

**TODAY**

## Machine For (Living) Dying In | 4/5



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**BY BRUCE QUEK - AUGUST 23**

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Life and death are pretty weighty topics, so the cool expanse of Yavuz Fine Art's white cube seems markedly appropriate for Lee's works. The gallery's first room is given over to only three works: The show's title in blue neon; a monochrome painting of a Housing Development Board (HDB) floor plan from Lee's *Dwelling* series; and the compact black plinth of *Gone Solo*.

Consisting of a stately procession of names, dates, ages and so on, *Gone Solo* concerns itself with people who've died alone, regardless of cause or circumstance. So a famous pop star might follow some regular Joe; and tragic suicides share screen time with those who expired peacefully in bed. Sombre and reserved, the work doesn't bombard us in hopes of eliciting a visceral reaction, but leaves us to reflect on mortality and solitude.

The painting of the HDB floor plan, however, seems at first comparatively clinical, though for those of us who grew up (or continue to live) in HDB flats, deciphering the floor plan might rattle loose some memories of our own living arrangements. It's the floor plan of Lee's home during his teen years, and in managing to be both deeply personal and detached at the same time, it's an unsettling contradiction that hints at a porous barrier between apparently opposite extremes.

The exhibition continues through a heavy, opaque PVC curtain, which turns out to be an artwork in its own right, revealing a stark pattern of black and yellow suggestive of danger. It's an artwork you first experience in a humdrum, utilitarian fashion, unaware of its status as art. Tying the second half of the gallery together is a brief text on the wall, which, together with a hammock, constitutes *Script For Unperformed Performance No. 1*. The script briefly describes a short loop of actions: A man swinging gently in the hammock, who then inspects the shelves for scratches, painting over any that he finds, before proceeding to watch television in an adjoining room, and then returning once more to his hammock.

As this scenario plays out in your mind, it becomes clear that the show is more than only a set of individual artworks, though not interconnected to the extent of becoming a single unified installation. Drawing connections between the works in the gallery, the script charts an endless loop that suggests life reduced to its most mechanical, functional level: Resting, working, and relaxing, ground down to mere shadows of themselves.

Not so much life or death, but some interminable limbo formed by the opposed terms cancelling each other out.

BRUCE QUEK

*Machine For (Living) Dying In* runs until Sept 21, 11am to 7 pm, Yavuz Fine Art, 51 Waterloo Street #03-01. Mondays and public holidays by appointment only. Free admission.