



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 31, 2026

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

Eli Klein Gallery is pleased to present *Best by 07/21/2026*, the culminating exhibition of its 2026 residency-then-exhibition program featuring artists Clare Hu, Tianyi Sun, and Shaan Ken Rao. The exhibition showcases new bodies of work conceptualized and executed by the three artists throughout the residency, representing not only their most updated artistic experiments, but more importantly, their developing throughlines that are pronounced by a recursive language which takes pride in its formation process—a journey filled with erroneous grammar, unconscious gibberish, and deliberate muting.

Inspired by product packaging, the residency-then-exhibition, by title, expired on its opening day (July 21, 2026), which questions the standardized procedure of contemporary art production. One-dimensional and teleological, the “produce, select, and present” model flattens art production into a preferred pipeline for ease of consumption. With the opportunity of an open-door residency at the gallery, Hu, Sun, and Rao argued for the active but usually omitted motion of “discarding” to be reconsidered in the equation. They believe an artist’s studio is only alive when it breathes and excretes, and even more so when discarded substances are studied, categorized, archived, and recycled.

Clare Hu is a weaver who applies the loom and weaving logic to other disciplines such as drawing, collage-making, sculpture, and installation. She furthers the examination of the ontological definition of weaving throughout the residency. Reminiscent of the status quo for many Chinese immigrants, the traditional weaving process is often labor-intensive (at times hidden) and result-driven. Hu assembles and edits variations of Overshot weaving drafts (coded guide for weave application) primarily woven in the Appalachian region of the United States, as an in-between step that is both temporary and speculative. In these new woven works which did not involve the application of the loom, round-shaped glass tabletops (referred to as “Lazy Susans” in Asian cultures) were implemented to archive drawings of the weaving drafts. Inspired by a family tradition of temporarily storing objects of memory and meaning under glass tabletops, such as family photos, Hu argues for a permanent fossilization of what seems ephemeral and

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unfulfilled. The application of glass tops also concretizes and suspends chance and coincidence, advocating for their unusual appearances as a final form. In another body of work, Hu mends industrial fabrics such as moving blankets and insulation from dishwashers. These materials archive past actions through a negation of their perfect and original form: threads coming apart, stains left, fabrics printed onto one another from press and fractions. Fascinated by these wear and tear, Hu applies print-making and weaving logic onto these materials, acting simultaneously as a means of preserving and a call for rejuvenation.

Discarded objects, under similar lights in Tianyi Sun's practice, extend into the very infrastructure and supporting mechanisms which make art production possible. She considers the process of filmmaking sculptural via the mold-making of set construction, the choreography of blocking and rehearsal, and the shaping of light by extending or diffusing, all of which perform a "grip" to shape a time-based work. These filming apparatuses are visible stand-ins for the digital and contemporary experience when filmmaking is treated as a material practice. The entire installation is simultaneously functional and performative. On the one hand, the C-Stands' traditional function of "support" is not yet fully deprived, highlighting the sculptural objects scattered throughout, whether it's the draped screens, porcelain objects, or the weights that pretend to hold down the stands while giving a sense of lightness. On the other hand, none of the C-Stands are actually holding light fixtures. With their intrinsic definition disrupted, they become scaffoldings that objectify their supportedness. Labor is another essential component of the production apparatus which Sun made visible. As a director, Sun extends credits to those who are traditionally omitted after the making process is over: grip and lighting which didn't leave traces for themselves. Sun's newly developed "cookie" works further epitomize the consolidation of production apparatus and labor visibility. Short for cucoloris, a "cookie" is a panel that breaks part of a light beam into a certain shape, also performing a "grip." Sun's "cookies" cast specific shadows when lit, but they also carry meticulously sculpted motifs that are only visible when facing the light source.

Shaan Ken Rao's work draws from lived experience of addiction, examining what remains after a body has been written off. With many of his figurative works foregrounding what's considered despicable, Rao projects the outcasts on a level playing field against more classically acknowledged motifs and compositions. Rao's paintings are deeply influenced by his other role: an actively practicing musician. In a new series developed during the residency, Rao refuses the white canvas or a traditionally applied grid as a starting point. He uses a staff pen (a five-line pen used to create music scores) to draw improvisational grids to background the paintings, resulting in rhythmic gridding systems unique to each work. Geometric patterns then emerge tightly in relationship to this organic field, which has been bent unevenly from the beginning. Under these new conditions, leaving a grid unfilled becomes a new form of painting, representing a musical decision to fill with blanks when juxtaposed against what is occupied.

We thank those who took the time to visit the artists' studios during the residency and helped them dearly

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in the process of discarding: Sunmi Yong, Jenny Wang, Do Tuong Linh, Bath-Ami Rivlin, Mike Tan, Anthony Terzino, Shen Wei, Fang Daqi, Sofia Thiệu D'Amico, Erin Cao, Emma Safir, Elizabeth Wickham, Bryan Martin, Jim Koenig, Amy Yuanchen Qian, Derec Carner, Anne Muntges, Ysabel Pinyol Blasi, Yve Yang, Chando Ao, Alex Feim, Webson Ji, Yang Shuai, Wenfei Quan, Damien Ding, Jan Dickey, Alison Nguyen, Deng Qingyuan, Claire Kim, and Ho Jae Kim with Civil Art. (listed in studio visit chronological order).

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