



nara roesler

**josé patricio**  
geometry of chance

nara roesler new york  
opening september 6, 2023  
exhibition sep 7 – oct 21

**osé patrcio, the  
'geometry of chance':  
spirals, infinities and  
imperfect grids**

camila bechelany

'Then I understood that their origin (of lines) was not in the geometry – literally "the measure of the earth" – of Euclid, but in the stretched warp threads of the weaver's loom.'

—Tim Ingold

José Patrício's interest in so-called 'popular culture' is not recent and goes beyond mere curiosity. Instead, it could be defined as profound aesthetic research. The artist has been a collector of objects and works made by self-taught artists for many years. His house and studio are filled with objects; games, toys, ex-votos, figurines, and decorations found at fairs and street markets, usually purchased directly from these creators in Recife and other cities in Northeastern Brazil, where he was born and still lives. The Northeast is recognized as a territory of strong artistic tradition, and as an artist-collector, Patrício has always been attentive to the peculiarities of the art found in the streets and at popular festivities. He observes the details, the materialities, and the wisdom embodied in this art.

According to his statement from May 2023, at his exhibition at the Nara Roesler Gallery in Rio de Janeiro, the artist's initial training came from observing the cultural practices of the Northeast. He felt somewhat isolated from the formal art circuit centered in the Southeast of the country.

'I started to invest in visiting exhibitions, and from the 1980s, I began going to Rio and São Paulo almost every year, visiting all the ongoing exhibitions, institutions, museums, and galleries. At that time, there were some galleries in Rio's City Hall that showcased the works of concrete and neo-concrete artists. I believe that those had some influence, but above all, my interest in the geometric-constructive came mostly from popular art in the Northeast, especially in Pernambuco, where I live. I've always been interested in and admired the structures you see on the façades of houses, in the paintings of popular festivities, in the stalls, in the benches; all of that caught my attention.'

It was through his focus on popular objects and everyday life that Patrício chose his materials and experimented with plastic elements, wooden pieces and other found objects such as puzzles, buttons, and dominoes. He began using dominoes in his works in 1999 when he created *Ars Combinatoria* at the São Francisco Convent in João Pessoa, Paraíba, which marked a milestone in his practice. Since then, dominoes have presented an opportunity for seriality and combination with interesting pictorial results and an infinite number of possibilities, with chance as an intrinsic element. The procedures for constructing the composition based on the grid, moving from the center to the edge, were later tested with various other materials, such as buttons, pins, dice and colored threads, leading to the development of his own formal language.

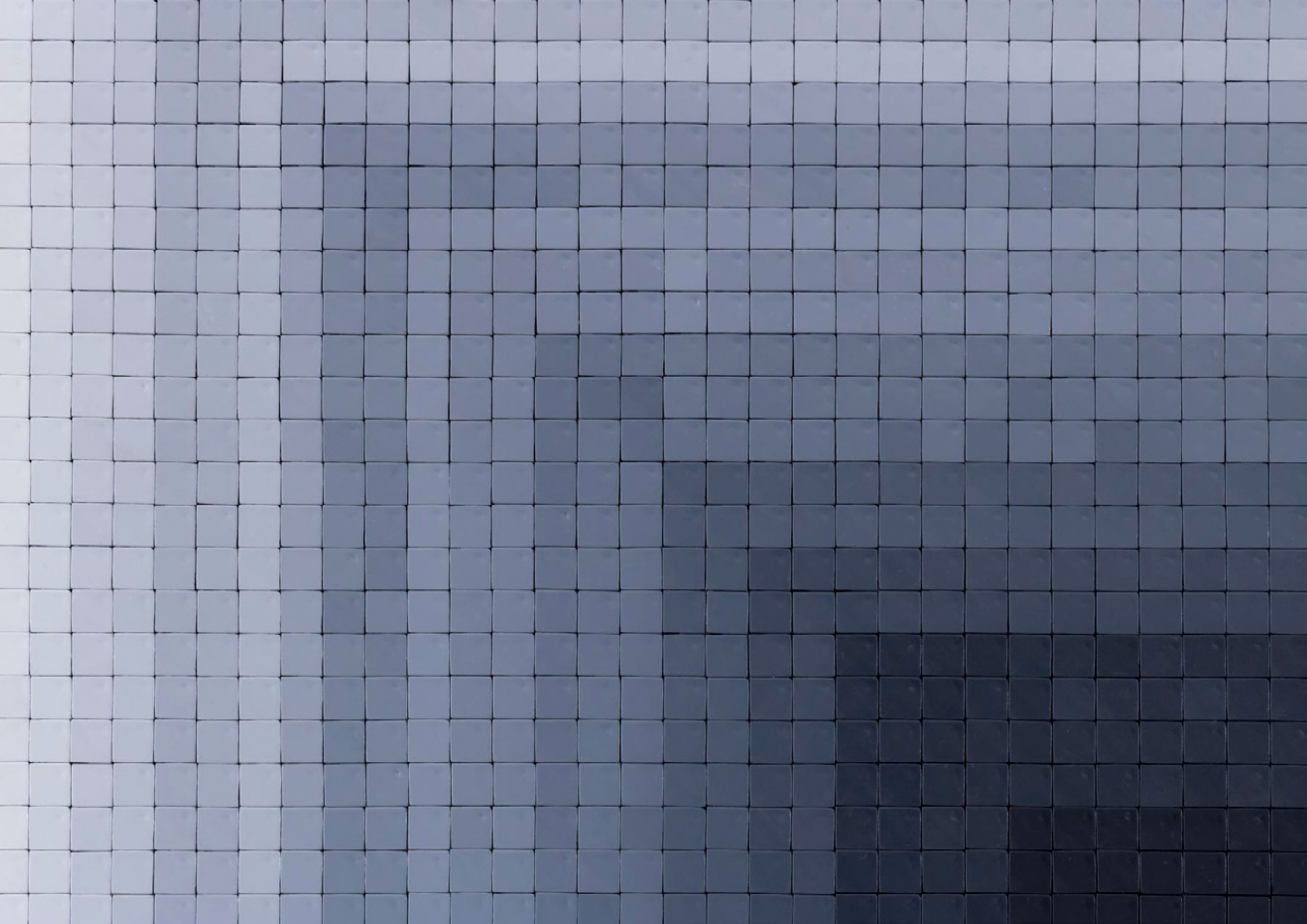
The constructive tradition of Brazilian art is expressed in Patrício's work through modulation and seriality. Leveraging the flat and square surface, his works are built upon a grid upon which a large set of chosen small elements are organized, repeating in a spiraling evolution with chromatic variations that define the final composition. The results are achieved through the creation of a system where he first chooses the organization of the pieces on the grid and then assembles the work, where chance inevitably plays a role. José Patrício does not use preparatory projects or drawings, only 'some mathematical calculations, but not for all works.' Therefore, the final result of the artwork is only known once it is fully assembled.

In most of the works presented in this exhibition, the essential constructive element is the plastic puzzle piece. The artist has used this material since the early 2000s, initially employing its original patterns and designs to create a figure once the puzzle is completed. In his more recent works, with an interest in creating more abstract chromatic compositions, the artist began ordering puzzle pieces directly from the same manufacturer, in solid colors and various shades of gray, devoid of their traditional patterns. From then on, he uses the same spiral assembly procedure to create different compositions by recombining the colors. The possible arrangements of tonal combinations are explored in as many ways as possible.

