

Francesco João

15 February - 15 March, 2021

Via Vincenzo Gioberti 1  
20123 Milano MI, Italy  
By appointment only

This exhibition was born out of a conversation between the art dealers Andrew Dubow and Francisco Barreiros Cardoso and the artist Francesco João (b. 1987, Milan): a triangle between New York, Lisbon, and Milan. The paintings by João are installed in the halls of a Milanese Art Nouveau building from the early 1900s, one of the first designed by Ulisse Stacchini, who would become famous for the majestic Central Station and San Siro Stadium, both Milanese landmarks.

Paintings, paintings, paintings. As with many artists trained in Italian art academies, it is perhaps only natural that João cultivates a form of insubordination. But it's not any sort of fury directed at "history" or the (likewise Milanese) Futurist movement. Rather, it's a disruptive playfulness—a sentiment not unlike a child's desire to pick apart the gears of a beloved game. The artist uses structural-material elements as parts of an expressive vocabulary. The canvas might remain intact but with different layers and degrees of tension; color may be deposited on the frames only; the stretcher can itself become a pictorial element. The formalist credo is bypassed not through awareness of environment, as in site-specific painting, but through manipulations of the foundational architectonics.

Painting, painting, painting: its cyclical dying is such an inconvenience. What energy dispersal, what a drag. "I like paintings; I don't like painters," João quips. His practice resonates with the words of Yve-Alain Bois regarding his misunderstood essay "Painting: The Task of Mourning" (1986): "The death of painting has been on order since Manet, and the task of every modern artist is to try to achieve it. That is what modernism as I know it is all about."<sup>1</sup> So, the death-of-painting assumption is not an endgame; it is a fresh push that keeps the pendulum swinging.

Painters, painters, painters. João has in his toolbox techniques from modernism such as color fields, monochromes, the use of chance (some portrayed subjects are arbitrarily chosen from images friends message him; some of the works on display use both house painter's white and the expensive stuff). Sometimes the tricks he plays with classical ideas of "the author" are less visible and more insidious—for instance reworking art historically charged tropes in a flirty hide-and-seek, as when he approaches landscape painting by means of exploding images produced by a NASA Mars rover, or when a frame is stripped bare of almost everything but the core sustaining structure, suggesting sacred art.

In the next few days, João will refurbish and move in to the apartment you're visiting. The effect is fascinating; the unpainted walls welcome with unexpected balance the minimalistic, yet nuanced, aesthetics of the works and seemingly effortless treatment of materials—raw canvas, wood, acrylic, tarlatan. But on top of that, the visitor may perceive a subtler correspondence between the environment, ready to be rethought, and the results of the artist's loving assaults on painting. In their shared naked austerity, both are sites of possibility and transformation.

- Francesco Tenaglia, 2021 -

Francesco João's practice indulges in the ambivalence of the pictorial method, stressing the duality between the immediacy, and the over-complexity of the medium. Immersed in a constantly-changing, hyper-evolving loop of reconfiguration, the medium of painting enduringly affirms its substance both through historical legitimation and through the confrontation against fast-disseminated images adhering to the sphere of the digital.

The complexity of this specific gesture-painting finds its reflection in João's work, where the image is produced through the use of a complex schema of juxtaposed layers, which let forms emerge through subtraction. Delving deep into the calibrated tangibility of the canvas, João's gesture is oriented towards the production of images functioning as ideas. The immediacy—say, the innocence—of painting is the actual core on which Francesco João's work is grounded. In other words, his ability to deliver meaning without many formal obstacles, whilst also being self-conscious when investigating the nature of the medium itself.

The canvases produced by the artist in these last years consist of an elaboration of a visual language that is disruptive in its sensuality and rawness. Gradient palettes and dreamy textures murmur secrets of escapism, forgotten horizons, and rarefied galaxies, where layers and layers of gouache protect from the gaze of the viewer. In João's work, the coalescence of the enigmatic and the pragmatic is tangible, as it is the association of simple, direct scenarios with extra-complications that often hijack the linearity of his paintings. This dualism triggers the idyllic mystery that is latent in João's production— that feeling of ethereal fascination when facing the large panels wrapped in raw canvas.

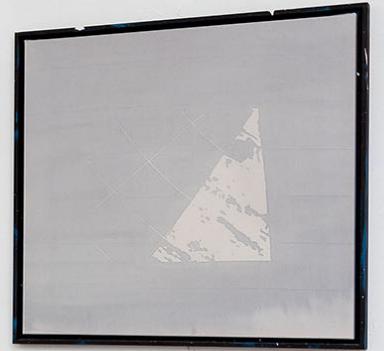
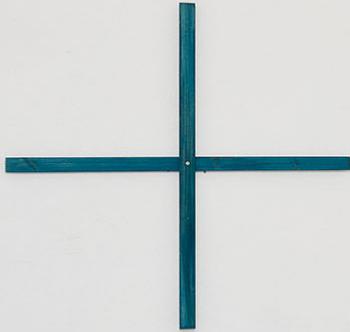
Francesco João (Milan, 1987) lives and works in Milan, Italy.

