



WIRES

12 April - 5 May 2012
Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore
Earl Lu Gallery

Wires

Dr Charles Merewether

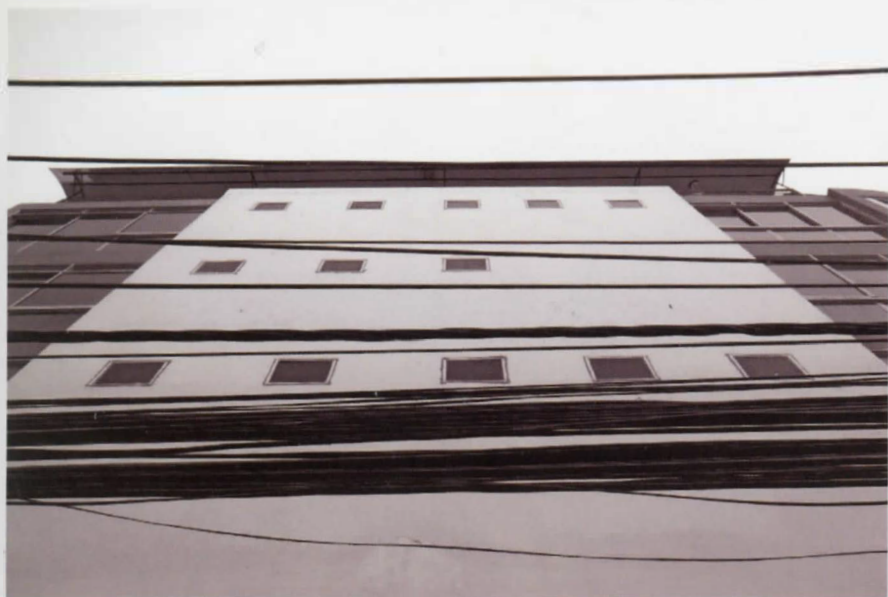
Wires surround us, we live amidst them. Sometimes they are embedded in the fabric of our built structures, other times visible. There was a time when this was not the case and we lived without these lines of energy that provided artificial light and a means of communication with other people within our immediate proximity. Nowadays, too they are being buried under the surface of the earth, hidden from view to safeguard them and ourselves as much as conceal the trappings of a congested urban fabric.

The Singaporean photojournalist Chia Ming Chien has created a series of photographs 'Wires' that looks at the streets of Singapore and other cities in Asia, capturing the maze of wires that moves back and forth across the roadways of streets and roads. These wires become a form of connecting thread both in a real sense and symbolically. They are visible yet their purpose is invisible to the eye. What is distinctive about the photographs is the starkness of their portrayal, their utterly mundane character, raw patterns of lines and counterpoint to other dimensions of the street and space across which they pass. The photographs of wires are portrayed from different angles. No longer are they seen only as hovering above us as we walk along the street. Rather, he photographs them directly above, parallel or horizontally. They are seen straddling spaces between buildings or close up, densely gathered together blocking the view of the street or space or against an adjoining building block, crisscrossing the sky or floating at an apparent distance across the open sky with the clouds as its backdrop.

There is a strange beauty that is wrought from the image of wires littering the urban landscape. This approach recalls the age of industrialization and an aesthetic of industrial beauty whereby such machine-made objects and forms symbolized a triumph of man over nature. The telephone becomes the machine that carries a disembodied voice speaking to another person linking one world to another. As did the car and even the television aerial, such images became the symbol of modernization and, in turn, the subject of art.

These subjects became the object of photography and film that represented achievements of the industrial era and contributed to shaping the character of modernization. Such material abstraction recalls the moment of the Nineteen Twenties and the filmic and photographic practice of the great Russian experimenters Dziga Vertov, El Lissitzky, Alexander Rodchenko alongside their German counterparts, especially at the Bauhaus School and work of Lázló Moholy-Nagy and Hans Richter.

However, Ming Chien's work does not contain the utopian impulse of that era. Perhaps, he is closer in spirit to the photographers of Japan during the Nineteen Fifties and Sixties. Not simply did they capture the birth of the modern industrial city but with it the advent of a brutal modernization in all walks of life. Wires is a documentation of the rawness and brutality of the cityscape. As a photojournalist, Ming Chien has produced a contemporary form of the industrial aesthetic that belongs to the era of modernization which is still going on in the cities of Asia.



Top: Wires & People #1 (2010)
Bottom: Chaos - The Beginning (2009)

Cover: Wires - Highway #1 (2010)

Artist Statement

My artistic objective is to question what beauty we miss in the mundane landscape of everyday life. What does a person need to change in their way of being to see beauty where previously they saw ugliness? Which begs the question: Do we preserve something because it is beautiful? How does perception of beauty factor in urban planning – do we preserve these wires, a kampong of atap houses?

About the Artist

Chia Ming Chien's professional career has been in the media & communications industry, primarily as a journalist, creative director and copywriter. Specialising in available light photography, his focus is on documentary photography (photo-journalism, street photography), architecture, musicians, and art photography. He graduated from Murdoch University with a B.A. in Theories of Consciousness.

Ming Chien's photographs have appeared in newspapers, international magazines, corporate brochures and advertisements. Recently, National Geographic Magazine published a photograph of his as a double-page spread and lead image for a feature story; this photograph was also selected for its gallery - Best of January 2012.

Ming Chien lives and works in Singapore.

www.HumbleRooster.com

The Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore (ICAS) is the curatorial division of LASALLE College of the Arts. It runs seven galleries, comprising some 1,500 square meters of gallery spaces dedicated to exploring new and experimental art across the Fine Arts, Design, Media Practices and Performing Arts. Its programme focuses on showcasing international, Asian, Southeast Asian and local contemporary arts. Its outreach programme includes regular publications, seminars and symposiums, visiting artists talks and events of contemporary performance, installation, design and music/sound practices. The ICAS is committed to providing a cultural and educational tool for students and the Singaporean audiences to advance their knowledge and appreciation of the contemporary local, regional and international arts, that is not otherwise available in Singapore today.



**INSTITUTE OF
CONTEMPORARY ARTS**
s i n g a p o r e

1 McNally Street, Singapore 187940

Tel: +65 6496 5075

Email: icas@lasalle.edu.sg

www.lasalle.edu.sg

www.facebook.com/ICASgalleries