

# ART + PRACTICE

## TRANSCRIPTION OF ARTIST TALK: SHIRLEY TSE FROM JUNE 8, 2021

**JOSHUA ODUGA:** Hello everyone. Thank you for joining us for this public program, Artist Talk, Shirley Tse. My name is Joshua Oduga and I am the exhibitions and public programs manager at Art and Practice. I'm very excited to welcome you all to this program, which is prerecorded. Today, I welcome Shirley Tse, an artist working in a variety of mediums, including sculpture. Shirley's work is work that I first encountered in my travels as I was traveling to the Venice Biennale. And I'm very excited to welcome her here today to talk a little bit about that work, but really dive into her entire practice as a whole. Shirley, thank you for joining me.

**SHIRLEY TSE:** Thank you, Joshua. Thank you so much for having the opportunity to share my work on the Art + Practice platform.

**ODUGA:** Yeah, we're very excited to have you. I'm very excited over the various conversations that we've been having leading up to this conversation, to share some of the ideas that we've talked about over time, things that are very much ingrained in your practice. So, I think we're going to start off with the little presentation that you have to share with us?

**TSE:** Yes. I'm going to start... I'm going to go share my screen now. Do you see it?

**ODUGA:** Yeah, looks great.

**TSE:** Awesome. So, the slide is organized so that I'm going to focus on the Venice Biennale project, which is actually two exhibitions. The first one is in Venice, which you see here and is called *Stakeholders*. And the second one, which is actually their return show or the homecoming show, took place in Hong Kong in 2020. And the title of that exhibition was called *Stake and Holder*. And in between these two exhibitions, I'm going to show a free body of older work that directly influences this project. And I'm going to go to this next slide, which is a video documentation of the Venice portion.

Okay. I thought the video got you a sense of how to navigate a space in the installation. And also because there's a sound element of the radio, so that you get to hear some of the sample. And well, the show is called *Stakeholders* and I chose that title because it's actually a double meaning, and morphologically, there's a lot of stake-and-holder form in the exhibition, really elongated thing, and then devise the whole thing, so it's stake and holders. And then of course, philosophically, it talks about the concept of stakeholders, which to me, is an alternative to the binary opposition of individual versus collectivity. I often find that this binary between individuals on one hand, or the collective is really limited. And Stakeholder talks about holding stake together, which does have that collectivity. But they also talk about interdependence and doing non-competitive work. And then at the same time, it also emphasized the individual which is taking ownership, having agency. So that, to me, really speaks to the form of togetherness that I want to talk about.

**ODUGA:** Yeah. That's beautiful. And I wanted to just jump in really quickly and give a little bit of an anecdote from when I experienced the work.

**TSE:** Please.

**ODUGA:** The way that it made me think about my own physical presence and things of that nature before I even really took a second to think about the title and all the different connotations that you just very beautifully laid out for everyone tuning in. But I think that that's one of the things that's really great about seeing it in a video. And I really loved that video. It really took me back to that experience of experiencing the work. And we talked a little bit about this when we first started talking to each other, this idea about where you're experiencing a work and how you're experiencing it, is so important. And I think that for me, that's something that I connect with a ton in your work. And I think as we go through this talk, everyone that's tuning in will see other elements of that as well. But go ahead.

**TSE:** Thank you. I'm so glad. Yeah. You are one of the very few people from LA who have seen the show in person, so that's great. And the slide you're seeing right now is the... There's actually two installations in the show. So, there's an outdoor portion and then there's an indoor portion. And Joshua, if you remember, I don't know if you would get a chance to sit in that place and enjoy the piece. And the outdoor piece is called *Play Court* and it's, as you can see, also from the video as well. So, it's like an imaginary game of upstreet badminton. And I laid out, instead of a net, in the middle of the court, I laid out a set of sculptures on stands. So to me, they act like this optical net. And then on both sides, there are badminton rackets, maybe in the video, you might catch a detail of the brand name of the badminton I chose very specifically.

One is called *Victoria*, which is the old name for Hong Kong when it was a British colony. And then the other one is *Imperial*. So also referencing the history, the colonial history of Hong Kong for this special occasion, where I work is in Hong Kong. And the choice of badminton also referred to... Because actually, badminton was invented in colonial India, and then it became really popular in Asia. So, it's like a mixture between the very old form of... what do you call it? Shuttlecock. Using a shuttlecock and then combining that with a racket. And because the theme is about stakeholders, I wanted to address the idea about public domain. So, playing street badminton is a way to reclaim public space. You take up some public space and you start to play a game, which is... It could be improvisational and non-predetermined.

So, I also included amateur radio in *Play Court*. And it's another example of claiming a topic domain, which is not physical space, but air, the airwave, which is our public space. Amateur radio is still being used today, although the frequency that was allowed for civilian uses were limited, because a lot of them have been taken up by government and commercial purposes. So, and it's the form that still allows person-to-person connection without the mediation of government or technology for platforms, is unlike the internet. You don't need a server to communicate with each other. So, I really liked that idea of this sort of unmediated connection between individuals. And I'll talk more about the sculpture in the middle in a second. And so we'll get into more detail about that. And so in the end or piece, it's another installation that actually took up three different rooms.

So as you enter into the space, I don't know if you remember, Joshua, when you enter the space, you actually cannot go through the piece because the work actually blocked that archway. So, you have to back out from the entrance and go from another entrance; so, to your left, to see the piece from the other side. So, that is on purpose as always. The way that I construct my installation, I usually consider methods of sculptural installation. There's always an element of responding to the site. So, it's site-responsive. And I really wanted to play with the architecture of the space. And the title of this piece can be negotiated differently. There's many ways in which you can understand negotiation and negotiating with the space architecturally is definitely one of them.

And what you see here, I just want to describe the material a little bit, is made of carved wood spindles and all the wood spindles were actually done by hand on a lathe. I turned this wood on a lathe, and it's really a laborious process. And they connected together with a 3D-printed joint. And the filaments that I use in the 3D printers are wood, metal, and plastic. So, there's also a variety of 3D-printed material as well. And I'm combining old and new technology in that sense, and also putting together subtractive and additive forms. The carving is taking away material. So, it's subtractive. The 3D-printing is adding material in layers. So, it's additive, in terms of sculptural languages. And there's no fixed configuration of how it should be connected, in terms of an installation.

It's like a game and non-program, although there are sections, there are clusters that I might have pre-planned ahead of time, but then the whole installation, they're all connected as one body. There's no separation. So, I would put certain clusters that's pre-planned and then during the installation, then we'll figure out how to connect these clusters. So, that is the fun part, but also very tricky because there was no glue or nails involved. It's all done by balancing the weight and angles, because the ideas about how differences come together to join the fight against gravity, so to speak, and they have to do it through negotiation.

**ODGUA:** I love that idea and I love how multi-layered all of this is, especially as we get to later parts of this presentation, and you start to talk about the second iteration of this exhibition and how that came to fruition and all of the actual logistics of doing it, which are really interesting, I think for people tuning into this program. But I think it is really important to talk about the difference in materials and all of these different techniques that you're using. And then a little bit how the element of chance plays into all of this as well. I love how you were saying that the things are not connected in a way, and it's all up to gravity and essentially, the team of people that come together to install it with yourself, and all of that. And I think that that is something that comes across by looking at the work, even in photographs, as well. So, it's really interesting to hear you talk more about that. Go ahead.

