

De / formed

FAN ZHONGMING (CHN/JP)
HIROMICHI ICHINO (JP)
MERRIC BRETTLER (AU)
CRAIG EASTON (AU/NZ)

April 10th - May 2nd, 2026

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FIVE WALLS GALLERY

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Wed-Sat 12-5pm



Titles come before words.
That's usually so.
Just as paintings come first.
Arriving fully formed visual things,
With language complete.

Next, it's portioning out the words,
descriptions.
Deforming the good bits to make them conform.

About that.

It's impossible to speak for all artists.
Is it?
Sometimes art is made to be difficult.
Increasingly, art needs to be
...belligerent.
(But only to the degree we say so.)

What of rights attached to images and objects?
Can an image have rights?
Probably only if it has the right image.
And no one objects.
What?

Sometimes mute is good.
It's on your remote control,
your iPhone too.
Impossibility and absence take root,
take form.
There's not much here.

Really.

If *De/formed* suggests a removal of Form(alism),
then what remains?
Another form of course,
and another and another,
until there's...
nothing.
But a whole lot of it.
(This is better than nothing.)

Scientifically speaking,
what happens when it gets down
to the last Russian doll?
Is it the end of something,
or just the beginning?
Is Kaluza Klein the mother of invention?

When is *De/formed* deranged?
Which is to say,
is an arrangement undone, necessarily deranged?
Or simply *De/formed*?

DE/formed

*If De/formed suggests a removal of Form(alism),
then what remains? Another form of course, and
another and another, until there's... nothing. But a
whole lot of it. (This is better than nothing.)*

*Scientifically speaking, what happens when you
get down to the last Russian doll? Is it the end of
something, or just the beginning? Is Kaluza Klein
the mother of invention?*

*When is De/formed deranged? Which is to say, is
an arrangement undone, necessarily deranged? Or
simply De/formed?*

Fan Zhong Ming (Shanghai)
Hikomichi Ichino (Yokohama)
Merric Brettle (Melbourne)
Craig Easton (Melbourne/Dunedin)

Four artists consider their abstract practices in
relation to the show's title. Each has their own
affiliation and history working with Formalist ideas
and constructs while being equally engaged in the
pulling apart of such things to create open works
of indeterminate presence. Working through and
between mediums of painting, object, drawing and
video, there's an ongoing question around what
Formalist practices might mean and look like today.

Craig Easton, 2026





Fan Zhong Ming
Two Twisted Cubes
1993
acrylic on plywood
56 x 36 cm

\$6,000



Fan Zhong Ming

Two Purple L Shapes

1993

acrylic on paper, framed

36 x 22 cm

\$4,000

Two L Shapes

1993

acrylic on paper, framed

36 x 26 cm

\$4,000

FAN ZHONGMING

Fan Zhong Ming's art practice is marked by a steadfast rejection of 'style', instead shifting in his choice of forms, materials and processes from exhibition to exhibition. In continually constructing and deconstructing his own work and its various modes of presentation, there is an argument made for abstract art and the artist's role as agent of change and radical possibilities.

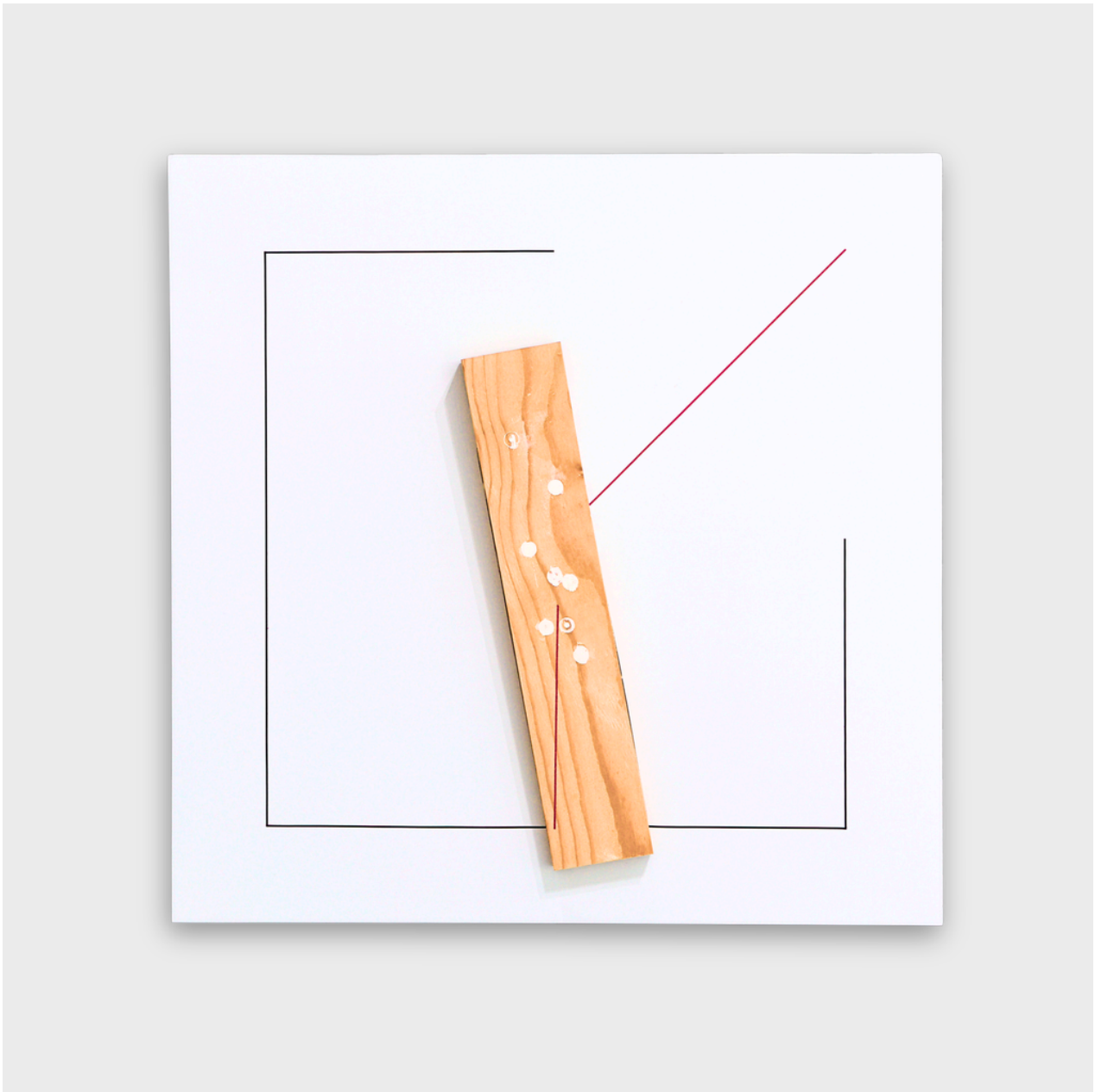
"In visual art, once a form is recognized, it immediately disintegrates as "form" and is transformed into a cognitive configuration—a shape of understanding rather than a form itself. In this series of my works, one can experience the interactive process between eye and brain in which form, once recognized, dissolves into cognitive shape."

