

## Modern Art

Phillip Lai

*Drunken Sailor*

24 June – 31 July, 2021

Helmet Row, EC1

Modern Art is pleased to announce a solo exhibition of new work by Phillip Lai.

Since the early 1990s, Phillip Lai has been working with sculpture to develop a visual language that enables a certain kind of thinking about abstraction and specificity in the ubiquitous objects and material that much of human life depends upon for sustenance and survival. Lai returns to similar typologies of objects in his work. Containers – plates, sinks, bowls, or barrels – the receptacles that typically carry raw materials or food, repeatedly appear in Lai's sculptures, often alongside other motifs, such as cloth - in the form of jute, clothing, tarpaulin - layers utilized to provide protection, shelter or warmth. Lai works within a language of these foundational formal motifs to consider how visual and conceptual attention is structured in daily life.

Phillip Lai's exhibition for Modern Art consists of a group of new sculptures both wall-based and floor-based that cross-reference each other across the spaces of the gallery. Their colour palette is limited to mostly blue and silver, but made with a range of materials including poured concrete, pewter, polyurethane resin, aluminum, and tarpaulin. Much of the work explores a sense of retention and loss of physical material. In *Blue Food*, a blue cast-concrete form with defined depressions and hollows eventually becomes the clogged container for more concrete poured through it. Within these lengthy processes, positive and negative spaces are sometimes muddled, using the reversing logic of casting; nothing is quite what it first seems. *Drunken Sailor*, a work with cast barrel-like objects, also titles the show as a whole, denoting qualities of physical immersion and disorientation. Perhaps it is a kind of reverie, or something more oblique.

Phillip Lai was born in 1969 in Kuala Lumpur, and he lives and works in London. His works have been shown in solo exhibitions in institutions including Camden Arts Centre, London (2014); Transmission Gallery, Glasgow (2009); and The Showroom, London (1997). His work has been shown in group exhibitions in such institutions as The Hepworth Wakefield, Wakefield, UK (2018); John Hansard Gallery, Southampton University, Southampton (2015); Nottingham Contemporary, Nottingham (2014); City Gallery Prague, Prague, Czech Republic (2012); Tate Modern, Turbine Hall, London (2010); Cubitt, London (2008); Overgaden Institute for Samtidskunst, Copenhagen, Denmark (2007); and Midway Contemporary Art, Minneapolis, USA (2007); CCA, Glasgow, Scotland (2005); Hayward Gallery, London (1999); MoMA, New York, USA (1998); and ICA, London, (1995). In 2018 the artist was shortlisted for the Hepworth Prize for Sculpture. His work is held in the following collections: Arts Council Collection, London; Nomas Foundation, Rome, Italy; Sifang Art Museum, Nanjing, China; Tate, London.

For more information, please contact Alex Glover on [alexander@modernart.net](mailto:alexander@modernart.net)

Works List: Phillip Lai 'Drunken Sailor' 8<sup>th</sup> July – 7<sup>th</sup> August 2021

Gallery 1 (clockwise from entrance)

*Drunken Sailor*, 2021  
cast polyurethane resin and epoxy fibreglass  
59.5 x 245 x 159 cm  
23 3/8 x 96 1/2 x 62 5/8 ins  
(MA-LAIPH-00192)

*Untitled*, 2021  
cast pewter  
15.5 x 22.5 x 4.5 cm  
6 1/8 x 8 7/8 x 1 3/4 ins  
(MA-LAIPH-00190)

Gallery 2 (clockwise from entrance)

*Untitled*, 2021  
cast pewter, aluminium, polypropylene fabric  
11 x 120 x 97 cm  
4 3/8 x 47 1/4 x 38 1/4 ins  
(MA-LAIPH-00185)

*Untitled*, 2021  
cast pewter  
23.5 x 21 x 4.5 cm  
9 1/4 x 8 1/4 x 1 3/4 ins  
(MA-LAIPH-00189)

*Untitled*, 2021  
cast pewter, aluminium, polypropylene fabric  
8 x 236 x 158 cm  
3 1/8 x 92 7/8 x 62 1/4 ins  
(MA-LAIPH-00184)

*Untitled*, 2021  
cast polyurethane resin and metal  
44 x 217 x 23 cm  
17 3/8 x 85 3/8 x 9 1/8 ins  
(MA-LAIPH-00191)

*Blue Food*, 2021  
cast pigmented concrete  
9.5 x 286 x 64 cm  
3 3/4 x 112 5/8 x 25 1/4 ins  
(MA-LAIPH-00186)

*Untitled*, 2021  
cast pewter  
14.5 x 16 x 4.5 cm  
5 3/4 x 6 1/4 x 1 3/4 ins  
(MA-LAIPH-00187)

*Untitled*, 2021  
cast pewter  
21.5 x 24 x 4.5 cm  
8 1/2 x 9 1/2 x 1 3/4 ins  
(MA-LAIPH-00188)