

Cici Wu

Lantern Strike (Strong Loneliness)

June 25–August 6, 2021

Lantern Strike (Strong Loneliness) is a prelude on the dissolution of light. For her second solo exhibition at 47 Canal, Cici Wu begins an embarkation on the imagining and reconstruction of a proto-cinema. The works installed in this exhibition—paper lantern sculptures, drawings, and projection—embody trajectories made between an undetermined past and an unforeseeable future.

Cinema, deconstructed and stripped of its national and industrial apparatuses, is at its essence the experience of light. In this exhibition, Wu continues her exploration of expanded cinema, using the form of the lantern, one of our earliest and most quotidian optic devices, to envisage alternate worlds beyond the bounds of film history (and conversely, history told through film). Rather, the humble lantern structures familiar feeling, an art of stateless memory that casts undefined shapes and shadows as we remember and abstract in the dark.

The varying shapes of the lanterns are derived from popular folk symbols across cultures: a star, a rabbit, a lotus, a pagoda, to name a few. They hang glowing and suspended from bare branches, some stretching out from vases, sitting atop or protruding from makeshift plinths. Embedded in a few of the lanterns, are specially programmed, open-source digital cameras, a new kind of optic device initiated by Wu to record the contours of shadows. The resulting video recordings resemble something like early abstract animations, which can be seen projected in the adjacent galleries.

Similarly minimal in their appearance, the drawings in the exhibition depict scenes of maidens holding lanterns, plucked from art historical examples. Here, their figures are delicately outlined, some details washed over with the slightest dilution of mineral pigments. They float in composition, like spirits parading or marching in solidarity with the countless souls whose stories and images remain obscured in the shadows of time.

If the arrival of the Lumière brothers, Muybridge, and other “pioneers” of their tradition mark a kind of interruption or disappearance of native ways of seeing in favor of optical and perspectival realism, of borders and nation states, of surveillance and capitalism, then *Lantern Strike* calls for a re-envisioning of cinema and of life.

The artist would like to thank Agnes Cameron for her technical support and consultation. She also extends a special thanks to Xiaofei Mo, Taro Masushio, Amy Lien, Margaret Lee, Xinyi Cheng, Emily Wang, Jinno Neko, Mai Atwell, Terence Chan, Jane Debevoise, Nick Deocampo, Oliver Newton, Jasmine Lee, Jamie Kenyon, Nick Fernandez, Xochitl Perez, Ms. Lim, Billy Tang, Alex Lau, Dachal Choi, Yason Banal, Ontopo (2019), TRST (2018-2020), as well as the Rockbund Art Museum in Shanghai for their research grant support.

291 GRAND ST, 2ND FLOOR
NEW YORK, NY 10002
OFFICE@47CANAL.US
(646) 415-7712

47 CANAL

—

Cici Wu (b. 1989, Beijing) lives and works in New York. Having received her bachelor degree from the City University of Hong Kong, and completed her MFA at Maryland Institute College of Art. She has had solo exhibitions at Empty Gallery, Hong Kong, 47 Canal, New York, Bonneville, Noisy-le-Sec, France, and has participated in group exhibitions at ParaSite, Hong Kong; Asia Society, Hong Kong; Drawing Center, New York; Artists Space, New York; Yokohama Triennial Afterglow, Johannesburg. She will participate in the Seoul Mediacity Biennale in September 2021.