



nara roesler

abraham palatnik
seismograph of color

curated by **luis pérez-oramas**
nara roesler new york

opening thursday, january 13
exhibition jan 14 – feb 19, 2022

abraham palatnik

seismograph of color

Luis Pérez-Oramas

Abraham Palatnik (1928–2020) is a monumental figure in Latin American art. Arguably the author of the earliest mechanical experiments with movement and color, giving him a pioneering position among practitioners of Op Art in the Americas, Palatnik is a complex creator who bridged technology and art, energy and color, function and ornament, nature and movement within his work.

Born in Brazil to parents who emigrated from Ukraine at the beginning of twentieth century, Palatnik moved in his early childhood to Palestine, remaining there until 1948. Trained as an artist and engineer there, he began to work influenced by both the School of Paris and Modern Bauhaus-like ideas.

But it was his experience at the National Center of Psychiatry in Rio de Janeiro, led by Nise da Silveira alongside peers such as Amir Mavignier and Ivan Serpa, that brought both spiritual

upheaval and aesthetic epiphany to Abraham Palatnik. Looking at art made by psychiatric patients moved him profoundly and set off a sudden crisis which led him to re-think his career as an artist entirely. As a result of this experience, Palatnik, bridging art and engineering, created his very first light-box and the earliest experiment with a mechanically driven, pure experience of color in the Americas.

Palatnik never stopped addressing the transfiguring aspect of visual fields, from his *Kinechromatic Devices* to his *Kinetic Objects* to his *Progressions*, vibrational compositions using natural elements such as wood and paper. His work is characterized by dynamic reliefs and fractal surfaces where color and light emerge as energy and force, sudden thrust and undular waving. Conceiving his art as a mapping support for visual energies and unfolding it through countless types of work, Abraham Palatnik was a modern seismograph of color.



Abraham Palatnik working
in his Kinechromatic Device, 1950's.

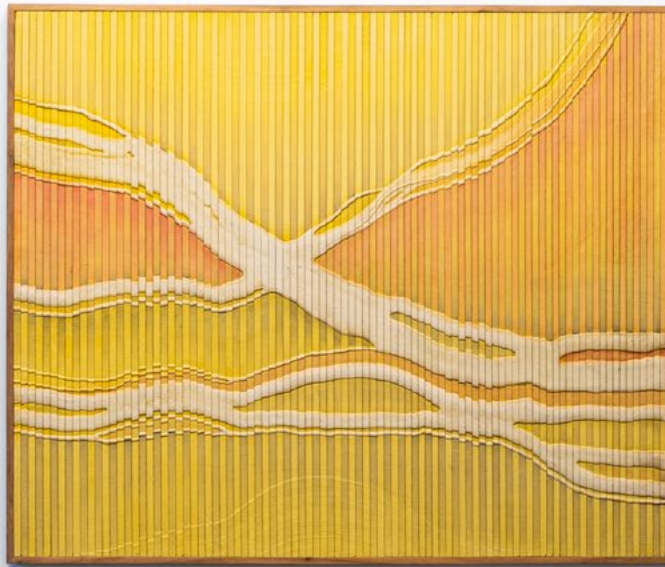


Untitled, 1947/1948
oil paint on canvas
61,8 x 72,9 cm
24.3 x 28.7 in





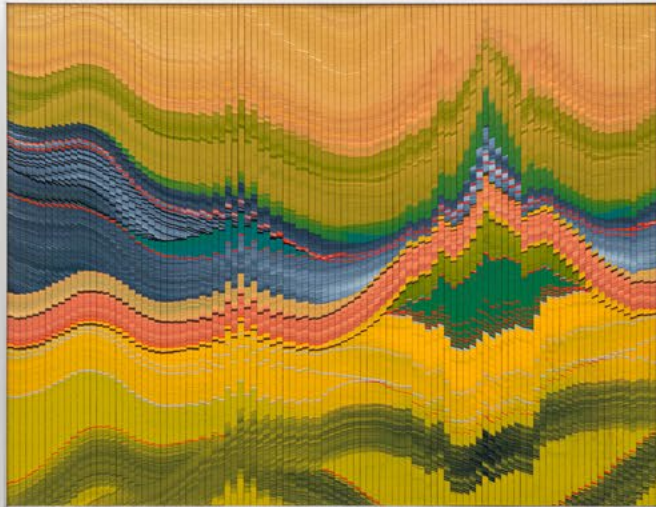
Mário Pedrosa's
house, Rio de Janeiro, 1953.
From left to right: Geraldo de Barros,
Abraham Palatnik, Mário Pedrosa,
Lidia Pratt, Tomás Maldonado,
Almir Mavignier and Ivan Serpa.
In the background, Tarde de temporal,
by Emygdio de Barros
Abraham Palatnik Family Collection
Unknown Photographer

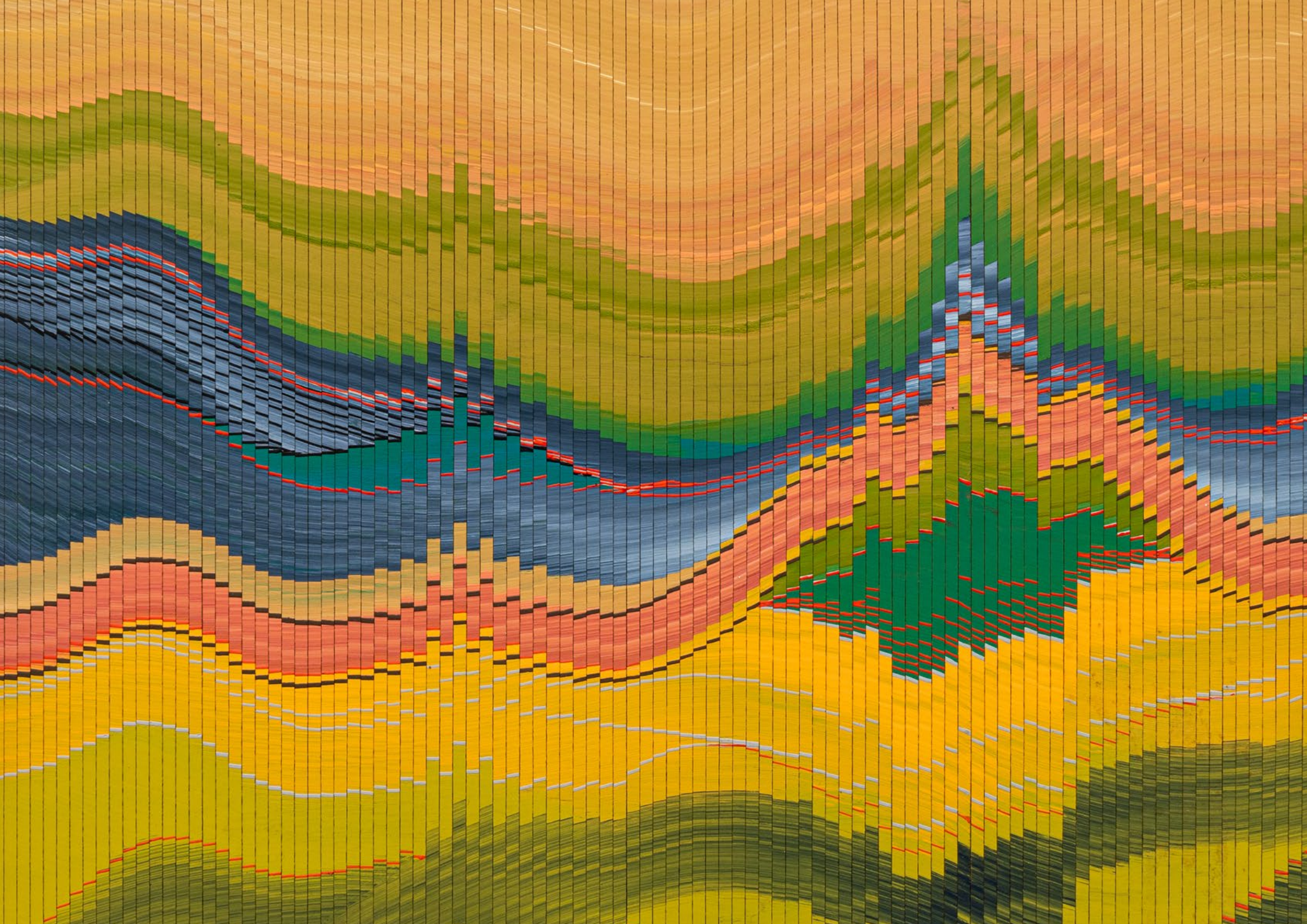


S-31, 2001
oil paint on wood
69,7 x 83,5 x 2,9 cm
27.4 x 32.9 x 1.1 in
Photo: Erika Mayumi



W-10, 2003
acrylic paint on wood
55,2 x 71,7 x 3,1 cm
21.7 x 28.2 x 1.2 in





Palatnik's point of departure is not the reticular model that dominates most constructivist and kinetic art. We could say instead that his work shows a continuity with landscape, or with its organic forms: undular, elliptical, turbulent. Contrary to the antinatural program of kineticism, nature subsists—it cannot be otherwise—in these works that use machinery to produce their effects. Particularly notable are his *Progressions* which produce effects of seriality and undulation by juxtaposing thin rectangular strips cut from jacaranda trunks and branches. In the context of the optical art of the 1960s, they stand out as isolated premonitory examples and are the basis for his landmark, late-painted wooden *W* compositions. The undulating configurations that recur in these works recall scientific representations of energy fields, continuous and discontinuous waves, reflecting reality in that both matter and space are energy fields in motion.

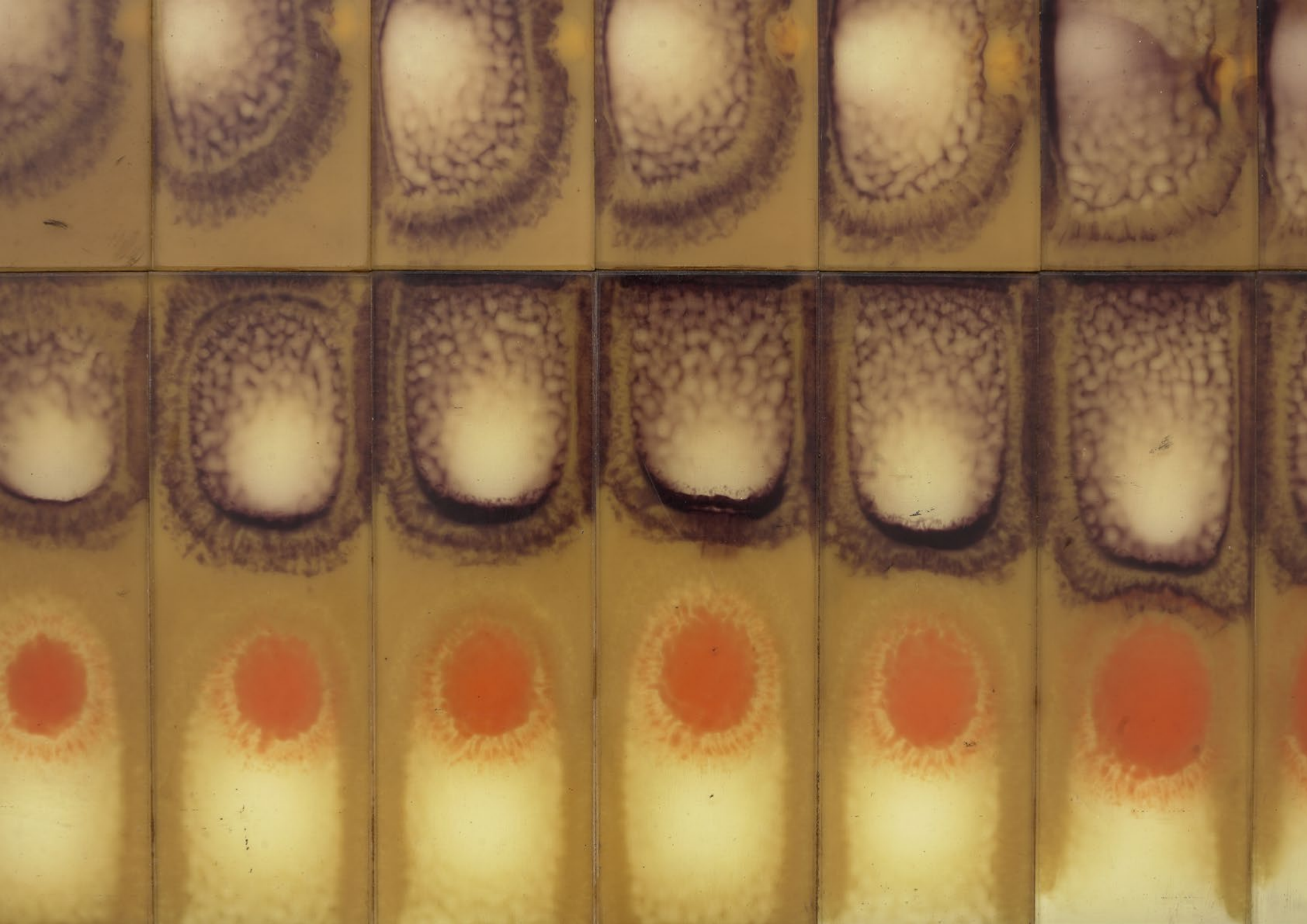


Progressão 60-A, 1965
Brazilian rosewood
58,4 x 141,8 x 3 cm
23 x 55.8 x 1.2 in
Photo: Erika Mayumi



