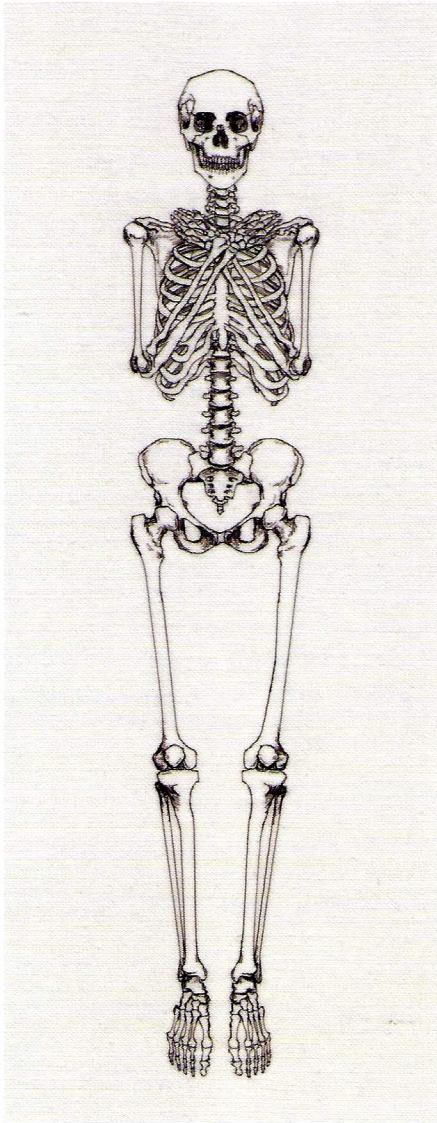# liyen chong

Liyen Chong currently has two modes of art practice, linked by her remarkable attention to detail. In one mode, using her own hair, she embroiders miniatures that resemble engravings, or ink drawings done with a fine pen. Her other conceptual work consists of the creation of simulacra of small packaging and printed material through the language of graphic design.

Chong's embroidery will withstand the closest scrutiny. The fine black hairs appear to lie on the surface of the linen support, twisting and turning like a drawn line. There seem to be no gaps where the hair goes into the backing and comes out again. A repeated subject is the human skeleton and skull. The skull is, of course, the source of hair, but is hairless. Using her hair, Chong delineates the internal structure of the body, bringing the realms of life and death together through embroidery. The engravings of Albrecht Durer come to mind, and the works can be interpreted as death being overcome by the power and longevity of art. In 2008, using different shades of hair, Chong created a perfect $5 note, complete with its Ed Hillary portrait.

Chong's other interest is in the stream of words that flow past our eyes daily and constantly, much of it unread, or only superficially scanned. How many of us read all the text on a box of pills, a bottle label or a packet of sugar? Then there are the business cards thrust into our hands, the magazine leafed through at the dentist's, the official forms, the junk mail. Chong re-presents these items to us, but they have been totally rewritten and turned into surreal dream messages, admonishments or devices to prompt introspection. The thinking viewer cannot toss one of these items aside, as one would if

Passport. Visas, 2007. Variable dimensions and media.

IT'S SILLY
DEPARTED
THIS CONTINENT
01.01.2000
AS IF WHAT YOU SAY AT THAT
TIME WOULD BE THE MOST
IMPORTANT THING YOU
COULD SAY, WHAT
ABOUT THE BITS
IN BETWEEN?
TRYING TO KEEP A DIARY ...

Disillusioned, Cynical,
And Sad (but healthy If
I Have Not Lost Myself
In The DISEASE OF
SOMEONE ELSE'S SPEECH

DO YOU TRAVEL ALL THE TIME?
Holder may remain indefinitely
(travel-no place, no place)

Current
from
YES I DO,
my eyes are constantly open.
But I do not see what the people who live here see.

WILL you find me???LB   Immigration Officer
the right choice.

TRAVELLER'S CHEQUES & FLIGHT TIMES & DISTANCES
DON'T FORGET
WHO YOU ARE
AND MOST IMPORTANTLY,
SOMETHING
TO PASS THE TIME
AS WELL AS YOUR SIGHTSEEING SCHEDULE

hermetically sealed self sufficient projectile or nuclear arms
TRAVELLING, DO WE GET THERE
STATIONARY
BECAUSE MY SELF IS
STILL MY SELF
snakes in certain countries

0:00:00,00:00:02,00:00:06,0
22:34:40
TO ARRIVE
arriver
MEANING:
to begin to look with both
the eyes of a stranger
and native in one.
05:04,00:46:03,00:57:56,03:36:3

65

it was the real thing. The words that rub off on a casual scan are not 'wholesome' or 'low fat' but 'a cure for anxiety' or 'Please consult your optometrist if you have ideological conflicts in your range of vision'.

Chong's careful study of her source materials, her computer graphic skills and the range of papers and cards she uses result in objects that are immediately recognisable as what they turn out not to be. The artist builds verbal excursions around each 'product'. So a bag of flour refers to 'incoherent particles'; official questionnaires become demands for self-examination; a computer painting program becomes a metaphor for the dilemmas facing artists. Chong selects things that could be encountered by a female in a day: toothpaste, skin moisturiser, facial cleanser, a cookery book. Other items are more general: a passport, glue sticks, real estate ads. After some time spent grappling with Chong's provocative mantras, everyday life takes on a new meaning. We become acutely aware of the multiplicity of perspectives in the world, of how much we may be missing, and its relevance.

Above: *I Am Here and There* (detail), 2008. Artist's hair embroidered on cloth, 139 x 27 mm (actual size).

Right: *Prescription Medication*, 2007. Variable dimensions and media.

SEARLE

Do you trust yourself to make the right decision?
And do you believe that you are making the right decision
not to trust yourself? Or to trust that you are not going
to trust yourself and instead (overoverandabove) to
Trust SomeOne Else, that They are Right.

DOSAGE: TO INGEST IN
45 SECONDS

STORE BELOW

*no solution, nosolution. not even a simple
one.not even a complex one.
But it should be simple, just do what your
heart says is right. But.*

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IF THIS
DOESN'T
WORK, CAN
I RETURN
IT?
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4 005808 812004 >

CHOICES 45 seconds

Perhaps you should decide whether you want
a remedy, cure, healing agent, treatment of lack
or treatment of abnormality before you expire

CHOICES 45 seconds

CHOICES 45 seconds

PRESCRIPTION
MEDICINE

"Have I ever believed a lie in my life?"
You cannot believe in anything unless you
trust yourself.

Can you have faith in anything if you do not
trust yourself to be able to discern whether
there is a presence enough to be believed?

And if you have no faith, how can you live?

CHOICES 45 seconds

CHOICES 45 seconds