

RTSBS Printed Matter- raw transcription

WY= Wen-You Cai

LZ = Lu Zhang

TS = Tim Simonds

TS: I'm Tim, I'm an artist who's worked with Wen-You, and Lu.

LZ: We've both worked together.

TS: We are going to talk through two books that will be released at Printed Matter. One is *When You Make No Art*. The second is newer in some ways, older in other ways, *Rooster, Tiger, Sheep*, by Snake, which is a book of photos in concert with an exhibition that opened in October in Macau, and is still on view. We will talk about these two books, then we will extend that into the collaboration that we have done together, and also the space *Special Special* that Wen-You runs. I hope that we can get to a point where we can bring some context to what *Special Special*'s curatorial project. Wen-You, can you start by talking about this book?

WY: Thank you Tim for your wonderful introduction, thank you all for joining us today to talk about our projects and our shared collaborations, and how collaboration is a big part of my practice. We decided to mash the titles of the two books together, just half an hour ago in our conversation. You will understand why as we continue.

First we will go through the photo book, *Rooster, Tiger, Sheep*, by Snake. This is a recent release of photographs collected over twelve years, that I've taken of three members of my family. Rooster is my father, tiger is my mum, and sheep is my sister, and snake is myself. They are taken from 2006 and 2018. The photos are currently being exhibited at MGM Cotai in Macau, inside a hotel and casino that has an arts and culture program. They've invited me to do a photography exhibition there, on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Macau handover back to China. What drew me to this concept is that I've always been drawn to photography from a young age, but I wasn't able to be comfortable in front of the camera for a long time. Over the years, as I kept taking photos of my family, I saw them as very photogenic. So it's an investigation of my photogenic family, and trying to understand what that means from behind the lens. As a family, we travelled around the world together, and I liked to catch candid moments. And there's captions of little stories behind the photographs and vignettes.

This is on Chinese New Year in 2014. Throughout the photographs, there are moments that are more performative, and ones that are more candid. This one is a family funeral. I like to capture the environment as things occur. As we dressed in funerary costumes for my great-grand-mother's funeral, there are little children that are going to the swimming pool in similar outfits and colors. These are more performative moments, but I'm mostly just capturing my family's natural state, of the play. Throughout the photos, you see my sister, who's 13 years

younger than me, grow up in front of the camera. My parents look more or less the same, but my sister becomes a timestamp. The book is in chronological order, there's also artistic elements of my father, who's an artist, and my sister, who's also cultivating her artistic side, and how that plays out in the dynamic of the family. And my family's an artistic family.

Through the collection, I'm not shown in any of the images, except this one, where you can see me in the flash, and in another one, where you see my leg. I wanted to make myself not present, but I am also present in the composition, my participation, and the interaction between the family members. This is the exhibition in Macau, I wanted to display it in a salon style manner, against blue walls. Because it's not a traditional gallery space, it's at a casino, in a space that used to be a jewelry store. In order to house these works, which are very intimate, I wanted people to come in and experience the rigor of memory in a way that I see them. There are some that are chronological, but there are also mish-mashes of time. And this is my family looking at the photographs.

There are also moments of our family visits in artistic environments. This is taken at the Uffizi Gallery, and we are all nurtured and cultivated by the art that is surrounding us, as well as creating art at the same time. In the exhibition at Macau, this photograph is displayed in a lightbox in front of the casino entrance, so framing the image in a completely out-of-context environment. I was interested in presenting art in an environment that's not for people who are there to look at art. I wanted to make art accessible to everybody. So for people who are there to gamble, on vacation, or shopping, I wanted them to come and see intimate moments of our family. So what's really exciting about is that a lot of the people who came and see the show were usually on solo trips, completely un-family related trips, but they saw their own families in the exhibition.

Now we move to *When We Make No Art*.

TS: Let me ask you. This is published in 2019, and *When We Make No Art* was originally published in Chinese in 2015.