**TSE:** Thank you. Yeah, because I tried to bring all the different kinds of differences together because I think we counted over 40 different species of wood and there's no stain or paint involved. So, it's all the natural color of the wood's species. And the color is the front, and then the forms we use are also very different. Some of them are representational. A lot of them are representational, but there are quite a number of them also abstract. And then there are objects that we copy from like table legs that are functional, that are architectural, but then some of them are like domestic objects, or there's objects from the kitchen. But then there's also sport objects. So, there's indoor and outdoor going on and then there's musical instruments. And then there's also, in my research, trying to figure out what kind of object has ever been made on a lathe.

I also went to a different culture. It is a really old technology that was used in Northern Africa, and actually I travelled to Morocco to study some of it. And so, I was in Asia. So, you will see there's a combination of different kinds of differences. And I cannot emphasize enough that the individual elements are very different from each other. That is a really important concept because I believe that we all hold an uneven stake. As a metaphor, "Some of us hold more weight than others". So, that is like the concept of bringing it all together.

**ODGUA:** Yeah, definitely.

**TSE:** And I want to say that... Back to the concept of stakeholder, when I was making the work, I knew of this term, and also in my teaching, I actually used this term a lot, but I have to be honest with you. I never really studied the origin of the terms until after I made the work. And then I'm teaching at CalArts. And then I thought, "I should teach a class called *Stakeholders*, which will give me an opportunity to do more research on the concept". And it actually comes from management theory. And it's really fascinating. And I also want to say that sometimes I read theory to be inspired to make work, but sometimes it's the other way around. I will make the work first and then there's a concept that becomes really interesting and important. Then I'll go back and do more research. So, it's like a back-and-forth movement and that's important to me as well.

**ODGUA:** And I think that that's such an important element of this idea that you talk about, in terms of collectivity and things of that nature, right? I talked to so many artists that are research-based and things like that. And more often than not, it does start with the research first, but I always wonder myself, as a person that works in support of artists, "What about the work that you're making and the various different rabbit holes that that can take you down once you create a work?" And you realize that. And I love this idea of having a whole class that you then talk about that because I'm sure, so many different ideas came from your student base, especially at a place like CalArts, in terms of what the term "stakeholder" actually means. Because for me, it brings up all of these like business and finance financial connotations when I think of it, and that's very much built into my own personal experience. You know what I mean?

**TSE:** But Joshua, it's actually much more than that. When it was first written, I guess actually Edward Freeman was not the first one who brought this concept along, but he was the one who summarized it. And actually the main point for him is that it's not just limited to business. It's very important to him. It's actually, come to think of it, published in 1984, it's actually quite radical for him to think that there is actually no difference between things that are within economics or outside of economics.

Because the simplest definition is, "A stakeholder is any group or individual who can affect, or is affected by the chief man of a corporation's purpose". So, whoever or whatever unit or entity that can affect the health of an organization or whatnot. And that is not that it's including both inside and outside and both entities that this economic, business and financial profit. But also the non, the non-one, including [inaudible 00:21:27], environmental, interest groups and whatnot. So, I think that is a really radical concept actually, that they make no differences between, that's not allowing economics to dominate over the other realm. And then also I really liked that he talked about, when there is a conflict, he does not, under the stakeholder theory, it's not considered conflict as much, but it's more considered as an opportunity to review the whole thing all together. So that maybe new opportunities can come up. New value creation can come up. So, it's a real holistic approach to look at something which I quite like.

**ODUGA:** I think that's so radical for the time. Definitely. And it makes me think about this time that we're living in and this idea of like mutual aid. It's something that kept coming up a lot in the past year with the various different social upheavals and things that are happening all over the world. And I think, looking at it from this lens is something that's really interesting and applying art to that is the way I think that people can really get a hold of an idea like this. So, I love that you're exploring this in your art and in your teaching as well.

**TSE:** Thank you. Yeah. I think the... You brought it up, the time we're living indeed, because I think the concept of a stakeholder is really important. All the more important in society where people are

disenfranchised. Being disenfranchised, they don't bear the title of "shareholder", which is not "stakeholder", "shareholder", "voters", or "homeowners". Maybe they can be called "consumer" or "taxpayer". So, "stakeholder" is a default term to remind those in power that these people matter. And at the same time is the term to empower everyone. So, I think that that point is really important. And I remember when the press asked me to give an example, "What do you mean by stakeholder?"

This is back in 2018 before the Biennial. And I was trying to come up with a metaphor to explain the concept of stakeholders. But ever since COVID hit the world, it needs very little explanation. It's so painfully clear to everyone that we are all at stake. And our action and inaction has an effect on others way down the line, even though that they may not be obvious to us in the first place. So, we live in a world of strong second and third order effects.

**ODUGA:** To take it back to your work just really quickly, that's such a delicate process, which is something I've been thinking about a lot. The way that this work is put together and what you're saying about how it's joined and things like that. And even some of the references, thinking about actual sculptural and architectural forms that you're using or furniture and things like that. It's so multi-layered. And it's so much to unpack. Yeah. Go ahead.

**TSE:** Yeah, indeed. So, back to the negotiating difference, I want to say that the theme of the Biennial was, "May You Live In Interesting Times", and it opened in May of 2019 and I will be amiss if I don't mention the protests that broke out in Hong Kong, that actually still last today, but it's been quieted down a little bit. And so it opened in May, and then the protests broke out in Hong Kong in June of 2019.

And I want to say that it created a huge resonance for people who came to visit the Biennial from Hong Kong. And I cannot claim to foresee that happening, because the work, actually, was more of a product of the world in general, than for Hong Kong in particular. Because back in 2018 when I was making the work, I was really talking about the rise of nationalism, fascism, populism, and also a young generation lacking the ability to connect to people who are very different from them. I suppose it might have something to do with the echo chamber effect created by social media. And there's widespread divisiveness everywhere. And that is under those contexts that Negotiated Difference was born.

And then I also want to mention that I was the first female artist to represent Hong Kong in the solo show. So, at the opening for the show, I dedicated my exhibition to all women's sculptors and educators in the world. It is a commitment to these two roles that keep me going in times of difficulty and still is. And I also pay tribute to immigrants, caretakers, student activists, and mental health patients. Mental health patients and these disenfranchised people, particularly need the recognition of them as stakeholders. And women's sculptor and educator describe who I am today and immigrant caretakers, student activists, and mental health patients, or the path that I went through to become who I am today. I mentioned when you walk into one room, you're blocked by the work and then, you have to come out and then enter it from the other room. So, this is actually what you will see from the other room. It's more sparse.

This is one example, in which we can see how the differences come together. For example, you can see that here we got a cue stick, connected to a baseball bat, connected to a flour rolling pin. And then, there's some abstract element here and then this is a prosthetic leg. So, this is sort of my vision of bringing all the differences together. And here is the section that... I just skipped one. Here's a section that has a more color to it and the section is a little bit more abstract and has more of the furniture element to it. And then, you can see that there is actually also a different scale. Some of them are on a smaller scale than others.

