

# MINGKAI HE

*The structure of world history*  
Solo Exhibition

**Inauguration:** Friday, January 23, 6-8 pm

**Duration:** January 24 - February 21, 2026

# VIN VIN

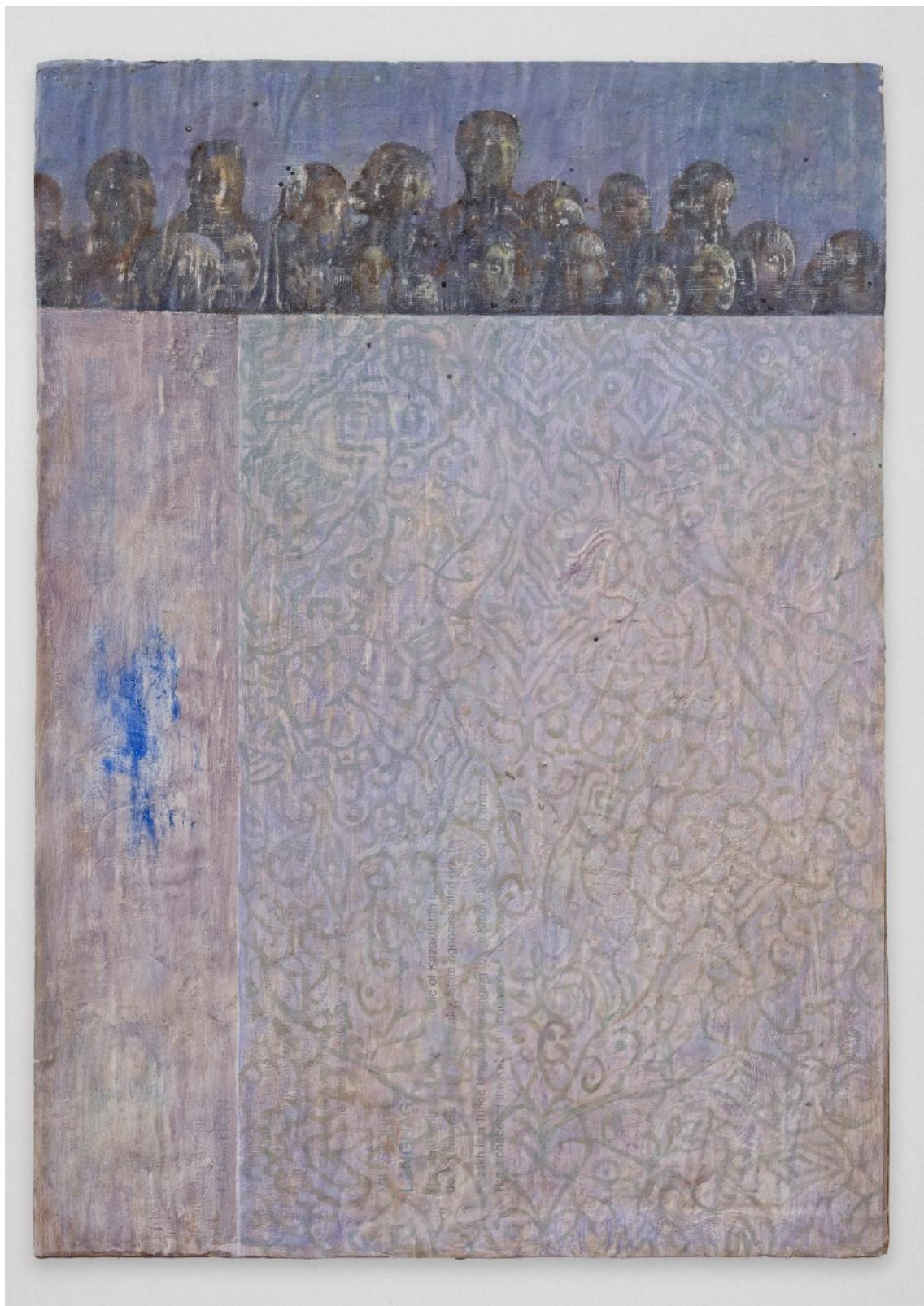
He Mingkai's painting and artistic practice span multiple domains including politics, the postmodern cultural landscape, and iconology. In constructing his pictorial space, he typically takes historical images and personal imagination as his blueprint, forging a visual experience imbued with mystery.

