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Photograph taken by Liza Wolters in New York City, Spring 2025 – part of a site-specific installation

## Season II, 2025 International Residency Exhibition

# *Undercurrents*

May 30 – June 17, 2025

Curated by NARS Curatorial Fellow Joyous R. Pierce

Opening Reception: Friday, June 6, 6-9pm

NARS Main Gallery

The New York Art Residency & Studios (NARS) Foundation is pleased to present ***Undercurrents***, a group exhibition featuring work from the Season II, 2025 International Residency Artists: Juan Alvarez, Isabel Bonafé, Doreen Chan, Ye Cheng, Nik Cho, Gloria Fan Duan, Brubey Hu, Evelyne Leblanc-Roberge, Sangmin Lee, Camille Lescarbeau, M.E. Sparks, Liza Wolters, and Tianxing Xu. Curated by NARS Curatorial Fellow Joyous R. Pierce.

*A conversation between sisters:*

**J. Pierce 03:45PM:** *I'm really inspired by the messages woven through the work and practice of each of the artists, they have such distinct creative voices that carry a socio - political awareness that translates not only in the way they create but is embodied in the way they relate to each other as peers. There's a poem by Lucile Clifton that has been sitting in my spirit that I want to include as a framing text. (Scrolls through notes app and reads aloud)*

*"They ask me to remember / But they want me to remember their memories / And I keep / Remembering mine."* —Lucille Clifton, "why some people be mad at me sometimes" (1987)<sup>2</sup>

*I feel like it really captures the spirit of persistence and vibrance and questioning that the artists are bringing to their work and the exhibition. But I'm stuck on a name.. I want to make sure the curatorial path for their show really highlights the resonance of the undercurrents of each of their practices and invites their perspectives to shine.*

**B. Ford 03:46PM:** *That sounds like it right there.*

**J. Pierce 03:46PM:** *What?*

**B. Ford 03:47PM** *Undercurrents*

**J. Pierce 03:47PM** *B! I love it! Theres actually a poetry anthology by Rita Wong I've been reading by the same name that speaks directly to the themes in the artists work (hops off of her couch, grabs book and opens up to ....)*

*"We are undercurrent, overburden, the rolling earth, the pain that won't be doctored, the healers who want to live well on this revolving planet."* —Rita Wong, from *undercurrent* (2015)<sup>1</sup>

## Present

Like a hand dipped into the ocean, feeling the pressure of earth's rotation above and below the surface, gently gliding, pulling, shifting in constant change—welcome to under.

Undercurrents. The word carries its own momentum, its own geography. In water, they are the hidden flows that shape coastlines and carry vessels off course. In society, they are the persistent forces that move beneath visible structures, memory, labor, ecology, identity.

*Undercurrents* brings together thirteen contemporary artists whose practices respond to overlapping currents of memory, labor, ecology, identity, and sociopolitical consciousness. Spanning geographies and kindred waters including Canada, Korea, The Netherlands, China, the Dominican Republic, and Spain, these artists converge at a moment when the membranes of borders are simultaneously more permeable and more contested than ever.

The exhibition draws its title and philosophical foundation from the deep wells of work by Canadian poet and climate activist Rita Wong, whose scholarly and creative practice investigates the intricate relationships between social justice, ecology, decolonization, and contemporary poetics. An excerpt from a body of work—Wong's words, *"We are undercurrent, overburden, the rolling earth, the pain that won't be doctored, the healers who want to live well on this revolving planet."*—summons a border-transcending ecological consciousness that challenges nationalist frameworks, serving as both invocation and invitation

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<sup>1</sup> Wong, Rita. *Undercurrent*. Nightwood Editions, 2015.

for viewers into a space where political boundaries dissolve in the face of communal memory and shared environmental stewardship.

