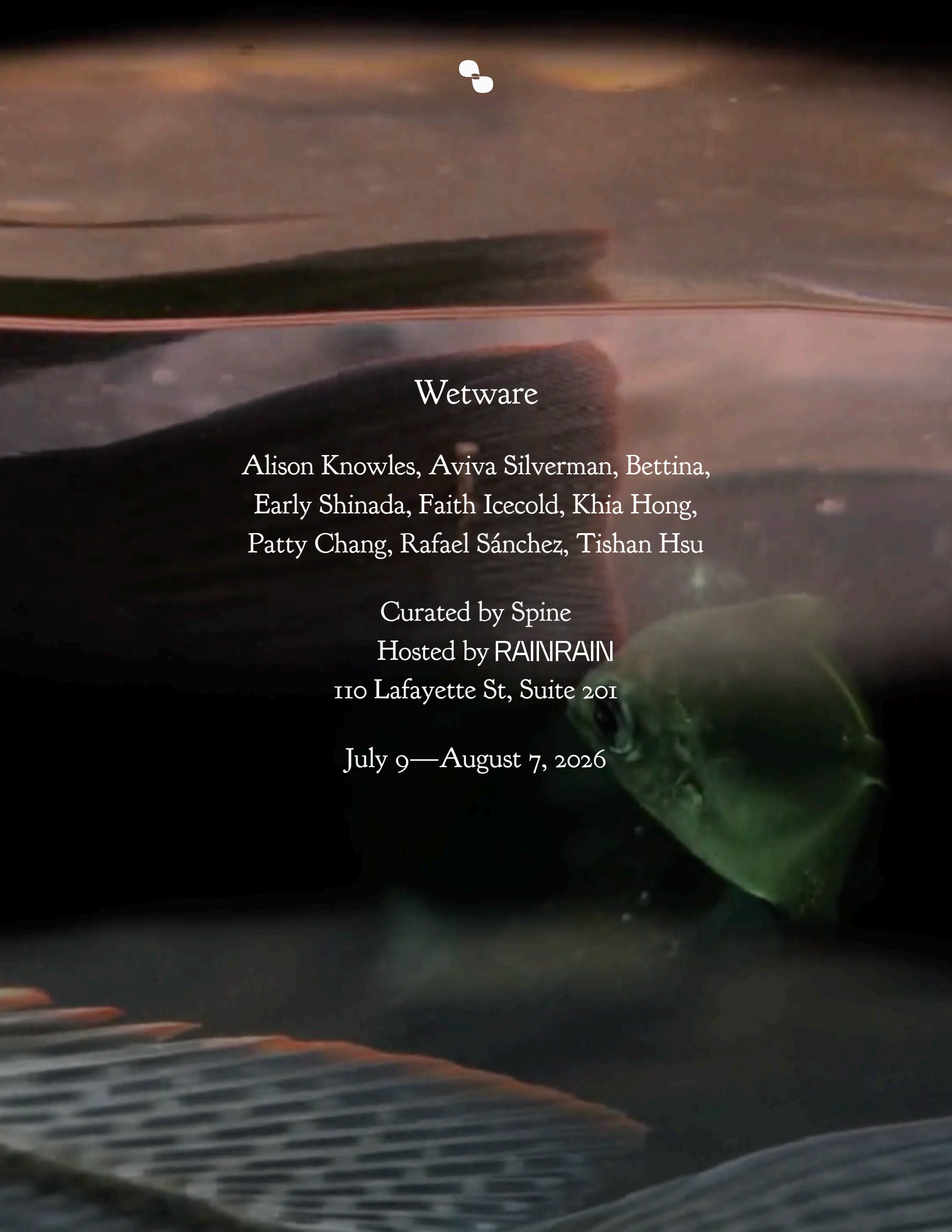


Wetware

Alison Knowles, Aviva Silverman, Bettina,
Early Shinada, Faith Icecold, Khia Hong,
Patty Chang, Rafael Sánchez, Tishan Hsu

Curated by Spine
Hosted by RAINRAIN
110 Lafayette St, Suite 201

July 9—August 7, 2026

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110 Lafayette St, Suite 201, New York, NY 10013

Gallery hours: Tuesday–Saturday, 11am–6pm

Wetware invokes consciousness as an insistently material phenomenon. If hardware is the physical "body" and software its logical "mind," "wetware" describes living biological systems as information-processing networks. This third term—an analogy popularized in 1980s sci-fi that sought to define the "underlying generative code for an organism"—likens human cognition to computation. Emerging technologies have since materialized this metaphor: so-called organoid intelligence (OI) fuses brain tissue directly onto silicon chips, literally collapsing the distinction between biological and computational substrates.

Wetware poses the artwork as a similar sort of substrate—a conductive site where perception and matter become inseparable, each shaping the other. The nine artists in this exhibition resist locating cognition within an autonomous subject or isolated organ, instead approaching consciousness as a distributed phenomenon shaped through continual exchanges between living bodies, materials, and environments. This exhibition inhabits that wet zone between the neatness of cybernetics and the messiness of embodiment.

