



MINIG FAY

Timeline

1943

Ming Fay is born in Shanghai, China, to artists who studied under sculptor Zhang Chongren, exposing him to visual culture at an early age.

1951–52

While recovering from appendicitis, Fay spends a year in bed reading everything from books on painting to comics, awakening his interest in art.

The family moves from Shanghai to Hong Kong, which remains under British rule, following the establishment of the People's Republic of China.

1953–60

His father, Rex Fay, co-founds Hong Kong's first wax museum and works as an art director in film and television. His mother, Ting Gi Ying, an art teacher, shows him how to make paper lanterns, kites, and watercolor paintings—media that later become central to his practice.



Tiger Balm Garden, Haw Par Mansion, Hong Kong, 1950s

Fay visits Tiger Balm Garden, a sculpture park that leaves a lasting impression and later becomes a recurring reference in his work.

1961

At 18, Fay receives a full scholarship to Columbus College of Art & Design in Ohio. One of the school's first Asian students, he studies industrial design at his father's suggestion.



Ming Fay (third from left) and his family before he departs to the U.S., Hong Kong, 1961

1965–70

In 1965, Fay discovers a passion for sculpture and transfers to the Kansas City Art Institute, earning a BFA in 1967. During this time, he creates large-scale geometric steel sculptures. He continues his studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara, where he receives an MFA in 1970.



Ming Fay's early sculpture, Santa Barbara, CA, c. 1969–70

1971–77

Teaches sculpture at the University of Pittsburgh from 1971 to 1974.

Establishes a studio in SoHo, New York, in 1973, while commuting to Pittsburgh through the following year. Transitions from steel to papier-mâché, experimenting with layered paper, gauze, and plaster influenced by the craft techniques of his childhood.

Creates his first fruit sculpture—a pear symbolizing prosperity in Chinese tradition. A series of oversized fruits and vegetables follows, inspired by produce from Chinatown markets and reflecting his Taoist belief in the harmony between humans and nature.



Ming Fay in Union Square home and studio with *Pear*, 1990s

1978–81

Teaches sculpture at Pratt Institute from 1978 to 1980.

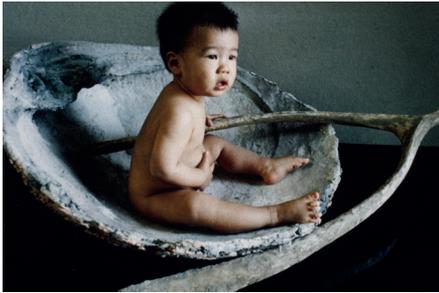
In 1981, marries Peili Chang and moves into their Union Square home, which also serves as one of his studios until 2012.

1982

In January 1982, Fay teaches with the Semester at Sea program, which doubles as the couple's honeymoon voyage around the world. During the trip, he creates his first wishbone sculpture from a clothes hanger and paper, making a wish for a child. Their son, Parker Fay, is born later that year.



Epoxy Art Group members (from left to right) Eric Chan, Jerry Kwan, Bing Lee, Kwok Mang Ho, Hsieh Lifa, Ming Fay, and Kang Lok Chung, Kwok Gallery, New York, 1983



Parker Fay sitting inside *Clam Shell* alongside *Wishbone*, 1983

Co-founds Epoxy Art Group with Eric Chan, Kang Lok Chung, Jerry Kwan, Kwok Mang Ho, and Bing Lee. Named after a bonding resin, the group represents the “glue” connecting Asian and Western cultural influences. Together they produce collaborative multimedia installations and performances addressing identity, cultural exchange, and diaspora.

1983–84

Begins teaching sculpture at William Paterson University in Wayne, New Jersey, where he teaches until 2016.

In 1984, as part of Epoxy Art Group, Fay participates in *Erotica*, an outdoor slide projection on a building at Spring Street and Broadway. Fay contributes mollusk drawings with erotic overtones.



Invitation to *Erotica*, Epoxy Art Group, New York, September 11-29, 1984

Presents his first New York solo exhibition *Objects from Nature* at Broadway Windows, NYU's window displays at the Washington Square East Gallery. The works explore Taoist themes and Chinese symbolism—oranges for wealth, cherries for love, and peaches for longevity.



