

Portfolio 2026
Yiming Clara Li

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Yiming Clara was born in New York and raised in Beijing. She now lives in Berkeley.

Getting to know the world through a time of mass-transformation in Beijing, where walls were torn down and rebuilt over night, the semblance of solidity in human construction was dispelled for her early on. The profanity of permanence—whether in definitions, feelings, walls, or boundaries—became the exigent site her work emerges from.

She is interested in the traces that lay upon the surfaces of the world, those residues of time, chance, or negligence that reveals a construction, and gives hint to the potentiality of a de- and re-construction. In her work she diverts the gaze to configure a poetics already present in the everyday, playing with familiarity and its capacity to obscure and make things disappear, to move our bodies as it leverages our inherent blindness to what is known and agreed upon. With sculpture and moving image configured in “situations”, she pushes and pulls those thresholds of recognition, borrowing familiar traces and reworking them into new affective encounters.

Yiming Clara is looking for that world which is revealed only through sensory channels—one made by a language that is beyond the strictures of linguistics and exists in those visceral reactions, the flashes of memory, a feeling on the skin, and those appearances in dreams.

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Education

2027 BA, Rhetoric and Art Practice
University of California, Berkeley, CA, USA.

Selected Exhibitions

- 2026 (upcoming)
500 Capp Street Foundation, San Francisco, CA, USA.
Slash Arts Foundation, San Francisco, CA, USA.
Recology Artist in Residence, San Francisco, CA, USA.
- 2025 *The Chair*, 202019: Occasions, Berkeley, CA, USA.
- 2024 *A Tale of Love*, Climate Control, San Francisco, CA, USA.
- 2023 *Garden of Eden*, Climate Control, San Francisco, CA, USA.



Speakers Never Learn, 2026
Gauze, speaker
dimensions variable



202019: Occasions
Speakers Never Learn

Still Coming into the World: A Sunrise Gathering
January 23rd, 2026
sunrise – 11 AM

“Speakers Never Learn” is a salon on the sonic developed in collaboration with Hyungtae Kim—a second edition of the exhibition series 202019: Occasions. On January 23rd, we open with its first occasion, *Still Coming Into The World: A Sunrise Gathering*, a research-based listening event.

Centered around a sample of sound works dedicated to or heard by artist Theresa Hak Kyung Cha herself while in Berkeley, California, this gathering is conceived by Cha Scholar, Ju Ly Ban; Independent Writer, Isabelle Utzinger-Son; and artist, Cici Wu.

Still Coming Into World is an opening ceremony that stakes a single sound: “friendship.” We hope you join us to celebrate the persistence of that sound in: the works of Reese Williams; Berkeley, CA; 2026; Sunrise – 11:00 A.M.; between friends; through speakers.





The Chair, 2025
202019: Occasions



202019: Occasions
The Chair
December 1st - December 14th, 2025

202019: Occasions is an exhibition series made by Yiming Clara. *The Chair* is the inaugural occasion.

On this occasion, I attempt to bring together some forceful encounters within the gravitational field of my locality, as they are figured through questions and images, fragments of manuscripts and long-awaited sculptures, and, of course, poetry. These are the things that resurface infinitely in my mind as residue of a much longer conversation, affinity, and imagination that have opened to a widening joy. This, as Alejandra says, is our attempt at a coherence that is against the world.

Growing out of a longing to gather what matters most, this unfolds as a natural evolution from a year of tea gatherings—only now borrowing a new ritual.





Theses on *the Occasion* (loose)

1. The Occasion

An occasion is a particular time or instance, a suitable or opportune time for doing something. This series of occasions is made by many borrowings, mostly of familiar social forms and situations contained within the grammar of art exhibitions. From these, we can create the “opportune” time for doing something, that something being always a gathering of what matters.

2. A coming about

This occasion is a gathering of encounters, an occurrence that came about all too naturally, as it was absolutely impending. Each object within the show is a gathering itself, of this intensity of knowing and exchange within each encounter, coalescing in an object that flashes forth in my mind again and again. This shared sensibility is the force behind this gathering and also the way I had brought the occasion to everyone in the conversation. This is how the conversation became an occasion.

3. In the middle

On the occasion, these different encounters meet in the middle, between their already-coalesced forms and the new becomings that emerge from this gathering. Others then enter at this middle as well, an entrance welcomed through the formalities of an exhibition, as we borrow its sedimented forms of knowing, seeing, and moving about in a space. I am interested in such dances—how we step in and out of them, but also how we can choreograph them anew, differently—allow them to be slippery, and have them move to and for others.

