

The Skin of Truth

Zhang Ji

The Skin of Truth

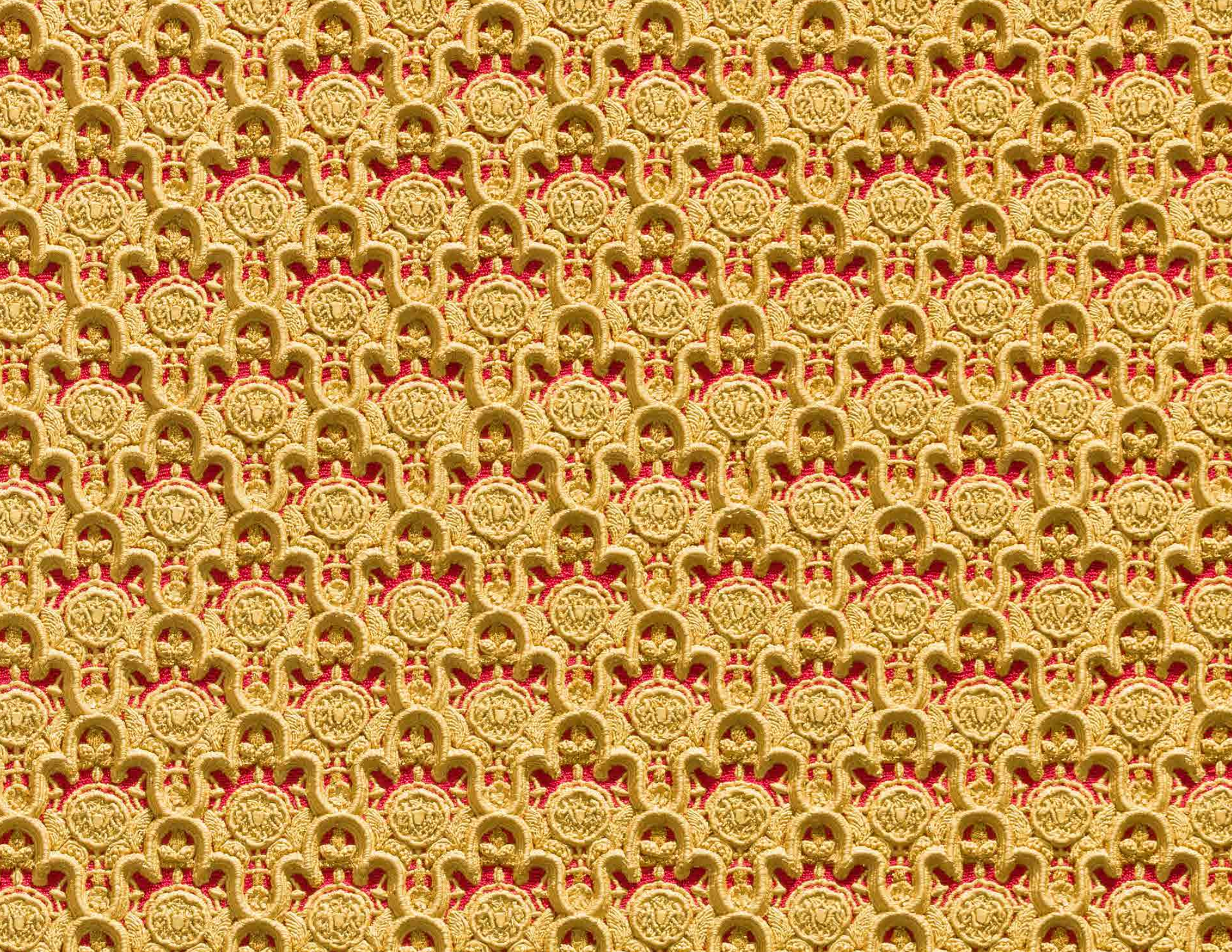
Zhang Ji

30.10.26 - 30.12.26

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The Skin of Truth

by Zhang Ji

Beijing based artist Zhang Ji's Skin of Truth, merges ancient symbolism and a contemporary sensibility in a practice that reconsiders what painting can be. Begun in 2011, the series emerged from a childhood fascination with intricate decorative reliefs that he encountered at churches, which later expanded into a sustained investigation of religious architecture across cultures. Mosques, synagogues, Catholic churches, Hindu and Buddhist temples became points of departure for Zhang's abstract compositions, carrying with them layers of history, ritual and collective memory.

Zhang's engagement with these sites is an exploration of the artist's everyday contemporary living in reference to the gravity of the cultures and traditions of the past. Extensive travels, photography and sketching make up the foundation of his works. Architectural details are extracted, and selected motifs are translated into painting. Among the sources for works in this exhibition are the Great Mosque of Córdoba, the Alhambra and cathedral in Granada, the Alcázar and Palacio de las Dueñas in Seville. Patterns are fragmented, transformed and then repeated, until architecture becomes an abstract vocabulary of colour, geometry, rhythm and surface.

At the centre of Zhang's practice is a radical rethinking of the painting itself. Rather than employing the conventional brushstroke, a syringe is used, to patiently apply paint onto canvas. His works often resemble bas-relief sculptures, with the works modulating between composition and decomposition, sturdiness and ephemerality. The traditionally flat picture plane acquires a sculptural presence, where surfaces swell and recede, becoming simultaneously image and object. From a distance, the works can appear atmospheric and weightless; up close, their density reveals the extraordinary labour embedded within them.

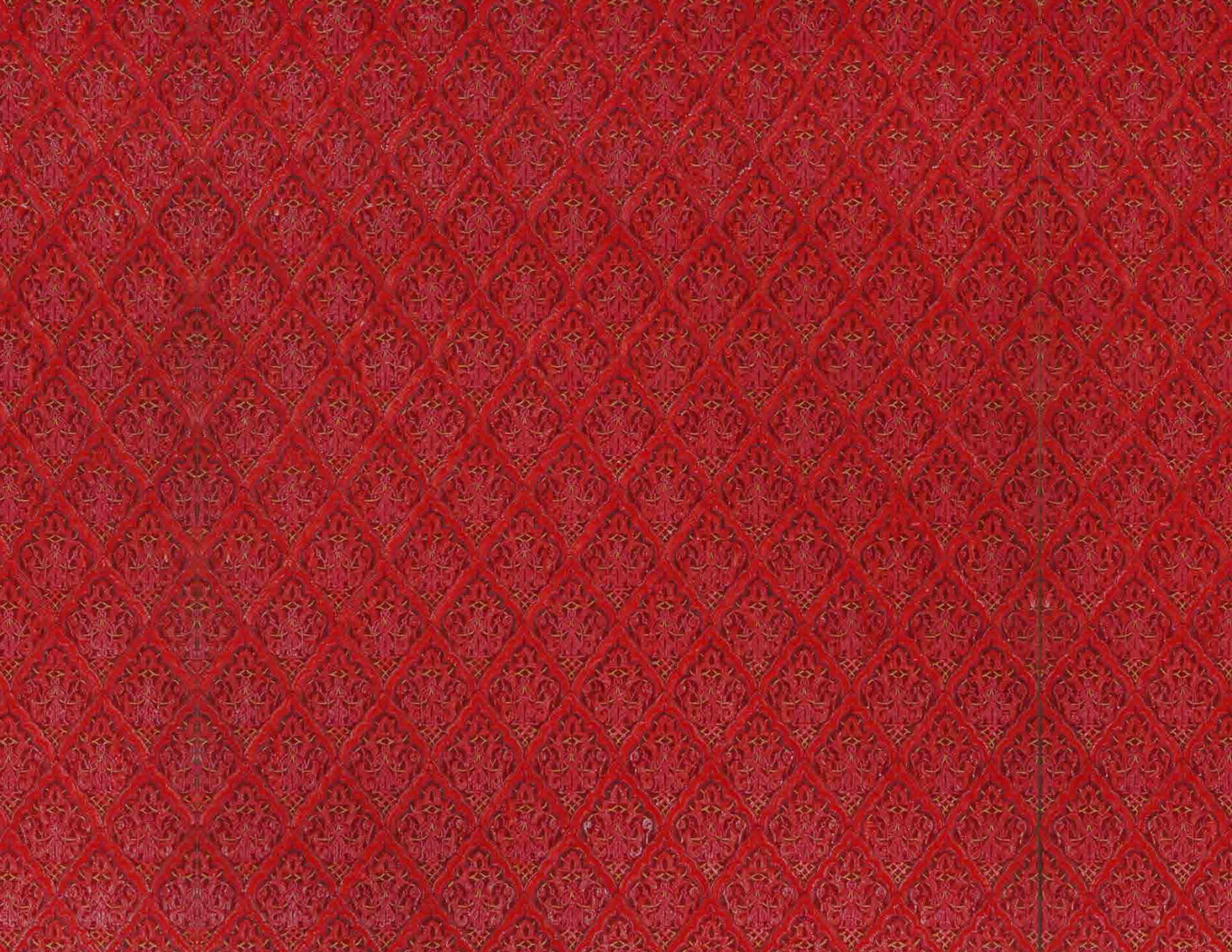
Repetition is fundamental to this process. The patterns retain echoes of sacred architecture and spirituality, while becoming detached from any singular religious or cultural meaning. In this sense, the paintings operate as archaeological fragments of a visual language that continues to resonate within contemporary life. Their "truth" is not fixed in the symbols themselves, but resides in the physical and contemplative experience of making and looking.