The entirely new works He Mingkai has created for this solo exhibition not only sustain his consistent, rigorous philosophical reflection on history and politics but also, through a series of relatively small-scale paintings characterized by more relaxed and unrestrained brushwork and painting substrates, document aspects of his personal life ranging from dreams and film works to everyday existence.

These thematically diverse works are in fact unified within the seemingly oppositional realms of world history and personal history—there exists no definitive boundary between the two; instead, they intertwine, generating an inherent tension between grand narrative and personal documentation. Extensive historical images, mythological tales, and personal video records all serve as sources of inspiration for the artist on this occasion, yet during the creative process, the directional significance of these images and texts (treated as raw materials) is completely dismantled, transforming them into signifiers without signifieds, intended to express a metaphysical plasticity.

This body of work places various symbols and metaphors in a single space to contend with one another; such inherent complexity and conflict render invalid any single-perspective analysis of the works. Thus, He Mingkai regards his creations as visual records of personal history and products of desacralized human labor—that is, painting functions both as a tool for shaping and inscribing historical memory, and is itself shaped by history and integrated into it. For him, painting, as a product of condensed time, becomes a component of world history upon its completion and also a visual declaration of the individual's participation in writing history.

# VIN VIN



***I'm listening!***, 2023  
Oil on paper, 21 x 29,5 cm

# VIN VIN

***I'm listening!***

In the 1980s, special trials targeting certain political prisoners were broadcast live for the first time, they were not so much trials as mockeries. The figures of the judges and jurors appeared blurred and uncanny in the faded video tapes, and in the meantime, their images underwent a strange overlap with the bidders at Christie's auctions in my mind.

Fading hues smudge the line between verdict and bid, each silhouette melting into the next. Only a faint hum lingers, wandering between the static and the auction hall's hush.



