

Spring 2018

ArtReview Asia

"ArtReview Asia recommends eight shows to see this Spring."

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By **Nirmala Devi**



Phillip Lai, In the Half Life, 2018 (installation view). Courtesy the artist and Edouard Malingue Gallery, Hong Kong & Shanghai

Phillip Lai at Edouard Malingue Gallery, Hong Kong 26, through 5 May

Exhibitions by **Phillip Lai** tend to be masterclasses in getting the most out of the least. The Malaysian-born, London-based artist uses the overly precious setting of the gallery space to pull objects – cooking utensils, kitchen fittings, plastic tubs, sheets of jute, etc – out of their utilitarian context in such a way as to force viewers to think about them as discrete objects, or things in and of themselves, while in the process challenging the assumptions we make about their functionality and attendant concerns such as, for example, the social status of the person who might own such an object, its role in their lives and that relation in respect to one's own style of living. Such objects might be a paint- or glue-stained plastic bowl (an object from the artist's studio?) or a similar, but clean, plastic bowl mounted on the wall and filled with a small amount of rice (preparation for cooking?): they're the same but different, and we process the information about these objects (even if they have material, proportional and functional equivalence) in a different manner as a result. *In the Half Life* at Edouard Malingue Gallery's Hong Kong space features Lai's latest works, and if you're tempted to think of them as being like Subodh Gupta's without the polish, don't: Lai sometimes uses polish too.