

**UP
CLOSE**
Cornelia
Erdmann



Hong Kong-based German artist Cornelia Erdmann has co-edited the book "Preoccupations: Things Artists Do Anyway," about the desires, fetishes and obsessive pastimes of creative people. She reveals hers to Winnie Chau.

HK Magazine: Artists' lives are often an enigma. What are some common misconceptions?

Cornelia Erdmann: I think the general misconception is that artists are strange creatures that cannot be understood by the public. People think museums and galleries are for the elite. We hope that our book project can de-mystify things a little bit. We show that we are just normal people with similar interests and similar things to deal with as anybody else.

HK: But the preoccupations in the book are pretty weird...

CE: I think everybody pursues strange obsessions. Sometimes it's not something you consciously choose to do; it just controls you and becomes part of your life.

HK: In the book, you talk about being preoccupied with collecting label stickers on fruit. Tell us the story.

CE: I started the collection two years ago, when I moved to Hong Kong and found all these fruits I'd never seen back home. My apartment was relatively empty when I first moved in, and the fruits brought color to it. Some of them have really beautiful stickers with Chinese signs or characters on them. Without thinking about it, I started sticking those fruit labels to the kitchen cabinet.

HK: Any symbolic meaning behind it?

CE: It's just a sticker to me, but I asked myself that question when I was writing the article for the book. The stickers are like a label or brand name—you keep buying certain fruit because it has a nice sticker on it. For example, there's one brand of papaya that has a really nice red-gold label with Chinese characters I can't read. Maybe it's the Gucci of papaya, and that's why I bought it. Maybe the stickers are really like fashion labels.

HK: That's pretty weird. How far will artists go?

CE: I think this is one of the weaknesses, but also one of the strengths, of artists: they'll do anything. An artist might even apply for a boring nine-to-five secretarial job, if they wanted to do an art project about office life. Artists are open to trial and error.

HK: Do you think Hong Kong is a good place for artists?

CE: Oh, definitely. It's a very diversified place with great opportunities. The art scene has lots of potential to grow though; it's still small. But that potential just makes it more attractive.

Check out Cornelia Erdmann's art projects at www.corneliaerdmann.de. "Preoccupations: Things Artists Do Anyway" is available at Kubrick bookshops (see review on P.36).