*I'm listening*, 2023, installation view



*I'm listening*, 2023, detail

VIN VIN



***The Second Dream*, 2025**  
Oil on canvas, 80 x 60 cm

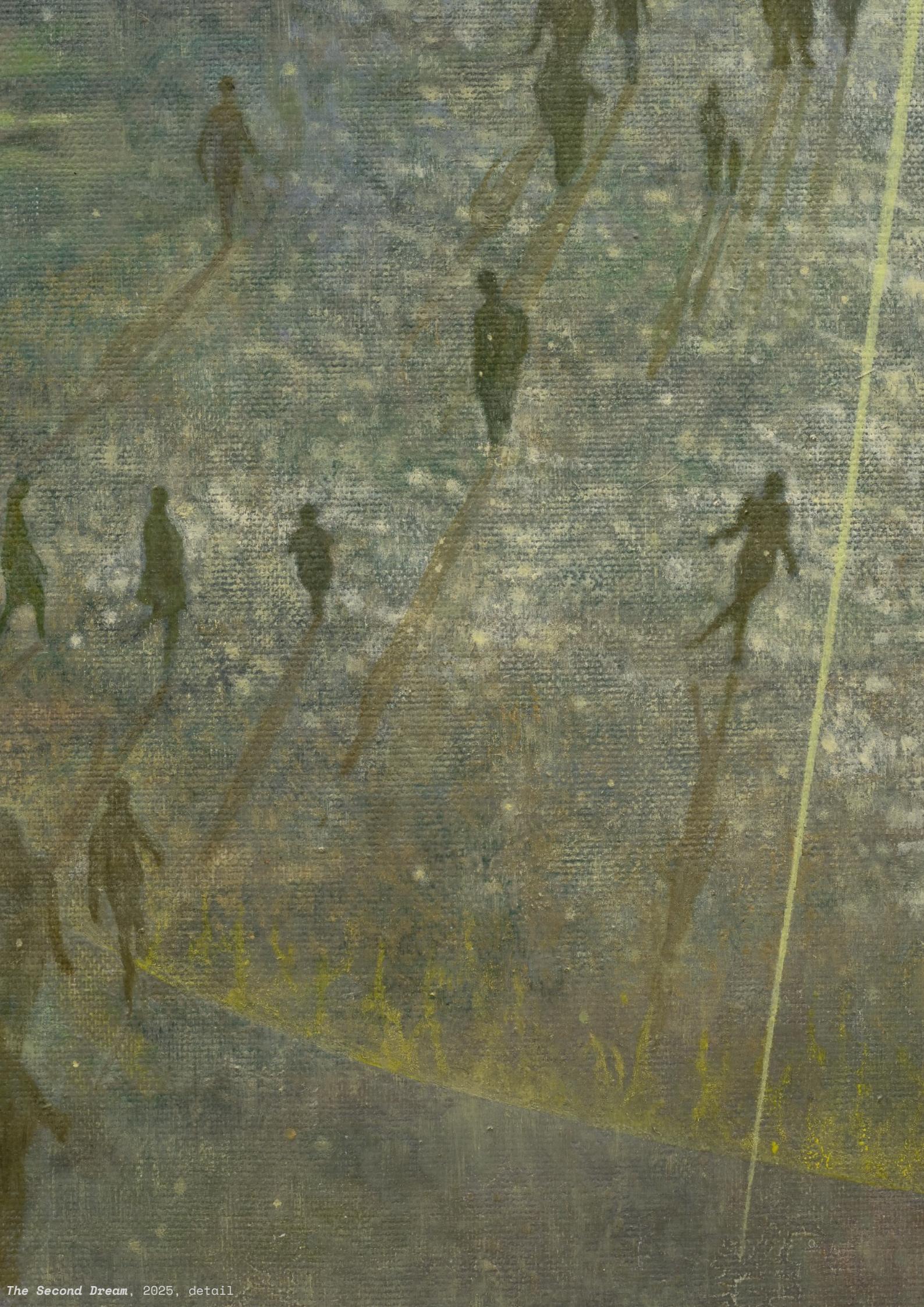
# VIN VIN

## ***The Second Dream***

This painting began with a photo of an ordinary indoor beach taken by my friend, I began to try to depict a thin atmosphere under the light, while the various characters in it made me feel a link, that is, humans as a social animal, are connected by various invisible powers, ideologies or discourses. Based on such a subconscious, my pictures may present a mysterious and sublime color, but this is not a hint of religion or the supreme existence, I have always focused on human beings themselves.



