Born in Lynn, Massachusetts in 1950 to Chinese emigrants, Yau attended Bard College and earned an MFA from Brooklyn College in 1978. A noted art critic and curator, Yau has also published many works of art criticism and artists’ books. His first book of poetry, Crossing Canal Street, was published in 1976. Since then, he has won acclaim for his poetry’s attentiveness to visual culture and linguistic surface. He teaches at the Mason Gross School of the Arts and Rutgers University, and lives in New York City.