

Damien H. Ding  
*Precious Mirror*

02.21 - 04.05.2025

Island is pleased to present *Precious Mirror*, a solo exhibition of paintings by New York-based artist Damien H. Ding.

Lined with mirrored boxes on either side of the gallery, *Precious Mirror* confronts the viewer with a reflective mirage. *Four Shadows* (2025) serves as an anchor, outstretched in a conjoined frame on the far wall. The quadriptych presents four fleshy forms, fading into skeletons as they span a horizontal ladder. More sumptuous scenes are nestled behind the seamless enclosures of the mirror boxes: two figures fornicate before a roaring fire, a faceless woman studies a book of Balthus' paintings, a weary and flaccid man sits alongside a supine form. Functioning simultaneously as objects, portals, and tools of self-scrutiny, the mirrored works entangle these visions with reality. Ding's familiar surfaces ensnare viewers recalling the mythological Narcissus, who became so enamored with his reflection that he drowned in his own gaze.

*Precious Mirror* alludes to Cao Xueqin's *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, in which a man is prescribed a mirror to cure his ailment. Instructed to look only at one side, he is met by a skull staring back at him. In disobedience, the man turns the mirror over and is immediately captivated by visions of his deepest desires. Though momentarily satisfied, he remains unhealed and ultimately succumbs to illness. Such moments of anticipation, longing, and dissatisfaction are echoed in Ding's paintings, realized in figures pursuing a consummation that is never depicted. *Position* (2024) emulates a relentless, Atlas-like figure that hints at familiar tropes, yet retains a moral ambiguity. A separate room offers a brief respite from this stark self-recognition, where *My portrait with Edward Darley Boit's vases and two other figures* (2024) is illuminated by natural daylight. A man curls over a reflective disc, bewitched by his visions, as Ding's self-portrait observes from behind. Ding's paintings are fraught with the act of looking and its consequences. They point to the role of an artist who works continuously to articulate the inexpressible, just as Cao Xueqin's sick man longs eternally for what can never be possessed.

The artist thanks Shiqian Pan and Paz Sher for their input and fabrication expertise.

Words by Maria Owen

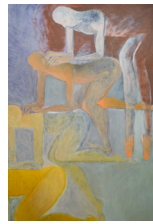
Damien H. Ding received a BA in Art History with a minor in Asian Studies from Swarthmore College and an MFA in Painting and Printmaking from the Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts. Recent solo exhibitions include *Simple Structures* (Steven Zevitas Gallery, Boston), *Private Paintings* (Denny Gallery, NY), *Difficult Paintings* (The Anderson Gallery, Richmond, VA). His work has been included in notable group exhibitions at Linseed Projects, Shanghai, China; Braverman Gallery, Tel Aviv, Eugster, Belgrade, Serbia, Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery, Schloss Goerne, Germany, Galerie Marguo, Paris, France, Steven Zevitas Gallery, Boston, MA, Alexander Berggruen, NY, Denny Dimin Gallery, Hong Kong, Afternoon Projects, Vancouver, Canada, and Spazio Amanita, NY, among others. His work has been written about in art press such as Hyperallergic, The Brooklyn Rail, Whitewall and Artsy.

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*Six Fingered Figure*  
2025  
Oil on canvas  
54 x 80 in



*Back Scratchers*  
2024  
Oil on canvas  
54 x 80 in



*Position*  
2025  
Oil on canvas  
60 x 37.75 in



*Girl With Balthus Catalogue*  
2024  
Egg tempera on panel, steel, mirrors  
12 x 9.5 x 2.75 in



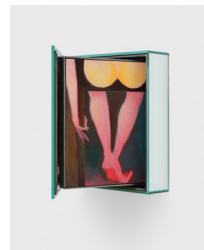
*White Bathtub*  
2025  
Egg tempera on panel, steel, mirrors  
12 x 9.5 x 2.75 in



*Seated Man Inspecting His Table*  
2024  
Egg tempera on panel, steel, mirrors  
12 x 9.5 x 2.75 in



*Vase and Woman*  
2025  
Egg tempera on panel, steel, mirrors  
10 x 11.75 x 2.75 in



*Hand and Two Circles*  
2025  
Egg tempera on panel, steel, mirrors  
10 x 11.75 x 2.75 in



*Large Fireplace*  
2024  
Egg tempera on panel, steel, mirrors  
10 x 11.75 x 2.75 in



*Four Shadows*  
2024  
Egg tempera on panels, custom  
white oak frame  
78 x 8 in



*My portrait with Boit's vases and two  
other figures*  
2024  
Egg tempera on panel  
60 x 48 in