In echo to Wong's call are the resonant words of African American poet and luminary Lucille Clifton (1936–2010), whose poem "why some people be mad at me sometimes" articulates the tension between collective and personal memory that flows throughout this exhibition: *"They ask me to remember / But they want me to remember their memories / And I keep / Remembering mine."*

Clifton's work addresses both intimate personal history and broader cultural legacies, and her succinct and salient verses speak to the struggle of maintaining narrative integrity against dominant historical accounts. Her ability to distill emotional and political realities offers a vital entry point to the multilayered artistic expressions gathered in *Undercurrents*.

Through investigations of settler colonialism, narratives of labor and gender, identity politics, grief, joy, memory, and the ephemeral, these artists create works that both obscure and illuminate. They employ humor, satire, illusion, and critical commentary to reveal the hidden currents flowing beneath the surface of our time.

Resident artist **Gloria Fan Duan** meticulously traces these currents that flow between life and stasis, drawing from whispered memories of ecological existence. Her methodology and process, partially recreated within her studio, demonstrate how scientific observation transforms into poetic intervention through careful attention to overlooked natural processes. Meanwhile, resident artist **M.E. Sparks** explores the flow of history, figure, time, wind, movement, and light in works that collapse temporal boundaries. Visitors encounter her studio methodology through a multimedia work that gracefully holds breaths of ephemeral elements, like shifting sun patterns over time—through textile and canvas, translating them into elongated artistic gestures.

Resident artist **Juan Alvarez** cultivates this poetic flow through visual collage that morphs, evolves, and transforms. His studio practice, with its emphasis on unexpected juxtapositions and textual interventions, opens new channels between visual and literary expression that resonate with Clifton's insistence on personal narrative.

The exhibition extends into the dual studio-turned-gallery spaces of **Nik Cho & Isabel Bonafe**, where ghosts of our past and embers of memories converge alongside a deeper immersion into ghosts of space, reflection and beams of light. Both artists have meticulously defined immersive & embodied experiences emitting an electric heat made of gazes, and delicate balances of light.

A light weaver, resident artist **Isabel Bonafé** inhabits this ephemeral space between light and illusion, creating works characterized by weightlessness and perceptual uncertainty. The exhibition offers glimpses into her studio experimentation with optical phenomena, revealing how seemingly solid realities can dissolve under specific conditions of viewing. Similarly, the luminary work of resident artist **Sangmin Lee** investigates currents of illumination and flow in form, sharing work where light itself becomes both subject and medium, opening the exhibition with a phantom of light.

Like interconnected channels beneath the visible surface, these thirteen artists navigate the tensions between personal narratives and collective histories. They establish portals between realms of varied

experience, from deeply intimate reflections of spoken memory and dreams to expansive observations of our shared ecological reality. The presence of these international voices offers a deliberate counterpoint to rising tides of economic nationalism, tariff wars, and border reinforcements. In an era when the flow of goods, capital, and ideas faces increasing restrictions, this gathering of artists speaks to the resilience of creative community, one that acknowledges Clifton's truth of holding personal memory sacred while engaging in collective remembering.

Resident artist **Evelyne Leblanc-Roberge** channels precisely these currents of collective memory, working with clouds of aggregated imagery that refuse singular interpretation. Her studio process, evident in the way she layers imagery, and material into cloud-like digital compositions, demonstrates how personal memory is rarely singular, but always shaped by collective archives and cultural memory.

Alongside her work, resident artist **Doreen Chan** explores the flow of libation and memory, her creative practice invites viewers to participate in acts of remembrance that resist forgetfulness and transfigure cocktail ingredients into messengers of vulnerability drawing meaning from dreams through taste.

In this convergence, **Liza Wolters** shares a patient practice, deeply responsive and attuned, empathetic to the subtle rhythms that flow beneath surface awareness. Her fluid repository of experiences—photography, video, installations, text, sound, and found objects—grows and transforms like water finding its course, constantly growing, consisting of experiences and particles of encounters, finds and materials that come together and grow apart again.