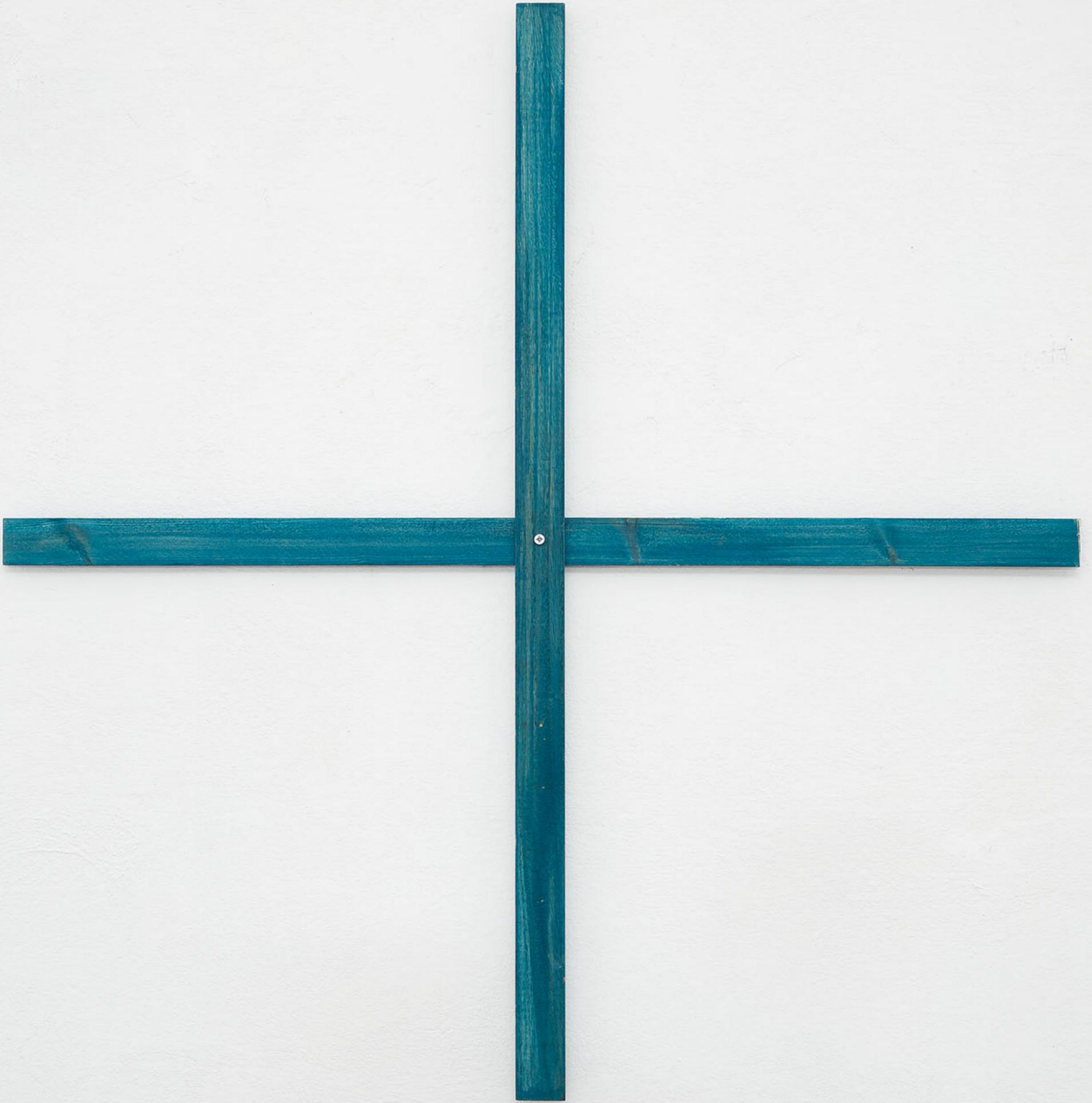
His exhibitions include 1550 San Remo Drive, Hot Wheels, Athens (2020); Francesco João, Mendes Wood DM, Brussels (2019); Knife in the flesh - Contemporary Brazilian Art, Pac - Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea, Milan (2018); Donkey Man, Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo (2017); Everything tends to ascend. Or not., Pivô, São Paulo (2016); Summertime '78, Kunsthalle São Paulo, São Paulo (2015); Nimm's Mal Easy, Ausstellungsraum Klingental, Basel (2015); Extra DRY, Peep Hole/DRY, Milan (2014); Dizionario di Pittura, Galleria Francesca Minini, Milan (2014); The Opposite of the Opposite Opposite of the Opposite, Gasconade, Milan (2012).

Note

1. Arthur Danto, Yve-Alain Bois, Thierry de Duve, Isabelle Graw, David Reed, David Joselit, and Elisabeth Sussman, "The Mourning After: A Roundtable," *Artforum*, March 2003, <https://www.artforum.com/print/200303/the-mourning-after-a-roundtable-4321>, referencing Yve-Alain Bois, "Painting: The Task of Mourning," in *Painting as Model* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990).







*Arte Sacra*, 2020  
Leftover painted frames  
98 x 98 cm, 38.6 x 38.6 in







*Untitled*, 2019  
Gouache on raw canvas in artist's frame  
62 x 62 cm, 24.4 x 24.4 in





*Untitled*, 2019  
Gouache on raw canvas in artist's frame  
62 x 62 cm, 24.4 x 24.4 in