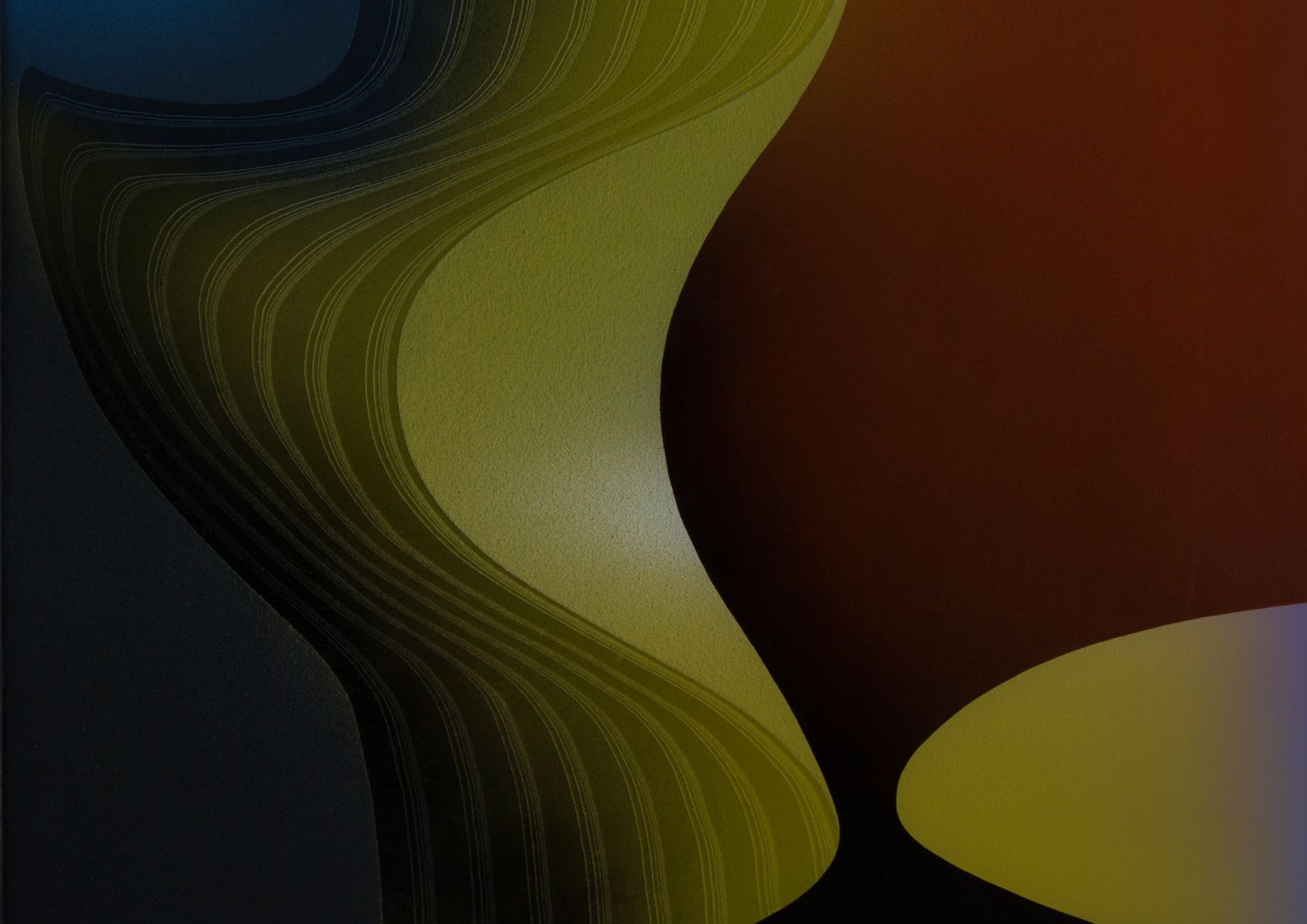


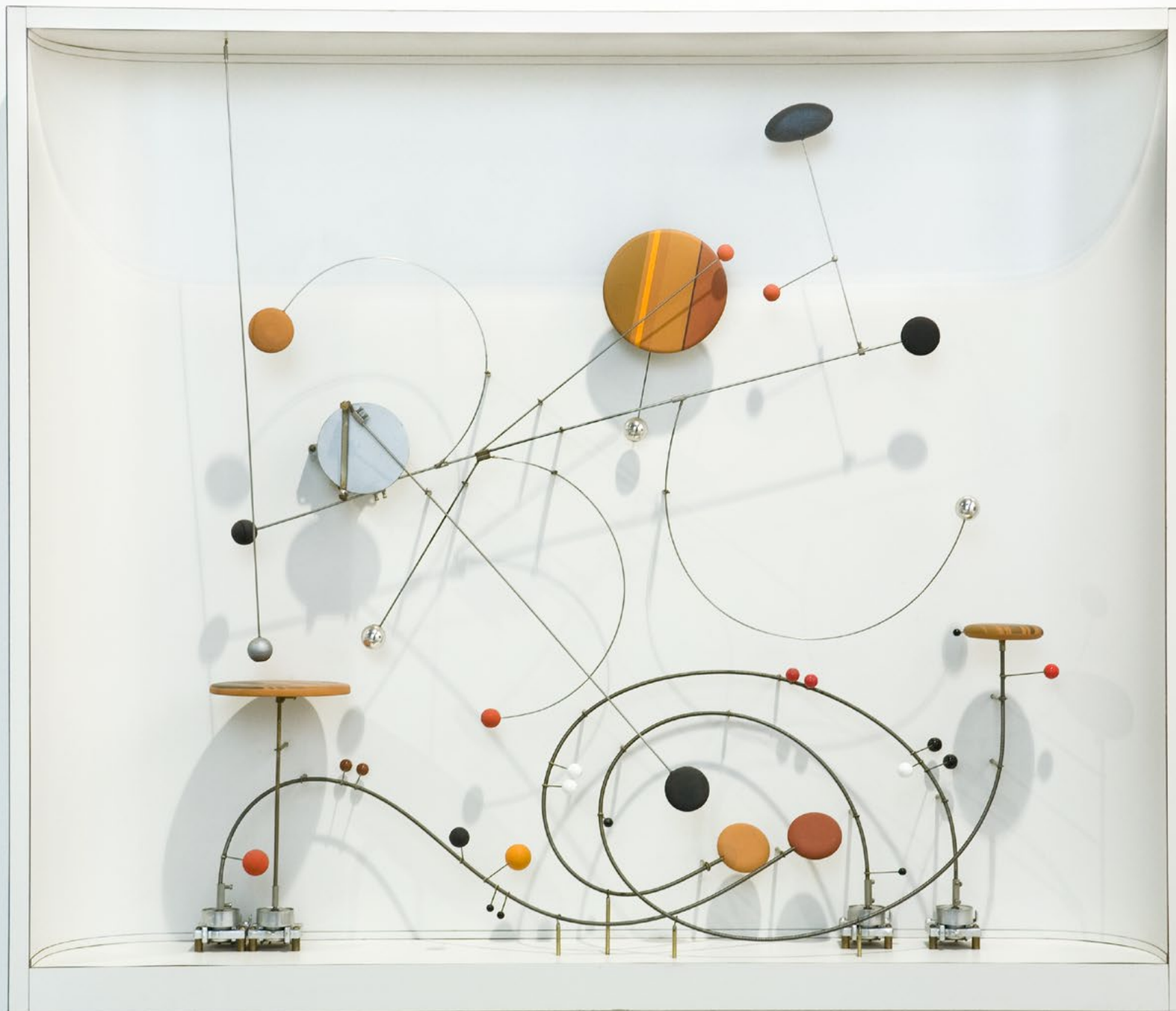
RS-7, 1975
polyester sheets
59,5 x 38,7 cm
23.4 x 15.2 in
Photo: Flávio Freire





Untitled, 1963
friable ink on glass
65 x 74,5 x 6 cm
25.6 x 29.3 x 2.4 in





Kinetic Object C-15,
1969/2001
engine, paint, formica,
wood, metal and magnets
77 x 90,5 x 15 cm
30.3 x 35.6 x 5.9 in

exhibition view
Abraham Palatnik,
Nara Roesler São Paulo, Brazil, 2012
Photo: Everton Ballardin





Untitled, 1968
cardboard
19,5 x 19,2 x 4,3 cm
7.7 x 7.6 x 1.7 in
Photo: Erika Mayumi



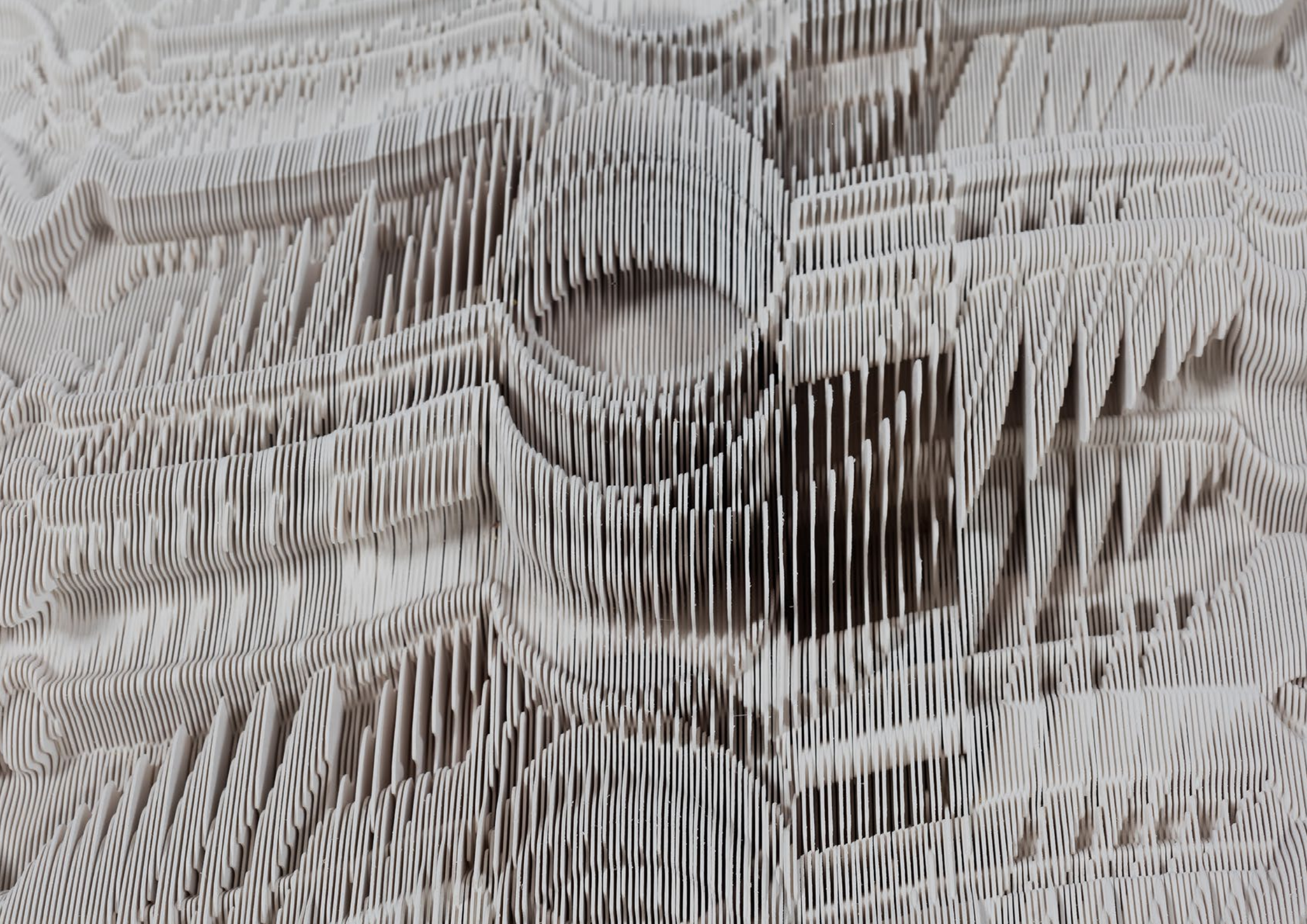
Objeto Cinético, 1968/2006
wood, formica, magnets, metal,
motor and industrial paint
203 x 115 x 41 cm
79.9 x 45.3 x 16.1 in
Photo: Flávio Freire





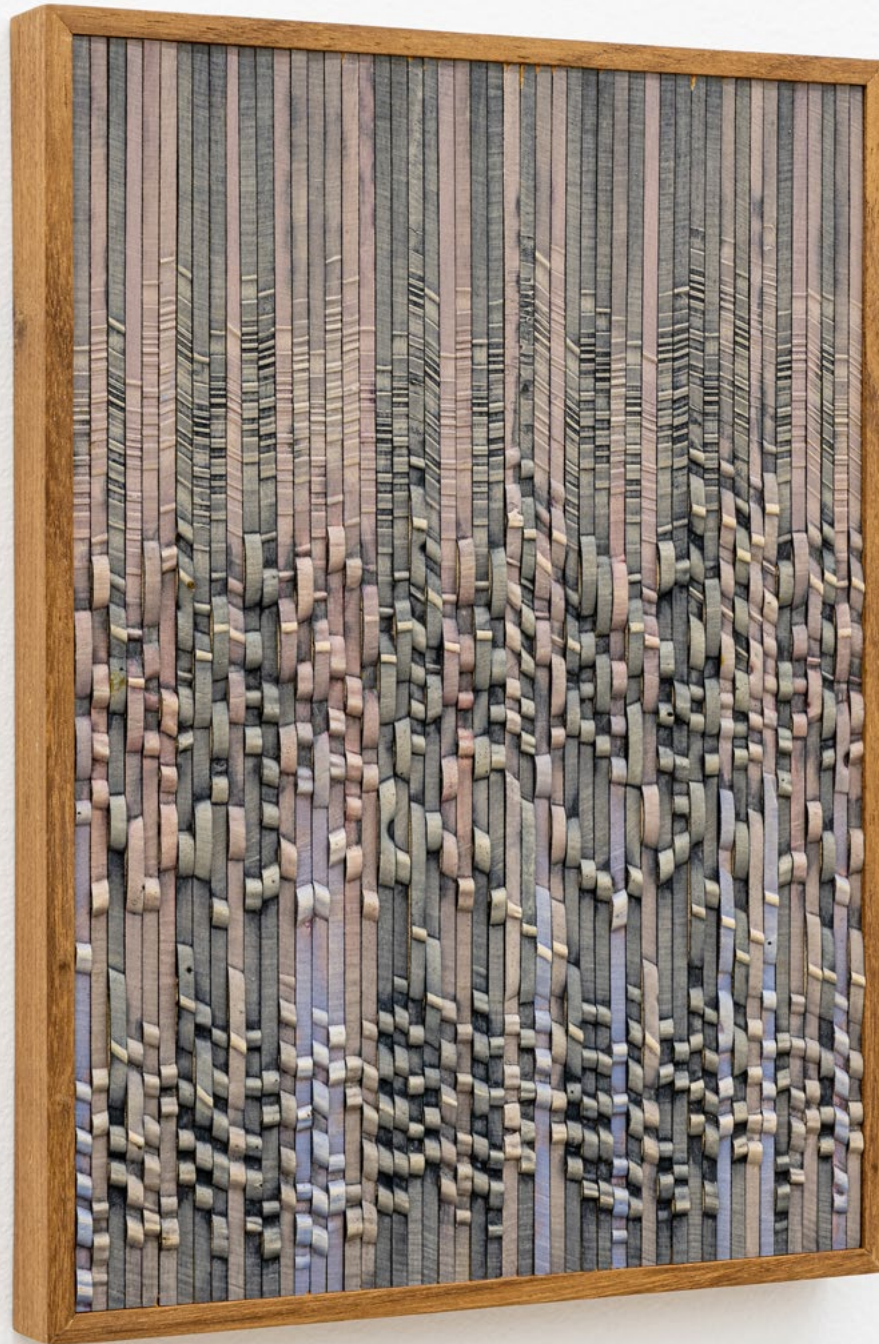


Untitled, 1987
progressive relief on duplex
paperboard and wood
67 x 60 cm
26.4 x 23.6 in
Photo: Pat Kilgore



Untitled, 1997
wood relief
36,4 x 26,8 x 3 cm
14.3 x 10.6 x 1.2 in
Photo: Erika Mayumi