Fan Zhongming is an established figure within the first school of Shanghai abstract artists. Graduating from Shanghai Normal University Art department in 1984 he was among the early group of contemporary artists to travel internationally, living first in Japan where he was featured in the influential China Modern Art Today at Tokyo Gallery alongside artists including Yu Youhan, Xu Bing and Wang Jianjun. In 1989 he was the recipient of a prestigious Rockefeller Foundation Visiting Artist Fellowship for travel to New York. As a member of that first wave of Chinese experimental artists in the city, he was an active participant in significant exhibitions from this time including the legendary Door Exhibition at PS1. Spending much of his career in Japan he exhibited extensively before returning to Shanghai and in 2018 was in the survey, Avant Garde Shanghai: 30 Years of Shanghai Contemporary Art, Mingyuan Art Museum, Shanghai.

His most recent solo exhibition was Transmutation of the Ordinary at Haibitai Art Centre, Qinhuangdao (2025). His art has been shown widely and featured in exhibitions at venues including China Art Museum Shanghai, Shanghai Xuhui Art Museum, Wakasa Art Museum, Shanghai Tushanwan Art Museum, Asia America Cultural Centre New York, City University New York, Ningbo Art Museum, Art Xiamen, Duolun Museum of Modern Art Shanghai, West Bund Art & Design Shanghai, Liu Haisu Art Museum Suzhou and Shanghai, Spark Gallery Tokyo, Dongyue Art Museum Beijing, Combes Paris, Chaokung Art Museum Xiamen, Nest Shanghai, LL Contemporary Paris, Suzhou Art Museum, China Cultural Centre Tokyo.

Fan Zhong Ming currently lives and works between Shanghai and Tokyo.