Alongside The Skin of Truth, the exhibition presents Ultima, a body of work that marks a further movement towards abstraction. The architectural source becomes increasingly elusive as Zhang turns his attention to the underlying impulses of painting itself. Colour, rhythm, material become autonomous forces and the paintings suggest that what matters is not necessarily what an image depicts, but the state of consciousness generated through its creation and encounter.

Across both series, Zhang transforms historical memory into a contemporary visual experience. Each work is independent yet participates in a larger matrix of correspondences. They invite a slower form of looking, in which the works become a meditation on how images endure, and how the past continues to inhabit the present.

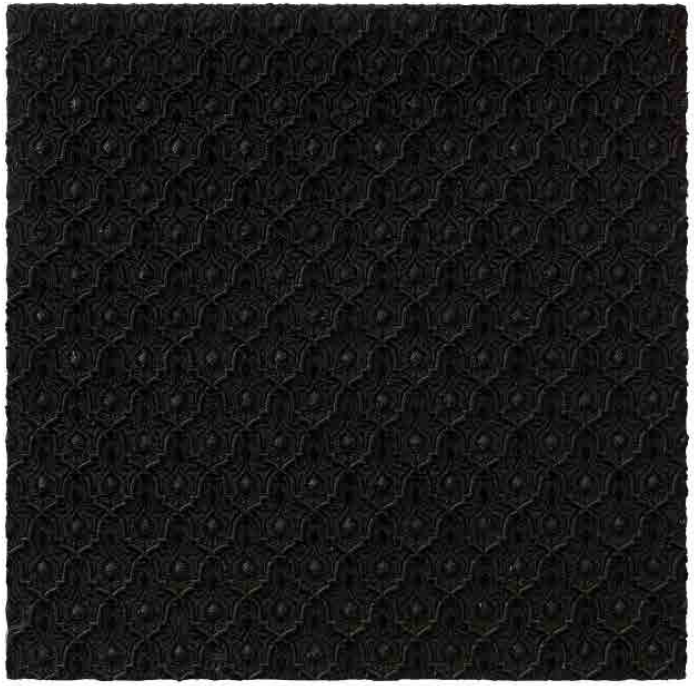


ZHANG JI
The Rainbow,
2016
Oil on canvas
7 Panels
59 x 47.2 in (each), 59 x 330.7 in (total)
150 x 120 cm (each), 150 x 840 cm (total)





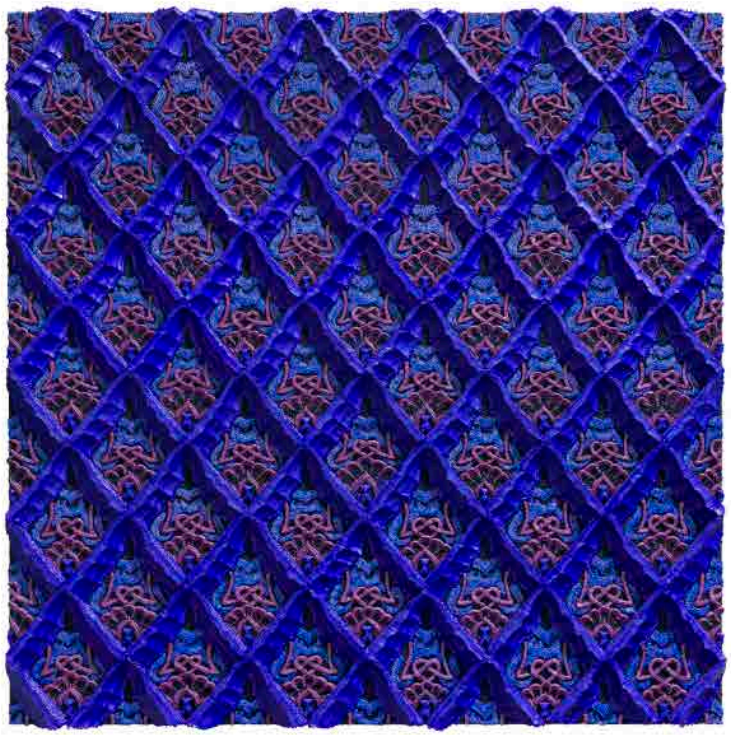
ZHANG JI
The Skin of Truth 20237 (Triptych),
2023
Oil on canvas
86.6 x 70.8 in each, 86.6 x 212.5 in (total)
220 x 180 cm each, 220 x 540 cm (total)



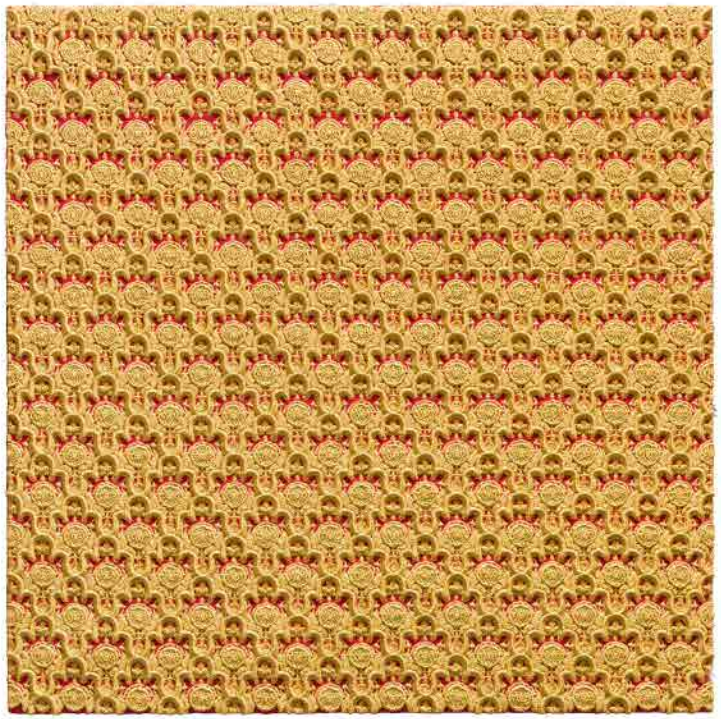
ZHANG JI
The Skin of Truth 96,
2018
Oil on canvas
39.3 x 39.3 in
100 x 100 cm