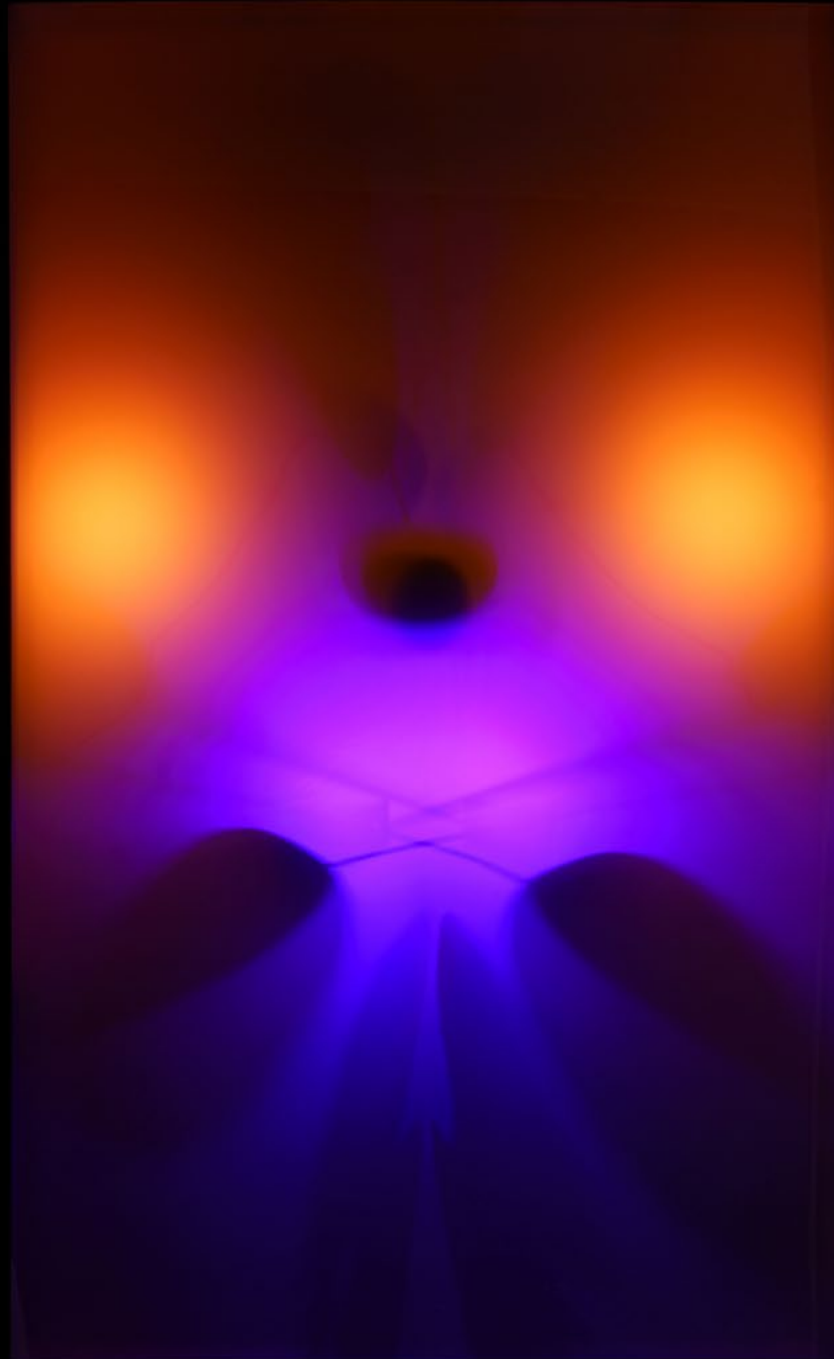




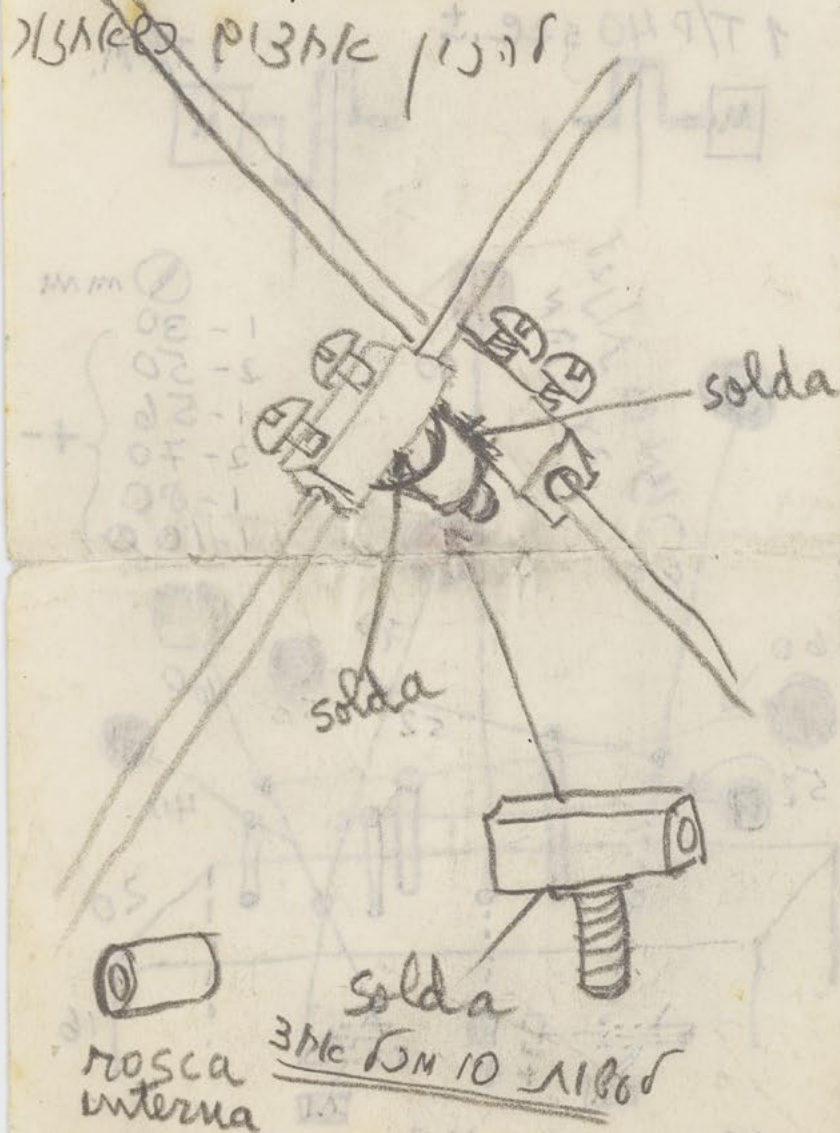


The *Kinechromatic Devices* are among the earliest examples of light boxes. Their translucent skin allows the viewer to see not the machine itself, or its parts, but the exact opposite: the other face of cinema—not the halo of light in which cinema's projected frames so dynamically arrive but shadows and illuminated forms emerging from within and behind a screen that serves as a filter, darkening a light that moves, veiled, in hiding, and manifests itself to us transformed. On the contrary, the *Kinetic Objects* are mechanically moving compositions, automatic mobiles, as if the inner dimension of the *Kinechromatic* were suddenly exposed. These two typologies encompass Palatnik's production between 1950 and 1969. They feature undulating elements already visible in his earliest landscapes and that appear throughout his entire work in paintings on glass, as well as in his landmark and overarching series of vibrational *Progressions*.

Kinechromatic Device
(*Vertical Sequence S-30*), 1950s
wood, metal, screws, plastic,
light bulbs, synthetic fabric
and electrical components
112,7 x 70,8 x 21 cm
44.4 x 27.9 x 8.3 in
Photo: Flávio Freire



Quinta-feira, 1 de Setembro de 1949



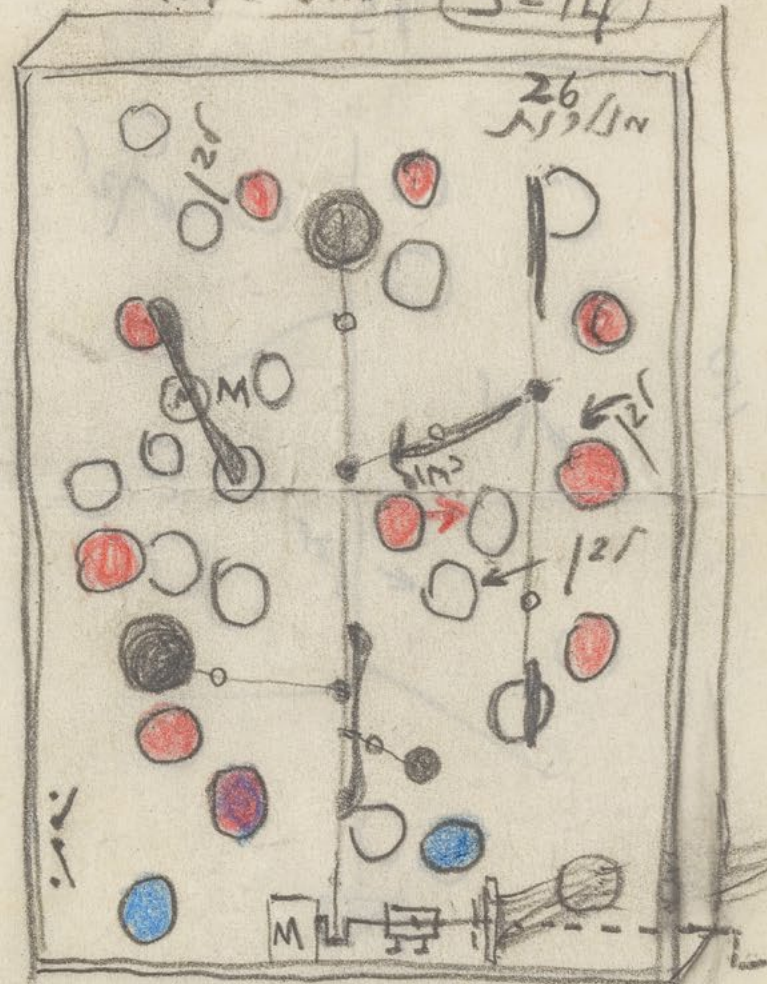
Quinta-feira, 25 de Agosto de 1949

abril 1956

1957

1/15/18

S-14



dois ou trez metros

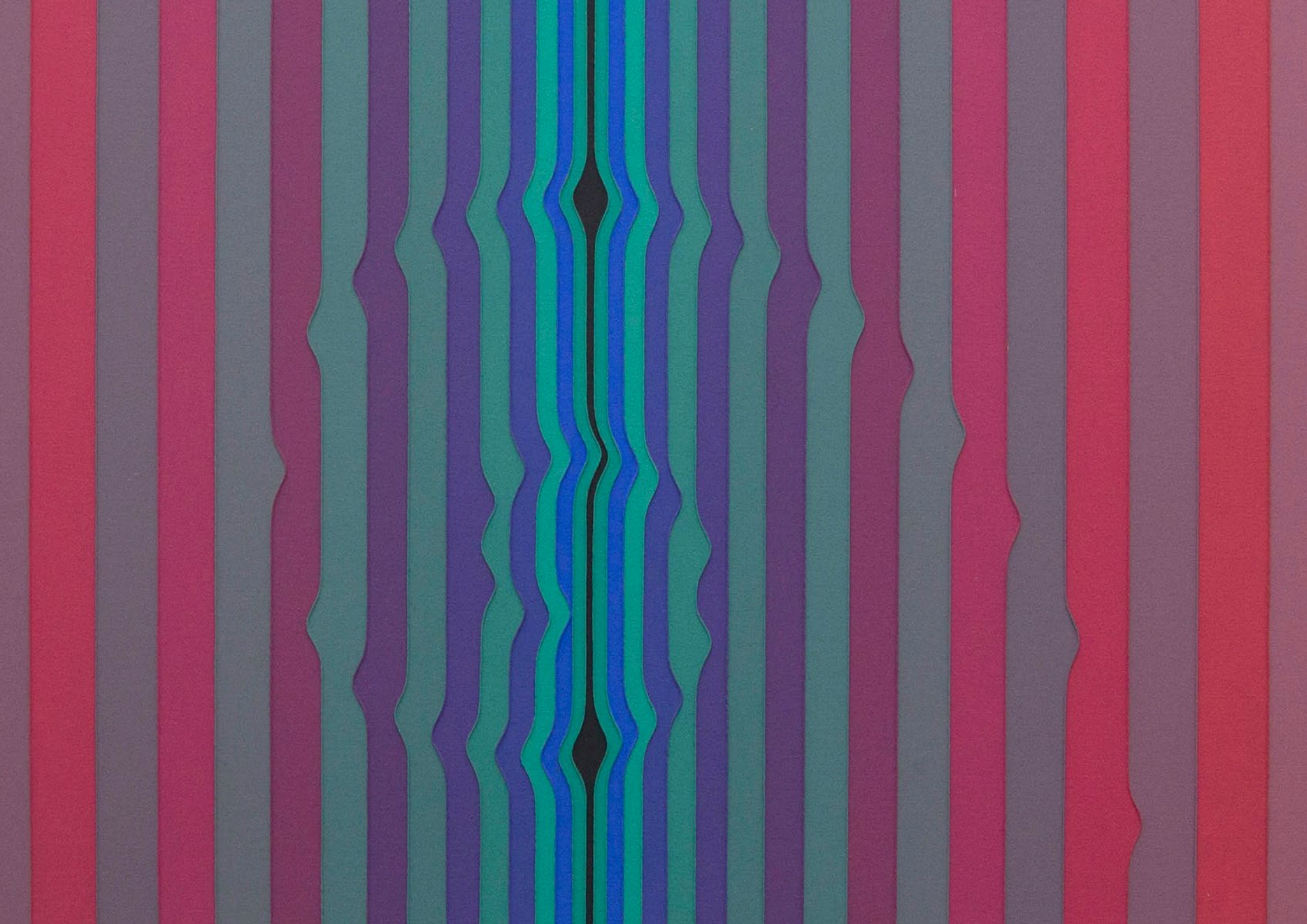
1 R.M. 50 Hz
110V

P131K

S2. MAURO 3 PM.

Untitled, 1991
acrylic paint on canvas
100 x 100 x 3,5 cm
39.4 x 39.4 x 1.4 in

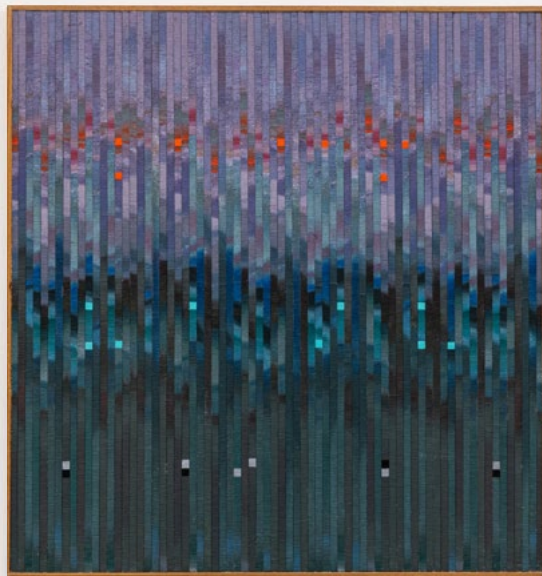




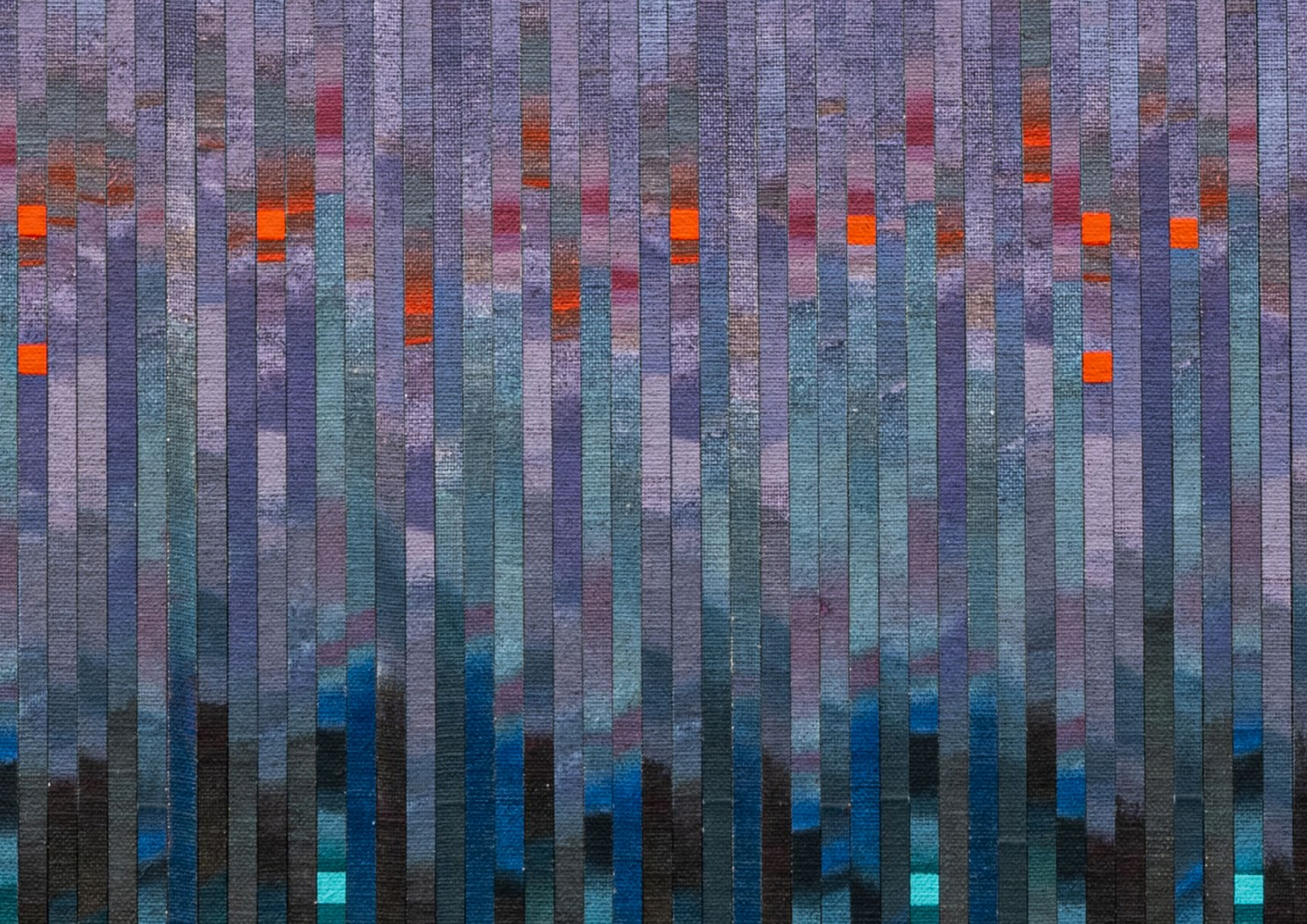
Progressão K-62, 1993
acrylic paint and ropes on canvas
100 x 100 x 4 cm
39.4 x 39.4 x 1.6 in