**ODGUA:** Yeah, I love the juxtaposition in both. You'll see something that appears in one part of the image and then, you'll see it in a totally different scale and sometimes a totally different color, and all of that. So, it really tasked the viewer with trying to negotiate those differences, I guess I will say. So, it's a really fun game to play when you're viewing the work. And I viewed it alone, but I wonder how my experience would have been if I had been with other individuals and that's a really fun thing to think about, as well. Go ahead.

**TSE:** Yeah, thank you. It was done over a year and a half ago. I had a mental checklist of what kind of differences I want to include in the show. And then, at some point, it became a visual diary. Things happen and then they become part of the work. For example: This section is a gavel and I'm talking about around November of 2018, the Democrat went back to House, so to speak. And then, we got Nancy Pelosi holding the gavel. When you're making certain things, you're so sensitive to them. So, when I saw the gavel, that's when I was like, "Oh, that's made of wood and it looks like it could be turned on."

And then, the next thing I know, I went to [inaudible 00:30:09] a gavel, and that's how this thing was born. But the thing is, now when you look at a gavel, it has a handle and a body, and then, you're supposed to drill a hole into the body, where you can insert the handle, but that is not the logic of Negotiated Differences. The wood actually does not connect to wood directly. It has to be mediated through negotiation of the 3D print joint. And then, you see this portion of the installation was constructed in a way so that these two elements can be visually aligned, even though they are actually not touching, but they are visually aligned. So, it creates a visual illusion of the connection.

This actually speaks to my sculptural language of, often having an element of suspending subjectivity in a way, so that... I think that this show invention comes along, when you are not entirely dependent on your own tastes or preferences, so to speak. So, you allow other things to come along to negotiate with it, to have a convergence of it. So, for example, again this whole configuration... you're only seeing the details, but this whole configuration, no one plans to make it look good, so to speak, but we're trying to find a way for this thing to line up. So, it's fun to play that game.

**ODUGA:** Yeah. And that image of Nancy Pelosi is such an iconic image. I remember the day that it happened and people sending it around. It was such a hilarious moment, I think, in our history. And I think it's really important to talk about this idea in your work, of changing the form and having something look a way that is a little bit off from how you may perceive it. Because, I think that that once again, goes back to this idea of stakeholders and all the various different elements and the people who are coming together to do something. We all perceive things in various different ways, as well. So, I love that you put that in there and also, that these elements outside of your studio practice and these pop cultural references, if you will, also make their way into the work. I think that's really fun.

**TSE:** Yeah, thank you. This image shows you that, from this room connecting you to the other room, there is a hockey stick here and to go along with the story of how it became a visual diary of the process. One day around that time also, winter of 2018, I was watching TV and I saw the Winter Olympic for the first time. We have a United Korean team of women's ice hockey team. And I thought, "What a powerful image," and the next thing I know is I need to make a hockey stick. Actually, that was not quite all [inaudible 00:33:32], because the hockey stick has an area that is more angular. So, we have to do it by hand, carve by hand. And I mentioned we, because I'm not the only one who does the carving. My wonderful assistant, Jin Choi, a former student from [inaudible 00:33:51], also did a lot of the carving also. It's definitely a collaboration in so many different ways.

**ODGUA:** That's great.

**TSE:** And then, this is the section of... That is the cluster that I mentioned earlier. So, this is the Moroccan cluster, because this section actually referenced Moroccan architecture and it has a certain element that needs to line up. Again, this is another example to show you, in order for this particular element to line up together, we have to construct this whole section to make the visual overlap. And so, that is part of the element of that improvised station.

**ODUGA:** Yeah, that's really interesting as well. I was thinking a second ago, when you mentioned about, "A piece of wood can't connect to another piece of wood." And these kinds of rules, if you will, that you have in the forms that you're making. I would imagine that it would be next to impossible to [inaudible 00:34:54] something like that on your own, even with the technology that we have at our disposal nowadays. And I think that's really interesting, because you have so many different types of forms and references that are all coming together to make what you're making, but then in that, you also have a set of rules or a set of things that as an artist, you would like to adhere to. I think that's really interesting. Don't really have anything else other than that, but I just think that it means a lot. I think when an artist is approaching work in that manner.

**TSE:** Thank you for saying that. So, that rule is in my mind. That is how I try to bring different kinds of subjectivity together. The rule, in a way, is a kind of subjectivity, in addition to the choice of a certain function or choice of certain look. And of course, the concept of the whole installation that requires a certain kind of flow and form, as well. And then, I want to talk a little bit about 3D printing as well. So, the 3D file actually was downloaded from the internet from a file that has a creative commons license. That is, you're free to use. And in my mind, this file that's available on the internet is the 21st century ready-made, when you come to think of it. All these files exist on the internet. It's free for you to download and use it. But in a way, the 3D printer is the way to actualize all this ready-made and it's like digital ready-made, that is being actualized by the machine.

So, that's how I see it and I didn't know how to use a 3D printer at all, because of the installation and the concept required and I taught myself. I taught myself within those two, three years, how to download a file, use the software and then, print it. And then, also I'm using a material that's actually considered as more sophisticated than plastic, because it's a composite of wood dust and metal dust. And so, the failure rate was very high and you can see that.

Actually, one day I was just trying to print this connector. I don't know what happened, it shifted. So, this top part is supposed to be right here, but I checked the news the next day. Sometimes, it takes 16 hours to print just one thing. So, I would set the machine and go to bed. And then, I wake up in the morning and I see this and it's like, "Oh my God, did we have an earthquake that night?" But there was no earthquake, but there was some error that the machine had from that [inaudible 00:38:10] me. But then, I really liked the way that it still worked. So, it's just leaving the hanging parts suspended and you really see the process of how this is built by layers. So, in a way, I see that the machine is also trying to be the artist. So, this is responding to what you see, the artist's different way of making and coming together. So, it's not just my taste and the rules, but also the machine, also it's become a part of the artist.

**ODGUA:** Yeah, yeah. I've spent a bunch of time online, looking at all of those open source files and like that, that you can 3D print. And I think it's really interesting, because those things are meant to be as

close and as realistic as possible, right? When people are putting out those 3D prints that you download for free on the internet, and I love this idea of the error, because I'm sure so much error happens, when you're 3D printing things and you're trying out these new skills. The machine's hand as well, being a part of it. I think about that a lot when I deal with artists and work in digital means and things of that nature. And only recently have I seen sculptors really start to talk about this idea. There's only yourself and a few other artists, who are like, "Something is 3D printed and it didn't turn out how the design is meant to be, but this is also a part of the work."

And for you, that's so important. Once again, talking about the themes that you're trying to hit on, but also it's just a really interesting thing to look at in terms of the work itself, because it's very obvious that some things are carved by a human hand and things like that, and you can see that. So, then to be able to see the technology and how the technology shreds this fiber there, or something of that nature, that's just a really great thing to see. And I think for a lot of younger people and younger artists who are experiencing this art, that's a really great thing for them to be exposed to also.

