



Leah Ke Yi Zheng

b. 1988, Wuyishan, China  
lives and works in Chicago, USA



Leah Ke Yi Zheng's art marries the techniques of Chinese painting with histories of the Western avant-garde, revised and updated into both a personal and poetic vision. Her paintings follow two key physical characteristics: each utilizes silk fabric stretched over hand-crafted hardwood stretchers, each has a unique contour, striking an eccentric and fluid conversation between rigidity and suppleness. Zheng apprenticed in traditional Chinese painting techniques from an early age, and continued her art studies in the United States, synthesizing divergent cultural practices which now determine a singular temporality that harnesses the forces and consequences of globalization.

Her practice exists within the critical space between one's mind and a surface of perception. Machine gears, I-Ching hexagrams, fictional portraits, and phantasmagoria develop within a delicate but firm compositional structure of lines both fixed and open-ended. The silk medium offers a gossamer effect, and this translucence is flooded by an emotion of color as light changes effortlessly in a transcendental elucidation of her own artistic decisions. Her works revise the deliberate framework of painting, attending to the very nature of painting itself, its histories, and its capacity for spirit; they call forward the abstract field of a viewer's individual perception and innermost subjective experiences.

Recent solo and two person exhibitions include *Leah Ke Yi Zheng*, **Mendes Wood DM**, Brussels, *John Cage & Leah Ke Yi Zheng*, **CASTLE**, Los Angeles, USA (2024); *Leah Ke Yi Zheng*, **David Lewis**, New York, USA (2023); *Leah Ke Yi Zheng & Danny Bredar*, **Arts Club of Chicago**, Chicago, USA (2022). Recent group exhibitions include *Everyone Loves Picabia*, **David Lewis**, New York, USA (2024) and *Soul Mapping*, **Zeno X Gallery**, Antwerp, Belgium (2023).



SELECTED  
EXHIBITIONS



2024  
Mendes Wood DM, Brussels  
*Leah Ke Yi Zheng*



*Leah Ke Yi Zheng, Mendes Wood DM, Brussels, 2024*



*Leah Ke Yi Zheng, Mendes Wood DM, Brussels, 2024*



I make irregularly shaped paintings because I want them to point to, and make notice of, all the other irregularities in the world... that's how I want to think of the paintings' presence—a totality of the painting object. The decision of destabilizing the painting's infrastructure comes not from starting with the 0, but with the -1; it begins even before a thought of a painting could take place.

- Leah Ke Yi Zheng



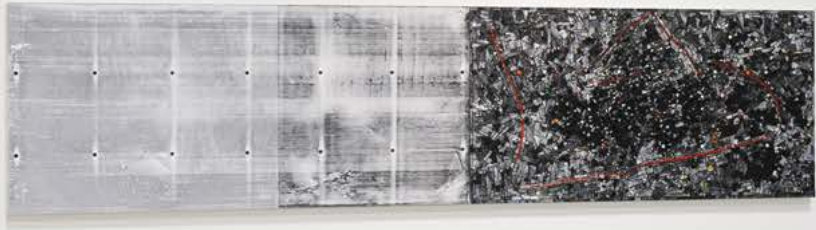
*Leah Ke Yi Zheng, Mendes Wood DM, Brussels, 2024*





As an artist, (Leah Ke Yi Zheng) adopted much from eastern and western traditions, primarily through an understanding of how to create a situation that can lead to an epiphany; whether that's from the architecture of Zen gardens or the situation of land art - the kind of artworks that are meant to be walked as well as viewed and experienced over an extended period of time and that seem to constantly change. It's easy to be drawn into Leah's work by its visual abundance and the way it connects to complex ways of seeing and how we consider our place in the world. But to enter this thicket, it's necessary to begin somewhere, with an element, a piece of the whole that then begins an irregular and circuitous path forward where a viewer must first focus on the immediate situation of her work before arriving at a place where perceptions open up and the possibilities of the nature of the experience come forward. Leah's work is not logical, it plays with and subverts our expectations.

- Gaylen Gerber, 2024



2023  
Zeno X Gallery,  
Antwerp Soul  
*Mapping*

*Left wall: Jack Whitten, Right wall: Leah Ke Yi Zheng*



*Soul Mapping*, Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp, 2023



Works (seen individually or in an exhibition) attend to shape, type of silk, level of translucency, how the light travels, how the space is engaged — all of this contributes to the nature of change in an experience, like how each moment of perception offers a different perspective. My motifs are related facets that give a different potential epiphany, that this is truly a different moment.

