

nara roesler

# heinz mack paragold

curated by  
**matthieu poirier**

**september 2**  
thursday, 10am – 8pm

**nara roesler são paulo**  
sep 2 – oct 30, 2021



Nara Roesler São Paulo is proud to announce *Paragold, kinetic alchemy*, a solo exhibition by Heinz Mack (b. 1931, Lollar, Germany) marking the artist's first solo presentation in Brazil and with the gallery. The exhibition is curated by Matthieu Poirier, and showcases a selection of works, sculptures, paintings, and works on paper, ranging from 1955 to 2020, offering the opportunity to discover the artist's historical and recent productions. *Paragold, kinetic alchemy* inaugurates on 2 September, remaining on view through 30 October, 2021, and is accompanied by a critical essay written by Poirier for the occasion.

Throughout his trajectory, Heinz Mack has continuously carved a pioneering artistic production marked by investigations on light, color, temporality and movement. Mack began his career in the 1950s, famously founding the Group ZERO (1957–1966) alongside Otto Piene in 1957, later also joining forces with Gunther Uecker in 1961, with the aim of creating a space devoid of pre-existing structures—a place of silence—for new possibilities and beginnings to emerge. Mack was also in close contact with artist Yves Klein, with whom he developed a great friendship and collaborated on numerous occasions, and who introduced him to Jean Tinguely, discovering a

universe of experimentations that informed his own search for aesthetic purity, striving for an essential, unmediated work.

Mack notably wrote, 'The goal is to achieve pure, grand, objective clarity, free of romantic, arbitrarily individual expression. In my work I explore and strive for structural phenomena, whose strict logic I interrupt or expand by means of aleatoric interventions, that is, chance events.'

In line with this, Mack's practice has come to rest on three main pillars—light, movement and color—, which he has explored through a varied production that ranges from kinetic sculptures, metal or mirror steles, to Land Art, while also including paintings characterized by chromatic modulations. The exhibition proposes a selection of works from different fundamental stages of the artist's investigations, allowing for the audience to delve into a retrospective cutout of Heinz Mack's oeuvre.

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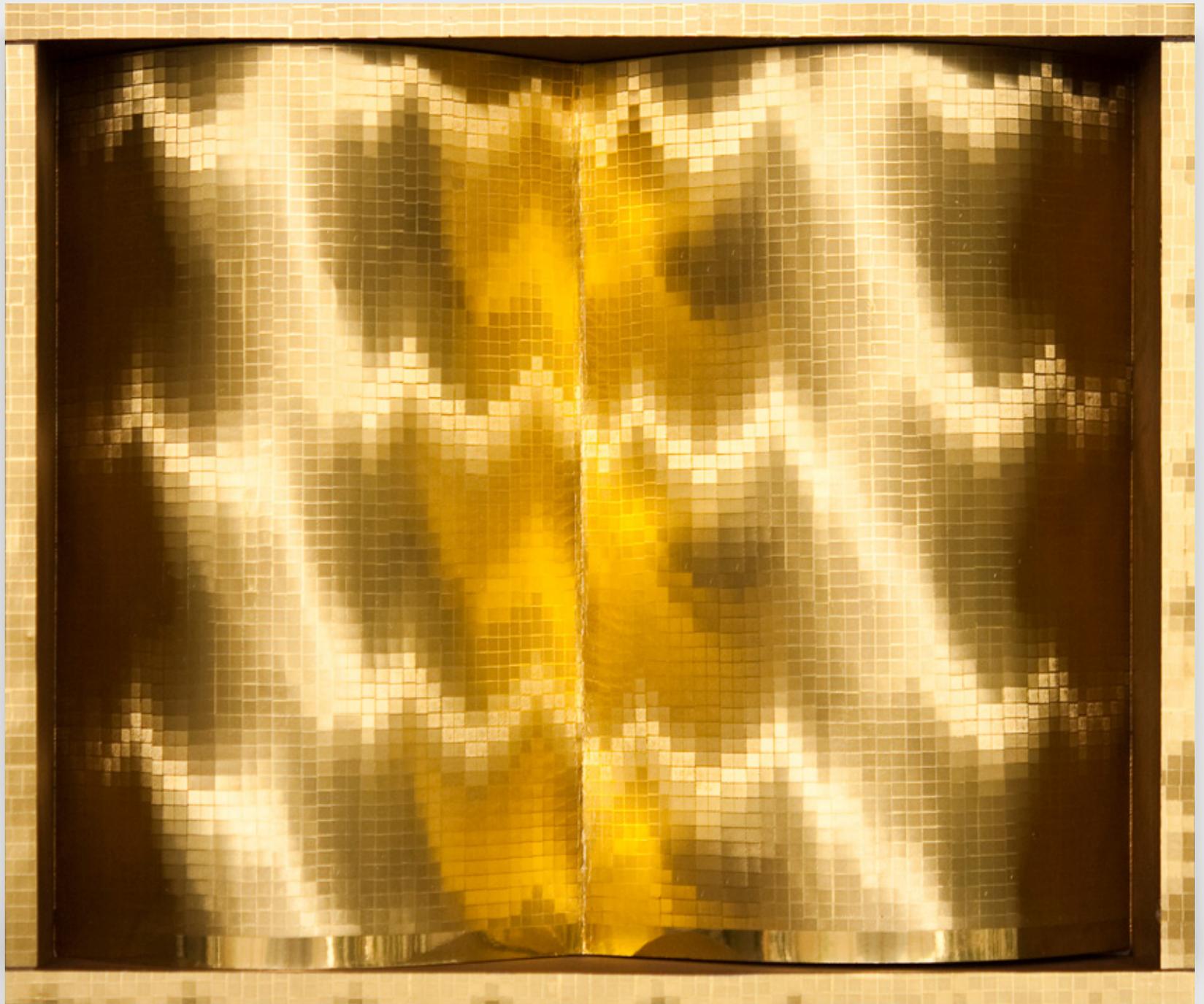
A world without art would be  
Like a sky in the night  
Without the light of the stars.  
They appear like meteors  
Ideas fully unexpected -  
Only a few people see them.

Paintings and sculptures are  
Planets of the sun and make you  
forget  
The black depths of the night  
From which they arise.

A world without art would be  
A gray world between day  
And night, in which time stands  
Still, in an empty room,  
Without shadow, but also without  
light.

Art expresses  
That a gray world would be  
Unbearable.

—Heinz Mack



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*Untitled, 1977*  
aluminum foil on paper,  
wood and acrylic  
33 x 40 x 8 cm  
13 x 15.7 x 3.1 in