**Tianxing Xu's** grabbing of memory invites the viewer to wrestle with notions of nostalgia and tactility, pulling at the threads that connect personal history to collective experience. Through his visual investigations, memory becomes both anchor and current, holding us to specific moments while carrying us forward into new understanding.

### **Tides of Light and Shadow**

As a meditation on illumination, the physical presentation of *Undercurrents* unfolds in two distinct waves: first in a subdued environment, greeting visitors with dialogues in the dark. then, turning with the tide into a luminous environment, where multimedia works, paper-based pieces, and delicate installations layer light upon one another, where works confront viewers with their immediacy and presence. As darkness transitions into light certain works transform, revealing hidden elements or shifting in emotional tenor. This choreography of light mirrors the exhibition's thematic exploration of what remains visible and what flows beneath the surface of perception.

*Undercurrents* embraces illumination not merely as a technical necessity but as a conceptual framework that unites the exhibition's artistic voices. In many of the works, light is used not only to illuminate but to transform. Light becomes both material and message, shaping how each piece is seen, and what remains just out of reach.

Resident artist **Camille Lescarbeau** harnesses these physical currents of light and water in her paper-based works, combining hand-formed pulp with strategic illumination that shifts and transforms the work with

changing light. Her studio practice becomes visible through layered and masterful techniques that demonstrate how materiality itself can carry meaning and respond to conditions of viewing.

Balancing the precarity of Camille's work, **Ye Cheng's** work dives through dimensionality, tapping into interpolations of historic landscapes with a sharp cutting edge. Twisting, rotating and suplexing perception inviting the viewer to move through her portal like works - through space, time, place, history and dimension.

Resident artist **Brubey Hu** questions these flows of visibility in the rituals of domesticity, making perceptible what typically remains hidden. Her work in the exhibition translates elements of her studio investigations and invites viewers to reconsider everyday acts of maintenance and care, illuminating labors that often remain invisible, undiscussed, and quickly washed away.

Underscoring these convergences is a light of necessity—as a meditation into the work, I offer Fela Kuti's

"Water No Get Enemy,"

*T'o                ba                fe                lo                we                omi                l'o                ma'lo*  
If you want to go wash, na water you go use

*T'o                ba                fe                se'be                omi                l'o                ma'lo*  
If you want cook soup, na water you go use

*T'o                ri                ba                n'gbona                o                omi                l'ero                re*  
If your head dey hot, na water go cool am

*T'omo                ba                n'dagba                omi                l'o                ma'lo*  
If your child dey grow, na water he go use

*T'omi                ba                p'omo                e                o                omi                na                lo                ma'lo*  
If water kill your child, na water you go use

*Ko                s'ohun                to'le                se                k'o                ma                lo'mi                o*  
Nothing without water

*Omi                o                l'ota                o*  
Water no get enemy

How do we understand the imbalance of necessity and of harm, the necessity of multinational connection, community and collaboration, and the myth of states that pull borders like strings to coerce power and space?

These thirteen international artists, brought together through NARS Foundation's Season II 2025 International Residency Program, invite visitors to trace undercurrents across disciplines, geographies, and personal histories. Their collective presence offers not just finished works, but windows into creative processes that continue to flow beyond gallery walls.



## Curatorial Note

*Undercurrents* as an exhibition is an expression of my desire as a curator / space shaper / communal storyteller, in this time to exercise the **curatorial as a communal language**. I believe in the curatorial mode as a means to employ, embrace, and embody **communal intelligence** —what it means to listen to each other, share vulnerability of process, and evolve together. In bringing together these thirteen international voices, the exhibition space becomes a practice of collective thinking, where the undercurrents that connect us transcend the artificial boundaries that would keep us separate.

## About the Curatorial Fellow:

**Joyous R. Pierce** (she/her) is a multi-disciplinary curator/space shaper, artist, and researcher whose practice re-envisioned ceremonies of creation and collaboration through intrinsic relationality and care. Her work as an arts and cultural producer engages creative and cultural spaces as liberatory sites for transformation, reflection, connection, expansion, and joy.