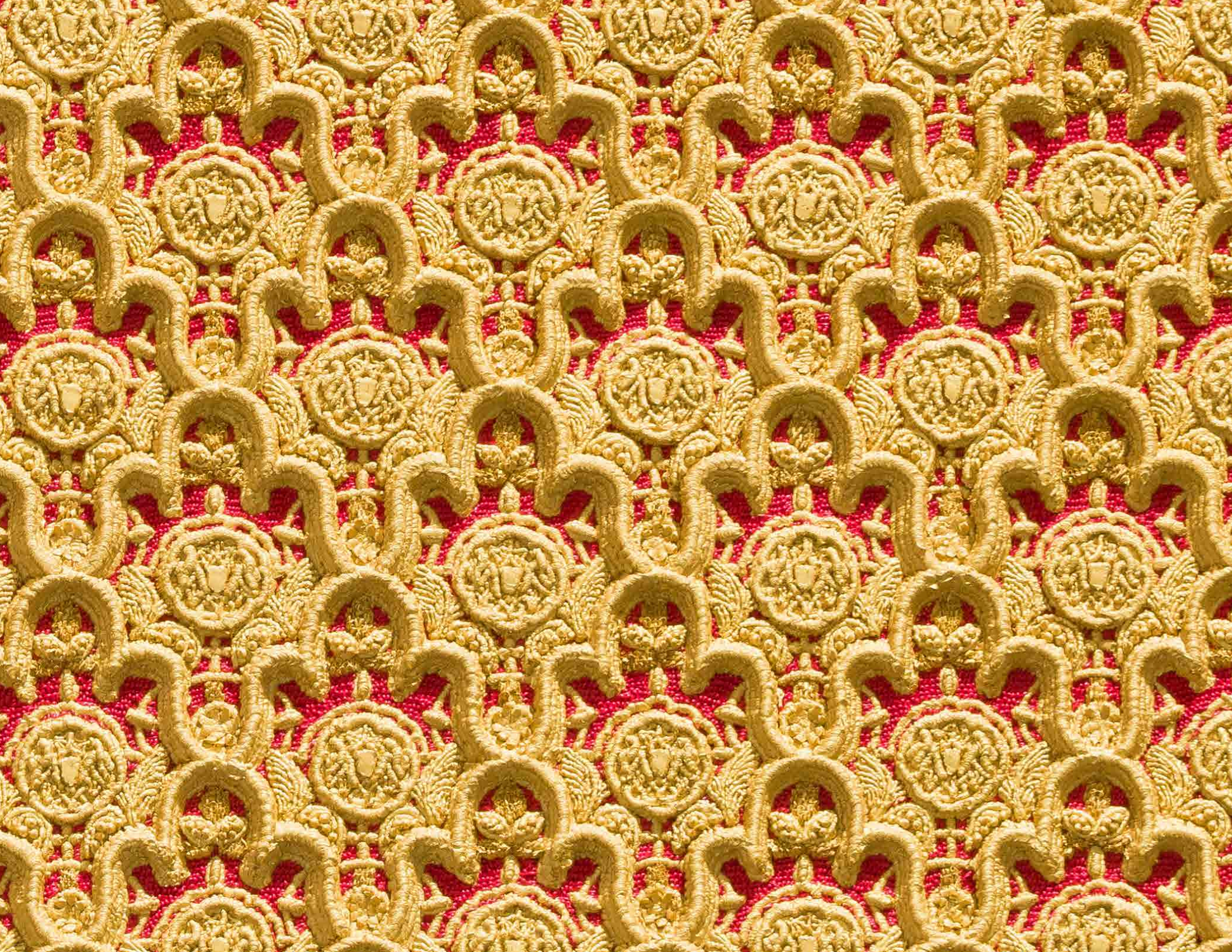


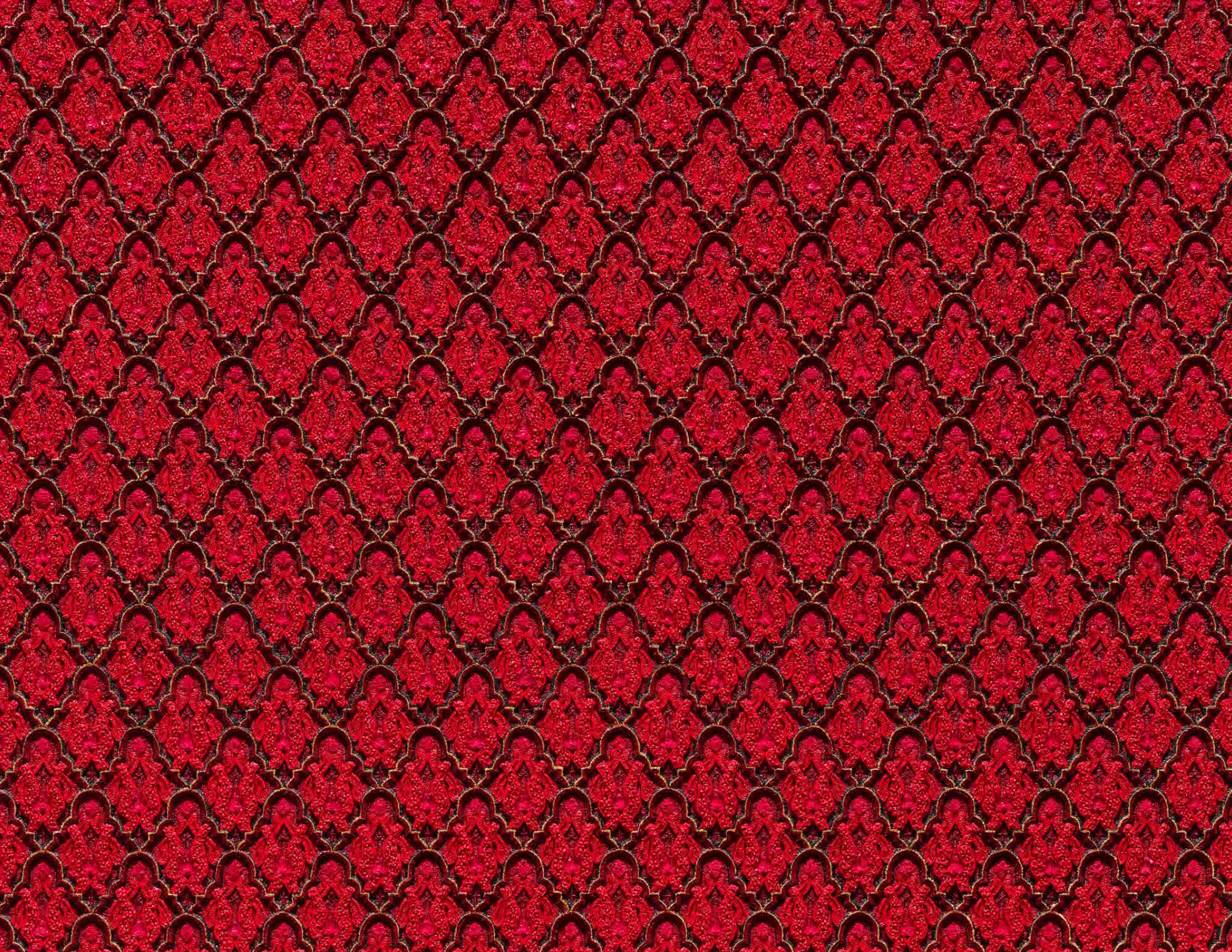


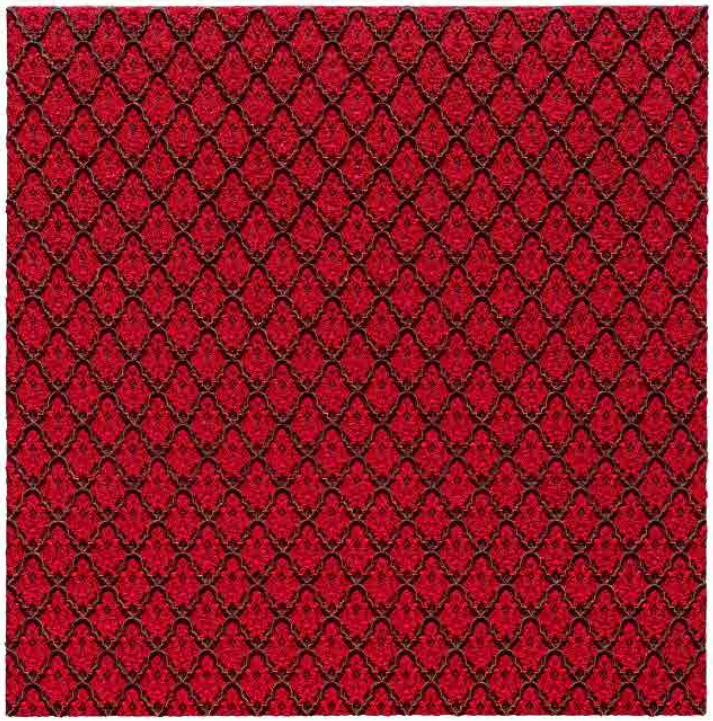
ZHANG JI
The Skin of Truth 20238,
2023
Oil on canvas
59 x 59 in
150 x 150 cm