Objects from Nature, Broadway Windows, New York University, 1984

1985

Alisan Fine Arts, Hong Kong, presents Fay's first solo exhibition with the gallery, *Drawings for Sculptures*, featuring pen, ink, and watercolor works that develop ideas for his fruit and vegetable sculptures.



Peach, 1978 Watercolor, 30" x 40"

Ming Fay



Alice King & Sandra L. Walters request the pleasure of your presence at the preview of

"Drawings for Sculptures"

by

Ming Fay

on Wednesday, 30 October, 1985

9:30 — 7:30 pm

Dr. Philip Kwok, JP,

will open the exhibition at 6 pm

Alisan Fine Arts Ltd.,

815-616 Holland House

9 Ure House Street

Hong Kong

Tel: 5231425

Exhibition continues through 30 November, 1985

Gallery Hours: 10:00 am — 5:00 pm (Weekdays)

10:00 am — 1:00 pm (Saturdays)

Ming Fay 費明杰

"What is the place of drawing in the process that results in the sculptures which are the focus of Ming Fay's work? As with so many artists, they are a testing ground for ideas: a way of keeping eyes, mind and hand open, maintaining a balance against the concentration and condensation which major work demands. At the same time the drawings demonstrate qualities that will already be familiar to those who know his sculpture. Among these are sensitivity and an almost obsessively analytical attention to detail. For me this is especially clear in some of the water drawings in pen and colored inks.

More recent drawings are generally done in watercolors, which are handled more loosely than pen and ink. Ming Fay capitalized on the fluidity of this medium in order to attain a new flexibility.

Berry Schwebsky poet & art critic for Arts Magazine

Selected Public collections:

City Museum of Hong Kong

Museum of Fine Art, Ohio

Walt Disney World, Florida

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art

Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art

Invitation to *Drawings for Sculptures*, Alisan Fine Arts, Hong Kong, 1985

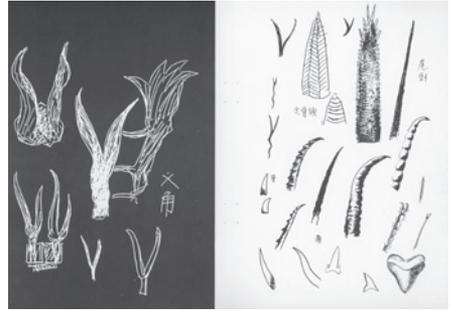
1987

As part of Epoxy Art Group—now joined by Zhang Hongtu—Fay participates in *36 Tactics*, an installation inspired by ancient Chinese military strategies, presented at Sabrina Fung Gallery and The Alternative Museum. Wall-mounted panels combine photocopied historical and political images with proverbs from Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*. The work was later acquired by the New Museum.



Detail from Epoxy Art Group, *36 Tactics*, 1987

Creates the artist's book *Midnite Porridge*, compiling sketches from his notebooks that document ideas in progress—some later realized as finished works, others remaining as raw concepts.



Spread from *Midnite Porridge*, 1987

1988

Presents the solo exhibition *Elixirs* at The Alternative Museum, New York. Features sculptural “hybrids”—invented plant forms that merge natural and imagined elements, combining species traits and personal symbolism to explore reproduction, rejuvenation, and desire.



Ming Fay with *Elixirs*, The Alternative Museum, New York, 1988

1990

Moves his studio to Dumbo, Brooklyn, where he will work for almost two decades.

Installs his first public outdoor sculpture *Bell Sprouts* at Petrosino Park, sponsored by the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council with a reception hosted by Storefront for Art and Architecture.



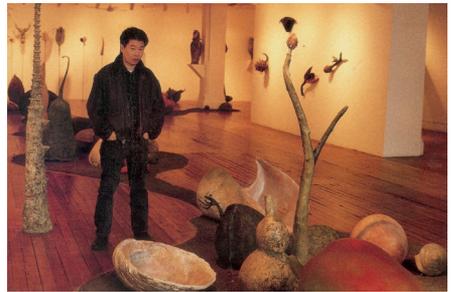
Bell Sprouts, Petrosino Park, New York, 1990

With Epoxy Art Group, Fay participates in *The Decade Show: Frameworks of Identity in the 1980s* at the New Museum, a group exhibition on identity politics featuring over 200 works by artists including Hans Haacke, the Guerrilla Girls, Ana Mendieta, and Cindy Sherman.