A lifelong New Yorker, **Bettina** (1927–2021) was informed by personal studies in mathematics, physics, and mysticism as well as her Orthodox Jewish upbringing. Her rigorous, system-driven practice is concerned with pattern recognition, repetition, and the unseen structures guiding everyday life—what she described as "noumenological research." In her *Phenomenological New York* series (1972-1977), she probes the urban landscape as a perceptual apparatus that refuses to transmit clear signals. The grid—architecture's most insistent claim to order—is liquefied by its own reflective facades, which receive, warp, and redistribute visual information. In this multidimensional domain, photography functions as a material extension of perception. Her images, physically arranged in grids and containing them, evoke the channels between external architectures and interior psychological contours. Bettina gleans the outputs of both the city and the brain as unpredictable processors—mapping the epistemic limits of these two worlds via her own literal, living perspective in perpetual motion.

Alison Knowles (1933–2025) likewise takes up the city as its own locus of intelligence with *Found Gloves In Line* (2018). A founding member of the Fluxus group in 1968, Knowles broke ground in her approach to the performative potential of non-living materials. Her later series of *Event Threads* (emerging in the 2000s) translate the logic of the Event Score—short, textual instruction functioning as performance prompt—into sculptural form. These hanging, vertical assemblages "thread" together found materials collected over years of walking the streets of New York. Each forms a quiet, talismanic composition, carrying remnants from past unscripted activities in a bricolage manner. Much like her early approach to collaborating *with* technology, Knowles deems the city as a collaborator. Representing one of her latest works, *Found Gloves In*

Line accrues a diagrammatic constellation of discarded gloves. Information is compressed and stored by their material substrates; shaped and softened by the chemical signatures of anonymous hands, and then by the sediment of the city streets they rested on.

Two generations later, **Faith Icecold** (b. 1989) treats the image itself as a sedimentary field shaped by both virtual and material processes. In their new pair of jacquard tapestries, the artist digitally collages a set of found images without clear structure or hierarchy. The photographed surface of a used workbench forms the textured field—at once the ground and background—on top of which those smaller vignettes float. Together, these untethered layers evidence a parallel flow: of data and of paint, both now dried down. Carried into an entirely new, third domain, Icecold reproduces the collage-composite via jacquard loom. Thus transformed by the physical conditions of its transmission, the image is exposed as perpetually, materially contingent. The digital file is re-embodied as woven thread; its colors compressed through the limits of the yarn palette. Rather than contrasting the digital against the analogue, Icecold evinces the compatibility of these ontologically distinct realms.

Rafael Sánchez (b. 1956) conjures materials as conductive media for the metaphysical, tracing unseen energies through the manifest world. For *Untitled (The Window Prophets Part A)* (1983), the painting's ground—a layer of gesso, cracked, surrounded by small specks of asphalt sealant—operates as a charged field. Although irregular, it suggests a cracked grid, with scattered black dots overlaid like an aerial map or data set whose order has been disrupted. In this rich, sensual register, the painting itself intimates shifts in temperature, tension, and time. This intelligence of materials compounds Sánchez's *The Honey Jar* (2003) series, in which honey, glass, and submerged metal objects become a kind of slow circuit. The honey—viscous, neither liquid nor solid—conducts and diffuses daylight, bending and warming the light that passes through it. Discarded technologies, including light bulbs, cables, and a film roll pierced with pins, are cradled like artifacts held in a sticky, preservative medium that forecloses their intended use. Together, these materials—honey's slow transformation, glass's refraction, gesso's brittleness, tar's residual heat—reveal consciousness as an ongoing negotiation with forces that exceed the empirical. The metaphysical shows itself through the very physics of its stuff.

Working between sculpture and performance, **Aviva Silverman** (b. 1986) parses how objects become carriers of belief, memory, and collective identity. Icons of Abrahamic faith—rosaries, angels, prayer hands—settle in Silverman's work through their mass-produced material forms. In this sense, stable symbols become fragile hardware: devices that offload memory onto the hand, transmitting devotion through repeated touch. In *Drifters* (2026), Silverman suspends convent-sourced rosaries inside a translucent resin block. The rosary's function as a counting device—a centuries-old computation for keeping track of prayer—is arrested mid-circuit, as if encased in amber. A new, frozen image forms: two figures, one riding the other by the reins, are preserved in an exchange of intimacy. As these ritual props become inaccessible as tools, they render apparent the extent to which even the most immaterial pursuits require physical infrastructures.

Is terraforming reincarnation? (2015), a collaboration between Silverman and poet **Early Shinada**, recalls a zoetrope, as its mirrored interior fractures and multiplies a single photographic idea into an apparent infinity. Peering inside this hollow chamber, a desertified sun and lone cowboy figure recall both the myth of manifest destiny and the speculative aesthetics of

retrofuturism. Where an icon like the cowboy travels through single images like a Trojan horse—injecting narratives of conquest, protection, and vulnerability into the body that beholds it—the work tests the ways complex narratives proliferate like code, lodging themselves in real action through the very act of looking.

