

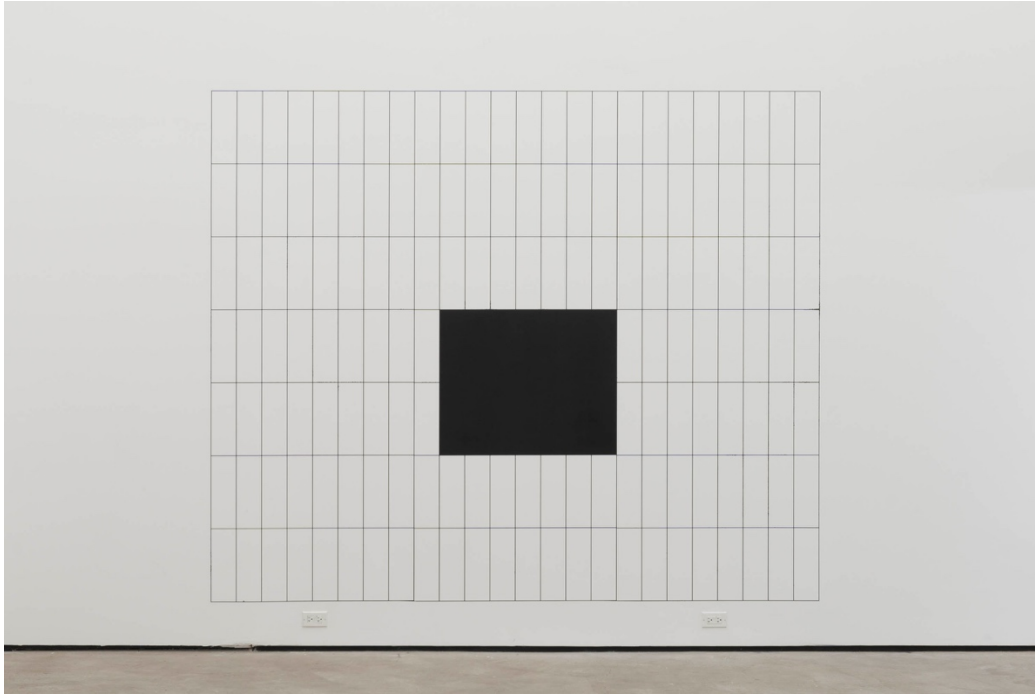
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What to See in N.Y.C. Galleries Right Now: LOWER EAST SIDE

Ghislaine Leung

Through Oct. 15. Maxwell Graham/Essex Street



Ghislaine Leung, *Hours*, 2022 Score: A wall painting the size of the artist's home studio wall divided into all the hours of the week with the portion of studio hours available to the artist marked in black. Thursday 9AM-4PM, Friday 9AM-4PM.

Contemporary art tends not to discuss the difficulties of parenting. The rare artist daring to muddy the waters — to peek beyond Hallmark-ready ideas of parental bliss — often focuses on motherhood's chaos and bodily gore. (The soiled diapers Mary Kelly included in her feminist artwork come to mind, or more recent, Heji Shin's grisly-looking photos of babies being born.)

In "Balances," a tauntingly provocative, concept-heavy show by the midcareer artist Ghislaine Leung, parenthood is treated as something demanding diamond-like precision. Visually spare, the show consists of mostly found objects: a baby monitor, child safety gates, a soothing water fountain. The show also features an intentionally infuriating twist. Leung's objects come on display from only 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Thursdays and Fridays — the same blocks of time during which the artist can work in her studio, unencumbered by the demands of child care. Beyond these times, visitors will find the gallery open, but empty.

On one wall, "Hours," an abstract black-and-white calendar marking the artist's time in the studio — drives home parallels between the unforgiving rhythms of parenting and the unyielding austerity of minimalism. "Balances" will certainly speak to caregivers juggling many roles. But Leung's simmering frustrations will also resonate with anyone feeling defeated by workplace standards that held their grip, even as the pandemic made them untenable. This show defies expectations that, as good members of the work force, we must keep life's strains and stressors hidden from view, even when they leave us in an impossible bind.

-Dawn Chan