- Leah Ke Yi Zheng



2022  
David Lewis, New York  
*Leah Ke Yi Zheng*



The slippage between legibility and illegibility in Zheng's work pushes back against the long-held assumption that a painting must acknowledge its two-dimensional surface. That slippage enables the artist to raise questions about the relationship between legibility and illegibility, while pursuing a trajectory that is all her own. Each of the exhibition's paintings presents a different level of legibility, from graphically immediate to impossible to decipher.

- John Yau, *Hyperallergic*, 2022



*Leah Ke Yi Zheng, David Lewis, New York, 2022*

Across the development of the works, these forms undergo changes: they transform, substitute, alter, and deviate, raising questions on repetition and difference. When forms and variation collide, the gradual process of revealing occurs: the semiotics of hiding, veiling, unfolding, and the coexistence of silence, stillness, and living energy.







*Leab Ke Yi Zheng*, David Lewis, New York, 2022



2024  
CASTLE, Los Angeles  
*John Cage & Leah Ke Yi Zheng*



*John Cage & Leah Ke Yi Zheng, CASTLE, Los Angeles, 2024*





**Leah Ke Yi Zheng**

*No. 45*

2024

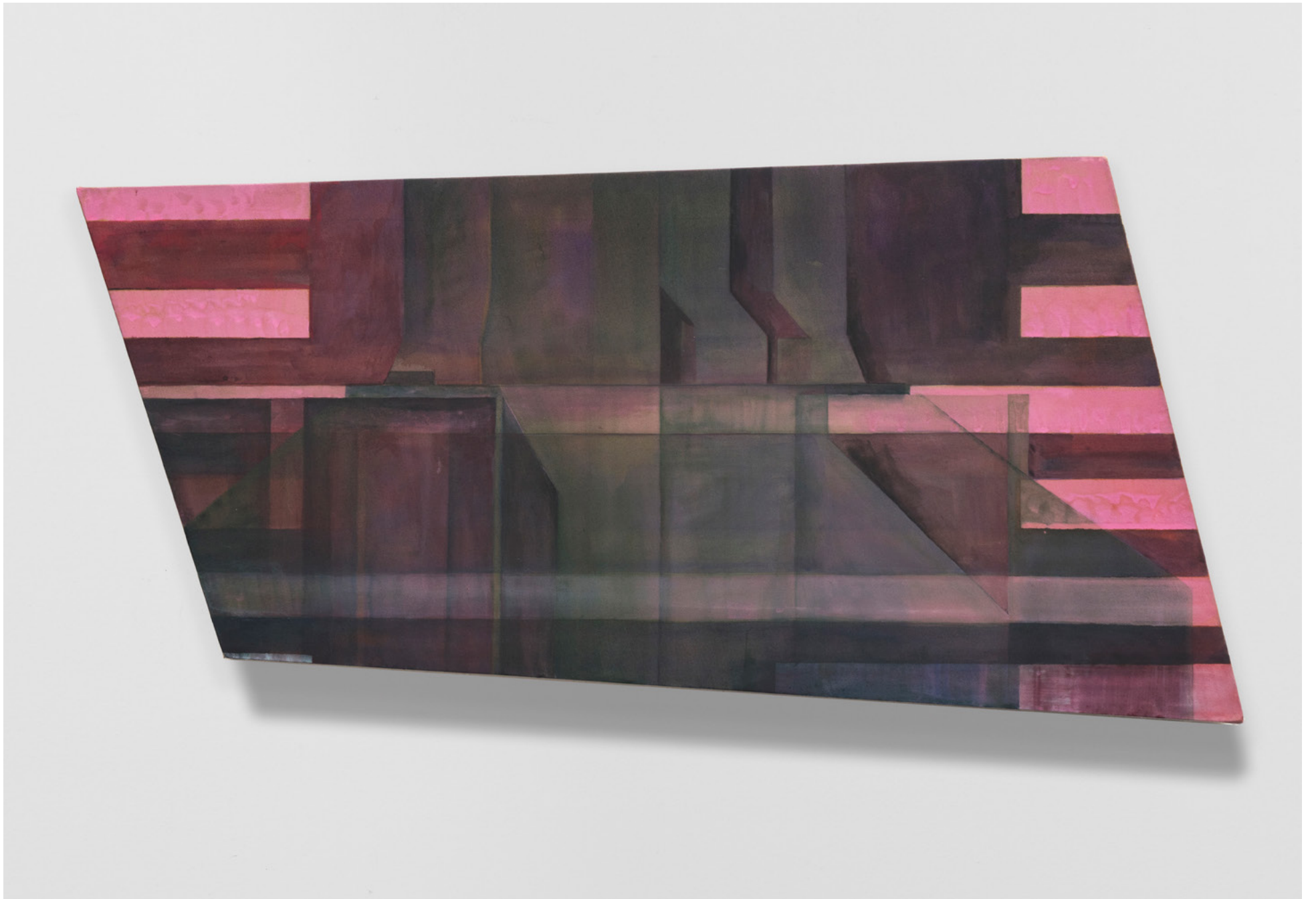
acrylic on silk over pine stretcher bar

152.4 x 142.2 cm

60 x 56 in

MW.LKY.015





Leah Ke Yi Zheng, *No. 40*, 2023, acrylic on silk over mahogany stretcher, 32.5 x 70 x 4.5 cm, 12 3/4 x 27 1/2 x 1 3/4 in, MW.LKY.005



**Leah Ke Yi Zheng**

*No. 45*

2024

acrylic on silk over pine stretcher bar

152.4 x 142.2 cm

60 x 56 in

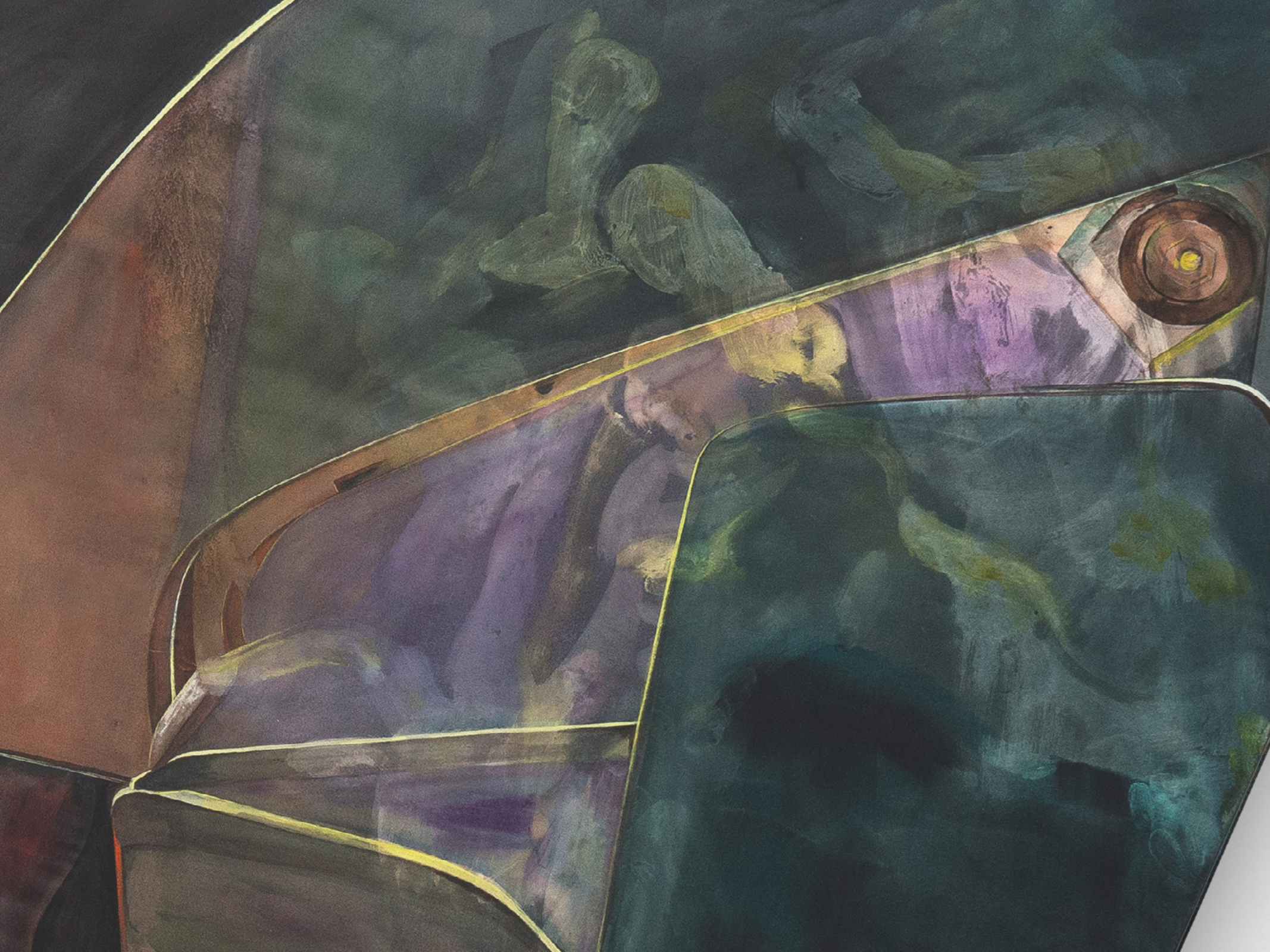
MW.LKY.015







Leah Ke Yi Zheng, *Untitled*, 2023, acrylic on silk over mahogany stretcher, 82.5 x 146 x 4.3 cm, 32 1/2 x 57 1/2 x 1 3/4 in, MW.LKY.006





