

Zhi Wei Hiu
Slivered Wake, A Cast Lance

June 6 – July 5, 2025

RAINRAIN is pleased to present *Slivered Wake, A Cast Lance*, the debut solo exhibition in New York by Singaporean Chinese artist Zhi Wei Hiu. Rooted in analogue techniques, her process draws from the darkroom and the metalsmith's studio to construct recombinant, syncretic forms. In this new body of work, Hiu envisions photographic practice as an idiosyncratic terrain where surface, memory, and chemical transformation converge. Across the exhibition, image-making becomes a site for probing the residue that lingers in the wake of seeing, recording, and remembering.

Slivered Wake, A Cast Lance suggests both aftermath and action: a luminous trace and a searing, piercing gesture. These dual forces echo through the exhibition.

In the wake of their intended function as image reproducers, darkroom apparatus—including enlargers and film developing tanks—are arranged alongside biographical traces from Hiu's life: wristwatches inundated with seawater, photographs made by her uncle and firing pins from M16A1 rifles. These materials are arranged in configurations that recall devotional forms in Chinese folk religion.

Hiu opens sightlines in which new sets of relations emerge—ones that reside in distortion, evanescence, and obfuscation. In several works, frames supported by bronze and copper armatures project from the wall. These frames recall the form of street shrines ubiquitous in Singapore. Each conceals several images that cannot be perceived head-on. Instead, the negative space between frame and wall creates a window for the images to be glimpsed through reflections.

Hiu denies image-receiving surfaces the ability to register figurative images, instead transforming them into mirrors and palimpsests through chemical manipulation and silverpoint drawing. Dispersed throughout the gallery are unexposed silver gelatin glass plate negatives dating back to the early 1900s. Treated to accelerate the silver mirroring process—where unexposed silver particles rise to the surface—these plates take on a faintly metallic sheen, while humidity subtly warps and distends the gelatin binder, leaving each object caught in a delicate state of transformation.

The only figurative photographs in the show were made by Hiu's uncle, depicting religious sites in Cambodia he visited in the 1980s. These images, rephotographed by Hiu to reveal and foreground evidence of fungal damage on the negatives, mirror the state of these sites today—both are physical manifestations of heritage suspended between preservation and ruin. She draws a connection between the formal qualities of these reliquaries—which convey a sense of reverence while encoding meaning through specialized iconography—and her own use of darkroom chemical processes, which leave visible traces of the work's making and material composition on its surface.

Hiu's installations invoke an encounter in which the limits of photographic visibility are reached and reassessed—where knowledge, memory, and material fold into each other, and the photographic act becomes one of invocation rather than depiction.

Zhi Wei Hiu (b. 1992, Singapore) received her BFA in Photography from The New School in 2016. Recent exhibitions include *Industrial Dry* at Jack Barrett, curated by Francesca Altamura, *Sin Fatigue* at Salma Sarriedine Gallery, and *If Silt Saw A Window, When A Wave Flared Blue* (with Max Popov) at Putty's Coronation. Hiu lives and works in New York.

For inquiries, please contact hello@rainraingallery.com.
Read Destiny Be's accompanying essay on the next page.

RAINRAIN

www.rainraingallery.com
hello@rainraingallery.com

110 Lafayette St, Suite 201
New York NY 10013

On a sliver of medium, fixed to a fine sheet, appears a photograph. A filament of time, a shadow of an alleged reality, outlined in silver and staged on a plane, slices through our dimension.

The photograph, once a marker for history, a fine plane of silver evidential for what was. An encapsulation, time entrapped molecules in an eternal frame, its preexistence proven by contours of the enclosure, a cavity made by an existence that has passed on. When something is photographed, does it die? What was once there is no longer. No, it is not a death, but a die to stamp to snap a shape a picture

The body of history is of an immaterial weight, the essences motivating our bodies are formless, and memory has no mass. More truth is contained beyond a perception that is contingent on the demarcation of substance and shadow.

How can we take a picture by another means than light? If we tried to photograph it, the picture would be pure black. Truth is contained in total darkness, not so in contrast to light, but to knowability.

Could we build a camera to capture a picture of the forces that propel nature, propel time? We collect old parts of attenuated apparatuses, disassembled for other means. Haunted appendages, infused with the motivation to capture through ulterior senses and material transference. A feint, a phantom enters the frame. An invitation to spurious perspective.

Our apparatus is a stoppage point placed at the intersections of light, sound, and material projections. A disruption in the hum, a rupture, a whisper of light, wind, and sound, whipping molecules to their fated encryption.

Through a hallway of mirrors, cacophonous with representations, at the interstices of reflections, we get a truer image. What we tried to seize has a frayed, patinated pulse. A molecule of rust is more truthful than a pixel. The essence we are trying to capture is too sacred to be seen and primordial to our nature.

What we are, what we witness, and what we attempt to picture are the remnants of light-emanating effluvia, and the soundings echoing from the scrapes of its passing through the barrier from the unknown into perception.

Could we be so arrogant to attempt to apprehend such a depiction. No amount of photos could ever picture her. Foolish as the man who asks for proof of a god. The totality of existence confounds conception, engulfs and reveals itself every moment that passes at the rate of infinite minutiae. Just slow enough to leave an impression.

Maybe we can only be so audacious to attempt to take a picture of ourselves. Not just the passage of our bloodlines, but our blinking consciousness. An interiority that we can only perceive through our parietal awareness. Against the backdrop of total absence, the outline of darkness.

- Destiny Be