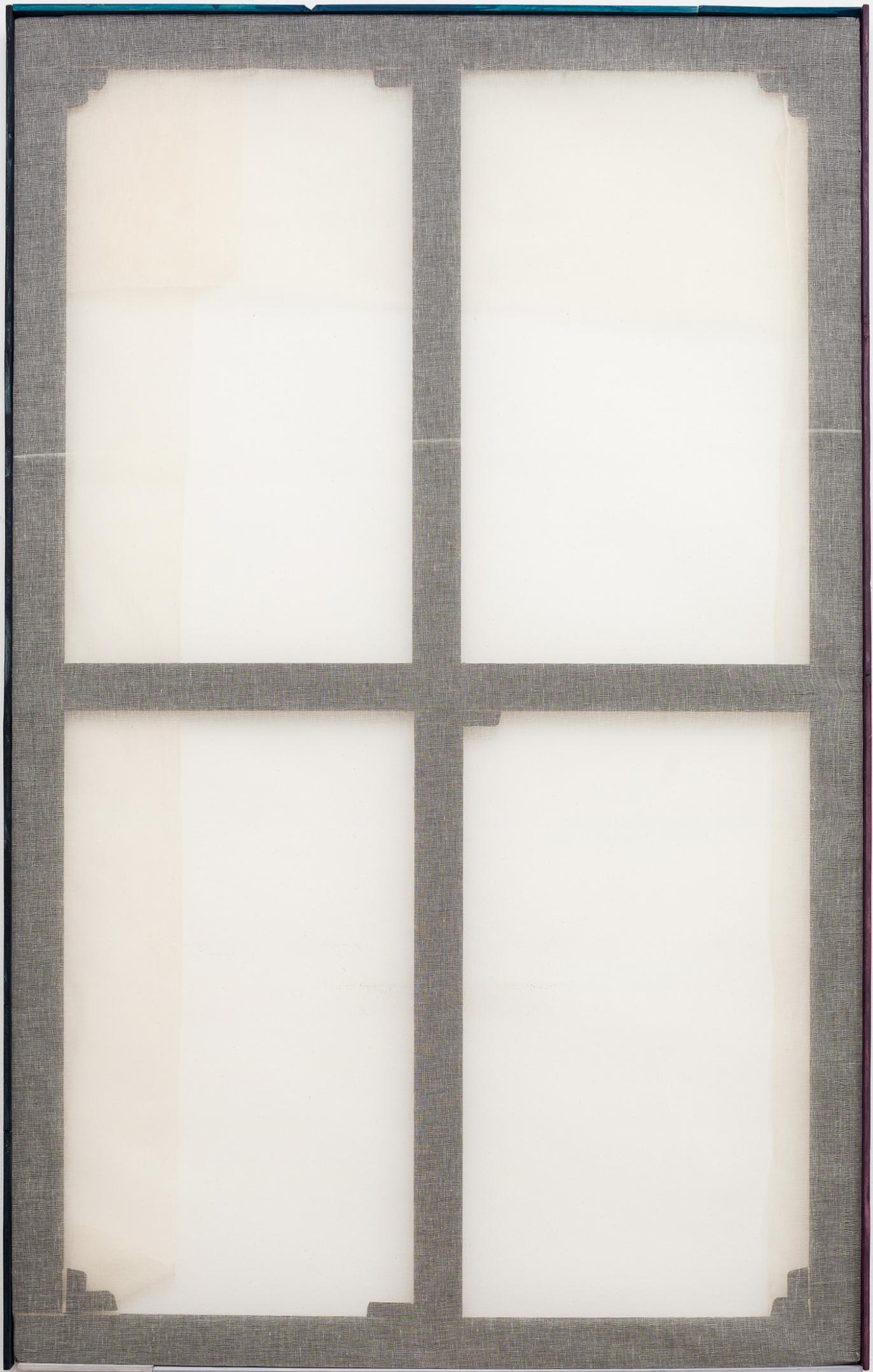


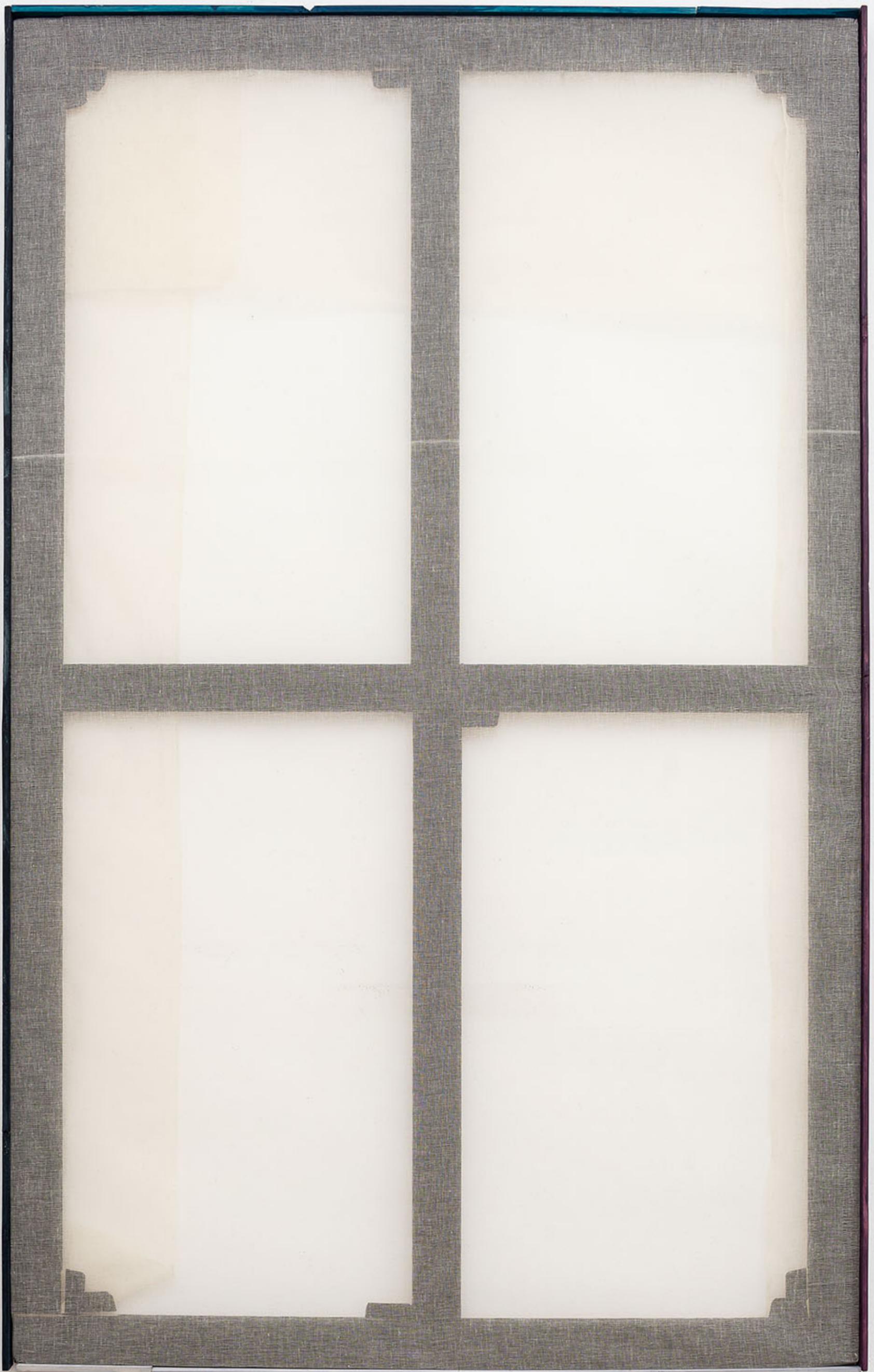