ZHANG JI
The Skin of Truth 202314,
2023
Oil on canvas
59 x 59 in
150 x 150 cm



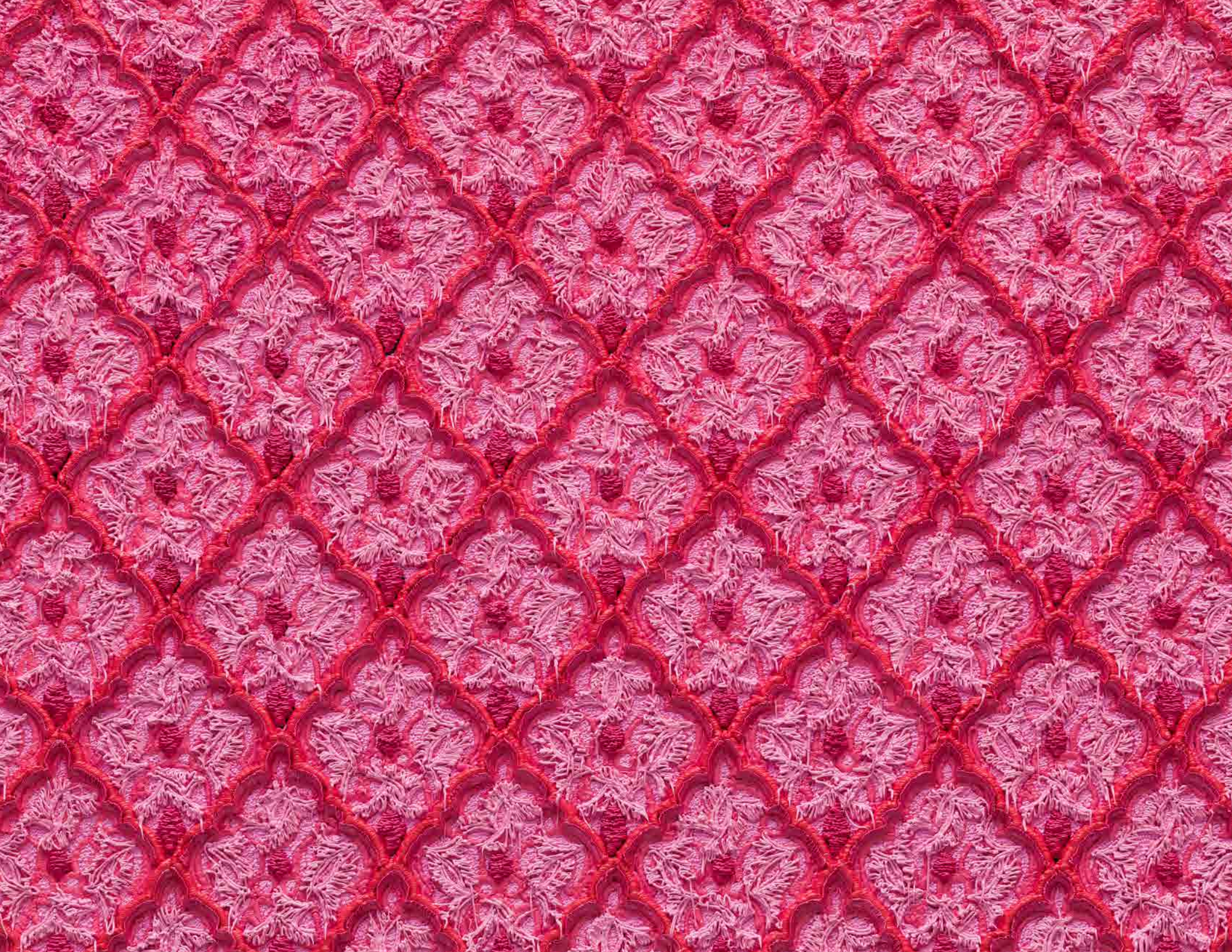


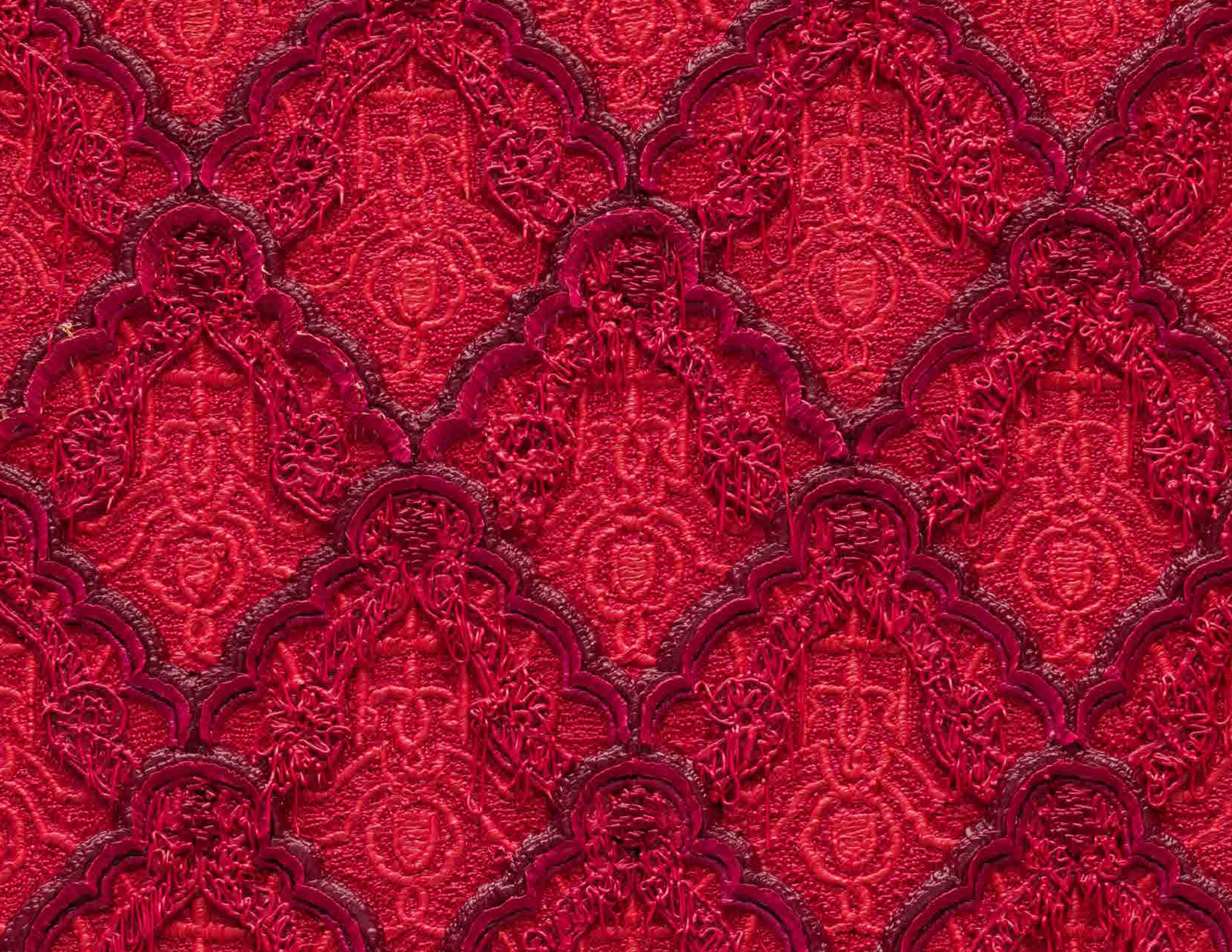


ZHANG JI
The Skin of Truth 202211,
2022
Oil on canvas
78.7 x 78.7 in
200 x 200 cm