WY: I had written it from 2012 to 2014, right after I graduated college. The English version was produced in 2016. It was originally in a limited edition of 300 printed in yellow. Thanks to Printed Matter, I had sold out of the yellow copy. So I've re-editioned them in green.

TS: Before we go three years back in time. One simple question to ask is why you choose to refer to your family members by the zodiac sign. I don't know if it's related to not wanting to show yourself in the photographs. Is there a connection between the two? And how do you think about the zodiac names?

WY: I wanted this to be relatable to many people. Coming from a Chinese family, a lot of Chinese people ask you which animal are you, upon introduction. I wanted the book to be not so much about who my family is, I wanted the photographs to demonstrate a family of four people,

one of them unseen, and show how we interact with each other. Another element to the zodiac is also that a lot of people like to instill characteristics into zodiac signs, like horoscopes. There are different associations with each animal. I was hoping by naming my family after zodiac animals, that it would be more accessible, and that it would keep people guessing, and create a dialogue, in which they might not know who this person is previously, but associate them with their zodiac traits and understand them.

LZ: I have a related question. The whole story in the book...The tiger is the mom, the rooster is the father. How do you see yourself within those relationships?

WY: There are little stories attached to the photographs. But I don't use the individuals' names, I use the animals. In some ways, people can guess based on that. In the beginning, it can be unclear. And I do instill a family hierarchy in the beginning, by calling my father as rooster, my mother as tiger, and my younger sister as sheep. But as you look through the book, the hierarchy gradually disappears, and we are just representing animals in the Chinese zodiac. I'm trying to break free of the expectations that people have of the animals, and especially when they see this book and recognize my father as a famous artist. These photographs depict a completely different aspect than what people may originally have thought.

TS: And by expectations, you mean the image through which your family would have been known otherwise?

WY: I wanted the book to be mainly about a family dynamic, and truthfully show candid moments in our family that people might not otherwise now. We are very humorous, we travel a lot, and are very close. From the perspective of how someone might perceive a famous artist, or our lifestyle.

LZ: I often don't see you in the photographs, you appear only in the flash in the book's cover photo. I'm very curious about how you discovered yourself through this process.

WY: That's a good question. In both this book, and also in *When You Make No Art*, it's about trying to figure out where my place is within our family structure. In life, we are always trying to do that regardless. Our family is a big part of what shapes us in our day to day. These two books stem through a long period of time: *Rooster, Tiger, Sheep, By Snake* spans 12 years, and *When You Make No Art* spans my upbringing until I was 24. It's an investigation of who I am, and each photograph depicts moments of happiness, sadness, and other types of information.

LZ: Why did you choose photography?

WY: I chose photography because I can't draw. I like to use something that's instantaneous. Most of these were taken with a point-and-shoot camera. I wanted to do something that was quick. Most of them were film too, as it's a format that creates an object, as opposed to digital

photography, where I often lose track of where the files go. Film is more artistic in quality. So I gravitated towards photography as an instant way to make art, as a reluctant artist, as I say in my bio.

TS: That seems to be the perfect transition to talk about *When You Make No Art*. At the end of the book, you have this realization that maybe you are a reluctant artist. Can you expand on that?

WY: WYMNA is a book of different stories of my upbringing relating to art, and also not relating to art. It's about my family, my education in art school, growing up in general, and trying to find a sense of purpose. This photograph was taken when I was 5 years old. I had an album back in 1995, and each roll would be printed. I would pick a photo from each roll. I was working with an artist who wanted to capture the world from a child's eyes. She gave me film and processed it for me. I would also write captions for them. When I was writing the book, I went back to this photo and found it very interesting. This is a project that my father did, *Century of Mushroom Cloud*. It's a photo of him igniting a mushroom cloud out of his hand. In the real image that he used, it didn't show the ladder. But at 5 years old, I took a photo of the setup behind-the-scene, which broke the illusion of the image. I noticed later on that I took a selfie at the same spot. It's also interesting because the Twin Towers still existed in the back, it dates the image and stamps myself in the context of history.

TS: Can you speak to how the context of the images in terms of the book?

