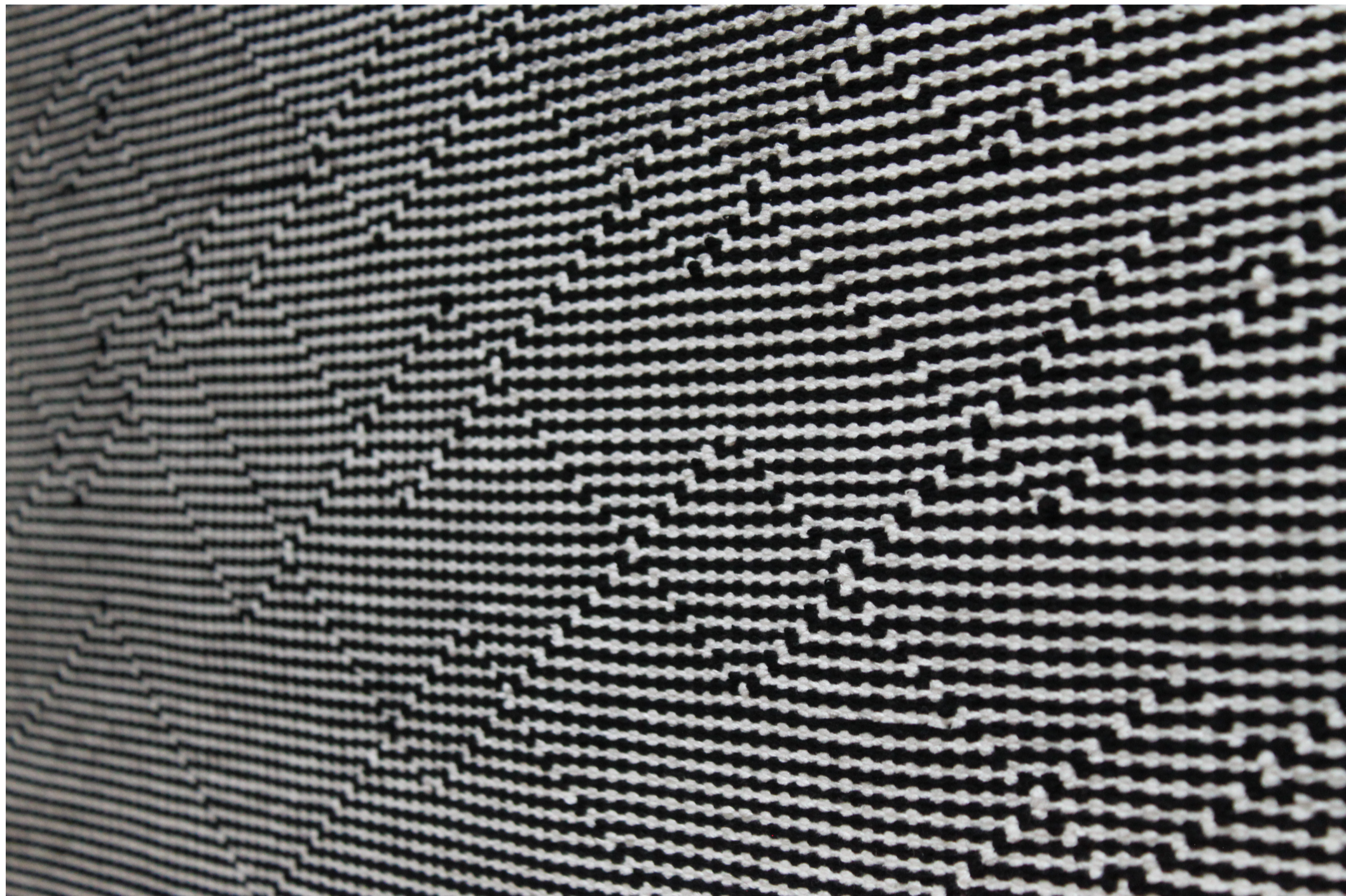


# THE MIDDLE DISTANCE



10 - 27 Nov 2022  
Opening: 10 Nov, 6 - 8pm

BRITT SALT

St Heliers Street Gallery (Next to Cam's Kiosk)  
Abbotsford Convent  
1 St Heliers Street, Abbotsford  
VIC 3067 Australia

Open Hours:  
Wednesday – Saturday | 9am - 11pm  
Sunday | 3pm - 9pm

This project is supported by the City of Yarra.

Image: Britt Salt, The Distance (Detail), 2021,  
wool and cotton, 100 x 94cm. Courtesy of the artist.

St Heliers      Abbotsford  
St Gallery.      Convent.

# 20/20 VISION

## Sophia Cai

In today's world of screen-mediated interactions, viral TikToks and social media feeds, it can be too easy to regard artworks as mere images, and neglect their physical and material characteristics. This 'flattening' of visual experience has been further exacerbated by our recent experiences of collective lockdown and confinement over the past two years, where hand-held screens were often the only pathway to the outside world.

Britt Salt's exhibition, *The Middle Distance*, is an exhibition designed to be experienced by the naked eye through physical encounter. Her works centre optics and visual cues, while recognising that this perception is specific to each individual and therefore holds the possibility for recognising difference. That is, Salt's work does not speak in universal declarations, but rather in specific conversations: emphasising instead what individual meanings might arise from single viewer experiences. Working across drawing, collage, and hand-woven tapestries, Salt's exhibition is a sensory exploration that tests the boundaries of visual perception and invites closer examination.

A number of works in the exhibition challenge viewer expectations of space and depth. *Field of Vision* is a large-scale digital print that began as an ink drawing, and has undergone processes of copying, cropping, rotation and cutting before being pieced back together like a puzzle. The black shadows present in the work are created by machine glitches through the photocopying process, and contributes a sense of artificial depth to the work that blurs distinction between forms. The apparent flatness of the image is further contested through the use of raised paper portions, which effectively 'lift' the picture plane and extend additional 'shadows' over the drawing.

Where the 'glitches' in *Field of Vision* were machine-aided, the woven tapestries in the exhibition contain visual 'glitches' deliberately formed from the artist's hand. These works are methodically woven by Salt using traditional tapestry techniques and combine multiple strands of wool and cotton to create geometric planes and patterns. There is a precision and a clarity to the works, yet their process of making is also guided by more intuitive processes of disruption. Through subtle shifts in coloured thread, Salt is able to achieve works that appear to shift and move depending on viewing angle.

This illusory quality is also present in the series of paired drawings – each set consisting of one framed and one unframed work. The pairing recalls how our visual gaze is shaped by two points of view, where through our two eyes set apart, two slightly different flat images transform into three-dimensional perspective. It's not our eyes playing tricks on us – or is it?

When I meet with Salt to talk about the exhibition, she shares that while her previous works might have been easily viewed as 'cold' due to their formalist rigour, *The Middle Distance* is an exhibition that invites people in. The 'middle' that the exhibition title refers to is the space in between near and far, left and right, focus and unfocussed, the blurry central point where meaning comes together. The exhibition is an invitation to fill in this gap. This is a nuance that is easily lost through screen-mediated connections, yet brings Salt's exhibition to life.

Sophia Cai 蔡晨昕 is a curator and arts writer based in Narm/Melbourne, Australia. She currently teaches as a sessional lecturer in Critical and Theoretical Studies, Victorian College of Arts at the University of Melbourne, while also maintaining an independent curating and writing practice.