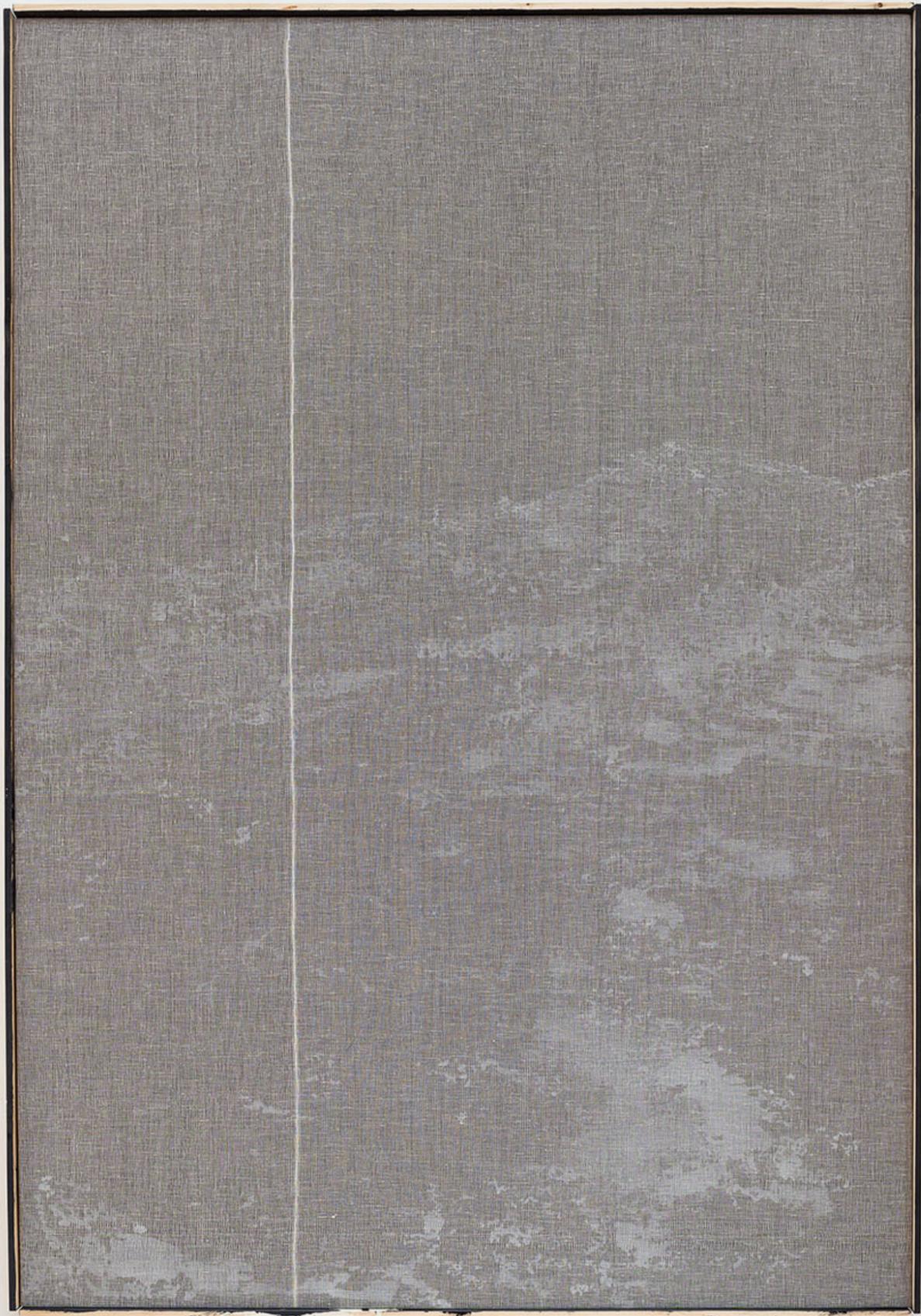
*Untitled*, 2020  
Tarlatan, wood, acrylic, artist's stretcher  
198 x 102 cm, 78 x 40.2 in

