

## Lee Chun Fung

### ARTIST

I am Lee Chun Fung, artist based in Hong Kong. Now we are in "Woofers Ten" which is a community artspace in Yaumatei in Kowloon.

I do a lot of things. I do my art, sometimes curating, I am also a core member of this artspace "Woofers Ten". I have the duty of many things: the space and holding the group, the collective.

I am involved in many many different kinds of aspects of work. Even sometimes in curating or even education ... and also here in Hong Kong, we have been concerned so much which social issues, so I am involved a lot in social movements as well. I do different aspects of work, but I would still consider myself as an artist.

My training is an artist's training. So, I think this kind of training made me have a stronger sense for how to generate people's perception to think about ... to generate some feeling. In this platform we can communicate with different people. Those skills I learned from art school made me more effective or more capable to communicate in this way I think.

It also made me think art is more like a universal skill. I can apply this thinking in photography, also I can apply this thinking in education or when I participate in a social movement. No one got trained in a social movement, I think. Most people are self-learned. There's maybe no need to train. We learn from experience.

Maybe everyone can be an artist. But you have to be aware that you are doing art.

I think artists are have more sensibility to make people think or to generate dialogue. And being an artist maybe is a life form, naturally. It is a life form you choose. It is more than just the term "I make art" and everything is art and you are an artist. But if you think a life form as an artist, your value and your status are important.

### ARTWORK

Actually, there are many projects because I do performance and others like ... concept, action ... because I think there is an aesthetic when we link different people together. Because there are many people around with an idea and I think art is a good platform to link them. I want to explore the aesthetic like this.

Maybe we can use the term "community activism" as a description of my artistic concern. So, firstly it's the aesthetic about how to link people around and also, it is a community base we want to focus, I want to focus on the community – not the general sense of the public.

Maybe one example is I have been working with the issue of the Tian-an-men incident. I have a project here which is called "Cycling to the square". I want to use the symbol of a bicycle. Because the bicycle to me is a symbol of the students during the Tian-An-Men incident. So, I created a scene of many bicycles cycling inside the city, traveling in the city. It is like restoring a piece of history and remind Hong Kong people of something. A picture.

And at that time – we started in 2010 – we had open calls. Everyone could dress up like the students at that time and we started from Woofers Ten, then we cycled to Victoria Park, we had the candlelight ceremony during the day of June 4 – when Tian-An-Men incident happened. We created the scene of Tian-An-Men incident together with different people.

It is very difficult to say who owns this project etc. But in most of them we don't actually care about this. Because I think artists in Woofers Ten, they find this meaningful to do, so they do it together.

The concept is changing. And this project is also changing. We started in 2010, so it is more than 5 years. Actually, these projects keep changing. And I have been trying to push, everyone can do it. I even put a manual on the internet so that some other artists use this model to do in other places, to do in Hong Kong, island side, some artists even do it in Beijing. This is something like ... called with the Joseph-Beuys term "social sculpture", "social organism". It's something organic. Artists initiate

some technique and then it is changing organically. Everyone is an artist. But they have to be aware, I think.

"Artists" for me, personally, maybe they experiment their life, spend their life trying, exploring something so that it means something.

## PRODUCTION

Many of my works relate to political issues, but that's not necessarily the case for all of them. I am always interested in joining closer distance relationship of this history and the social position, social issues with the distance of art.

And Tian-An-Men incident is an interesting topic actually to go into asking Hong Kong people's identity and the value of democracy. What kind of society Hong Kong people want always brings up many interesting questions. But it has been quite ... actually to talk about Tian-An-Men incident among many different aspects .... No matter the society or even artists. In my generation also not so many people have ... If artists talk about the Tian-An-Men incident in their art, sometimes the imagination is just ... as I first said ... it is a tragedy ...

I want to think about how to relate ... how to relate to the spirit that the students at that time, fighting for the social reform, this spirit for the better social change. Now, as the young people also in Hong Kong, can we echo with this spirit? Among my work, I sometimes relate to this thinking and in "Cycling to the square", this project, I use this symbol of a bicycle because "bicycle" for me is a symbol for the students of that time.

