

Kiang Malingue Meanwhile

馬凌畫廊

kiangmalingue.com

10 Sik On Street, Wanchai, Hong Kong
香港 灣仔 適安街10號
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(Artist) Homer Shew

(Opening)
Sat, 28 Oct, 3 – 6 PM

(Date)
29 Oct – 02 Dec 2023

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

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

(Contact)
office@kiangmalingue.com;
+852 28100317

(Media Enquiries)
Sarah Aiman
sarah@kiangmalingue.com;
+852 28100317

(All Other Enquiries)
Ella Liao
ella@kiangmalingue.com;
+852 28100318

Kiang Malingue is pleased to present "Meanwhile", an exhibition of Homer Shew's recent portraits. This is the New York-based artist's second exhibition in Hong Kong since *Backgrounds* in 2021, including a number of portraits based on the same sitter years after the first portraits were made, adding a poignant temporal dimension to the artworks. Focusing on depicting Asian Americans, Shew continues to explore the social fabric and contiguous elements of the community as individuals inside it continue to grow and change.

Shew made a portrait for Pulitzer Prize winner Hua Hsu in 2021, whom he admires as an exceptional Asian American writer. For the current exhibition, Shew created *Hua Hsu II* (2023), an organic development from the previous portrait. Hsu is seen once again donning a Hawaiian shirt — a fortuitous opportunity for Shew to fully express his liking for plants and leaves — in a relaxed, sitting pose, calmly looking away from the viewer as he is engaged in a friendly conversation. In a strange and playful way, the depiction moves away from a classic Asian American portrait that emphasises racial features to a portrayal that obfuscates the racial identity of the sitter: Hsu's skin tone darkens under the sun and the awning shade while his hair attains a dramatic jaggedness that echoes the arboreal elements in the background, eyes lit and widened with sincerity and enthusiasm. No longer frozen in a staged pose, Hsu is here naturally integrated with his surrounding environment, at once metamorphosing into and out of the New York streetscape behind. *Hua Hsu II* shows that the writer has not changed but has for the artist become an endearing subject who goes beyond the necessity of racial descriptions.

Shew's second portrait of Bogota-based artist Charlie Mai, among other two-timers including *Brandon Blackwood II* (2023), *Simon II* (2023) and *Chantal II* (2023), functions in the same way: Mai is, in this slightly smaller painting, wearing the same bandana and blue checkered shirt, and even the same necklaces. *Charlie Mai II* (2023) made two years after the first piece unapologetically revisits the sitter in the same look, intensifying the chiaroscuro and the expressive handling of the subject. The slender artist friend in *Charlie Mai II* directly approaches the viewer, producing under Shew's unexpected brushwork a friendly expression that is as intent as it is languid. The inscription of "respect", a fragment from the awning of a martial arts studio at the bottom left corner of the painting also conveys Shew's feelings for the sitter.

Karen and Tenn Joe (2023) is the largest painting in the exhibition and a rare double portrait with two sitters. Capturing the affectionate, playful scene, Shew fully contextualises the couple by surrounding them with traffic, trees and the location of the lunch — 45th street, Queens, New York. The unmistakable focus on the faces testifies to the artist's interest in exploring visages, and in discerning the inherently abstract and gestural within representation.

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(About Homer Shew)

Born in Chicago in 1990, Homer Shew graduated from the Bard College in 2012, and is presently based in New York City. Since 2015, he has been painting portraits of Asian Americans that are, in his father's words, improper subjects for oil painting. As a Chinese American, Shew has since been making paintings that deal with the re-aestheticisation and de-caricaturisation of Asian faces, from a perspective that is singularly immanent. Homer Shew earned his B.A. in Visual Art from Bard College in 2012. He has exhibited paintings at the CP Project Space at SVA (New York, NY), The Hyde Park Art Center (Chicago, IL), The Silent Barn (Brooklyn, NY), and Bard College (Annandale-on-Hudson, NY). He has participated in the exhibition "Responses: Asian American Voices Resisting the Tide of Racism" at the Museum of Chinese in America (New York, NY), in which a series of Shew's large-scale commissioned paintings are on view. Shew has completed residencies in Chicago and Preston Ranch, WY, and was an artist-in-residence at The Millay Colony For the Arts (Austerlitz, NY) in 2021. His previous showings with the gallery include his solo show "Backgrounds" in 2021 and his participation in the group show "Yuan Fang, Yirui Jia, Liu Yin and Homer Shew" in 2023.