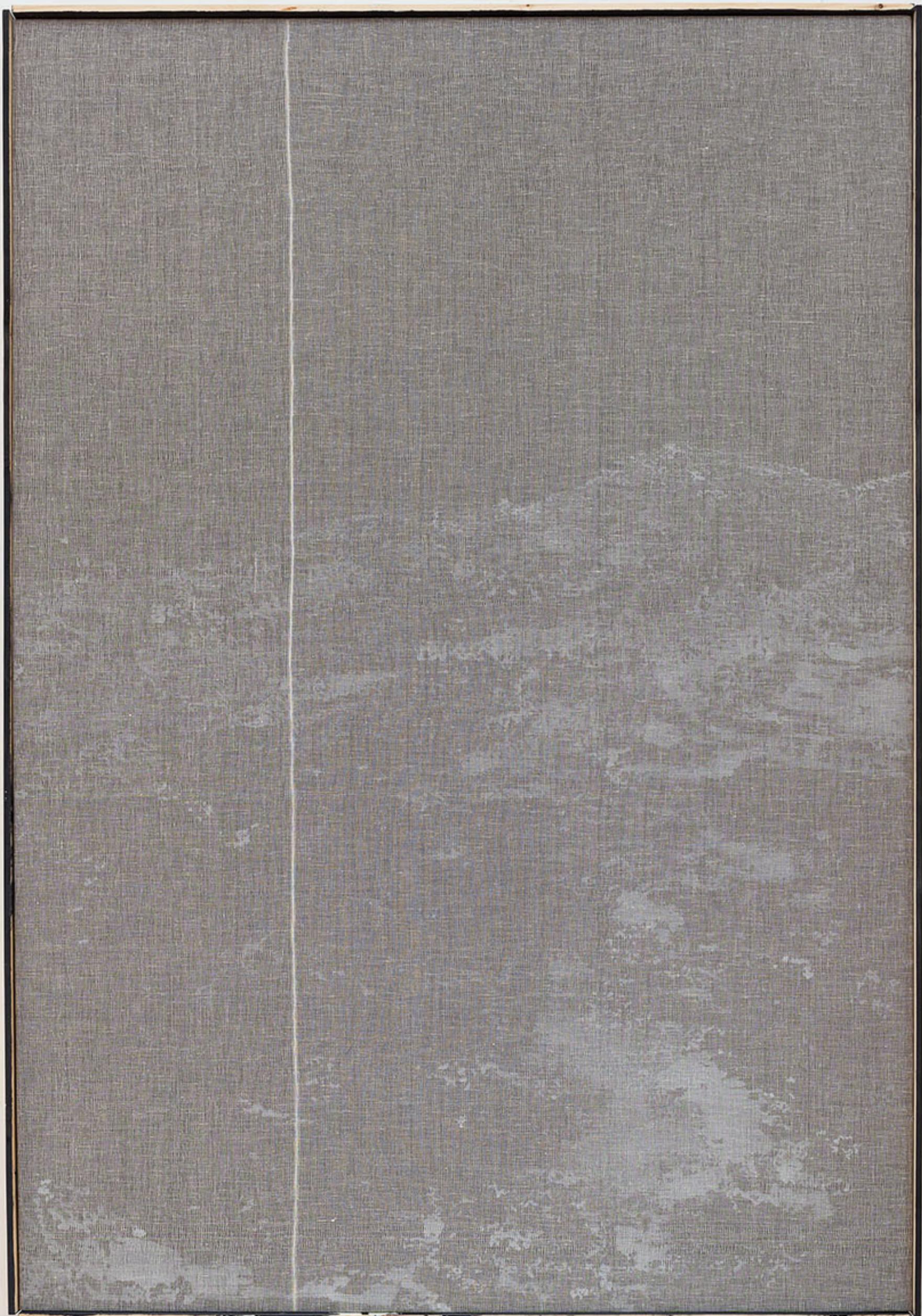










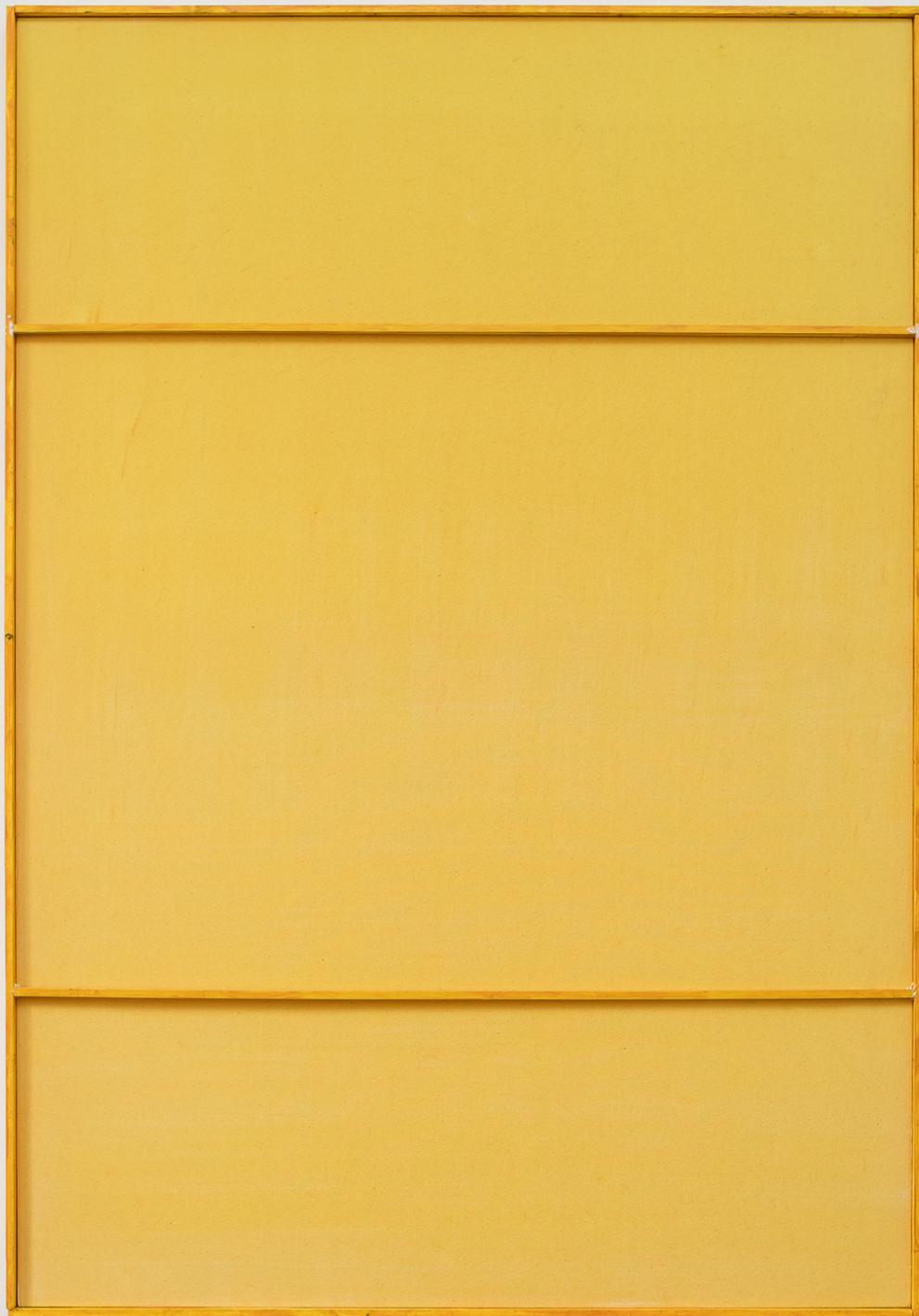


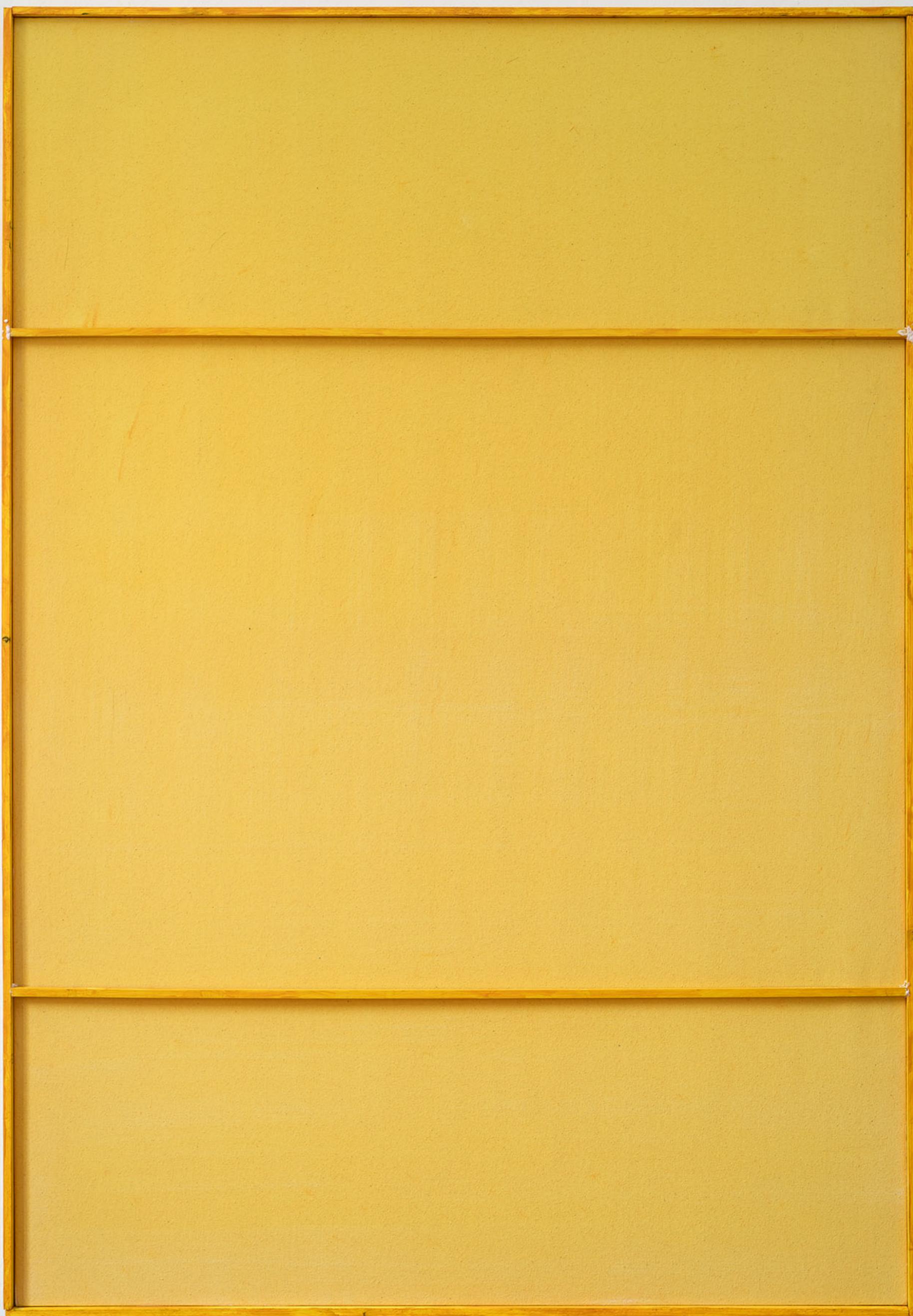
*Untitled*, 2020  
Gouache on overlapped raw canvas and tarlatan, artist's frame  
147 x 102 cm, 57.9 x 40.2 in