4. On writing, writing in general, writing generously.

The show is perhaps just about writing in general—writing as a form of thinking, as the enabler of thought, but also as a holder of things. I’ve been thinking a great deal about its capacity to relinquish what has already been written down. As with the show, I’m interested in how we can take the minimum trace of a form’s legibility and use it to enact, upon its original shape, a total breakdown or opening up from the inside out.

The real artichoke

1953

— In order to find the real artichoke, we divested it of its leaves.

L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §184.

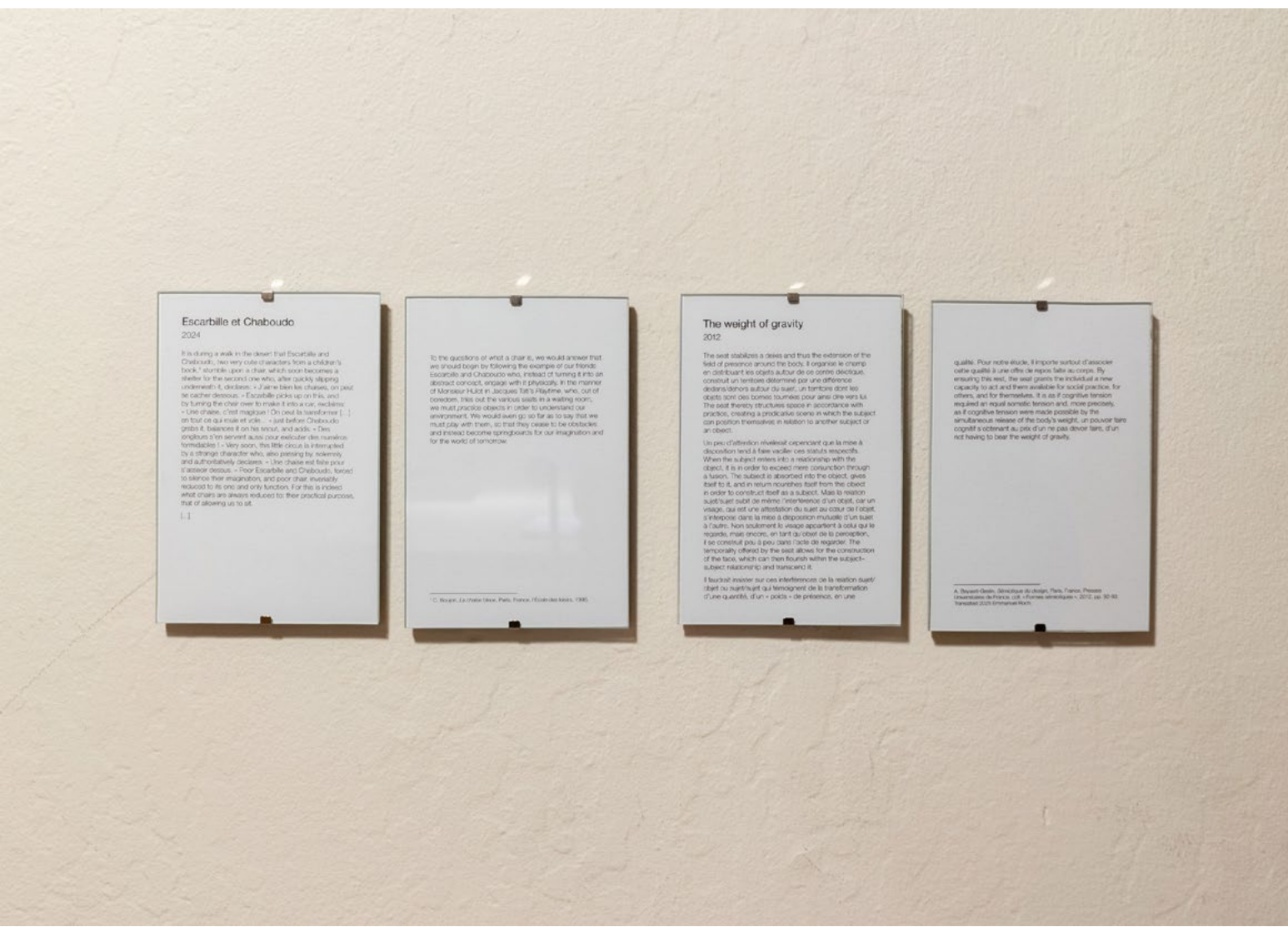
A Convenient Grammatical Fiction, 2025

Inkjet print on paper, glass picture frame

10cm x 15cm



A Convenient Grammatical Fiction consists of a series of 11 “exhibition tombstones”, installed during an exhibition at the height level of museum standard exhibition tombstones, but explicating nothing but a bizarre philosophical reading of *Chairs*. Made in collaboration with Emmanuel Roch, we drew extractions from his History of Philosophy Thesis from École Normale Supérieure de Lyon, tinkering with the tenets of language and how it formulates the world through didactics, translations, and perceptions.