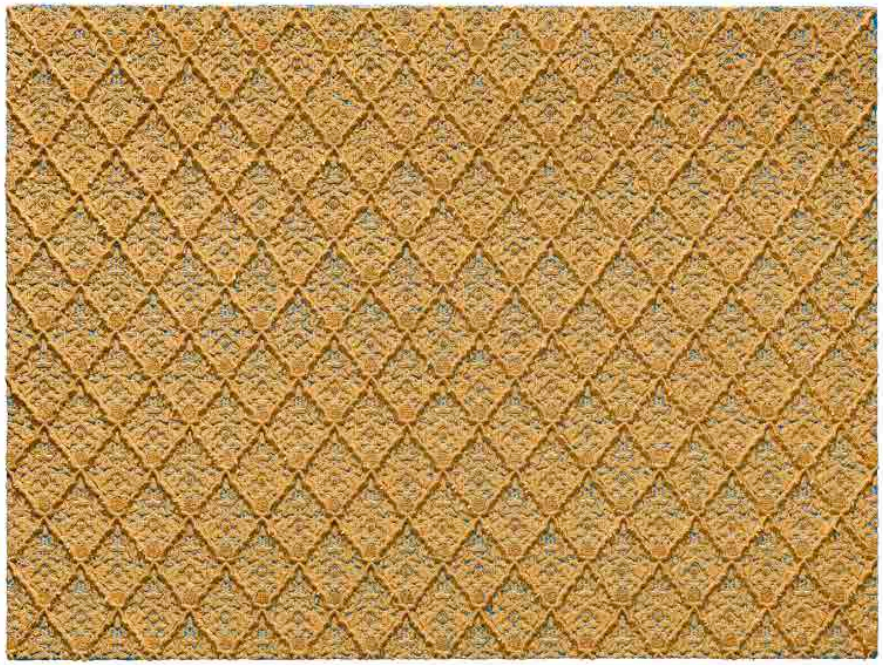
ZHANG JI
The Skin of Truth 114,
2022
Oil on canvas
23.6 x 31.4 in
60 x 80 cm