*Untitled*, 2021  
Gouache on raw canvas in artist's frame  
147 x 102 cm, 57.9 x 40.2 in



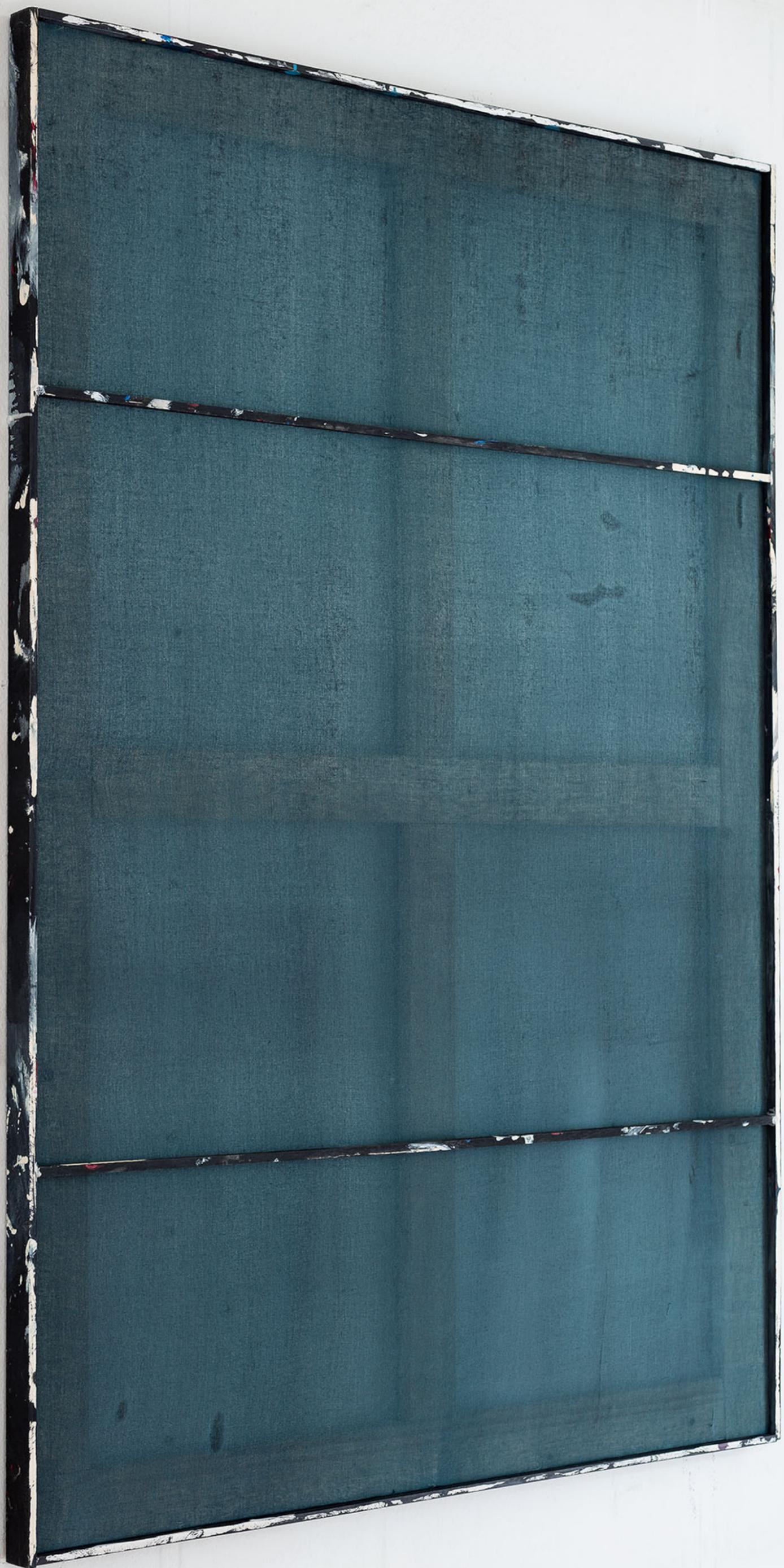




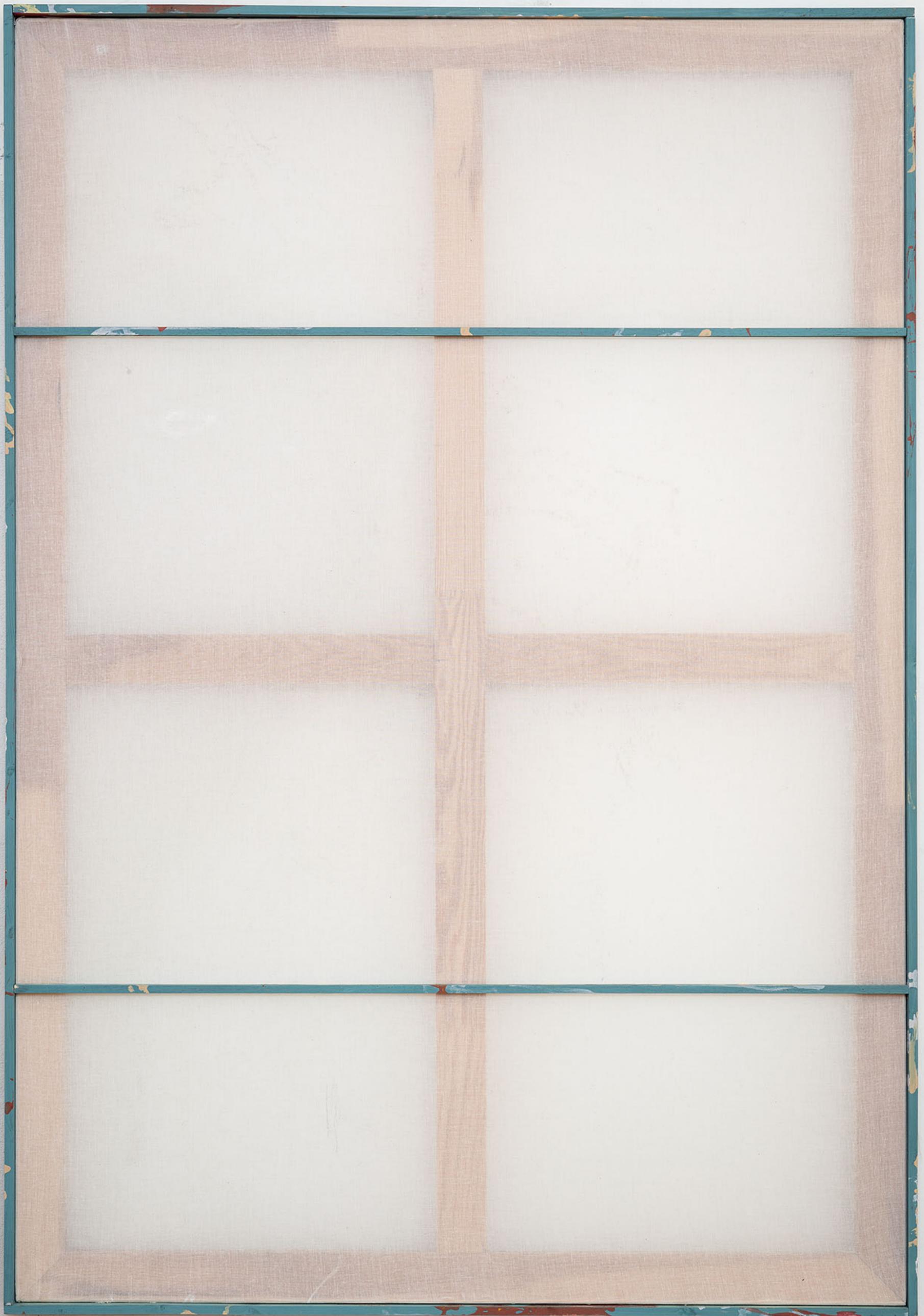




*Untitled, 2021*  
Gouache on raw canvas in artist's frame  