Every student used to have a bicycle from the university to Tian-An-Men square and also a kind of symbol for independence and "you can go everywhere". But when we talk about Tian-An-Men incident, there has always been some negative symbol like tank, soldier, blood. So, I think to use this symbol to discuss this issue and my artistic concern relates to the concept of – as I would say – "community-plus-activism". So, activism is: I have an idea, I want to link other people and maybe we can cooperate and we can do something together, take action.

It is about your life and how it affects the other people your community around. So, your daily life is important and how to make it as kind of activism. This is important. So, Tian-An-Men incident also, I have this concern and how to link up people around and make an action together, make it happen in a community.

And maybe from this small change we form a small community and this small community can affect a bigger community and generate a big discussion.

I make that open call, I think it is actually a re-enactment of the history. In the open call we asked everyone during the day of June 4 – the Tian-An-Men incident anniversary – to dress up like the students of that time and take the bicycle from Woofen Ten to the Victoria Park where the candlelight ceremony is held every year. So, you create a little piece of history in the city and together we go past through the city and remind people of "we still care about this issue" and the spirit of the students at that time.

And also, I would think this, firstly, it's like a collective performance and secondly, I also focus on ... I am concerned about how the participants feel.

Because some tell me after they joined this action, they feel a kind of sense of togetherness, you know, and joining hands together. "What is your experience during this action if you pass through the city, what is the feedback from the normal people, the people on the street? Did they support you or didn't they like you talk about this issue?" It is actually maybe related to the feelings of the students at that time.

Some young people in my generation, maybe they care about this issue, Tian-An-Men incident - although they were quite young at that time, just children of a few years. But they don't have many different ways to participate in memorizing this incident. So, maybe this is one of the platforms that young people can participate in.

## MATERIAL

Most of my work is like action or like concept action so maybe I don't need any physical material. I think it is also important that ... it's a skill that everyone acquire, that everyone can use. In an ideal case, many people can know their skills and join together like they do it by themselves. I just initiate a platform. Social networks are important, actually. Like Facebook. In Woofer Ten, we have already built up a community network, with our neighbourhood. And if we want to have some cooperation with the neighbourhood, we can do it immediately. For example, if you want to interview them, we just go and ask and they trust us, we are doing something not for business purpose. Community network is also a platform that makes it more easy for us to do this kind of projects.

If you organize an action, the material can be everything. If you say "bicycle" this time, next time maybe it's a truck moving around or I have a project with a drinking bar moving around, so we need a bar and a truck and look like a bar and beer and whatever.

But because we are a collective, sometimes this kind of problem can be solved easily. We can find different people with different skills to solve. But of course, we will keep some documentation. We take photos and videos of the whole action. For this kind of art project it is important to keep some documentation. A different way of archive and a different way of documentation like photography, video or sometimes publications, zines.

## MEDIUM

When I was in university, I have been training for thinking something abstract and of how to turn this abstract feeling into an artwork and an art project. But I believe that is not necessarily something physical.

Sometimes I do paintings, drawings, but I think this is also very important, actually, but I also want to explore the possibility to have something non-physical, to create experience inside people, to bring the artistic experience, not just look at the painting but they can feel by themselves directly, create a meaning directly by themselves.

And I think this is because the society does not have this. Some people do this and we say they are artists. Like our neighborhood ... they have this expression. They do something quite interesting. They are just not aware that this thing belongs to the things I mentioned that are important. No matter if we call it art or not.

## PROCESS

At the very beginning, we thought we should restore the scene. At the beginning, we thought "ah, how about taking a bicycle to the neighbourhood?"

I think the process is important for the participants. In "Cycling to the square", this project, I designed some checkpoints during the action. And on different checkpoints there is some local history about the Tian-An-Men incident, hidden inside. So with these checkpoints, we tried to tell the story and we tried to ask different people to tell their story.