She has collaborated with artists internationally and with institutions such as the Sugar Hill Children's Museum, the Guggenheim, the African Artists Foundation, the Apollo, Christie's, Sotheby's, Barnard, Burning Man, and Google. She was a fellow in Cycle IV of the Innovative Cultural Advocacy Fellowship with the Caribbean Cultural African Diaspora Institute (Harlem) and Nafasi Artspace (Dar es Salaam).

Joyous holds a Bachelor's degree from Muhlenberg College in International Relations with a concentration in Peace and Conflict Studies in Sub-Saharan Africa, and a Master of Science in International Relations and the Politics of Africa from SOAS, University of London. Some areas of interest include contemporary afro-indigenous migration, seabed mapping & ecosystems in the marine water column, immersive technology, and having way too many tabs open at any given moment.

## About the artists:

**Juan Alvarez**, aka Wamoo, is a Dominican-born, Washington Heights-raised and based musician and media-based artist, working at the border between visual art, music and live performance. His audiovisual work is constructed by means of collage art, reconstructing existing materials and bringing them into new contexts. He is mainly inspired by the video art of Joan Jonas and Pipilotti Rist, as well as music producers J Dilla and Tainy. He has exhibited at the Cincinnati Contemporary Arts Center, SuperBlue Miami, Brooklyn Academy of Music, the Andrew Freedman Home, among others. He has also been featured on publications like "Obsidian: Literature and Arts in the African Diaspora", an arts publication published by Illinois State University; and "Apricity", published by the University of Texas at Austin. He studied at the University at Albany, SUNY, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in two concentrations, Philosophy and World History.

**Isabel Bonafé** relates the way we perceive and live with virtual images and some physical phenomena that question our common sense and the ordinary experience. Using elements related to electromagnetism and optics, light and vision, Bonafé creates installations that seem to blur the boundary between the physical and

the virtual and are rooted in questions that concern memory, presence and the ontological status of photographic media. BAFA (2014), University of Seville and MAFA (2019) University of Saint Martins, London. 2025- INICIARTE Prize; solo show: messages of the collision, La Madraza, Granada; site-specific installation at San Bruno Chapel for 'Tablao' escenarios de formas en el arte contemporáneo andaluz at CAAC; and collective show Omnímoda at MuCAC. 2024 - solo show: la percepción resbala sobre las cosas sin tocarlas, at Espacio Derivado; Prize from the Artists Residency at the Center for Contemporary Creation of Andalusia C3A; nominated for the Prize Miquel Casablanques SAC, Barcelona and collective show Una nova arqueologia de la matèria, Fabra i Coats - Centre d'Art Contemporani, Barcelona. 2023- Prize ASECAS; duo show: Univers d'Itnages L'ETNO Museu Valencià together with Martínez Bellido; collective shows: HotSheet Photo Festival - DnBrixton Gallery, London; Baggage Claim - Staffordshirest gallery, London; among others.

**Doreen Chan** (b.1987, Hong Kong) is a mixed-media artist focusing on social practice. She was trained in visual communication and photography before receiving her MA in Art Education from School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2021. In her work, Chan re-examines the tensions between interpersonal relationships and subject formation. Through collecting, selecting, and reorganizing fragments from everyday life, she explores how individuals interact with collective and personal memories. She works site-specifically on installations, public programs, virtual projects, and collaborates with a wide range of individuals using images, sculptures, objects, sounds, and performance. Chan has exhibited in institutions such as Ars Electronica Festival 2022 (Linz), UCCA Center for Contemporary Art (Beijing), Times Museum (Guangzhou), Art Omi (New York), and Para Site (Hong Kong). In 2023, her commissioned project, Sipping Dreams, inaugurated Tai Kwun Contemporary's V Hall. In the same year, she was listed as ArtReview China's Future Greats. In 2021, she was an Eyebeam fellow and the 4th VH Award of Hyundai Motor Group finalist. She was also selected as Cultured Magazine's Young Artists (2021). Chan currently lives in New York.