*The Second Dream*, 2025, installation view

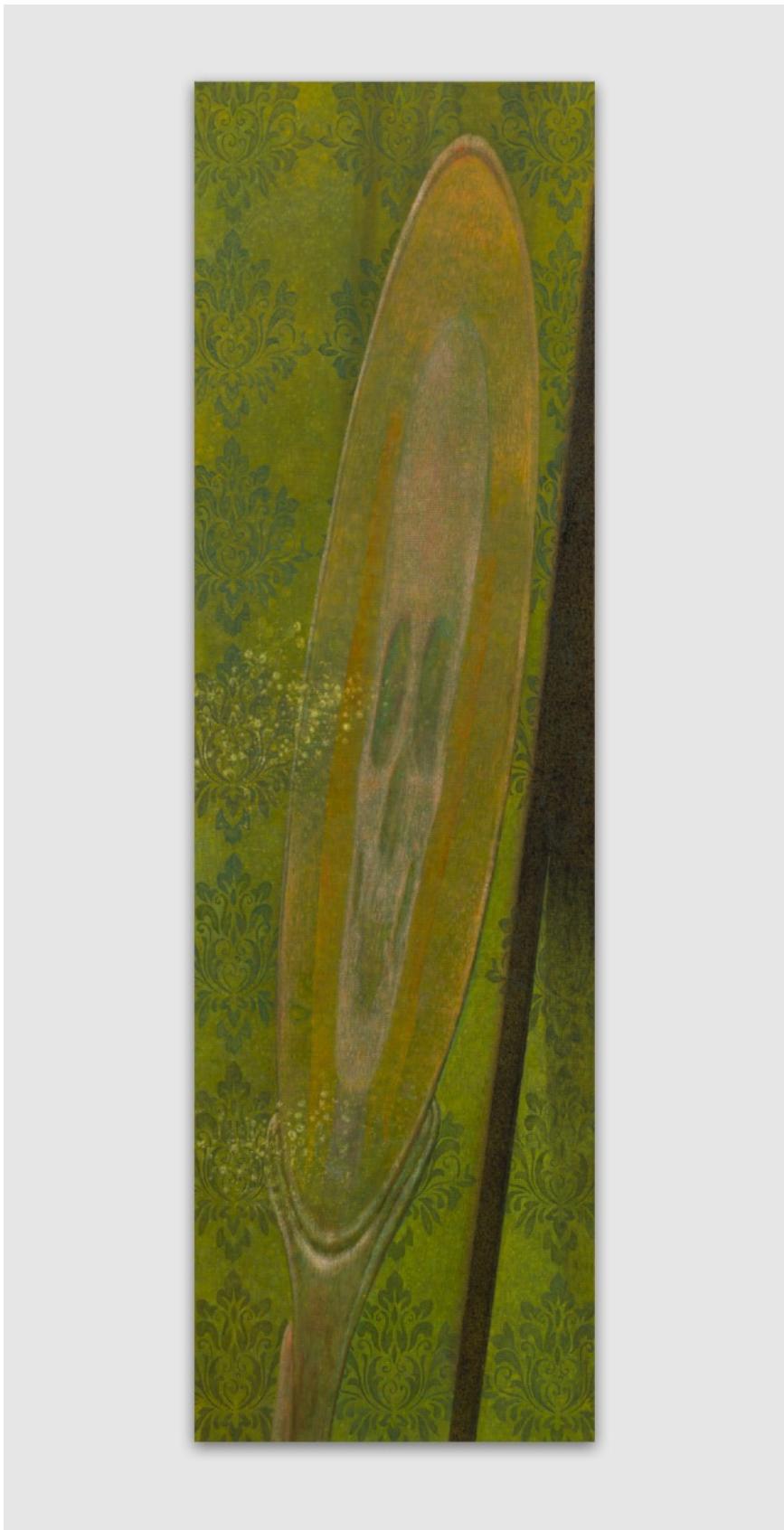


*The Second Dream*, 2025, detail



*The Second Dream*, 2025, detail

VIN VIN



*End of Asia*, 2025  
Oil on linen, 200 x 60 cm

# VIN VIN

## *End of Asia*

The inspiration for this painting comes from a scene in the classic Chinese novel "Dream of the Red Chamber": There was a young nobleman named Jia Rui, who was crazily infatuated with his sister-in-law Wang Xifeng. Wang was a smart and vicious woman who set traps to punish him - making him suffer from the cold in winter night and being subjected to blackmail and humiliation. As a result, Jia Rui fell seriously ill and was on the verge of death.

At this time, a monk brought a magic mirror called "The Precious Mirror of Love", warning him that he could only look at the reverse side, which would only show Wang's skeleton, to cure his illness. But Jia Rui couldn't resist the temptation and secretly looked at the front side - in the mirror, his sister-in-law lured him into the magic mirror, causing him to be addicted to the illusion and eventually die.

Why this segment caught my attention so much? On the surface, this story seems to be just an interpretation of ancient strict moralism, but through the taboo, it produces a contradictory tension of desire. As the main subject of the painting, the mirror is on the one hand a tool for self- reflection of traditional morality, and on the other hand, it has become a carrier of peeping and fantasy. This contradiction fascinated me very much.



*End of Asia*, 2025, installation view



*End of Asia*, 2025, detail

VIN VIN



***The last time people saw him was***, 2025

Oil on linen, 80 x 100 cm

# VIN VIN

## ***The last time people saw him was***

This work takes its cue from a trivial frame in a World War II documentary—where warehouse ruins churn amid the flames of aerial bombs. This piece of history is both intimately bound to us and utterly disconnected from us; meanwhile, the temporal and spatial disjuncture between the viewer and the conflagration itself signals the rupture between the meta-image and its narrative.

The flames no longer point to a “moment of destruction” – they are merely a color block. When the knot of the narrative unravels here, history adheres to the canvas in a purposeless form.



*The last time people saw him was*, 2025, installation view



*The last time people saw him was*, 2025, detail

VIN VIN



***Cartography and super Genius***, 2026

Oil on linen, 150 x 120 cm

# VIN VIN

## ***Cartography and super Genius***

Cartography is a branch of geomatics, a discipline that studies maps as well as their compilation and application. It explores the use of maps to reflect the spatial distribution, interconnections, and dynamic changes of various phenomena in the natural world and human society.

