

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.