Patty Chang (b. 1972) emerged in New York's alternative performance scene in the mid-1990s. Where Chang's early video works centered her own body through performance, her recent work rethinks the very terms of embodiment through an ecological lens. Chang's *Glass Urinary Devices* (2017) emerged from *Configurations* (2017), a multimedia project in which Chang recorded her urination as a mundane ritual while traveling along China's South–North Water Transfer Project (the world's longest aqueduct). Modeled after plastic bottles that she had refashioned as urinary funnels during this journey, she re-crafted these prosthetics in borosilicate glass. Although appropriating the material of laboratory instruments, Chang's elaborate cyborgian props transcend the clinical restraints of the functional "device." As literal wet wear, they suggest both the intake and expulsion of fluids. The body here is defined by leakage, resisting Cartesian fantasies of disembodiment. Urine travels not as waste but as evidence of fundamental porosity and ecological enmeshment of all bodies.

Tishan Hsu (b. 1951) has long explored the interplay between flesh and interface, anticipating the ontological questions that would become increasingly dominant in the following decades through to today. Hsu's painting, *New Portable* (1988), postures as a mechanical interface, although its intended function is resoundingly, importantly, unclear. Subtle undulations and decidedly human imperfections complicate distinctions between the biological and the technological, the organic and the inorganic. What might be read as vents, apertures, or ports could just as easily be bodily orifices, scars, or sites of leakage. Three decades later, extending this ambiguity as technology continued its acceleration, Hsu's custom software work, *Folds of Oil* (2008) melds familiar corporeal sounds—the thump of a heartbeat, an animal's roar, the heavy, belabored rhythm of breathing—with mechanized noises that are equally familiar: the beeping of an EKG machine, the drone of an airplane, a siren. These organic and mechanical textures are braided together into the visual field, too. Their fluctuating topographies seem to contend with the flatness of the screen, in resistance to the dematerializing logic of the digital. Across the warped and folded planes of both works, cognition cannot be located neatly inside or outside a human subject as defined by the false threshold of the skin. The body appears instead as a membrane or interface much like the electronic screen itself, where the material complexities of tactile experience are at once thwarted and heightened by the very medium that seeks to contain them.

Emerging from a body of work begun after her arrival to New York City from Seoul, **Khia Hong**'s (1994) new site-specific sculpture marks a decisive shift in material and method. While earlier works were grounded in plaster—solid, brittle, stone-like—her recent project turns to transparent, meldable plastics that register light, movement, and the city's visual noise. Formed in direct response to the experience of arriving in an unfamiliar metropolis, *Lest We Perish of the Truth (2026)* materializes a kind of ontological mapping of what it means to be a human in a body in this particular place. Installed in the gallery's window, the work invokes transparency itself as a cognitive substrate. Reminiscent of a miniature stage set or the modular CPU of an early computer, its quasi-architectural structure is constituted by shifting daylight and reflections

of sky, as much as its material make up. Up close, a series of embedded clues scatter starlike: Rodin's *La Pensée* (1895), scenography from the Met Opera's production of *Tristan und Isolde* recreated in miniature, and fragments from a *Western Civilization* textbook. Gesturing toward the human impulse to stitch time into a linear, coherent narrative, Hong's meditation on illusion and representation ultimately understands that we can never see the world from outside our own body. Perception is figured as a material process, continually redistributed across overlapping interfaces. Thought becomes an emergent property.

About the project

Spine pursues an elastic model: collaborating with artists and presenting exhibitions at partnering galleries and off-site spaces across New York, with the city itself as counterpart.

By creating a named entity, we work in the register of a gallery while keeping the conditions adaptable—starting with no fixed physical address. Each exhibition responds to its particular site, however standard or distinct. Our project is informed by many years of education working in commercial galleries, not-for-profit exhibition spaces, and arts publishing in the city. From this deeply embedded, highly pragmatic perspective on the art "world" as we know it, we adopt a roving M.O. in response to the present. This approach is bound to change in the future.

