

For Immediate Release  
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## ***Test Flights***

Curated by Jenny Wu, writer and critic

Participating artists: William Graef, Juan Hernández Díaz,  
Kate Liebman, Caroline Ongpin, Ernesto Ortiz-Leyva, Qiaoyi Shi

**February 23 – April 14, 2023**

Opening reception: Thursday, February 23, 6 – 8pm

Lower East Side Printshop is pleased to present its 2023 Winter Exhibition, *Test Flights*, curated by fiction writer and art critic **Jenny Wu**. Featuring work by six artists in media ranging from printmaking to sculpture, video, and site-specific installation, the exhibition takes as its point of departure the Wright brothers' 1903 test flight at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, during which their prototype aircraft made four low-altitude flights ending in an "unintended landing."

"After these flights," artist **Kate Liebman** writes, "a powerful gust of wind carried the plane across the dunes flipping it over and over and over on the ground." The image of a tumbling plane is the subject of a meditation in Liebman's video *Fall*, featured in the exhibition along with two works on mulberry paper and a drawing on linen. As a metaphor, the falling, winged creature captures the melancholia inherent in experimentation, with its iterative and exquisite failures.

*Test Flights* is a collection of such moments spent tripping and tumbling, making and unraveling. Artist and educator **Qiaoyi Shi** will present four intaglio prints on katakana paper depicting toddler gymnasts attempting surreal feats of coordination. **Caroline Ongpin**, a member of the Art Students League of New York, has contributed an aquatint etching of an imagined river that runs in circular currents, a reflection of the artist's idea of paradise. **Ernesto Ortiz-Leyva**, a graduate of the California College of the Arts, will exhibit two monochromatic etchings that contain less forgiving views of eternity inspired by medieval Christian imagery. **William Graef**, an artist and instigator, will show a soft sculpture that skewers American consumerism while reaching back to a bygone era of independent filmmaking and vintage advertisements. **Juan Hernández Díaz**, who holds an MFA from Columbia University School of the Arts, will mark the walls of the exhibition space with pencil, creating an ephemeral, site-specific installation dedicated to "objects in precarious states."

Through these artists' works, LESP's 2023 Winter Exhibition reflects on the role of the printshop as a test site. The thirteen experiments on display represent, each in their own way,

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a first flight—an arc of potential defined by the weight of risk, a launch from the ground whose zenith is paradise.

### About the curator:

**Jenny Wu** is a fiction writer and art critic. Her work has appeared in *Artforum*, *BOMB*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, and *New York Times Magazine*. She has organized exhibitions in New York and elsewhere—including most recently *Texts and Soundings: The Image Talks Back* at the NARS Foundation (2022). Wu has, in the past, provided editorial, research, and curatorial support for the Pulitzer Arts Foundation, *MARCH: a journal of art & strategy*, and Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center. She is currently a staff writer for *The Millions* and a recipient of the 2021-23 Tulsa Artist Fellowship, for which she is completing a book-length work of fiction.

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Curatorial Statement by Jenny Wu

### *Test Flights*

In 1903, the Wright brothers took a plane to the dunes of Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, where it made “four low altitude flights, the longest of which lasted 59 seconds and traveled 852 feet” before making an “unintended landing.” “After these flights,” artist Kate Liebman writes, “a powerful gust of wind carried the plane across the dunes flipping it over and over and over on the ground.” This haunting image of a tumbling plane, which appears in one of Liebman’s works in the exhibition, captures the melancholia inherent in experimentation, with its iterative and exquisite failures.

The exhibition features six artists working in media ranging from printmaking to sculpture, video, and site-specific installation. All throughout, one encounters, in various forms, motions of tripping and tumbling, making and unraveling—and of flight. The toddler gymnasts in Qiaoyi Shi’s *1255* series, whose bean-shaped bodies squirm in tangled masses, and at times loop effortlessly through the air, enact a form of acrobatics reminiscent of an artistic practice. The warm-toned currents in Caroline Ongpin’s *Ask the river* form cyclical bands of aquatic texture that reflect the artist’s conception of paradise as a “fleeting mental space that can be made, unmade, and remade, infinitely.”