WY: I don't really have one answer to that. I think the context is that people can enter into reading this book, and perhaps understand the perspective I'm writing from, which is that at the age of 5, I did create something artistic, and it was the beginning of my artmaking. From there, I kept walking on a path that deviated from artmaking, but kept coming back to it.

LZ: I noticed that the title of the first chapter is that *Museums Are An Awfully Lonely Place to Grow Up*. How would you describe the relationship you have to museums, art, and artmaking? Why are museums so awful

WY: It's not awful. It's just an awfully lonely place. It added to my sensibilities. Today, I operate a storefront space called *Special Special*. And it's a shop and gallery, and I work with a lot of artists. My upbringing of being in museums felt like a lot things were not very accessible. The context is that I grew up in museums during its after hours. The visitors would have left and I would be alone. A place with not a lot of other people and no children to play with. So I was alone for a lot of the times. That helped created a sensibility in which I didn't want to leave art, but wanted to make it a more engaging environment.

TS: Just for people who don't know, can you talk about why is that you grew up in museums? To give some context.

WY: My father, who is here today, his name is Cai Guo-Qiang. He's a contemporary artist who's had exhibitions at MoMA, the Whitney, the Guggenheim, and all the major museums in New York and around the world. Throughout my life, he has been working as an artist.

LZ: When were you born? And how did you get to New York?

WY: I was born in Japan. My father was a grantee of the Asian Cultural Council residency program. We came when I was 5 years old.

LZ: When I was reading the first chapter, I felt that I was taken to a very intimate place. Instead of approaching art in a conventional art historical way, you have your own personal way of understanding art. Did that influence what you do now?

WY: Even though I studied art history and artmaking, I feel like everything that is bestowed upon me is not filtered through an art historical understanding, but more from a sense of observing it.

TS: In the book, you describe a moment of going on an El Greco pilgrimage, but there's a sense that you never quite get there, as you are always turning towards something else. To me, that's how the book is set up, how time is interlaced together. One moment you're in Bilbao, but on the next page you are jumping to being at RISD, trying to figure out what a critique is. These non-sequiturs are reminiscent of the photo on the right, of taking the photo on the ladder, here's a photo of something that got edited out. In the first chapter you also talk about being present when explosives are being set off. These are the background things that are going on, but not necessarily focused on the masterpieces or the actual artworks, but what's going on around it. The reason why I'm bringing it up is because that's how I see your project at Special Special, and how you think about curating, perhaps, and also of how you see artworks function beyond their outward appearances.

WY: Something that we talked about before is the idea of creating something without really understanding where it's going. The stories that I write about, they are not so much about the outcome, but rather living in these moments and trying to figure out where to go. There's no climactic arc to this book, but rather trying to find myself as an early-20 something who just graduated college and trying to understand where I stand artistically.

LZ: How is WYMNA related to Special Special?

WY: During the couple of years when I was writing the book, I was also behind the scenes photographing my father's ignitions. Before I started Special Special, I had an apartment gallery, and I called my space If and When. This was an exhibition called Supporting Characters, made by Kate Phillips. She was my classmate from RISD, and made these conjoined socks that everyone fits into. They could wear and walk around in them. It's an experiment in wearing the same socks. At the time, I was starting to think about functionality, participation and art, and how anybody entering a space, particularly my house, where I always ask people to take their

shoes off, maybe it's nice to have a project/exhibition where you don't have to take your shoes off. You can have a group of strangers come together, and figure out how to wear this sock together.