Horomichi Ichino

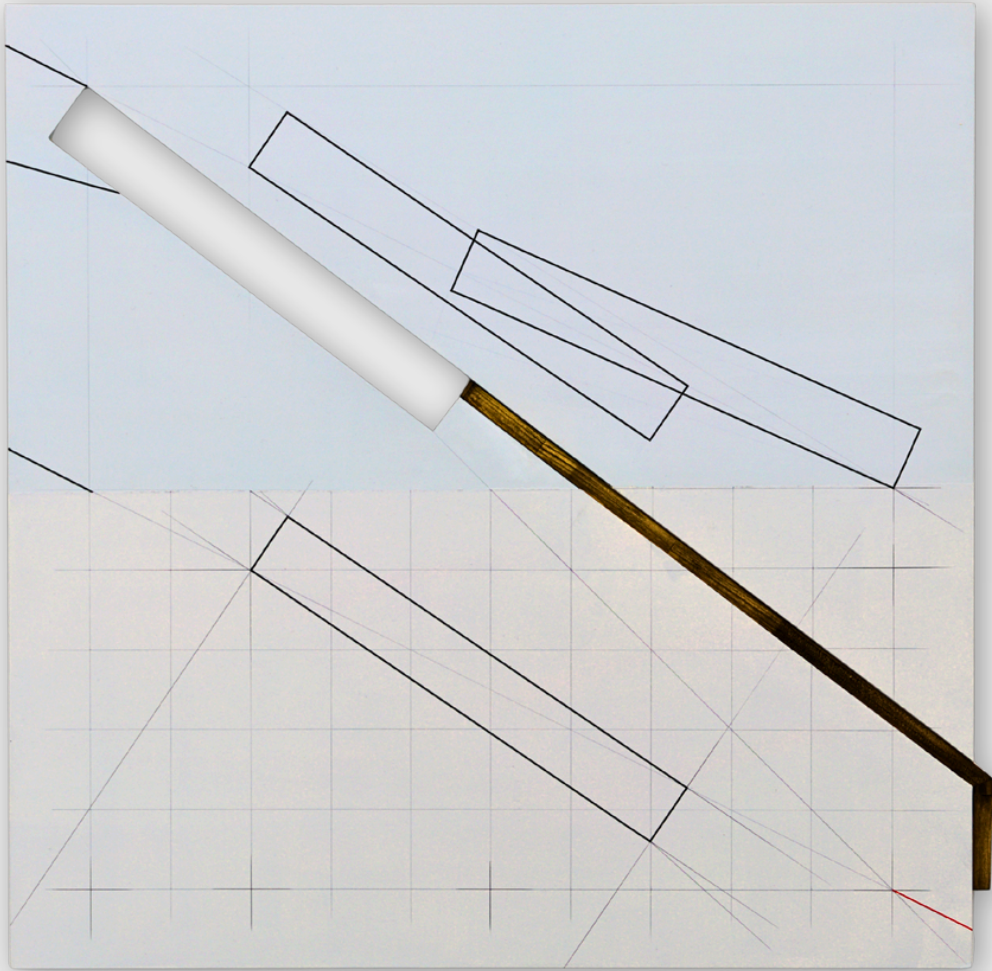
Landscape S in S / S2

2022-06

wood, modelling paste, acrylic paint, line tape

60 x 60 cm

\$1,800



Hironichi Ichino

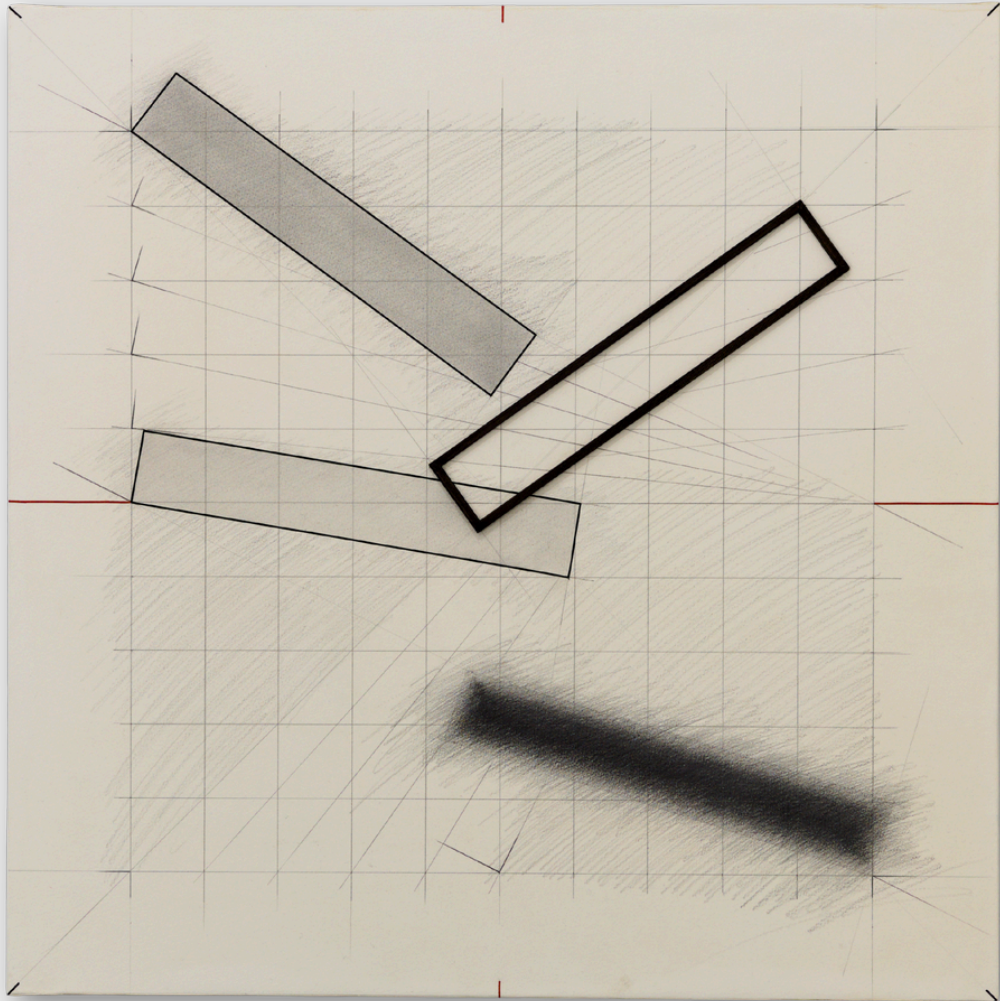
Landscape DCS-B

2025-12

wood, paper, acrylic paint, pencil, line, tape

60 x 61.2 x 2.7 cm

SOLD



Hikomichi Ichino

Landscape MFR-D1

2022-11

wood, paper, pencil, line tape

60 x 60 x 3 cm

\$2,600

HIROMICHI ICHINO

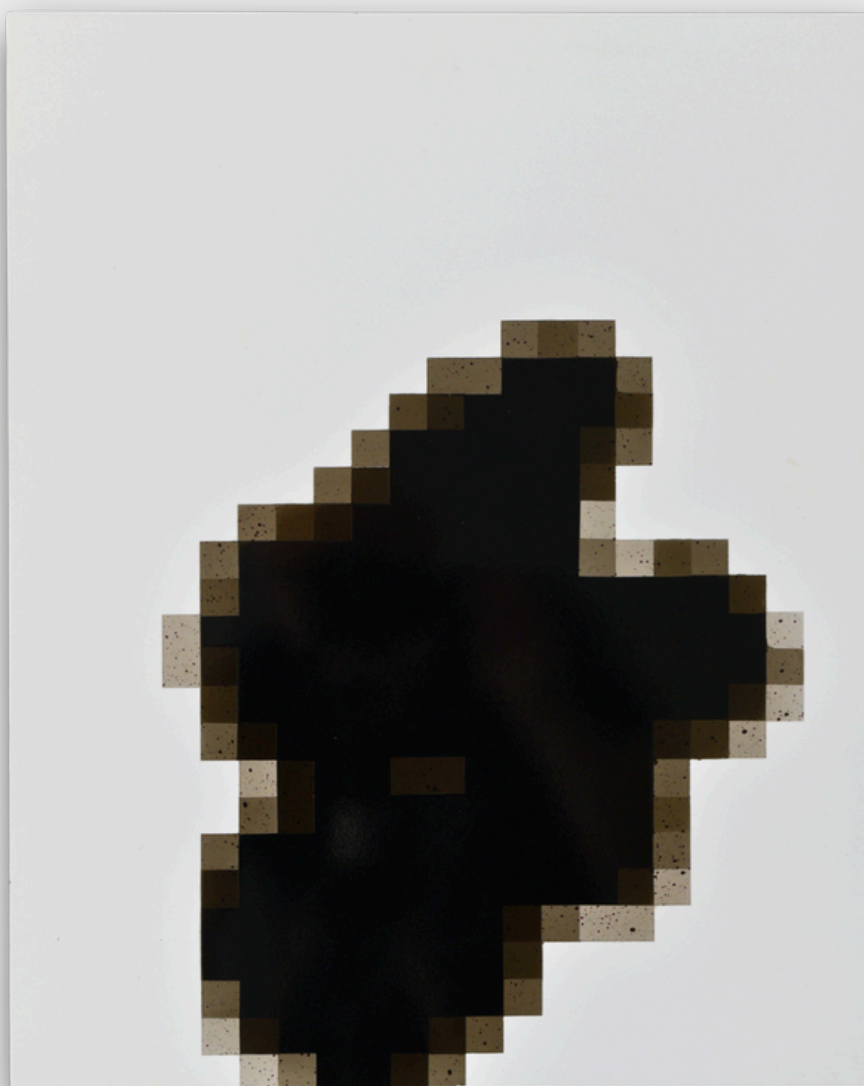
“With the idea that "all events proceed at the same time," this series visualizes the trajectories of any forms or objects moving within specific coordinates. The past, present, future, materials and expressions, as well as my own experiences and thoughts intertwine in various ways to form the work, and here symbols and drawing lines also function as necessary formative elements. The works are like studies, drawings, and architectural models. How to look at it is up to the viewer, but the system for composition is extremely simple.”

Hiromichi Ichino was born in Kyoto, Japan. After graduating from the Department of DESIGN at the Tokyo University of the Arts in 1975, he worked in art education with contemporary artist Hachiro Izuka (1928-2008). Through Izuka he met the legendary Yoshishige Saito (1904 -2001) - one of the pioneers of abstract