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Works Abundancies III brings together the artwork *Untitled (Palmetto)* (1982) by **Ching Ho Cheng** and the voices of writers and poets **Wayne Koestenbaum**, “**CJ**” (**Craig Jun Li**), **Nora Treatbaby**, and **Ramona Ngin** for an evening.

Ching Ho Cheng (1946–89) was born in Havana and graduated from Cooper Union in 1968 being one of the few Chinese students at the time. By the 1970s and 80s, Cheng had become a fixture in New York’s downtown art scene. He lived at the Chelsea Hotel from 1976 until his untimely passing in 1989 from AIDS-related complications. Cheng had a garden in his apartment at the Chelsea Hotel, with palmettos. As his sister Sybao recalled, that made the space beautiful and meditative. We imagine it as a space for sustained attention (only with this kind of attention can one start to see the details in Cheng’s gouache: the pin, the cracks...). We imagine this apartment as a space for prolonged readings too (Cheng was an avid reader and very connected to many poets). And a place where the aesthetic is enmeshed with its surroundings and not separated from it. This attunement to a context is something we keep thinking about when considering Cheng’s work with light and shadows. To paint light and shadows, one must really understand the structures that contain and affect them – the time of the day, the architecture of the space, the opening of the window, the way a small breeze can move the leaves of the palmetto if that window is kept open... What we’ve described is a scene, an environment that unfolds and adjusts to graciously receive something both of this world and cosmic.

With this in mind, we’d like to explore what Cheng described as “something of the miraculous” found within ordinary subject matter. To do so, we are thrilled to have readings by “CJ” (Craig Jun Li), Nora Treatbaby, Ramona Ngin and Wayne Koestenbaum tonight. The writing and research of each of the readers has, during the last months, made us reconsider Cheng’s work and the relation between the prosaic and sacredness, as well as the ways in which quietude, perceptual shifts and vague memories help us shape unconventional narratives of lives in the midst of crisis and chaos.

Works Abundancies

Special thanks to BANK/MABSOCIETY and Sybao Cheng-Wilson, Director of the Estate of Ching Ho Cheng.

Born in Havana in 1946, **Ching Ho Cheng** was the son of Chiang Kai-shek’s last ambassador to Cuba. He graduated from Cooper Union in 1968, one of the few Chinese students at the time. By the 1970s and 80s, Cheng had become a fixture in New York’s downtown art scene, respected for his talent and distinct personality. He lived at the Chelsea Hotel from 1976 until his untimely passing in 1989. Cheng’s work is part of the permanent collections of major institutions including the Whitney Museum of American Art, LACMA, the Cleveland Museum of Art, and the Smithsonian American Art Museum. His visionary pieces are also held in private collections by cultural icons such as Miles Davis, Princess Caroline of Monaco, and Alfonso Ossorio.

“**CJ**” **Craig Jun Li** (born 1998, China) is an arts worker and artist based in New York City. Li’s work has been shown in solo and group exhibitions, including Emmelines, New York; Galeria Filomena Soares, Lisbon; lower_cavity, Holyoke; KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin; Kurtkubin, CDMX; SYSTEMA, Marseille; François Ghebaly, LA & New York; Taon, Ivry-sur-Seine; ROMANCE, Pittsburgh; Chris Andrews, Montréal; RAINRAIN, New York; September Sessions, Stockholm; hatred 2, New York; Prairie, Chicago; and Canal Projects, New York, among others. Li operates a nomadic curatorial project, “Benny’s Video,” currently hosted in a studio sublet in Bushwick. Li’s solo exhibition “I Want to Love with No Fear” is on view at Chapter NY at 60 Walker St. until the end of February.

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Nora Treatbaby is an artist based in New York City. *Our Air* (Nightboat, 2024) is her first book. She has published two chapbooks, *I <3 2 Swim* (Spiral Editions, 2022) and *Hope Is Weird* (OW 002, 2020). She does not spend her time.

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Ramona Ngin is an art worker and writer based in Providence. Her most recent essay, “Love Letter Incinerators,” was published by Momus. With Natalie Bell, she is currently preparing the exhibition *Performing Conditions: Artistic Labor and Dependency as Form* at the MIT List Visual Arts Center.

Wayne Koestenbaum—poet, critic, novelist, artist, filmmaker, performer—has published 23 books, including *Stubble Archipelago*, *Ultramarine*, *The Cheerful Scapegoat*, *Figure It Out*, *Camp Marmalade*, *My 1980s & Other Essays*, *The Anatomy of Harpo Marx*, *Humiliation*, *Hotel Theory*, *Circus*, *Andy Warhol*, *Jackie Under My Skin*, and *The Queen’s Throat* (nominated for a National Book Critics Circle Award). His next book, a novel, *My Lover, the Rabbi*, will be published by FSG in March 2026. He has received a Guggenheim Fellowship in poetry, an American Academy of Arts and Letters Award in Literature, and a Whiting Award. He is a Distinguished Professor of English, French, and Comparative Literature at the City University of New York Graduate Center.

Works Abundancies is a series of events that considers abundance—and the margins in which to find it—through poetry and works of art, as well as the staging and display elements that support, undermine, and disseminate the readings and artworks presented.

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