A map is a representation of the world, a two-dimensional mapping of the world on a plane—but this mapping does not imply transcendence or absolute objectivity; instead, it has always been oriented toward the needs of constructing the underlying will to power and political consciousness. And on this stage, one group exits as another enters.



*Cartography and super Genius*, 2026, installation view



VIN VIN



***Unexpected hiking***, 2025

Oil on paper mounted on wood board, 40 x 30 cm

# VIN VIN

## *Unexpected hiking*

The painting originates from an intense dream experience: when the boundary between day and night becomes indistinct, an unrecognizable figure walks slowly deep in the forest, its body silently ablaze. The flames symbolize both destruction and dissolution, while also hinting at the alchemical motif of "the trial by fire" –the stripping away of impurities in the flames to refine a purer existence. The pervasive purplish-red aura and dotted, misty texture in the image create a nearly trance-like atmosphere, the boundaries of consciousness.

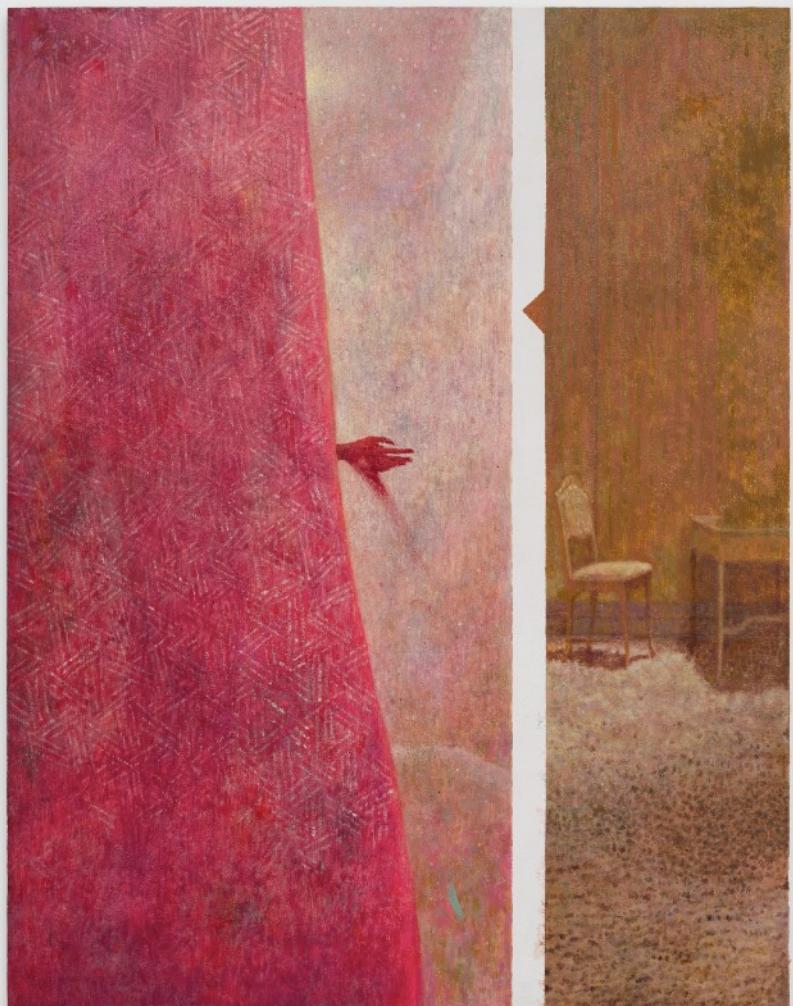


*Unexpected hiking*, 2025, installation view



*Unexpected hiking, 2025, detail*

VIN VIN



*I feel it coming*, 2026  
Oil on wood board, 40 x 50 cm

# VIN VIN

## *I feel it coming*

For a long time, I have been fascinated by Gothic psychological thriller films like Persona and Rebecca—the oppressive sense of impending danger and mystery permeates the fabric of every frame. I often ponder the source of this obsession; perhaps it stems from the family traumas of my childhood and adolescence, those unspoken tension and estrangement that mirror exactly the hidden tension in the silent courtyards of the films.

They are like a blurred mirror, reflecting those silent corners and the unease that never truly fades of mine.