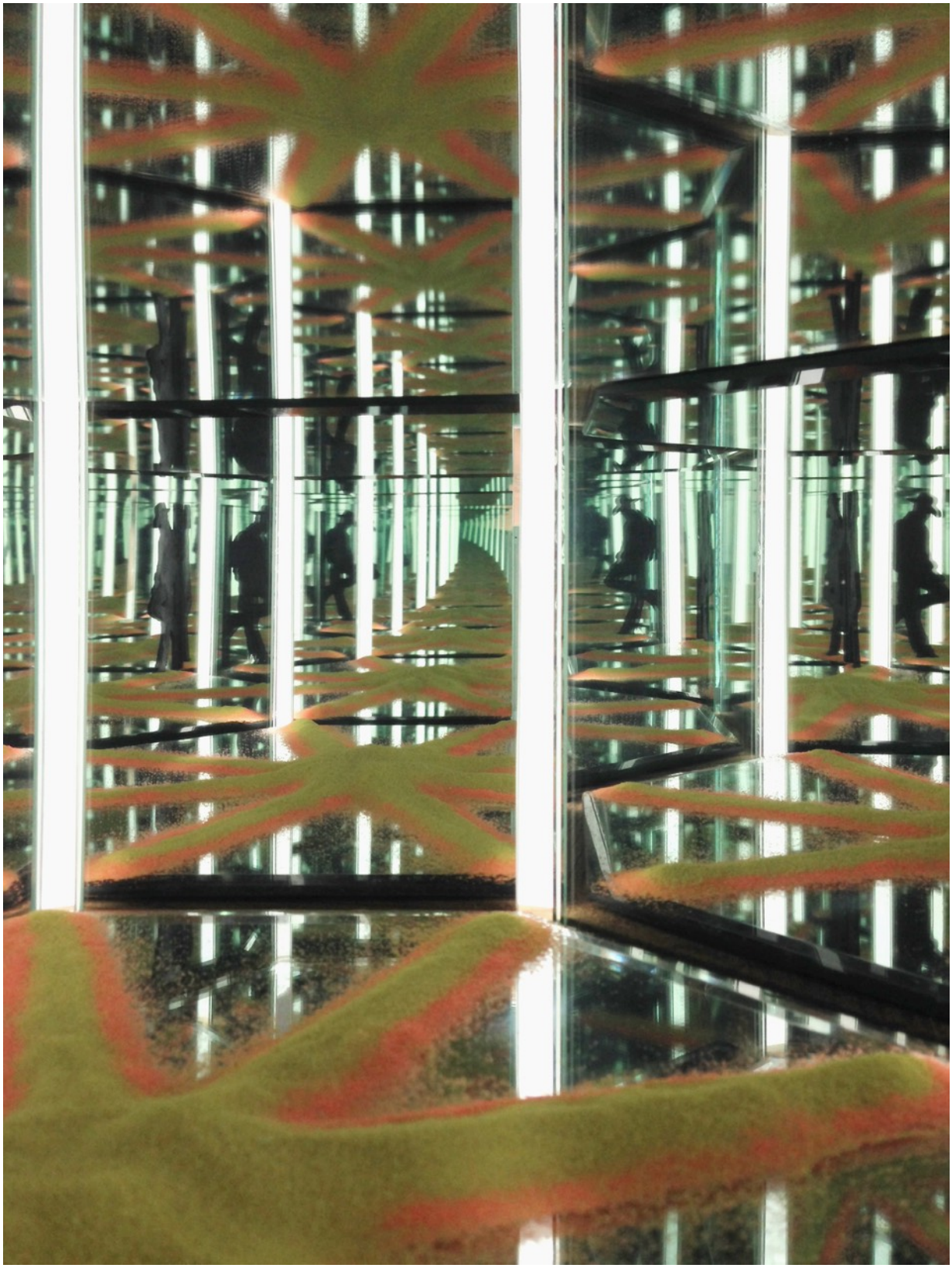
Spine is programmed by Laura Audrey Brown and Aidan Chisholm. For more information, write us at info@spine.nyc.



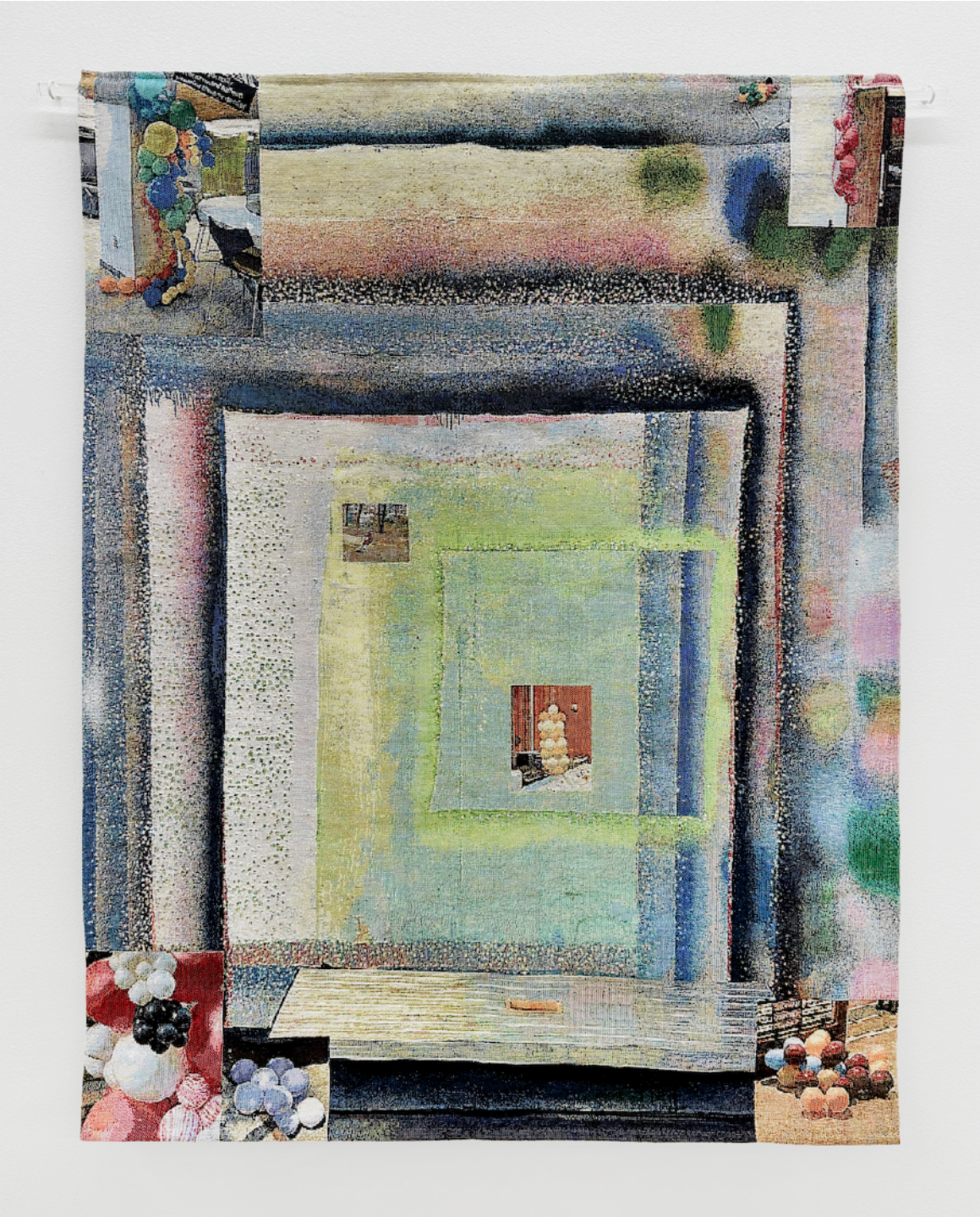
BETTINA
Phenomenological New York, 1970s
Silver gelatin print
7 x 9 ¼ inches