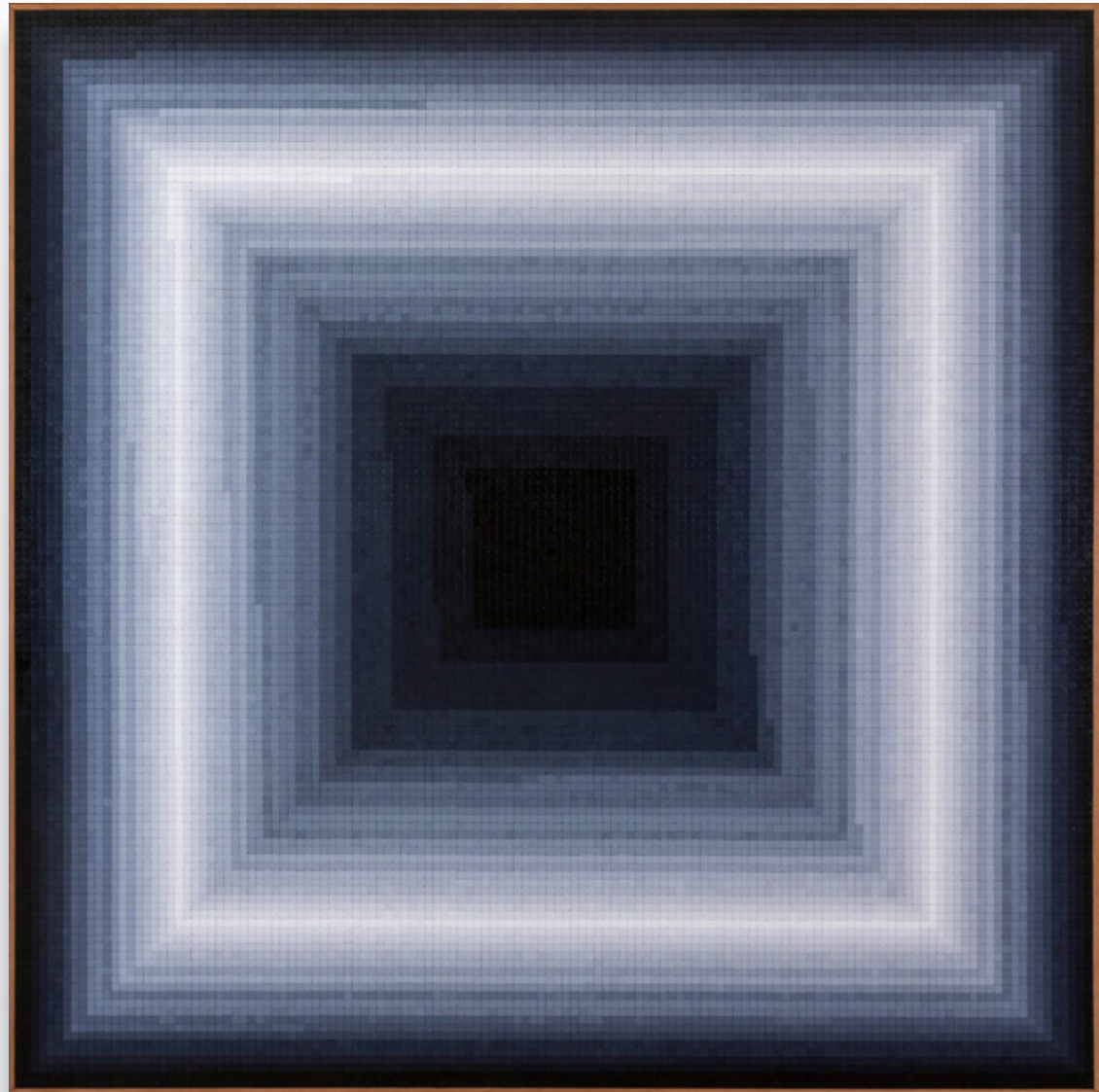
In the *Recipientes* series, the works are composed of the back sides of the plastic puzzle pieces, where the object has a cavity originally designed to insert a visual sign or some fitting, thus becoming a kind of container. The artist fills these empty spaces with enamel paint to create other color combinations and formal compositions. In Patrício's words, this work represents a kind of 'expanded painting,' as it does not follow the procedures of traditional painting on canvas and uses objects to define the composition of the picture.

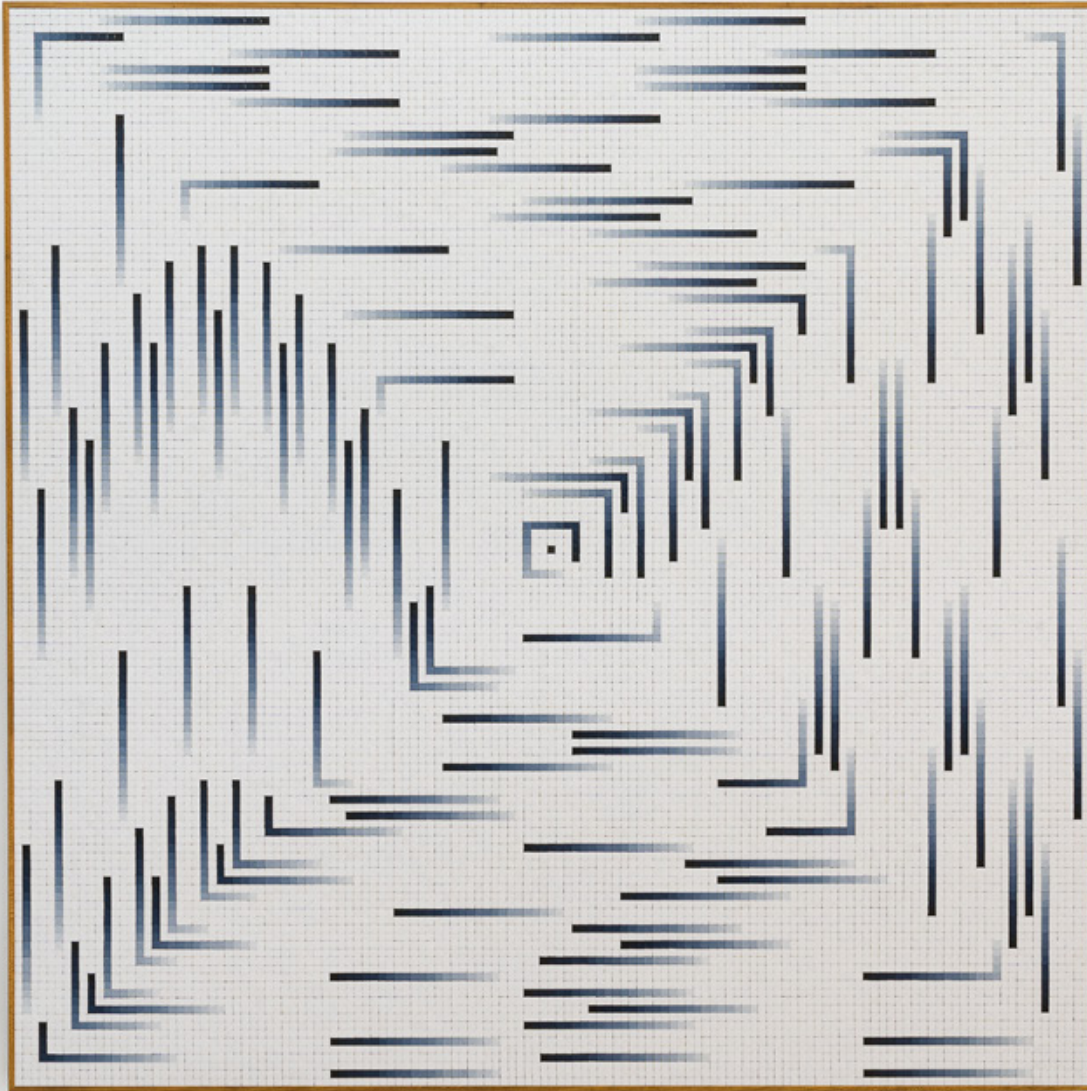
In the principles of the Geometry of Chance, Blaise Pascal affirmed in the 17<sup>th</sup> century that we can reason, speculate and make calculations with chance. Since chance is an inherent part of mathematics, Pascal could attest that knowledge never seems to be devoid of its practical component because it is never given a precedent; it must be constructed.

José Patrício's artistic practice seems to confirm Pascal's assertion about the laws of nature to some extent. Knowledge is never given a precedent; it must always be constructed through the practice of seeking truth. Through constant experimentation, one can arrive at precise mathematical results, but chance will inevitably be part of the process of this pursuit and, therefore, a constituent element of truth.



