

Edouard Malingue Gallery

馬凌畫廊

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≡edouardmalingue.com

Phillip Lai

In The Half Life

Opening
26 March 5 - 8 PM

Dates
27 March - 5 May 2018

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'In the Half Life', the first solo exhibition in Asia of Phillip Lai (b. 1969 Malaysia/UK) at Edouard Malingue Gallery, Hong Kong is a group of new works by the artist whose gestures are abstractly contained whilst also immediately assimilated via a highly familiar lexicon of the daily. The imprint of domesticity, public environments and the industrial are variously present both in the shape the work takes as well as its surfaces and how the materials have been handled. In some cases the clear presence of the manual prompts an exaggerated visual experience of them, and in others it is conversely the apparent removal of the hand that does this. In more of an overview we might see, in every instance of these embodied forms, the interlocking relationship that we have with the material world that we inhabit and that we have designed. The works isolate, distort and probe this relationship.

'Half Life' is also loosely premised on a quality of inhabitation and on an aspect of division or a divide. With many of the basic processes of these works, mold-making and casting is involved, and so conceiving of interiors, exteriors and the volumes that exist between are a constant. In visual terms, a possible image of productivity and progress is often immediately conflated with that of depletion, waste or expenditure.

Lai approaches objects in a manner that appeals to, and reflects on, their intrinsic existence and properties. Observing that in one's daily encounters with 'things' there is both a physical projection and an assumptive perception, Lai creates scenarios that draw objects away from these two conditions towards a state of autonomy. Through careful, delicate constructions that place the object in plain sight, Lai creates moments that guide you into a line of thinking only to then divert that original thought and allow room for another - gestures that open dialogue and invite novel modes of approach.

There is perhaps a sense of restlessness to the materials that constitute the object forms of the work in this show. And this is despite the rational and pragmatically reassuring suggestions of function that are seen. Although each element is individually identifiable there is crucially a running defiance of categorised value and hierarchy, and this is both a challenging position as well as the basis of a precarious aspect.

A 'meeting' between self and object, self and composition of, is where the poetics of Lai's work lies. Permeating his practice is a tension between simplicity and complexity, how that very 'thing' one recognises is reduced to what it actually is, yet how, through this arrival at an essence, a new level of awareness is enabled and unfolded. It opens the seemingly definitive to the abstract, urging a contemplative step away from the assumed and contained, towards the open and dispersed.

Phillip Lai has exhibited internationally at Camden Arts Centre, London (2014); Tate Modern, London (2010); Transmission, Glasgow (2009); Drawing Room, London (2005); Hayward Gallery, London (1999); MOMA, New York (1998); ICA, London (1995). Phillip Lai's work is held in the permanent collection of the Tate (UK), Arts Council (UK), Camden Arts Centre (UK), Goss-Michael Foundation (USA), Nomas Foundation (Italy), La Colección Jumex (Mexico).