This was an earlier project at Special Special. The space is on East 1st street, between 1st and 2nd Avenue, and we have exhibitions with artists and designers, and we also produce art editions that are functional. For every project that we do, I like for it to have some functionality, so people with all knowledge and background of art could come in and participate in something that we have, whether it's an installation or a purchase of an art collectible that's not a ridiculous price. These are select exhibitions that we had: this is a halloween costume show, this is a blanket exhibition. For every show we do, we try to completely transform the space. For this one, we made it into a homey living room space where blankets reside, it's by an artist named Oona Brangam-Snell. This is the Towelkini edition that we collaborated with the artist Aria McManus, and it's a towel that you can wear. For the opening, we had the model wearing the towelkini walking around Soho, then we had her lying on the floor of the space for the duration of the opening. This is the Hibiscus installation by Benjamin Langford, and we collaborated with him to create a Hawaiiin shirt with the hibiscus flower. This is a show with Sebastian Masuda, and we turned the whole space pink, and covered the wall with faux fur. People could come in and take a piece that they liked, collect it, and use it in a workshop setting to decorate their bags or tshirts.

We also started exploring the workshop format as we worked with artists. Sebastian Masuda is a well-known who popularized harajuku culture. So much of that is about the freedom of self-expression, so we invited people to express themselves through these colorful furs. This is a show by Sarah Verity. We invited anybody off the street to draw a room that they loved in. The show was called Love Hotel Room. These are different rooms that people contributed to. This project is also in our pop-up space at Macau. This is a show by Jenny Hata-Blumenfield. It's a play on light. She's a ceramic artist, but through the process of the show, and I suggested cyanotype photography printing technique to her. She started incorporating this technique, as well as light and shadow into her practice. This was a show that opened in October called CHKRA. We transformed the space into seven booths in different colors. Each color represented a chakra type. They are sound booths of ambient music recorded at high-end luxury retail stores. So we call it luxury retail therapy without the expensive price tag. People could come in and align themselves at Special Special and feel like they went shopping. This is our current show called Tie Me Up! Lock Me Down!. It's a jewelry and adornment show co-curated by Banyu Huang and Kristen Lee. They both curate and make jewelry. So it's an exhibition of wearables.

I mentioned earlier that we recently created a pop-up space open at the same time as my photography exhibition in MGM hotel and casino in Macau. The concept of this space is playground. We wanted to create an alternative space where people could go and hang out at a casino or a hotel if they didn't want to go gambling or stay in their room. We have these monkey-bar contraptions. This is a see-saw we created with our fellow artist friend's oracle

cards called Deck of Characters. There's also a telephone where you speak into one end, and your friend could listen at the other end of the space. We made it into a very playful shop to house our editions.

TS: Yeah I was wondering, within the playground, why you ended up being so insistent on having a space that was dedicated to forms of participatory art, and also editions, what is an edition and why are ppl making particular editions for this space?

WY: I re-read my book this past week, and there was a line in there where I said something along the lines of: " I wish museums could be more like a playground," which I didn't remember and then I thought back to that, that this was always an inherent connection. I think for me it's because, all of you are here today and experiencing this talk, and I hope that you do find something useful in this conversation. And throughout my journey in exploring art, I felt like the experience is something people can walk away with, with a new refreshed sense. Potentially they might have learnt something from another person, or they might have come up with an idea they never thought of before. So it's sort of the serendipity of it, without a purpose and without an ego per se. Partially also that people are open to anything, and with that openness there are so many possibilities.

TS: Is that what you are coming at when you say "reluctant artist"? The lack of ego?

WY: Well that's up for interpretation, because I can't say there's an ego in every artist. But I can say that a lot of artists have a vision of what they want to create, and they move towards that vision, and oftentimes we at Special Special do work with artists with a very specific set of ideas in mind. But I like for there to also be a dialogue that we have, and in the process perhaps making something unexpected. It could maybe be better sometimes, or it could be unexpected in a way where it can change the course of how they view their work up until this point. But it's open to all kinds of possibilities. Should we jump into Tim?

LZ TS: yeah

WY: So this is Tim making his work for a show at Special Special last year.

TS: That's in studio, well I'll start from what it was. Together with Special Special I did a scratch lotto ticket, a scratch game, but on a paper that we had produced together that was from bleached celery, and I had been bleaching celery for a couple of years before, and without any knowledge of making paper I had figured out that this could make a strange sheet of paper that is incredibly translucent. That was the project we worked on together, the people at Special Special and I all worked on it together. This is a photo of me in studio, but obviously there's lot... Wen-You is here, taking the photo after we had gone to buy 6 boxes of celery and 30 gallons of bleach. One of the many amazing collaborative projects that seem to have occurred at Special Special.