*Tonal Expansion and Retraction II*, 2017  
plastic puzzle pieces on wood  
edition of 3 + 1 AP  
190 x 190 cm  
74.8 x 74.8 in

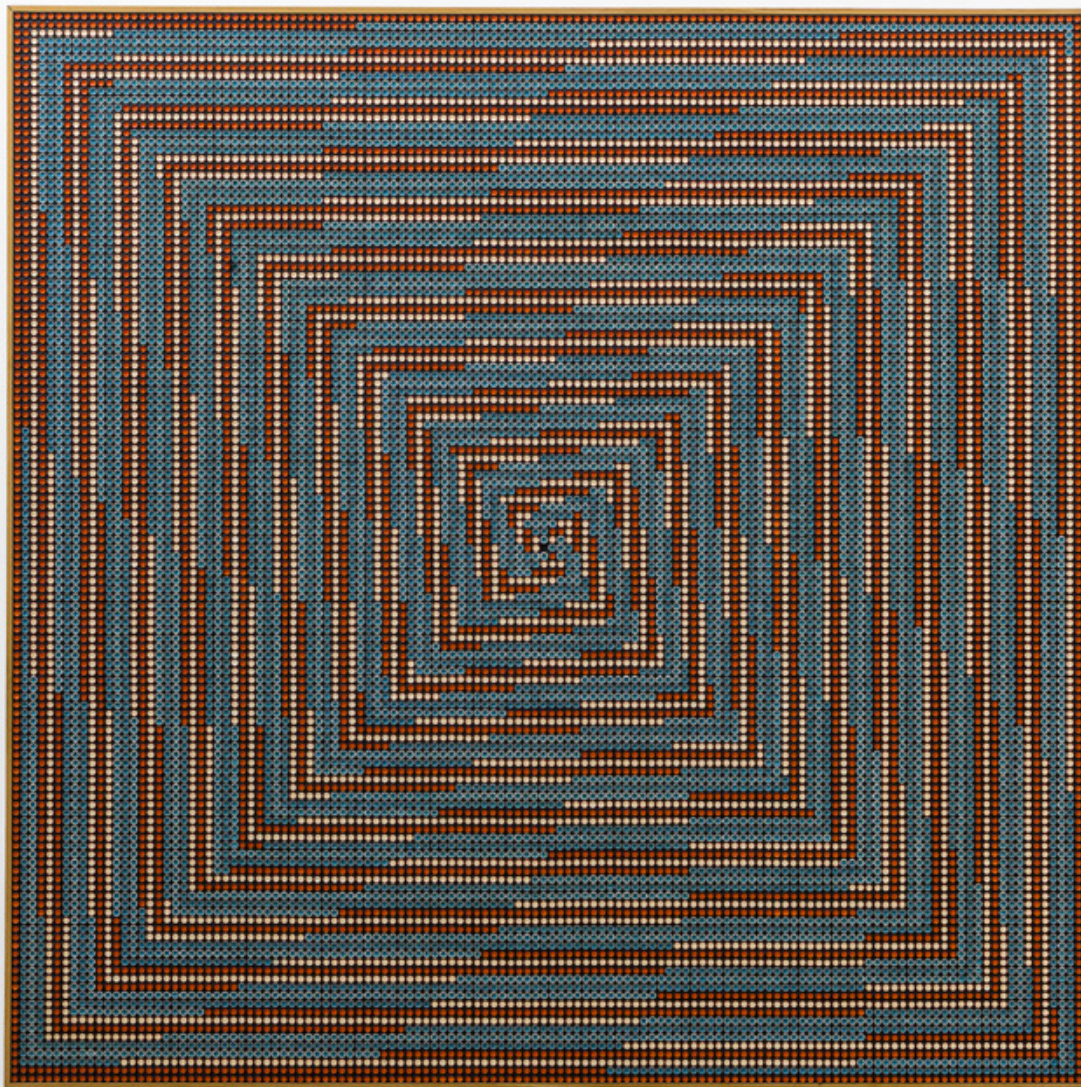




*Trajectories Over White – Version 2, 2018*  
plastic puzzle pieces on wood  
edition of 3 + 1 exhibition piece###  
190 x 190 cm  
74.8 x 74.8 in