Rhizome, 2025
Rebar, clay, plaster, wire netting
150cm x 62cm x 38 cm





Wall Paintings, 2025 (In Progress)
Edge banding, wall paint, painters plastic
Single-channel video, 1 hr 22 min









Lacuna, 2024
Unfired ceramic
dimensions variable (size of room)





***Lacuna*, as appearing in 'A Tale of Love'**

24.10.2024—07.12.2024

Climate Control Gallery, San Francisco

An accumulation, or perhaps the accumulated trace, of something once here. Inaugurated by the filling of all corners and cracks in the room, this gesture, once static as an object in space, reverses in motion as if caught in a moment of seeping away. It is omnipresent in the visual field but never the object of the gaze, its scale beyond a gallery-goer's habitual mode of looking. It exists only in stolen glances, when viewers vaguely register its presence—or perhaps only the absence of edges demarcating wall from floor: caught by accident, not long enough to decipher, or caught and confused. These affective intensities unsettle the disciplinary field of looking and being looked at in the gallery—returning the viewer to embodied presence, if only momentarily.



A Predicament, 2024
Wire, unfired ceramic
315cm 610cm x 40cm (site specific)





A Predicament, as appearing in 'A Tale of Love'
 24.10.2024—07.12.2024
 Climate Control Gallery, San Francisco

A splitting of space, swaying between states of visibility and presence, yet always bringing you back to the present. The work begins a foot from the gallery's entrance, slicing from ceiling to floor, a gesture in space that stages the first encounter: a choice to step right or left into the room. Though occupying barely 1% of the room's volume, the work finds way into every possible visual field, yet emerges fully only in splice moments: when one collides with the "lines," jarred, glancing about, hoping no one noticed; jarred again in realizing the piece is now swinging—set in motion by you, but no longer under your control; now, hyper-aware of your own presence, and finally, present in the space.

In this moment, the viewer surfaces as a differentiated body, suddenly aware of the collectively inscribed yet authorless disciplines that govern how to exist in a gallery.



To Portent, 2024
Plaster, rebar, fruit detritus
183cm x 157cm x 114cm



Impressions Left by Other, 2024
Recycled memory foam, nylon pantyhose, found chair,
found signage
26cm x 12cm x 10cm







Collective Feelings, 2025
Photographic documentation of a live performance
Berkeley, CA, USA.



Sara Ahmed posits that emotions “work to align individuals with collectives—or bodily space with social space—through the intensity of their attachments” and “affect the very distinction between inside and outside.” This distinction, Ahmed argues, materializes at the skin’s surface, a site where bodily and social boundaries are negotiated. This first exploration began with thinking about the physicality of skin surface and the affective negotiations of a subject dermally aware. How does skin position bodies in space?

One can never attain a complete vision of the self in solitude; instead, our social existence functions as a panopticon—an external gaze that scrutinizes from every angle simultaneously. This form of vision constructs a geometry beyond the comprehension of the eye, that is, the chimera of perception. This viscosity of wholeness generates an anxiety to continually perform a fully defined self, perpetually enacting the processes through which ‘bodies surface.’ Ahmed describes this as the ‘recognition or interpretation of sensations that are responses to the impression of others, and the transformation of such sensations into emotions’.

I see this as the individual’s repeated performance to align themselves with the vision imposed by the social panopticon. The interior communicates a specific vision projected from the surface towards bodily others and objects, one that is receptive to interrogation of an external vision which in turn informs that very surface. This movement is contingent upon the objects and others inhabiting specific situations. Building on Ahmed’s articulation of an intimate relationship between what Butler describes as ‘materialization’ and ‘intensification,’ this argument adds the dimension of vision—that which engenders the very fluidity, unfixity of such movement.



Perfect Oblique I, 2025
Stoneware, red iron oxide
96cm x 52cm x 38cm





The series *Perfect Oblique* emerges from contemplation about the sphere, about the immense perfection of the spherical form and the incomprehensible ability of nature to create such forms. Trying to grapple, perhaps tackle this incomprehensibility, the work emerges from a period committed to a singular activity, trying to create the most perfect form with the most formless medium, clay.



A Portrait of Clara, 2023

Digital Inkjet Print

122cm x 142cm

in 'Garden of Eden'

11.11.2023 – 15.01.2024

Climate Control Gallery, San Francisco



202508-Hohhot-InnerMongolia, 2025
Digital Photographs





202506-CDMX-Mexico, 2025
Digital Photographs





202507-Beijing-China, 2025
Digital Photographs





202507-Paris-France, 2025
Digital Photographs



End