**TSE:** Thank you. Now, I want to go to an older work, that has direct inference to negotiate a difference. In a way I see that negotiate difference is the sequel to this piece that was made back in 2000. That's 20 years apart. It's called *Polymathicstyrene*. Polymathicstyrene is a made up word. You see, I like to play with my title. So, I'm combining polystyrene, which is styrofoam and also, polymath. Polymath is kind of a renaissance person. Someone who has encyclopedic knowledge. So, in a way, very much like Negotiated Difference, this piece... I'm going to quickly go through these images, because in the interest of time. You can see that also in this piece, I'm trying to bring... Also, this is blocking. It was prior to the Negotiate Difference. I was playing with this sort of architectural intervention. So, I bought the passageway between the big room and the smaller room with this piece and that was in there.

There's actually a different installation of the same piece in Versailles. So, as also with the nature of this installation, we configure it in different spaces. And it's made of... I don't remember, maybe 36 to about 40 panels of different lengths, different width and thickness. And also, you can see that again, I'm trying to also bring different kinds of differences together. In this piece, there is an area that's rarely abstract. It's done by using a handheld router, also using a machine that carves on styrofoam. In a way, I see that as a 3D drawing on styrofoam.

**ODUGA:** Yeah, yeah.

**TSE:** Also... Yeah, go ahead.

**ODGUA:** I was going to say, this predates 3D printing, by maybe at least 10 years, if my timeline is correct. In terms of it being something that would be accessible to an artist in their studio maybe, but this is really interesting.

**TSE:** I think it did predate 3D printing, but at that time actually, some people thought that they was done by a CNC machine.-

**ODGUA:** That was going to be my next question.

**TSE:** And a computer control router, but it's not. It's mostly made by hand using a... Like I said, a handheld router. So, I used a lot of [inaudible 00:43:13] to make this form. A router is a pretty specialized



tool to use on wood. You really need to know what to do with it, otherwise you can hurt yourself. You have to work with the grain, but with styrofoam, you don't have to worry about the grain so much, because there's no grain. There's not. Well, in a woodworking term, there's something called a feed.

You don't have to worry about the direction of the feed, because the styrofoam is so yielding. So, in my mind, I can see if this work is sort of me messing with the fodder tools. So, I don't have to conform to going in one direction. I can go back and forth and make rounds and circles. So yeah, that was Polymathicstyrene. And like I said, there was some area that was more abstract and some more representational. And this panel is made after a visit to LegoLand. For example, some are very [inaudible 00:44:26]. Some are modernist and from the same panel, you can... Because this is installed in a circle, so you can read from left to right, or right to left. And from this panel, you can read it as going from order to chaos or chaos to order. It depends on which direction you're going.

And this panel is sort of like a key or the legend. So, it shows you the collection of all the forms that I used to coat with styrofoam. So, that's no mystery to the making of the work. That's another really important language in my sculpture, is that I leave no mystery. So, you know exactly how it's made. And also, I'm talking about using my hand to draw three-dimensionally, but it's not just my hand, it's mediated by this manufacturer item. This manufacturer item has very standardized sizes. So, really likely, again there's sort of suspending my own singular subjectively and then, allowing the machine, the ready-made and the manufacturing form to negotiate with my hand at the same time, to produce this form. So, that part is also really important.

**ODGUA:** Yeah, I love this. I love this idea of you showing how it's made in a way. And I think it's one of those things, where... I always think about certain artists and how their work requires so much time. You can see someone's work in passing or you can encounter a work for a short amount of time, but with some artists, you really need to spend time with the physical work itself. And I think you are making a really strong case for that in a lot of the work that you're making, because like you say, there isn't a lot of mystery.

If you look at the Negotiated Differences work and you spend some time with it, you can start to trace the elements. You will see the bowling pins and the baseball bats and all of these things. And the same thing here, there's references to me that are very futuristic in what you're doing, in this piece, but then, I can see some Baroque things and all of these other various elements that come out in the work. It just means you got to spend some time with it, I think. Which is always an exciting thing for a person like myself, who works in this field. It's like, how do we get people to really be in the space and look at the work and engage with it critically? And you're making a really good case for that.

**TSE:** Thank you, Joshua. You brought up something that is actually really important to both of these work, because I think it's really important to... In both of this work, I tried to make the work so that you have to experience it full time. It's durational. So, your experience of the work is... The work cannot be consumed by one single gaze. You can not just look at it. You can't. You have to use your body and walk through the space and use memory to compose the whole installation in your mind, in order to have the full experience. So, in a way, it's very cinematic and I'm so glad that you brought it up. That's a really important point of the work, as well. And then, while this piece Polymathicstyrene is about bringing differences together and you can actually see it visually too.

So, the kind of differences that I bring together, is artificially put on one single plane. They sort of lay... The differences are laid out side by side. So, unlike Negotiated Differences, with the wood spindle... I don't know, this is getting a little bit of a metaphor. So, they don't have to work together, they just sit

next to each other. So, in a way, that's how I see Negotiated Differences, as a sequel to this piece, because in Negotiated Difference, I really want to make something so that the differences have to work with each other. They don't just simply show up and sit next to each other. They have to work and balance and make something work. And I really want to emphasize that Negotiated Differences is not negotiation of differences. Negotiate Difference is the qualifying word. So, it's a way of qualifying differences as imminent. It's not transcendental.

It's differences are understood and experienced through negotiation. And there's no difference in the sense that a third party, a metaphysical being, or an omniscient narrator deemed these two things different. In the visual entity of each spindle, so to speak, understand and experience how singular is self, through the interaction and action with each other. So, it's not waiting for someone else to define the self. It is self-defining, showing agency. The kind of differences is [inaudible 00:49:54] and since each negotiation is different and hence producing differences at every turn. So, maybe I should flash back an image of that, since I'm actually talking about it.

**ODGUA:** While you do that, I think that the way that you're explaining this, I think is really important. And it really is important to go back and think about it in that manner and think about how much language means to the work that you're doing. In a very important way, I think different people's perception of the language, because once again, I'll go back to this idea of Negotiated Differences or what you were just saying. I could see myself coming to experience this work with someone and us having a little bit of a discussion, about what we perceive and what we think about it. And I think that this is a very logical progression.

I can definitely see how this earlier work led to what you were saying and also, how it would conjure up so many thoughts in your mind as an artist and as a person that's working. I think you mentioned that you worked in mental health care as well, or something like that. I can imagine how all of these experiences will inform your idea of these differences and then, trying to figure it out and applying it to your work in the next phase. I think I can see how all the wood and all of these other different references start to come together.

**TSE:** Thank you. Yeah, because when you understand that difference through the thing next to you, rather than being told, "Why are these two things different?" Then, it's not about putting things into the category of a label. It is through action. It is through negotiation. And it's definitely not, this is a way to avoid being nice, I think, as if there are differences in some sort of natural law. So, when you do that, it's really easy for it to become... To reinforce the already constituted and in our time, tends to serve power. So, that's just my way of trying to emphasize the agency of each entity.

And in the interest of time, I think we should move forward to Playcourt. See, this is an angle to show you the scene of street badminton. And then, I wanted to really talk about this piece. It does have a shuttlecock in Playcourt, which is titled the Shuttlepod, because the shuttlecock, which is a slightly bigger size than a shuttle shuttlecock, is made of cast rubber and vanilla bean pod. And the title is under the *Quantum Shirley* Series, which I will talk about a little later. And very quickly, it refers to my personal family history. My mother's family has contributed to a labor force in the rubber plantation in Malaysia and her cousins' family contribution to the vanilla bean plantation in Tahiti, which belongs to the French.