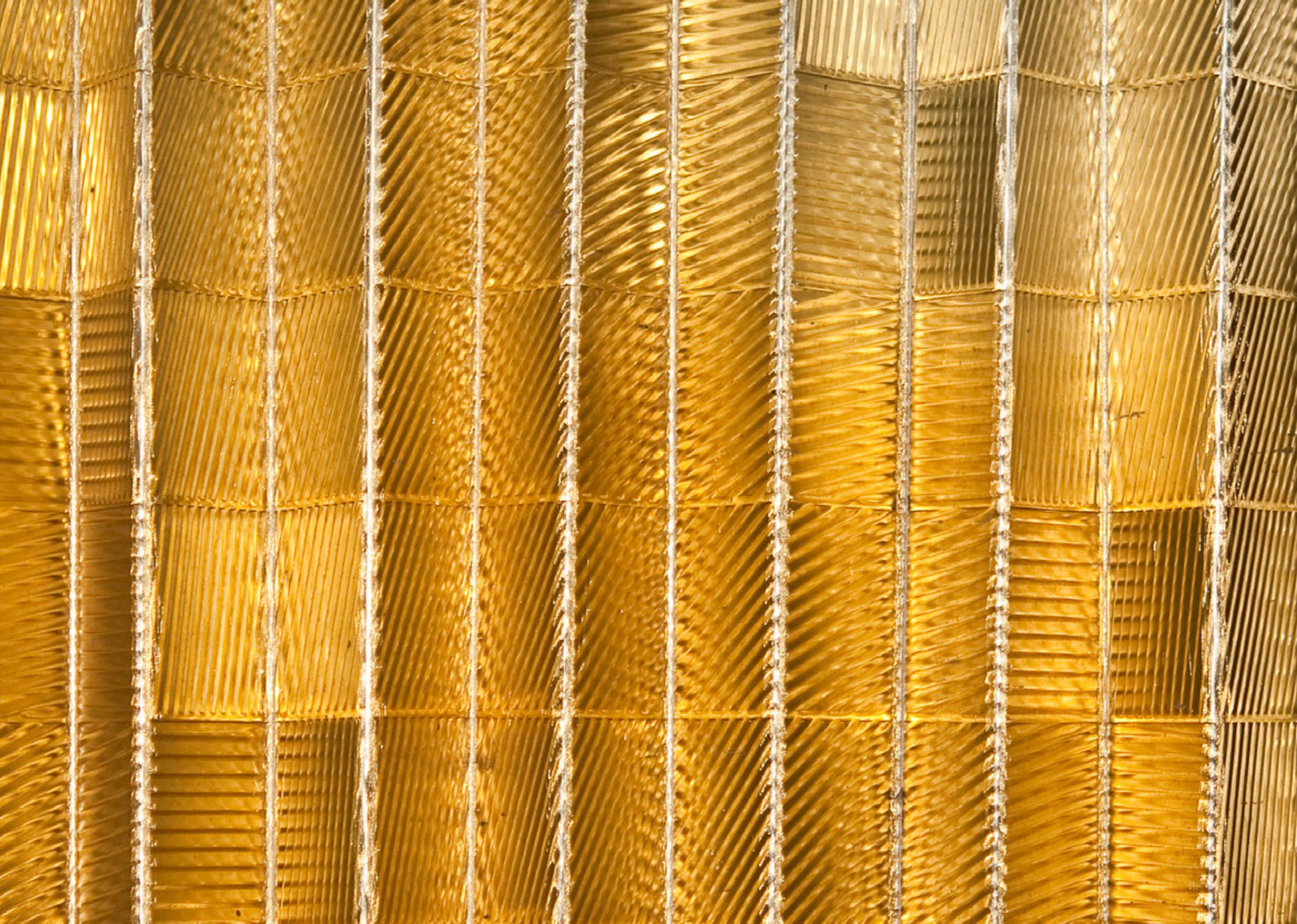


## golden sculptures

Early on in his career, Mack began producing a series of sculptures that sought to create a form of kinetic art that did not depend on motorized movement, but rather on the natural variation of light. By either manually or mechanically sculpting metal surfaces into grid-like structures, Mack created raised and depressed volumes of different depths and heights. Once exposed to light, the sculpture reflects the medium at varying intensities, with changing brightness and shadows depending on the location, angular positioning, or time of day. The metal panels thus reflect light at different rhythms, creating a form of kinetic art that combines light and movement through the motor-less manipulation of light itself. The natural variation in the medium generates a perception of dynamism producing movement without physical interjection, or induced motion, but rather by using the very fundamental element of optical phenomena, that is light, in its pure form.

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*Untitled, 1977*  
aluminum, wood and acrylic  
35 x 44 x 6 cm  
13.8 x 17.3 x 2.4 in





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*Open Bronze Cube*, 2001  
patinated and polished bronze  
4 parts of 71 x 71 x 70 cm  
28 x 28 x 27.6 in (each)  
plinth: 10 x 35 x 35 cm  
3.9 x 13.8 x 13.8 in  
base: 4,5 x 115 x 115 cm  
1.8 x 45.3 x 45.3 in  
pedestal: 30 x 55 x 55 cm  
11.8 x 21.7 x 21.7 in

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*Five Cardinal Points*, 1970  
gold-plated steel  
55 x 47 x 47 cm  
21.7 x 18.5 x 18.5 in







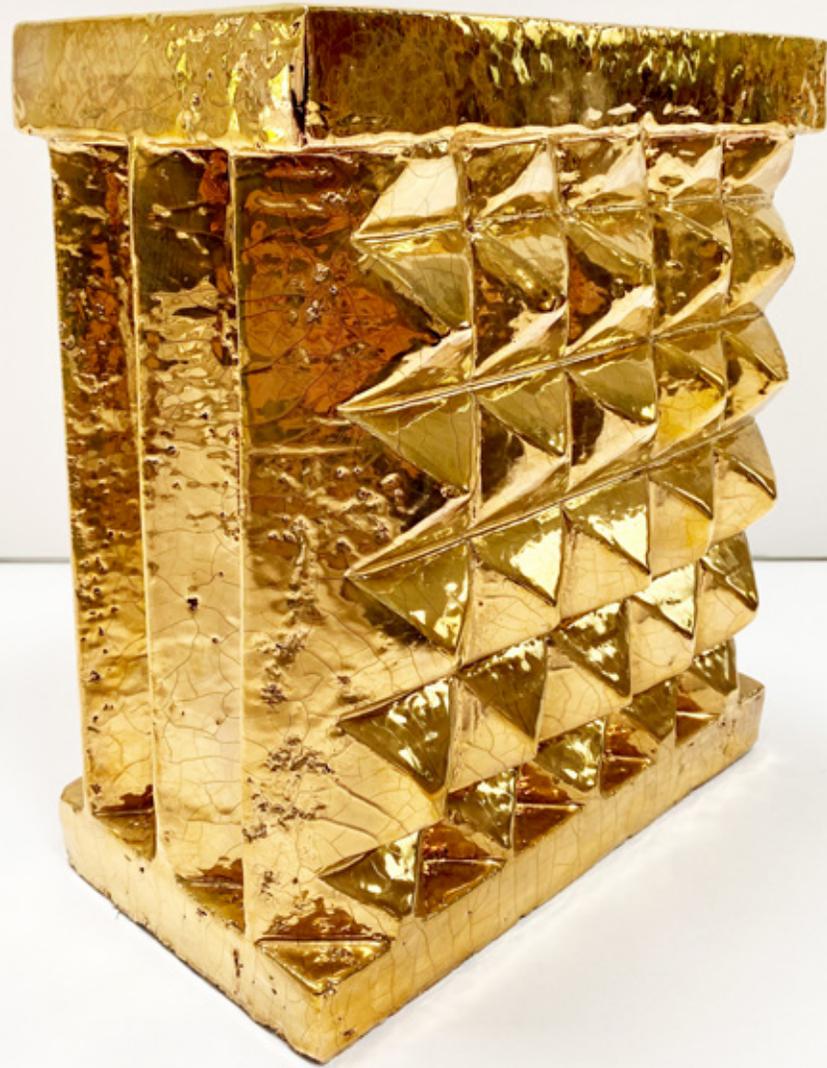
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*Meridiana in Gold*, 1995  
gold-plated wood and  
patinated metal  
2 parts of 56,5 x 84,5 x 2 cm  
22.2 x 33.3 x 0.8 in (each)  
disc: ø 60 cm | 23.6 in  
pedestal: 101,5 cm | 40 in (height)



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*Untitled*, 1971–2004  
stainless steel, acrylic,  
wood and motor  
53 x 53 x 14 cm  
20.9 x 20.9 x 5.5 in



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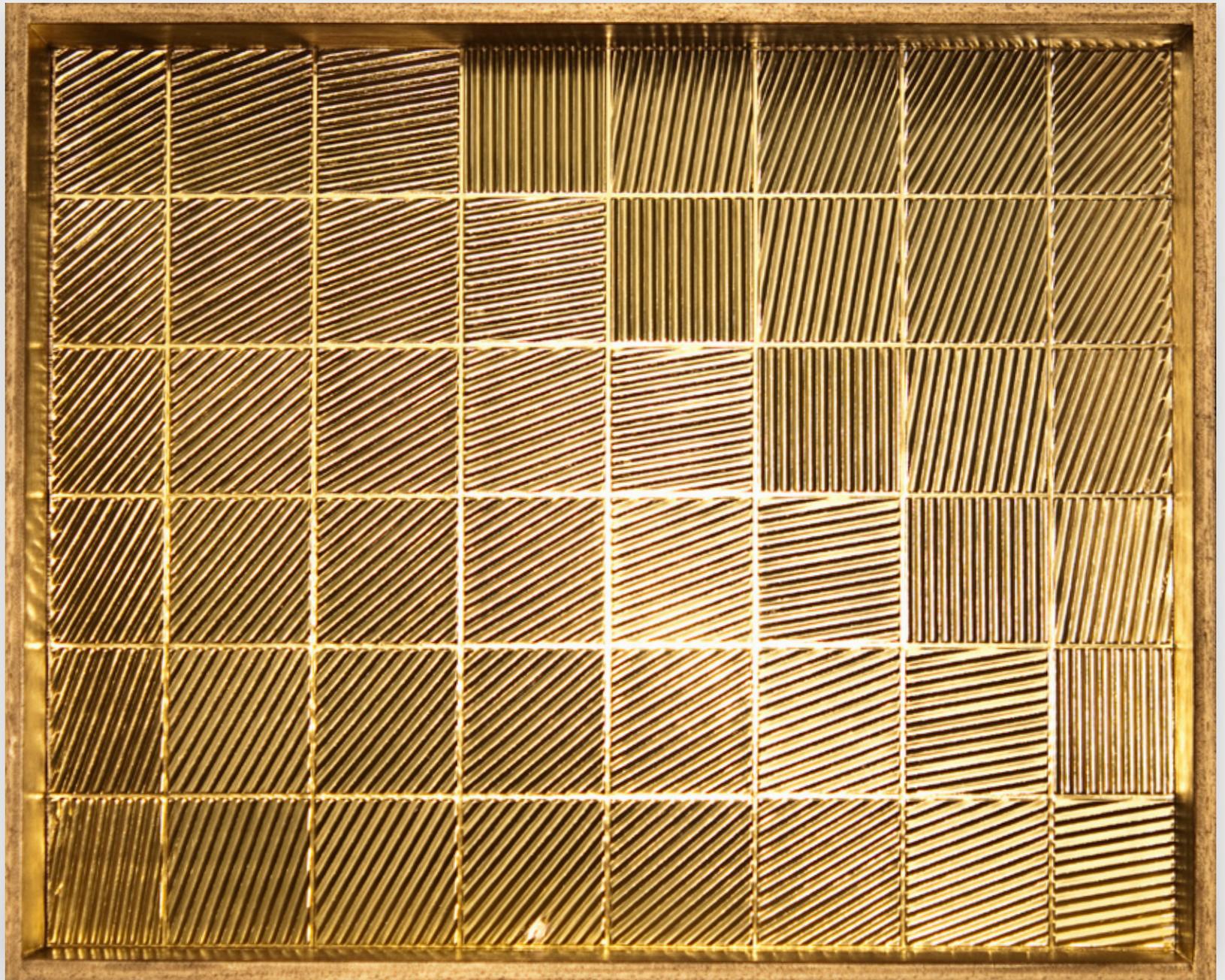
*Untitled*, 2009  
glazed ceramic and polished gold  
31,5 x 28,5 x 15 cm  
12.4 x 11.2 x 5.9 in



