

SYNTHETIC TRACES

LITE ZHANG & PAVLOS LIARETIDIS

Exhibition curated by Alfonso Sanchez Herrera Lasso

ON VIEW NOVEMBER 8-30, 2025

PS122
150 1st Ave, New York, NY 10009

PS122 proudly presents *Synthetic Traces*, a project arriving in New York that exposes the fractures running through human and environmental systems and the aftermath of their collapse. This exhibition brings together sculpture, video, and mixed-media works by artists Lite Zhang and Pavlos Liaretidis that underline how disaster unsettles the ground we stand on and reshapes the ways we remember, mourn, and persist.

Originating in Baltimore under the title *(un)natural order*, this project began as an exploration of the consequences of disasters, reflecting on events such as the 2024 collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Maryland and the 2023 Tempi train tragedy in Greece. For this second act, now in New York City, *Synthetic Traces* recontextualizes earlier works alongside new ones, positioning them within a city that has long absorbed global narratives while reckoning with its own history of rupture and renewal.

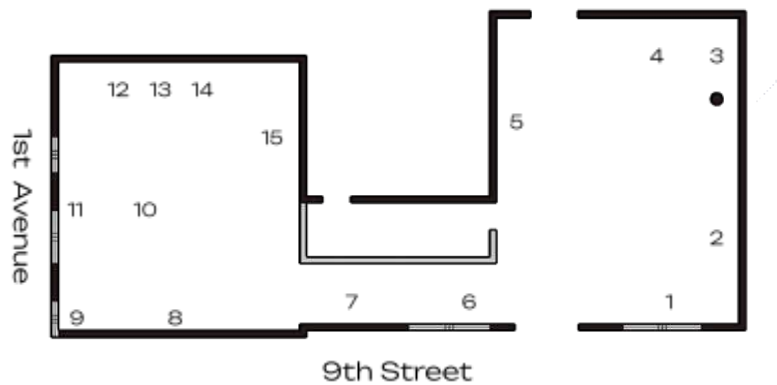
The exhibition unfolds across multiple themes: cultural displacement, environmental devastation, and the precarious balance between resilience and erasure. Both artists probe the fragile seams of human systems, from the infrastructures that collapse under the weight of disaster to the landscapes and animal lives scarred by fire, neglect, and exploitation. Their practices draw on strategies of displacement, memorialization, and estrangement, revealing how the synthetic and the natural, the human and the nonhuman, continually intersect and break apart. What emerges is a meditation on the sounds, memories, and matter left behind that insist collapse is never final but always carried forward as a reminder of care, vulnerability, and survival. Public programming will extend these conversations, with details to be announced at a later date.

Synthetic Traces situates these urgent conversations in New York City, a landscape shaped by its own histories of devastation and repair. Here, resilience is not framed as victory, but as the fragile endurance of memory, matter, and community. The exhibition invites viewers to step into this terrain of fracture and perseverance, to witness how collapse leaves not only ruins but also echoes—traces that demand attention, care, and reckoning.

Lite Zhang (b. 1998, Xi'an, China) is a New York and Baltimore-based interdisciplinary sculptor whose practice explores spatial dynamics, materiality, and audience interaction. Through installations incorporating found objects, formed sound, and tactile elements, Zhang creates multi-sensory environments that examine identity, memory, and social constructs. He holds an MFA in Sculpture from the Maryland Institute College of Art and attended the Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture (Class of 2025). His work has been presented at VisArts, Current Space, AREA 405, and SPCE Contemporary, including the 2023 solo exhibition *Same Root* 同根生 at Pinkard Gallery. Zhang is the recipient of awards including the Aesthetica Art Prize 2025, the Amalie Rothschild '34 Rinehart Award, and the 21st Annual Leadership Award.

Pavlos Liaretidis (b. 1999, Thessaloniki, Greece) is a New York-based interdisciplinary sculptor whose practice spans installation, printmaking, and drawing to examine how material, space, and context shape human experience. Informed by his Greek heritage, his work weaves cultural references, historical undercurrents, and contemporary realities into environments that are at once architectural and deeply affective. His installations, shown across Greece, Baltimore, and New York, invite encounters that are both symbolic and visceral, reflecting on systems of memory, resilience, and vulnerability. Liaretidis received his MFA in Sculpture from the Maryland Institute College of Art in 2024 and his BFA Integrated Master's from Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in 2022, and in 2025 was awarded a fellowship in the NYFA IAP Mentoring Program in New York.

Alfonso Sanchez Herrera Lasso (b. 2000, Mexico City, Mexico) is a curator and emerging arts professional working at the intersection of contemporary art, design, and architecture. Based in London, his practice explores how space, storytelling, and materiality each shape our understanding of the urban landscape. An MFA graduate of the Maryland Institute College of Art, he has held curatorial, production, and gallery roles in Mexico, the United States, and the United Kingdom. These include his current role as Gallery Assistant at BEERS London, as well as past positions of Assistant Curator at Museo de Arte de Querétaro and the Art Collectors Athenaeum, in partnership with the Art Museum of the Americas—Organization of American States. Recent projects include *DISJUNCTION* (Making Space Bmore, 2025), *(un)natural order* (Atrium Artspace, 2025), and *This Is Not Your Grave* (Eubie Blake National Jazz and Cultural Center, 2024).