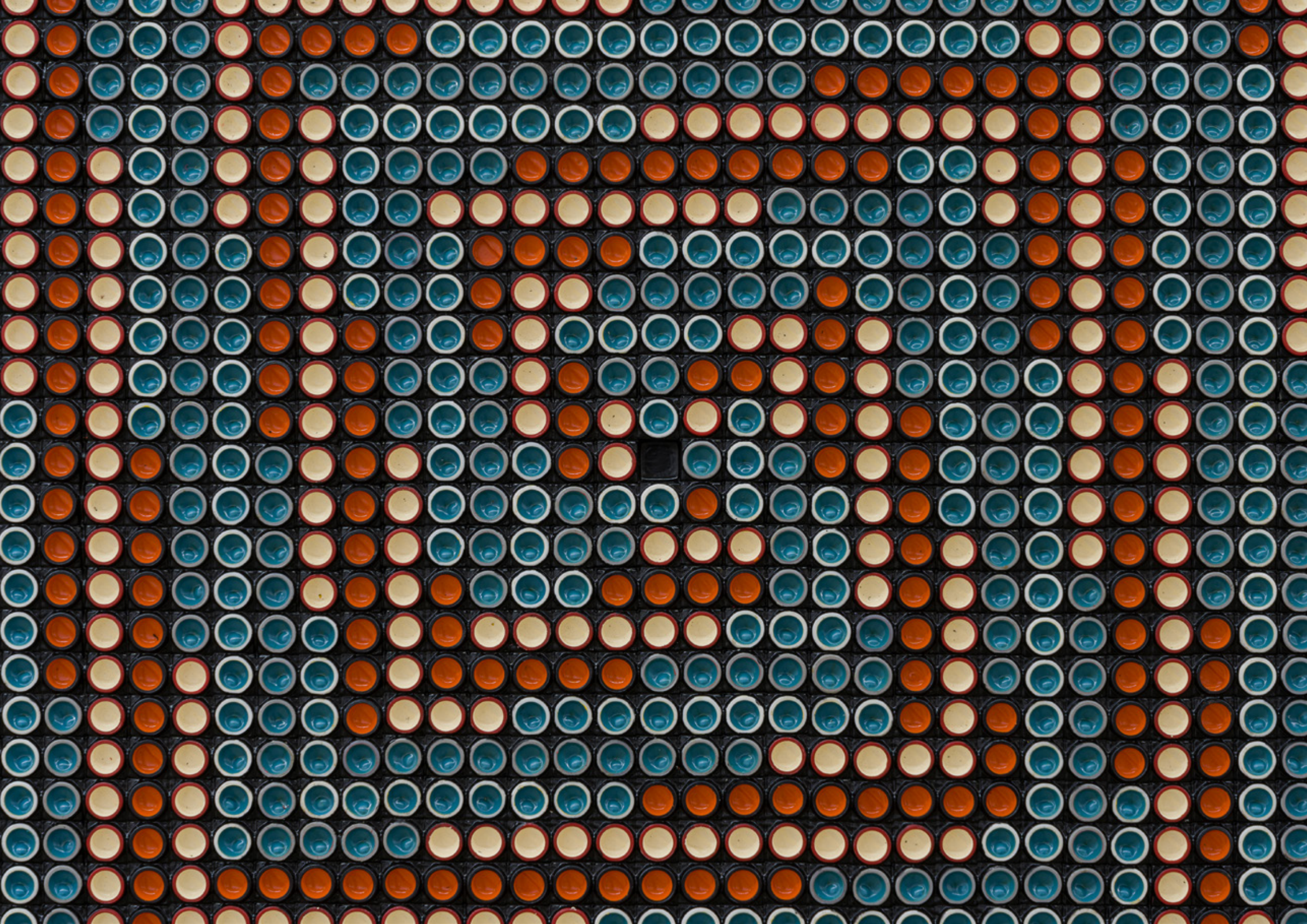


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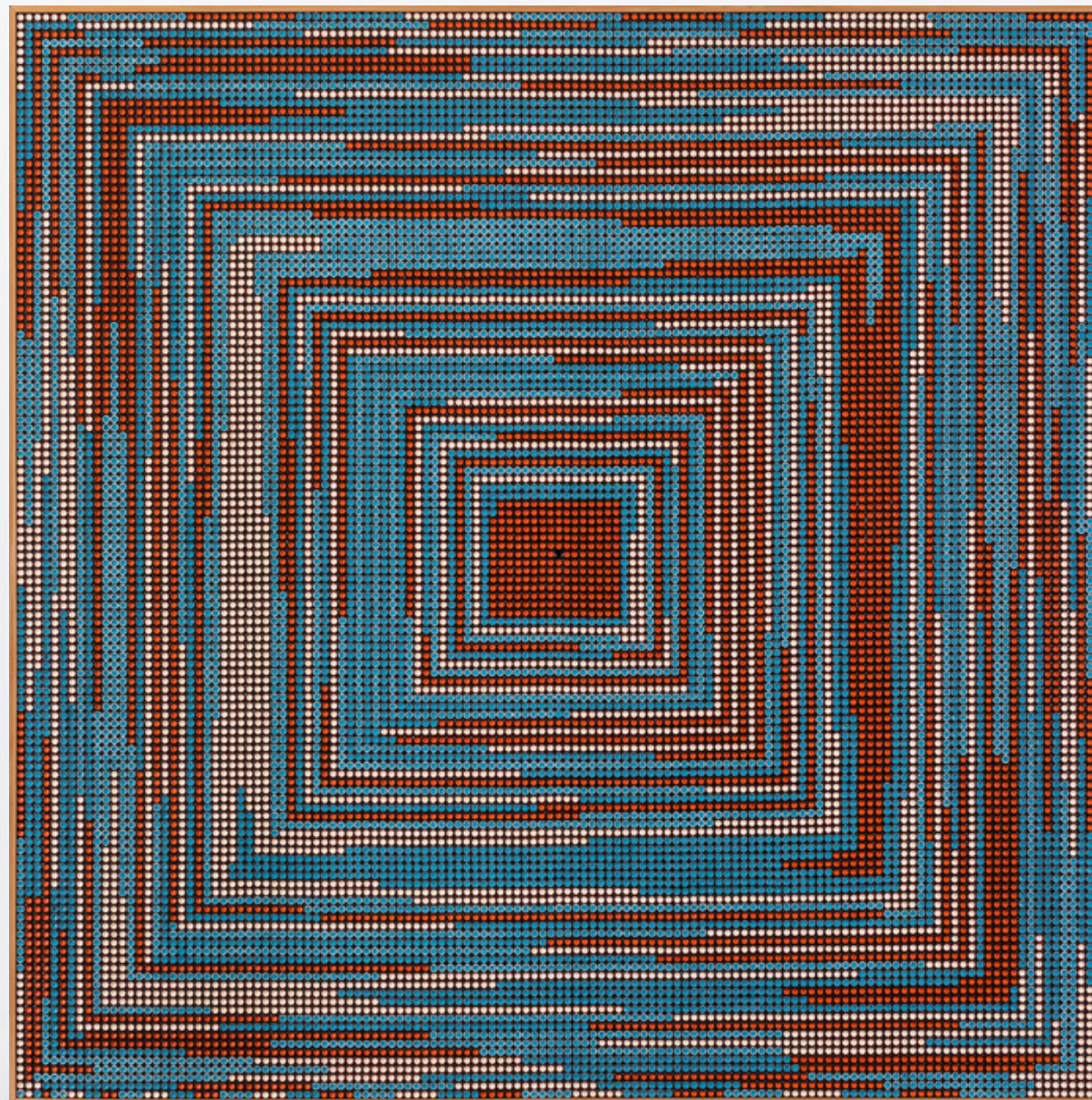
Containers – Progressively  
Increasing Accumulation  
in Blue, Red and White, 2017  
synthetic enamel on plastic  
puzzle pieces on wood  
unique  
183,5 x 183,5 x 4 cm  
72.2 x 72.2 x 1.6 in