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*Untitled*, 1977  
glazed ceramic and  
polished gold  
16 x 9 x 7 cm  
6.3 x 3.5 x 2.8 in





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*Untitled, 1977*  
anodized aluminum,  
wood and acrylic  
37,5 x 47,5 cm  
14.8 x 18.7 in



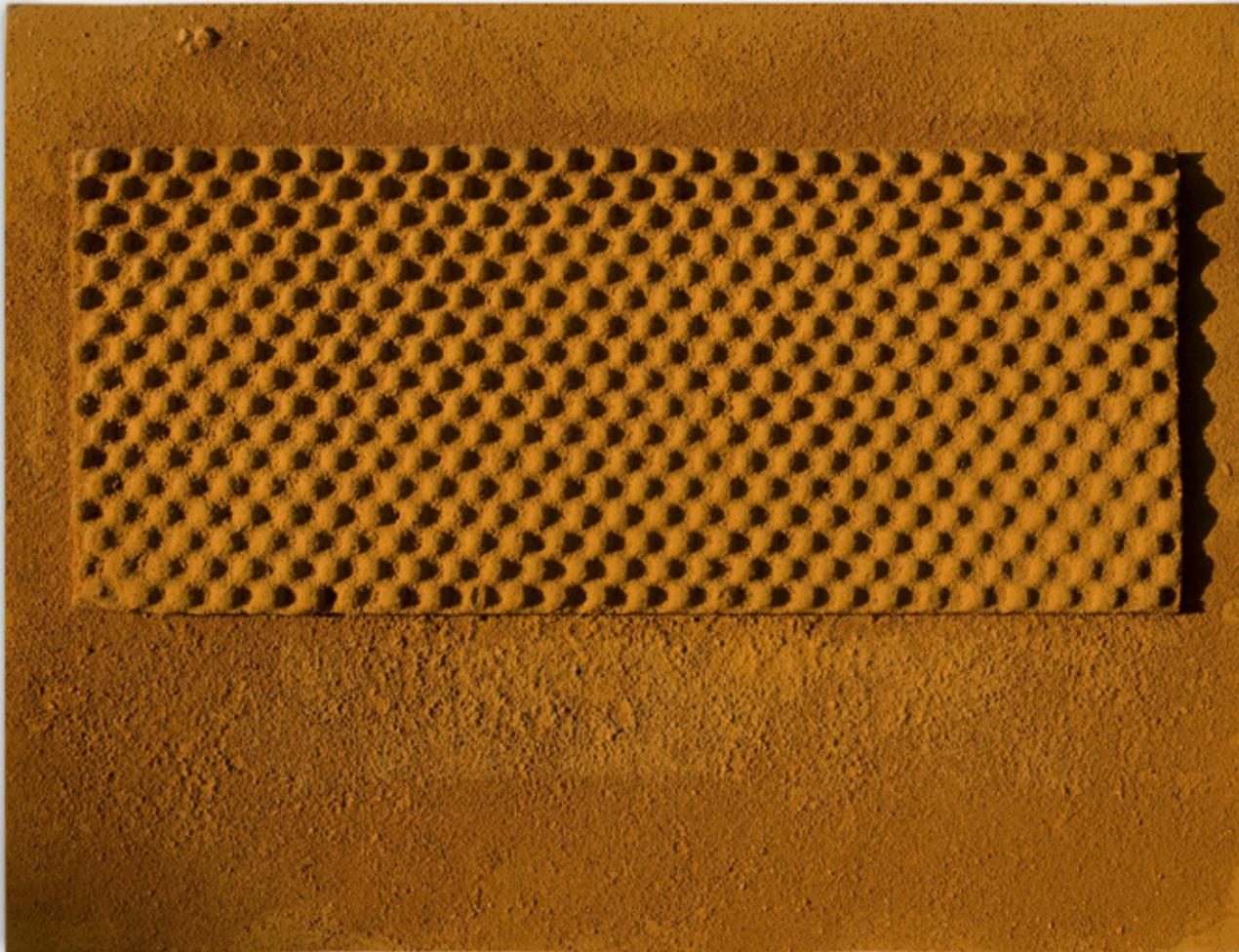
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*Golden Mountain*, 2011  
bronze  
32 x 50 x 20 cm  
12.6 x 19.7 x 7.9 in



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Heinz Mack no Grande Erg Oriental, 1976



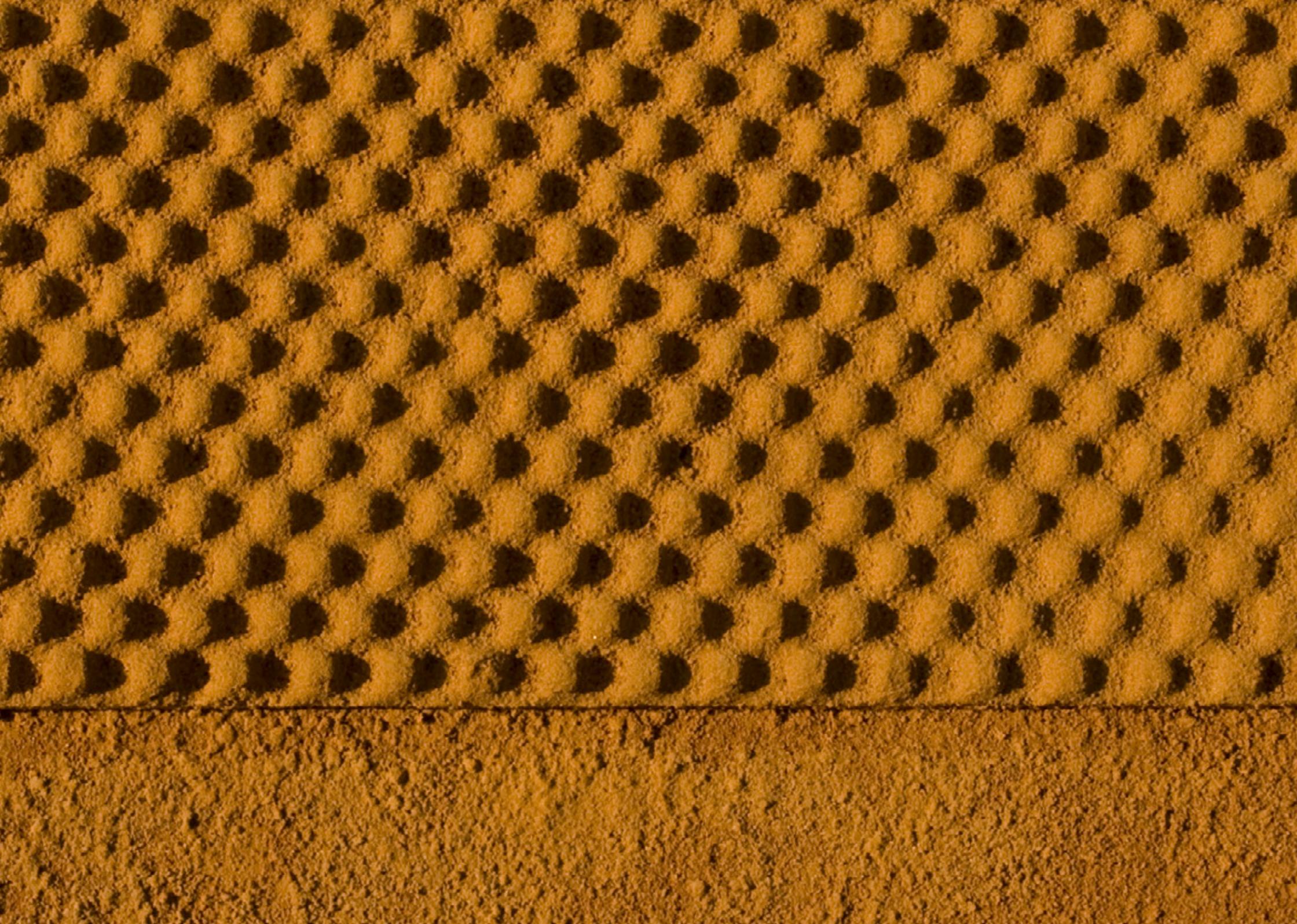
## group zero

In 1933, Heinz Mack and Otto Piene—later joined by Gunther Uecker—established the Group ZERO, which aimed to reset the pictorial field, bringing it to a *tabula rasa* that would allow for a free, unrestrained reconstruction. The artists called for the use of light, air, fire and water as new aesthetic materials so as to expand the possibilities of the field beyond that of traditional panel painting.

During his time with Group ZERO, Mack developed a body of work characterized by an endeavor to play with natural light, creating sculptures, paintings and works on paper that triggered a sense of movement, of vibration, without the use of motors, but rather based purely on natural changes in light.

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*Sand-relief*, 1966  
sand, wood and acrylic  
68 x 91 x 3 cm  
26.8 x 35.8 x 1.2 in



Beginning in 1958, Mack began producing sculptures consisting of metal surfaces of different depths and heights, for light to hit the surface and be reflected at varying intensities, with brightness and shadows changing depending on the location, angular positioning, or time of day. Mack also became interested in playing with light in relation to space, and outdoor space, literally integrating its surroundings—notably the moon—into his compositions. Ultimately, the metal panels mirror light at different rhythms, creating a form of kinetic art that combines light and movement through the motor-less manipulation of light. The natural variation in the medium generates a perception of dynamism producing movement without physical interjection, or induced motion, but rather by using the very fundamental element of optical phenomena, that is light, in its pure form.