Untitled, 2003
acrylic paint on canvas
79,7 x 74,8 x 3,2 cm
31.4 x 29.4 x 1.3 in
Photo: Erika Mayumi

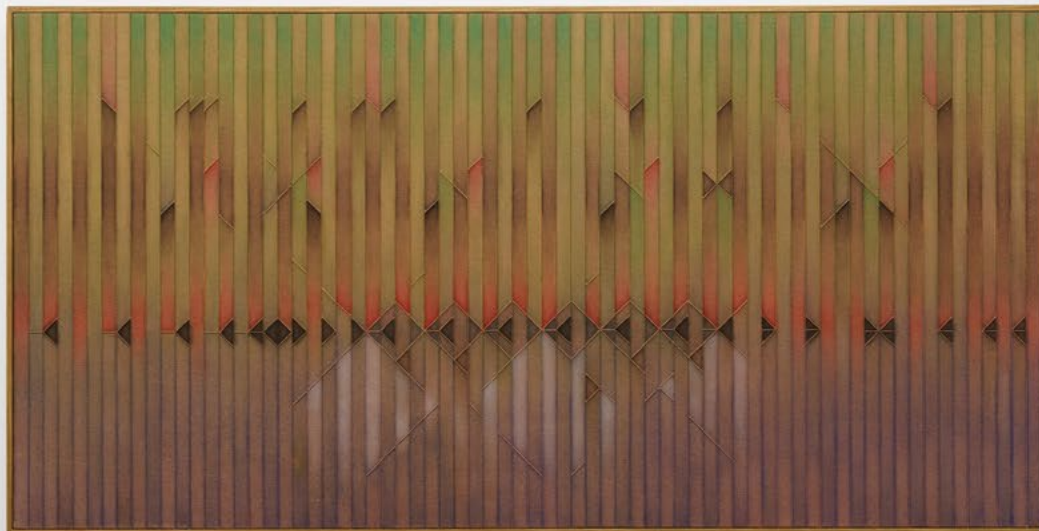


T-12, 2004
acrylic paint on canvas
110 x 120 cm
43.3 x 47.2 in





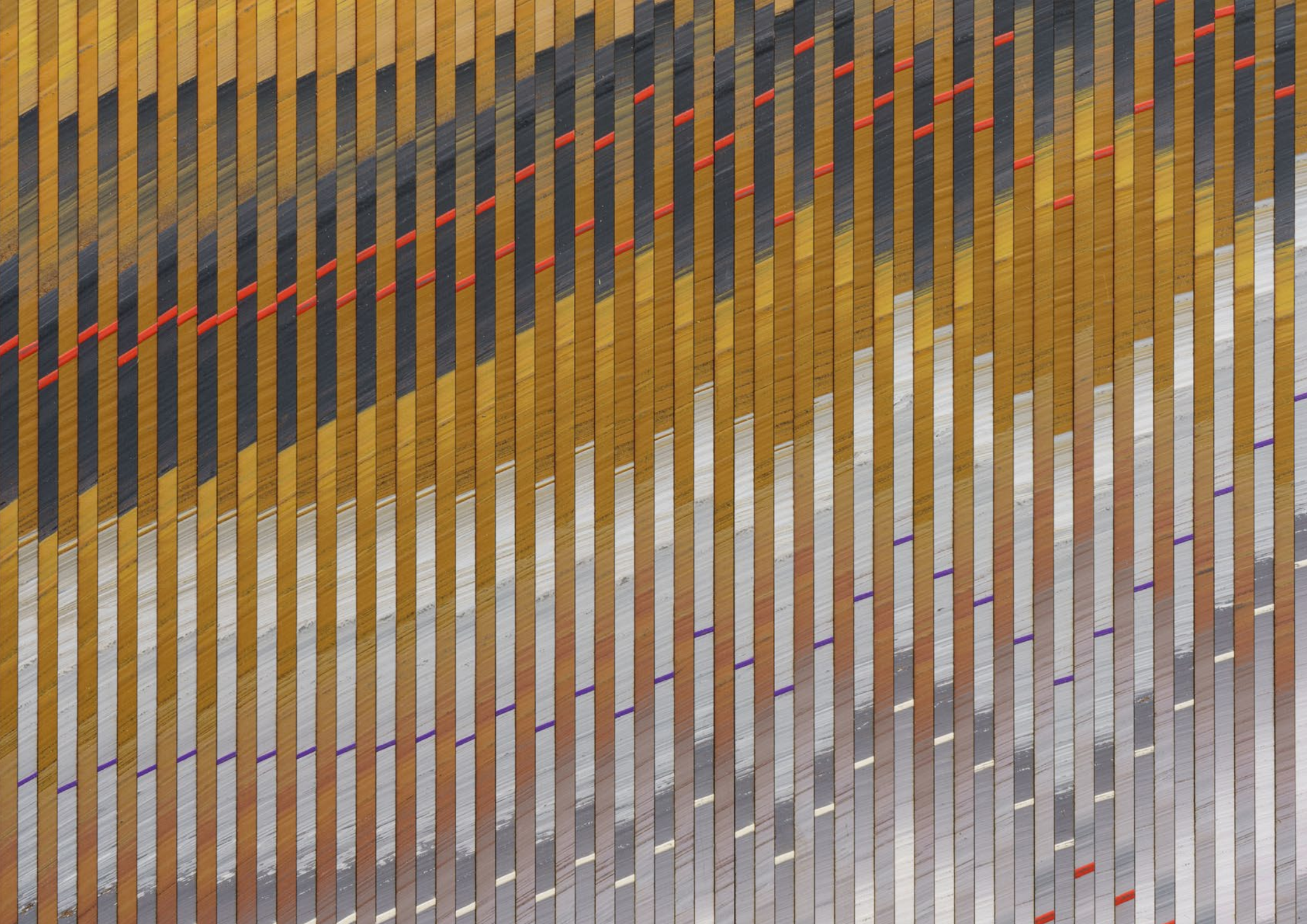
Untitled, 2002
acrylic and ropes on canvas
70,5 x 140 cm
27.8 x 55.1 in
Photo: Flávio Freire





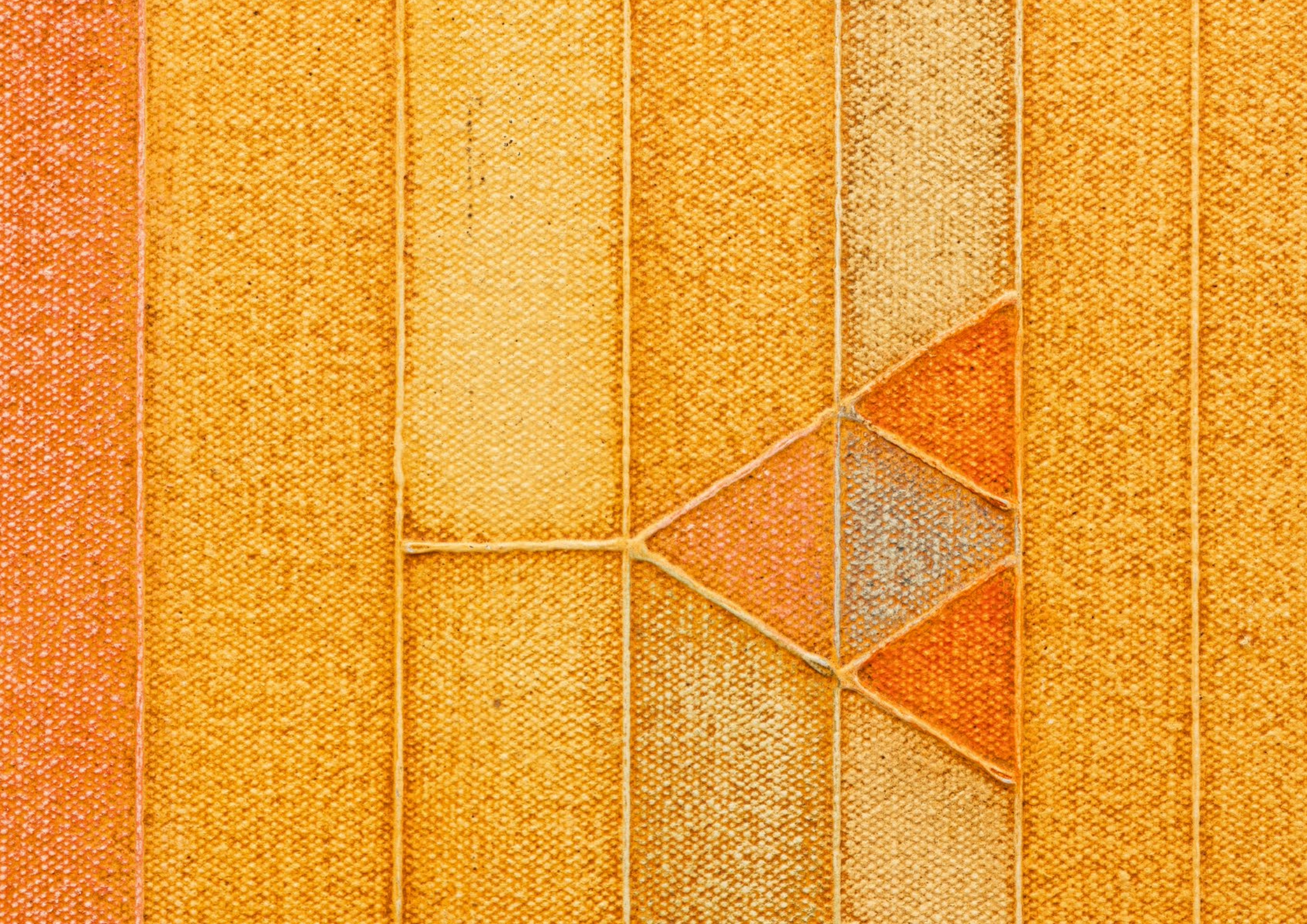


W-948, 2016
acrylic paint on wood
71,4 x 83,1 x 3,9 cm
28.1 x 32.7 x 1.5 in
Photo: Flávio Freire