**Ye Cheng** (b. 1992) is a Chinese American artist currently based in New York. Ye graduated with a MFA degree in Fine Art from the New School at Parsons, New York in 2022. And a BFA degree in painting from Maryland Institute College of Art in 2016. The experience of living between boundaries and communities as a first generation immigrant in the U.S. greatly impacted her vision of home and identity. Through art, Ye Cheng relates her personal challenges to the larger state of modernity and recalls the loss of Chinese heritage as an expression of displacement, mobility, disjunction, and self-recognition. Ye has had her solo exhibition in Latitude Gallery in New York and exhibited widely include NADA Miami 2023; Chambers Fine Art in New York; Make Room in Los Angeles; and RHAA, Chicago; Soka Art in Beijing, China. Her work was selected in e-flux Education. In 2023, Ye Cheng was featured in Artnet as one of the "5 Artists on the verge of a breakthrough". In 2024, Ye Cheng was a resident artist at Vermont Studio Center and the NARS 2025 International Artist Residency.

**Nik Cho** (b. 1993, Seoul, South Korea) is a Chicago-based painter whose work explores intimacy, identity, and the psychological tension between figures. Rooted in figurative painting, his practice draws from personal and social narratives. He holds both a BFA and MFA in Painting and Drawing from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC), where he currently serves as a Teaching Fellow in the Painting and Drawing Department.

**Gloria Fan Duan** is an artist and professor whose work explores the intersections of art, science, and technology through speculative projects that fuse the organic and synthetic. She has exhibited internationally at Art Basel in Basel, Ars Electronica, Currents New Media Festival, and the Wrong Biennale, with projects featured in Architectural Digest, Vogue, and Vanity Fair. Her teaching at The New School, Parsons and Pratt Institute stems

from the foundational aspects of her practice, emphasizing systemic design thinking and craftsmanship. Fan Duan's work has been supported by the Andy Warhol Foundation Interlace Grant, as well as residencies and collaborations with the Bauhaus Dessau Foundation, La Prairie, Chicago Botanical Gardens, and Pratt Institute. She holds a BFA from RISD and an MFA from SAIC.

**Brubey Hu** (b. Xiamen China) is an artist, designer and educator currently based in Toronto, Canada. Her work is a mediation on memory, migration and domesticity shaped through a transcultural feminist lens. Bridging her interests in linguistics and architectural drawing, her practice seeks to delineate how cultural and personal identities are shaped. Hu holds an MFA from the University of Waterloo and a BFA from the Maryland Institute College of Art, and is currently pursuing an MA in Gender and Feminist Studies at York University. Hu's work has been exhibited at Art Mur in Montreal; A Space Gallery and Field Projects in New York; Zalucky Contemporary, Art Museum at University of Toronto, Cambridge Galleries, University of Waterloo Art Gallery, and Art Gallery of Mississauga, all in Ontario. She has participated in numerous artist residencies, including the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity and the NARS Foundation. She has worked as a sessional lecturer at the University of Toronto Scarborough and the University of Waterloo. She is also a co-director at Tangent Collective. Her practice is supported by Ontario Arts Council and Canada Arts Council.

**Evelyne Leblanc-Roberge** grew up in a small francophone coastal village in eastern Canada. She completed her BFA in photography at Concordia University (Montreal, Canada) and her MFA in electronic integrated arts at Alfred University (Alfred, New York). She has received multiple grants from Canada Council for the Arts and participated in artist-in-residence programs across continents, including Visual Studies Workshop (Rochester, New York), La Cité Internationale des Arts (Paris, France), AIR 3331 Arts Chiyoda (Tokyo, Japan), SIM (Reykjavik, Iceland), and Arteles (Haukijärvi, Finland) where she produced multifaceted projects published as books, videos, zines, exhibitions, performances, and/or ephemeral installations.