**Leah Ke Yi Zheng**

*Untitled (Fusée)*

2023

acrylic on silk over mahogany stretcher

227 x 145 x 4.5 cm

89 3/8 x 57 1/8 x 1 3/4 in

MW.LKY.012







**Leah Ke Yi Zheng**

*Untitled (window)*

2024

acrylic on silk over cherry wood stretcher

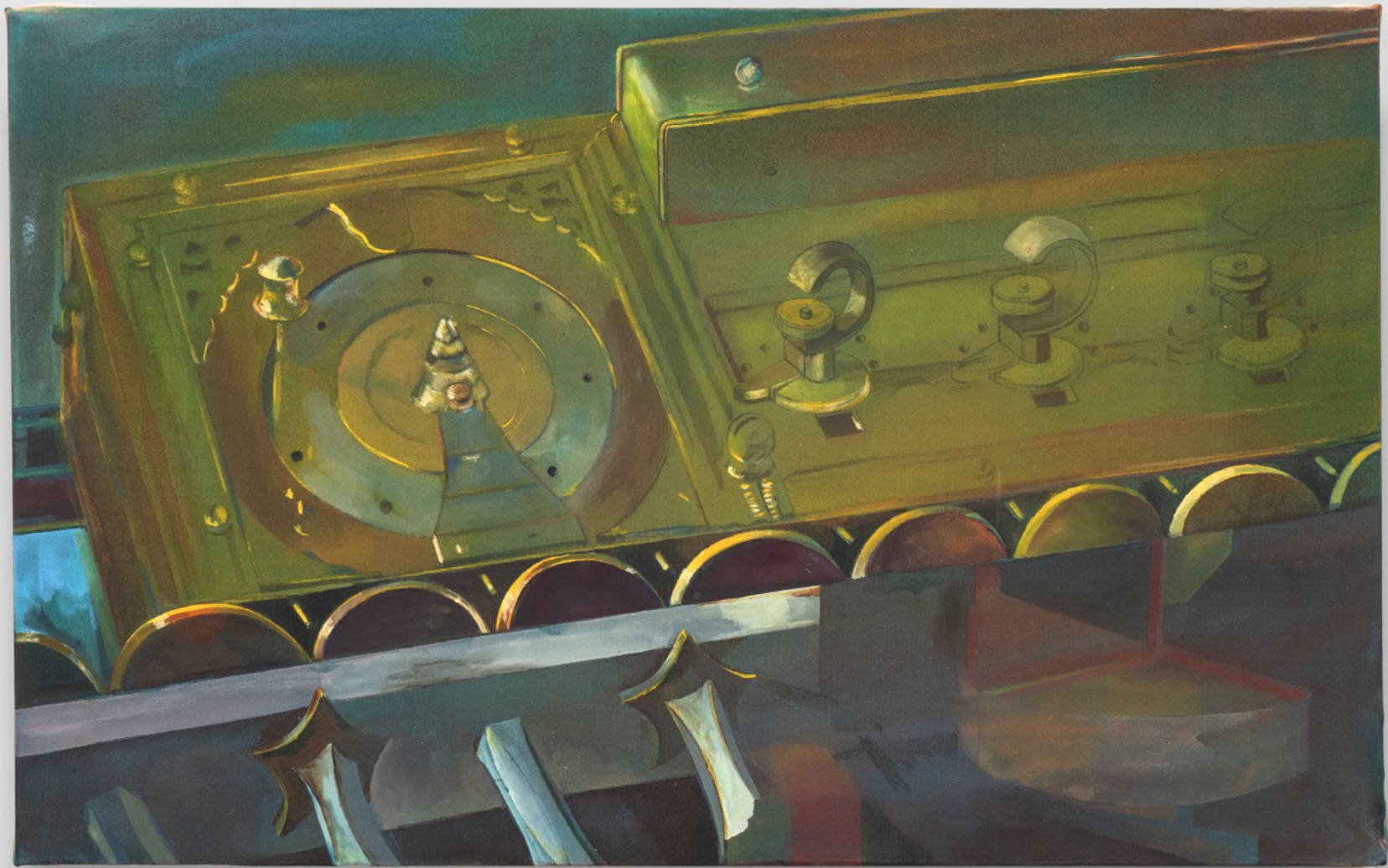
127 x 118 x 6 cm

50 x 46 1/2 x 2 3/8 in

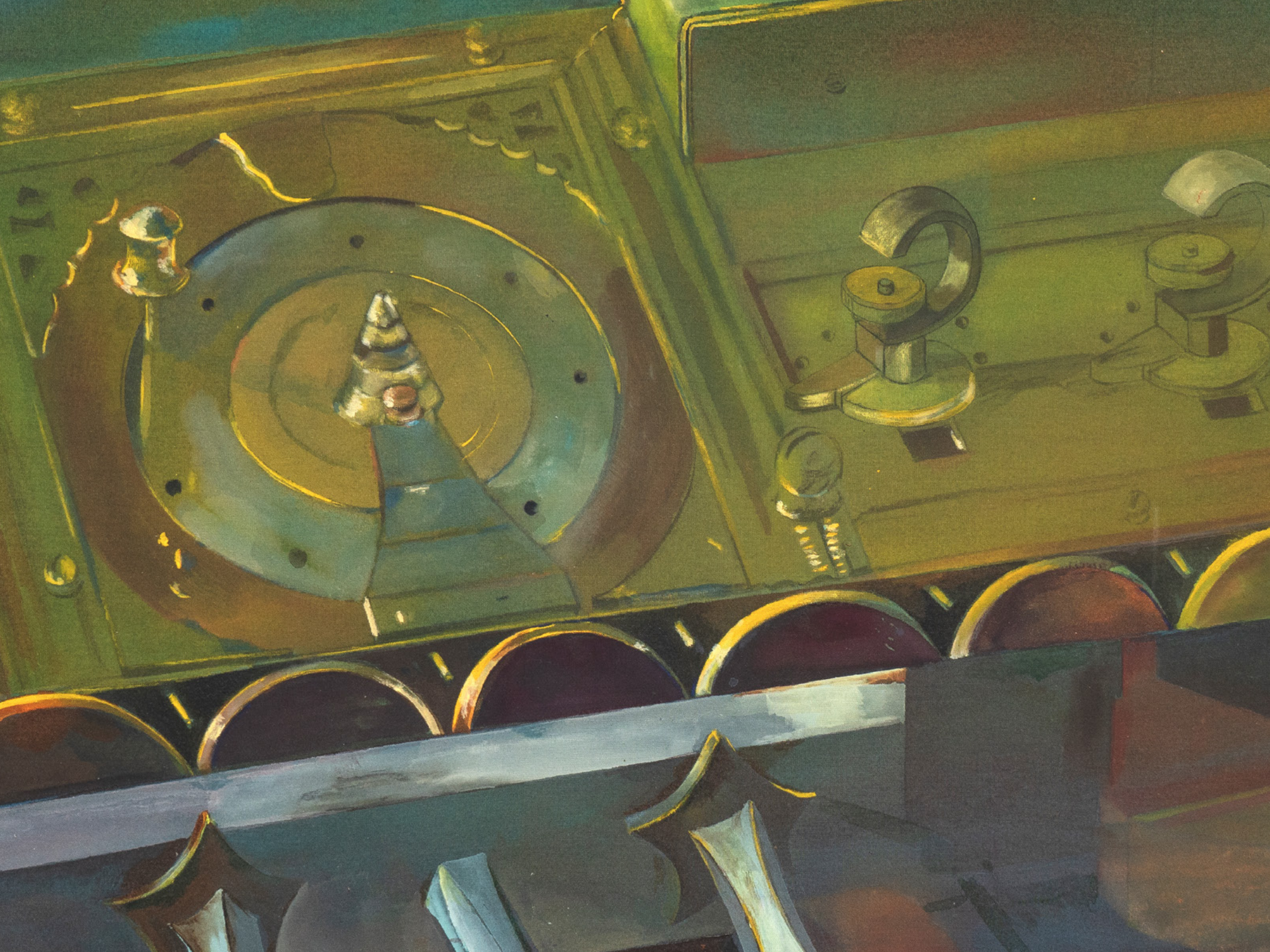
MW.LKY.014

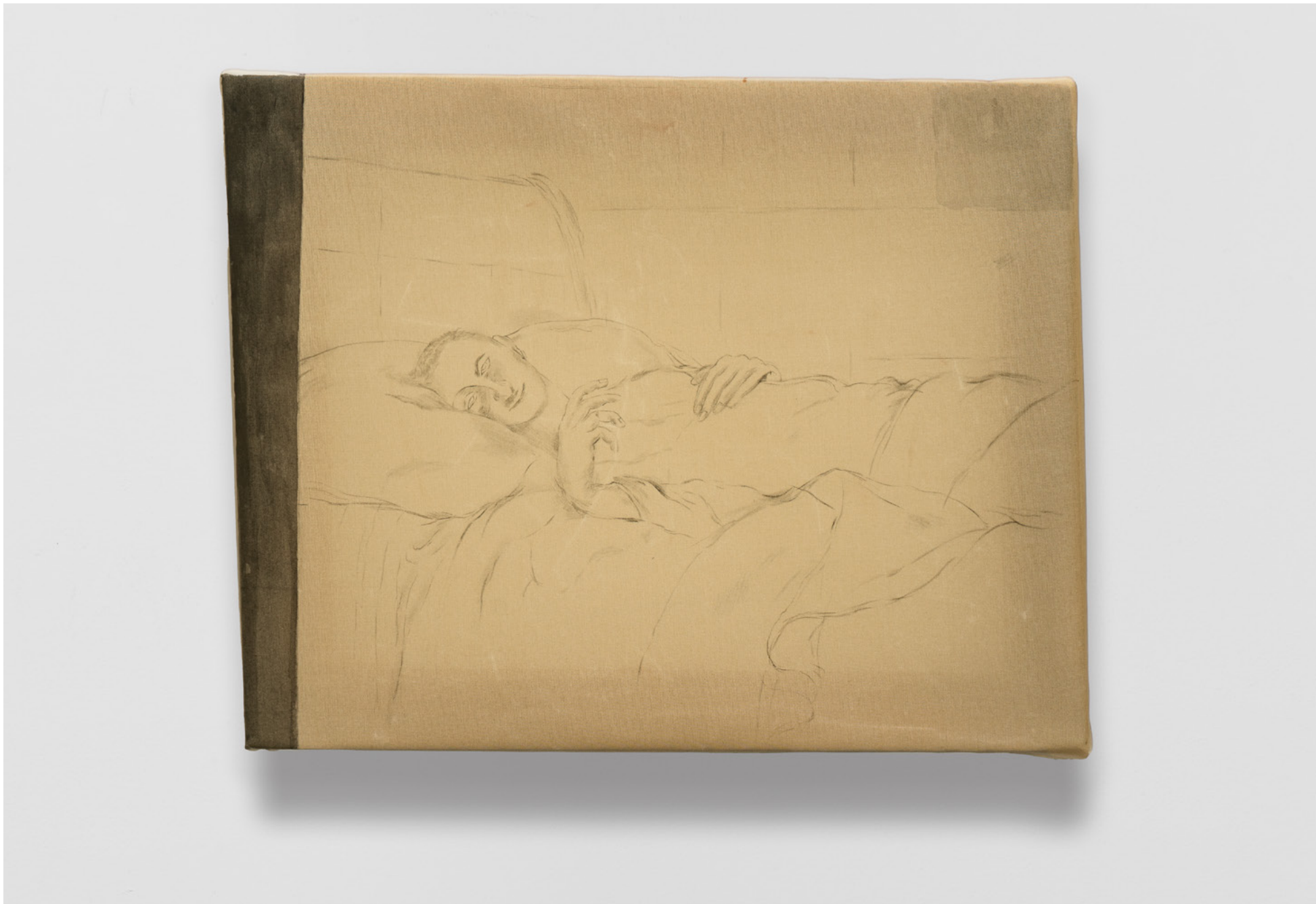






Leah Ke Yi Zheng, *Untitled (Leibniz's Calculus machine)*, 2024, acrylic on silk over mahogany stretcher, 27.5 x 44.5 x 4.5 cm, 10 7/8 x 17 1/2 x 1 3/4 in, MW.LKY.007





Leah Ke Yi Zheng, *Untitled (Man in bed of Roger de La Fresnaye)*, 2023, acrylic on silk over mahogany stretcher, 24.5 x 30.5 x 4.5 cm, 9 5/8 x 12 x 1 3/4 in, MW.LKY.011



