

# Kiang Malingue *Beech, Pine, Fern, Acacia*

馬凌畫廊

kiangmalingue.com

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(Artist) Zheng Bo

(Opening)  
Sat, 18 Mar, 3 – 6 PM

(Date)  
18 Mar – 6 May 2023

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

(Location)  
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Kiang Malingue is pleased to present *Beech, Pine, Fern, Acacia*, Zheng Bo's solo exhibition at the gallery's Tin Wan space. For the first time, Zheng Bo groups together four "biophilia films" in one space — *Pteridophilia* (2016-), *The Political Life of Plants* (2020-), *Le Sacre du printemps* (2021-), and *Samur* (2023) — tracing the myriad trajectories through which their artistic practice has evolved in the last decade.

Zheng Bo's four film projects have been unfolding in four distinct ecological situations: *Pteridophilia* in a subtropical forest with lush ferns outside Taipei; *The Political Life of Plants* in an old-growth beech forest near Berlin; *Le Sacre du printemps* in a primeval pine forest in Dalarna, Sweden; *Samur* in the Arabian desert with a single umbrella thorn acacia tree.

Zheng Bo began the *Pteridophilia* series in 2016. As the first project in the ambitious "biophilia films" framework, *Pteridophilia* connects queer people and queer plants by imagining close contacts between humans and ferns. The participants cultivate deep emotional and physical relations with the plants: making love to them, trying out BDSM acts, and bonding with fiddleheads and spores. The stunningly sensual *Pteridophilia* series provided the foundation upon which later "biophilia films" have expanded.

First shown in the artist's 2021 solo exhibition *Wanwu Council* at the Gropius Bau in Berlin, *The Political Life of Plants* is a black-and-white film that speculates about the forest's political life in a cinematic style that alludes to the aesthetics of early 20th century Soviet cinema. Featured in the film are conversations between the artist and two leading ecologists in the region, on topics such as symbiosis and community-building. Focusing intently on Grumsin, an ancient beech forest in Brandenburg and one of Germany's UNESCO World Heritage sites, *The Political Life of Plants* is a portrait of the forest as a queer assembly where the trees take part in a congress of their own "more-than-human" form.

*Le Sacre du printemps*, referencing Nijinsky and Stravinsky's 1913 landmark experiment, was first presented at the 59th Venice Biennale in 2022. Zheng Bo returns the dance to a living forest. Five Nordic dancers keep their bodies upside down to compose ecosexual courtships with pine trees that are hundreds of years old.

Zheng Bo's latest film *Samur*, completed in January 2023, is part of a two-year Artist's Garden commission at Jameel Arts Centre in Dubai. During extensive visits to different natural habitats around the UAE in the previous summer, the artist was captivated by the umbrella thorn acacia tree, known locally as Samur. In the film, two immigrant dancers and a Samur tree in the Mleiha desert are delicately entangled. For Zheng Bo, the dance is a way for all of us to reconnect with the tree and the land.

Biophilia, according to renowned biologist E. O. Wilson, describes our innate urge to connect with other forms of life. Zheng Bo insists that their chief responsibility in making these "biophilia films" is "ecosensibility" — instead of creating or directing. The panoramic *Beech, Pine, Fern, Acacia*

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conjures a garden of earthly delights in which humans and plants dance, love, and flourish together.

(About Zheng Bo)

ZHENG Bo is an ecoqueer artist of ethnic Bai heritage. Through drawing, dance and film, they cultivate kinships with plants. These relations are aesthetic, erotic, and political. For them, art does not arise from human creativity, but more-than-human vibrancy.

Zheng Bo lives in a village on the south side of Lantau Island, Hong Kong. Guided by Daoist wisdom, they grow weedy gardens, living slogans, biophilia films, and ecosocialist gatherings. These diverse projects, alive and entangled, constitute a garden where they collaborate with both human and nonhuman thinkers and activists. Their ecological art practice contributes to an emergent planetary indigeneity.

In 2023 Zheng Bo is working on the Artist's Garden commission at Jameel Arts Centre in Dubai and three botanical public works outside Rockbund Art Museum in Shanghai. In 2022 they presented a forest dance film titled *Le Sacre du printemps* at the 59th Venice Biennale. In 2021 they staged *Wanwu Council* at the Gropius Bau in Berlin and *Life is hard. Why do we make it so easy?* at Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden in Hong Kong. They participated in Sydney Biennale (2022), Liverpool Biennial (2021), Yokohama Triennale (2020), Manifesta (2018), Taipei Biennial (2018), and Shanghai Biennial (2016). Their works are in the collections of Power Station of Art in Shanghai, Hong Kong Museum of Art, Singapore Art Museum, Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, among others.

Zheng Bo studied with Douglas Crimp and received their PhD from the Graduate Program in Visual & Cultural Studies, University of Rochester. They taught at China Academy of Art from 2010 to 2013, and currently teaches at the School of Creative Media, City University of Hong Kong, where they lead the Wanwu Practice Group.