1. Lite Zhang, **same roots no. 9** (2023)
driftwood, brown paper
22" x 9" x 12"
2. Pavlos Liaretidis, **Unposting no. 5 – West 25 Street, Chelsea, May 5, dense mist and thin light rain during a late-night drive** (2025)
reclaimed wheatpasting posters, aluminum frame
16'5" x 6'
3. Pavlos Liaretidis, **Curing trace—1** (2025)
plaster, metal powders and graphite pigment
24" x 19" x 1"
4. Lite Zhang, **Key Bridge** (2024)
crab cage, concrete sink, metal cage, strobe light
9,2' x 2' x 2'
5. Pavlos Liaretidis, **Unposting no. 3 – Bowery, Nolita, February 4, night retrieval before trash collection, with partner in crime** (2025)
reclaimed wheatpasting posters, aluminum frame
6' x 11' 8"
6. Lite Zhang, **same roots no. 20** (2025)
driftwood, light bulbs
16" x 5" x 8"
7. Lite Zhang, **Foreign Signal** (2025)
GE radio, speaker, power bank
48" x 23" x 24"
8. Pavlos Liaretidis, **Unposting no. 1 – Greenwich Avenue, West Village, January 1 midnight, after new year's eve heavy rain, four of us in the emptied streets** (2025)
reclaimed wheatpasting posters, aluminum frame
4' x 6' x 4'
9. Lite Zhang, **Obey** (2025)
traffic light, wallpaper, plexiglass
variable
10. Pavlos Liaretidis, **After the Arrow** (2025)
roadkill deer's bloodstain and hide imprinted on plaster, metal powders, wooden crates (All organic materials found post-mortem)
variable
11. Lite Zhang, **same roots no. 12** (2025)
driftwood, brown paper
16" x 8" x 6"
12. Lite Zhang, **996** (2025)
grass, northeast wildflower mix seeds, video
14 minutes, 28 seconds
13. Lite Zhang, **Made in China** (2025)
grass, video
8 minutes, 15 seconds
14. Lite Zhang, **Plastic Pastoral** (2025)
artificial hay, video
8 minutes, 5 seconds
15. Lite Zhang, **Plastic Pastoral Hay Suit** (2025)
artificial hay
6,5' x 1,5' x 1,5'

Lite Zhang, **Key Bridge** (2024)



This installation responds to the tragic collapse of Baltimore's Key Bridge, a landmark I photographed extensively. Found materials from Inner Harbor Beach—driftwood, plastic, and remnants of Maryland's crabbing culture to fuel the practice. A suspended crab pot, holding a flashing yellow warning light, is tethered by a rusted chain to a symbolic sink below. This composition embodies entrapment, loss, and the weight of tragedy. More than a memorial, it evokes regret, awe, and the fragility of human life and infrastructure. The piece serves as both tribute and reflection on impermanence, reminding us of the forces beyond our control.

-Lite

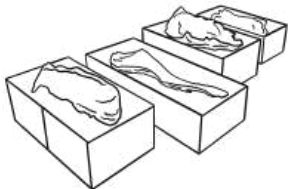
Pavlos Liaretidis, **Curing Trace-1** (2025)



Curing Trace reflects on the slow transformation of matter and time. In its fluid state, plaster drifts and settles, uncertain like breath or water. As it cures, motion thickens into stillness, yet the surface remains alive—metal powders oxidize, colors shift, and the body of the material holds its own scars. These marks endure as quiet records of passing time, traces of what has moved through and remained. The work becomes a meditation on memory and permanence, where the material continues to remember long after it has set.

-Pavlos

Pavlos Liaretidis, **After the Arrow** (2025)



A plaster mold cast from the body of a deer, a unique creature whose life cannot be replicated. The mold preserves surface details with rigorous precision, capturing the wound, the blood, and the shape of the animal. Hollow inside, it remains a mass with an empty core—like a soulless cocoon abandoned by an insect. Externally, iron, graphite, and coal merge with the plaster to form a stiff, dark crust, resembling coagulated blood and scar tissue. Hard yet fragile, the shell endures as a trace of life; its fragility reflects the delicate nature of existence, while the imprint preserves the animal's form across time and space.

-Pavlos

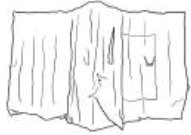
Lite Zhang, **Foreign Signal** (2025)



This GE radio, mounted on the wall, originates from a 1940s American living room, yet now repeatedly plays historical recordings of the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. Once an object of everyday life it is transformed here into a vessel for a foreign voice. Here, objects and sounds intertwine to create a "misbroadcast" that transcends time and space. Foreign Signal is no longer merely a technological medium; it becomes an emotional echo delayed. It functions both as a personal apparatus of nostalgia and as a "migrant of sound," where voices inhabit bodies that are not their own. As viewers approach, they experience history not as a grand narrative but as an intimate, quiet, and slightly disjointed presence