*Veil of Light*, 1964  
aluminum, acrylic and stainless steel  
172 x 132 x 62 cm | 67.7 x 52 x 24.4 in  
plinth: 2,5 x 120 x 50,5 cm  
1 x 47.2 x 19.9 in

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*Untitled*, 1958  
wood, mirror,  
aluminum and stainless steel  
122 x 25 x 40 cm | 48 x 9.8 x 15.7 in  
plinth: 2 x 25 x 40,5 cm  
0.8 x 9.8 x 15.9 in





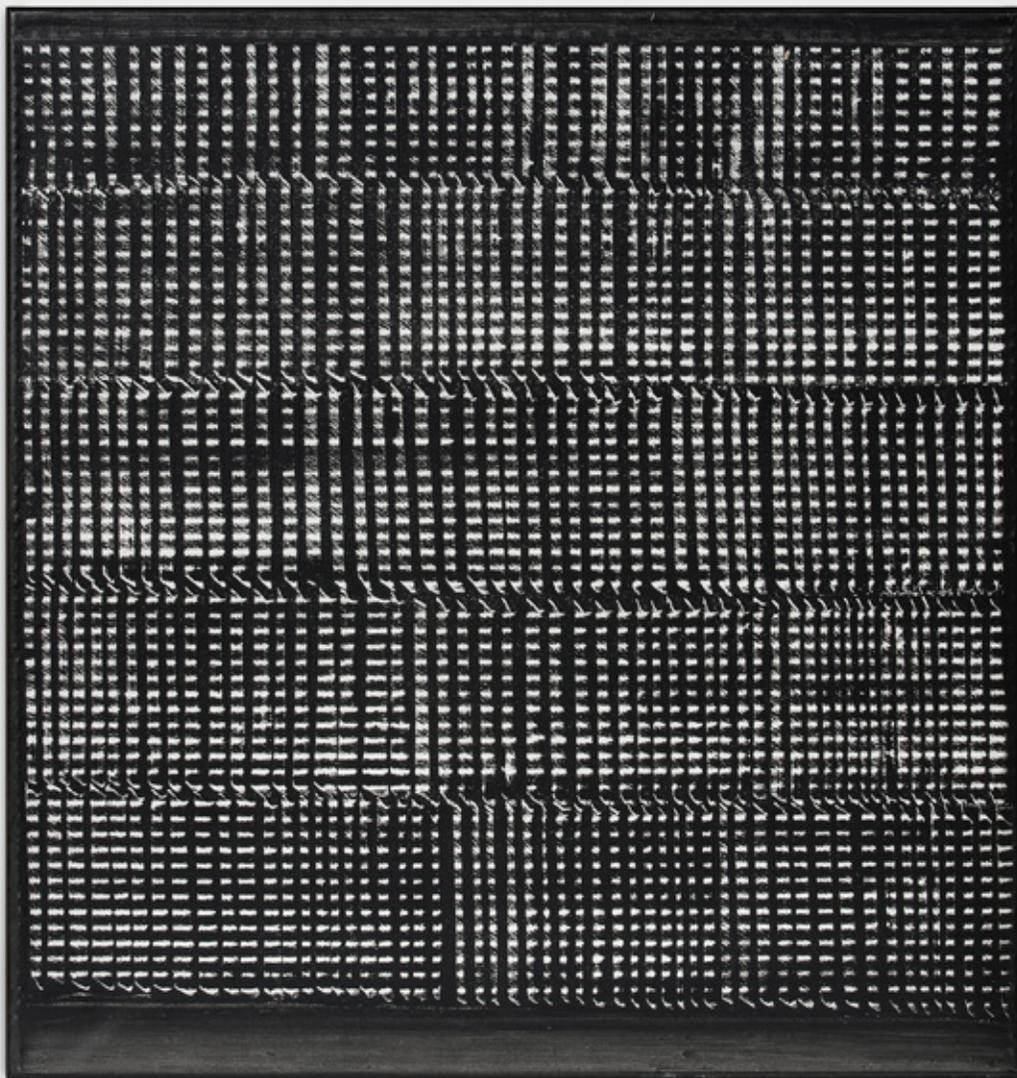
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*La Lune en Rodage*, 1961  
stainless steel  
51 x 62 x 62 cm  
20.1 x 24.4 x 24.4 in





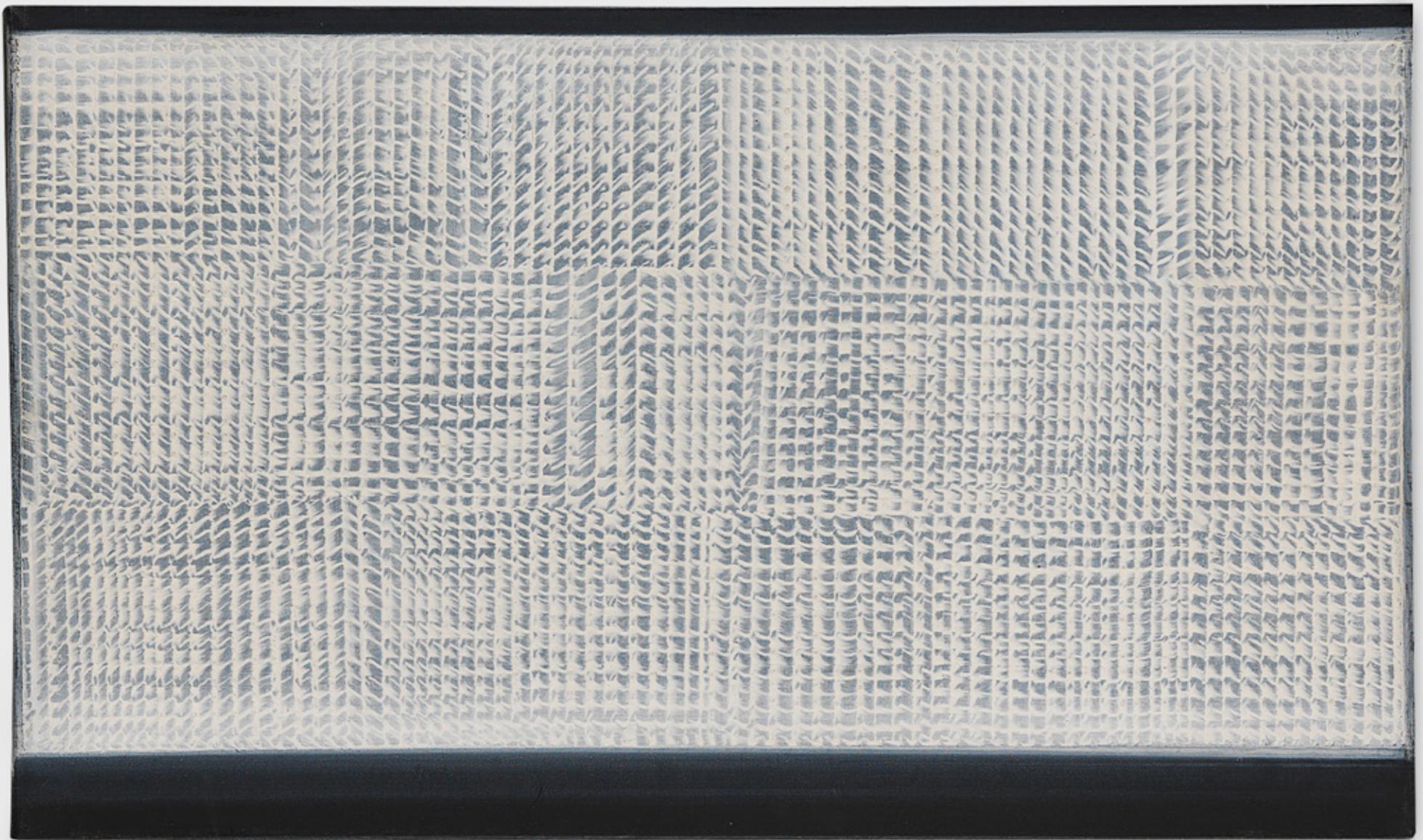




In addition, Mack developed a series of works using a technique known as *frottage*, which consisted of transferring the texture of a relief surface made with aluminum or other materials, onto a support. He carved metal or wooden structures, which he placed under the paper or canvas, manually rubbing for the underlying formations to imprint onto the surface, becoming part of the process and of the final work. With this, the artist translated the light and shadows from a dimensional surface into flat plays with black and white rhythms, or what he describes as 'energy fields'. In the artist's words, 'An unexpected opportunity to make aesthetic movement visible came about as I happened to step upon a thin piece of foil lying on a sisal carpet. When I picked up the foil, the light began to vibrate... My metal reliefs—I prefer to call them light reliefs—are formed solely by pressure applied by the fingers, and instead of color; they require light to come alive.'