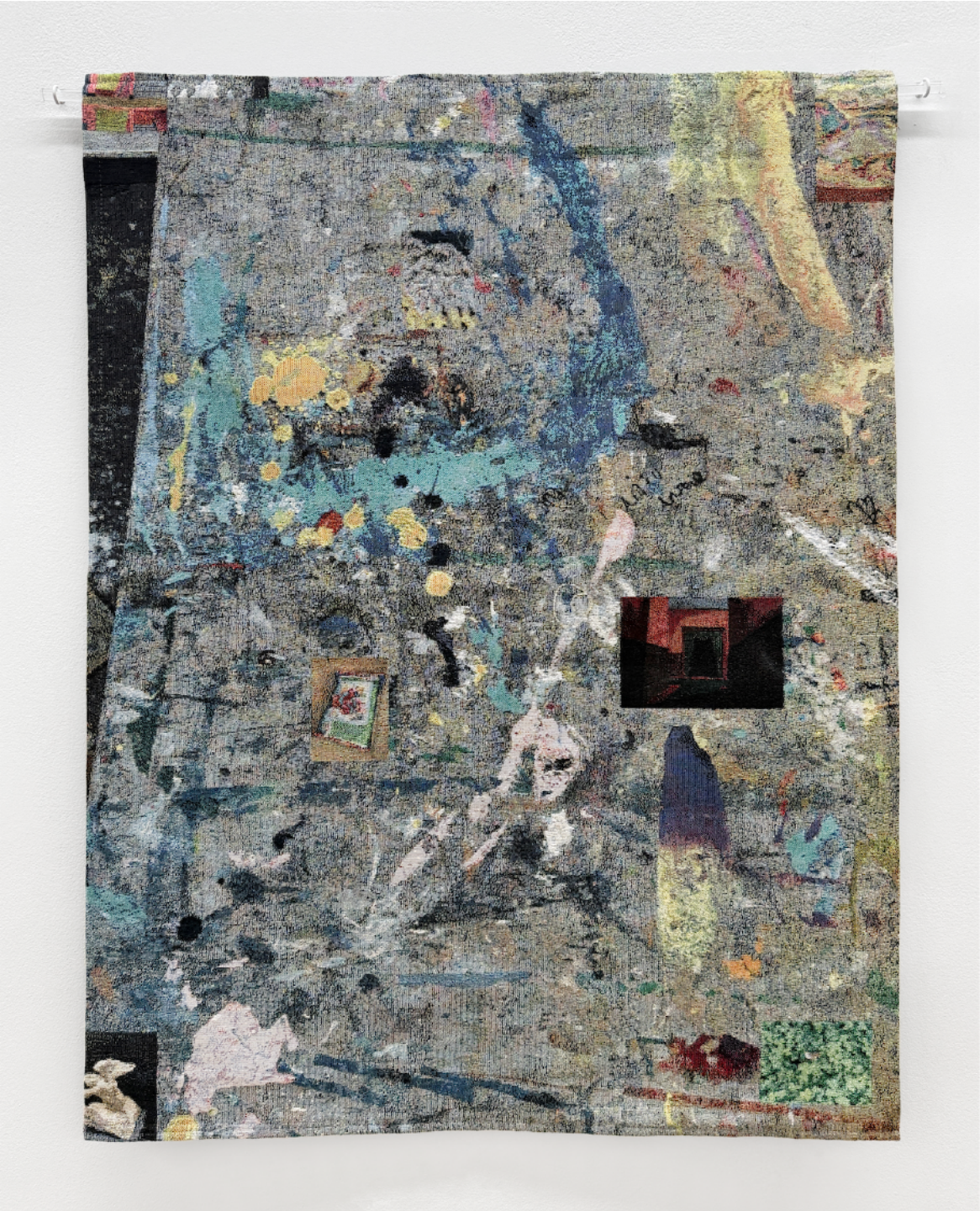
AVIVA SILVERMAN
in collaboration with EMILY SHINADA
Is terraforming reincarnation?, 2015
Mirrors, wood, dyed sand, steel
Dimensions variable