art in Japan. Saito had a great influence on the younger generation of the time with post-1945 American models of abstraction, Mono-ha and Saito's extended oeuvre becoming foundational interests for Hiromichi.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s he was a regular part of the “-ing THEATRE” series of exhibitions curated by Saito and Izuka. Other historical exhibitions of note include the Japan Festival '7 Japanese Contemporary Artists', Sofia Bulgaria 1995; Kanagawa Art Annual 1996 in the Kanagawa Prefectural Hall Gallery Yokohama; Tome City International Art Triennale 2010 Miyagi Prefecture; and The Bond of Art in Doulun Museum of Modern Art, Shanghai in 2017.

As a senior artist and designer based in Yokohama, his practice remains notable for its fluidity, gently disrupting and playing with the boundaries and expectations of art and design as twin spheres.

Hiromichi Ichino has held solo exhibitions throughout Japan and internationally, with recent solo shows at SPC Gallery Tokyo and Guest House UBUKATA Tsumagoi. Curated group exhibitions include Atelier 4 Paris; Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum Ueono; Kumagawa-juku Art Museum Fukui; Art Garden Kawasaki; Nerima Art Museum Tokyo; Japan-China Friendship Art Museum Tokyo; Tokyo Art Museum; and Shanghai Wootong Art Museum.