And when I started the *Quantum Shirley* Series back in 2009, I made a number of different sculpture installations, but at that time, I was really to come up with a sculpture that I would combine the vanilla and rubber, but it took 10 years. Again, for me to find a way to combine rubber and vanilla in this form... And then, they ended up manifesting in the form of a shuttlecock or birdie, which I'm very

pleased with. Because the way that you imagine a shuttlecock going back and forth within the court, it's just like the train route of this colonial product on the map, so to speak. So I really liked the evocative images of it going back and forth, this little train movement. And here's a little bit of a close up, and I'm going to go a little quicker in this slide because we will turn to some of these object sculptures that I'll talk about. And there's a lot of references to movement as well. I use the motorcycle helmet here to suggest a sense of movement.

And since, the sculpture is pretending to be the net of badminton games, so I also put some netting on top of this helmet. And so this is the close-up of the Imperial, if you didn't catch it in the media and then that's the Victoria. And actually some that are, I can't remember. I think there's 14 sculptures involving a play court. And actually four of the sculptures came from another show that I did in 2016, it's called *Lift Me Up So I Can See Better*. It was the star of the Shoshana Wayne Gallery in LA. And in this show, I'm going to show you some, so you can see there's the return of the bleacher in the Venice project and here's another image.

So it's called *Lift Me Up So I Can See Better*. It's actually inspired by an Oscar Wilde book called the *Happy Prince* and *Other Tales*. Not the Little Prince, not the French one, but the Happy Prince, written by Oscar Wilde. And very quickly, it is an allegory about a prince, it's a story it's not real. So a prince, when he was alive, spent all day inside the castle. So he couldn't really see the misery and the poverty of his townspeople. So after he died, the people would try to commemorate him and make him into a statue and would garnish with ruby eyes.

And because it's a statue so high up on a tall column and finally he was able to see the poverty and the misery of his town people. So he asked a bird, a swallow actually, to take out his ruby stone eye and give it to a sick child, and give it to the mother of the sick child to take care of him. And I read this story when I was a little girl. And I think at that time I was very focused on this beautiful ruby stone, then the cute bird and what not but then, as an adult, as an artist, reading this story again, because my niece and nephew were reading and they were all crying because of how sad the Disney story is sad.

And I was like, "Oh my God." As an adult, I'm reading it as, "Oh my God, this is really about the position of seeing." The prince was not able to see before, being cloistered in. But now when he's high up, he's able to see better now. So, the whole show is about navigating different kinds of heights, so that you have different viewpoints. So you can see, this is why I developed the sculptural language or putting anthropomorphic form on a stand that is moveable. So you can adjust it to any height. And then, this picture, the spectator stand is another way to talk about the position of being seen.

So that is where the play court comes from in a way, is a direct lineage to that. And I even use a production stand that can be used on uneven terrains or I just put the book right there, you can see where it comes from. And in this show, there is a piece called *Jade Tongue*, which actually, this is a piece that eventually went to Venice and it's a combination of styrofoam and Jade. And here is a detail. And then there's another piece called *Optic Nerve* and it's a very abstract rendering of an optic nerve. I studied the anatomy of an eye and there's this bundle of neurons inside our eye and that's where this piece is inspired by.

And then on the bleachers, there's a bunch of heads that is made of wire and there's gloss blocks. And actually the late illustrative artist, Miriam Wosk's family donated her studio supplies to CalArts. And then I inherited a box of these broken glass. Actually, I think they're remnants from a glass studio in Murano, Italy. And so I see Miriam Wosk, who by the way, designed the very first cover up in Ms Magazine in the 70's. And then it's just really serendipity, I inherit the glass block from her, which is from

Murano and then in Venice. And then eventually this work when I went back to Venice, so the glass went home in a way.

**ODUGA:** That's really cool.

**TSE:** It's really strange. And then the same show, this is one of my favorite sculptures of all time. It's called, *it's quite simple, it's called Income Inequality*. So basically I made this sculpture using a big piece of paper that has been primed with gesso so it can give you some body and then I crumbled them together. And then it's held together by a real 24K gold bracelet that was given to me by my older sister. I have three other sisters and one brother who all live in Hong Kong. And when I left Hong Kong in the late eighties, early nineties, my oldest sister gave me this jewelry as dowry.

And I thought it was really evocative to use my dowry bracelet to hold this paper, a very fragile ball together.

**ODUGA:** As a first-generation Nigerian American, it conjured so many things for me in my own life.

**TSE:** Yeah, you can relate.

**ODUGA:** And I love this idea of a piece of delicate paper. That's just sewed over. I think that this work, I could see why it is a favorite and I hadn't seen it before this, but it is a favorite of mine now, now that I see it. It's so interesting.

**TSE:** We should move on, but it was so ridiculous, I love it. Okay, so I want to talk a little bit about *Quantum Shirley* before we completely run out of time. So, oh my goodness. Joshua, what do I do?

**ODUGA:** Yeah. Where to begin with this one? Okay. How about I'll help you out a little bit. What are we saying here? Because I know that this work is so much to unpack. After the first time that you mentioned it to me, I went out and explored it and researched it on my own. And I think I still have those tabs open on my computer and I still have some questions in terms of that. So I'd love to start by you just telling me what we're seeing here and then maybe using that-

**TSE:** Oh, yes. That's great. Thank you. What you're seeing here is actually two different works. So in the front is called *Quantum Shirley Series Superposition* and it's made of styrofoam. And I think you can tell the scale by the cloud form on the right, it's sitting on top of the base of a swivel chair. And there's a playing card and the playing cards are about four feet tall, I think. And then on the other side, it's also made of styrofoam, but this time it is painted. I think that might have been one of the only painted styrofoam works I've ever done. I never paint over material, usually. That is like a toy, it's actually a happy meal toy that's been blown up, I don't know, 20 times.

**ODUGA:** Yeah.

**TSE:** And it represents a splash of an ocean. So on one side, the cloud actually represents Hong Kong, where I was born and raised. And then on the other side represents Tahiti. That is the part that I can go into. And then the back on the wall is called *Double Comfort with Soft-Filled Space* and you can see there is a detail. It is made of styrofoam and a sort of honeycomb board. All right, I think I know how to talk

about this. So I will say that, in the early years of my practice, I chose plastic or synthetic polymorph for a really particular reason. And not only for the materiality, you can still see a lot of plastic here by 2009.

But some of it is not plastic like the metal base and the paper and the wood, I mean the cardboard thing. But I chose plastic, not only for the materiality, but it's really important for the concept of plasticity. And also, it's not just about malleability either, but when I talk about plasticity, I was much more interested in the idea of paradoxes, conflict, ambivalence. We have a love, hate relationship to plastic. It's done wonderful things for modern medicine, for hygiene, you can see it with COVID, with aviation and what not.

But it's also, of course this is one thing that we cannot get rid of soon enough so that it does not further degrade our ecosystem.

**ODGUA:** Yeah.

**TSE:** But as I'm doing research on it, I also realize that plastic is not a substance. A lot of people ask me, "Shirley, are you willing to use plastic as a material?" And I say, "No, actually not." I'm much more into the concept of plasticity because plastic is actually not a substance. It's a code, it's a formula, it's an arrangement, it's a syntax. So chemists were able to coax carbon molecules to form irreversible carbon chains that are enormous. So what is synthetic about it, is not the substance.