AVIVA SILVERMAN & EMILY SHINADA
Is terraforming reincarnation?, 2015 (interior detail)



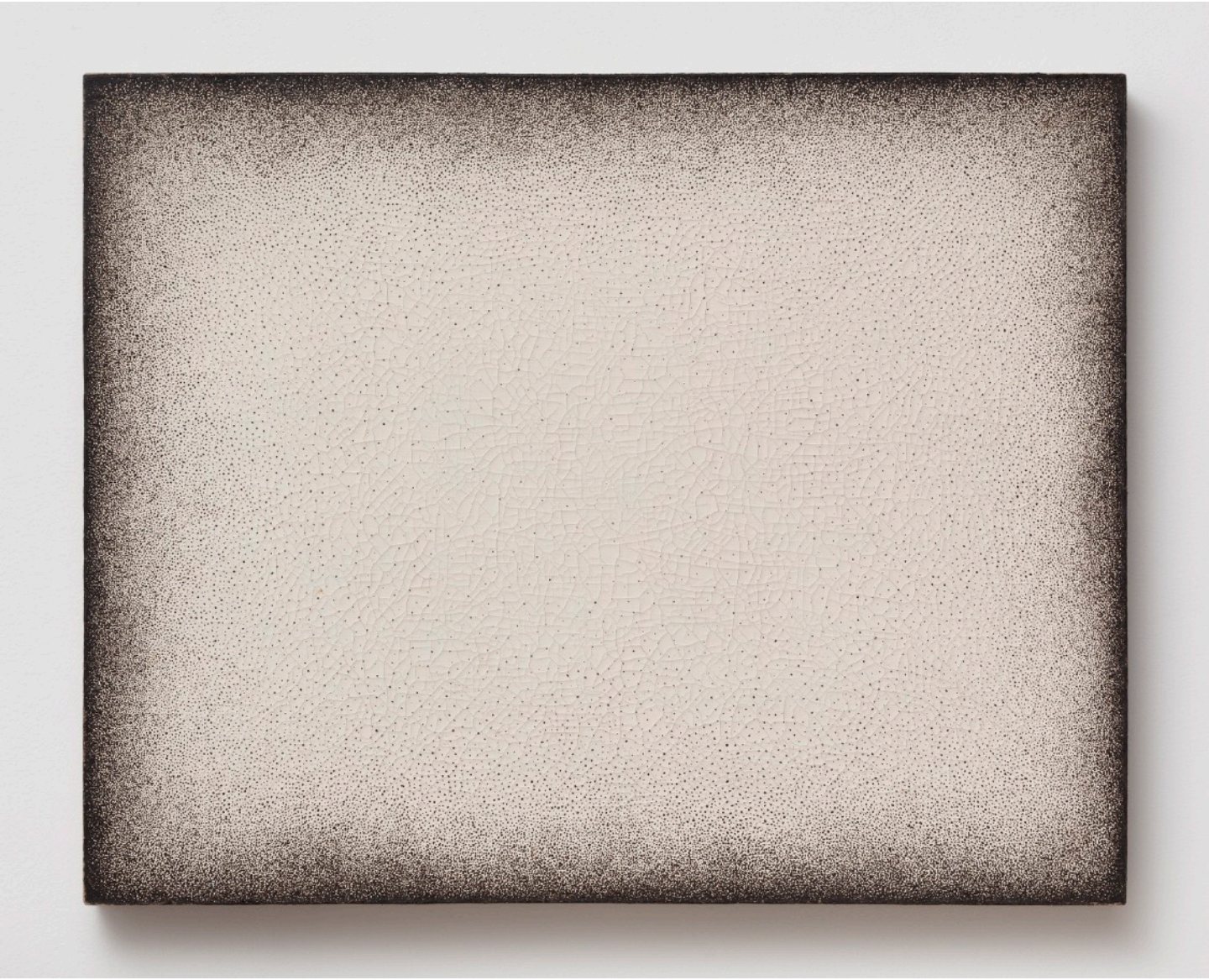
FAITH ICECOLD
Untitled (Howardena's Spray Booth), 2026
Jacquard tapestry
33 ¾ × 25 ½ inches



FAITH ICECOLD
Untitled (Art Students League Table), 2026
Jacquard tapestry
33 ¾ × 25 ½ inches



