

Leah Ke Yi Zheng

David Lewis

47 West 12th Street, NY

Through 30 September 2022

David Lewis is pleased to present an exhibition of paintings by Leah Ke Yi Zheng. This is the artist's first solo exhibition in New York and with the gallery.

Zheng was born and raised in Wuyishan, China where she apprenticed, from early childhood, in traditional Chinese landscape and figurative painting techniques. She trained subsequently at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Zheng's practice offers a profound and exquisite duality: a contemporary Chinese painting method heavily inflected and admiring of the European (in particularly German) postwar avant-garde; or, conversely, a theorized post-conceptual painting practice incorporating and re-invigorating elements of traditional Chinese art (particularly its underpinning in abstraction), ranging from Shan Shui (山水) to Gongshui (供石). Each painting begins with a shaped stretcher bar, hand-crafted by the artist from different warm-toned woods (mahogany, purple-heart wood, cherry wood). This yields an intimately irregular, slightly uncanny form. An image is then painted on one of a variety of silks: as light, transparent, and evanescent as the wood is heavy and warm. The images themselves range from imagined portraiture (Cosimo Piovasco di Rondò), mythology of the historical avant-garde ("Near black. Near square."), a radiant Cathedral, cynegetics, decadent conjunctions of nature and artifice, grotesque forms, a dog-form, a hare held by the ear, an expressionist rendering of Aulos (the wind instrument played by the doomed centaur Marsyas in his contest with the lyre-playing Apollo), and a single double-sided work—a morphing motif (curtain/folds/veiling revealing cosmic layers and folds) painted on the back of an anonymous pietà found by Zheng in a frame shop in Florence. The aesthetic convergence of image and objecthood. Generally speaking, the small paintings can be imagined as characters, or *rituals*; the large ones as spaces, or worlds.

Leah Ke Yi Zheng was born and raised in China where she attended Xiamen University. She has an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and has recently exhibited at The Arts Club of Chicago, Soccer Club Club, and Caffé Centrale (Monte Castello di Vibio, Umbria). She was included in the group show *A Mimic of Desire* at David Lewis' location at 57 Walker Street in Summer 2022.