The works in the show also posit the printshop as a test site. Ernesto Ortiz-Leyva’s monochromatic etchings riff on medieval Christian imagery to depict madcap scenes of consumption and combustion, victory and devastation. William Graef shares a vintage advertisement with a satirical edge, printed on a burlap sack, while Juan Hernández Díaz takes inventory of “objects in precarious states” directly on the walls of the exhibition space. The thirteen works in the show represent, each in their own way, a first flight—an arc of potential defined by the weight of risk, a launch from the ground whose zenith is paradise.

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## *Test Flights Checklist*



### **Juan Hernández Díaz**

*Object Inventory (LESP), 2023*

Mixed-media installation: pastel pencil on wall,  
irons, sponge, and flashlight  
220" x 140" x 130"  
Unique



### **Kate Liebman**

*moon ix, 2021*

Etching and cyanotype on Japanese mulberry paper  
22" x 25.5" image and sheet  
Unique

\$800 unframed



### **Kate Liebman**

*moon path i, 2021*

Cyanotype and chine-collé on Japanese mulberry  
paper  
25.5" x 35.5" image and sheet  
Unique

\$900 unframed

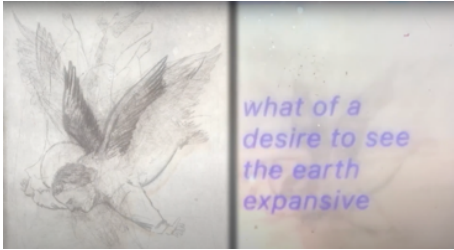


### **Kate Liebman**

*flayed, 2022*

Graphite and vellum on cyanotype  
9" x 11" image and sheet  
Unique

\$750 unframed



## Kate Liebman

*fall*, 2021-22

Split channel video made with original text and over 900 unique prints  
 8 minutes 41 seconds



## Caroline Ongpin

*Ask the River*, 2019

Etching and aquatint on paper  
 30" x 33" image and sheet  
 Edition of 10  
 Edition number: AP

\$1,200 framed; \$900 unframed



## William Graef

*Private Idaho No. 4*, 2019

Acrylic on burlap  
 22" x 34" x 10"  
 Unique

\$900



## Qiaoyi Shi

*1255 #1*, 2023

Intaglio on Katakana paper  
 5.5" x 8" image; 9" x 11" sheet  
 Edition number: AP

\$350 unframed



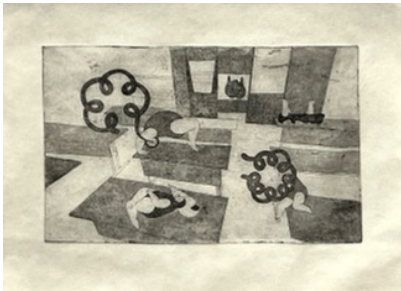
## Qiaoyi Shi

*1255 #2*, 2023

Intaglio on Katakana paper  
 5.5" x 8" image; 9" x 11" sheet  
 Edition number: AP

\$350 unframed

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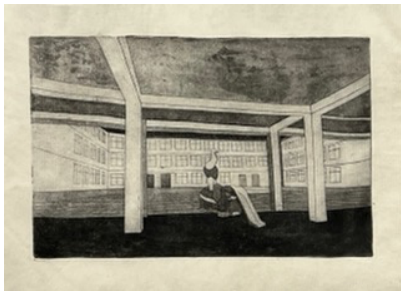


**Qiaoyi Shi**

*1255 #3, 2023*

Intaglio on Katakana paper  
5.5" x 8" image; 9" x 11" sheet  
Edition number: AP

\$350 unframed



**Qiaoyi Shi**

*1255 #4, 2023*

Intaglio on Katakana paper  
5.5" x 8" image; 9" x 11" sheet  
Edition number: AP

\$350 unframed



**Ernesto Ortiz-Leyva**

*Death Fight, 2021*

Etching, aquatint, and drypoint on paper  
12" x 18" image  
Edition of 10

\$535 framed; \$400 unframed



**Ernesto Ortiz-Leyva**

*Harrowing Innards, 2022*

Etching, aquatint, and drypoint on paper  
18" x 12" image  
Edition of 10

\$585 framed; \$450 unframed

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We thank our volunteers, friends, members, and patrons for their dedication, support, and generosity.

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