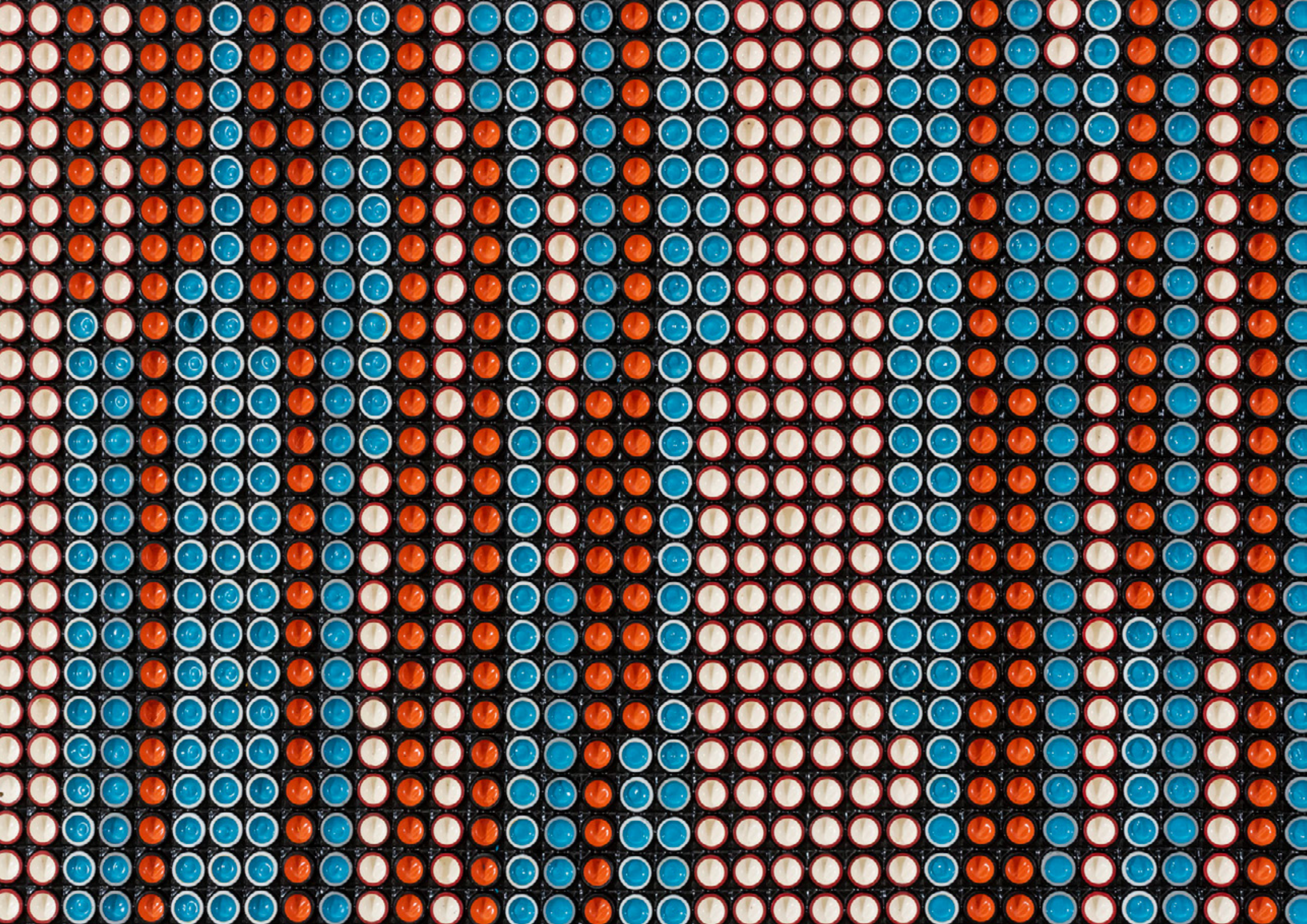


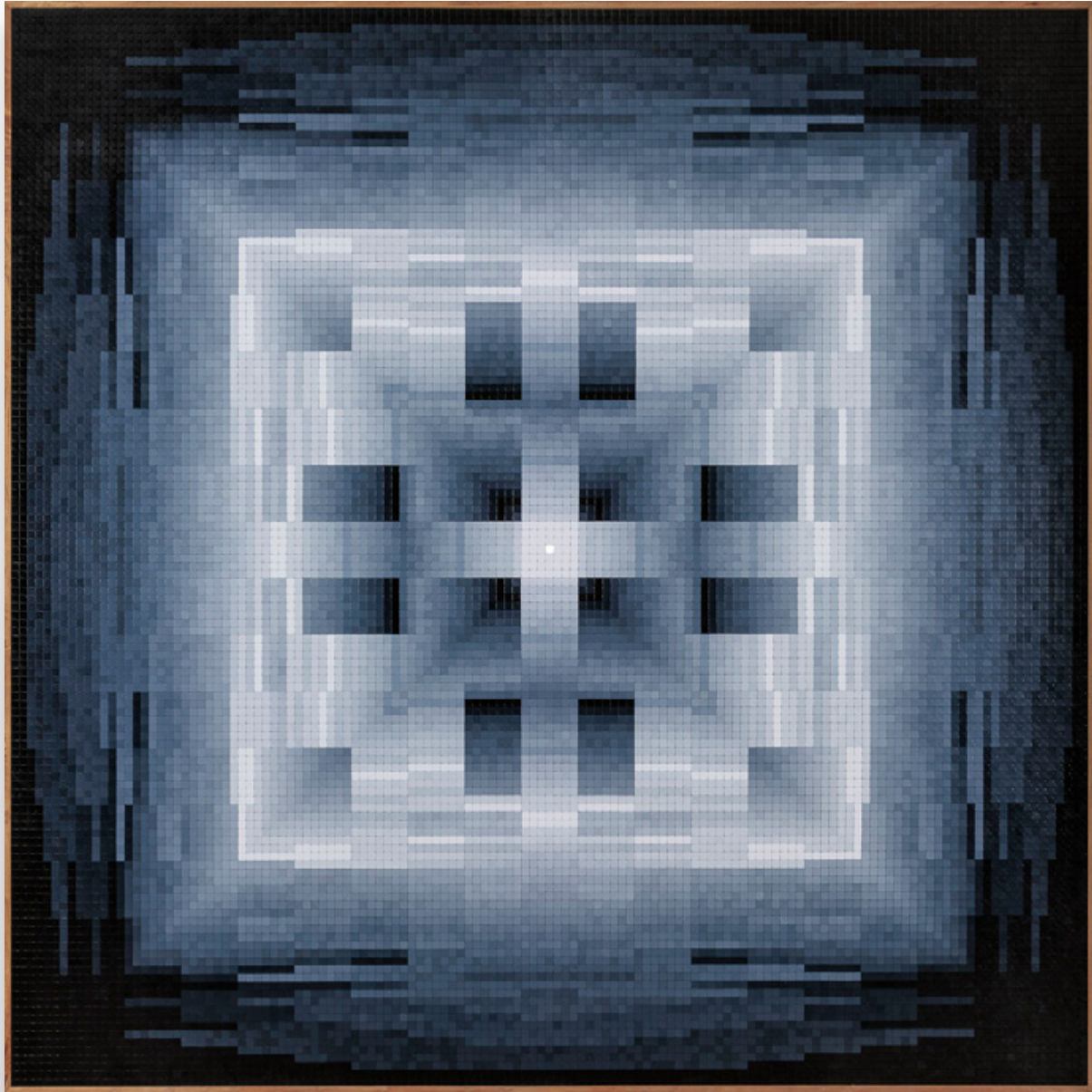




Containers – Progressively  
Decreasing Accumulation in Blue,  
Orange and White, 2023  
synthetic enamel on plastic  
puzzle pieces on wood  
unique  
183,5 x 183,5 x 4 cm  
72.2 x 72.2 x 1.6 in