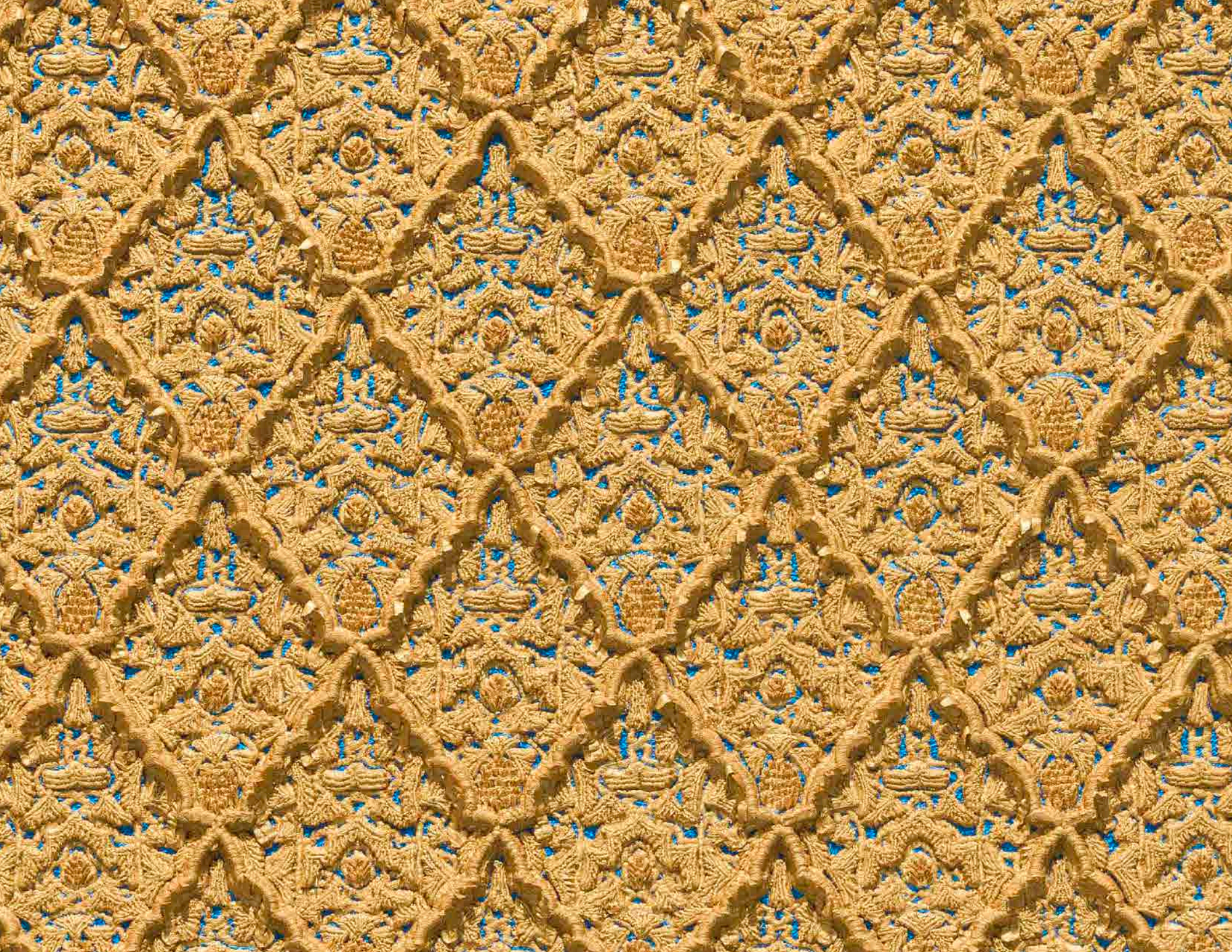


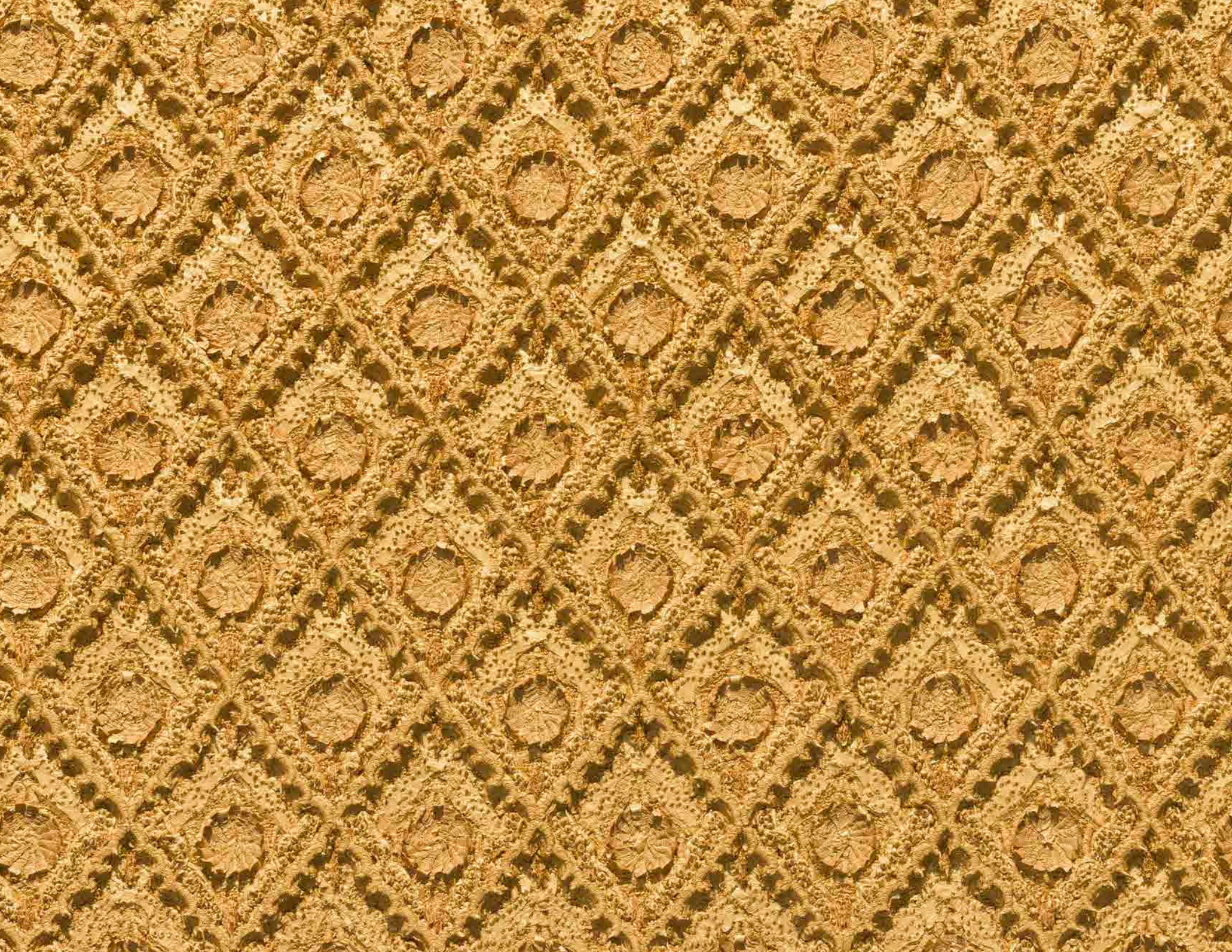


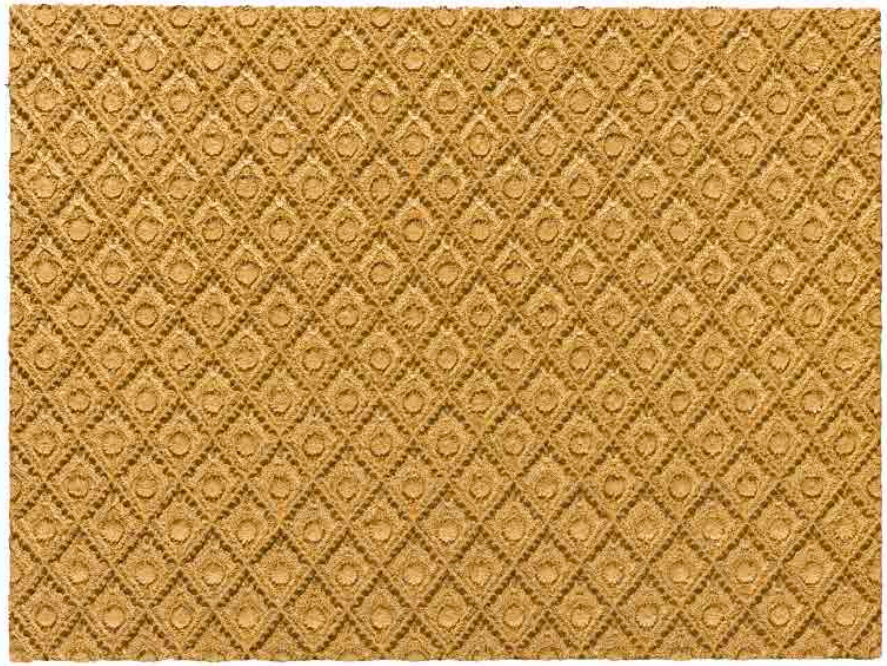
ZHANG JI
The Skin of Truth 113,
2022
Oil on canvas
23.6 x 31.4 in
60 x 80 cm



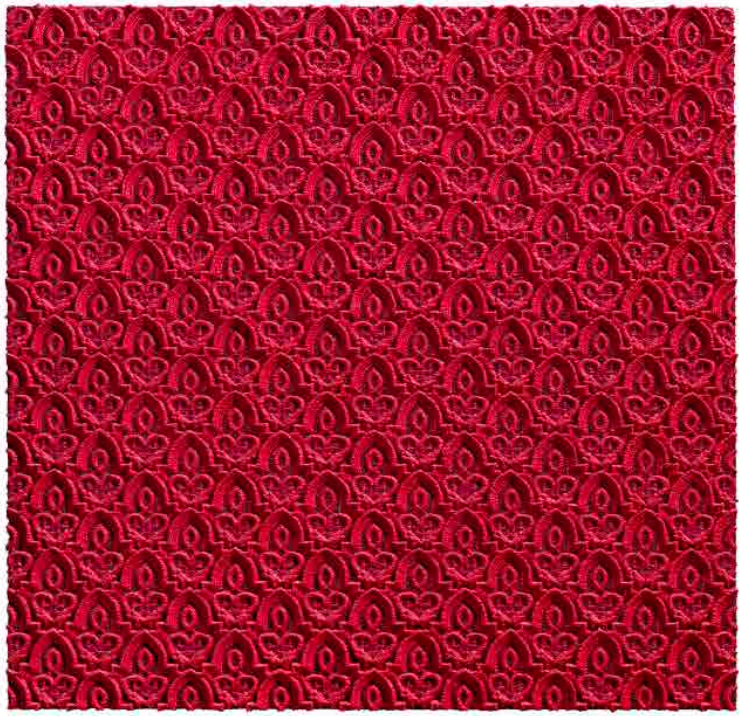
