

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Quan Wenfei – Internet Archaeology

398 West Street, New York, NY 10014

September 13, 2025 – November 29, 2025

Opening reception: Saturday, September 13, 2025 | 6-8 PM

Eli Klein Gallery is pleased to present *Quan Wenfei: Internet Archaeology*, the artist's first solo exhibition at the gallery. The exhibition showcases Quan's explorations of time and imagery visible on the internet, featuring 12 works using multimedia from her series "CAPTCHA," "Click and Win!," "Tetris," and a selection of installations.

Quan Wenfei, who considers herself to be an "internet archaeologist," grounds her practice in personal experiences drawn from the online world. Revisiting her interactions with the internet, from childhood summer vacations to her present-day encounters, she deconstructs visual information gathered from digital screens and incorporates it into her creative palette. Working across multiple media, she transforms these fragments into conceptual works. Through her refined skills, the boundaries between reality and virtuality, and between the tangible and the digital, gradually dissolve.



CAPTCHA 1, 2025. Drawing on archival digital print
40 x 34 inches (86 x 102 cm)

Creation is a form of hybrid, a way of pushing the boundaries of language through known formulas, and it is the only method I have to free up memory in my brain.

—Quan Wenfei

The artist employs oil paint and silkscreen printing, creating a powerful tension by resonating the replicable and transmissible nature of the internet with the reproducibility of printmaking. The silkscreen process itself is labor-intensive, requiring precise registration, multi-color layering, and meticulous printing. Through this sustained effort, the artist captures fleeting moments of the internet, as if hitting pause on the transient flow of the contemporary world.

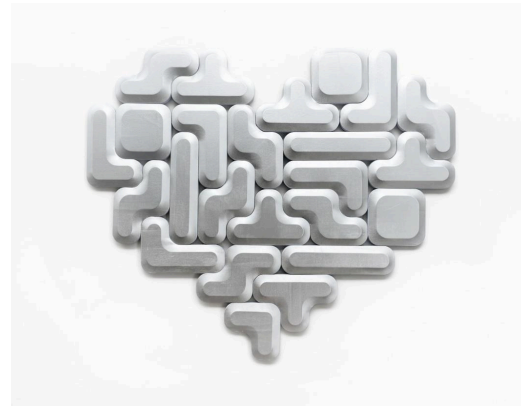
Quan Wenfei's series "CAPTCHA" intertwines her reflections on the ubiquity of online imagery with her printmaking practice. She samples low-resolution images recycled in CAPTCHA, and reimagines them through intricate techniques such as silkscreen, drawing, painting, and archival digital prints. Images that

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appear easily accessible and controllable are rendered invisible, dissolving into fragmented color. These Captchas, in the virtual realm, function as tools that relentlessly challenge the authenticity of being human—turning people into objects compelled to prove themselves. At the same time, these low-quality raw images, or what Hito Steyerl calls the “poor image,” “the trash washing up on the shores of the digital economy, the lumpen proletariat of images,” are rendered into hazy forms through both active and passive dissolution. In this process, Quan questions not only how images are retrieved and perceived by the public, but also how humans themselves become trapped in the paradox of having to demonstrate their own humanity. She also employs sponges as carriers for these reimagined poor images. Their malleable and resilient qualities provide fertile ground for the revival of the poor image.

Extending her timeline further into the past is the inspiration of her print series “Click and Win!” The retro card game, once a pastime for Quan, is reinterpreted as bearing the compulsive quality of birds pecking at their own feathers: “you think you are entertaining yourself, but in fact it is self-harming.” At the moment of victory, the cards burst like fireworks, releasing a rush of joy that is at once ecstatic and hollow. This fleeting instant is what the artist freezes onto canvas. By manipulating scale, color, and composition, Quan guides viewers in excavating this relic of the nostalgic internet era. Such archaeology also traces the roots of today’s digital visual aesthetics and humanity’s obsession with dopamine-driven reward systems.



Tetris Remix 1 - Silver, 2023-2025. Acrylic on shaped canvases, wood, metal.
47 1/4 x 53 1/8 x 1 1/4 inches (120 x 135 x 3 cm). Unique work (variation in color).

Quan’s “Tetris” series marks another experiment in her internet archaeology. Moving beyond silkscreen, she employs oil paint and movable, interlocking modules to test the dynamics of individuals and collectives. Tetris fragments scattered across different strata are reassembled into a curated whole. “Just like in the game, individuals stack together into a community, searching for their common ground, only to dissolve again through homogenization.”

Among the artist’s newest installations are “I Am Not A Robot” and “Duodecimal”. Here, conceptual inquiry is abstracted into ordinary objects that nevertheless seem haunted by human presence, producing an effect reminiscent of the uncanny valley. The void drifts through the space, leaving behind an emptiness that becomes both an annotation and a question on human subjectivity: What causes the keyboard to sound? For whom were the six-fingered gloves made? The retro keyboard and gloves, tools that have been alienated, ask who presides over this space. Serving as the exhibition’s epilogue, the immersive environment functions as a platform offering a skycam perspective aligned with the artist’s own, and as a meditative site for reflecting on humanity’s shifting relationship with the virtual.

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In Quan Wenfei's practice, the screen becomes an archaeological site. By peeling back the topsoil and digging deeper, she unearths nostalgic games, poor images and keyboards. These are both the findings of her excavation and the forces that drive her further. These visual elements may appear discrete, yet in her work they are woven into a network that illuminates the aesthetics and modes of thought embedded within the digital age.

About Quan Wenfei:

Wenfei Quan (b. 1992, China) is an interdisciplinary artist whose practice spans painting, printmaking, video, and installation. Much like a painter confronting surface and image, she describes herself as an "internet archeologist," dissecting the internet as both archive and artifact. Her work explores the aesthetics of digital memory, simulation, and historical construction, to center the act of unfolding and reconfiguring fragmented archives. Quan constructs layered visual narratives that reflect on the nature of perception and information.

A highly skilled printmaker, she works with oil and silkscreen on canvas (a method popularized by Andy Warhol) to slow down and dissect the accelerated pace of internet culture. Her practice mirrors and challenges the visual habits shaped by corporate media and the velocity of digital consumption. Quan's concept of "selective looking" is what guides her practice. Her work summons this filtered attention to the surface, much like wrapping text around an image in a document: controlled, deliberate, and embedded.

Quan's work has been exhibited at Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery, New York (2025); THE BLANC, New York (2025); Zepster Gallery, New York (2025); ONE Gallery, Beijing (2025); Shanghai Peninsula Art Museum, Shanghai (2024); Eli Klein Gallery, New York (2024); One Herald Plaza, Miami (2024); HaiPai Art Museum, Shanghai (2022); Song Art Museum, Beijing (2022); TanArt Community, Xi'an, China (2022); Hello art, Hangzhou, China (2022); Radius Gallery, Xi'an, China (2022); Yellow Box Art Museum, Qingdao, China (2021); Himalayan Art Museum, Shanghai (2021); Wuhan International Convention and Exhibition Center, Wuhan, China (2021); White Realm Art Space, Shenzhen (2020); China Print Museum, Shenzhen, China (2019), Shaanxi Art Museum, Xi'an, China (2019); Shanghai Exhibition Center, Shanghai (2019); Shenzhen Convention and Exhibition Center, Shenzhen, China (2019); and Xuyuan Gallery, Beijing (2016).

Quan currently lives and works in New York, NY.

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