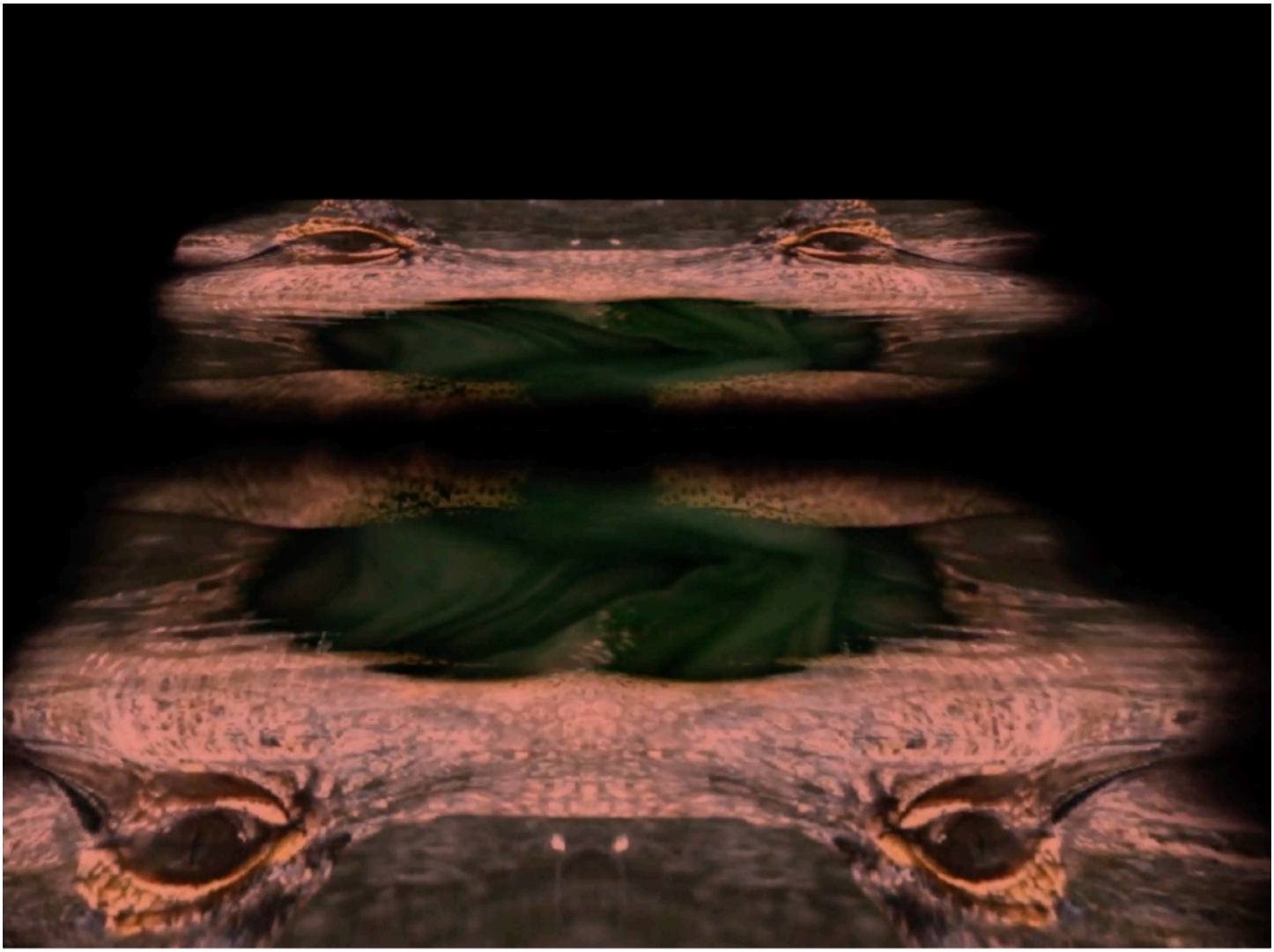
AVIVA SILVERMAN
Drifters, 2026
Rosaries, resin
11 ¾ × 7 ¾ × ¾ inches



RAFAEL SÁNCHEZ
Untitled (The Window Prophets Part A), 1983
Asphalt sealer and gesso on linen
31 ½ × 39 inches



RAFAEL SÁNCHEZ
Untitled (The Window Prophets Part A), 1983 (detail)



TISHAN HSU
Folds of Oil, 2005
Video capture of custom software
Edition of 5 + 3AP



RAFAEL SÁNCHEZ
From the series, The *Honey Jar*, 2003
Nine photographs
Each: 10 × 9 inches



KHIA HONG
Untitled, 2026
Site-specific installation: Mirror, acrylic sheet, glass, pvc, plastic wrap, tape, light bulb, electrical cords
Dimensions variable



KHIA HONG
Untitled, 2026 (detail)



BETTINA
From the series, *Phenomenological New York*, 1972-1977
C-prints mounted on paper by Bettina
28 × 22 inches (mounted)



ALISON KNOWLES
Found Gloves In Line, 2018
Found gloves and leather string with loop
77 × 7 inches



ALISON KNOWLES
Found Gloves In Line, 2018 (detail)



TISHAN HSU
New Portable, 1988
Acrylic, vinyl cement compound, alkyd, aluminum, and oil on wood
15 ½ × 84 × 7 inches