ZHANG JI
The Skin of Truth 20233,
2023
Oil on canvas
47.2 x 63 in
120 x 160 cm



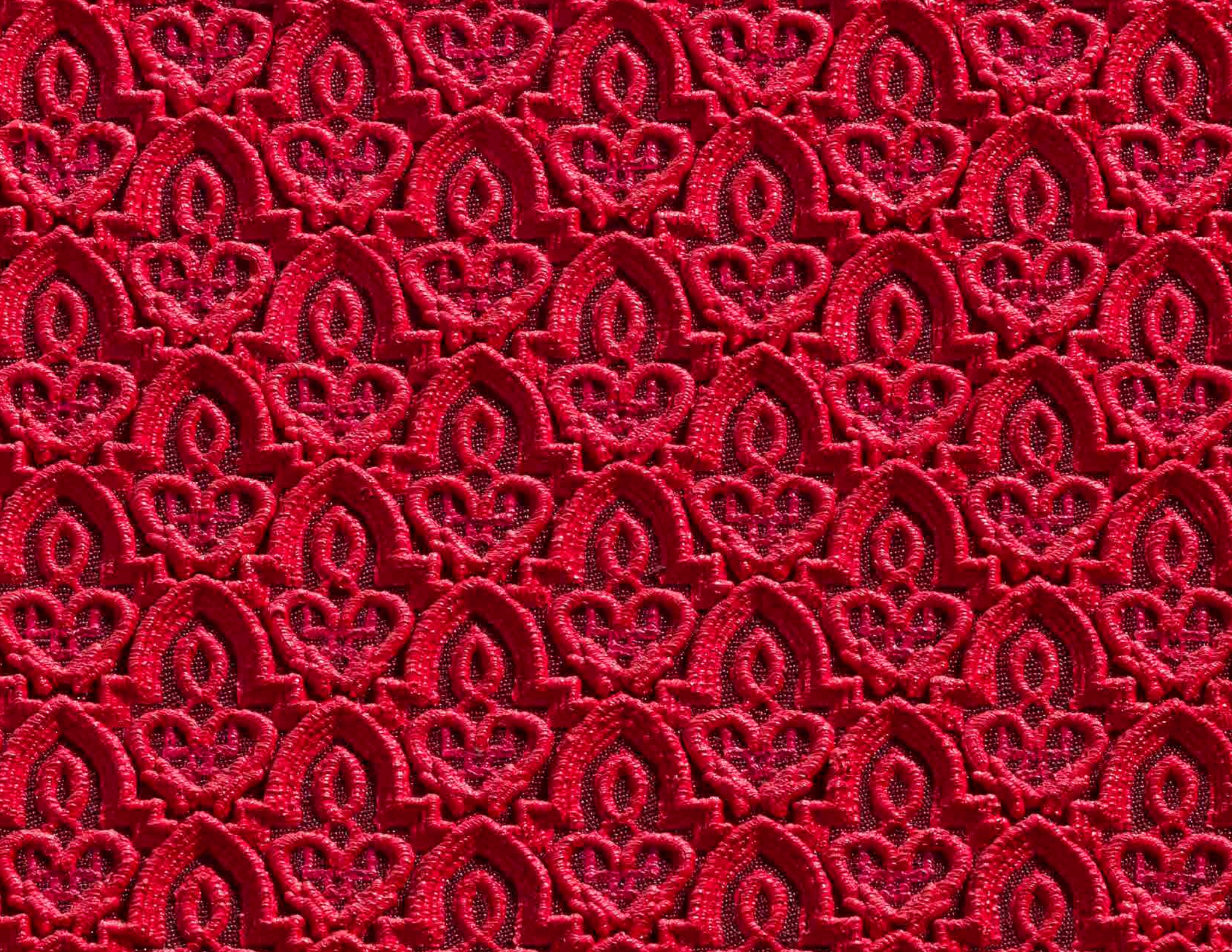




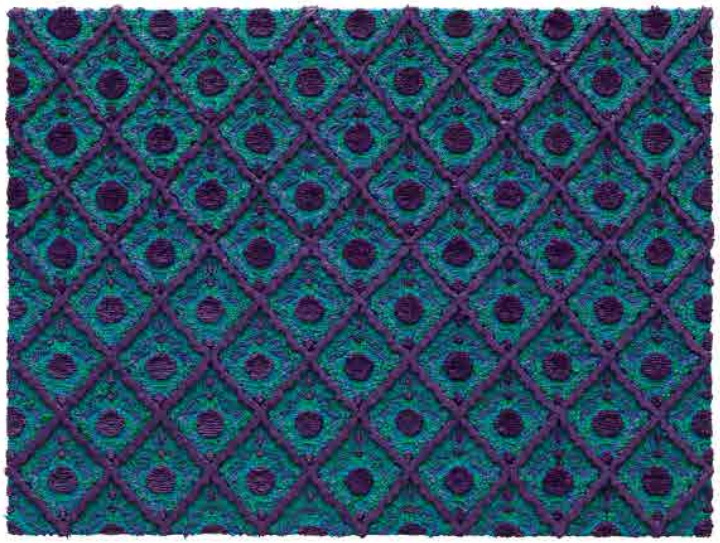
ZHANG JI
The Skin of Truth 121,
2023
Oil on canvas
47.2 x 63 in
120 x 160 cm



