

**Art(work) Interview Series**  
**An Interview with Cynthia Cao**  
*Assistant Preparator at the ICA*



Q: What is your favorite part about being an art installer?

**A:** My favorite part about being an art installer is visiting artists in their studios, chatting about their work in situ, and then helping to achieve that vision at the ICA.

Q: Describe a challenge you encountered during an installation that you were able to navigate BECAUSE you are an artist.

**A:** Mixing paint color to exactly match a custom color used in graphic design or an ICA branding campaign that is intended for the title wall in the gallery is very difficult. I'm able to execute these designs with the ICA team because I am an artist and am knowledgeable about mixing paint to color match the vinyl lettering for the title wall.

Q: How has being an art installer affected your practice? Has it impacted you in ways you did not expect?

**A:** Being an art installer has definitely affected my practice because I meet several artists in different stages of their career and seeing the differences of how they organize their space/artwork has made me consider my own work as an artist. As an art installer, I also think about the work after it's finished and how it might be displayed--traditionally or unconventional? It's fun to see how other artists problem solve too.



Q: What was the "After Hours" ICA residency like? Was it fun to create your own work, AT WORK?

**A:** The residency experience challenged me in terms of time management. In addition to working as an art installer at the ICA, I hold several other jobs, so it was crucial that I figured out the best times that I could work on my art, and the residency provided a nice solution.

**Q:** Describe one of your favorite exhibitions at the ICA. Is there a particular piece?

**A:** If I had to pick my favorite piece it would have to be *Taro's plane* from the exhibition [NextNewPaper](#), because of the memories I have from that install. The artist, Taro Hatori, and his wife Mayumi, spent nearly a week at the ICA carefully constructing a large scale plane out of cardboard. After assembling the plane, we attached a thick rope to the tail and hoisted it up into the rafters of the ICA. Five of us pushed it as much as possible into the corner of the gallery, and then Taro grabbed a small stepladder and smashed the plane in half to make it look like it had taken a nosedive. It was fun, and a bit of a shock, to watch how easily he partially destroyed the piece he had just spent a week constructing.

Questions by Sarah Fullerton, Online Content Manager. Pictured work by Cynthia Cao, courtesy of the artist.