LZ: What's the title?

TS: The title of the show is Talks To Me, which was the title of the game. Is there a photo of one individual ticket? You can kind of see them there. The way that the game worked is that essentially there was a conversation between people at a dinner table, and you are scratching their speech bubble, and the speech bubble happens to make a word. They're all randomized words, so with Wes and Mark and everyone at Special Special we meticulously but blindly randomized our stamping of these 500 lotto tickets, scratch game tickets and then ended up selling them individually but also as sheet editions. And I guess also another thing about the process that I thought was wonderful was that there was a moment where we had to juggle what is the legal terrain of making a scratch game. Which was wonderful because the object itself because this finding trust between us, both in a legal terrain, monetarily, in terms of having to pay back the people that won the game.

LZ: I have talked to Tim about the project he made and I know that the process is very meticulous; the printmaking process, the paper making process, coming up with all the text to be printed on the celery paper and there is also the manna. What is that part?

TS: The manna?

LZ: Yes, in relation to the installation. The Special Special gallery had completely changed.

TS: Well manna came from many different things, but it is another edible element, or seemingly edible, but also seemingly artificial at the same time. The hair is something I've put into a lot of my work, as if it's gotten caught in the mix. Because actually a lot of the pieces of paper that has a hair, it was caught in the mix.

LZ: Yeah, I think that overall when we see Wen-You's projects there are often different ways of collaborating with artists, like the way that Wen-You worked with Tim, the amount of editions they produced. It's kind of unique in a way. In each piece as well. All of them are different, different formats but they're editions of the collaboration. I think that's a different way, when you work with other artists there may be jackets that you can reproduce, but it's also a limited edition in that way.

TS; Well to that point, maybe it's what you're getting at with the manna. What I find so wonderful about the opportunity to work in editions is its accessibility. It's generous, but also generous to the artists that are producing. You are faced with the constraint of what the project space is, but not in editions.

LZ: Yeah, I mentioned it because I don't make reproducible projects, so this way me and Tim are similar in a way that when we work with Special Special on our projects we have to think about what can be made within the concept of an edition, accessible to people.

WY: The next part is only about you.

LZ: Oh me?! Okay, so this is a show I did with Wen-You in 2018. It was a project that I did earlier at the NARS foundation. It's a dating project, it's called "It takes 10 years to be on the same boat." So Wen-You came to the dating project and it was, I turned my studio into a dating site and had it set up as a boat, a Chinese river boat. Because the sentence, if you take the Chinese translation, it will be _____. So it's a lot of me thinking about how people are meeting each other in this very convenient time of technology, You have dating apps, you have email and you can connect with each other very clinically. So I had this boat I had set up, had this website that people could set up online, and they don't know each other, so the only thing that links them together is time they pick to go there. So in a way it's fate that chooses to pair them together, and some people drop out right before they come to the meeting, some people change their day. So then the way that they choose to meet is based on what their own schedule is. So Wen-You saw this project and she invited me to be part of the SPF show, a summer group show, so I produced a pool date.

WY: The theme of SPF was Special Special tuning into a pool over summer. Because our logo is a blue oval so it can be interpreted as a body of water. The idea was that everyone was in the same body of water, and that summer we were taking it literally, calling it a pool.

LZ: And at that time that when I was working you, the whole group show wasn't in a traditional sense, it was spontaneous and there was different artist overlap coming in, going out in different times. I think that was also the first time that I had experienced this in a group show.

TS: You mean that certain works were coming in and going out?

LZ: Yes, we started with three people in the beginning and then there were other people coming in, and there were other art and projects. It's a spontaneous group show, the SPF show;

TS: Yeah, maybe to that point, when we had our show Talks to me, I think it was maybe a week before the show opened, Wen-You said: "Oh, we have someone that's an artists in residence who is going to ask you if you would be interested in doing a collaborative project with her, which is Lu. And I think there is a similar energy to this, as if someone was in-house, ready to collaborate with you.