The process ... Firstly, we had the open call and we needed someone to design a poster, then apply to the policemen. That was in the first year. But after two years, we tried not to apply to the police because we thought of the possibility that everyone can do this by themselves. Already, actually, after the third year, some artist initiated the same project in a different place in Hong Kong and some other artist initiated one even in China, in Beijing – but secretly.

I think maybe they also think it is an open concept, open source. Everyone can use it. I want to actually become an open artwork. Everyone can learn the skills and start by themselves.

## PRESENTATION

I sometimes exhibit my work at alternative spaces and at some museums. And I do an artist-in-residence. But I think at that time ... most of my time I spend at Woofer Ten. Woofer Ten for me is a platform to have those art projects I want to develop in this community. But after two years, something changed. I think I am more outside this treadmill, walked away from the so-called art world.

I think I have to spend more time in this community. I think it is more important to develop a deeper relationship in this community than with the art world.

Some small action: one photography series, maybe a video. "Cycling to the square" is involved in many different complicated aspects, layers. For example like the manual of this project how to execute it and how people feedback, how things changed. Actually every time after these actions someone writes something on Facebook, some long article reviewing their feelings. It is also very good to become documentation, a whole archive. If I have time – want to put them together, like in a zine. I am more interested in having a small-scale publication. But so far, we have a time limit. Now, maybe we put it on the internet.

I don't think too much about audience. We do a lot in this community but maybe the main audience ... is just half ... 50% of our community.

But I don't know why I am always interested in generating ... making a public discussion.

## INTENTION

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## METHOD

Maybe this kind of practice is difficult to rely on, you know, a typical system. We take it to a bigger public, general public, so if we exhibit in a gallery, it is only taken to a small circle of people. So, if you want to be more free, more autonomous, you firstly need universal skills, you have to do a lot of things by yourself. So far, I think I have to learn many different skills and maybe need your own media, your own platform to put the message outside. Woofer Ten have been quite good I think. Actually, we have quite a good media exposure every time and many media are "good friends" with us (laughs). They are very interested in us. Every time they help me to bring ... They know we do something good and help us spread the message.

## ART

I think art is not something very high or you have to go to art schools or you learn what is art. I taught children some time. I think even small children – 4 or 5 years old – they are very good at expressing themselves, they are very creative. And we meet a lot of neighbourhood around in this Yaumatei community. Some old people, they are so energetic – they never know art in a school or even in the media. They don't have this concept but they do it in this way.

It is simple. It is very simple. If you think of something and you want to express it and you want to communicate with others in whatever way – it is already art. I don't put the definition so hard. Art is – maybe to me – just free expression. It is already important. But of course, apart from free expression, we can have more and more meaning. Maybe we can talk more about deeper content, different strategies, in different ways. But basically, the most important thing is, if people think of something and they want to communicate with others. Because I look at art in a more general sense like ... human ability.

## BIO

\* 1984, Lee Chun Fung is an artist and independent curator based in Hong Kong. He graduated from the Chinese University of Hong Kong's Fine Arts Department in 2007. In his art practice, he addresses the aesthetics of linking strangers together. He is now the Director of the community art space Woofert Ten.

Woofert Ten is a nonprofit art organization funded by the Hong Kong Art Development Council. It is based at Shanghai Street Artspace in Yaumatei, an aging grassroots community and neighbourhood. Woofert Ten aims to introduce a lively conception of contemporary art engaging the community. Therefore, instead of attempting an out-of-place, arty white-cube gallery, Woofert Ten molds itself more like a community centre, a platform for art projects to explore new approaches in bridging the community and art making.

WEB: <http://wooferten.blogspot.com/>

## Credits

The interview was conducted on 27 November 2014 at the art space Woofert Ten in Yaumatei Hong Kong.

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Filmed and recorded by: Banny Ng

Edited by: Paul Barsch

Transcript by: Yvonne Mattern

Produced by: Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK), Connecting Spaces Documents # 5

Special thanks to: Woofert Ten