

*Ken Lum*

September 17—October 22, 2022

Opening Reception: Saturday, September 17, 4–8 pm

Lower Level

Level Two

Magenta Plains is proud to present *Ken Lum*, a solo exhibition featuring four series of works: *Photo-Mirrors II*, *Time. And Again*, *Necrology*, and *Furniture Sculpture*. Working in a variety of media over the last four decades including photography, sculpture, and installation, Lum's art is concerned with how meanings are assigned to images, texts, and objects in everyday life.

The mirror is an important and recurring motif in Lum's art, dating back to 1997 with his first series of *Photo-Mirrors* in which personal photographs gathered from many sources were thoughtfully curated into the margins of the mirror frame. Lum has made the mirror a focal point of several key installation works, including *Mirror Maze with 12 Signs of Depression* for Documenta 11 in 2002, *The House of Realization* for the 10th Istanbul Biennale in 2007 and a series of mirror/text works in 2009. *Photo Mirrors II* meditates on the role of the image in the American landscape. Power, desire, violence, and spectacle are evoked by images screen-printed onto mirrored surfaces. The unscreened spaces remain as functioning mirrored surfaces, implicating the viewer within the narratives called up by the images themselves.

The combination of image and text in *Time. And Again* addresses what it means to work during a pandemic. The image component depicts highly plausible scenarios, while the text component, mantric in form, reveals the limits of speech in expressing the monotony and uncertainty within everyday life. The relationship between image and text demands of the viewer an oscillating attention between the two halves, generating a destabilizing effect on any possible readings.

Rendered in the style of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century frontispieces, *Necrology* features fictionalized obituaries. As Lum has written:

"They read as real rather than as fact. The works are expressive rather than illustrative, didactic, or instrumental in the way that documentary photographs of a person may be. As in all my work, I am interested in the question of identity and its formation. But mostly, I hope for a reader lost in both the language and look of the overall image of the text."

Following the configurative logic of Minimal Art, Lum's *Furniture Sculpture* highlights the silence of Minimal Art as a trope of inwardness in private life. This series of work, which dates back to the late 1970s and first realized when Lum was still an undergraduate student, speaks of the ways in which the social realm cannot be addressed directly or explicitly, but rather through a sublimated domestic ideal. This exhibition is the artist's first solo exhibition in New York in a decade.

Ken Lum (b. 1956, Vancouver, Canada) is an artist best known for his conceptual and representational art in a number of media, including painting, sculpture, and photography. A longtime professor, he currently is the Chair of Fine Arts at the University of Pennsylvania's Weitzman School of Design in Philadelphia. Lum has an extensive art exhibition record that includes Documenta 11, the Venice Biennale, Sao Paulo Bienal, Shanghai Biennale, Carnegie Triennial, Sydney Biennale, Liverpool Biennial, Gwangju Biennale and the Whitney Biennial. Solo exhibitions include the CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts in San Francisco, Kunstmuseum Luzern in Lucerne, Switzerland, Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art in Rotterdam, The Netherlands, and the Vancouver Art Gallery. Lum has also served as a curator for several large-scale exhibitions, including "Shanghai Modern: 1919-1945," "Sharjah Biennial 7," and "Monument Lab: Creative Speculations for Philadelphia." He was a project manager for the exhibition "The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa: 1945 to 1994." He was keynote speaker for the 15th Biennale of Sydney in 2006 and the World Museums Conference held at the Shanghai Museum in Shanghai in 2010. He is Co-Founder and Chief Curatorial Advisor for Monument Lab. Lum has published extensively, including a book of his collected writings issued by Concordia University Press (2020) titled "Everything is Relevant: Writings on Art and Life, 1991-2018."