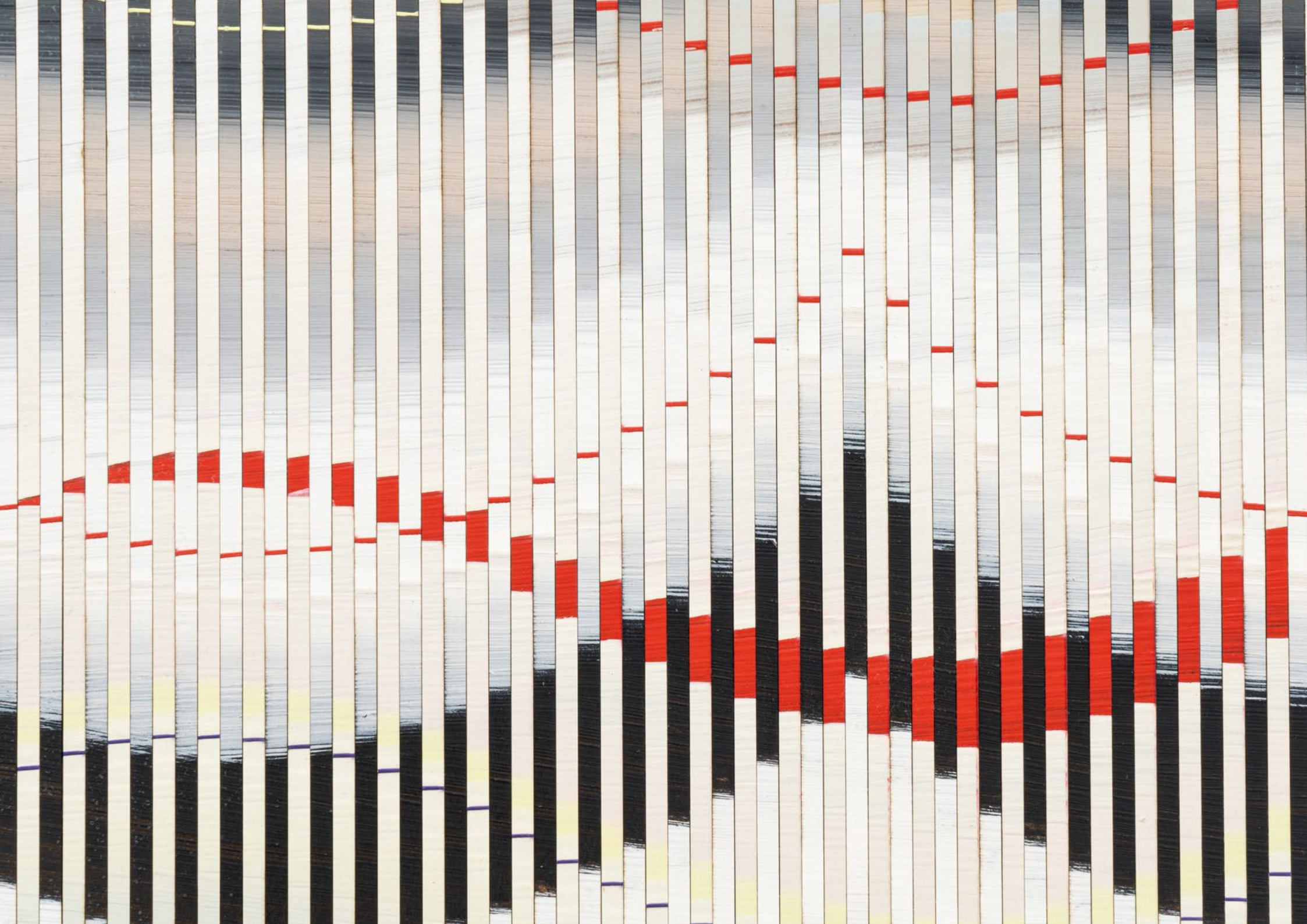


Untitled, 1993
canvas and threads
50,2 x 70,2 cm
19.8 x 27.6 in





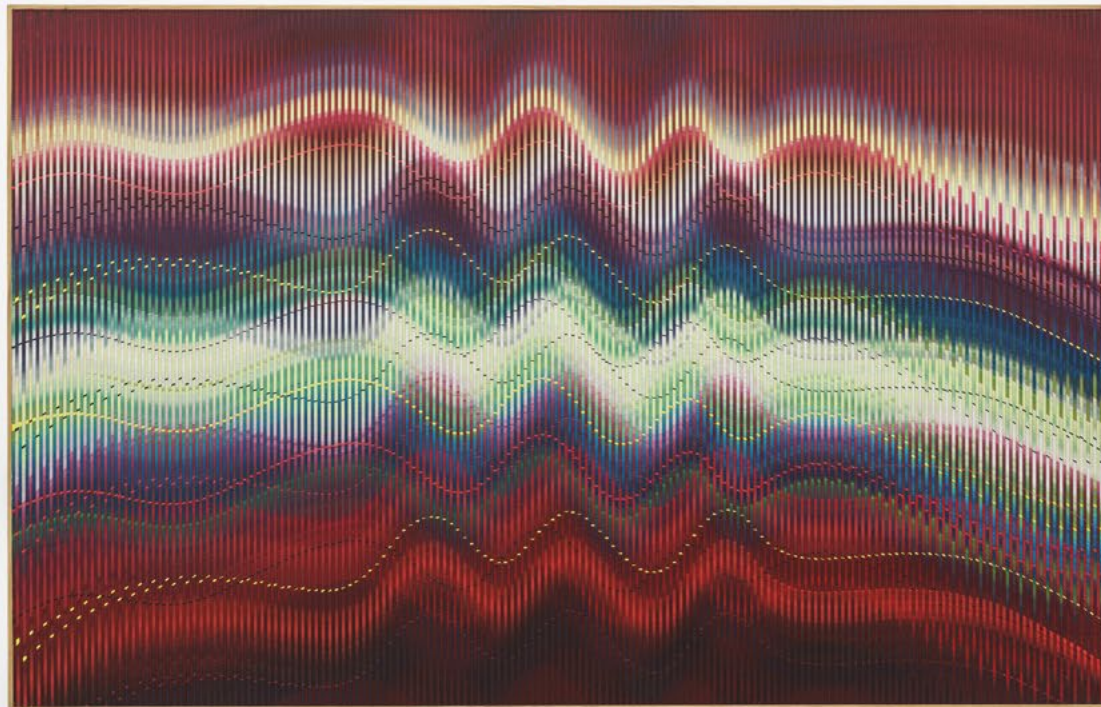
W-H/34, 2017
acrylic paint on wood
111 x 168,9 x 4 cm
43.7 x 66.5 x 1.6 in
Photo: Erika Mayumi

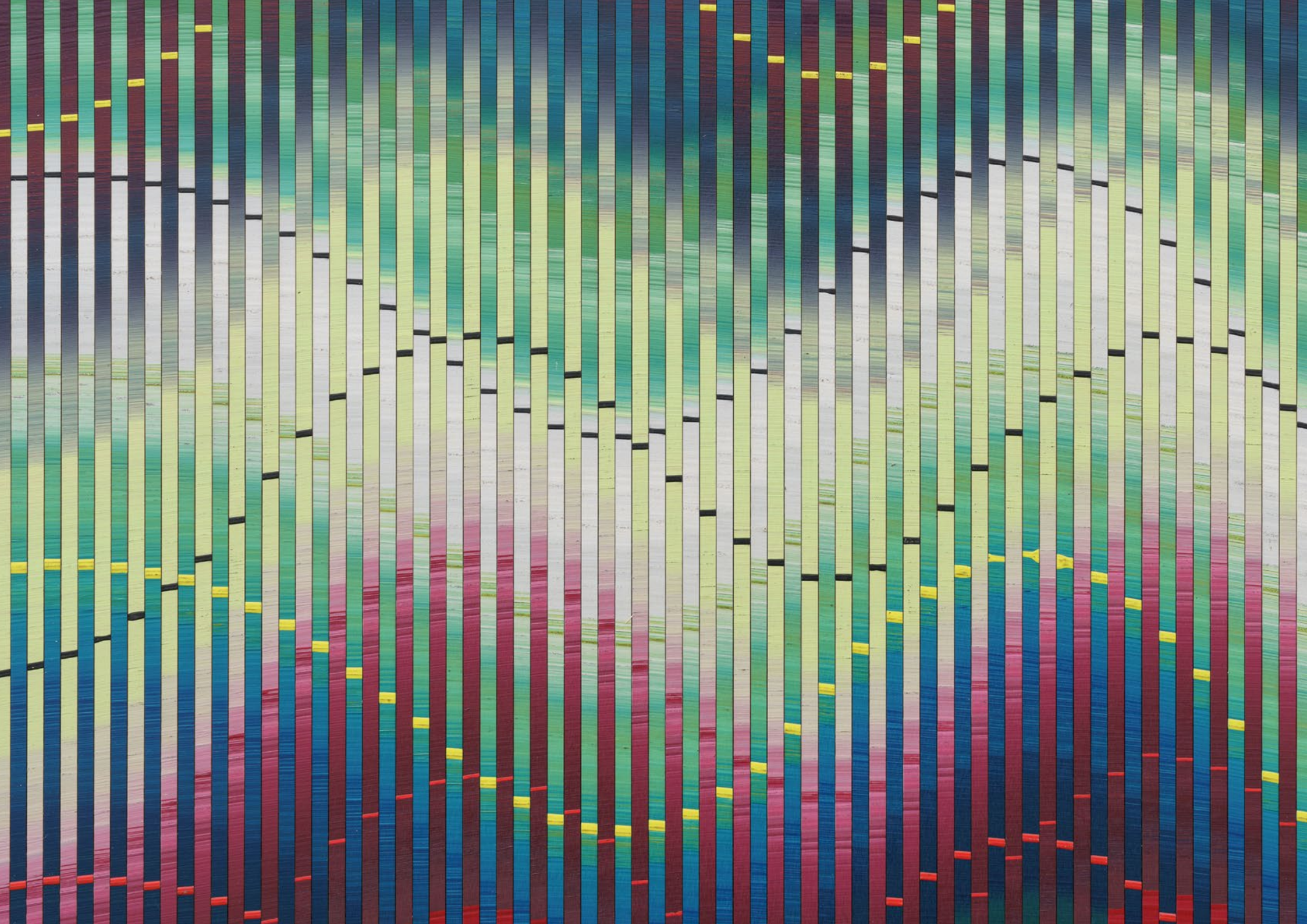


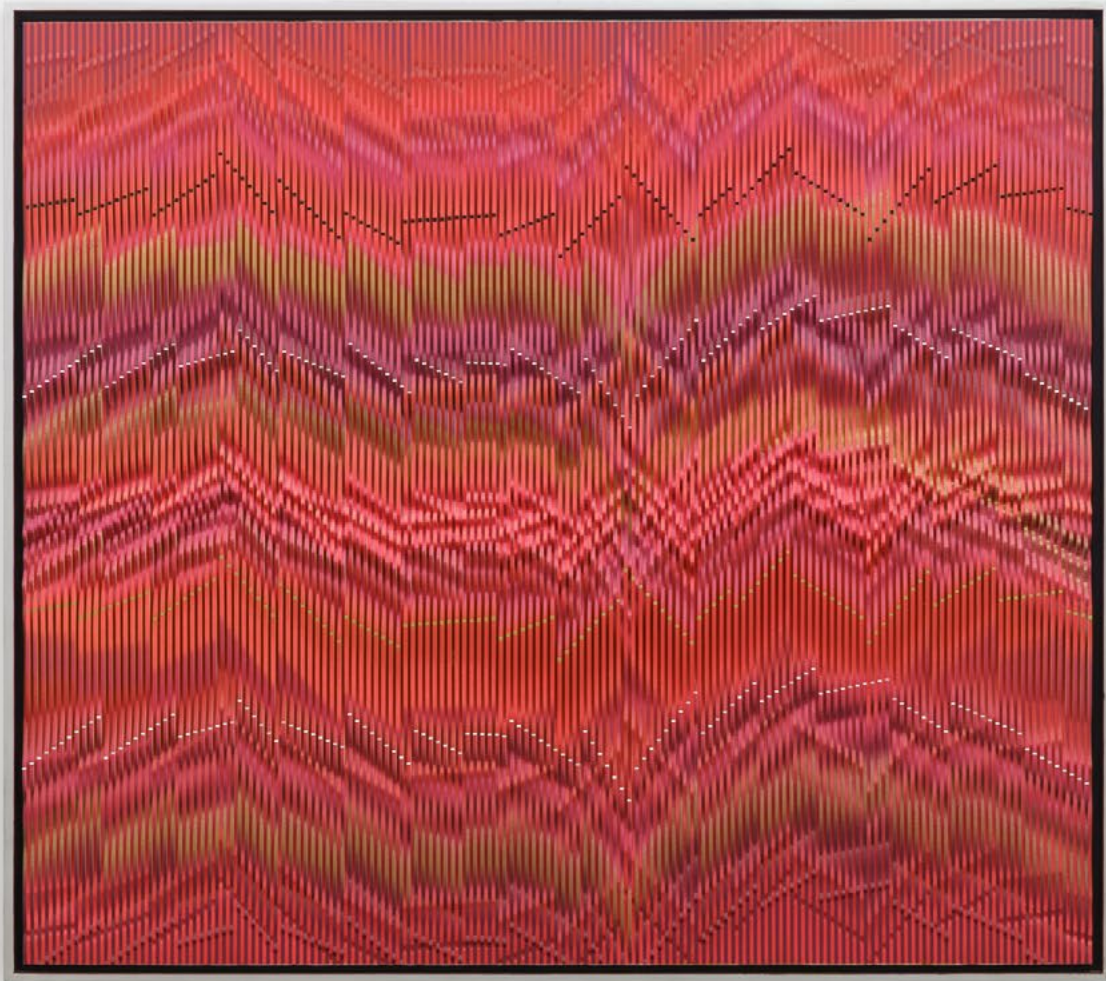
Abraham Palatnik working in his studio, 2013
photo © Vicente de Mello



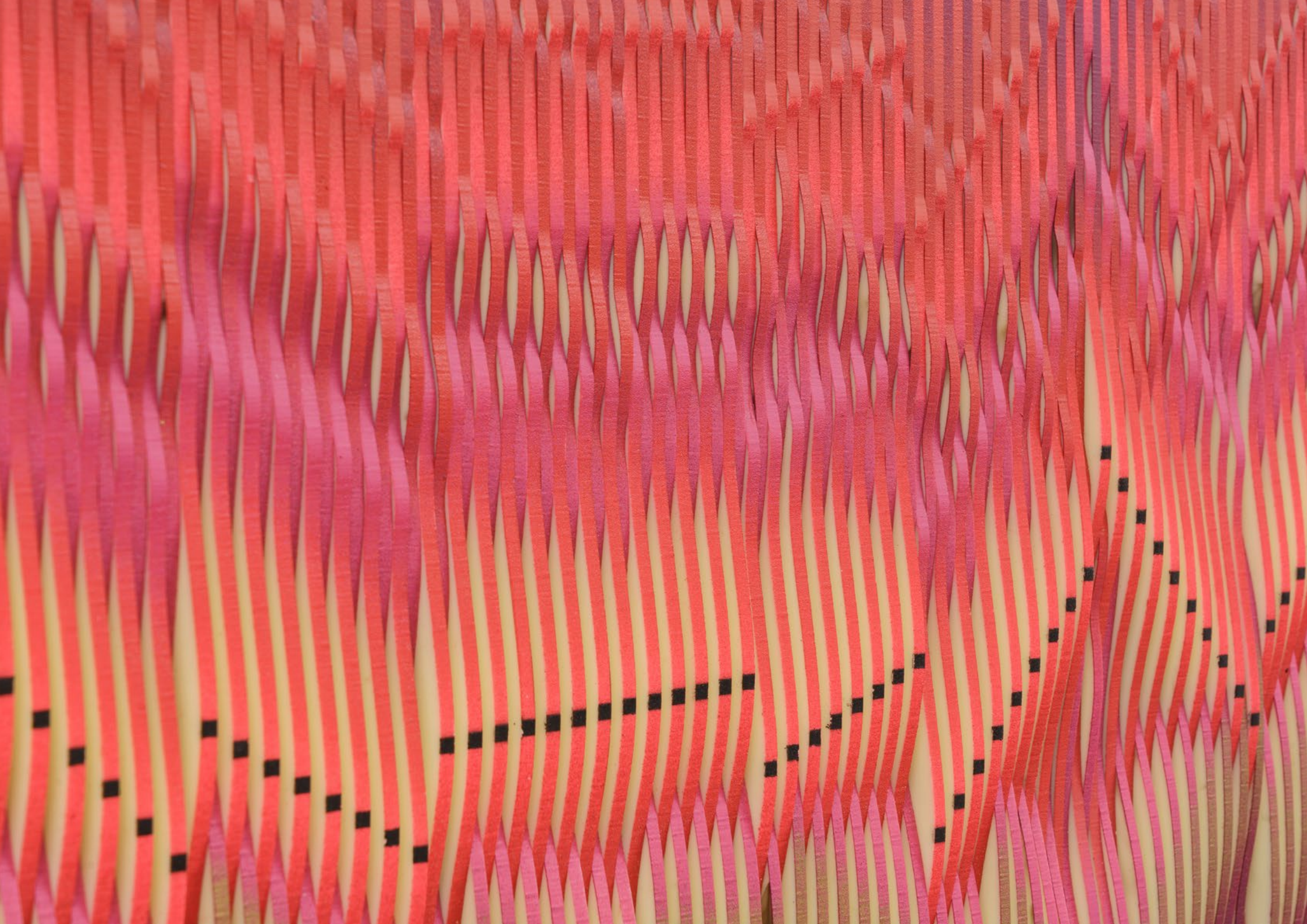
W-H180, 2019
acrylic paint on wood
109,5 x 171,8 x 4 cm
43.1 x 67.6 x 1.6 in
Photo: Flávio Freire

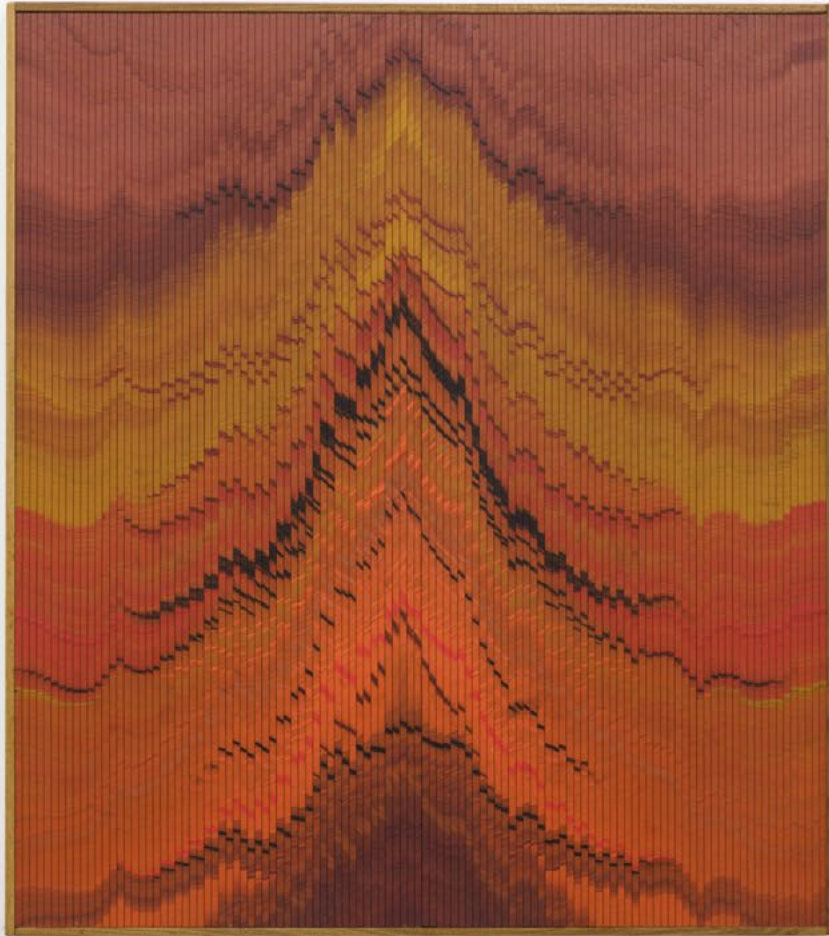






Untitled, 2019
alkyd paint on acrylic
79 x 90 cm
31.1 x 35.4 in
Photo: Flávio Freire