**Leah Ke Yi Zheng**

*Fusée (sanity)*

2023

acrylic, ink, bleach on silk over mahog-  
any stretcher

213 x 160 cm

83 x 62 in



**Leah Ke Yi Zheng**

*Untitled (fusée)*

2023

pigments and acrylic on silk over mahogany stretcher

29.8 x 25.4 cm

11 3/4 x 10 in



**Leah Ke Yi Zheng**

*Untitled (black painting)*

2023

ink and acrylic on silk over blackwood  
stretcher

80 x 80.1 cm

31 1/2 x 31 1/2 in





**Leah Ke Yi Zheng**

*Untitled (mother. saw)*

2023

pigments on silk over mahogany stretcher

41.3 x 30.5 cm

16 1/4 x 12 in





**Leah Ke Yi Zheng**

*No. 5, 2023*

Acrylic, ink, and bleach on silk over  
mahogany stretcher

107 x 83 3/4 in

271.8 x 212.7 cm





**Leah Ke Yi Zheng**

*Untitled (binary machines)*, 2024

Acrylic on silk over mahogany stretcher

147.3 x 152.4 cm

58 x 60 in

(MW.LKY.017)



**Leah Ke Yi Zheng**

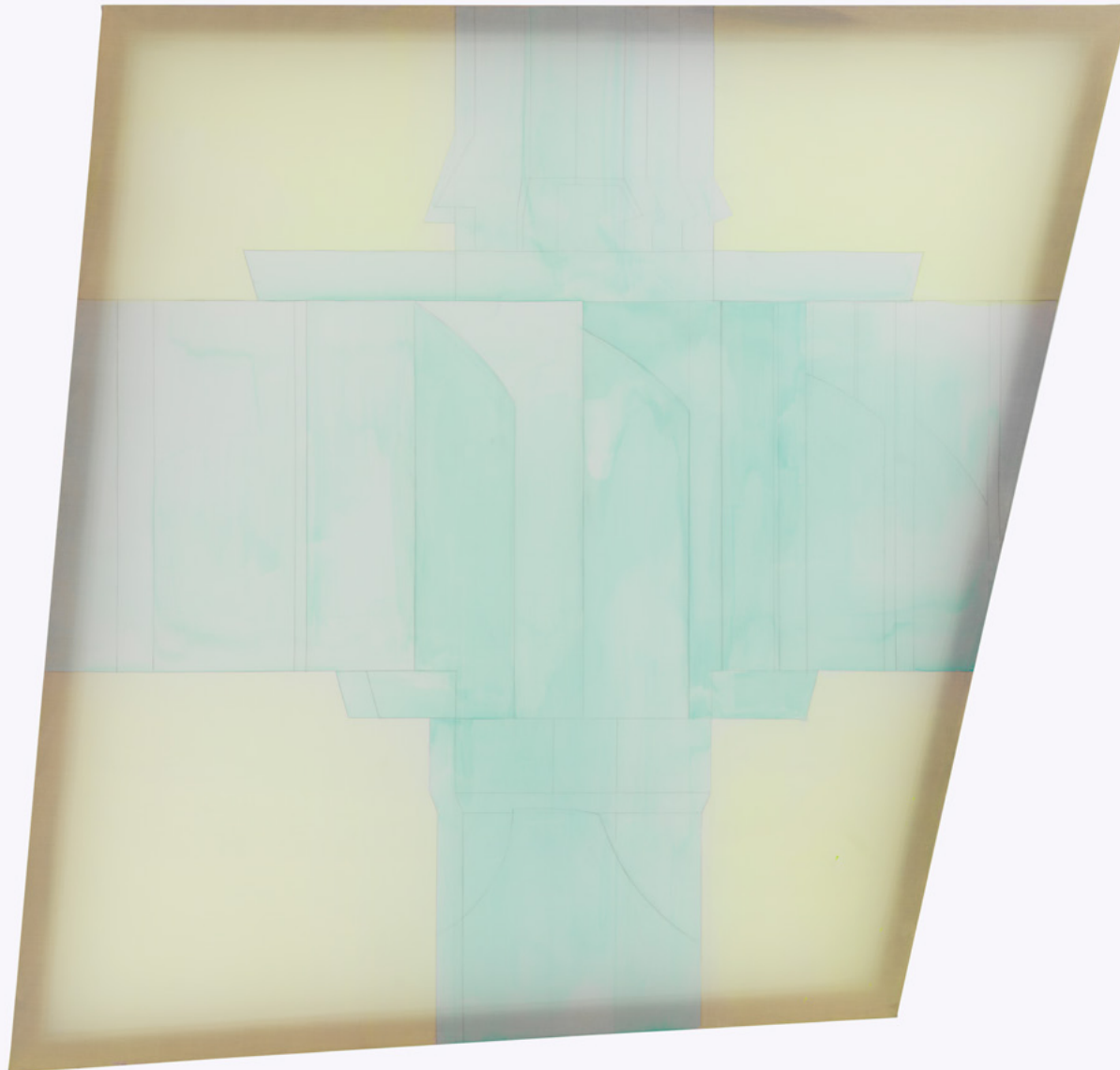
*Untitled (Nijinsky)*, 2023

pigments and acrylic on silk over mahogany stretcher

19 x 18 x 4.5 cm

7 1/2 x 7 1/8 x 1 3/4 in

(MW.LKY.002)