LZ: Yeah I think that's really interesting. I would also like to give a little context to why Wen-You and I started thinking similar. When I started doing the dating project, I started an organization called Wildman Clab, and it's a club where I try to find the primitive human instinct, through the form of human communication and interaction. I think that's when I was just thinking a lot about the _____ community, how to find alternative ways to communicate. And communication does not equal connection. You have to make an effort and make an exercise together to get to this connection. Because pure communication doesn't mean you're connected.

TS: No, I think it's also, it also reminds me of how I really think of the lotto tickets also, making a scratch card that's on translucent paper, and a really delicate one. And I am mentioning it because it's similar to what we worked on together, that with something that's a piece of translucent paper, if you print on both sides of it, they are communicating by negotiating with each other. You can only read on if the other side is helping you in some way to read this side, but they're not actually fused and connected, they're these two sides.

LZ: I'll jump into the project that Tim did. This is a performance we did together during Tim's show, it's when the Frontiers Conference started entering. Because right now Wildman Clab is doing a year-long residency at Special Special. That's something I think I've never heard of, as well, which Wen-You came up with a plan and then we worked together. So for the Frontiers Conference I proposed to do a poetry reading and performances at Special Special with the exhibiting artists, or with artists from the outside and then just figuring out what the communication or connection could be about. So I think that during Tim's show, or together on his piece, it's called Efforts in Reading Kaspar by Peter Handke.

TS: Do You want me to talk about it a little, or talk about it together?

LZ: Yeah.

TS: So, well I guess in part, in relation to this idea and collaboration, around the time that Lu had asked me, and we were trying to decide if we should do something together during the time of the show, I had been returning to a play that I had stuck in my mind, which is Peter Handkes writing of the story of Kaspar, Kaspar Hauser, that's disfigured. Historically the story is that it's a figure that's been locked in chamber, cave somewhere maybe by somebody and enters into this village without having any language or way of communicating at all with anybody, without having no language at all, and in the longer story he acquires language slowly through this teacher, and it has a very upsetting ending to it. But the play, Kaspar by Peter Handke, has these different characters and it has Kaspar, this figure that kind of comes on stage and doesn't really know what the stage even is, doesn't know how to walk. The world around Kaspar is kind of undefined because there's no language to define it. And then there's offstage instructors that are teaching Kaspar, and giving Kaspar language, and there are certain steps in the play that they go through. So we decided to work directly, physically, with the text of this play. There was a simple thing in the beginning, of learning how to read the text itself, and we did this in several ways, by working through the text redacting a lot of parts, and switching off into different roles with Aaron Lehman, who was with us too. There were different roles of being an instructor, teaching how to read something. But in our conversations there was also a certain point where we were going to translate a part of the text. Coming to some object, like this paper, from two sides, and knowing that communication isn't necessarily the connection between those two, but it's the trust that whatever someone is doing on the other side, you're sharing this object together. This may be a bit theoretical. Put more simply, there were parts in the performance where we were reading the play and we would dip it into a bowl of water so that we could read the text backwards. And if you've ever read a text backwards, that you haven't encountered

before, I mean some people are much better than others, but if you voice it, you are really trying to sound out what seems to be recognizable language, so it is like trying to learn how to read, but trying to learn how to read backwards.

LZ: I think that Tim gave a little bit of background of the performance, and we helped each other read through these pieces of paper. But then to me, I think that this is one example of how Wen-You is allowing us, or allowing collaborations to happen in a very different way at Special Special.

WY: Yeah, something about Special Special that I always tell people is that I want to create a platform and give people the opportunity of doing something that they wouldn't necessarily be able to do in a different setting, in a conventional art setting, and I want to give that space to people to explore.

TS: Where do you feel you are in terms of that, when an exhibition is at Special Special?

