

S V B T V T X

Collecting imperfect multiples: Interview with artist Rutherford Chang

Artist **Rutherford Chang** has an alternate take on the process of collecting. Rather than treasuring each object as a unique relic, he collects multiples and then recomposes them in new ways. His latest project—hosted in the SoHo storefront of **Recess**, a gallery-studio with locations in Manhattan and Brooklyn—involves setting up a record shop and listening library devoted exclusively to first-pressings of the Beatles’ White Album of 1968. He currently has roughly 700 vinyls and counting, out of an original edition of three million. At the end of his “Session” at Recess (through March 9), Chang will press a new double-LP made of accumulated record-

ings and images layered upon each other, incorporating the idiosyncrasies of scratched LPs and scuffed album covers. The collection is thus structured not only to highlight its contents but also to allow accidents and fresh composites to emerge.

Chang’s previous projects include reconfigured collections of Wall Street Journal author headshots, Beijing street vendor bullhorns, and the film deaths of Andy Lau. Svbtxt caught up with the New York/Shanghai-based artist to discuss his thoughts on collecting.



Storefront view of Recess in SoHo, credit Elizabeth Lamb

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Svbtxt: How do you shape the collections that appear in your work?

Rutherford Chang: I am interested in materials that have cultural significance. My work involves re-arranging these materials to further explore their nature. Grouping multiples is a way of creating context for dialogue.

Svbtxt: At what point does collecting become a creative act?

RC: Deciding to start a collection is already a creative act, though it might not necessarily be one that is interesting to others.

Svbtxt: Is the collection defined by the collector, or does it have a life of its own?

RC: Collections definitely have a life of their own and may be interpreted variously.

Svbtxt: Your current project at Recess, *We Buy White Albums*, plays up the subtle differences between once-identical LPs. Is the value of this collection inverse to the pristine-ness of the albums' condition?

RC: The way that each White Album has aged uniquely is interesting to me. The wear on the covers and the scratches on the vinyl tell the story of each album. The history captured is especially apparent as the physical aspect of recorded music is becoming obsolete.

Svbtxt: In your work, is collecting a personal act or a collective process? Where does personal significance meet collective significance?

RC: I collect objects that I find personally interesting. Collective significance makes them interesting in the first place.

Words by Gideon Fink Shapiro