Merric Brettle

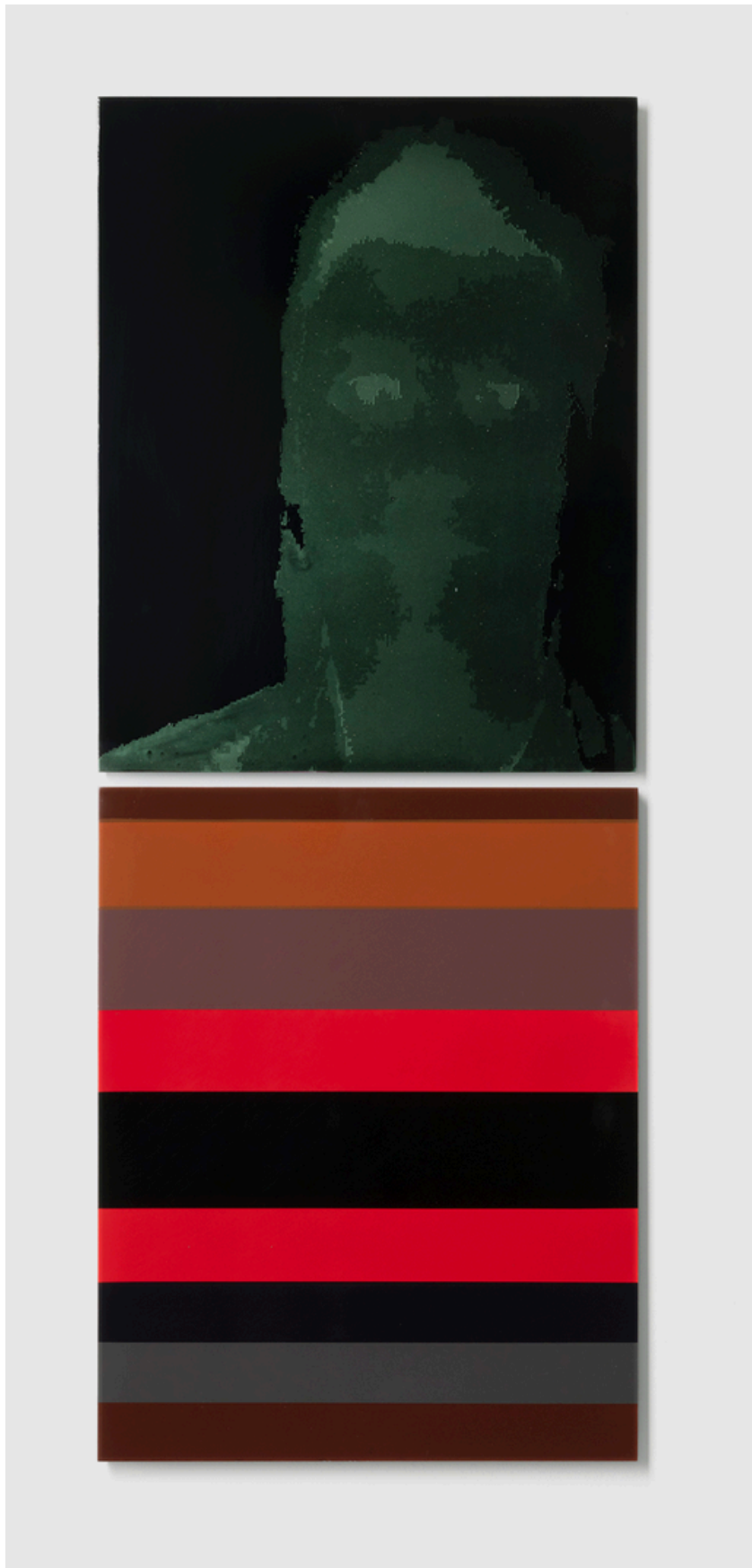
Pattern Finding 1

2016

acrylic lacquer on board

52.5 x 42 cm

\$2,200



Merric Brettle

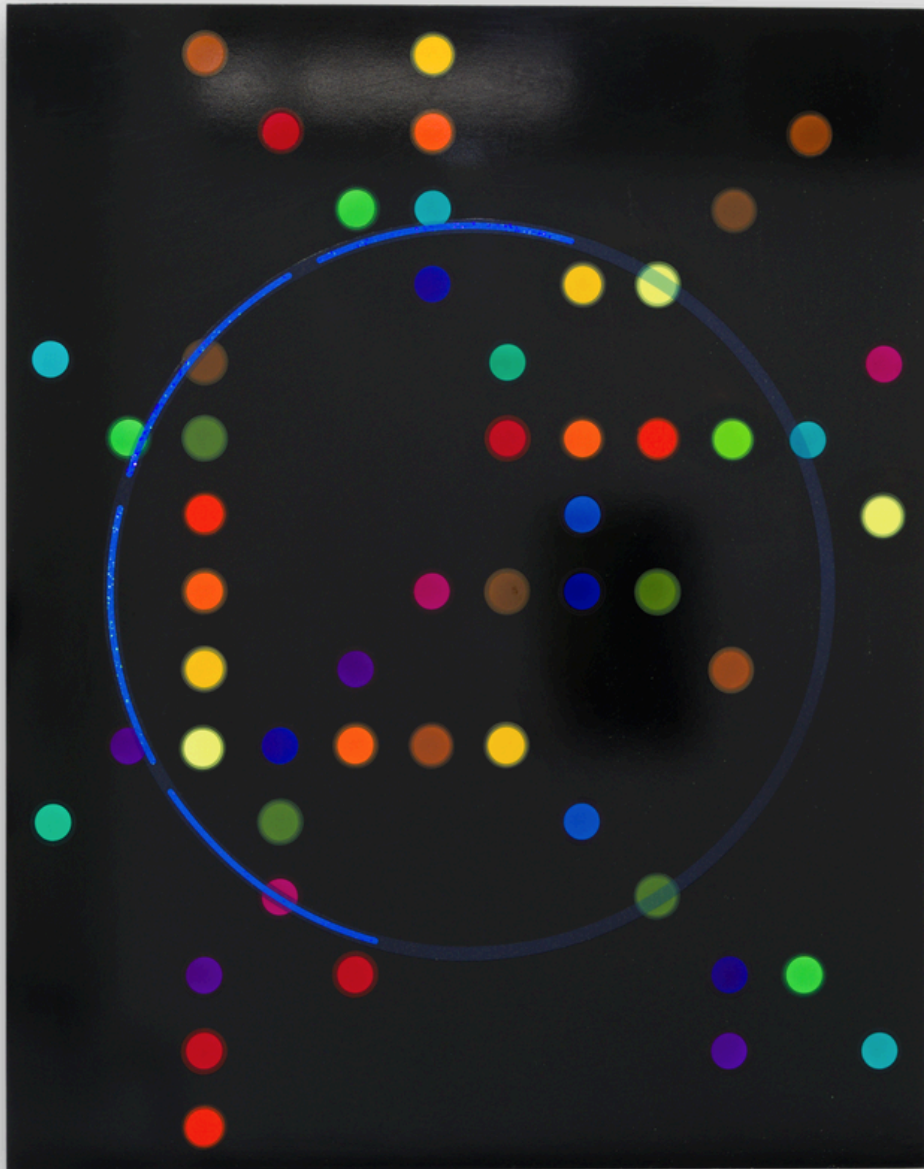
The Ritual Process - Liminal Landscape 3