Because the substance is actually from nature, it's a petroleum derived carbon molecule, right? But it's the arrangement of these molecules that make it plastic. It's the syntax. So-

**ODUGA:** It's human intervention, right?

**TSE:** Exactly. So, by about 2007, a couple of years before that, I had moved away from using plastic exclusively and including all the material. I'm also turning it into a narrative. Because, I think that narrative is one thing that really embodies that plasticity that I just talked about. So depending on how you arrange things and juxtapose the sequence of events, you get a different perception of reality. And so, *Quantum Shirley* series is an ongoing series. It's still going on, I'm still making work for that series.

That allowed me to make work that weaves together personal narrative, quantum theory, trade movement of colonial products, like rubber and vinyl and the Chinese diaspora. And in terms of the personal story, we're running out of time. The short of the long story is that my mom, because of the Chinese diaspora, she's second generation Chinese-Malaysian, born in Malaysia. And her cousin moved further away to look for a job, basically and ended up, her family working in the bean plantations in Tahiti. And her name is Simone, my second cousin. And Simone eventually becomes a toy import merchant.

And she would go to Hong Kong to visit my mom and then also do her business. And then, when I was born, I'm the fourth kid in the family. And she saw my mom struggling financially and she offered to foster me as a baby, but it didn't happen, I got to stay with my family. But my early childhood was all full of this mystery story about my second cousin Simone. I would have left Hong Kong and lived with her. And I always imagined what it was like, had I been adopted by Simone and grown up in Tahiti and speak French instead. It's just a fluke.

**ODUGA:** That's so interesting. Just to jump in really quickly, because I know we want to move it along.

**TSE:** Yeah.

**ODGUA:** I wonder about this. I love this idea of applying this in the realm of quantum physics and speculation and things like that. Because, I feel like so much of the immigrant experience is tied up in that experience. And as a kid, I had those sorts of things where I would get something like a happy middle toy and I would ask my parents, "This says this is made in China. How does that work?" And I think because I was first-generation and because I was thinking about all of these, what ifs, what if I was in the same place as my cousins who lived in Nigeria or lived in another place?

There's so much of that experience, especially here in America, that's tied up in this idea of speculation and tying it to the world of quantum physics and all of that. It's so interesting. And I'm glad that you're still making this work as well, is one of the things that I wanted to say, but go ahead.

**TSE:** Yeah. Indeed, like quantum physics. The thing is, I think the reason why I decided back in 2009, to do the *Quantum Shirley* series, is not only because of my personal story. Because in the end the story is not just about myself, but rather an intersection of larger historical events. Be they political ones or social ones or economic ones and beyond. And I'm also particularly interested in how quantum, maybe according to quantum physics, it's Shirley deep. One Shirley grew up in Tahiti, right?

So I just have no access to Shirley. So the idea of how science is, the quantum physics validate alternate realities, it's just fascinating to me. How it provides validation of that reality.

**ODUGA:** Yeah. And I'm seeing so much how all the things you're thinking about are connected. Because I wonder and it looks like from this work, as I'm viewing it, this can be in different configurations. If I'm wrong, you can move this around or is it always shown in this manner?

**TSE:** It could. I'm just making more work to address, you'll see it as you move along. But I just want to say one last thing about quantum physics. The reason why I use the playing card is, the scientist usually, when they explain quantum physics, they will use the idea of a card. If it falls it is actually a fall on both sides. It's called a collapse of the wave function, which basically means that things exist in multiple states, but then collapse into one state when observed. That's why you're not able to see the other side. But this slide does not show you, on the other side it's actually a heart eight. It's a diamond eight.

I didn't have a detail of that. So to answer your question, it's the moving things around, actually that are more work that may under the series. For example, this piece is called *Flotsam and Webs*. And then you can see it is made of expanded foam that in the process, when the foam expands, I put the laser cut wood veneer over it so that the foam popped up through the canal. And it laid out a map of the Quantum Shirley story that I just explained to you with the Chinese diaspora. And then some of the work on the *Quantum Shirley* series is not exactly directly related to my personal family history.

But more to the concept of translation of going from one state to another, for example, this is called *Squaring the Circle* in 2010. Is about an ancient mathematical riddle of how a mathematician tried to square a circle to translate the circle into a square and vice-a-versa and they got pi, 3.14. So you can never really... We can translate something fully. So under the *Quantum Shirley* series, I'm trying to address different notions of interconnection, network translation, displacement and so on and so forth. So that's how. And then also, I think we just see this piece at the armory.

**ODGUA:** I did, yeah. During this time, I was studying letterpress at the armory, during this time. Just very much dipping my toe into the art world and thinking about all the various different things that that entails. And I did get to see this piece and the larger show that it was a part of.

**TSE:** All right. So besides sculpture, I also lecture, I consider this a lecture performance under the *Quantum Shirley* series. And I don't have a slide of it, but in this performance, I actually show a video that is purportedly made by the other Shirley from Tahiti. And I'm also using this interesting shape chalkboard that is an artwork by a former Cal Art student, Sam Sermiker, actually he's sitting right there. And so that's another form of collaboration. And then we have, I'm going to skip over this piece because we run out of time. So you can see I'm making work that addresses, for example, this is about different forms of connection, the sort of network.

And I'm going to jump to the Hong Kong part now. So, after the Venice went out, the piece, because it's hosted by Hong Kong, I usually do a return or renew show. And then in a way there's that homecoming show for Hong Kong. But since I don't live there anymore, it's a little bit strange to talk about homecoming. So this show was installed at the M+ Pavilion because the organizing unit from Hong Kong is the M+ Museum. And you can see in this iteration, that it's actually very different. There are elements that are more specific because I wanted to adjust the architecture of the space again, for example.

And so I made this section to, make the spindle to climb the ceiling then go around the duct and then so to speak. And here's another view of the installation, that hug around that pillar and this is the details of how it goes up the ceiling. And this part actually is very planned because there's no way to improvise on the ceiling and we need to measure it and find the correct shape to go around those ducts. But I also liked the position of some areas that's totally planned and in some areas totally improvised.

**ODGUA:** Yeah.

**TSE:** That is a negotiated difference. Do you think we have time to show maybe just two minutes of the process of the remote installation?

**ODUGA:** Yeah, I think that would be really important. And I was going to just-

**TSE:** Yeah. Okay.

**ODUGA:** To lead up to that. I was going to say, I love that you revised how this was shown. And I think we should discuss a little bit briefly before you jump into the video, how that all happened because it happened in the past year and this was on view most of last year, correct?

**TSE:** Yeah. Okay. Yes, that's right. So we planned for the show, actually I don't even remember now. I don't even remember because the opening day was shipped so many times. I think it was supposed to open in May, if I remember correctly. And of course COVID had in Asia in January and in America, in March. So we postponed the show to July and I was supposed to go to Hong Kong to install, of course using the help of the install team. But we were on a holding pattern since the beginning of 2020 because of COVID. So we waited and saw.

And then when it just got worse and worse in the US and all, excellent Hong Kong got better. I think they opened up a little bit.

