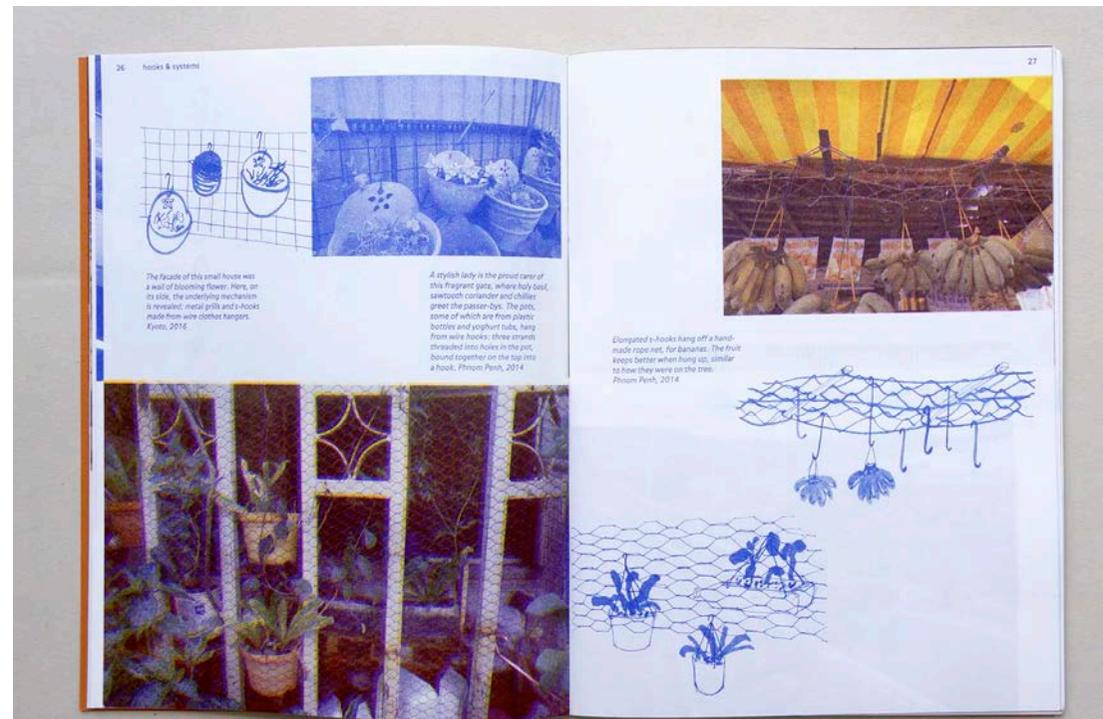


**a seedbag for resourcefulness**

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 print, edition of 200

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





**Building is a special way of suggesting**

Photo-installation as a part of  
*Future Tao: City Park #2* at Flaneur Festival  
Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW).  
Berlin, Germany 2019



Laminated photos of everyday resourcefulness were inserted playfully into the exterior terrace of the HKW.



Workshop participants were invited to walk around and to stumble across them, resulting in a spirited discussion about the making by hand and small modifications of existing spaces.



**everyday resourcefulness workshops**  
ongoing series involving performative story-telling, resourceful improvisation, deep listening exercises to reconsider our relationship to the material surrounds

Top row: with Gartendeck St Pauli & Year 1 design students at Hamburg University of Fine Arts (HFBK) Hamburg, 2018  
Bottom row: 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.*