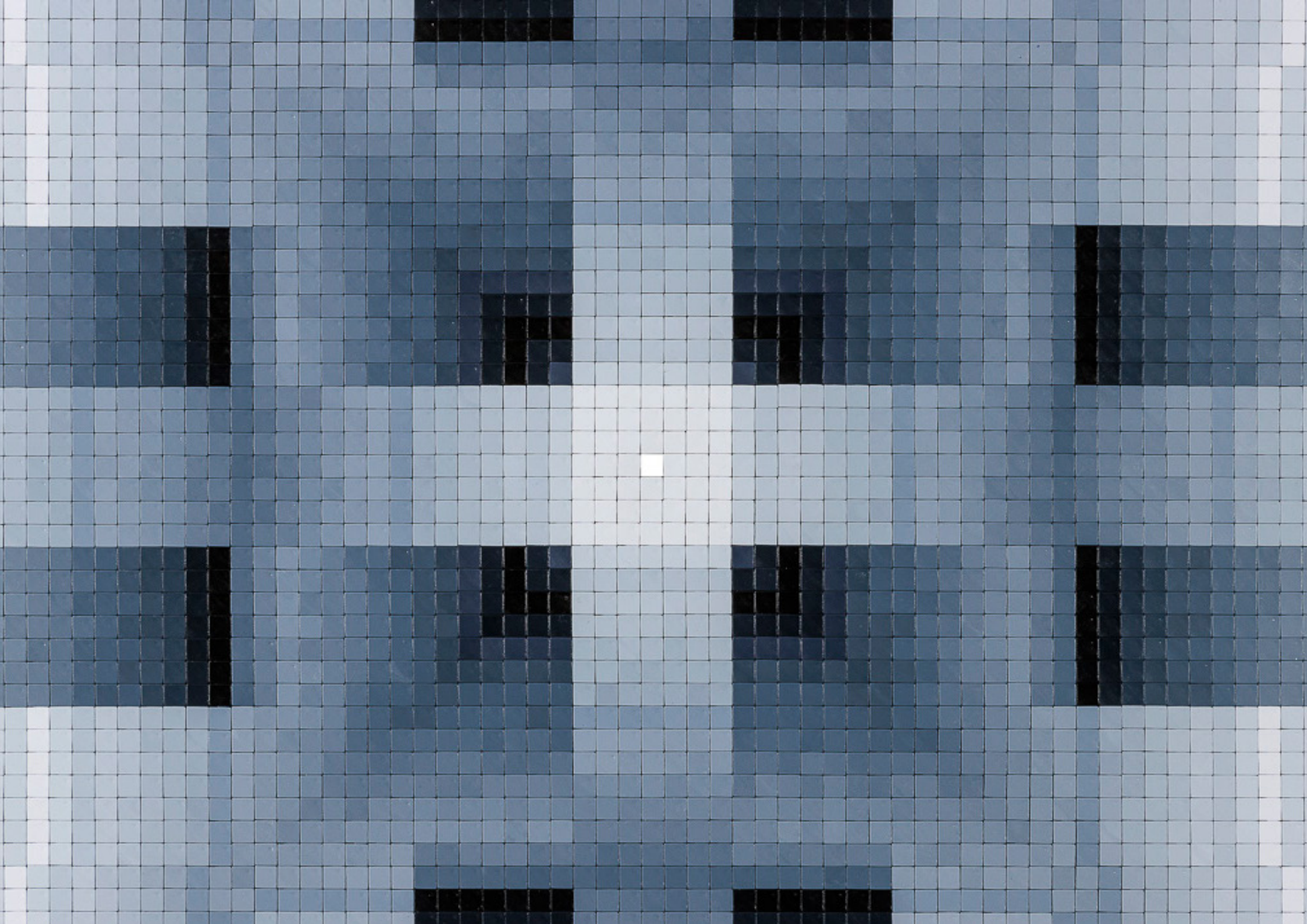




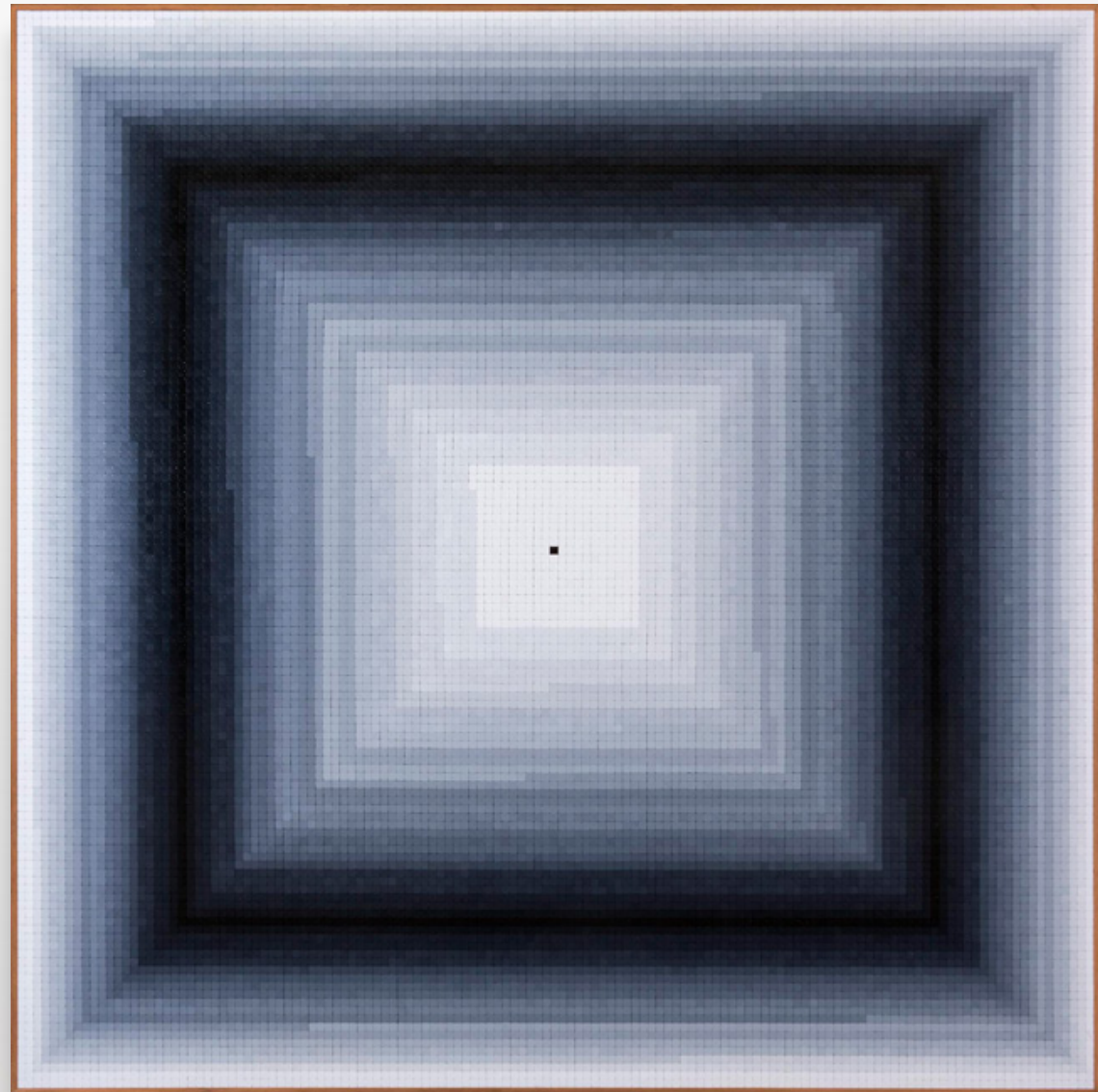
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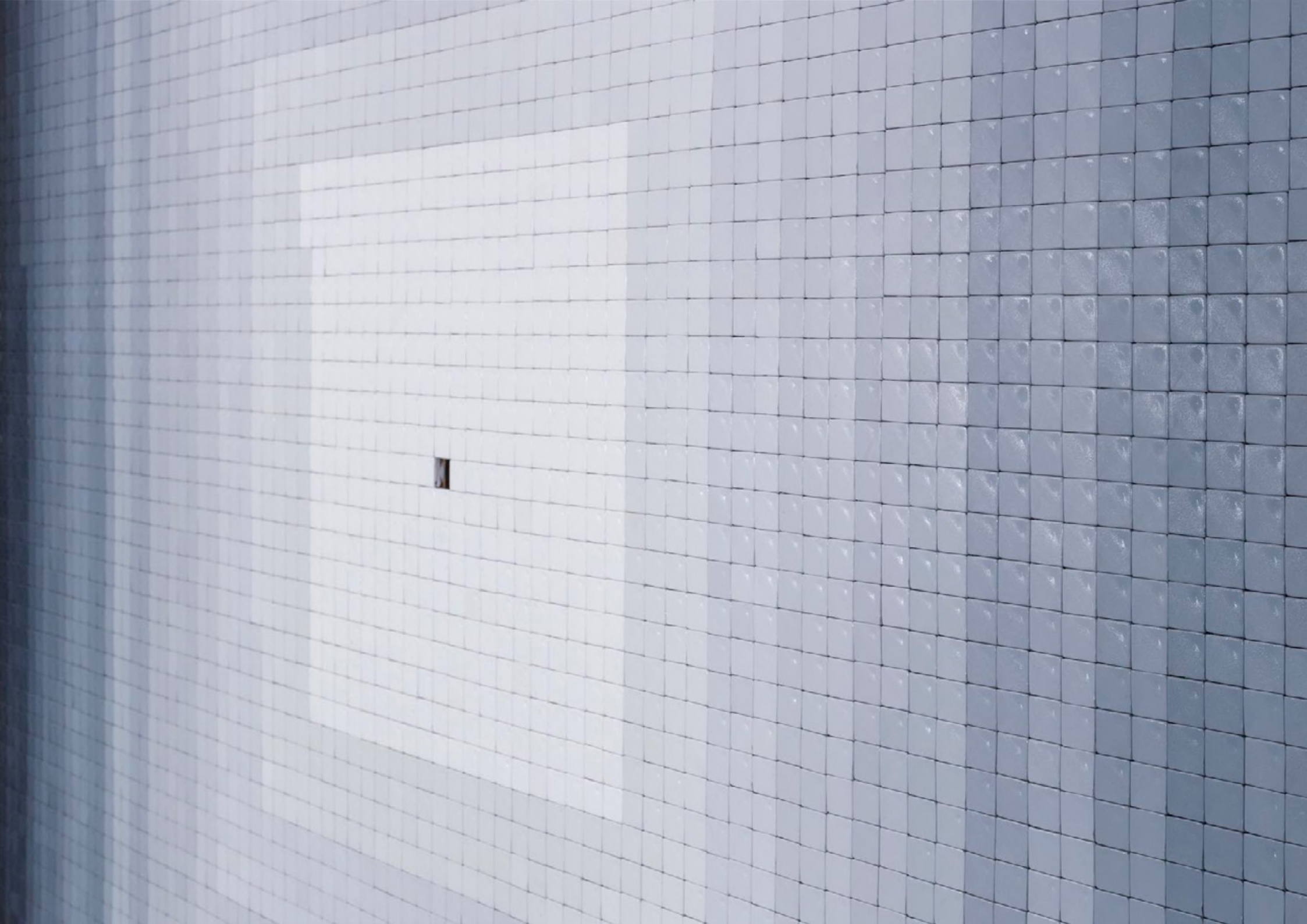
*Tonal Mandala II*, 2023  
plastic puzzle pieces on wood  
unique 190 x 190 cm  
74.8 x 74.8 in