WY: I think that more and more we have also _____. The place started in 2016 with the idea that we would have exhibitions of art editions that we would produce too, with the artists. And more and more the idea of what an art edition is, that's also functional, has very much expanded. For example with Tim making a scratch lottery ticket on celery paper, that's kind of another direction of what it means to be functional. And then in terms of workshops and performance I started to think in the function of experience, where people come to the space and they experience something, and that's what it is - they function together in a space. And the idea of the Wildman Club collaboration, and we call it the Frontiers Conference, it started from this idea that we had during our more of a shop-like rendition called Handle With Care where we wrapped everything in gift wrapped paper for the holiday season, all our editions, and we decided to do a asked poetry reading one afternoon. This was Lu's idea and we collaborated and Wes made these masks, and we pulled out all our poetry books and picked poetry to read. And after experiencing this we had some kind of epiphany, at least for me, after doing that I relaxed there could be a whole series of potential performances. I presented it as a conceptual poetic performance, and the idea of a conceptual poetic performance is that it could be anything. So that is when I asked Lu to be our event resident.

LZ: So I am just temporarily in Special Special posting the Frontiers conference. When I came up with the idea I was just thinking artists, musicians, poets, they're kind of incentives, trying to explore an emotion, communication, connections with each other. So this fits Wen-You's no boundary endless form of an art piece. It's a group effort each time. Mark works on the design of the poster and Wes does the set up, and then communication with the artists. So I always see that when I work with Special Special it's teamwork and a group effort.

WY: And also, the residency is also in dialogue with the existing exhibition and the space, so it becomes a collaboration, sometimes static, sometimes not static., it depends on the level of participation by the artist. So this was during the Love Hotel Rooms project, where we had people participating in a workshop to draw a room, and then Lu invited her friends Robert and

Wo to do a drag performance in the space where they are two friends coming together as lovers, and then it was opened up to the audience to recall someone they had loved that was no longer in their life. It became a very sentimental, heartwarming exchange. It's just very open.

LZ: And then the next one is Tim. How do you feel about this one?

WY: I liked it. I think part of what was amazing about this one was that it was a complete surprise. In the first project there was a script. There was going to be a 20 minute dance performance, there was going to be a 40 minute sound recording of people talking about someone that they loved that was no longer there, and then we opened it up for anyone to talk about someone in their life, and then with this one Tim and Lu just started talking. I set them up and said: I think you two would be good collaborators. And then they went off and brainstormed on what they would do. And I really didn't know until the performance, I didn't know what was going on. But I have felt like I trust these two artists to do something that's in the spirit of what I am hoping for. And that was what I was thinking of.

LZ: It was a really long time reading text. We read many, many times to edit the text down, in order to transform a play into a performance piece. It's two strangers mapped together, and Tim and I just sat down reading a text book together, and then I think the time of being with Tim, working on this piece, added a lot to the chemistry of the piece.

WY: Cause it's Lu who brings everybody together.

LZ: So the next one is a fishing workshop, and NYC fishing workshop. The artist is Yi Xin Tong and he fishes all around the city, and then he published a book called Fishing in NYC by Gong Press. So we invited him to give a series of fishing workshops, very practical. Like where to find what type of fish, which season you should use what type of tool, so he gave a demonstration about that. So this was very different than the previous poetry readings. And then the next one was Jenny Blumenfield. It's a practice of looking at ceramics, at materials in different ways. So we had people behind the mirror, describing the object to the audience, and the audience would draw. And the most recent one is still happening. There's a live Cam Karaoke. Wes worked on this technology part a lot. He figured out how to set up live surveillance inside the exhibition space, so now you see all the Special Special staff singing in front of a camera. We have Instagram live online and Youtube live online.

WY: I just want to add that our space that you can see up until this point is actually quite small, so we can't really fit too many people. And when we have performances we want many people to come, but there is a limit to it, so we started thinking about how we can do these performances in a way that's accessible to more people, so that more people can tune in from anywhere. This is something we in the past month have started experimenting with. And then tomorrow, all weekend we actually have a Cam Show, and we have programming. So this weekend, please tune in on our Instagram, and also on Youtube where you can see a multi-channel view of our space.