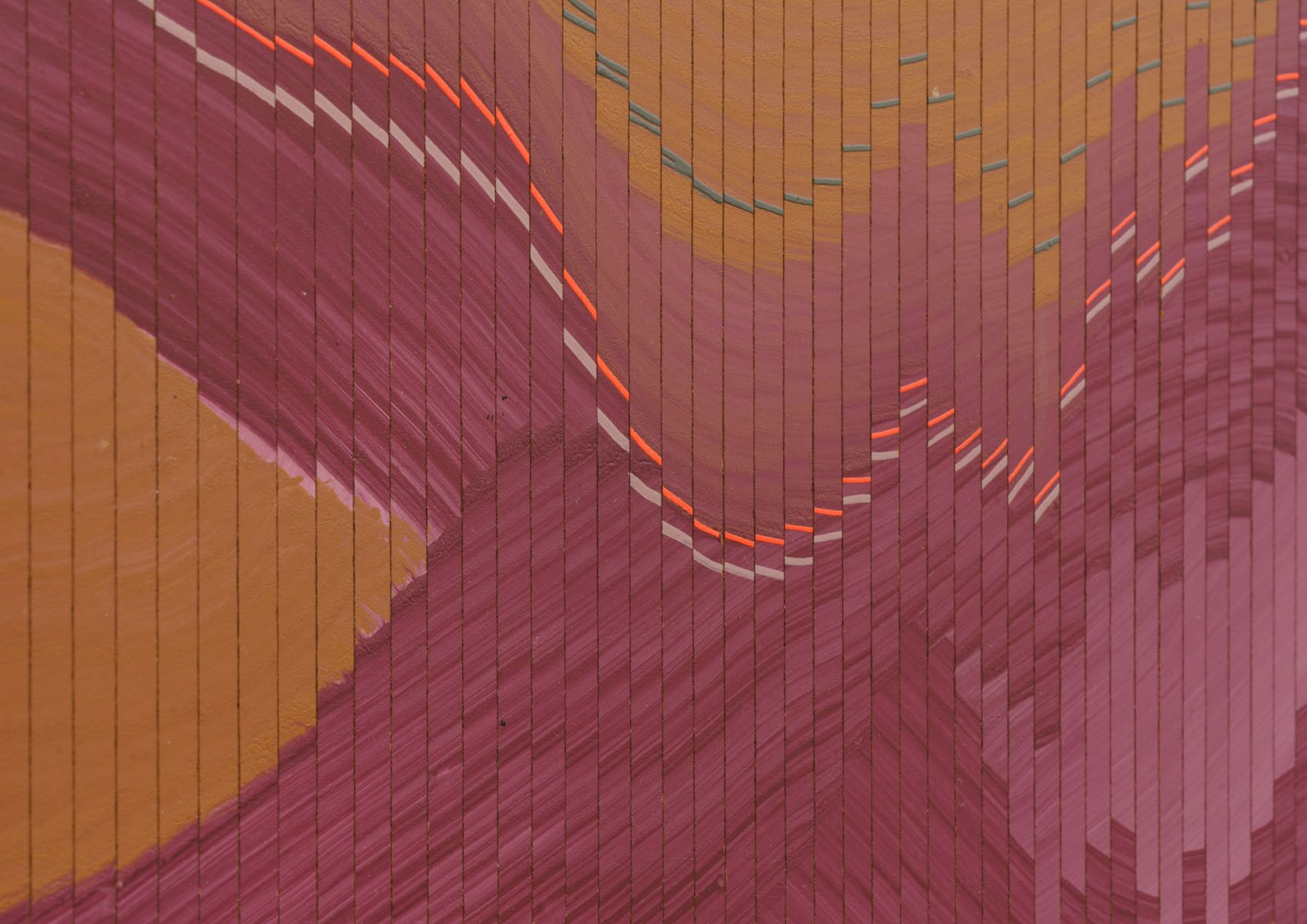
W-244, 2008
acrylic paint on wood
75,8 x 66,8 x 3 cm
29.8 x 26.3 x 1.2 in
Photo: Flávio Freire

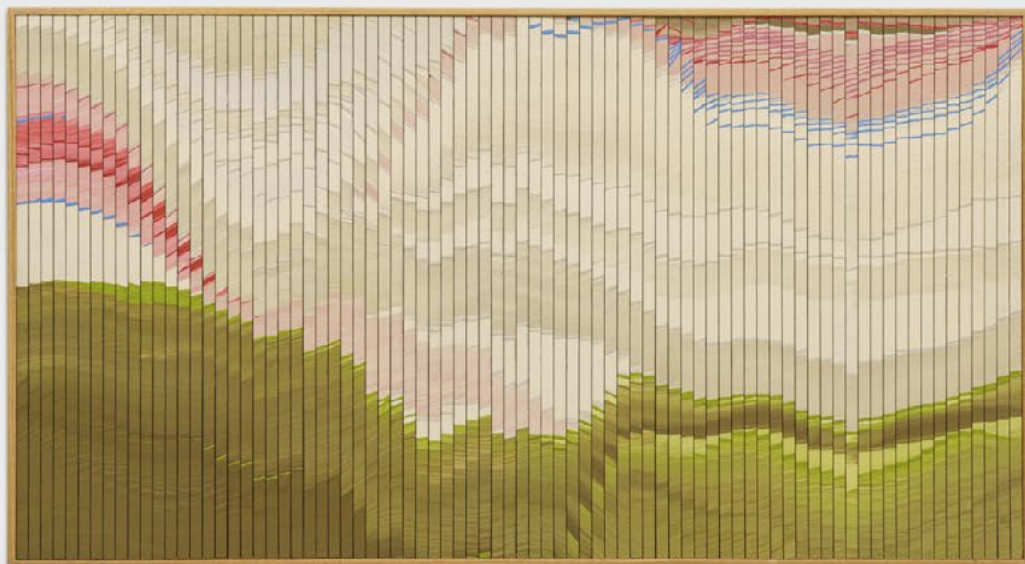




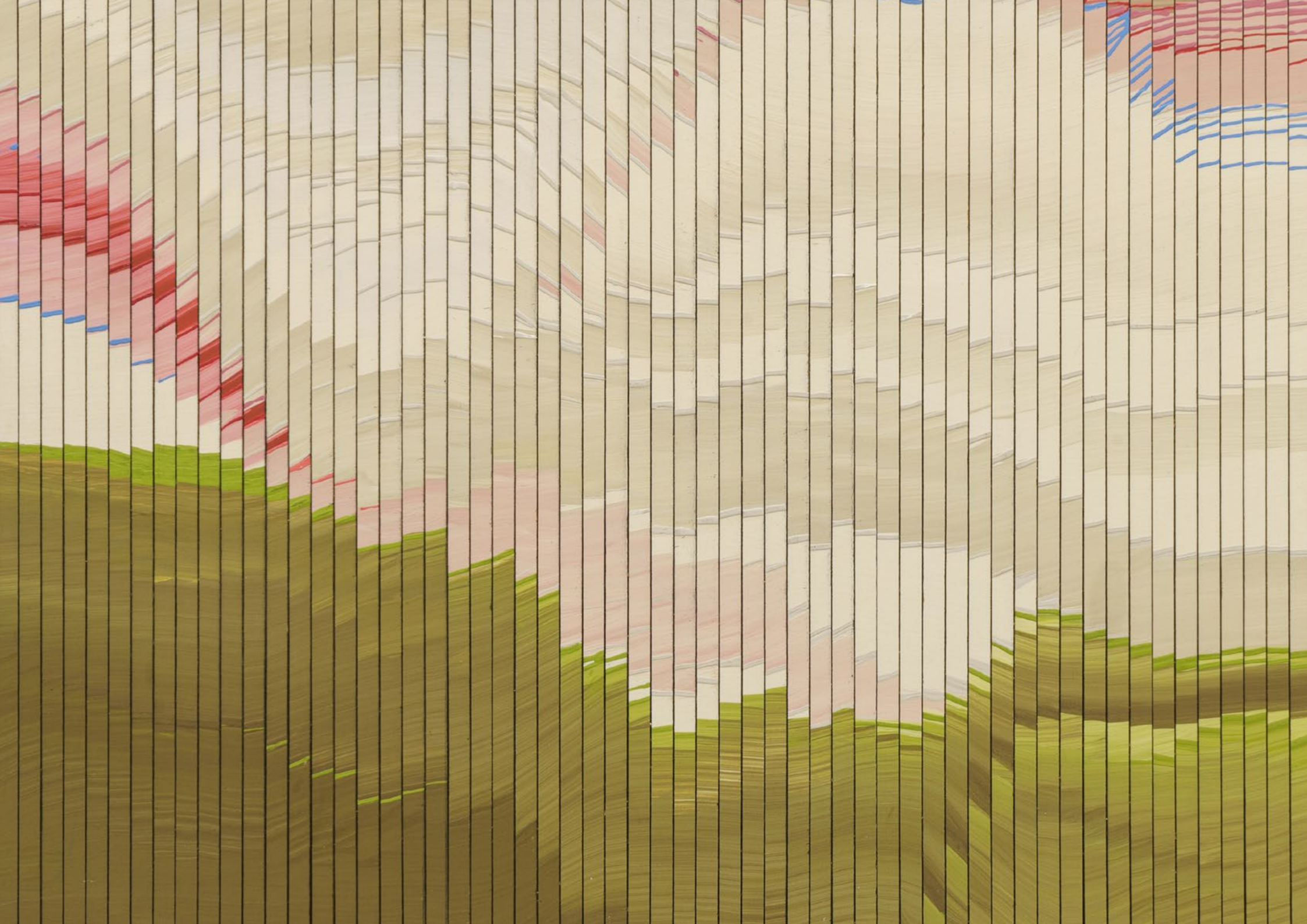


W-13, 2003
acrylic paint on wood
69,2 x 50,7 x 3,1 cm
27.2 x 20 x 1.2 in
Photo: Flávio Freire





W-424, 2003
acrylic paint on wood
44,7 x 81,8 x 3 cm
17.6 x 32.2 x 1.2 in
Photo: Flávio Freire





Kinetic Object CK-8, 1966/2005
engine, paint, formica, wood,
metal, acrylic and magnets
120 x 40 x 40 cm
47.2 x 15.7 x 15.7 in
Photo: © Vicente de Mello

vergalh. de latão (movimento)

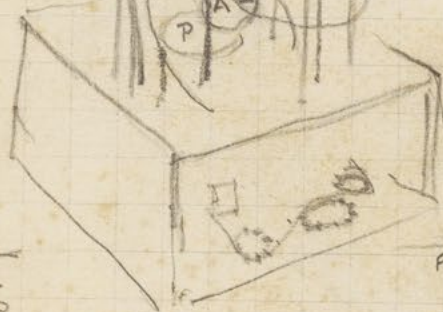
CK-8

11

- 1-52 cm
- 2-95
- 3-85
- 4-110
- 5-45
- 6-65
- 7-95
- 8-58

Suprimentos

- 5/32"-12 cm
- 3/16"-53 cm
- 5/32"-15
- 3/16"-38
- 5/32"-20
- 5/32"-15
- 5/32"-14
- 3/16"-24



- + - 12 a 13 seferas ?
- + - 14 discos ?
- + - 4-5 recortes ?

lâmpada com

Fazer teste
na escala
leve



Ferite BIPOLAR
Ferite

- 900
- (A) 92
- (B) 93
- (C) 55

2 a 3 motores
1 TPM. e 3 TPM.

entregar a FINK até 3/67 } cancelar
→ até dia 15

guardar as peças

exhibition view

Abraham Palatnik: *The Reinvention of Painting*,
CCBB-BH, Belo Horizonte, Brazil, 2021





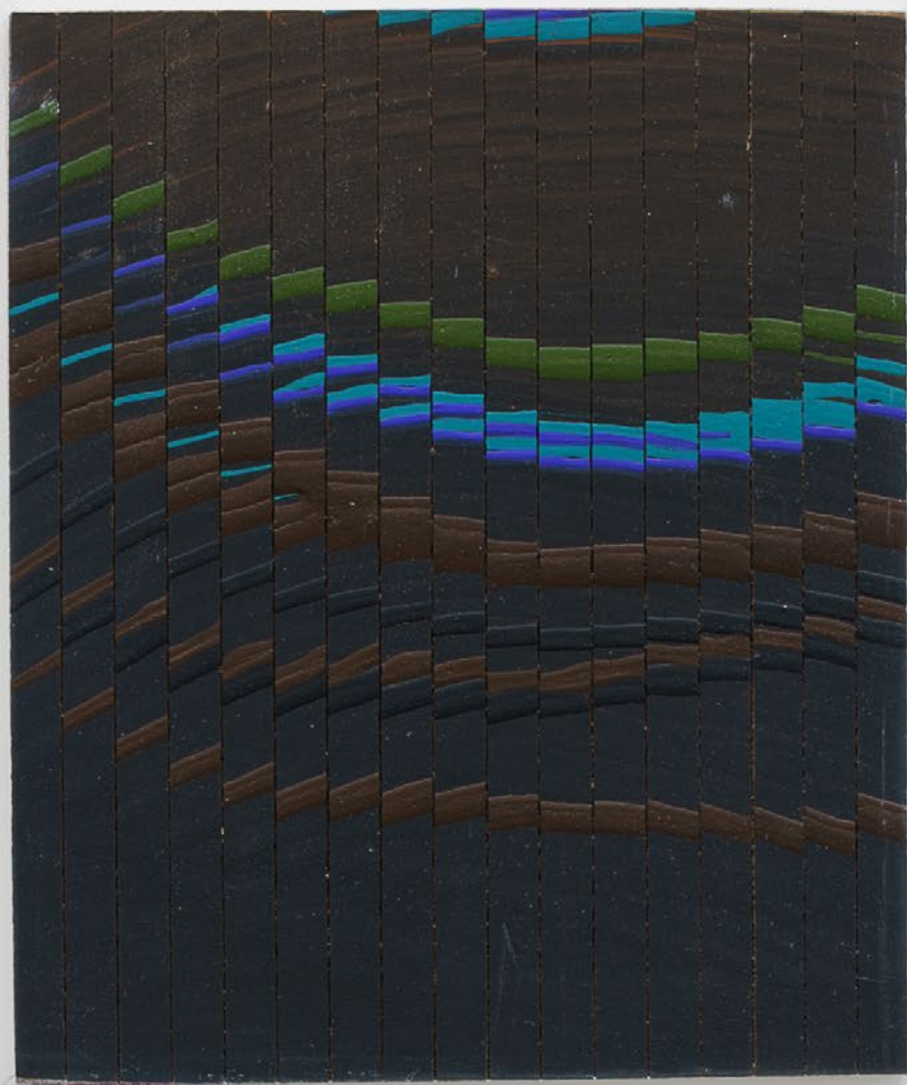
Untitled, 2017/2018
acrylic paint on wood
11,2 x 12 x 0,5 cm
4.4 x 4.7 x 0.2 in
Photo: Flávio Freire





