

***After Image***  
**Solo Exhibition by John Shen**

**February 22 to March 29, 2025**

**Artist Talk with John Shen and Laurel Nakadate: Saturday, February 22 from 4-5 pm**  
**Opening Reception: Saturday, February 22 from 5-7 pm**

(Brookline, MA – January 14, 2025) Praise Shadows is pleased to announce *After Image* by the New Haven-based John Shen in his solo debut at the gallery. Featuring time-based media, photography, and installation, the show is an exploration of memory, subjectivity, and the enduring presence of loved ones, created over three transformative years—from the precipice of the global pandemic to the close of 2023.

An artist talk with Shen, moderated by artist Laurel Nakadate, will take place at the gallery on February 22 at 4 pm; tickets are \$5 and available [here](#). The public is invited to the opening reception immediately following, from 5 to 7 pm.

At the core of *After Image* lies a 14-inch CRT television monitor, a once ubiquitous technology at the time of Shen's birth, which serves as both medium and message. Shen has inscribed a portrait of his mother, captured from a photo of her before she gave birth to him, directly into the cathodes of the monitor. This imprinting process results in a persistent after image, an indelible reflection of his mother that remains visible even when the TV is in use.

The creation of this after image is a testament to the power and preciousness of time as a resource. Over three years, Shen allowed the image to gradually etch itself into the monitor, a slow burn that mirrors the gradual fading and resurfacing of memories over time. This process underscores the idea that some aspects of our identity and relationships are forged not through immediate actions but through sustained, patient effort. Every image or video played on the TV now bears the subtle yet persistent imprint of Shen's mother, merging the act of viewing with the endurance of memory. This overlay challenges the viewer to navigate the interplay between the visible content and the underlying after image, reflecting on how our perceptions are invariably shaped by our histories and the people who have influenced us.

Accompanying the physical artifact is one year's worth of time-lapse footage documenting the gradual formation of the after image within Shen's studio. This visual chronology is paired with a soundtrack featuring his mother singing lullabies, melodies that soothed him in infancy. The juxtaposition of visual and auditory elements creates a multi-sensory experience, bridging past and present, and imbuing the work with layers of Shen's own personal emotional history.

The final part of the work incorporates a video of a Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) that Shen underwent. The TAT is a psychological assessment tool that uses a series of ambiguous images

to delve into an individual's personality, emotions, and subconscious conflicts. By documenting his personal experience with this test, and playing the final video on the image-burned TV, Shen adds another layer of introspection and self-examination. This component invites viewers to consider not only the external representations of memory but also the internal processes of self-discovery and psychological reflection.

Another body of work on view is photographs from Shen's *Straw Inscriptions* series, black and white prints created using a camera built by him over a meticulous year-long process using approximately 28,000 hand-glued black drinking straws. Drawing from Hito Steyerl's ruminations on the 'poor image,' Shen seeks to navigate the tension between hyperrealism and authenticity in contemporary photography. By intentionally forgoing advanced optics and embracing a low-resolution approach, this work challenges the prevailing obsession with technical perfection. The resulting photographs are painstakingly produced on Direct Positive Gelatin Silver Paper, making each image a one-off unique object. By prioritizing emotional resonance over technical precision, *Straw Inscriptions* offers a profound commentary on how our memories and identities are intricately woven into the images we create and perceive.

### **About the artist**

John Shen is a multidisciplinary artist born in China and raised in New Zealand, currently pursuing an MFA in Photography at the Yale School of Art. He earned his BFA in Photography and Painting from The Rhode Island School of Design. Shen's work intricately explores the nexus between image and object, delving into themes of memory, identity and temporality. Through his experimental, research based practice, Shen bridges cultural narratives, philosophical inquiry and technology, creating evocative pieces that invite viewers to reflect on their own journeys of self-discovery and the persistent echoes of the past.

### **About Praise Shadows Art Gallery**

Praise Shadows Art Gallery is a contemporary art program based in the Boston area with a focus on exceptional artists working in all artistic disciplines. Our worldview is informed by the notion that the artworld's untapped and unrecognized potential is worth cultivating, supporting, and championing. Since our founding in December 2020, the gallery has placed artworks by our artists in esteemed public collections, and our exhibitions have been covered widely in major international media outlets. Our work is grounded by partnering closely with artists to develop opportunities in traditional and emerging models of creativity and entrepreneurship—exhibitions, commissions, brand partnerships, new technologies, and original concepts that no one has ever tried before. [www.praiseshadows.com](http://www.praiseshadows.com)

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