*I feel it coming*, 2026, installation view

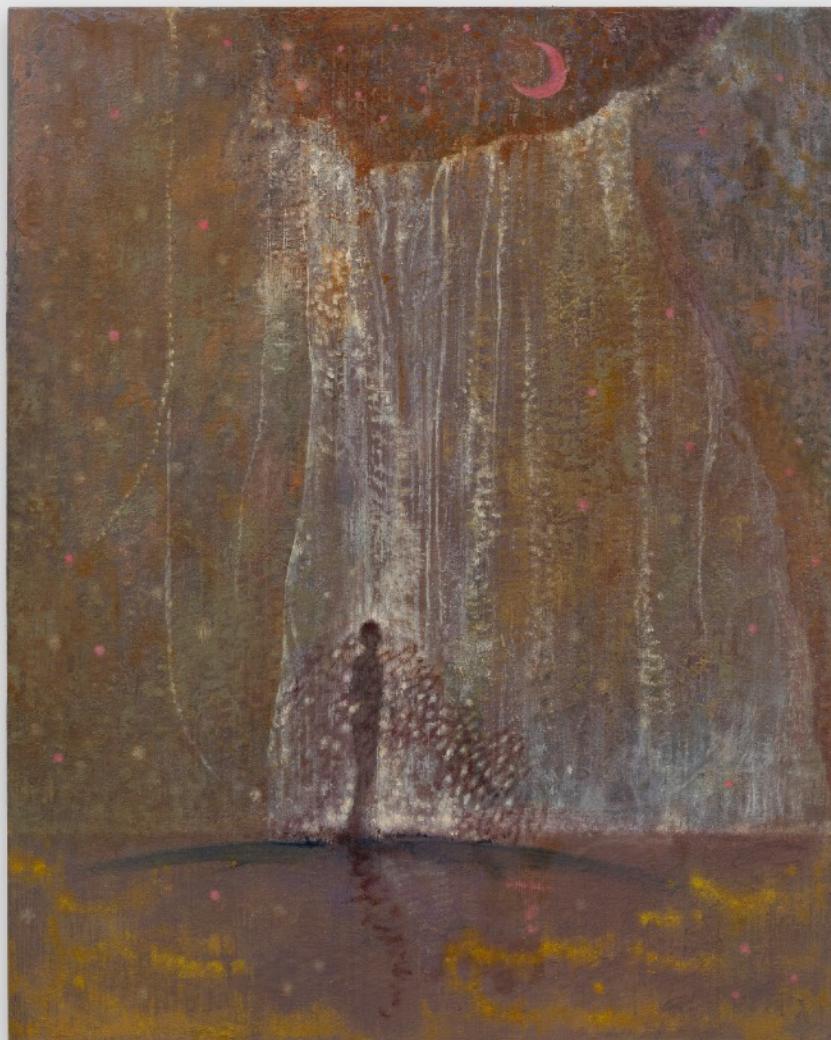


*I feel it coming*, 2026, detail



*I feel it coming*, 2026, detail

VIN VIN



***To Salvage a Shattered Moon, 2025***  
Oil and acrylic on wood board, 40 x 50 cm



*To Salvage a Shattered Moon*, 2025, installation view



*To Salvage a Shattered Moon*, 2025, detail

VIN VIN



**BMW 639**, 2026

Oil, acrylic and watercolour on wood board, 40 x 50 cm



BWV, 2026, installation view





VIN VIN



***Drink before the war***, 2025  
Oil and acrylic on wood board, 40 x 30 cm



*Drink before the war*, 2025, installation view



*Drink before the war*, 2025, detail



*Drink before the war*, 2025, detail

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*Chishui river*, 2024  
Oil on paper, 25,5 x 17,5 cm

