

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Best by 07/21/2026

A residency-then-exhibition

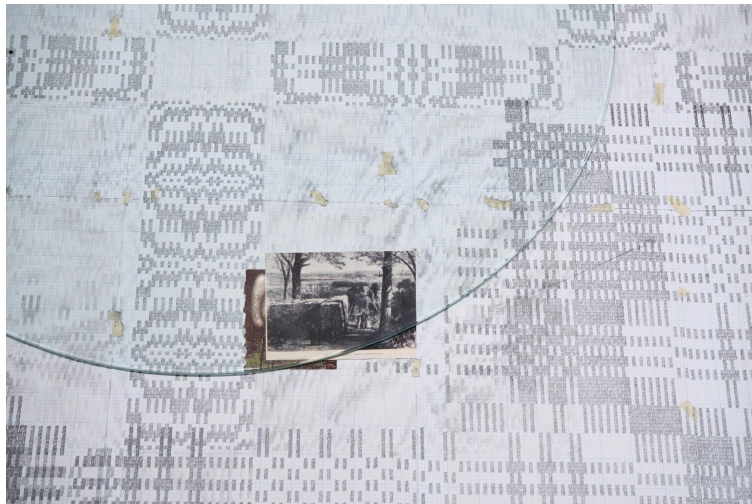
Artists: Clare Hu, Tianyi Sun, and Shaan Ken Rao

398 West Street, New York, NY 10014

Residency: July 21 - September 16, 2026

Exhibition: September 17 - October 17, 2026

Opening Reception with the artists: Thursday, September 17, 2026 | 6-8 PM



Clare Hu, *table ii (blooming leaf+lee's surrender+catalpa flower)*, 2026.
Poplar table, graphite, glass pane, digital images. 72 x 46 inches (183 x 117 cm).

Eli Klein Gallery is pleased to present **Best by 07/21/2026** a residency-then-exhibition featuring artists Clare Hu, Tianyi Sun, and Shaan Ken Rao, opening on its own expiration date. Following *At-Will Adaptation* (2024), the gallery's residency program returns this year for its second installment, running from July 21st and culminating in a three-artist exhibition on Thursday, September 17th. The three artists, working in various mediums such as sculpture, weaving, painting, and photography, will create entirely new bodies of work using Eli Klein Gallery as their studio. The gallery will be open to the public during normal business hours throughout the duration of the residency.

ELI KLEIN

奕 来 画 廊

"Can the concept of the human survive discovering how the "sausage" of us is actually made, what we really look and smell like at the cellular level?"

This question, raised by the writer and scholar Sophie Lewis in her catalog essay "New Wombs for Old Men" of the New Museum's inaugural exhibition "New Humans," challenges the default practice of separating the maker from their associated defecations during the formation of a public-facing identity. On a metaphorical and non-visceral level, contemporary art's birth-giving process today resembles an ectogenesis, with the "sausage-making" process susceptible to both curated previews and packaged commercialization. An artist's studio is only alive when it breathes and excretes, and more so when the discarded substances are studied, categorized, archived, and recycled.

If artistic production generates its own forms of excretion, "Best by" borrows from the language of a system that organizes such distinctions: product packaging, where expiry dates sort the viable from the expired. These dates make disposal feel inevitable and predetermined as though an object's ending was written the moment of its making. The art world is no exception to expiry logic. In a climate of rising costs, contracting budgets, and institutional retrenchment, galleries are shedding artists and staff, recalibrating toward the marketable—what some might call a search for the institution's "soul." Yet it is rarely the boldfaced names that go. Biennials and art fair cycles operate on the same logic, determining who and what is current, emerging, and relevant—and by extension, what has been spent.



Sun Tianyi, *Remote Viewing 2:16, 2025*. Epoxy resin, ink, wax, red beans, Chinese white bean, spirulina, silk, digital print transfer, acrylic polymer. 8 x 16 x 3 inches (20 x 41 x 8 cm).

Residencies, in particular, are temporary by design, existing in the threshold between process and product, between studio and exhibition. What it protects, however briefly, is duration—the right of a work to remain unfinished, not yet fixed as a commodity. In a climate where the pressure to produce sellable and institutionally legible work has never been more acute, the residency insists on holding open the space of making itself. *Best by* opens on its own expiry date, July 21st. These three artists work with what the system already disposed of—cultural memory, technological infrastructure, the human body.

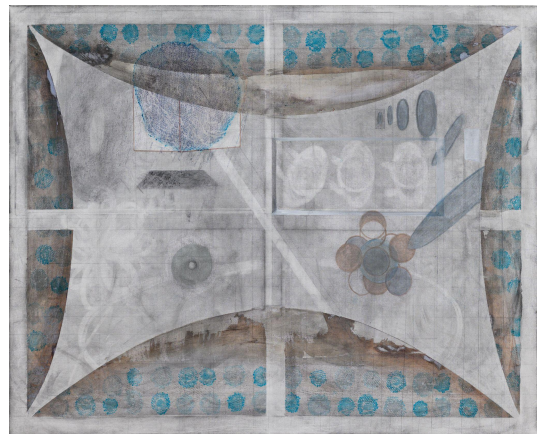
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Clare Hu (b. 1996, lives and works in New York) weaves from construction material remnants—plastic tarps, polyester mesh, industrial offcuts—which are discarded once the structure is complete. The tarp is also a symbol of the immigrant condition, marking a site of transition where assimilation demands disposal. Into these industrial surfaces, Hu weaves imagery drawn from her own cultural heritage—familial scenes, domestic objects, the fragments of Chinese-American life that migration renders partial. Hu's weaving practice performs a counter-teleological act, taking material produced to be temporary—cover, then discard—and weaving it into permanence. To weave is to revisit, reconstructing from what assimilation left behind.

Tianyi Sun (b. 1996, lives and works in New York) works from algorithmic disposal, reading such a process as not technical but political. Discarded objects, in Sun's practice, are records of distance—shifting values, cultural memory overwritten, humanity reshaped by the very systems it produced. Sun works in the residue of that operation: extension cords, power strips, medical carts, dim sum trolleys, fractured Qing dynasty wooden screens. She cleans, molds, and recasts them in resin and silicone, treating discarded objects as portraits of what the system tried to make invisible.

Shaan Ken Rao's (b. 1995, lives and works in New York) paintings and photographs begin where the system stops looking. His work draws from lived experience of addiction, examining what remains after a body has been written off. The social and institutional logic applied to addiction is utilitarian at its coldest: the body is useful until it isn't. Through distorted figures and fragmented self-portraiture, Rao works in the aftermath of that judgment — treating the parts of a self that survive the discard as the primary site of meaning. Where the system applies a binary logic of functional or disposable, he insists on the complexity of what falls between: the afterlives of addiction, the slow and nonlinear process of reconstituting the self.



Shaan Ken Rao, *Inside a Pixel*, 2026. Pencil, graphite, and ink on canvas. 30 x 40 inches (76 x 102 cm).

Throughout the residency, the gallery will be open to the public during normal business hours. Visitors are welcome to witness the work in progress, with updates available on the gallery's online platforms.

Inquiries:

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