ZHANG JI
The Skin of Truth 20236,
2023
Oil on canvas
38.1 x 39.7 in
97 x 101 cm



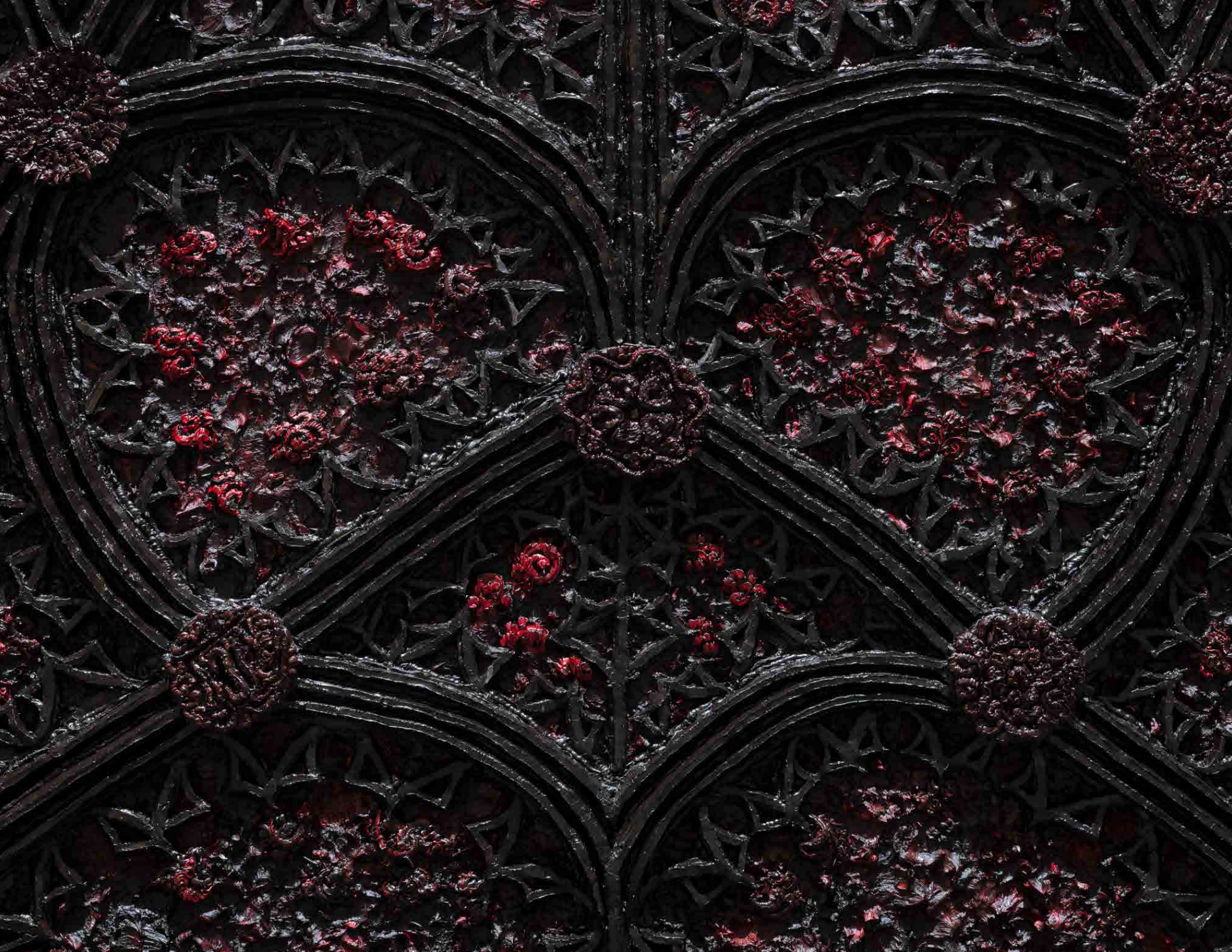


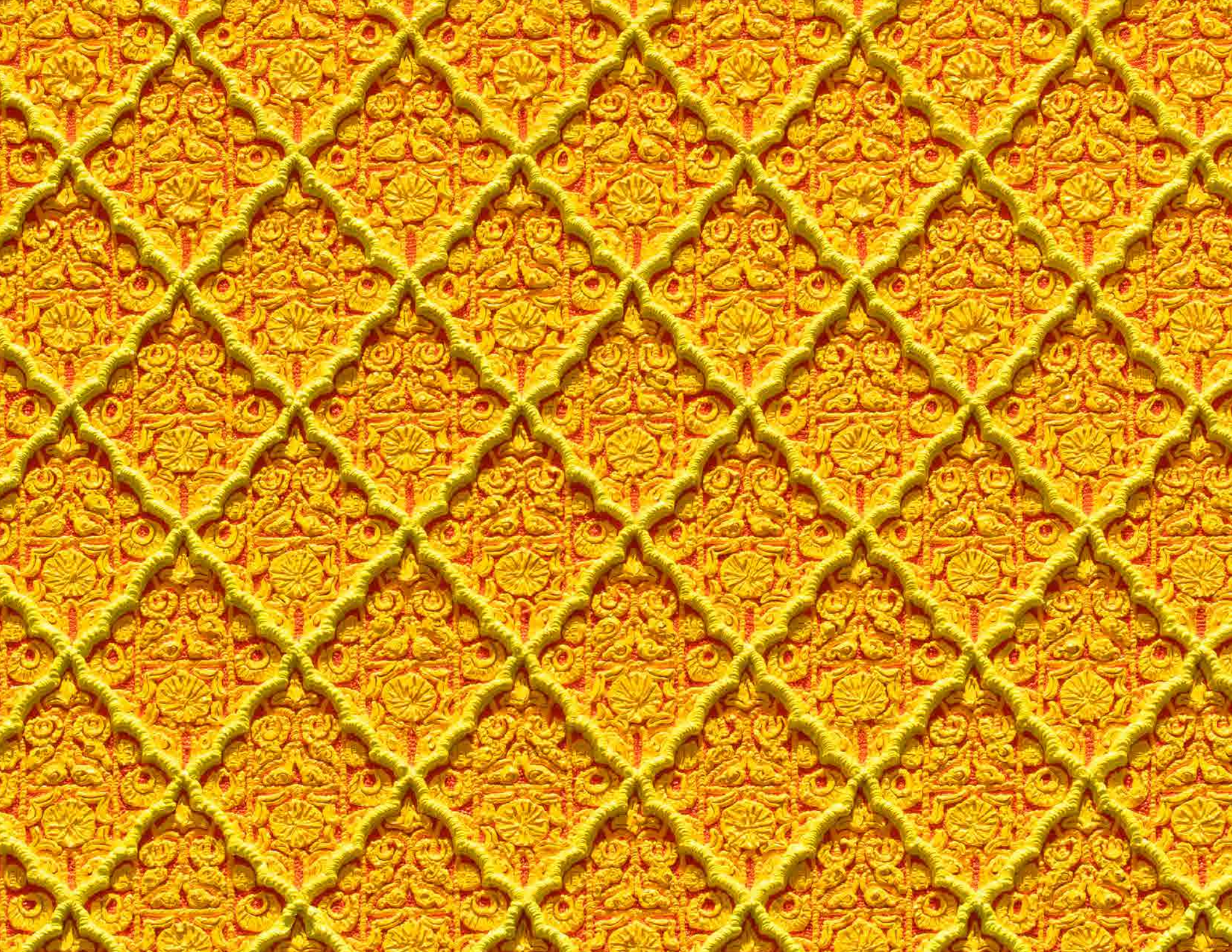


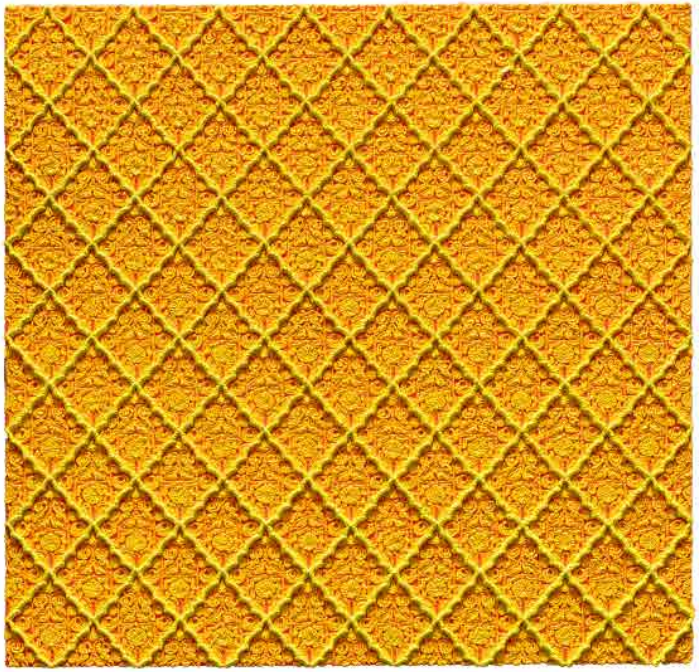
ZHANG JI
The Skin of Truth 111,
2022
Oil on canvas
23.6 x 31.4 in
60 x 80 cm



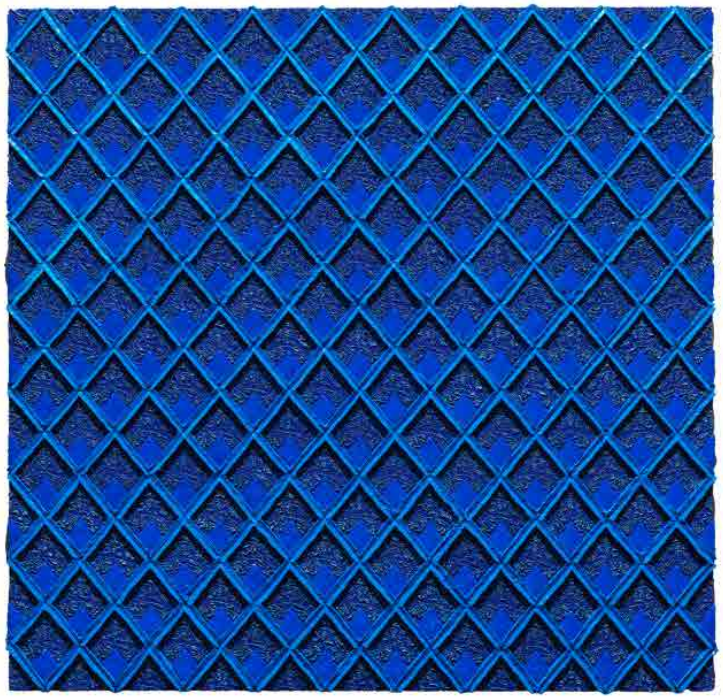
ZHANG JI
Ultima 20233,
2023
Oil on canvas
38.1 x 39.7 in
97 x 101 cm



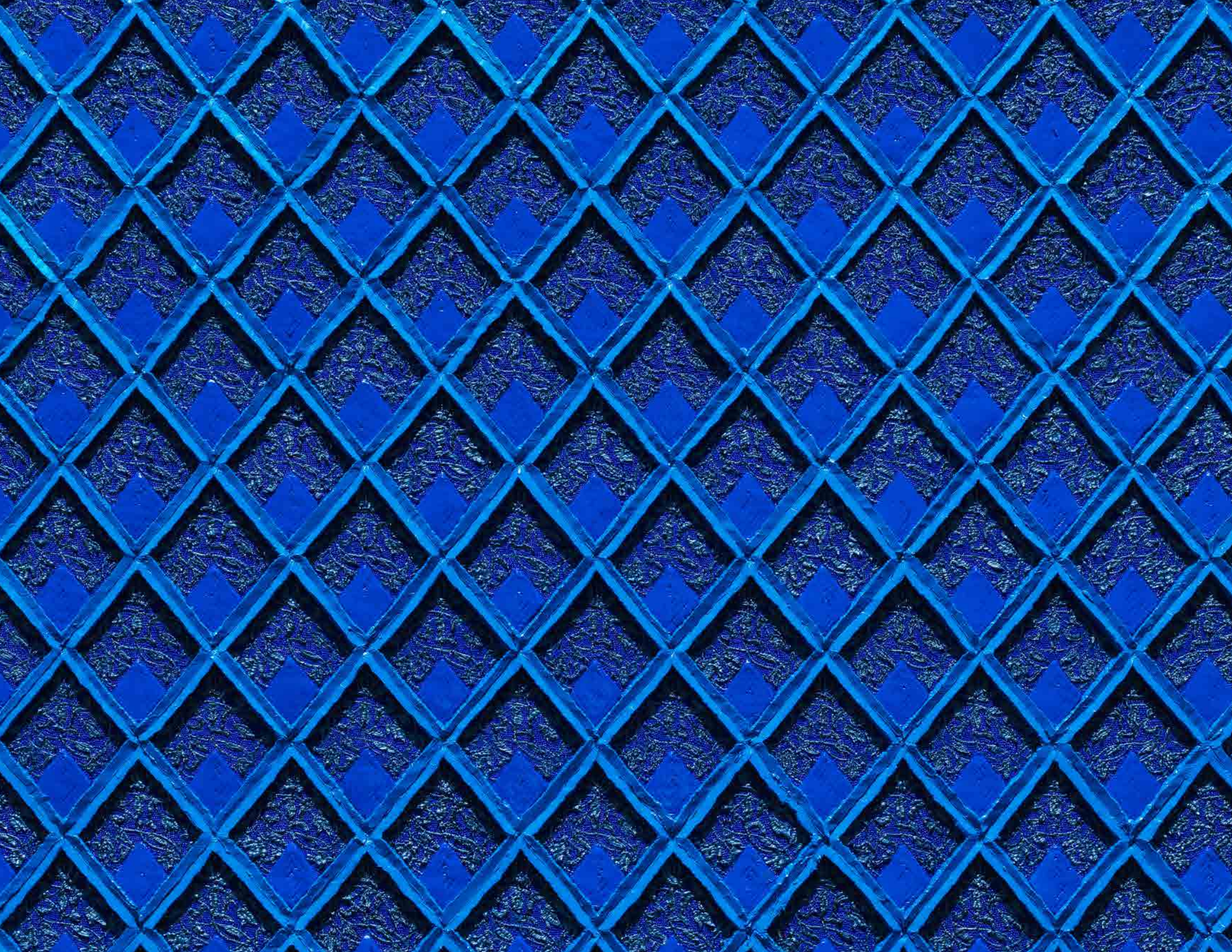




ZHANG JI
The Skin of Truth 20232,
2023
Oil on canvas
38.1 x 39.7 in
97 x 101 cm



ZHANG JI
Ultima 20231,
2023
Oil on canvas
57.4 x 59.4 in
146 x 151 cm



On the occasion of exhibition
The Skin of Truth
at Fly to Baku Art Weekend,
30 October - 30 December 2026

With the support of Fabien Fryns Fine Art.

Special thanks to the teams at JD Malat Gallery, Heydar Aliyev Center, and QGallery.

Heydar Aliyev Center, Baku, Azerbaijan.

https://www.jdmalat.com
https://www.instagram.com/jdmalatgallery/?hl=en

Catalogue Designed by Kamya Pratap

Front Cover Image: ZHANG JI, *The Skin of Truth 20238,* 2023, Oil on canvas,150 x 150 cm.
Back Cover Image: ZHANG JI, *The Skin of Truth 113,* 2022, Oil on canvas, 60 x 80 cm.

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