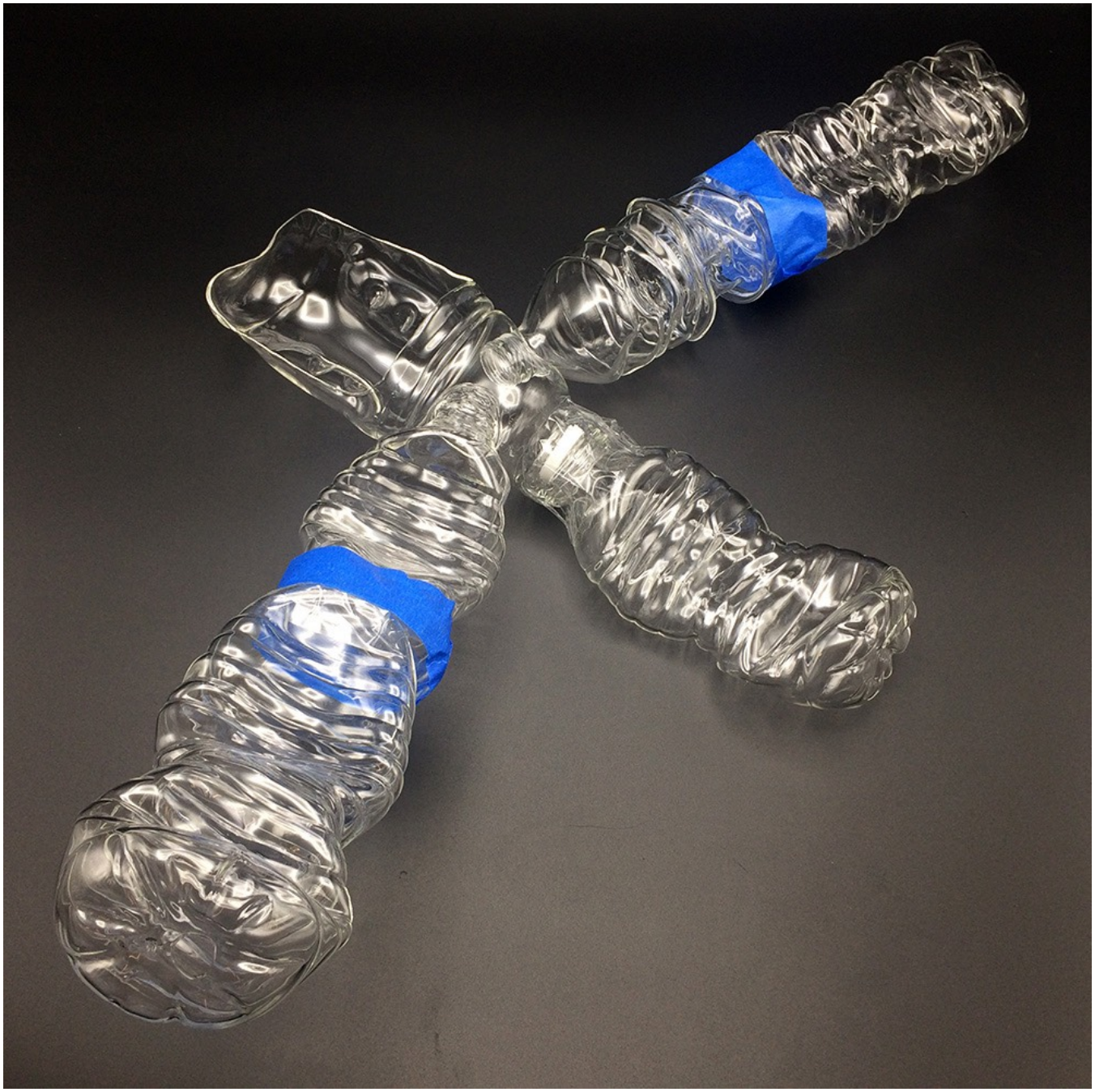
PATTY CHANG
Triple Spout, 2017
Hand-blown borosilicate glass, plastic, tape
19 × 7 × 7 ½ inches



PATTY CHANG
Crush, 2017
Hand-blown borosilicate glass, plastic, tape
8 ½ × 3 × 3 inches



PATTY CHANG
Chute, 2017
Hand-blown borosilicate glass, plastic, tape
19 × 3 × 3 inches



PATTY CHANG
Wings, 2017
Hand-blown borosilicate glass, plastic, tape
Three parts: 12 ¾ × 3 ½ × 2 inches; 14 ¾ × 3 ½ × 3 ½ inches; 13 × 3 × 3 inches



PATTY CHANG
Rectangles, 2017
Hand-blown borosilicate glass, glue
6 × 3 ¾ × 2 ½ inches



PATTY CHANG
Sleek Twist, 2017
Hand-blown borosilicate glass, plastic
7 × 2 ½ × 2 ½ inches



PATTY CHANG
Colored bottle caps, 2017
Hand-blown borosilicate glass, plastic, tape
15 × 9 × 5 inches