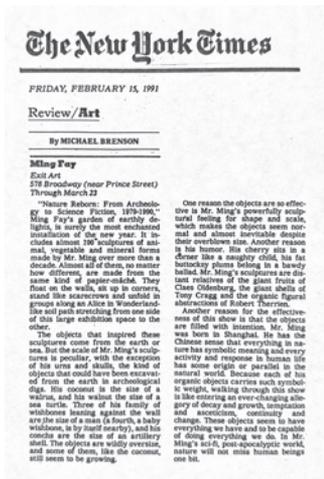
Begins a one-year residency at Dieu Donn e, a New York nonprofit studio dedicated to handmade paper. There, he develops the *Lings (Horns)* series—paper sculptures resembling horns that evoke growth, decay, and renewal.

1991

Fay presents the solo exhibition *Nature Reborn: From Archaeology to Science Fiction* at Exit Art, one of his first major solo shows in a prominent New York institution, bringing him international visibility. The installation features gigantic papier-m ch  fruits, nuts, seeds, pods, shells, sprouts, pits, bones, and roots arranged on beds of dirt throughout the gallery.



Nature Reborn: From Archaeology to Science Fiction, Exit Art, New York, 1991



Review of *Nature Reborn* by Michael Brenson, in the *New York Times*, February 15, 1991

1994

Fay presents *From the Garden* at Alisan Fine Arts, Hong Kong, featuring his signature oversized fruit sculptures displayed on draped white pedestals that lend a theatrical, intimate quality to the work.



From the Garden, Alisan Fine Arts, Hong Kong, 1994

1995

Creates *Enigma Elm*, his first permanent public artwork for the public school Louis F. Simeone (P.S. 7)—a multi-part bronze and steel installation spanning the school's interior and exterior.



Enigma Elm, P.S. 7, Elmhurst, Queens, New York, 1995



Enigma Elm, P.S. 7, Elmhurst, Queens, New York, 1995

1998

Presents his first *Money Tree* works in *Garden of Qián* at the Whitney Museum's Philip Morris branch, curated by Eugenie Tsai. Drawing on Chinese mythology and literature, the installation explores prosperity and transformation through plant forms inspired by *Lunaria annua* (the money plant).



Garden of Qián, Whitney Museum of American Art at Philip Morris, New York, 1998

2000–03

Begins teaching at the Rinehart School of Sculpture, MFA Program, Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA), as a visiting professor mentoring graduate students in sculpture, and conducting midterm and final critiques, a position he holds until 2016.



Ginkoberry Gwa, Oregon Convention Center, Portland, Oregon, 2003

Completes *Ginkoberry Gwa*, a public artwork for the Oregon Convention Center, inspired by ancient regional ginkgo trees and the Native American tree of life, *Gwakalekala*.

Fay creates an installation of oversized bronze ginkgo berries, steel-and-glass flowers, and floating mandala-like seeds.

2004

Through the MTA Arts for Transit program, Fay designs mosaic murals for the Delancey-Essex Street subway station. Drawing on local history, he depicts a cherry orchard from the 18th-century DeLancey family farm and shad fish found in the Hudson and East Rivers, symbolizing the train's passage beneath the water. Based on his watercolor sketches, these glass mosaics are his first work in the medium.



Shad Crossing, Delancey Orchard:
Delancey-Essex Street subway station, 2004

2007-10

In 2007, Fay presents *Floating Reeds* at The Museum of Contemporary Art Shanghai, featuring oversized *Monkey Pots* inspired by the South American monkey pot tree as a metaphor for human desire. The works incorporate bulging layers of foam, paint, paper, and gauze in candy-colored hues over wire frames.

Moves his studio from Dumbo to Jersey City, at Mana Contemporary, where he works until the end of his life.

