

W.H. CHONG

EVERYTHING CHANGES

18 MAY - 13 JUNE 2018

Lone Goat Gallery - 28 Lawson St, Byron Bay NSW 2481

EVERYTHING CHANGES

The old sages didn't fool around. Here is a triplet of Buddhist sayings, simple truths with a killer punchline.

- 1) Everything changes.
- 2) Anything can happen at any time.
- 3) No one is exempt.

Shakespeare had Richard II confess: 'I wasted time, and now doth time waste me.' David Bowie proposed: 'Time may change me / But I can't trace time.' His title struck the note: 'Changes'. These ideas of change and inevitability underwrite this exhibition.

We can all draw creatively from ancient roots if we wish: whether farming or writing a song or cooking a meal. Old traditions can be transformed — are always being transformed — and itself be the transformative idea, triggering new iterations.

In these works from several ongoing series I drew from the deep well of Chinese art traditions. Useful concepts: the understanding of art's intangible qualities — its "spirit" — codified 1500 years ago as the most important part of art. The ancient abstractions of Chinese calligraphy, and the deployment of the void as integral to the image. Mark making that speaks of distinctive individuals.

The themes here are change, exile and perhaps, freedom. Change can be seen in the way words (Chinese characters, English script) are transformed into near illegible marks to become abstract expressions, a different kind of sign with only subjective readings. How ink landscapes become groupings of bright coloured shapes. The way digital technology can marry with analogue processes to create a contemporary Chinese scroll. Exile is the great theme of the last hundred and some years and enough has been said about it. I mention exile only because it is undeniable.

The idea of freedom is more subtle. Bold gestural mark making may suggest freedom — the manifestation of a body and mind unfettered. Another freedom is achieved when we discover the art that comes of personal necessity. When we grasp what we need to make we are released from convention, from fashion, from dogma, from self-consciousness. Then we are free to make the marks drawn from the deep well within.

LONE GOAT GALLERY

W.H. CHONG

EVERYTHING CHANGES

18 MAY - 13 JUNE 2018

Lone Goat Gallery - 28 Lawson St, Byron Bay NSW 2481

Bio

W. H. Chong is an artist and a book designer. He is one of Australia's foremost cover designers, winner of multiple awards, and is an inductee in the Book Designers Hall of Fame.

He is well known for his portrait drawings of writers and artists — his near life-size portrait of novelist Michelle de Kretser is in the collection of the National Portrait Gallery in Canberra. The Green Room in the Wheeler Centre in Melbourne is hung with his drawings of visiting authors. His art is often seen on books, gracing over 100 covers of Australian literature in the Text Classics series.

He has written art reviews and columns on culture for Crikey and Daily Review. He resides in Melbourne.

Chong & Byron

Chong has been coming up from Melbourne to enjoy Byron and its hinterlands going on twenty years. He says the heat, moisture and vegetation recall his tropical childhood in a way that Victoria, where he lives, never can. He loves the culture, the mood, the general sense of relaxed well-being. He even thinks it may be his single favourite place in Australia.

Instagram: @whchong

Web: whchong.com

CV

2018: Everything Changes, Lone Goat Gallery

2017: A Whole Different Animal, Brightspace Gallery

2014-2017: Art reviews for Daily Review

2009-2016: Culture Mulcher blog for Crikey

2014: Portrait of Michelle de Kretser acquired by the National Portrait Gallery

2014: Subject/Matter, Brightspace Gallery

2013: Double Vision, Brightspace Gallery

2013: Inducted into the Book Designers Hall of Fame

2011: Trouble with Boys, Until Never Gallery

2011: Portrait print of Patrick White

Acquired by National Library of Australia and the State Library of Victoria

1994-present: Director of design, Text Publishing

1995-1997: Editor of The Sydney Weekly

1990-1994: Art director, The Sunday Age

1986-1989: Art director, Melbourne Herald

1981: Bachelor of Graphic Design, Swinburne