**Leah Ke Yi Zheng**

*Untitled (light)*, 2024

acrylic on silk over mahogany stretcher

139.7 x 152.4 cm

55 x 60 in

MW.LKY.018



“Ever since I was a young child when my mother took me to see a blind monk, I began the obsession on the spirit and the underlying structure of existence. The three motifs in my work right now all emerge from a strong interior motive. I won’t do anything until that happens. They become a motif because the ideas relate and repeat. The motifs, and the combination of works, reverberate on aesthetic, conceptual, art-historical, and social-political levels. The machine and I-Ching both generate, I-Ching book is a machine that generates change; Fictional portraits are people that’s important in my mind and in the history of arts; The mind space of the portraits exists in the same mind space as I-Ching; the binary nature of I-Ching and the binary language of computer machines...Painting itself, to me, is a machine that generates change. They all perhaps also root in my desire of locating myself in a globalized world that created my dislocation, a desire to find spiritual in the worlds of machines. Individual works, and when in an exhibition, attend to shape, type of silk, level of translucency, how the light travels, how the space is engaged — all of this contributes to the nature of change in an experience. Like how each moment of perception offers a different angle of perspective, my motifs are related facets that give a different potential epiphany, that this is truly a different moment.”

- Leah Ke Yi Zheng

## Education

2019

School of the Art Institute of Chicago – MFA in PTDW, Chicago, USA

## Solo Exhibitions

2024

*Leah Ke Yi Zheng*, Mendes Wood DM, Brussels, Belgium

2023

*Leah Ke Yi Zheng*, David Lewis, New York, USA

2022

*Leah Ke Yi Zheng*, David Lewis, New York, USA

2021

*Currency @ Swiss National Bank, Zurich*, Soccer Club Club, Chicago, USA

2020

*Fisherman on the shore*, abandoned venture capital office, Chicago, USA

*It Will Never Go Back to What It Was*, project with Currency, Munster, Germany

*Uffizi*, Taqueria Los Alamos, Chicago, USA

## Group Exhibitions

2024

*Meet me by the lake*, CLEARING, New York, USA

*Naked Name*, Derosia, New York, USA

*It Never Entered My Mind*, Galeria Mascota, Mexico City, Mexico

Everyone Loves Picabia, David Lewis, New York, USA

*Leah Ke Yi Zheng with John Cage*, CASTLE, Los Angeles, USA

*How Mundane*, Lévy Gorvy Dayan, Hong Kong

2023

*Soul Mapping*, Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp, Belgium

*Ravens and Crows*, Winter Street Gallery, Paris, France

*(Silence. By this point, everything is different): Five years of Apparatus Projects*, Apparatus

Project, Chicago, USA

2022

*Leah Ke Yi Zheng and Danny Bredar*, Arts Club of Chicago, Chicago, USA

*Immagini*, Currency at Caffé Centrale, nido, Monte Castello di Vibio, Italy

*Loud Lord*, Good Weather, Chicago, USA

*A Mimetic Theory of Desire*, David Lewis Gallery, New York, USA

2021

*Sleeping Twin*, curated by Nathan Engel, MICKEY, Chicago, USA

*carbon copy 4*, John Hancock Tower Parking Garage, Chicago, USA

*Leah Ke Yi Zheng and David Hartt*, Paris London Hongkong, Chicago, USA

2019

*carbon copy 3: die prosperous*, Chicago, USA

*carbon copy: þ*, The Garden, Chicago, USA

*The Turf*, The Research House for Asian Art, Chicago, USA

*carbon copy: 7 Rings for the Window Elves (SAIC MFA Show)*, Sullivan Galleries,

Chicago, USA

2018

UCLA Wight Gallery Biennial, Los Angeles, USA

## Residencies

2019

The Studios at MASS MoCA, North Adams, USA

2017

Ox-Bow Residency, Saugatuck, USA

## Awards

2019-2021

Fellowship from The Arts Club of Chicago, Chicago, USA

Mendes  
Wood  
DM

São Paulo  
Brussels  
Paris  
New York

[www.mendeswooddm.com](http://www.mendeswooddm.com)  
[@mendeswooddm](https://www.instagram.com/mendeswooddm)