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The Beatles' White Album an obsession for artist Rutherford Chang

Artist Rutherford Chang has turned his collection of 679 copies of the same album into art.

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Every one of Rutherford Chang's 679 copies of the Beatles White Album is unique.

By: [Lesley Ciarula Taylor](#) News reporter, Published on Thu Feb 21 2013

Each one of Rutherford Chang's 679 copies of The Beatles [White Album](#) has its own 44-year-old story to tell.

Scribbles, stains, markings, water damage, notes to self, peace symbols. Or even still-pristine glossy embossed white after all these years.

Chang, [an American artist whose last show was in Toronto](#), has turned his obsession for The Beatles' iconic ninth album into an art exhibit running from now until March 9 at [Recess Gallery](#) in New York's Soho neighbourhood.

The [White Album](#), released by The Beatles on Nov. 22, 1968, is the perfect collector's item because of its cultural significance, he told the Star. The double album's songs stand as possibly the most analyzed of the much-dissected Beatles canon.

Even Paul McCartney and John Lennon have called it the peak of their songwriting careers, the Revolution spot where Rocky Raccoon and Bungalow Bill met Julia, Martha My Dear and Sexy Sadie.

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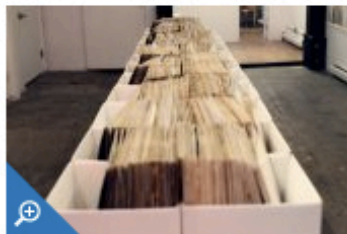
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Chang is not just collecting albums, but also “the story of where it's been. It's hard for me to know the exact story. It's more the imagined history.”

His ultimate quest is to collect all 3 million of the first pressings.

“Each one of these things is telling a unique story. To compare and see all of these identical objects that become unique is interesting to me.”

The artist bought his first [White Album](#) as a 15 year old in California and only realized several years ago it was one of the first pressings when he discovered an erased serial number: .0865301.

Chang has turned the gallery into a record store stocked only with his copies of the [White Album](#). After each one is taken from its numerically ordered bin and played, all 94 minutes of it, he posts the sleeve on a wall.

Recordings of all 679 albums, complete with skips and scratches, will be superimposed into one pressing and released after the exhibit closes.

“People are invited to come in and browse, but I'm not selling any.”

Chang is, in fact, buying, and has added 39 to his collection since the exhibit opened Jan. 7.

His art uses “conceptually minimal approaches to rearrange often already existing cultural products so something new is revealed,” he said. “Very simple systems like the alphabet or numerical order can reveal a lot.”

Cataloguing his [White Albums](#) by serial number takes that even further, he said, since

For his 2012 Toronto show, part of an exhibit called “Beyond Geography,” Chang examined the American 1980s sitcom *Growing Pains* which was also one of the first foreign TV programs aired in China.

His art reinterpreted the pilot episode, called [Cheng Zhang De Fan Nao](#) in China, with “the dialogue dubbed into non-native English by Chinese actors who grew up watching the show.”