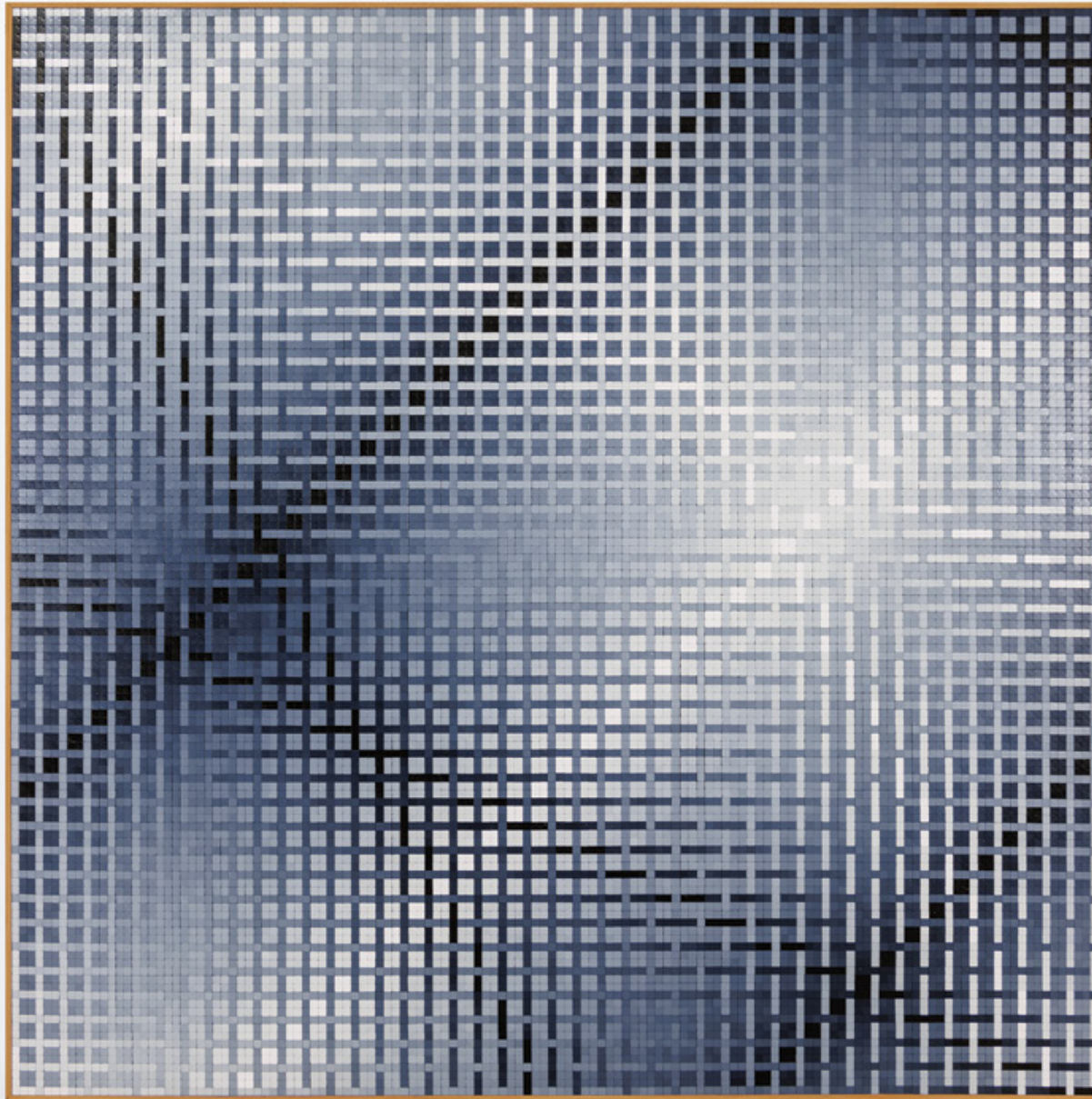




*Tonal Expansion and Retraction I*, 2017  
plastic puzzle pieces on wood  
edition of 3 + 1 AP  
190 x 190 cm  
74.8 x 74.8 in