2019

acrylic lacquer on board

105 x 42 cm

\$2,700



Merric Brettle

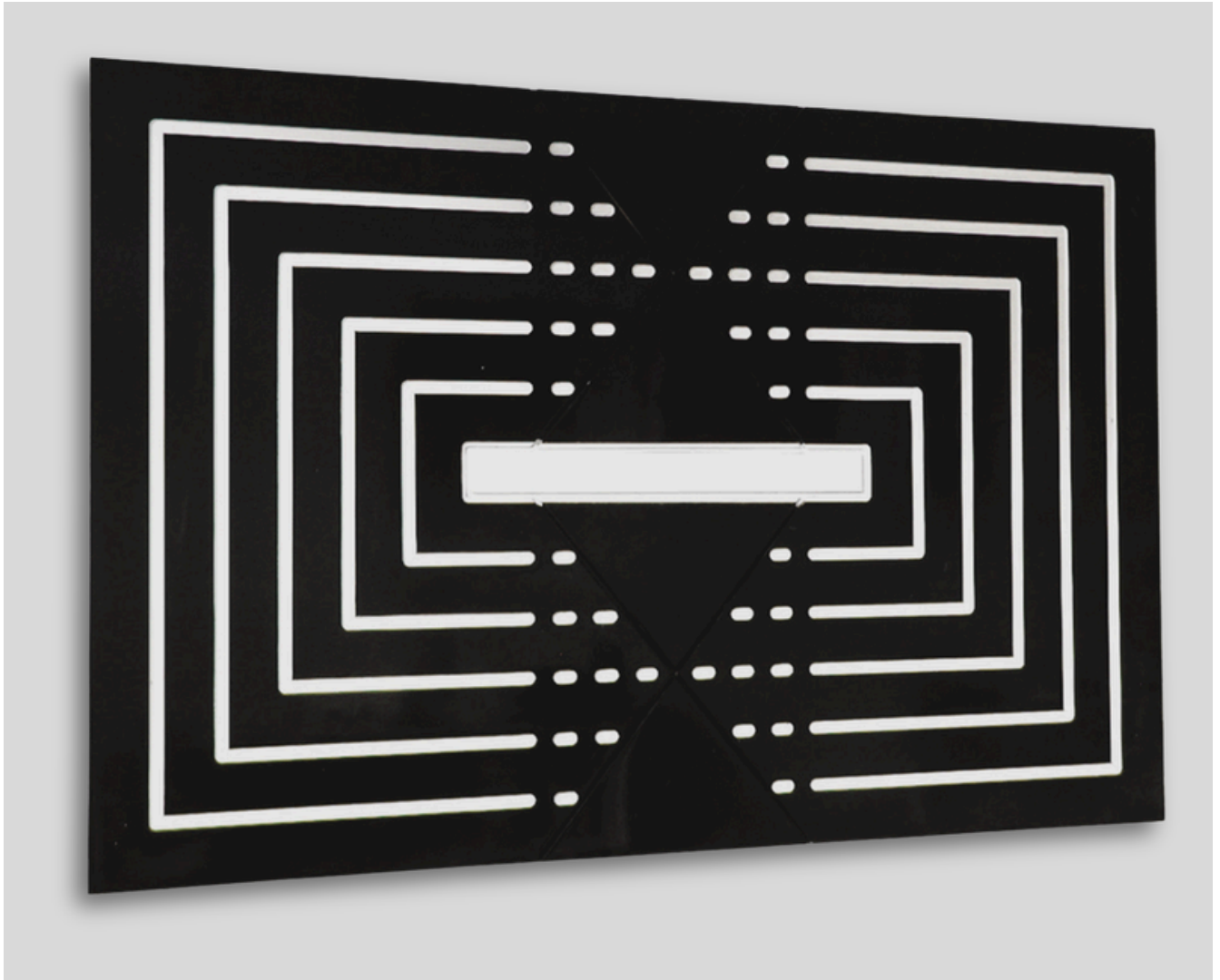
Phosphene - Diachronic/Synchronic

2019

acrylic lacquer on board

92 x 73 cm

\$3,200



Merric Brett

Binary Clash

2005

auto-paint on board

80 x 120 cm

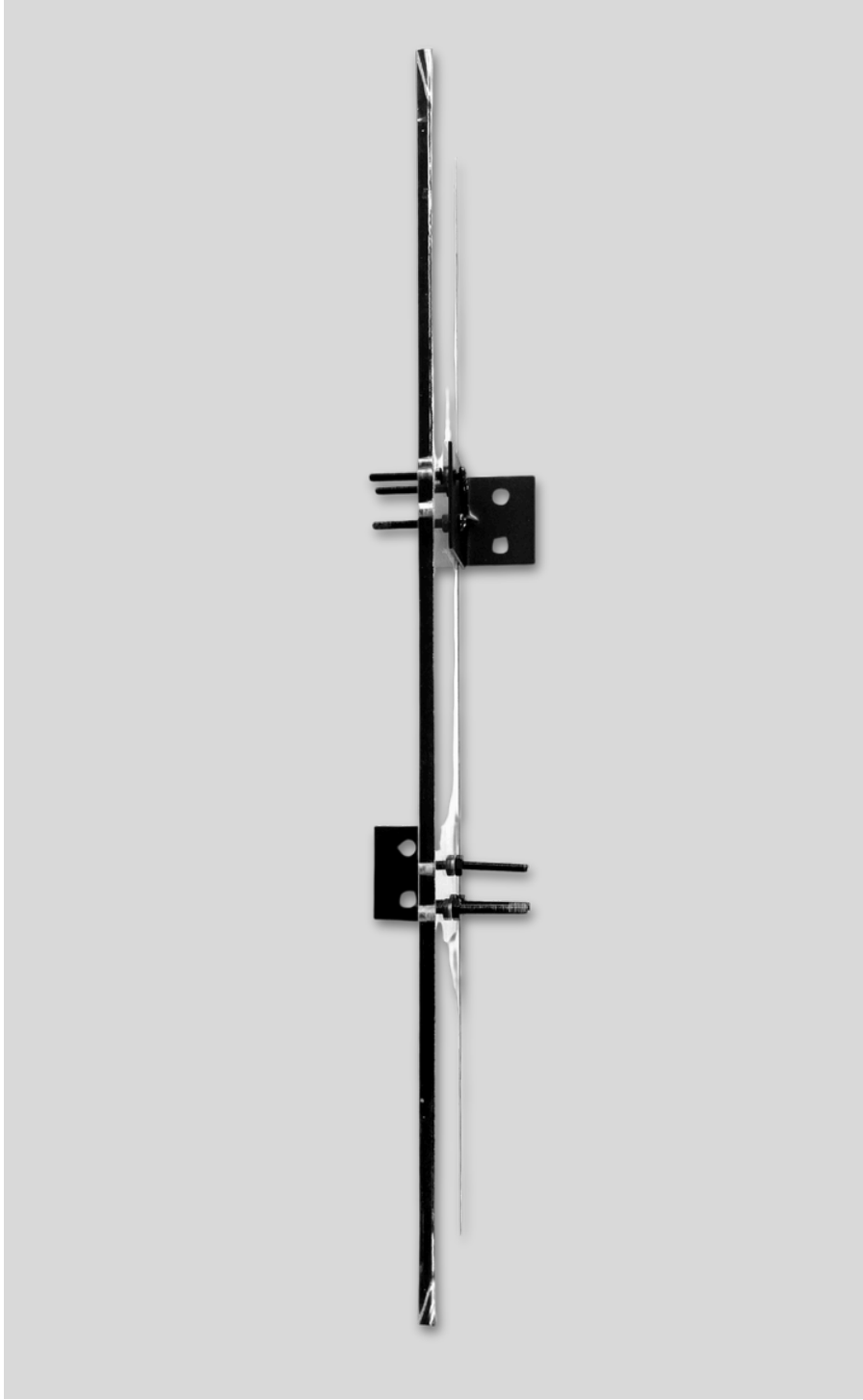
\$3,200

MERRIC BRETTLER

“When reading my works, I hope they are seen as ‘frozen moments’ of an ongoing investigation, and that the viewer reads my systems, materials and methods as they formally reflect the way that I played with the ‘membrane’ of our mechanised and globalised culture.”

Merric Brettler’s art operates across twin fields, with the first a remaking of readymade ‘samples’ drawn from contemporary culture. With an almost anthropological intensity he then applies his own distortions, interpretations and deconstruction of these found images and objects. Within this second phase the skilled application of acrylic automotive lacquers and other sometimes ‘backyard industrial techniques’ combines with an intuitive use of Formal modalities. The results frequently tend to object paintings - strangely organic, strangely mechanic, and largely stripped of their found narrative. Neither one thing or its other, they reflect the artist’s ongoing fascination with the flux of existence in a world caught up in its own states of (increasing) deformation.

Merric has had a deep engagement with the arts for the last thirty years with an extensive exhibition history in Australian and Asian institutional, commercial and independent spaces with venues including Terajima Kashiwa, Omotesando Garo Tokyo, Neu Contemporary Bangkok, Cartel Bangkok, Genkan Gallery Tokyo, Japanese Consulate Melbourne, Brenda May Sydney, Peloton Sydney, Blindside Melbourne, Deutscher & Hackett Melbourne, Block Projects and NKN Melbourne. He was also awarded a Research Scholarship from the Monbusho (Ministry of Education, Japan) and holds multiple degrees including Masters in Visual Art from Tokyo University of the Arts, and SCA (Sydney University). He has curated and participated in numerous exhibitions exploring cultural exchange in the Asia-Pacific with a focus on Japan/Australia.