LZ: I think we're good now.

TS, WY, LZ: Thank you!

applause

WY: I want to quickly thank Printed matter for hosting us today, and I want to thank Tim and Lu for joining today and balancing, being great collaborators and really understanding what I'm trying to do, and helping me articulate that. I'm very grateful for that, and thank you all for coming today.

applause

TS: We have 10 minutes for a few questions if there are any.

Q: Why the name Special Special?

WY: So Special Special is a word doubled. There are many reasons why, one main reason is because it's here we are producing something special, but it's in multiples, it's in edition form. And also growing up, my mom always thought I was too special.

Q: I'm wondering how big of an impact the practice of taking those photos over those years had on your relationship with your family, and how your role as the documenter and observer of your family, but also participating, affected your relationship.

WY: I feel like the experience of photography for me is... One is in the present moment where I find something interesting, so I capture it, and the other is in the reflection upon it. So it's being able to capture a moment, compose a moment and then going back to it. And I think over the years, as I go back to these images, I can recollect what it was, but also see it from a different light, and so it's upon the review of it over time that I am constantly re-orienting myself in these stories and real-life moments that I have. And it's also a personal study of trying to understand where I am in relation to my family. I feel like it's always changing. So even when I was putting together this book with 175 photographs, I was trying to curate and figure out what I wanted to include in this book, and editing down the photos, editing down from many more photos that I had. And I was also seeing things. A lot of the things in the photographs, seeing new things in the photographs. And it's so much a relationship in our lives, where we recall something and it could be different over the years.

Q: Why do you think editions, rather than just one photograph, or one book, or as with the artist you invite to work at Special Special?

WY: It goes back into the accessibility of Special Special, that I want to instill that not only one person can collect, but that more people can access, and I'm hoping that in writing this book for more people to read, they might understand something that I don't understand, and they might reach back to me and we can have a dialogue about it, and I might find something new. And with the book too, someone might see something that I don't see. I don't feel like I know everything about what I am producing, but I want to put something out there for people to come back and start and a conversation with me, and that we get to that next level of place together.

LZ: I want to just quickly make a comment of what Wen-You said, because when I think about community, I often think about when other people have similar views, and hoping that other people can understand, But what Wen-You did is, she stepped out to make voice of what she thinks it should be. And in that way we heard, and came together and became a group that understood each other. And when I met Wen-You, we never talked about what we like, and why we like the things we like. But during the year of working together, we realized that this accessibility is a reason why I created Wildman Clab.

Q: There is a lot of alternative art, independent art projects, also in the LES and East Village. How do you feel that you are contributing to that?

WY: I think a big part of that is that there are a lot of creative types in New York, which is why there's all these creative spaces, which is why there is a large pool of people to work with, and I feel like every day, these platforms help people gather together, and create meaningful dialogues. Just like how I've worked with a group of people at Special Special, and now we're here at Printed Matter, we're all just working towards understanding one another. And there are pockets where we might find common things and one another, or we might express one side of it which is a little different from another side, one way of looking at it. So it's about creating perspectives, which I think is very valuable to a bigger artistic community.

TS: Can I add something? Just because I don't know if it came up so clearly. It's that what I find very unique about Special Special, and to question about the editions, is that when you ask an artist to do an edition, your whole team, everybody at Special Special, is there in their willingness and excitement to make it together. Doing an edition you know, it's asking for us to be collaborating towards something together, which creates a completely unique set of connections amongst the people who work at Special Special. Besides the edition being distributed, it's automatically entwined with everybody who's there. Everyone has different roles, everyone who works at Special Special is more than willing and wanting to have their part in it. I find that incredibly unique. I mean it's way beyond what you could think of someone commissioning an artwork. It's someone saying "Here! Here is a space where we will show something you want to do," and everyone here is not here just to be your PR, everyone is here to contribute to figuring out how we can do this together.

WY: And to that, thank you to everyone at Special Special.

applause

TS: And to Rooster, and Sheep and Tiger, and to others!