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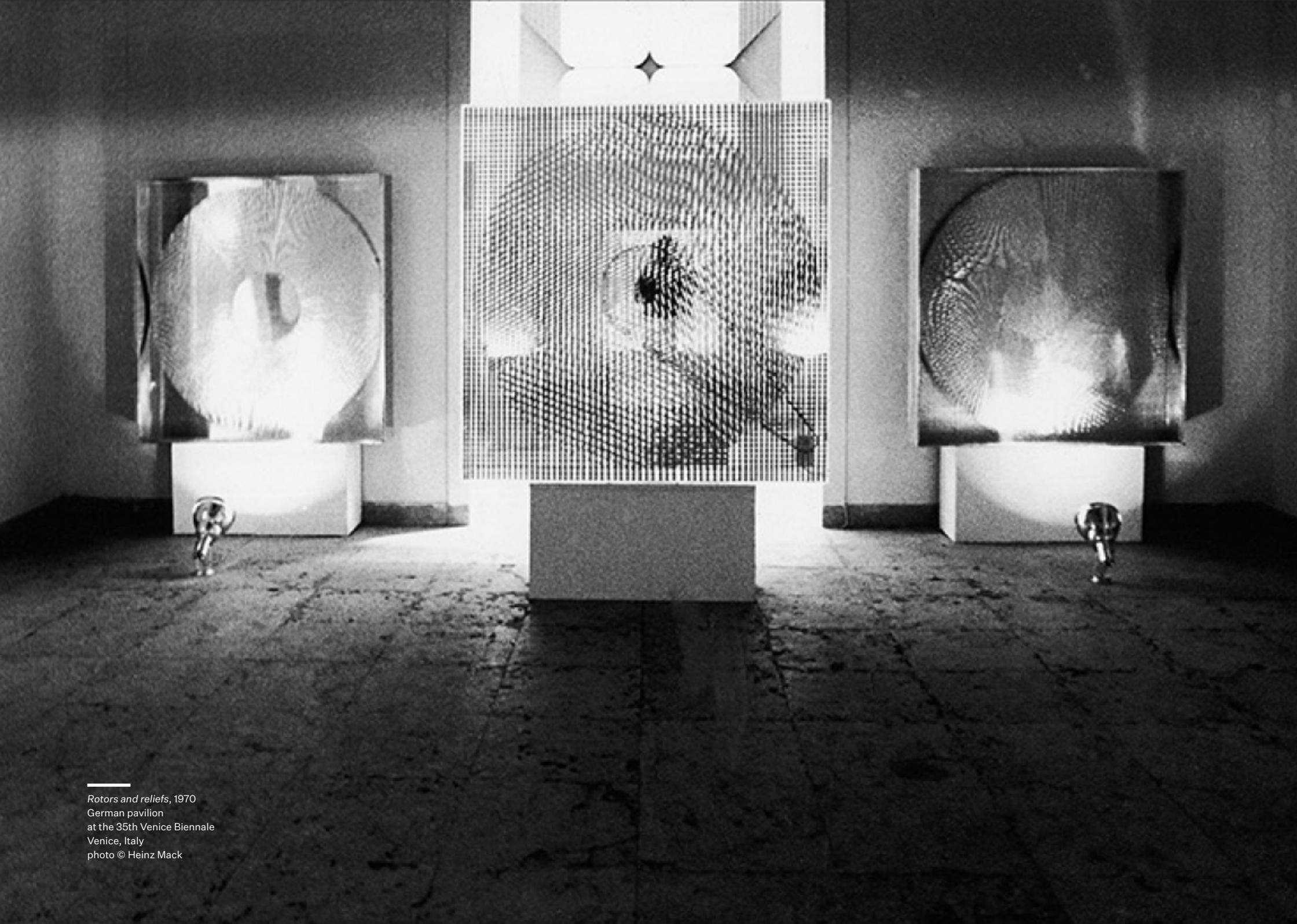
*Untitled*, 1959  
synthetic resin on canvas  
163,5 x 158 x 6,5 cm  
64.4 x 62.2 x 2.6 in



Untitled, 1959–1960  
synthetic resin on canvas  
70 x 105,5 x 6,5 cm  
27.6 x 41.5 x 2.6 in



Heinz Mack in front of his work  
*Kleiner Urwald*, Hans Mayer Gallery, 1964

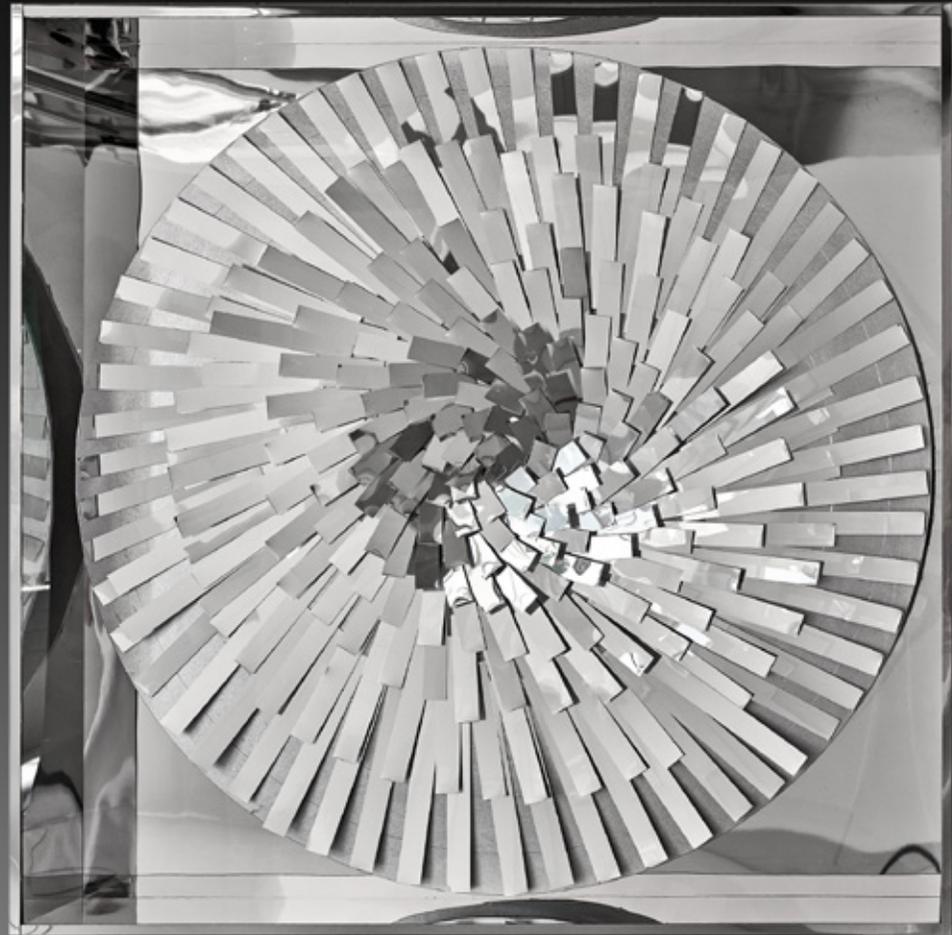


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*Rotors and reliefs*, 1970  
German pavilion  
at the 35th Venice Biennale  
Venice, Italy  
photo © Heinz Mack

## rotors

In 1959, Mack began producing his first kinetic works to make use of motorized movement, which he coined *Light Dynamos*, *Emanations of Light*, or *Rotors*. The works are made using textured plates that are attached to a back wall and placed on the inside of a box, and which can be made to rotate with a small motor. The box is closed on its front side with corrugated glass, and thus, once set in motion, the rotating disks create light refractions that shimmer and transform through almost imperceptible movement, occasionally amplified by built-in artificial light. After 1960, Mack began to use new materials such as aluminum, optical lenses, stainless steel, anodized aluminum, reflective glass and Fresnel lenses, employed as a means of creating different abstract optical and color effects that may scatter, reflect, refract, focus or diversify light. From this experimental core, emerged an immense variety of objects that engaged with light, movement, and color, as part of his cohesive pursuit to intervene in, and thus expand, structural phenomena.



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*Mirror-Rotation*, 1960–2014  
stainless steel, acrylic, wood and motor  
150 x 150 x 25 cm | 59.1 x 59.1 x 9.8 in  
reverse driver: 20 cm | 7.9 in  
pedestal: 60 x 125 x 35,5 cm  
23.6 x 49.2 x 14 in



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*Rotor for Light and Shadow,*  
1966–2010