147 x 102 cm, 57.9 x 40.2 in







*Untitled, 2020*  
Gouache on raw canvas in artist's frame  
147 x 102 cm, 57.9 x 40.2 in





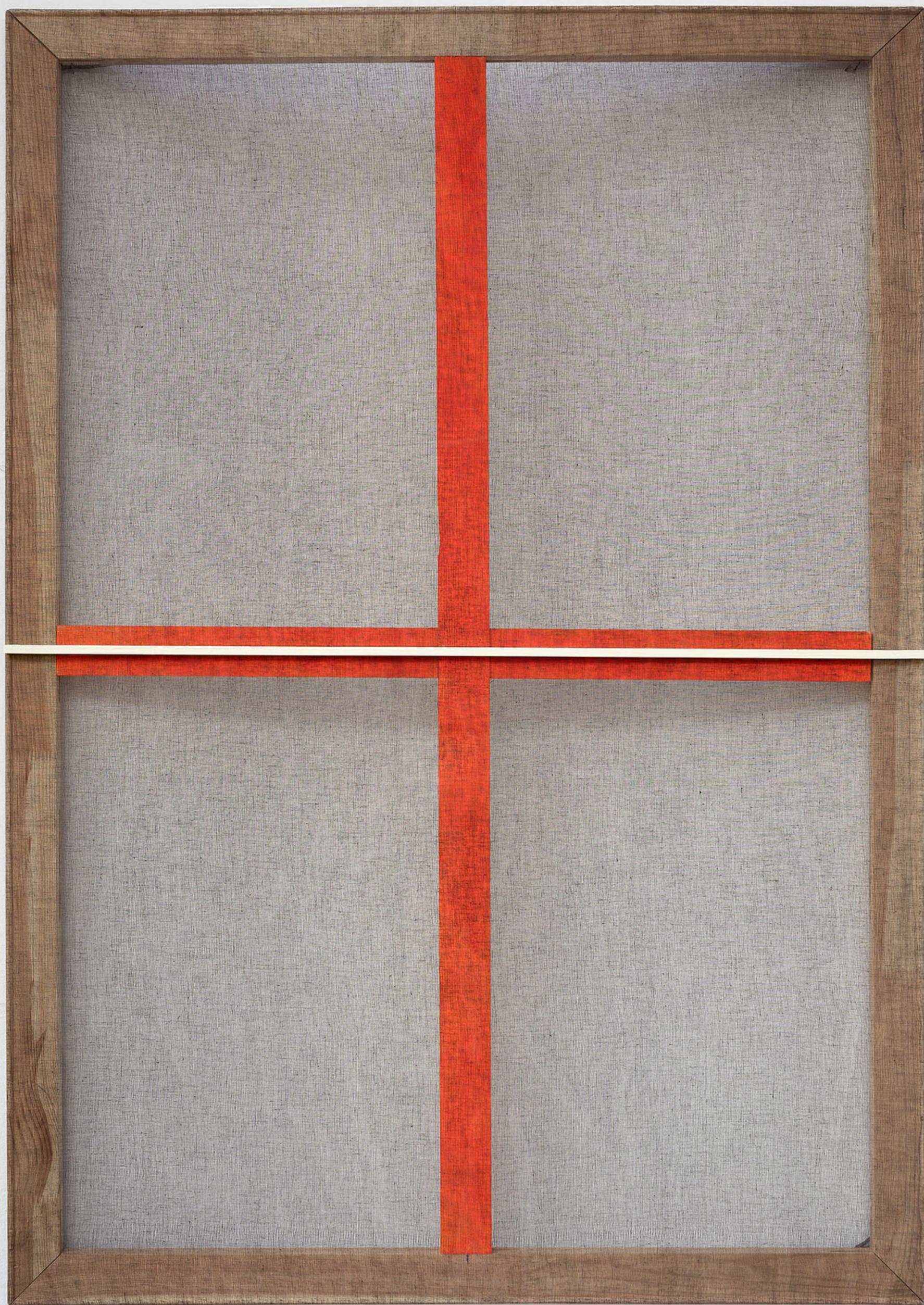
*Untitled*, 2020  
Raw canvas, acrylic, wood  
146 x 102 cm, 57.5 x 40.2 in



