

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

At-Will Adaptation: The Exhibition

Artists: Quan Wenfei, Yang Shuai, and Echo Youyi Yan

398 West Street, New York, NY 10014

September 7 - October 26, 2024

Opening Reception with the artists: Saturday, Sep 7, 2024 | 6-8 PM

New York, NY, September 2, 2024 - Eli Klein Gallery is thrilled to present "At-Will Adaptation: The Exhibition," the final and climatic chapter of the Gallery's residency-then-exhibition project featuring artists Quan Wenfei, Yang Shuai, and Echo Youyi Yan. The exhibition showcases newly executed works by the three artists, each highlighting their new experiments and directions.



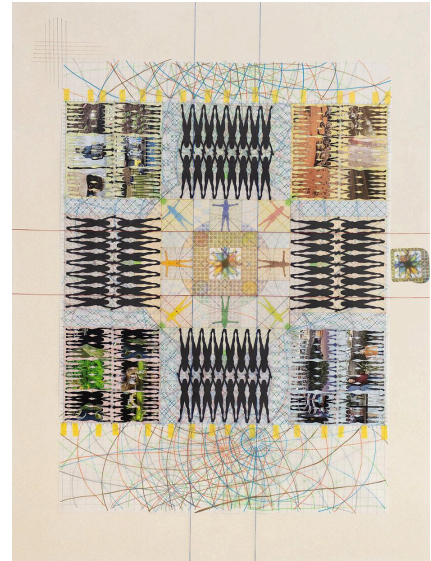
Quan Wenfei, *Click and win* - Print, 2024. Oil and silkscreen on canvas. 61 1/2 x 45 1/4 inches (156.2 x 115 cm).
Courtesy of the artist and Eli Klein Gallery © Quan Wenfei

The Residency has cultivated insightful discussions, constructive comments, and inspiring relationships after welcoming over 100 visitors at the artists' studio, which was also the gallery space throughout July and August. Throughout the process, the three artists fiercely developed their practices within their focused areas backed by research and their creation processes. These new inquiries will serve as the cornerstone of the next chapter of their practices.

Quan Wenfei, a self-proclaimed "internet archeologist," is a highly skilled printmaker. Using oil and silkscreen on canvas (a printmaking method popularized by Andy Warhol), Wenfei creates unique works commenting on pleasure, nostalgia, and the formation of habits. During the residency, Wenfei zoomed into the core concept of "selective looking," a derivative of the print-maker's worldview. Via playful manipulation of scale and color, she futhers her *Click and Win*, and *Shuffling* series.

Both series are based on the 90s Windows game Solitaire - the first generation of dopamine-feeding machines. With the ability to look at elements of images selectively (colors, shapes, formations), the print-maker Wenfei and the internet archeologist Wenfei work in unison to strip down redundant layers of information, rearranging and re-grouping them either back to their original states or into brand new abstracted imageries. Wenfei argues that "selective looking" has been deeply wired into our contemporary perceptive systems, and her works only summon it forth to our recognition, like wrap-texting an image in a word document.

Yang Shuai's mastery in printmaking enables her to apply the principles of "multiplicity"—the foundation of printmaking—onto other mediums. During the residency, she defines herself as the base unit of measurement. With this methodology in mind, Shuai continues to examine the relationship between one and many - repeatedly juxtaposing herself (the constant) with free-handing drawing, collages, prints, risographs, paintings, and etc. (the variables). Shuai has also developed systems to contextualize how the self is used as a measurement. Gridding, matrixing, tile-making, net-making are all examples of this formal but humanitarian approach. Shuai displays the whole spectrum of human society with an entire wall of new works, carefully systemized and laid-out.



Yang Shuai, Countable Me No. 3, 2024. Mixed media on canvas, 70 x 52 inches (177.8 x 132.1 cm). Courtesy of the artist and Eli Klein Gallery © Yang Shuai

Finally, Echo Youyi Yan's works present the metamorphosis of bodies in different contexts. Inspired by artists such as Pierre Huyghe, she creates research-driven works that are based on a myriad of fields including zoology, anthropology, and eroticism. During the residency, she extended the theme of domestication to domesticity, focusing on nature being tamed and housed under everyday purposes. As a resident artist of the gallery, Echo ironically and literally inspects the aspects of residency on a universal level: how lives might be transformed into tools; how utilities might be stripped away from pseudo-household objects; how intentions of tools might be miss-purposed. Technically, Echo's new progression includes scraping away portions of stain and resin which she had been applying on her wood sculptures. This act of excavation mirrors an archaeological process, unearthing layers of meaning.

About "At-Will Adaptation"

"At-will," a term commonly associated with employment status, endows equal rights for the employer to fire and the employees to quit at any time. However, this concept often conceals the inherent power imbalances between the "masters" and "servants". On a societal level, we are supposedly empowered with an absolute liberty in thoughts and action. In reality, however, we are not truly liberal thinkers nor free actors; we are constantly adapting against our will. AI aids social media algorithms more effectively, curtailing original thought. Certain political factions demand absolute loyalty and suppress all other opposing viewpoints. We are becoming smarter in acting senselessly. As Herbert Marcuse



Echo Youyi Yan, In The Beginning We Are All Holes, 2024. Clear pine, douglas fir, resin, 8 x 39 x 4 1/2 inches (20.3 x 99.1 x 11.4 cm). Courtesy of the artist and Eli Klein Gallery © Echo Youyi Yan



poignantly pointed out, “The total mobilization of all media for defense of the established reality has coordinated the means of expression to the point where communication of transcending contents becomes technically impossible.”

Artists are the first to recognize this struggle, as contemporary art themes have shifted from a 'human-nature' dichotomy in the 2010s to a 'subjectively human - objectively human' focus, which identifies forced adaptation as a more pressing threat in the 2020s. As recent graduates, Quan Wenfei, Yang Shuai, and Echo Youyi Yan are at the forefront of this battle, working at the intersection of anthropology, sociology, and behavioral studies.

“At-Will Adaptation: The Residency” was completed between July 9 and Sep 7, 2024. We’d like to thank everyone who has visited the program and given the artists tremendous feedback in their creation process.

Inquiries:

Eli Klein Gallery

Phil Cai, phil@galleryek.com | +1 212-255-4388