

Lai Yu Tong: The Dogs

Opening Reception: 30 August 2025, 4pm

Exhibition Period : 30 August – 9 November 2025

Performances : 5 & 6 September 2025, 8.30–10pm (ticketed)

Singapore, August 2025 — ShanghART Singapore is pleased to present Lai Yu Tong's first solo exhibition with the gallery, *The Dogs*, opening on 30 August 2025. Featuring a new series of works that centres around his encounters with a pack of stray dogs, the artist invites us to reconsider our relationship with entities that exist on the fringes of our environments, while reflecting upon his own experiences and interactions with the dogs across several months.

Drawing upon observations of the present, Lai's practice examines the overlooked and neglected. Everyday objects and subjects such as cars, crows, hands, and chairs feature as motifs across his works that are cast within the stories and scenarios that he creates around them. By looking at something for extended periods of time, he brings out alternative perspectives on the familiar. Recently, his gaze fixates upon the stray dogs that he encounters around a forested area close to where he lives. Their existence as wild, untamed and shy creatures that roam under the shadows of Singapore intrigues him.

In a highly developed and controlled society, the presence of these dogs introduces a degree of unpredictability, even instilling a sense of danger. Initial encounters with them ended with Lai retreating out of fear. However, following multiple visits where he would observe, photograph and sometimes feed the dogs, the fear that he felt eventually shifts into a kind of love, as he forms a connection with these misunderstood creatures.

Storytelling makes up a big part of Lai's approach, manifesting in forms such as drawing, sculpture, and sound. In these latest works, Lai seeks to retell his encounters with these enigmatic creatures through intimate pieces of drawings and collages on various modest everyday materials — cardboard, wood, and paper. He simultaneously draws and obscures the dogs, playing with techniques of erasure and transparency that render his subjects as ghostly figures and impressions. Such loose methods of representation allude to the elusiveness and placelessness of the subjects he draws, whilst also allowing them to take on other identities and connotations.

Through a selection of two-dimensional works, a sculpture, a sound piece and a performance, the gallery space is transformed into a site of encounter between the audience and the dogs. Bridging the distance between us and them through Lai's own experiences, the exhibition encourages visitors to empathise and identify with the beings that live on the edges of our environments; out of sight and away from what we are familiar with.

About the Artist

Lai Yu Tong is an artist from Singapore who works across drawing, image-making, sculpture and sound. His practice is interested in creating adequate media to articulate the present, believing in the intrinsic need for humans to make images and tell stories. Recent works of his consider how art can evoke empathy in a world so damaged.

Lai has presented his work at group exhibitions in Singapore and abroad, most recently at Radio28 (MX), Plague Space (RUS) and Barely Art Fair (US); and held solo exhibitions in Singapore at Temporary Unit (2022), The Substation (2021), Comma Space (2020), and DECK (2019).

Besides his art, Lai regularly publishes books under Thumb Books, a self-founded press that makes children's books for both children and adults. His recent curatorial projects include Frida (2023), an exhibition platform by his kitchen window; and Robin (2022), a series of group exhibitions held in camping tents around Singapore.

About ShanghART

ShanghART Gallery was established in Shanghai in 1996. It has since grown to become one of China's most influential art institutions and a vital player in the development of contemporary art in China, working with over 50 pioneering and emerging artists, including DING Yi, HAN Mengyun, LI Shan, LIN Aojie, Arin RUNGJANG, SUN Xun, Melati SURYODARMO, TANG Da Wu, Apichatpong WEERASETHAKUL, XU ZHEN®, YANG Fudong, ZENG Fanzhi, and ZHAO Renhui Robert.

ShanghART Singapore was established in 2012 as the gallery's Southeast Asia wing, located in the contemporary art cluster Gillman Barracks. The gallery's first overseas space serves as a platform to introduce Chinese contemporary art to the region while developing collaborations with Southeast Asian artists, facilitating cross-cultural dialogues and enriching artistic exchanges within the global art community.

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