wood, acrylic, cardboard and motor

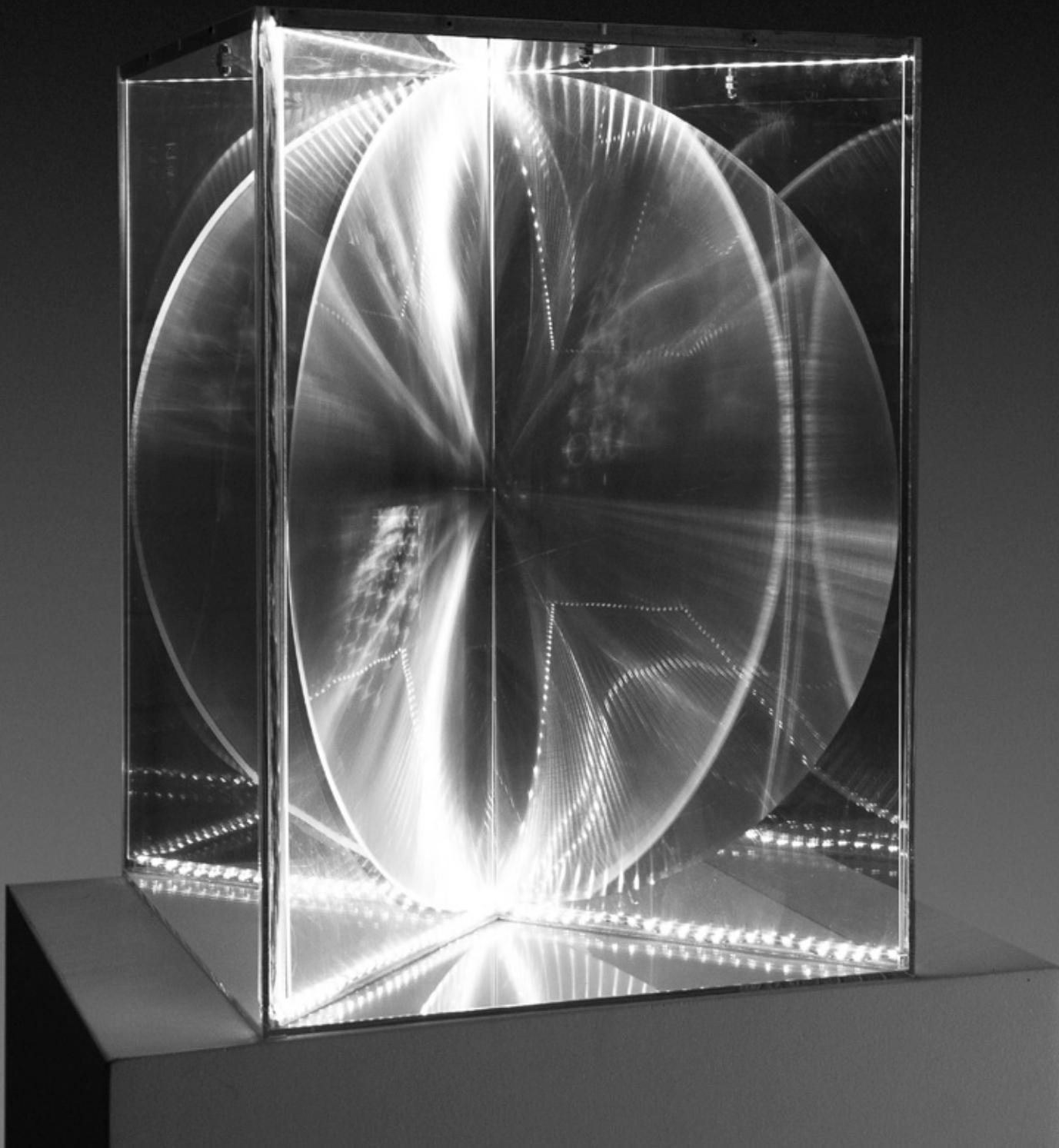
102 x 102 x 20 cm

40.2 x 40.2 x 7.9 in

reverse driver: 14 cm | 5.5 in

pedestal: 60 x 70 x 36 cm

23.6 x 27.6 x 14.2 in



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*Transparency and Radiance*, 2009  
acrylic, Fresnel lens and electricity  
63 x 44,5 x 44,5 cm  
24.8 x 17.5 x 17.5 in

## steles/columns

It is important to understand Mack's series of columnar sculptures in the context of his emblematic expeditions to the Sahara, which began as early as 1959. The idea emerged out of the artist's necessity to break free from what he described as an overcrowded environment—full of man—made structures, furniture, buildings, people—preventing his works from having independence and freedom. In the Sahara, the artist found a vast land undomesticated by civilization. With this in mind, Mack mapped out a series of stations, where he would set up objects or experiences in the context of the desert, creating a body of work that was art historically ahead of what would later be understood as Earth Art or Land Art.

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*Check-Stele*, 1987  
anodized gold colored aluminum  
188 x 25 x 25 cm | 74 x 9.8 x 9.8 in  
plinth: 5 x 40 x 40 cm  
2 x 15.7 x 15.7 in



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*The Sky Over Nine Columns,*  
CAC Valencia, 2016  
private collection  
courtesy Beck & Eggeling  
International Fine Art  
photo: Alfonso Calza

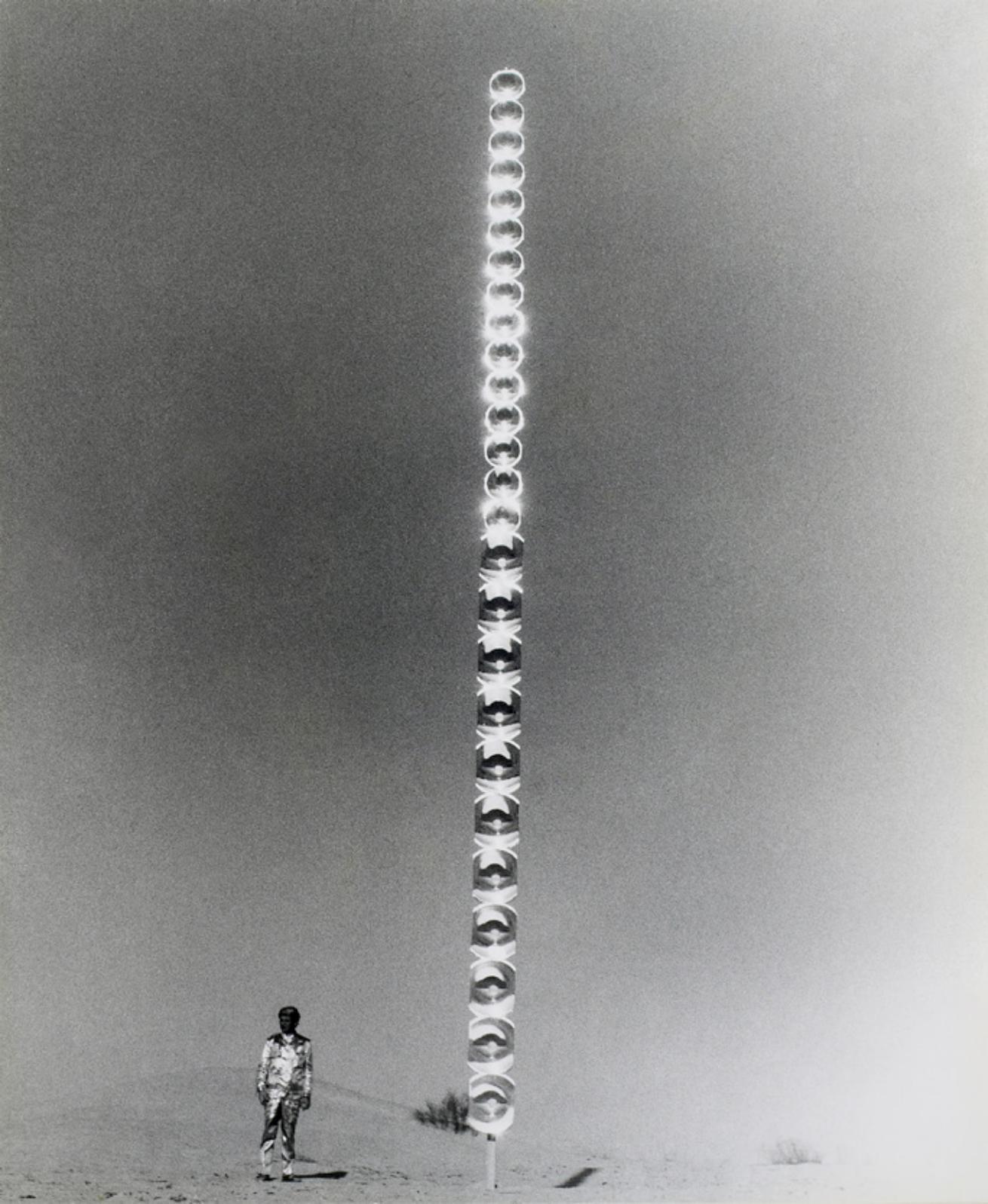


He notably designed and erected light steles, or monumental sculptures built as vertical columns, covered with mirrors, Fresnel lenses and prisms, that worked to engage with the intense natural light of the desert—further intensifying it, triggering vibrations and capturing, or rather materializing light in space. Following this, the artist developed a large body of work characterized by sculptures in the form of smaller scale columns, or steles, which derived from this initial endeavor to engage with the intensity of natural light. The ensuing sculptures pursued the desire to materialize light in space, while expanding the experiment to other types of spaces—interior and exterior, small and vast, lit and dark—through a use of different materials, and scales.

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Heinz Mack during the filming  
of TELE-MACK, 1968  
photo © Edwin Braun





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Light Stele at Sahara, 1968

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*Light-Rain*, 2002  
stainless steel and acrylic  
205 x 35 x 9 cm | 80.7 x 13.8 x 3.5 in  
plinth: 3 x 36 x 52 cm  
1.2 x 14.2 x 20.5 in