**Sangmin Lee** is a Korean Canadian artist with a BFA from OCADUniversity and an MFA from Columbia University. They have exhibited nationally and internationally ranging from Osaka, Jeongseon, Paris, New York, Miami, Montreal, Toronto, and Dawson City (Yukon). He is the recipient of the OCADUniversity Project 31 Sculpture/Installation award, with artist grants from Toronto Arts Council, Ontario Arts Council, and Canada Council for the Arts, and residencies at Vermont Studio Center and NAVE Residency in Ecuador. Currently, they are based in New York and a Bronx Museum AIM Fellow.

**Camille Lescarbeau** is an ecofeminist textile artist based in Montreal, Canada. She holds a BFA from Concordia University and an MFA from Université du Québec à Montréal. Her work has been shaped by residencies at the Musée régional de Rimouski, Atelier Retailles, Zocalo, Créer des Ponts and the Saint-Jean-Port-Joli's Sculpture Biennale. Lescarbeau's recent exhibitions include AVE Gallery, Regart, Espace Pierre-Debain and the FOFA Gallery. She has been awarded multiple grants from the Canada Council for the Arts and the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec. In addition to her studio practice, she regularly shares her research on craft, ecofeminism and textiles through workshops, roundtables and artist talks. She is the co-founder of UQAM's papermaking studio.

**M.E. Sparks** (she/her) is an artist and educator based in Winnipeg, Treaty 1 Territory, Canada. In recent work Sparks uses painting and collage to examine the relationships between surface and image, materiality and content, legibility and disorientation. In her paintings she pulls apart and recombines art historical imagery, searching for the moment a form dislocates from its origins to resist classification. Recently, this method of



abstraction occurs through the cutting, draping, and layering of painted canvas. By reconsidering the conventions of painting Sparks searches for uncertain and unsettled spaces of representation, as well as the reconciliation and transformation of historical narrative. Sparks completed her MFA from Emily Carr University and BFA from NSCAD University. She is a recipient of project and research grants from Canada Council for the Arts, Manitoba Arts Council, Winnipeg Arts Council and BC Arts Council. Sparks has participated in residencies in the USA, Germany and Finland, and was a finalist in the 2016 and 2017 RBC Canadian Painting Competition. Sparks' work has been exhibited at Gordon Smith Gallery of Canadian Art (North Vancouver), Alternator Centre for Contemporary Art (Kelowna), Trapp Projects (Vancouver), Access Gallery (Vancouver), among others. Upcoming projects include a solo exhibition at aceartinc. (Winnipeg).

The practice of visual artist **Liza Wolters** (1992) is like a fluid repository that is constantly growing, consisting of experiences and encounters, finds and materials that come together and grow apart again. She works with photography, video, installations, text, sound, publications and (found) objects.

**Tianxing Xu**, a visual artist. He has actively participated in the art scene along the east coast, with solo exhibitions Amherst College, Savannah College of Art and Design. He was involved in resident programs in Gibbes Museum of Art, Artists Association of Nantucket and Lower East Side Printshop. Currently, he continues to advance his artistic career in collaboration with the Alan Avery Art Company and Brooklyn Editions.

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**The New York Art Residency and Studios (NARS) Foundation** is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit arts organization committed to supporting artists and curators on an international level as well as engaging the local community in Brooklyn and the Greater New York area. Our mission is to present diverse platforms on which to nurture creative inspiration and innovative cross-pollination of ideas.

The NARS Galleries are open Monday - Friday from 12 to 5 pm. For further information, please contact us at [www.narsfoundation.org](http://www.narsfoundation.org) / [info@narsfoundation.org](mailto:info@narsfoundation.org) / 718-768-2765.



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