Craig Easton

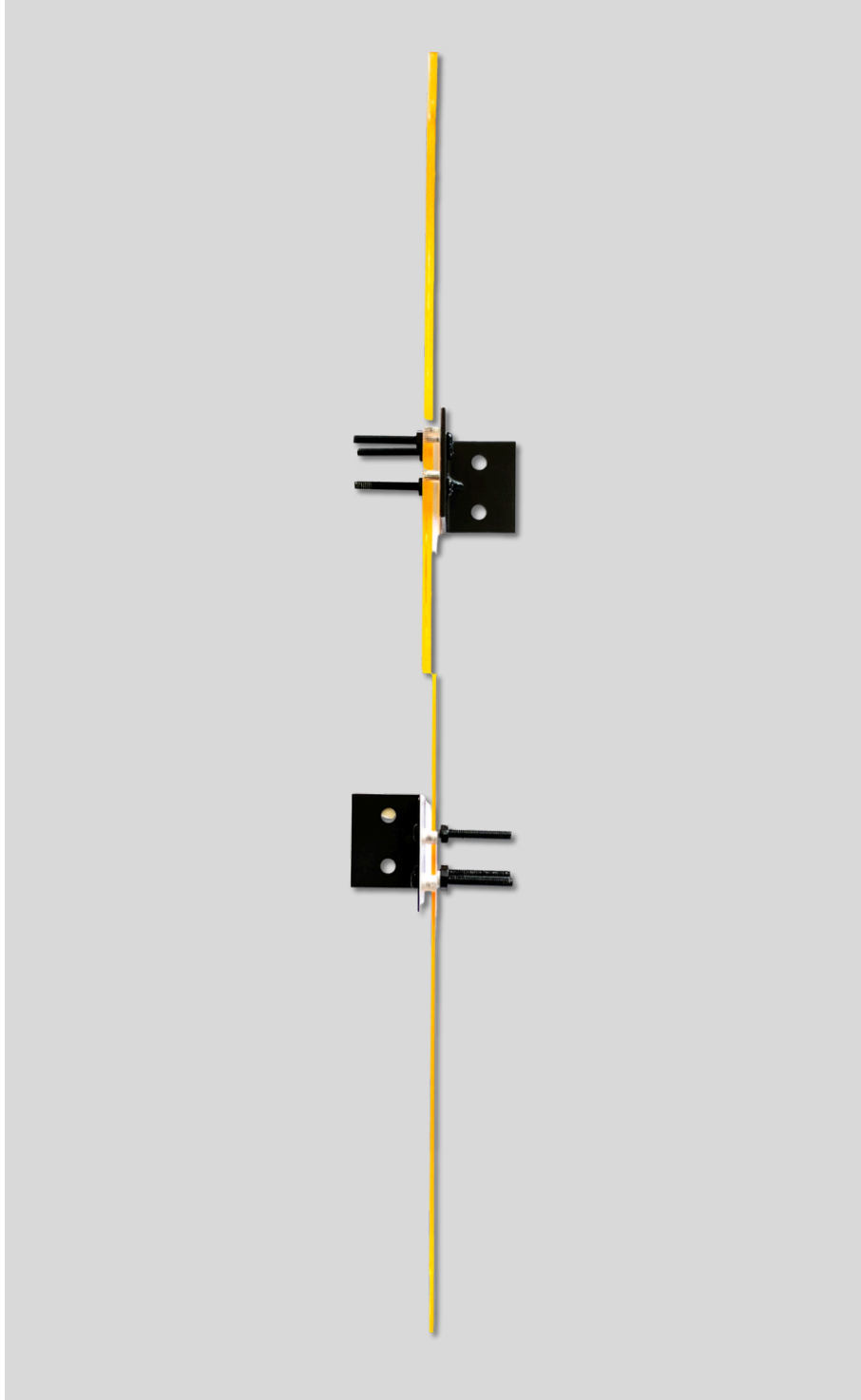
Available Light/Black

2024/2025

acrylic on transparent plexi-glass, metal brackets and bolts

41 x 6.5cm+

\$1,400



Craig Easton

Available Light/Orange

2024/2025

acrylic on transparent plexi-glass, metal brackets and bolts

41 x 6.5cm+

SOLD



Craig Easton

Means of Production

2016-26

video with sound, portable screen, cables,
timber and acrylic shelf, bolts
dimensions variable

POA



Craig Easton

Excavation / Accumulation / Mountain Building Painting

2024-2025

acrylic on canvas board mounted on cardboard

40 x 30 x 6 cm

\$1,800

CRAIG EASTON

“A video of the laser cutting of another artwork creates a stripe painting by default. A black excavation painting pushes out into our space on a piece of packaging salvaged from Dunedin’s Mitre 10. Some transparent offcuts of acrylic hold a delicate vertical line in space, projectors and containers of light and colour both. All of it heading towards a state of gentle collapse.”

Craig Easton is an Australian / New Zealand artist with an abstract painting practice extending through video, photography, object and architectural installation. Exhibiting extensively over the last 30 years, his art is built around Western Formalist, Minimalist and Pop codes of making frequently in open dialogue with Chinese influenced ways of seeing.

Easton has held 38 Solo exhibitions since 1996 and been a regular contributor to institutional, commercial and collaborative projects at venues including Bank/MAB Society, Shanghai; Object Gallery, Shanghai; Chi K11, Shenyang; Bendigo Art Gallery; Project 8, Melbourne; Moordn Artfair, Guangzhou; Putuo Cultural Centre, Shanghai; Wen He You Art Museum Changsha; Shangyin Opera House, Shanghai; Yu Yuan, Shanghai; Shanghai Art Fair; RMIT Gallery Melbourne; Margaret Lawrence Gallery VCA Melbourne; Justin Art House Museum, Melbourne; VVVVV, Huangzhou, La Trobe Art Institute Bendigo; Foundation Art Museum, Suzhou; Chun Art Museum, Shanghai.

Easton holds a PhD from the VCA: University of Melbourne (2014) investigating the structural and poetic devices of Chinese literati gardens in connection to contemporary abstraction. He has exhibited regularly in China since 2012, living in Shanghai 2016-2019. An occasional curator and writer, other exhibitions curated for Five Walls include Acts of Reversal: Some Abstract Artists from China, Australia and New Zealand (2019).

Craig Easton currently teaches in the VCA School of Graphic Design, University of Melbourne. He lives and works in Melbourne and Dunedin, NZ.