## paintings

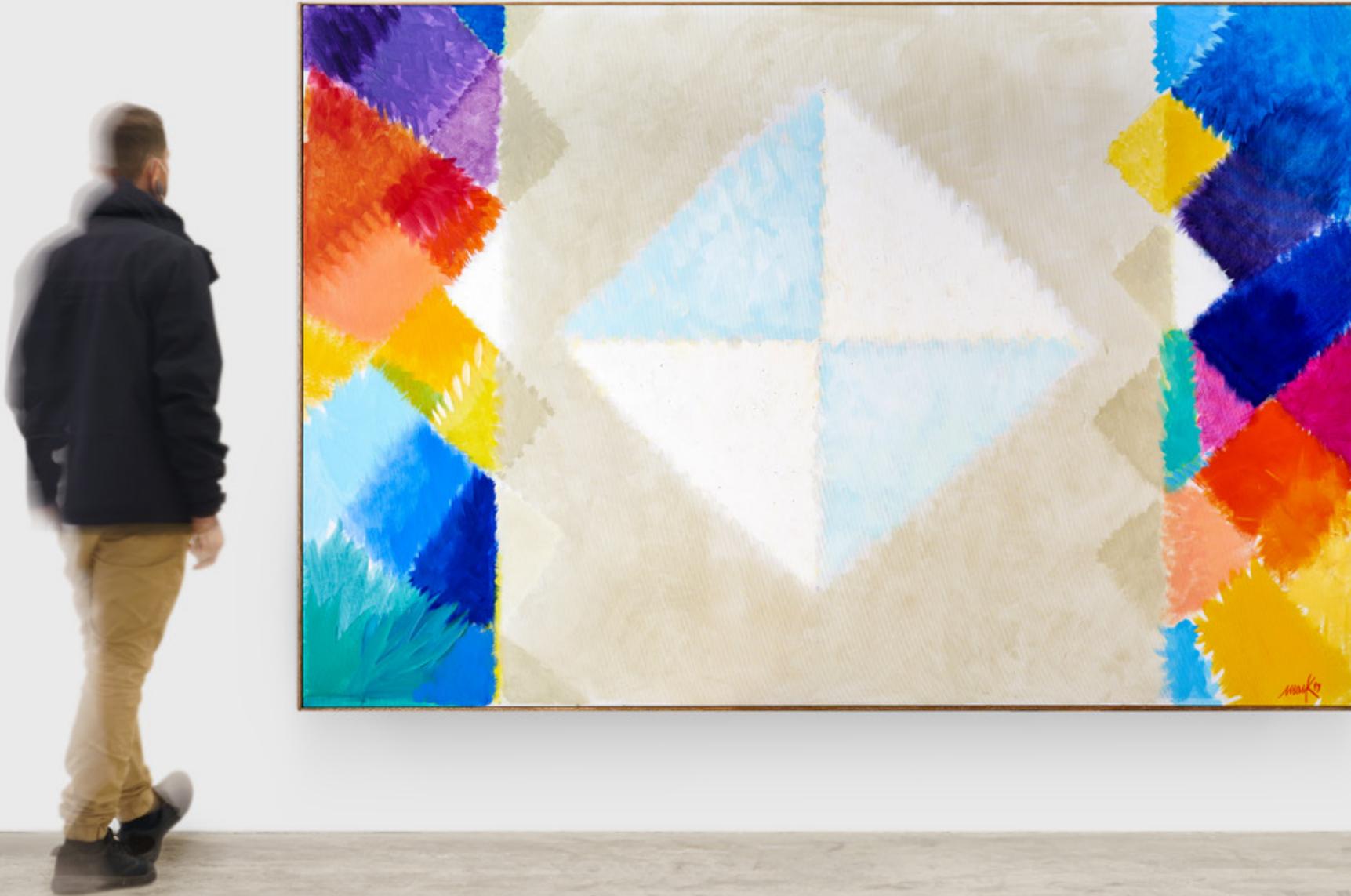
Following Heinz Mack's experimentations with painting as a member of Group ZERO, the artist abandoned the medium in 1963, for over two decades. In 1990, he found a new source of inspiration upon his travel to the island of Ibiza, which he describes as an 'island of light, everything is shrouded in light, touched, caressed and ultimately dominated by light.' The paintings explore the recurrent themes that Mack has meticulously and relentlessly engaged with in his other bodies of work—namely light, color and rhythm—which he intertwines in a process of making that combines intuitive gesture and meditative repose.

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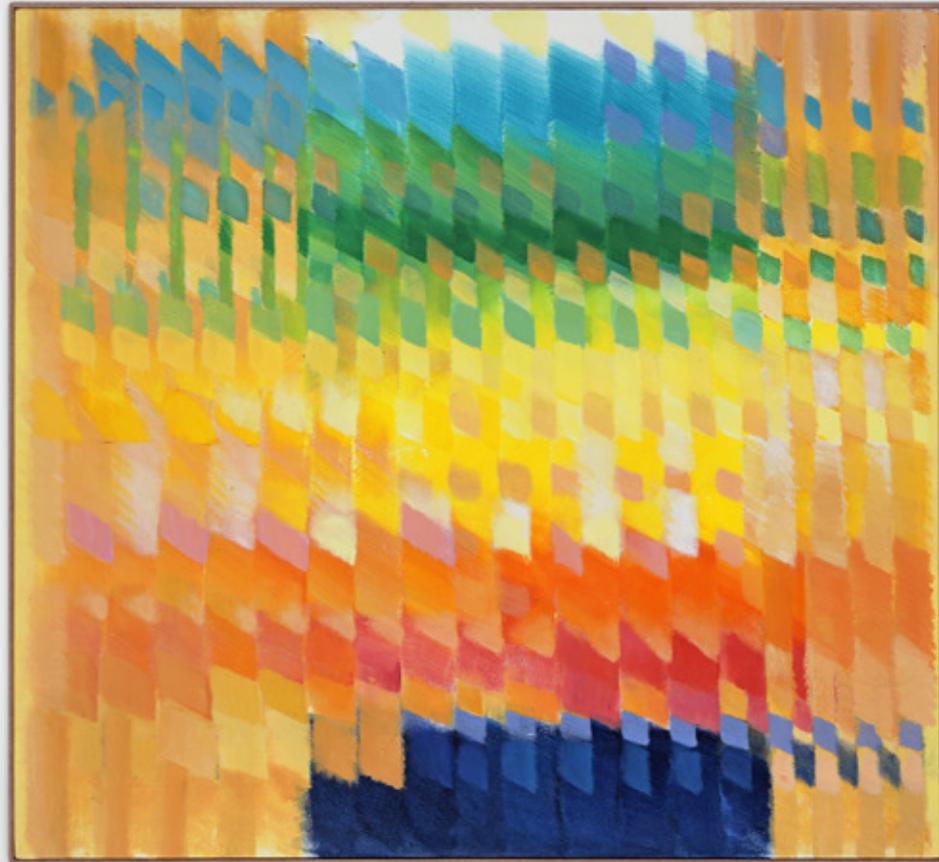
*Untitled (Chromatic Constellation)*  
[detail], 2019  
acrylic paint on canvas  
158 x 240 x 3 cm  
62.2 x 94.5 x 1.2 in

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*Untitled*  
(*Chromatic Constellation*), 2019  
acrylic paint on canvas  
158 x 240 x 3 cm  
62.2 x 94.5 x 1.2 in



*The Painter's Garden*  
*(Chromatic Constellation)*, 2001  
acrylic paint on canvas  
132 x 144,5 x 2,5 cm  
52 x 56.9 x 1 in