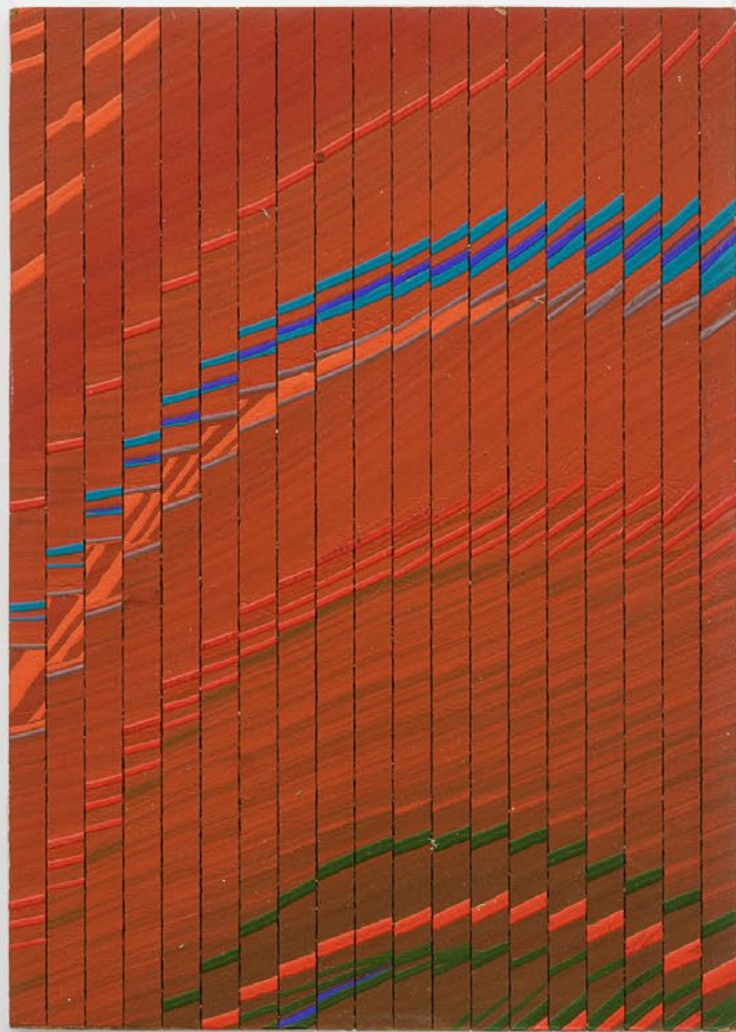
Untitled, 2017/2018
acrylic paint on wood
14,2 x 12 x 0,5 cm
5.6 x 4.7 x 0.2 in
Photo: Flávio Freire

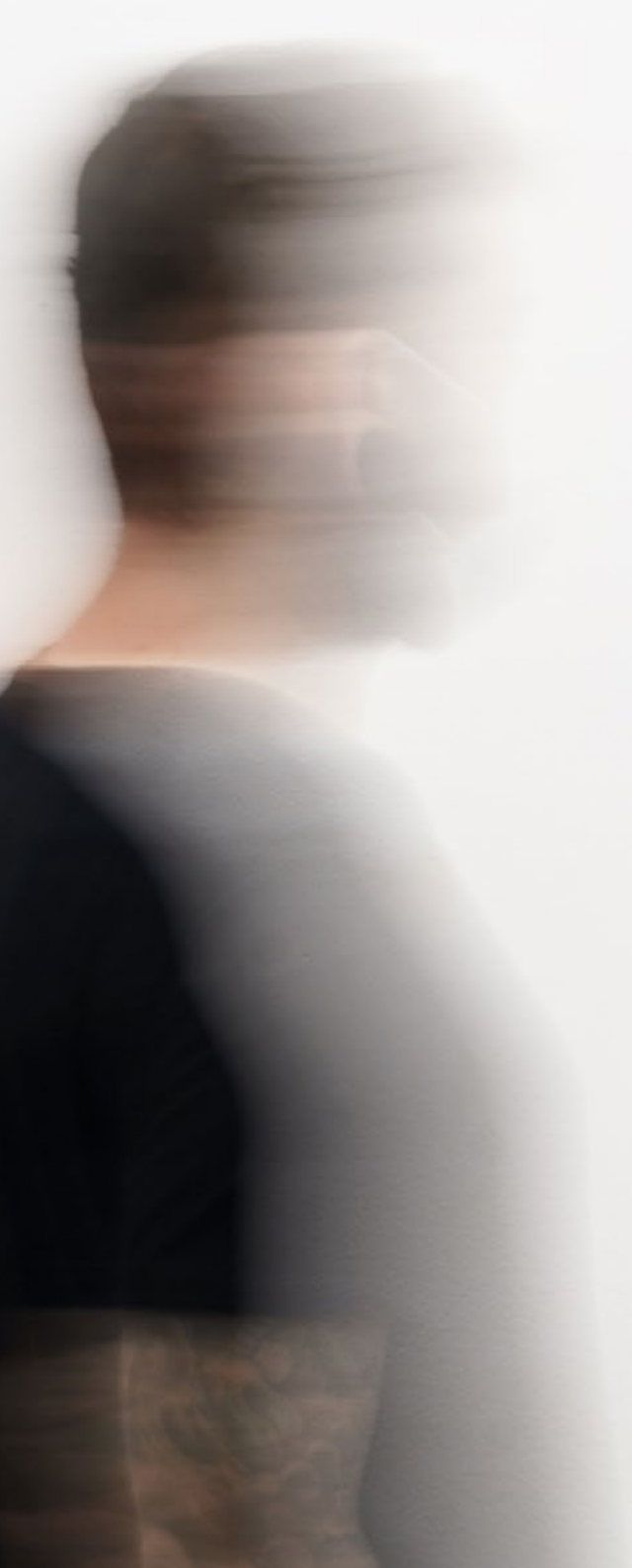




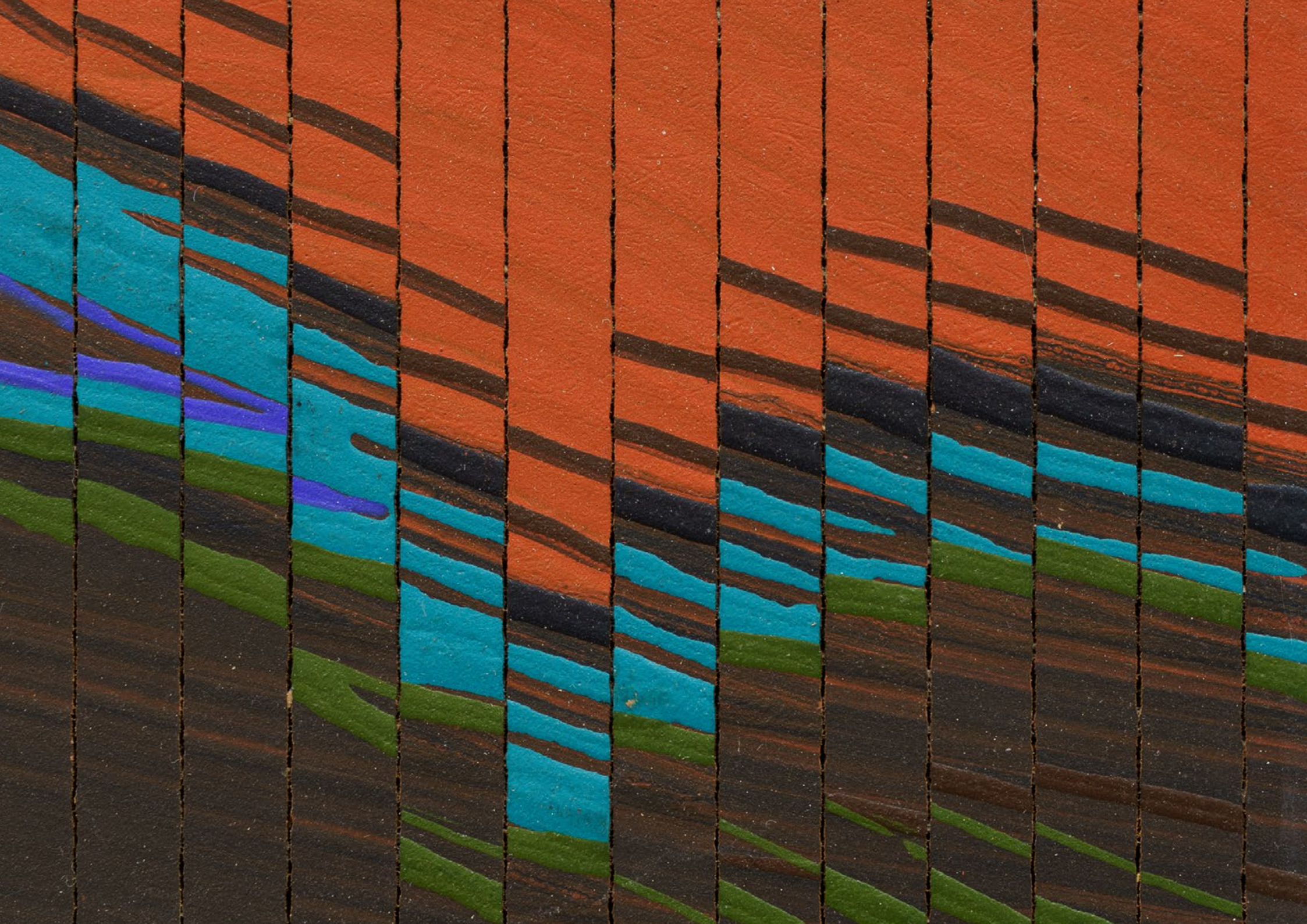


Untitled, 2017/2018
acrylic paint on wood
19,1 x 13,6 x 0,5 cm
7.5 x 5.4 x 0.2 in
Photo: Flávio Freire



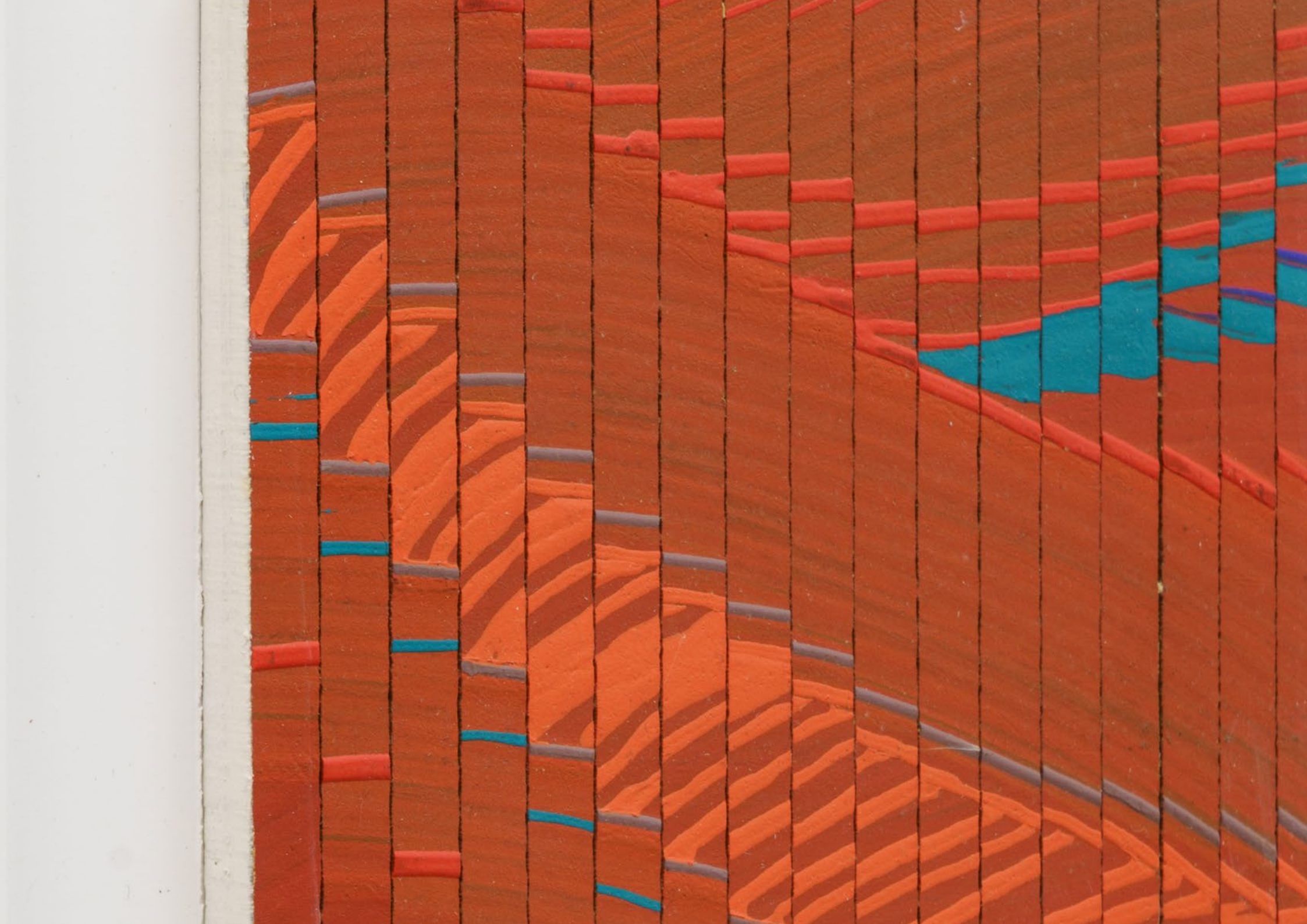


Untitled, 2017/2018
acrylic paint on wood
11 x 11 x 0,5 cm
4.3 x 4.3 x 0.2 in
Photo: Flávio Freire