2012-13

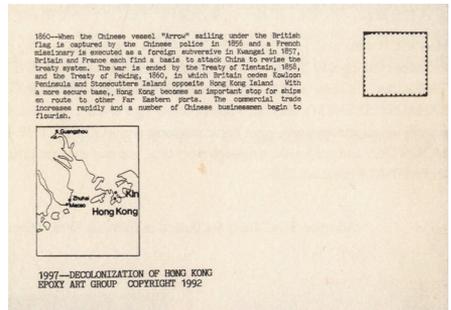
Presents the solo exhibition *Canutopia* at Grounds for Sculpture, Hamilton, New Jersey. The title, combining “canopy” and “utopia,” expresses Fay’s vision of harmony between humans and nature. The installation embodies an allegory of the natural world, balancing themes of birth, growth, death, decay, and rebirth.



Canutopia, Ground for Sculpture, Hamilton, New Jersey, 2012

2018

36 Tactics (1987) and *The Decolonization of Hong Kong* (1992) by Epoxy Art Group are featured in *Art Across Archives: Postcards from Chinatown* at Think! Chinatown, in collaboration with Asia Art Archive in America and the NYU AIP/A Institute. The show explores the group’s downtown New York context and slideshow-based practice.



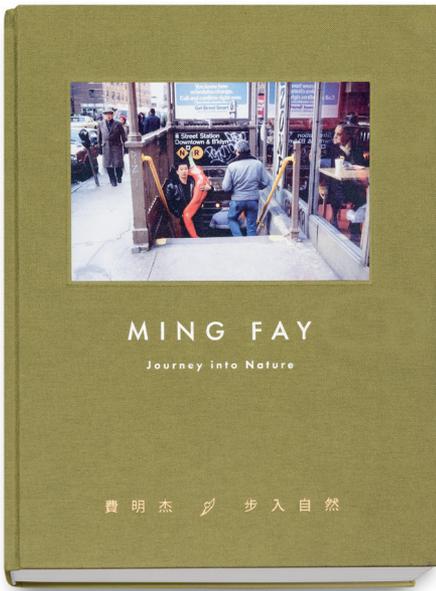
Details from Epoxy Art Group, *The Decolonization of Hong Kong*, 1992

The Decolonization of Hong Kong postcard series is later acquired by M+.

2020-22

The Ming Fay Papers are donated to NYU Fales Library & Special Collections. The archive spans five decades.

On the occasion of his solo exhibition *Journey into Nature* at Alisan Fine Arts, Hong Kong, the gallery publishes a 423-page artist monograph, the first major publication documenting over 50 years of Fay's work.



Cover of *Ming Fay: Journey into Nature*, Ming Fay Studio and Alisan Fine Arts, 2022

Participates in the group exhibition *Oneness: Nature and Connectivity in Chinese Art* at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, presenting works from his *Money Tree* series along with seeds, hybrids, cherries, peaches, and other sculptures.

2023

His proposal *Monumental Fruits* is restaged at an exhibition by Canal Street Research Association at Storefront for Art and Architecture. This project was first shown in the 1988 group exhibition *Public Art in Chinatown*.



Proposal for *Monumental Fruits*, 1988

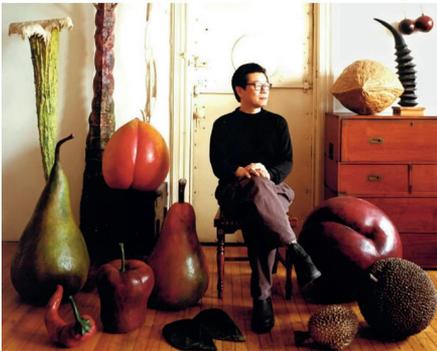
2025

Ming Fay passes away on February 23, 2025, at the age of 82 in New York.

The New York Times

Ming Fay, Who Made Magical Sculptures of the Natural World, Dies at 82

By Will Heinrich
March 17, 2025



Ming Fay's Obituary by Will Heinrich in the *New York Times*, March 17, 2025

The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, presents *Ming Fay: Edge of the Garden*, the first retrospective of his career, with 100 works including sculptures, drawings, and sketchbooks.

Fay's work is included in the annual exhibition curated by Timo Kappeller at The Campus—a collaborative exhibition space located in a former school building in Hudson, New York.



The Campus 2025 Annual Exhibition, Hudson, New York, 2025

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Ming Fay: Edge of the Garden, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, 2025



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2025