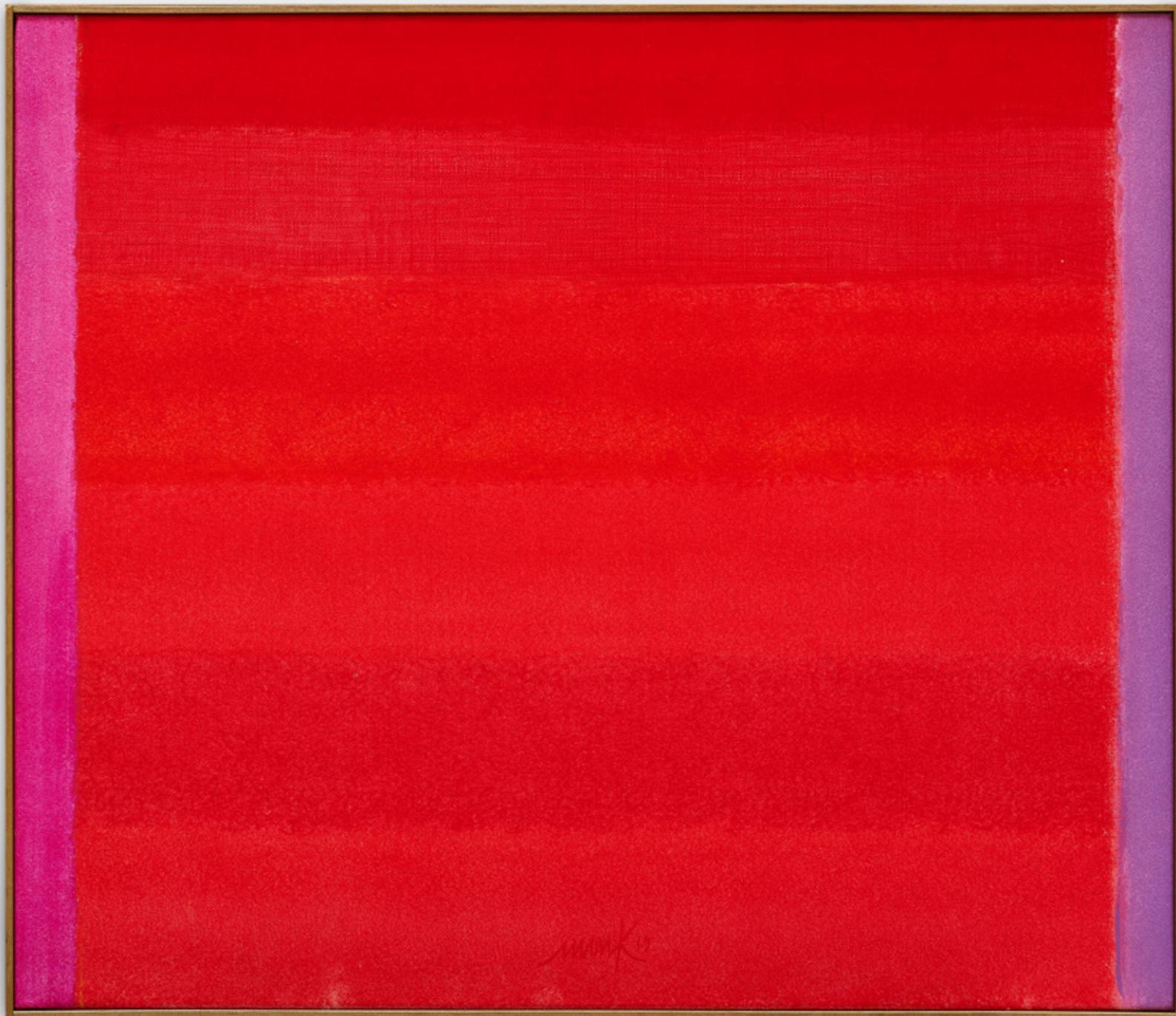


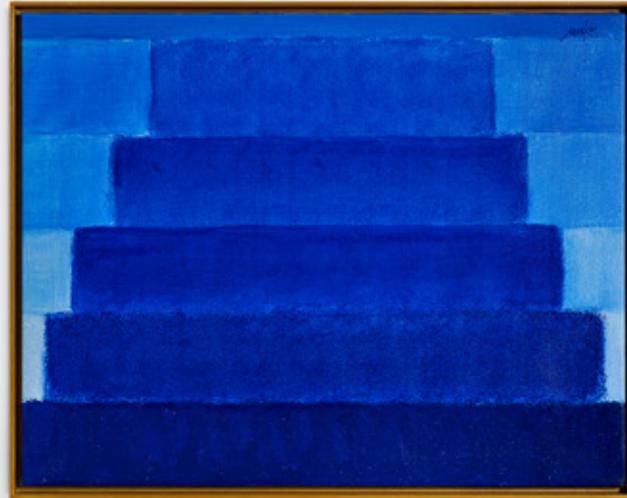


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*Untitled*  
*(Chromatic Constellation)*, 2019  
acrylic paint on canvas  
69 x 81 x 3 cm  
27.2 x 31.9 x 1.2 in



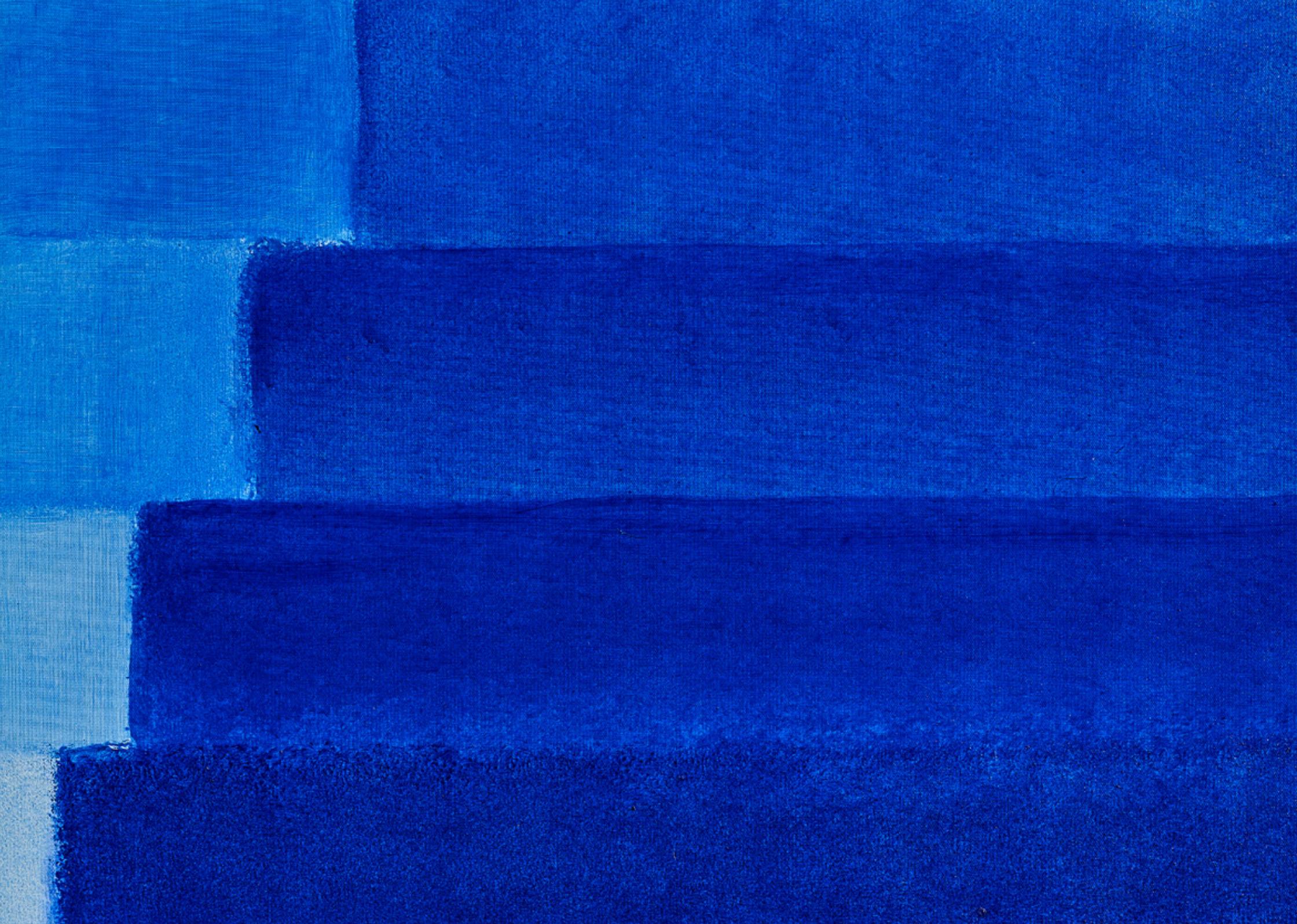




In the artist's words, 'I have always been fascinated by painting when it is filled with light. But, for me, painting is also much more than this: it is the foreground of the infinitely deep and black space, in which light and color have been inseparable from each other. The identity of light and color, which becomes visible in the spectrum, is the subject of my painting - it is the only subject.' Through his painting, the artist engages with light, color and movement, intricately interweaving them, so that one exists and is enhanced because of the qualities of the others. Mack's paintings are characterized by a highly consistent pictorial use of color, anchored in the alternation of chromatic modulations, which the artist executes as a means of achieving what he defines as color vibration.

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*Untitled*  
*(Chromatic Constellation)*, 2020  
acrylic paint on canvas  
82 x 104 x 4 cm  
19.9 x 21.7 x 1.2 in





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*Fiesta en Espana*  
(*Chromatic Constellation*), 2002  
acrylic paint on canvas  
114,5 x 134 x 2 cm  
45.1 x 52.8 x 0.8 in





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## heinz mack

b. 1931, Lollar, Germany

lives and works in Mönchengladbach, Germany and in Ibiza, Spain

Throughout his career, Heinz Mack has continuously carved a pioneering artistic production marked by investigations on light, temporality and movement, which have taken the form of major installations, as well as sculptures, paintings and works on paper. Mack began his career in the 1950s, famously founding the Group ZERO (1957-1966) alongside Otto Piene in 1957, later also joining forces with Gunther Uecker in 1961, with the aim of creating a space devoid of pre-existing structures—a place of silence—for new possibilities and beginnings to emerge. Mack was also in close contact with artist Yves Klein, with whom he developed a great friendship and collaborated on numerous occasions, and who introduced him to Jean Tinguely, discovering a universe of experimentations that informed his own search for aesthetic purity, striving for an essential, unmediated work. Mack notably wrote, "The goal is to achieve pure, grand, objective clarity, free of romantic, arbitrarily individual expression. In my work I explore and strive for structural phenomena, whose strict logic I interrupt or expand by means of aleatoric interventions, that is, chance events."

Heinz Mack's oeuvre is characterized by disruptive engagements with light, and ways in which it affects and is affected by movement, space, and color. With this idea forming the core of his practice, the artist has rigorously and shrewdly developed a multi-faceted body of work that has recurrently opened new horizons for the realm of art. Since the beginning of his career, Heinz Mack has continuously participated in major international exhibitions including Documenta II (1959) and Documenta III (1966) in Kassel, later also representing the Federal Republic of Germany at the 35th Venice Biennale (1970). Mack has been also been honoured with major awards, including the Premio Marzotto (1963), the 1st Prix Arts Plastiques at the 4th Paris Biennale (1965) and the Grand Federal Cross of Merit with Star of the Federal Republic of Germany (2011).

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## selected solo exhibitions

- *Taten Des Lichts: Mack & Goethe*, Goethe-Museum, Düsseldorf, Germany (2018)
- *Heinz Mack – From Time to Time. Painting and Sculpture, 1994–2016*, Palais SchönbornBatthyány, Vienna, Austria (2016)
- *Mack – Just Light and Color*, Sakip Sabanci Museum, Istanbul, Turkey (2016)
- *Heinz Mack – The light of my colors*, Museum Ulm, Ulm, Germany (2015)
- *Mack – The Language of My Hand*, Museum Kunstpalast, Düsseldorf, Germany (2011)
- *Heinz Mack – Licht der ZERO-Zeit*, Ludwig Museum im Deutscherherrenhaus, Koblenz, Germany (2009)

## selected group exhibitions

- *AThe Sky as Studio – Yves Klein and his contemporaries*, Centre Pompidou, Metz, France (2021)
- *Visual Play*, Wilhelm Hack Museum, Ludwigshafen, Germany (2018)
- *New Beginnings: Between Gesture and Geometry*, The Georgem Economou Collection, Athens, Greece (2016)
- *Facing the Future. Art in Europe, 1945–68*, Palais des Beaux Arts, Brussels, Belgium (2016)
- *ZERO: Let Us Explore the Stars*, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (2015)
- *ZERO: Countdown to Tomorrow, 1950's–60's*, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, USA (2015)
- 35<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy (1970)

## selected collections

- Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, USA
- Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France
- Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington DC, USA
- Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, USA
- Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, USA
- Tate, London, UK

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