**ODUGA:** Yeah.

**TSE:** But then they went back with the second wave. Anyway, we were in a holding pattern. And so I think sometime in, I can't even remember, February or March we decided this is not going to... No one will be able to travel, but we wanted the show to go on. And so indeed the shipment of the work was returned, it went to Hong Kong from Italy and the work is already there. But me and the curator, Christina Lee, won't be able to travel to Hong Kong. And so we had many discussions and we will aim to do it remotely. Actually, if the work is totally preplanned, it wouldn't be a problem for a museum like the M+. Their totally capable-

**ODUGA:** Yeah.

**TSE:** Of installing something according to instruction. But the nature of this piece is, there's so much improvisation going on. So they were a little hesitant in how we do this? Because, I think as proprietors, they really want to respect the work and I don't how much they will allow themselves to improvise. So I have to go through a lot of training session discussion, a lot of Zoom.

**ODUGA:** I was thinking about that when I asked if you could do this. I was like-

**TSE:** I have to encourage them.

**ODUGA:** She may be tired of Zoom as a professor and as a person that installed a major exhibition in Hong Kong remotely, and I think the video clip that we're going to show.

**TSE:** Yeah, let's do it. Let's do it.

**ODUGA:** Let's jump into it.

**SPEAKER 1:** They are seeing you in the other cameras.

**SPEAKER 2:** Oh gosh. I don't know which angle, they can just spy on us.

**SPEAKER 1:** They see all angles.

**SPEAKER 2:** I know. It's like God's eyes.

**SPEAKER 1:** [foreign language 01:22:22]

**SPEAKER 2:** Kind of open towards our left when you are facing.

**SPEAKER 3:** Yup.

**SPEAKER 1:** I see. Okay.

**TSE:** [foreign language 01:23:04]



**SPEAKER 1:** This connector should be right above this angle. So it should come up here. Can you see the green line? Maggie has another option. She has another view.

**TSE:** But you can see it from a different angle. This is the font. This is blocking. [foreign language 01:23:35].

**SPEAKER 1:** Five steps.

**TSE:** It looks good.

**SPEAKER 2:** The table is looking great.

**TSE:** I'm glad you think so.

**SPEAKER 2:** It's got such a presence. You walk in, you're like, "Oh my God." It's really great.

**TSE:** Yeah.

**SPEAKER 3:** You want to talk before 7:30 or the next day? Just let me know.

**TSE:** Sounds great.

**SPEAKER 3:** Okay.

**TSE:** Jin, don't stay up too late please.

**JIN:** Yep, okay.

**SPEAKER 3:** Alright.

**TSE:** All right, goodnight, bye.

**SPEAKER 3:** Goodnight. We're catching up with what we originally wanted to do. Today, things went really quick. I mean, yesterday with the cube, it was understandably much more complicated and exhausting. All parties were involved to really levitate this cube on the side which at the end worked out.

**SPEAKER 4:** It's just looking amazing. This is our new world, no? I mean, the installation so far is fascinating. And the use of space, superb. I'm just thrilled, really thrilled.

**TSE:** I am so glad to hear. It's completely different from Venice. It's so different. In Venice, it was very low. [crosstalk 01:25:21] I really accentuate the architecture of this space. Lastly, look at the architecture of this space before we say goodbye.

**SPEAKER 4:** That's right. It is true.

**SPEAKER 5:** [foreign language 01:25:33].

**TSE:** [foreign language 01:25:35]

**SPEAKER 1:** So basically there are like four legs now.

**TSE:** So I think you get the idea. So the very last bit is interesting because [inaudible 01:25:36] or the installation team, they're actually giving me their improvisation idea. So I didn't do that session, they did it. But then we do a lot of back and forth and help them out. It's a little bit triggering because there was so much work.

**ODUGA:** I was going to ask. I was going to [inaudible 01:26:48]. Looking at this, it's so exciting and it's such a fun thing. It's like so many people come into our practice and they ask me questions about how things are done and how the art gets hung. And I feel like this is a really great example to show people of what happens, even though it's so far outside of the norm, you being on a zoom call and doing all of this. But I think it's amazing to see because for one, the multi languages that are being used and everything that's happening together to make it work, you know what I mean? Which it's a beautiful thing to see, but it's also such a daunting task to have to put on. And also your studio assistant, who's the person I'm familiar with his art and his practice outside of this conversation as well.

So it's really interesting to see, as an artist, how much you give up, how much you're willing to engage with something like this. Cause I know artists that are at the level that you are, that won't take this sort of thing where they're just like, "I don't want to deal with that. I'm not going to install remotely or anything like that." And then I think one thing I will act for the team that's working on this, for the preparators, for the installation team, everyone, this is such a great experience for them to be a part of.

I do so much stuff like this in my job, working with artists and I'm learning things all the time, but never do people give up the opportunity for them to say "We need to improvise and you tell me how you might want this to look in your space" and things like that. I think you didn't perceive that this was going to happen. I imagined, but that's such a beautiful part of this whole idea of stakeholders and the various things that come together. I think that that's an unexpected element of this presentation while I'm sure it wasn't the same for you to deal with it. It's great.

**TSE:** Yeah. I mean, that's been the title of this particular, this installation, Negotiated Differences definitely has become a running joke. Trust me [inaudible 01:28:44]. Not only the different languages spoken between the Chinese and the English, but also the time difference. Now I'm in LA, the curator Christina Li in Amsterdam, like Europe time and then the Hong Kong time. And then at one point when we were involving someone in New York, it was just really crazy. I was up at like wee hours in the middle of night just doing this. But then I would say that is actually what makes this work and makes sense is because there is actually a built in, unplanned, and non predetermined nature of the installation. I mean, improvisation is built-in in the work. So the difference was I was going to go there and then sort of be the leader or the orchestrator, the conductor.

I was going to be like a little bit of the conductor of the improvisation, but in this situation I was not able to be there, but still again, because improvisation is built in the work. It's not like I'm changing the work or the installations already there. So it's actually made it possible to do remote installation because I build in the improvisation into the process to start with. So it would actually be that much of a struggle to make the decision to do it remotely because I thought I'll be like, "well, it's meant to be

improvised anyway. So you don't really need me there. You know, I can give you guidelines and stuff. So." So it's actually worked, maybe with just more about the day to day pragmatic thing that is really exhausting. For example, this. This image I'm showing you, I'm not really good at doing 3D modeling on the computer.

So there was a time when I needed to tell them that it might look better if you tweak the angle of a certain element. So it was not able to show. It takes so long to describe a little tiny movement for this platform. This online platform. I think that is how I find out the difference between analog and digital, because certain things, if you are in there in space with your own body, it only takes two seconds to do it. But to communicate and have someone do it, it will take 15 minutes [crosstalk 01:31:30] exactly.

**ODUGA:** Right. To render it on the computer, to do AutoCAD, all of those things are so time consuming.

**TSE:** Yeah. I actually am not really good at it. It will take me too long to even use AutoCAD. So I ended up cutting a piece of paper sculpture and then held it with a tweezer in front of a photograph that I took from their live camera. And then show them. Give them a video tutorial or you can turn it this way and see how it looks. This part is almost like an artwork itself, do you know what I mean?