-Lite

Pavlos Liaretidis, **Unposting no. 3 - Bowery, Nolita, February 4, night retrieval before trash collection, with partner in crime** (2025)



Pavlos Liaretidis, **Unposting no. 5 - West 25 Street, Chelsea, May 5, dense mist and thin light rain during a late-night drive** (2025)



Pavlos Liaretidis, **Unposting no. 1 - Greenwich Avenue, West Village, January 1 midnight, after new year's eve heavy rain, four of us in the emptied streets** (2025)



Unposting is a series of sculptures—wheatpasting posters reclaimed from the streets of New York City and reworked within a sculptural language. The action itself is an urban hunt during closed season—physical, improvised, and reflective. It unfolds as a kind of large-scale journalism: tracking and retrieving finds circulating as advertising, part scavenging, part documentation. Each act brings back a trace, a record of movement through a landscape that continually renews and erases itself. In the studio, I approach them sculpturally. They become canvas-like objects, their skins—off-whites and pale blues, scarred with wrinkles, scratches, and traces of glue—blur material identity. Once fragile and light, they accumulate into dense, rigid, self-supporting forms. What remains are objects caught between endurance and decay—records of pursuit, time, and the city's shifting skin.

-Pavlos

Lite Zhang, **Plastic Pastoral-Suit & video** (2025)



This work emerged from my fascination with the uneasy dialogue between the synthetic and the natural. I created a full-body suit from yellow artificial turf, a material designed to mimic the surface of a hayfield, and wore it while rolling across an actual field of dry grass. From a distance, my body nearly disappeared into the landscape, until movement exposed me as an awkward, hybrid presence caught between camouflage and revelation.

The suit is a second skin made of petroleum-based fibers, a plastic parody of nature. By staging myself in a rural field, I wanted to collapse the distance between what is real and what is manufactured, to expose the fragility of that boundary. The body that emerges is not quite human, not quite an environment, but a strange amalgam.

My rolling gesture rejects the logic of agricultural labor that once defined human relations to the land. Instead of cultivation or harvest, I enact a movement that is purposeless, clumsy, and childlike. This futility highlights the absurdity of attempting to “return to nature” while enveloped in plastic.

Plastic Pastoral asks what happens when this harmonic ideal is reconstructed through artificial materials. The work inhabits the paradox of our time; we simulate nature endlessly, even as we erode the ground beneath it. By masking myself in synthetic hay, I become both invisible and conspicuous, both part of the field and its intruder. In this tension, I find the image of a contemporary pastoral where the idyll is no longer green and fertile, but plastic, precarious, and estranged.

-Lite

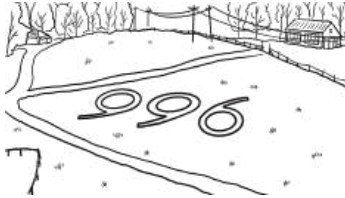
Lite Zhang, **Obey** (2023)



I see traffic lights as a microcosm of societal order—red means stop, green means go. A silent agreement of obedience and waiting. In this work, I place the traffic light in a new context, where the illuminated signals do not dictate movement but instead display images of the sky and clouds. This visual displacement disrupts perception, prompting viewers to question ingrained habits. At the bottom, a crack appears in the "sky," further blurring the line between reality and illusion. What do we truly follow each day? Are rules absolute, or are they constructs we unconsciously obey?

-Lite

Lite Zhang, **996** (2025)



"996" is a site-specific work centered on the interweaving of nature and culture. I carved the word "996" with a sickle into the grass in the small town of Skowhegan and scattered North American wildflower seeds over it. This work not only echoes the local manufacturing history of the New Balance 996 shoe and the cultural symbolism of "Made in USA," but also introduces the "996" overtime culture in the Chinese context, revealing the social reality of labor, perseverance, and oppression. Furthermore, the work, situated within the Skowhegan art community, reflects the close interweaving of the artist's work and life. As the wildflowers grow and fade year after year within the outline of "996," the work gradually merges with nature, becoming a witness to the ongoing dialogue between human labor and nature.

-Lite

Lite Zhang, **Same Roots 9, 12 and 20** (2023-2025)



Same Roots is an installation centered on driftwood, exploring themes of identity, migration, and the transformations of nature. The work was inspired by my journey from Xi'an to Baltimore—standing on a distant shore, far from the familiar landscapes of my hometown, I was captivated by the driftwood scattered along the beach. Weathered by the relentless sea, each piece seemed to carry its own story, reflecting my own sense of being adrift in a foreign land: a young individual full of hopes and dreams, yet uncertain of what lies ahead.

-Lite

Lite Zhang, **Made in China**
(2025)



The work inscribes the phrase “Made in China” onto the grass in the town of China, Maine, creating a striking juxtaposition between geographic naming and global manufacturing identity. By situating this ubiquitous label within a landscape that shares its name yet holds no direct connection to Chinese production, the piece exposes the dissonance between symbolic meaning and material reality. It opens a critical space to reflect on how place, language, and economy intersect, questioning assumptions of origin, authenticity, and the circulation of value across borders.

-Lite

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

Conversation with the Artists
November 15, 4–6PM

Performance by Lite
November 21, 6–8PM

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