**Resonanz**

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

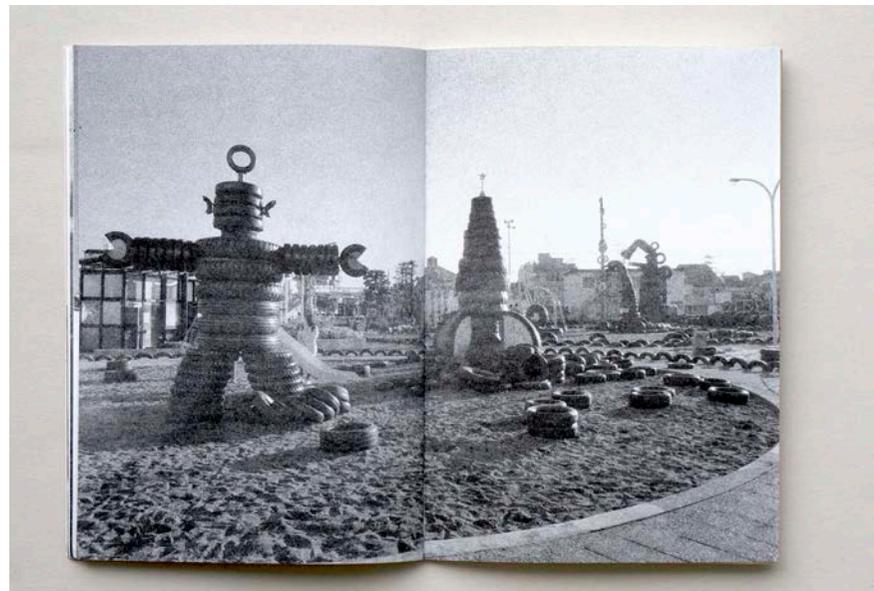
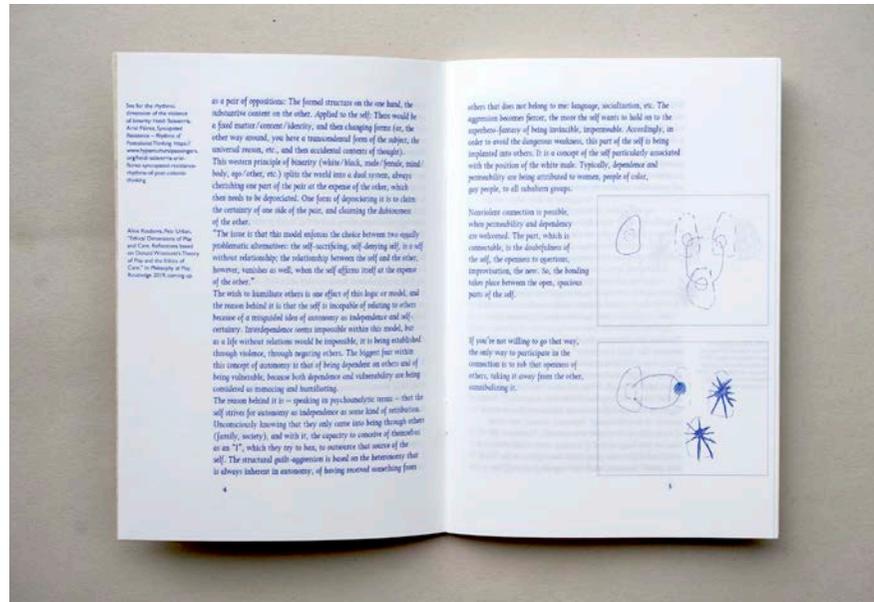
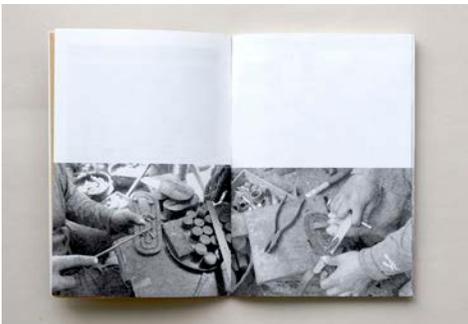


**Following the Rubber Trails (Auf den  
Spuren des Gummis)** Frappant Galerie,  
Hamburg, Germany, 2019



**Elastic Space**  
Interactive installation, used  
bike inner tubes, hooks  
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\\_](https://futuretao.lololol.net/Dantian_)



**Elastic Dialogues**  
 walking, text exchange, drawing-installation,  
 performative talk  
 with philosopher Heidi Salaverría

*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 :  
*starting something we cannot finish*, in response to the project's focus  
on activities fostering the creative process.





**Propositions for Freedom Farmers**

Mixed media installation with recycled materials and edible native plants

Curated by Natasha Conland  
Auckland Art Gallery, Auckland  
2013-2014



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>



**furniture design and installation, size variable, 2013  
with Blaine Western & Michael Parr  
for S/F project at the Physics Room Christchurch, New Zealand**

In 2011 split/fountain was invited to facilitate a project at The Physics Room, but when the earthquakes struck Christchurch, plans were put on hold. split/fountain presented the project two years later in 2013, and diverted from the original proposal to expand on Temporary Housing + Shelter, a publication and exhibition project produced in collaboration with Whatever Press (Tokyo) for the 2012 Tokyo Art Book Fair.

For the Physics Room exhibition project, Xin Cheng, Michael Parr and Blaine Western improvised a display and furniture system constructed from a selection of raw materials locally sourced through TradeMe, exploring opportunistic forms and the versatility of materials in common usage. They considered the objectives of space through various interim structures to establish form in multiple configurations and suggestions.





**Furniture and installation designs for publisher split/fountain**

left:  
Exhibition of split/fountain publishing at C7C Gallery, Nagoya Japan, 2016  
Publications presented on cardboard tunnels  
collaboration with Midori Kadokura, Youhei Shimada, Chris Berthelsen

below:  
Temporary Housing + Shelter  
split/fountain at the Tokyo Art Book Fair, Japan, 2012  
realised by Layla Tweedie-Cullen and Asumi Mizuo  
outdoor furniture for reading and resting, made from easily accessible, locally-sourced materials: bamboo tied with bike inner tubes, cardboard rolls, bucket and rope coil seats