**ODUGA:** The documentation of the process is just as much. And I feel like that's not always something that every artist... We don't need to see that for every artist and the way that they work. But I think for your work, it's so interesting, especially in terms of the different hands and things that come into making it, which is a thing to think about when you think about a sculptor and people that work in the mediums that you work in. But I think the documentation, that's why I love this video. And I had a chance to see this video before I actually met you. And I spoke to you and I was so excited about it because I worked so closely and I could see myself having to do something like this, but then also this idea of the collectivity, all the people coming together, it's just really great.

**TSE:** Yeah. Thank you. I'm so glad you enjoyed it. The video is available on YouTube. If you search the M Plus channel, it will be in there as "Agency in Practice." And it's a great title.

I just want to show you that even for Negotiated Differences, when I went to Hong Kong, it was expanded. We added more spindles. And then we added something that is more site-specific or site responsive. For example, because it was in Hong Kong and there was such an eating culture there. I thought we need a table and then we need to adjust the idea of how the community comes together, when they honor around the table and eating and sharing food. So we craft soy sauce, bottles, and tea cups. And we put on top of this abstract table form. And then also want to show this barricade because like by 2020, Hong Kong has already been transformed in the recent protest movement. And if you look at the everyday street scene, there's a barricade being mingled. So I wanted to include that as well.

**ODGUA:** Yeah. I think the timely nature of so much of the work that you do is so important. I remember hearing and watching the student uprisings that were happening in Hong Kong before COVID was a thing here. And it felt like those two things, while they were explicitly tied together, in my mind, I'm always going to look back at those times and think about it as well. So I love that you put those elements into this work. And I think in the work that you're doing as it continues to grow, it's pulling elements from the current events, as well as something that's really interesting.

**TSE:** Yeah. I mean, it is, again, adhering to the logic of the work, just quite like the way that I included Nancy Pelosi gavel and the North Korean. I mean, let's just say unified Korean teams are hockey sticks so that's what's going on in Hong Kong, I think that is part of Negotiated Differences to include those scenes as well. And there's also... they use, what do you call those things? Traffic cone to extinguish the tear gas. So we also included a traffic cone and the piece. And then the police are in this. The Hong Kong iteration has become deconstructed. Because Hong Kong is going through so much upheaval. So I wanted *Play Court*. No Longer is a scene that is ready to be played but it's like a deconstructed song that you don't quite know whether the game is already over, that people are putting away equipment or the game is about to begin that we were getting ready for it.

So I like for it to have this sort of ambivalence state, and there is also the amateur radio component in the Hong Kong part. Actually we added even more antennas to address the outdoor space. And here is the deconstructed look of Play Court in Hong Kong. And then you can see through the window, there is a multiple antenna and OSI. Actually there is. And then the Shuttle Pod Come Back. And I have a new sculpture for Play Court as well. That's the safety head piece. And this is called *Zip Tie Head* that is made of a bundle up with zip tie. The stronger it is if you interconnect almost like a Venn Diagram for zip tie to tie together. And zip ties, another thing you see in the street scene, Hong Kong. And then this piece is called *Emulsion Not Solution*. Actually, it was already in the Venice iteration.

And I can show you a detail of it. And it's made of the fail prints from Negotiated Differences. That's right. A lot of the 3D printing has gone beyond usability. I was not able to use it to connect. So I melded them together to form this mask and then installed it on top of another radio antenna, but this one is not functional. It's got Emulsion Not Solution. I just want to say that it also addressed the similar Negotiated Differences concept because I believe two distinct things, for example, like oil and vinegar, can come together, holding each other in suspension, as in Emulsion, like a salad dressing, without having to be dissolved into one solution. That's a really important concept as well. There's a way to connect across differences yet maintain agency for each individual entity without rendering everything into a uniformity. So that is the thing, the message.

**ODUGA:** It's such a great concept for people to think about during this time.

**TSE:** Yeah. I think that ends. We get to the end of the slide show, Joshua.

**ODUGA:** Oh, that's great. That's great. I feel like that's a really great place to really end it in terms of what you're talking about. It's like a thesis to your whole practice, in a sense, even looking back to those *Quantum Shirley* works and those works that are referential to your history and your personal experience in some way or another, it pulls from so many elements and it pulls from so many things. So first of all, thank you for sharing so much about your practice and about your work. I'm really excited to see where you take these ideas in the future. I think, getting to the level of presenting as the first woman representing Hong Kong at the Venice Biennale, it really is only the beginning of what you can start to do and how you can start to apply these concepts. That's why I really loved everything that you've shown from the M Plus version of the work. It's just all really exciting to me. So thank you again for sharing so much about your practice and about everything. Really looking forward to seeing more.

**TSE:** You're so welcome. It's been a pleasure. I don't know. I just want to quickly add this point that the remote installation and then going for COVID is a real challenge, but also back to the stakeholder theory, it's not necessarily a conflict, but it could be an opportunity to create new value. So in the world break,

this reset, I'm also thinking about the future and how, even though I was not able to go to Hong Kong and install it. I think the plus side is we save some greenhouse gas emission by not traveling so I think that's [inaudible 01:41:09] cost to do. So moving into the future, I think the next challenge is to think about the idea of sustainability. So that will be something that I will carry on the concept of stakeholder and move towards in that direction.

**ODUGA:** Yeah. And I think so many things that add encompasses, right? Like, I love that you mentioned this idea of travel and things of that nature. I think about that a ton, inviting artists to do things and do we want to put people on a plane and have them come out to Los Angeles to do something that only touches a small amount of people or things of that nature. And I think you've set a really great system for yourself as an artist to think about that. And your studio practice as you rehash old elements and reuse them in a way that is actually it services the ideas that you're trying to get across as well.

But then in your studio practice the materials that you use and create new work, we talked about that briefly in the conversations that we were having, that you're mentioning, in terms of making new work, do you want to acquire new materials or new things or use what's already there? I think that's a really important thing for people to think of and think about this idea of the stake that we all hold in our environment and the various careers and things that we have. So I really appreciate you adding that towards the end of this talk, because they did such an important thing to think about.

**TSE:** Yeah, absolutely. I think on many different levels... Some people asked me, "What is the new normal?," I don't know, I don't have an answer to it, but I know this must be all normal so to speak is not very sustainable. Both in terms of the element, the use of material, the consumerist attitude, disposable culture, and air travel, you name it. The use of material. And also the pacing, the timing, we churn out so many exhibitions in such a small amount of time, these days for all the art fairs and buying them and so forth. So it's a good time to slow down a bit and then think about if that is the kind of pacing we all want as artists. So a lot to think about.

**ODUGA:** Yeah, and I think also it's one of those things that even if we're all thinking about it on our own, it comes to a level of where you need to come together. You need to have various different perspectives and all of those things just to touch on your ideas of collectivity and all of that stuff and how important it is. Cause I'm thinking about these things so much, sustainability and things like that. And it really only starts to become something that's concrete to me until I start to talk to people like yourself when I talk to artists and I talk to people and they're thinking about the various different ways that they're applying it in their work both personally and professionally, I think it's the thing that we all need, is to come together. And I just want to say thank you again for making work that advocates for that sort of thing, that advocates for people to come together and think about these ideas. Not only through their own lens. Think about it through other people's lenses and things like that. So thanks again.

**TSE:** The pleasure's all mine. Thank you for creating the space for us to have this conversation. I really enjoyed it. Thank you.