

Kiang Malingue Wayfarer of Fire

馬凌畫廊
kiangmalingue.com

10 Sik On Street, Wanchai, Hong Kong
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(Artists) Brook Hsu, Kwan Sheung Chi, Lai Chih-Sheng, Phillip Lai, Ellen Pau, Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Samson Young

(Opening)
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(Date)
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(Gallery Hours)
Tue to Sat, 12 – 6 PM

(Location)
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Beneath the marble it isolates

No other fire fulminates

Than the console glittering there.

— Stéphane Mallarmé, “Tout Orgueil fume-t-il du soir”

Kiang Malingue presents at its Hong Kong location *Wayfarer of Fire*, a group exhibition bringing together Brook Hsu, Kwan Sheung Chi, Lai Chih-Sheng, Phillip Lai, Ellen Pau, Apichatpong Weerasethakul, and Samson Young. With a focus on the transformative power of cinema, sound and labour, the artists turn to Promethean figures and revolutionary visions, tracing the ways in which individuals and communities act as keepers of the flame, collectors of cinders, and fire-watchers—tending the life-giving potential of fire, reflecting on its mobility, monumentality, and memory, setting amnesia ablaze.

At the heart of the exhibition lies Ellen Pau’s single-channel video *Blue* (1989–90), a pivotal work that commemorates tragic historical events through a montage of war imagery. Set to American vocalist Meredith Monk’s hauntingly evocative soundtrack, Pau’s masterful edit on a Betamax machine shapes the tape into a deliberately oblique sequence—the Hong Kong urban texture Pau favours gives way to glimpses of incendiary gesture, a barrelling train, and a choreography layered with footage of an event that remains unspeakable, opening a space of solidarity by way of solitude. The scratchy, tactile grain of the Super-8 projection suggests that the irrepressible urge to act, to mobilise, and to dance has turned the video into a body—one that questions its own capacity to remember and to forget.

Phillip Lai’s installation *Untitled (Hypnos)* (2023) turns, on the other hand, to the absence of fire, and to the absence of any vigilant, fire-watching figure. As the title suggests, the installation—a siren that sounds in total silence, a lighthouse that disorients—means to hypnotise, working as a relentless, clock-like fixture that ensures one does not wake. One may, however, also attempt to identify with it: the rotating beacon light set atop incinerated breakfast cereal resembles a human head, making the artwork far more anthropomorphic than many of Lai’s sculptural forms, such as the capsuled sleeping bag *Untitled* (2023) also on view. Externalising the body as an object marked chiefly by vulnerability, while laying bare the possibility of internalising emissive, igneous elements, the two artworks hand fire back to the Promethean figure—Brâncuși’s version of the Titan is nothing but a head—and leave it there, within them.

Apichatpong Weerasethakul layers a constellation of incandescence onto the making of a community in *Of Love, Of Lights* (2022), and returns to the pyromantic origin of gathering and storytelling with *Fireworks (Fans)* (2016). The latter acknowledges stories imagined from a blaze as the most primitive form of cinema. The artist also reminds us of the dialectical nature of fire, an element as life-giving as it is destructive, at once real and spectral: “The heat is both comfortable and threatening. A fireball is an organic-like machine with phantom fans to blow away the heat and, at the same time, rouse the fire, which is impossible to put out even in dreams.”

While one may dream that the character from Pier Paolo Pasolini's 1968 film *Teorema* burns away in Brook Hsu's half-crimson, half-pale *Odetta* (2026), the soothingly blue canvas of *Pasolini Seven Times* (2024) turns the afterimage of Pasolini into writing, itself on the verge of becoming an abstract form. The heated circumstance of the exhibition entreats Hsu's dense, undulating surface to take on, in turn, the shape of an emergent body of water—one that reveals the weightiness of flame throughout: ignited, inflamed, displaced, absorbed, suppressed, contained, and extinguished.

Also in conversation with a profound cinematic tradition, Kwan Sheung Chi's *Before the End: Les Quatre Cents Coups (1959)* (2017) re-enacts the final scene of François Truffaut's legendary French New Wave film. In Truffaut's film, Antoine Doinel, played by Jean-Pierre Léaud, runs to the sea having escaped the observation centre; in Kwan's all but monochrome video, the artist's then four-year-old son runs along the Hung Hom waterfront with an orange flag in his hand—the child appears cheerful, even triumphant, for he is in fact engaged in a friendly race with his artist-father. Fiery is not only the flag, the one bright object in an otherwise colourless social environment; fiery, too, is the flagbearer himself, oblivious to the symbolism he carries and thereby uncannily free—if only for a moment—of political struggle and the burdens of history.

Samson Young's *We Are the World, as performed by the HK Federation of Trade Unions Choir (Muted Situation #21)* (2017) is a further counterpoint, burying passion in bodily movement by way of silence. Part of a long series that began with an invitation to make music for a library, Young's video installation focuses on a performance of the 1985 charity single "We Are the World" by the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions, a pro-Beijing labour and political group established in Hong Kong in 1948. Another reality of solidarity is practised here: HKFTU, a satellite organisation of the Chinese Communist Party, takes as its motto "patriotism, solidarity, rights, welfare and participation," and the choir's performance remains passionate and meticulous even when its members are asked to sing without emitting sound. A performance, less audible than physical, of the will to unite reveals through markedly cinematic means the expressiveness and the energy that igniting compassion demands.

Finally, in *Wayfarer of Fire*, one finds traces of cinder: Lai Chih-Sheng's *One day, you will leave here* (2019) bids farewell—far ahead of the indefinite yet destined departure—by leaving ashen traces on a small piece of sandpaper, paired with a painting of white and grey smears. Together, in capturing remains, the works structure the time reserved for an after-fire, for remnants, for the moment when the wayfarer ends their journey and returns: back to a lifetime in which handy tools and materials are gathered and encased, as in *Case_No.01* (2026), forming a new, contained totality. The case turns tools, now archived and alienated, into a framed landscape of memory, a cached cloud of smoke. The exhibition closes with *A page* (2026), a thin, blank sheet of manually polished marble, a document of the mundane and of blazing events to come.