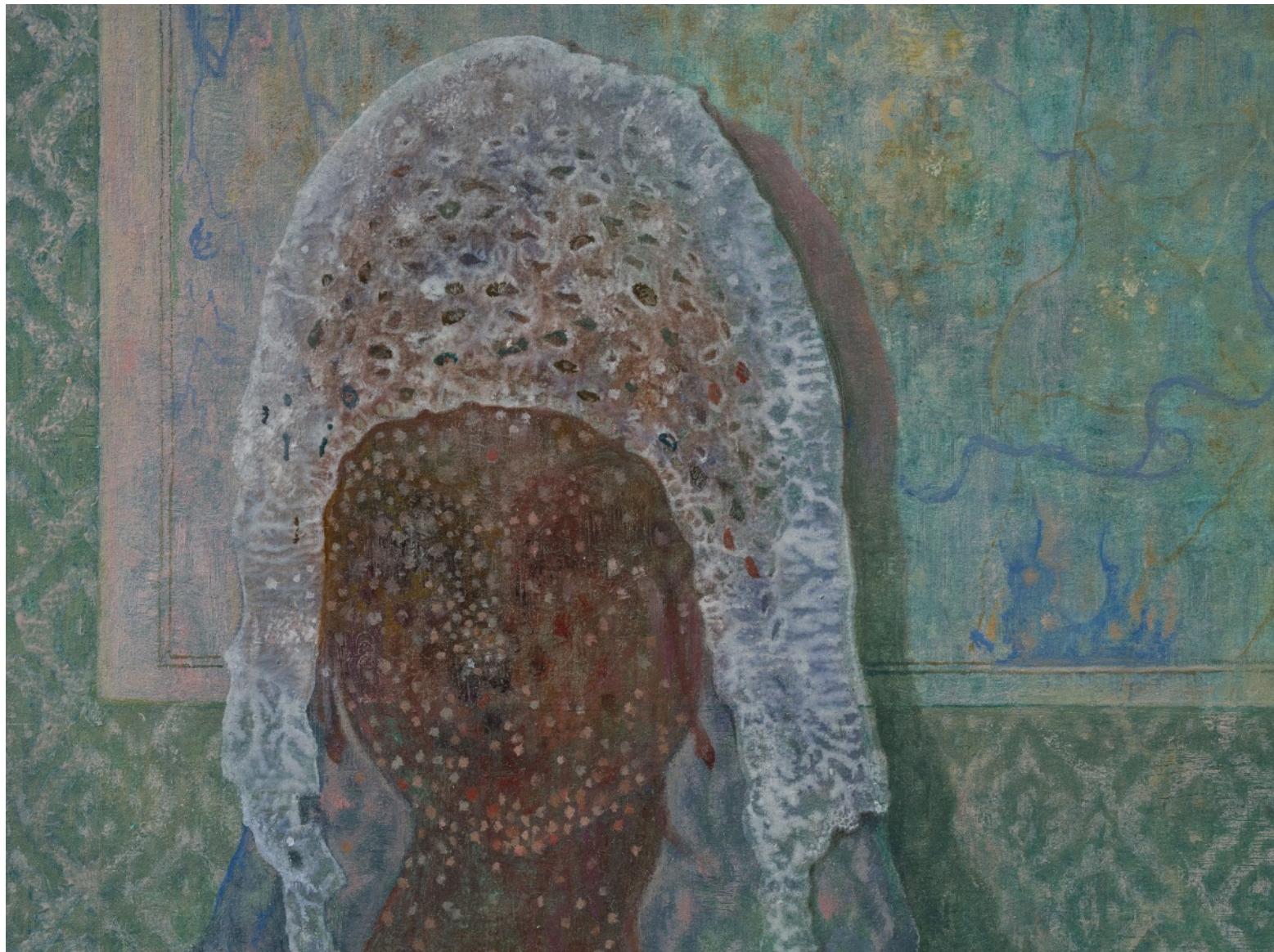
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*Chishui river*, 2024, installation view

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*Chishui river*, 2024, detail

# VIN VIN

Mingkai He was born in 1995 in Nanchang, Jiangxi Province, China, and now lives and works in Shanghai.

## ***EDUCATION***

**2016 - 2020**

B.A in School of Fine Arts, Capital Normal University, Beijing

**2020 - 2023**

M.A in Painting, Royal College of Art, London

**2024**

PhD in Art theory, Shanghai Theatre Academy, Shanghai

## ***SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS***

**Upcoming:**

**2026**

*The Structure of World History*, VIN VIN, Vienna

**Past:**

**2024**

*Traveling Memories*, The Modern Showroom, London

## ***SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS***

**Recent:**

**2025**

*The Collector's Residence*, organised by GECO Foundation, Shanghai, China

*VIN VIN x \_POLIMENO*, VIN VIN in collaboration with Valerio Polimeno, Paris

**Past:**

**2023**

*Reasons for Painting - The 5th Inter-Youth International Youth Painting Exhibition*, Shanghai West, Bund Art Center, Shanghai, China

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