

# Kiang Malingue *Contraflow*

馬凌畫廊

kiangmalingue.com

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(Artist) Tromarama

(Opening)  
Sat, 20 May, 3 – 6 PM

(Date)  
20 May – 30 Jun 2023

(Opening Hours)  
Tue to Sat, 11 AM – 7 PM  
Closed on public holidays

(Location)  
12/F&13/F, Blue Box Factory  
Building, 25 Hing Wo Street,  
Aberdeen, Hong Kong

(Live Sessions)  
Sat, 20 May, 3 – 4 PM (Opening)  
Sat, 3 June, 4 – 5 PM  
Sat, 17 June, 4 – 5 PM  
Sat, 24 June, 4 – 5 PM

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Kiang Malingue is pleased to present at its Tin Wan studio spaces *Contraflow*, showcasing recent paintings, lenticular prints, performative sculptures, installations and videos by Tromarama. The artist collective continues exploring the significance of the digital economy, the intersection of play and labour, retrieving traces of the personal and the intimate amidst data and statistics, as they reveal the infrastructures of social media, the production of happiness and simulated joy.

The titular piece *Contraflow* is a troupe of Himalayan salt lamps. Allegedly purificatory and good for nurturing a meditative state, the lamps scattered along the wall are activated by tweets that use hashtag #power, performing blinking dances choreographed by a binary code-translating machine. Representative of Tromarama's longstanding interest in re-assessing the link between the analogue and the digital, the performative lamps shed a spectacular yet intimate light on other artworks that physicalise speculations.

*Parade*, the serpentine sculpture inspired partly by the experience of playing with children, consists of 497 sculpted kinetic sand modules, and on each of the identical sand cubes is a recurring Tromarama motif: group member Febie Babyrose's eye, appeared also in previous works such as the 2010 *Extraneous*, which is in the M+ Collection. When taken as a whole and examined from a providential aerial view, the *Parade* reveals itself as an abstracted candlestick chart of Twitter's stock price on May 1st, 2014. Associating marching movements and activism on an international holiday (Labour Day) with speculative procession in the stock market, *Parade* considers the role social media plays in contributing to or exploiting public interest. Additionally, the seven *Abundance* glossy lacquer paintings that appropriate cottonlike kapok seed fibre – a material commonly used to produce traditional Indonesian mattresses – are also annotated with Twitter candlestick charts, reflecting further upon the pseudo-hedonistic and aesthetic aspects of social media.

*Dear oh dear #4* and *Dear oh dear #5* deal directly with the leisure-labour paradox on social media: by applying hot foil pressing on punched attendance record cards, Tromarama draws an analogy between workers punching in and out, and social media users logging in and out on a daily basis. The artist collective demonstrates that, what is promised as a form of leisure is always already a form of (in)voluntary labour, contributing to the data economy that is insatiable and inescapable. The fact that punch cards were one of the earliest data-inputting means when digital technology was nascent also complicates the equation of leisure=labour.

Tromarama also shows in the new video *Incognito* a more fashionable way of punching in: compulsive thumbing on the phone. One sees in the video hovering thumbs, being listlessly caressed and cleaned by mops. Tromarama relates this absurd act to the need for cleansing in ritualistic and spiritual contexts, meaning to address the necessity of cleansing and detoxication.

Another two works that are activated by Twitter hashtags are the installation *Pacupicu*, and the performance *Tukar guling*. *Pacupicu* (*pacu* and *picu* respectively means "race" and "trigger" in Indonesian) consists of a latex horse mask, a speaker, and a monitor, all mounted on a custom metal tripod. The monitor displays live tweets that use the hashtag #contest, collected in real-time. All the collected tweets activate various children's voices, effectively creating a sound composition that emits through the horse's mouth. *Tukar guling* ("asset swap" in Indonesian) on the other hand involves a performer with a custom-made device on his or her wrist; whenever the device fetches a tweet using hashtag #pleasure, the performer claps hands as the device vibrates.

Also on view on the 12th floor of Kiang Malingue's Tin Wan studio space is a selection of new lenticular prints from the *Notes on Play* series. The images combine punch card and mattress patterns, pictures of fresh orchids — the classy yet dispensable symbol of financial power par excellence — and materials from Tromarama's personal archives, including receipts, invoices and other documents that trace the members' economic activities. By laying bare and sublimating infrastructural elements into sophisticated aesthetic forms, Tromarama's *Contraflow* examines how one is instrumentalised and alienated in contemporary society, envisaging alternative ways in which one can freely and radically play.

(About Tromarama)

Tromarama is Bandung based artist collective founded in 2006 by Febie Babyrose, Herbert Hans and Ruddy Hatumena. Engaging with the notion of hyperreality in the digital age, their projects explore the interrelationship between the virtual and the physical world. Their works combine video, installations, computer programming and public participation depicting the influence of digital media on the society's perception towards their surroundings. They have held solo exhibitions at DOCUMENT, Chicago (2021), Centre A, Vancouver (2017), Liverpool Biennial Fringe, Liverpool (2016), Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (2015), National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne (2015), and Mori Art Museum, Tokyo (2010) among other locations. Their group exhibitions include National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne (2020), National Gallery of Australia, Canberra (2019), the Museum of Contemporary Art and Design (MCAD) Manila (2018), Singapore Art Museum, Singapore (2017), Gwangju Biennale, Gwangju (2016), Frankfurter Kunstverein, Frankfurt (2015), Samstag Museum of Art, Adelaide (2014), and the 7th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, Brisbane (2012).