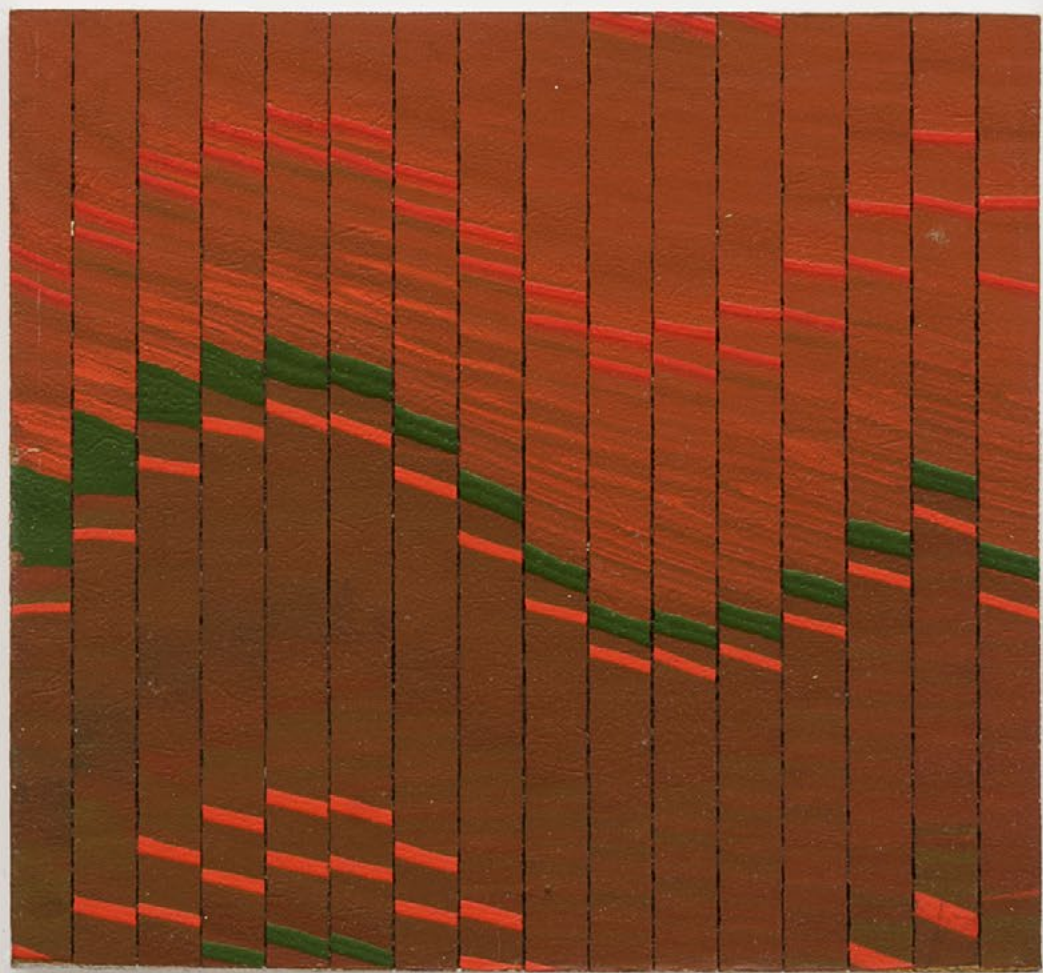


Untitled, 2017/2018
acrylic paint on wood
11,1 x 12 x 0,5 cm
4.4 x 4.7 x 0.2 in
Photo: Flávio Freire

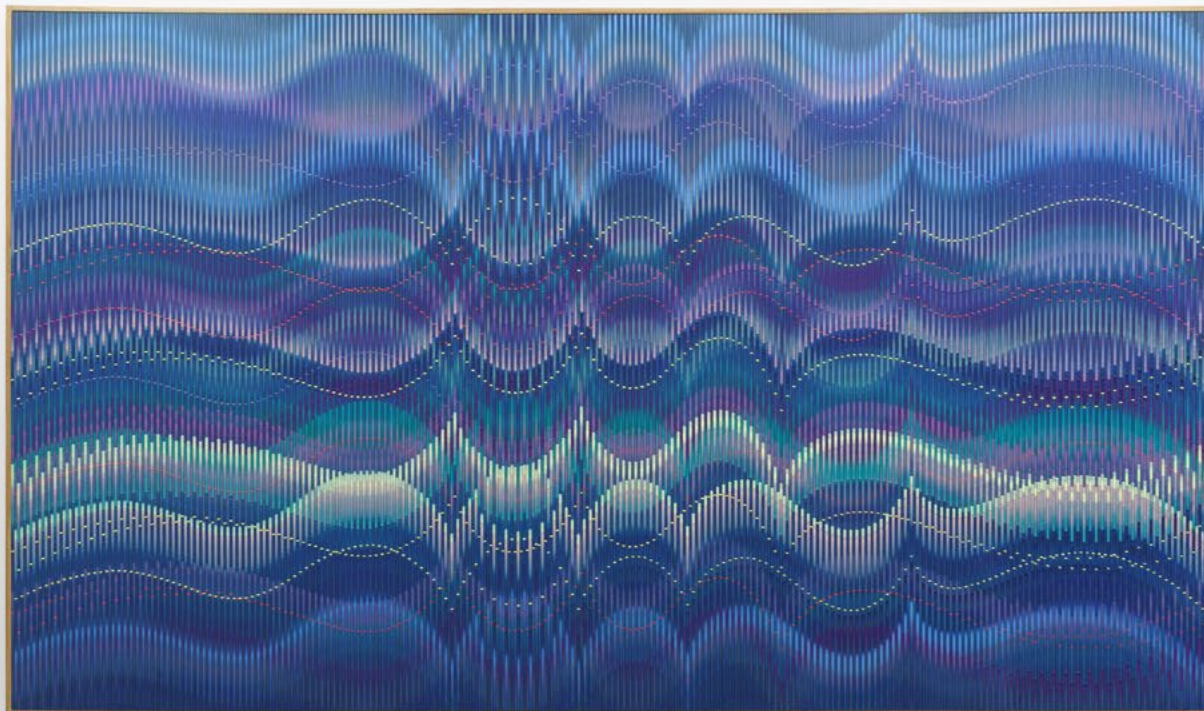


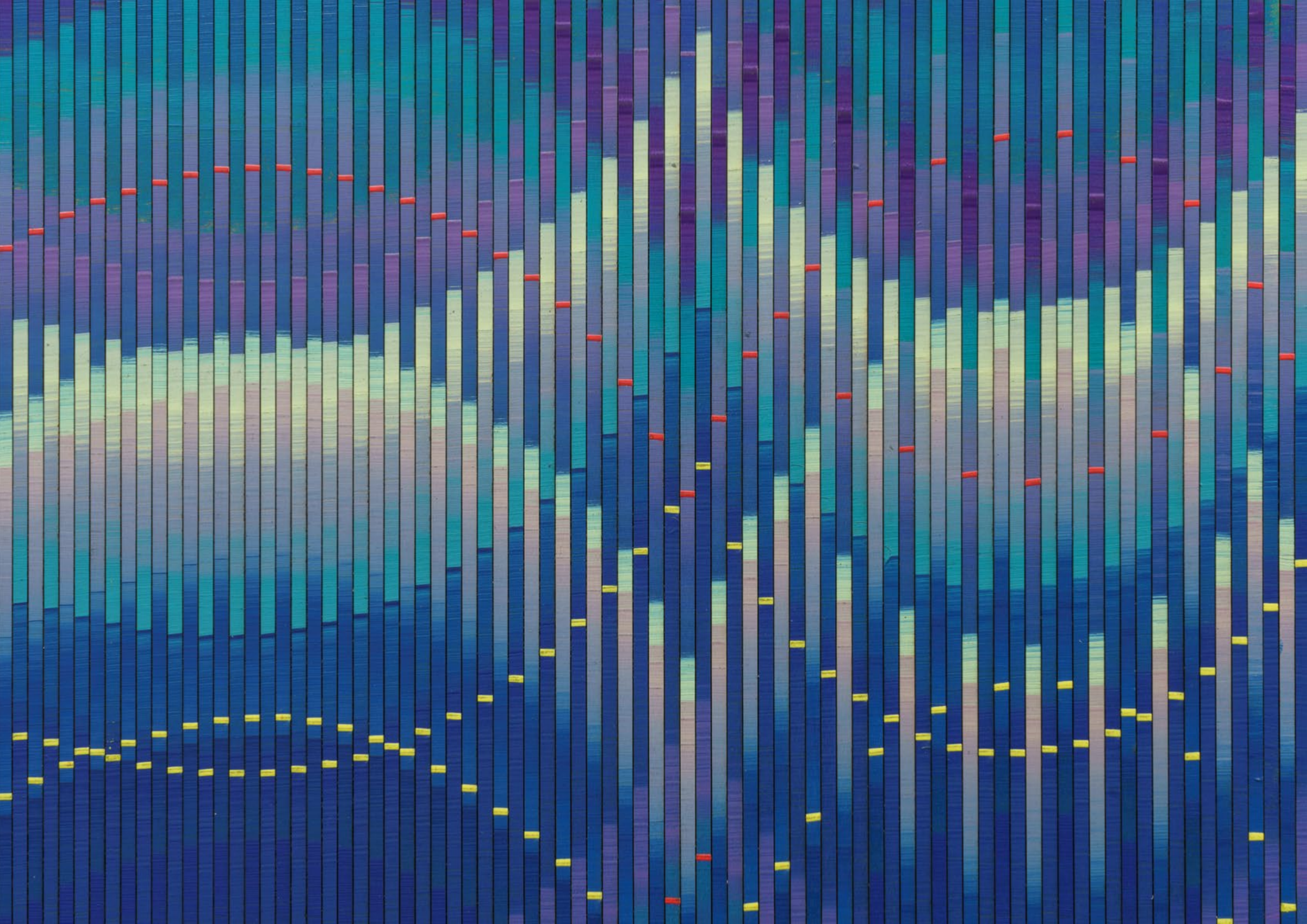


Untitled, 2017/2018
acrylic paint on wood
10,4 x 11,2 x 0,5 cm
4.1 x 4.4 x 0.2 in
Photo: Flávio Freire



W-HH/1, 2019
acrylic paint on wood
121,8 x 207,5 x 4,2 cm
48 x 81.7 x 1.7 in
Photo: Flávio Freire





Self Portrait, 1945
oil paint on canvas
46 x 30 cm
18.1 x 11.8 in
Photo: Everton Ballardin



abraham palatnik

b. 1928, Natal, Brazil

d. 2020, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Abraham Palatnik is an iconic figure in the optical and kinetic art movements of Brazil—a pioneer in his long-standing interest for exploring the creative possibilities embedded in crossings of art and technology. Having studied engineering, the artist became interested in investigating mechanical uses of light and movement. In 1949, he rose to prominence with the creation of his first *Aparelho Cinecromático* [Kinechromatic Device] effectively reinventing the idea of a painting by using different voltage bulbs moving at different speeds and directions to create kaleidoscopic images. The piece was shown at the 1st Bienal de São Paulo (1951) and received an Honorable Mention from the International Jury for its originality.

Abraham Palatnik subsequently initiated his work with reliefs, coined Progressive reliefs, which he made out of various materials (such as wood, duplex cardboard and acrylic), manually cut and intercalated to create a sense of rhythmic undulation. Apart from the series *W*, which has come to incorporate the use of laser-cutting, Palatnik continued to construct and paint every piece by hand, making each work a token of his craftsmanship, until the end of his life.

selected solo exhibitions

- *Abraham Palatnik – A reinvenção da pintura*, Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil (CCBB-BH), Belo Horizonte (2021); Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil (CCBB-RJ), Rio de Janeiro (2017); Fundação Iberê Camargo (FIC), Porto Alegre (2015); Museu Oscar Niemeyer (MON), Curitiba (2014); Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo (MAM-SP), São Paulo (2014); Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil (CCBB-DF), Brasília, Brazil (2013)
- *Abraham Palatnik: Em movimento*, Nara Roesler, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2018)
- *Abraham Palatnik: Progression*, Sicardi Gallery, Houston, USA (2017)
- *Palatnik, une discipline du chaos*, Galerie Denise René, Paris, France (2012)

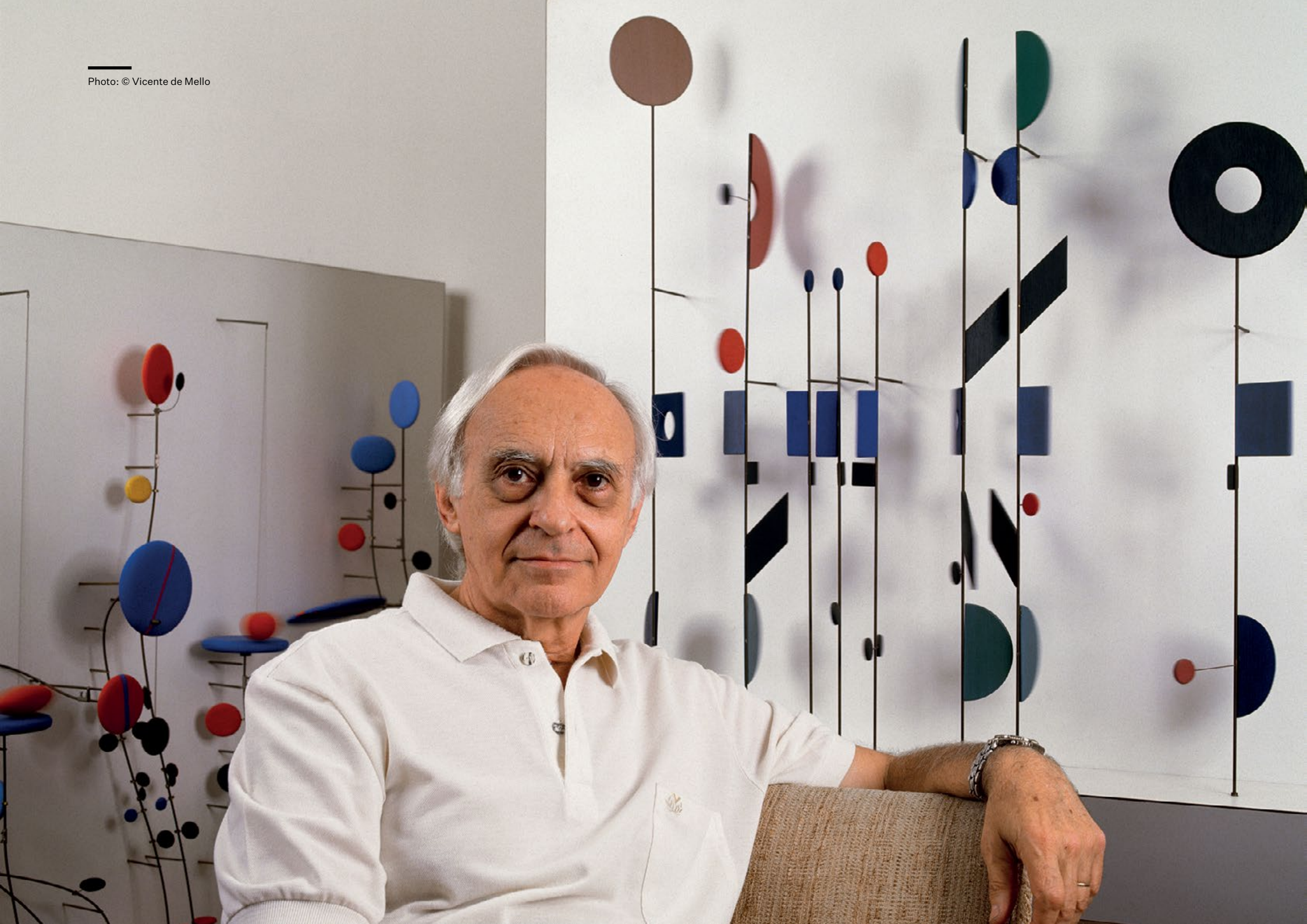
selected group exhibitions

- *Sur moderno: Journeys of Abstraction — The Patricia Phelps de Cisneros Gift*, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, USA (2019)
- *The Other Trans-Atlantic: Kinetic & Op Art in Central & Eastern Europe and Latin America 1950s–1970s*, Sesc Pinheiros, São Paulo, Brazil (2018); Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow, Russia (2018); Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, Warsaw, Poland (2017)
- *Delirious: Art at the Limits of Reason, 1950 - 1980*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA (2018);
- *Kinesthesia: Latin American Kinetic Art 1954-1969*, Palm Springs Art Museum (PSAM), Palm Springs, USA (2017)

selected institutional collections

- Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro (MAM Rio), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
- Museum of Fine Arts Houston (MFAH), Houston, USA
- Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, USA
- Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels, Belgium
- William Keiser Museum, Krefeld, Germany

Photo: © Vicente de Mello



nara roesler

são paulo

avenida europa 655,
jardim europa, 01449-001
são paulo, sp, brasil
t 55 (11) 2039 5454

rio de janeiro

rua redentor 241,
ippanema, 22421-030
rio de janeiro, rj, brasil
t 55 (21) 3591 0052

new york

511 west 21st street
new york, 10011 ny
usa
t 1 (212) 794 5034

nararoesler.art

ny@nararoesler.art