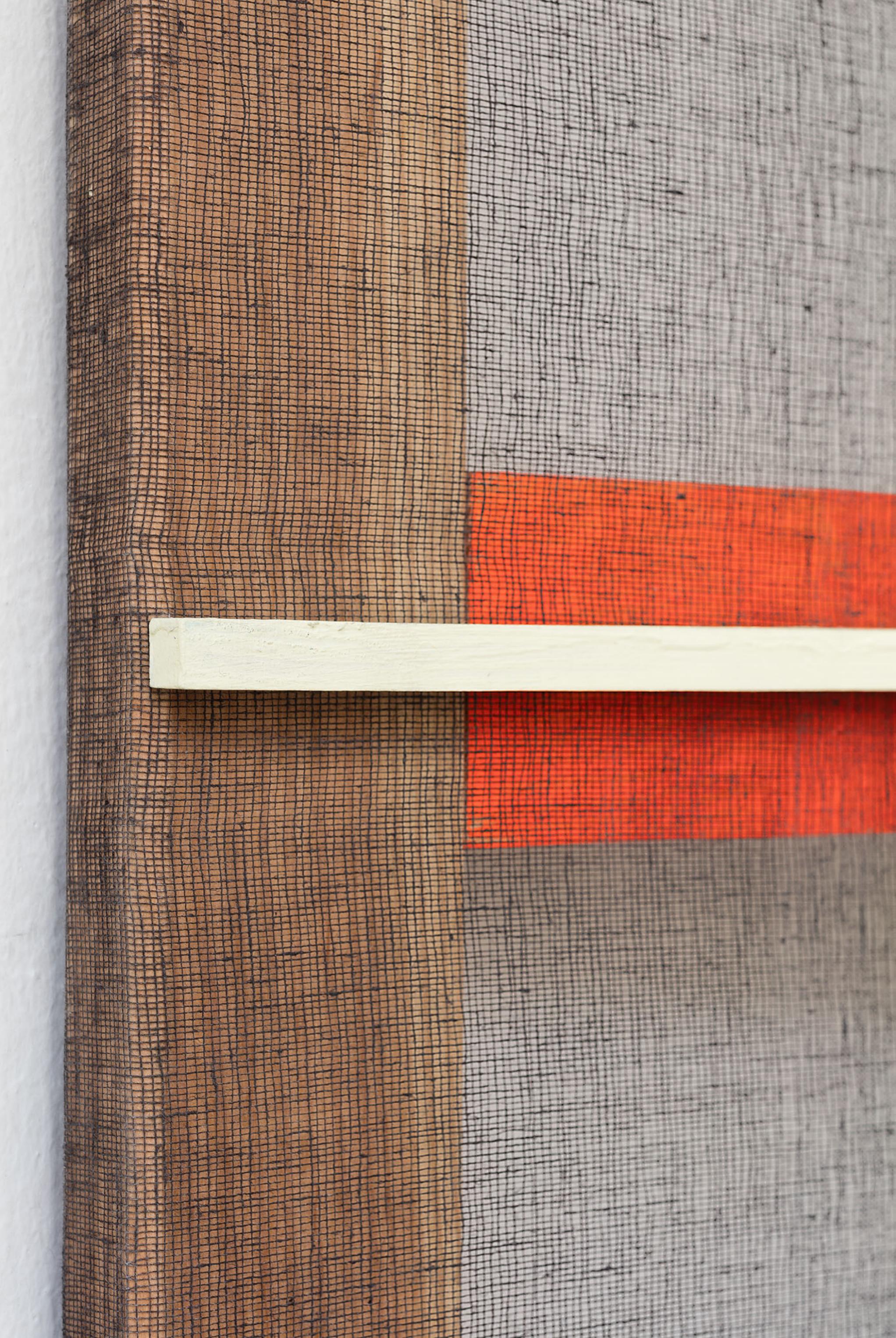








*Untitled*, 2020  
Gouache, tarlatan, wood, acrylic, artist's stretcher  
145 x 100 cm, 57.1 x 39.4 in





Francesco João

Born 1987 Milan, Italy

Lives and works in Milan, Italy

### **Solo Shows**

2019

Francesco João, Mendes Wood DM, Brussels, Belgium

2017

Donkey Man, Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo, Brazil

2016

Everything Tend to Ascend. Or Not., Pivò, São Paulo, Brazil

2015

Summertime '78, Kunsthalle Sao Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil

2014

Extra DRY, Peep Hole, Milan, Italy

2013

Studiolo#8, Cabinet, Milan, Italy

2012

The Opposite of the Opposite Opposite of the Opposite, Gasconade, Milan, Italy

2011

Il Quarto Passo with Dario Guccio, Grand Hotel et de Milan / Spazio Oberdan, Milan, Italy

### **Group Shows**

2021

X Minimal, Curated by Friederike Nymphus, Cassina Projects, Milan, Italy (upcoming)

2020

What's Up / Twenty Twenty, LVH Art, London, United Kingdom

1550 San Remo Drive, Hot Wheels, Athens, Greece

2019

Summer Show, Castiglioni, Milan, Italy

Le Monde Ou Rien, Sgomento, Naples, Italy

2018

Knife in the flesh - Contemporary Brazilian Art, Pac - Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea, Milan, Italy

2017

A Terceira Mão, Curated by Erika Verzutti, Galeria Fortes D'Aloia Gabriel, São Paulo, Brazil

Neither., Mendes Wood DM Brussels, Brussels, Belgium

2015

Outdoor I, Warm, São Paulo, Brazil

Nimm's Mal Easy, Ausstellungsraum Klingental, Basel, Switzerland

2014

Dizionario di Pittura, Galleria Francesca Minini, Milan, Italy

Art-O-Rama, Marseille, France

Summer Painting Show, Il Crepaccio, Milan, Italy

2013

One Thousand Four Hundred and Sixty, Peep Hole, Milan, Italy

Gasconade 2013 Portfolios, Pastificio Cerere, Rome, Italy

Don't Be a Ham!! (Christmas Party), by Ari Marcopoulos, Family Business, New York, USA

2012

Fuoriclasse, GAM Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Milan, Italy

2011

Agenzia 200, UniCredit Studio, Milan / Trento, Italy

2010

Roaming Off-Cells, Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Villa Croce, Genoa, Italy

2010

Gioberti1, Milan, Italy

Fuori Salone, Motel Lucie, Milan, Italy

Crola. NoNo Wallpaper, Motel Lucie, Lucie Fontaine, Milan, Italy

Francesco João

in collaboration with Andrew Dubow and Francisco Barreiros Cardoso

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