

Kiang Malingue Flowers of Hong Kong

馬凌畫廊

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(Artist) Liu Xiaohui

(Opening)

Sat, 23 March 2024, 3 – 6 PM

(Date)

24 March – 22 June 2024

(Opening Hours)

Tue to Sat, 11 AM – 7 PM

Closed on public holidays

(Location)

13/F, Blue Box Factory Building, 25
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“When I visited Hong Kong in the first summer after the pandemic, seeing all the cargo ships plying the sea, the flowers swaying in the urban parks, and the crowds overwhelming the streets, it was as if Hong Kong had remained unchanged in the flux of history. But as I walked in the evening breeze, the smell of Hong Kong and the subtropical flowers along the roadside gave off an extraordinarily vibrant flavour. ‘Before eyeing this flower, the two of you remain in tranquility; as you come for a view of the flower, it is at once brightened and elucidated, and then you know that the flower is not outside of your heart’. One could read Wang Yangming’s text on the immanent blossom through the flowers of Hong Kong. When I thought about and looked at flowers and plants in Hong Kong, I also realised that this flower-heart relationship is also comparable to my day-to-day artistic labour in relation to my constant review of the reconstructed images. These paintings, which have been detached from me and exist independently, are both frozen and animated in time, and are both outside and inside of my heart, just like those mesmerising flowers that made me stop as they danced in the night winds”.

—Liu Xiaohui

Kiang Malingue is pleased to present "Flowers of Hong Kong", Liu Xiaohui's first solo exhibition in Hong Kong, showcasing twenty sets of oil and tempera paintings. A number of the artworks in the exhibition were created when Liu was the artist-in-residence at Kiang Malingue in 2023. The recent paintings in various sizes combine the artist's newly found interest in flowers; long-term fascination with the human body in action; a focus on the solitary female figure, and an experience of identifying with the external world triggered by the environment of Hong Kong.

Ten years ago, Liu pondered the themes of flowers and nature with a number of depictions of the Chinese rose on paper. He revisited the subject in 2021 and created a series of hibiscus paintings, celebrating modesty and tenderness of the plant. For Liu, the continuous and laborious practice of painting has influenced the way he treats the forms and colours of flowers in recent years, and has also prompted him to regard flowers as a symbol for natural, uncontrived, and truthful gestures. Brushstrokes, therefore, should emulate or mirror the natural state of the flowers. Flowers and plants featured in "Flowers of Hong Kong" exhibition include lilies, red and white hibiscus, hydrangea, and roses; Liu repeatedly examines the individual plants, portraying in different scales the serene yet vivacious natural beings through contrasting colours and orderly compositions.

The two *Lilies* (2022) continues to isolate the flowers as the sole subject of representation, while *Reading and Lilies* (2021-2023) in a more complex arrangement integrates the various elements Liu has explored in the last two decades: subtle, quietly disturbing colours; overlapping, stacking rectangular structures and shapes; pictorial depth that is playfully hindered and mystified; a solitary female figure who turns away from the viewer, and a meek, graceful cat. *White Hibiscus* (2023), *White Hibiscus With Black Background* (2023), and *Untitled – Standing in Front of the Red Hibiscus* (2021-2023) are related to one another in a similar fashion: Liu's recontextualisation of flowers turns the natural beings into pictures-within-pictures that are larger than life, responding fancifully to the

enumerated realness of the interiors. The nebulous *Reading and White Hibiscus* (2023), on the other hand, confuses the figures in the foreground with the looming buds in the background, evocative of Goya's engraved fantastic scene.

In the exhibition "Flowers of Hong Kong", works focusing on the movement of the human figure such as *Labor Movement With Red Headband* (2020-2024) and *Labour work at Industrial Building* (2023) reiterate the artist's interest in labor and contortions. *The Island* (2023), *On the Sea* (2023), *Hydrangea and Sunset* (2023), and other groups of small-scale tempera paintings splice fragmented objects and scenes, laying out meandering narratives comprised of intricate and detailed sights. The exhibition space of "Flowers of Hong Kong", designed by Tian Jun, counterbalances the industrial atmosphere of the Kiang Malingue Tin Wan studio space by remapping the room, introducing an artificial environment that intimately and physically contextualises the paintings.

(About Liu Xiaohui)

Liu Xiaohui (b. 1975, Shandong Province, China) received his BFA from the Mural Painting Department of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing, China in 1999. In 2010, he received MFA from the Mural Painting Department of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, Beijing, China. Recent solo exhibitions include "Liu Xiaohui: Hibiscus", White Space, Beijing, China (2023); "Liu Xiaohui: Détournement", A07 798 Art Zone, Beijing, China (2020); "LIU Xiaohui: Movements", ShanghART Beijing, Beijing, China (2018); "Liu Xiaohui: The Mystery of Sisyphus", Antenna Space, Shanghai, China (2015). His works have been widely exhibited in major institutions including Beijing Minsheng Art Museum, Beijing (2022); Wuhan Art Museum, Wuhan (2021); National Art Museum of China, Beijing (2015); CAFA Art Museum, Beijing (2013); Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangzhou (2006). Liu Xiaohui currently lives and works in Beijing, China.