

PRIME: Art's Next Generation

Phaidon Editors

By Diana Campbell

Genevieve Chua describes herself as a "near-abstract painter." The minimalism of her work echoes the light and shadow that she experiences while contemplating how architects form and control space, especially in the simple perforated breeze blocks that populate Singapore, an urban land-scape rising from lush tropical gardens, where the artist lives and works.

The artist's Breeze Blocks series, executed in undulating monochromatic painted lines on linen, celebrates the permeability of architecture that allows for air circulation in the city's humid tropical climate. Chua sees painting as a genre freighted with significance and pares down her choices of colors to a predominantly black, white, and gray palette as a form of resistance, using subtle nuance as a tool to push back against the weighty history of the medium.

Chua is interested in how bodies interact with her work in space, from the breeze created by people as they walk through the gallery, exerting a kinetic charge on it, to the way that her hung works subtly protrude from the wall without fully intervening in the space, occupying, as a 2020 STPI Gallery press release describes it, "two-and-a-half dimensions." This sense of intimacy experienced when in the presence of her work is something the artist strives for with her Edge Control series, which invite the viewer to approach the works closely in order to see past their initially stark surfaces and explore the emotional resonances their details might provoke.

The artist sees potential in corners and in the meet-ing of planes to form edges, and several works in this series-such as Edge Control #28, Mid Section and Edge Control #27, Light Stack (both 2019)- visually rhyme with architectural plans and models. These works suggest forms in the process of evolving and/or dissolving, while the need to "control" their edges implies that they are moving-and that lines and rules that might seem hard and fixed actually have the potential to bend and flex. This fits into the artist's ongoing inquiry into the space between finding and losing control, between the closed and the open-ended.

Chua is also inspired by music, and in works from her Swivel series-such as Swivel #12 (2017), in which a stainless-steel bracket pushes shaped wooden paddles out from the wall into the space-amoebic forms seem to sway and twist to invisible musical notes, freeing them from the tyranny of straight lines and the architecture that supports them. The wavelike forms that appear in Chua's work connect to waves of light and sound circulating in the spaces where they are exhibited, and while generally small in scale, they evoke a sense of expansiveness.