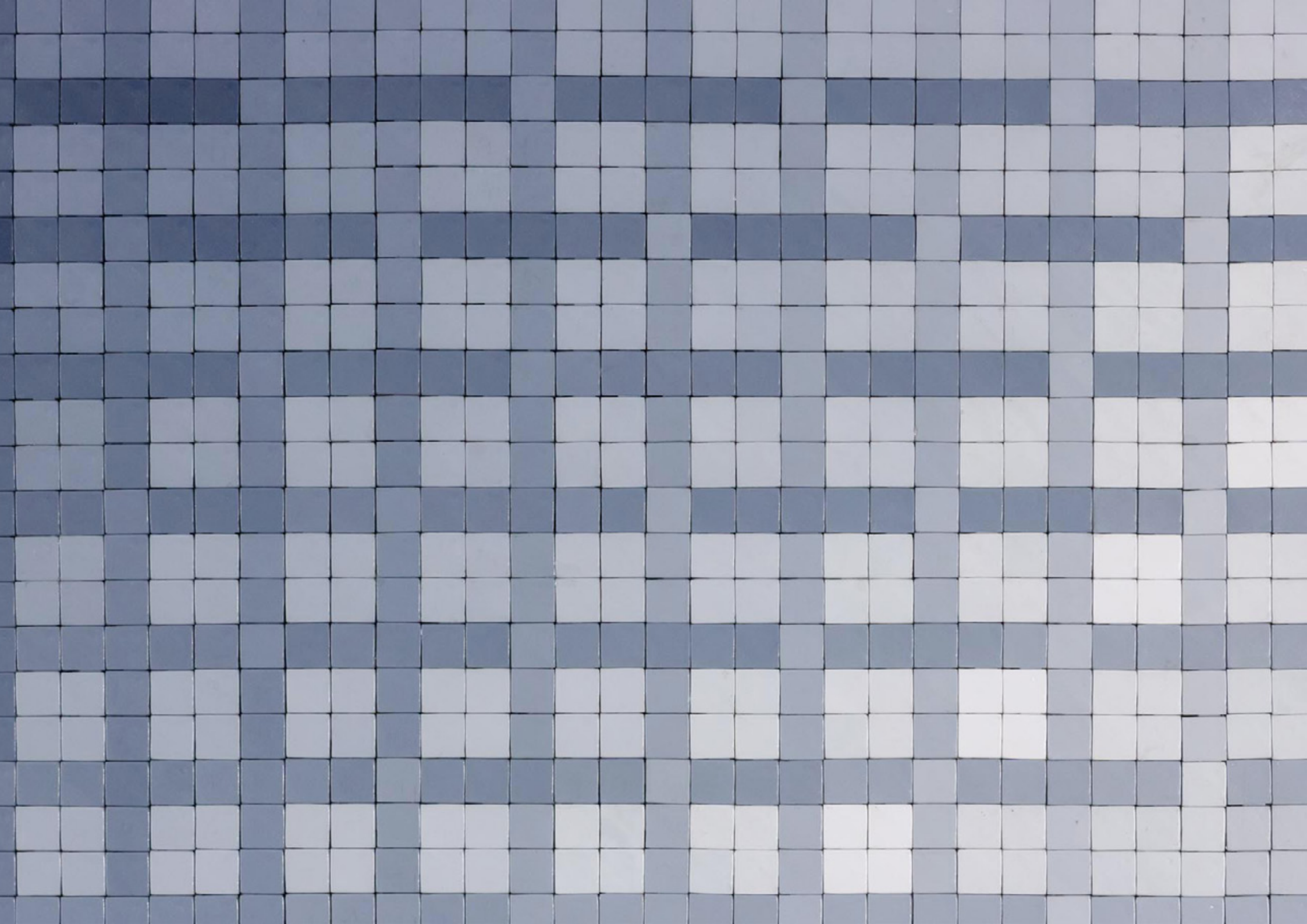




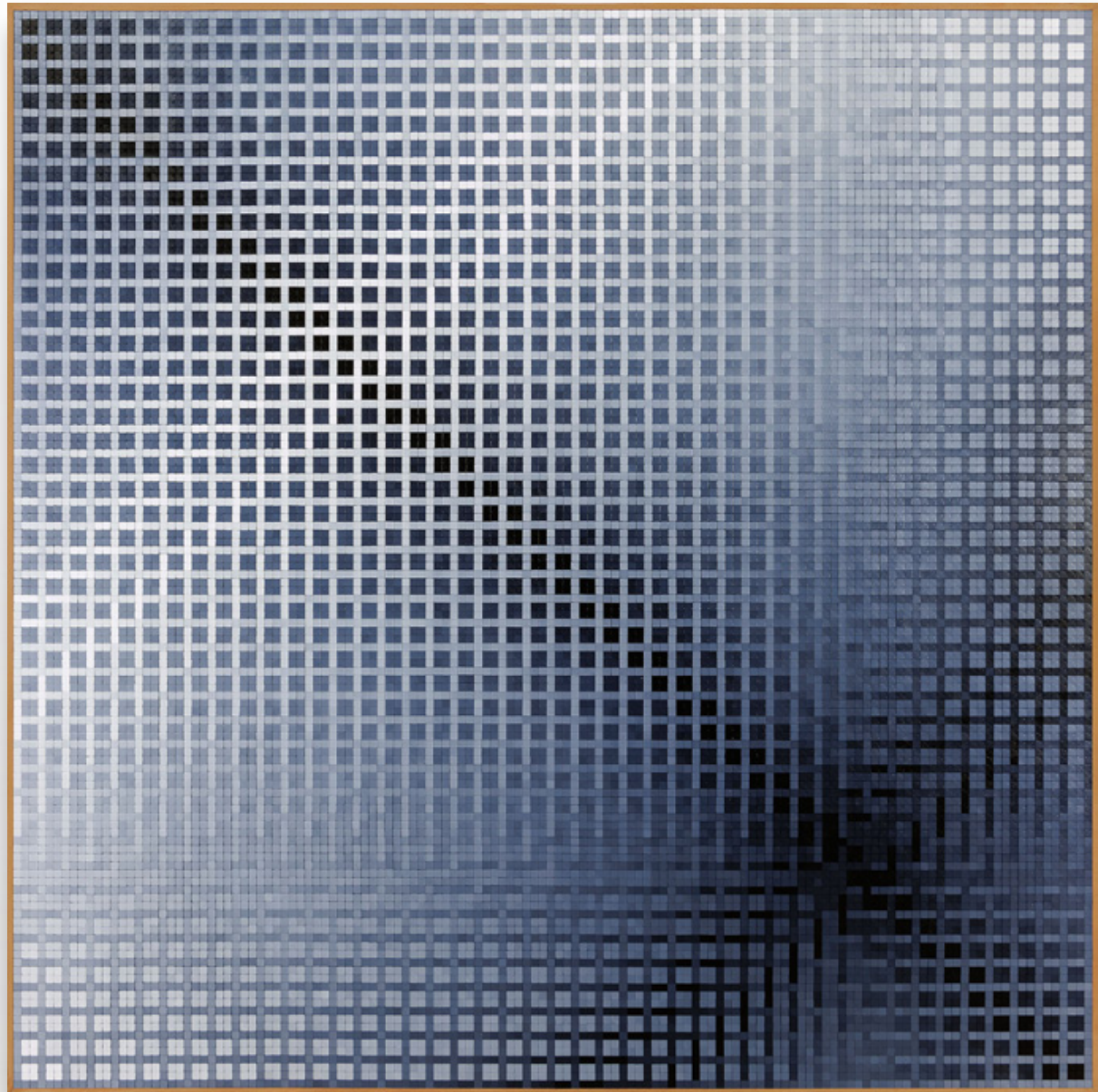
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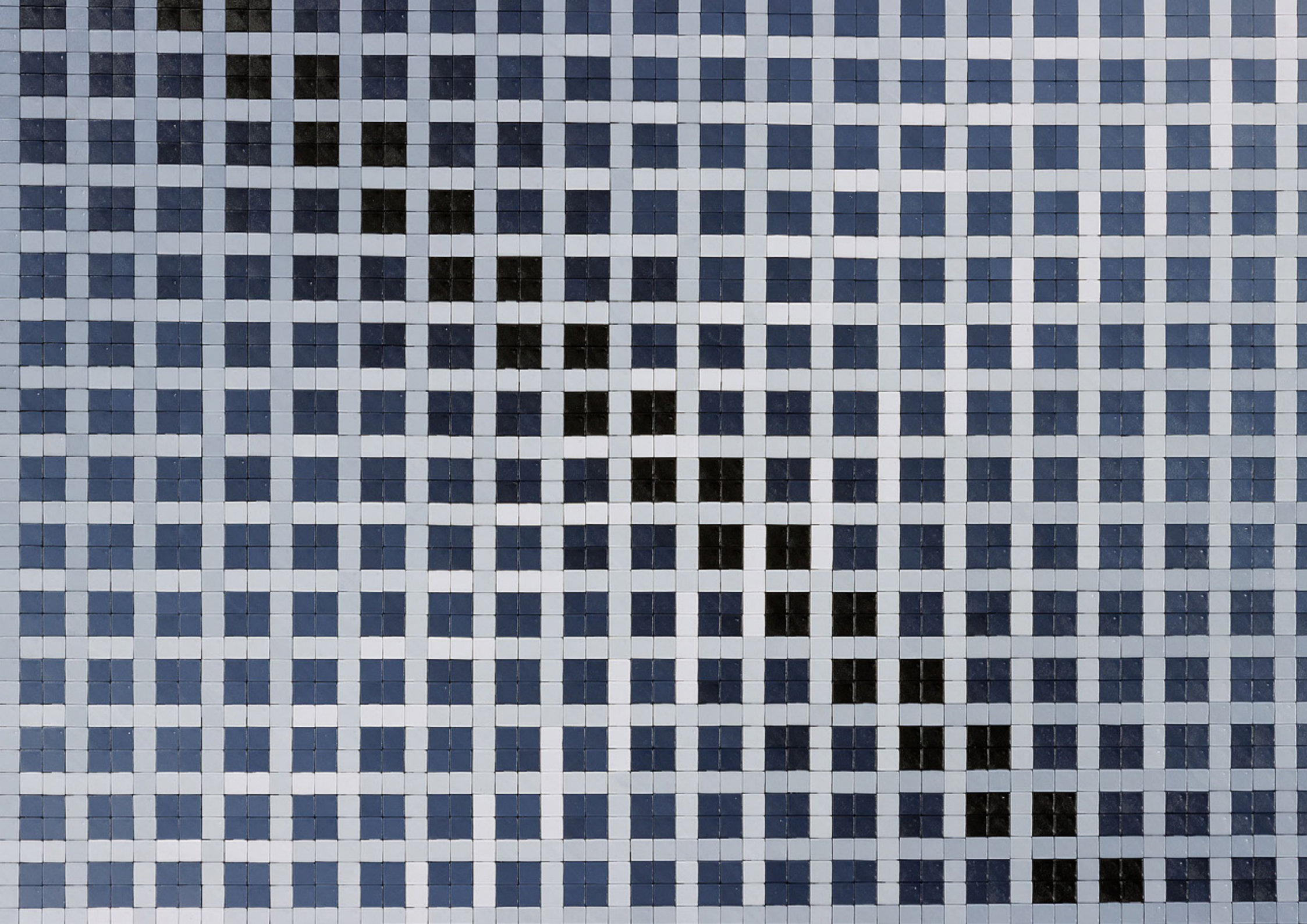
*Tonal Plots XIII*, 2021  
plastic puzzle pieces on wood  
unique  
190,5 x 190,5 x 3,5 cm  
75 x 75 x 1.4 in

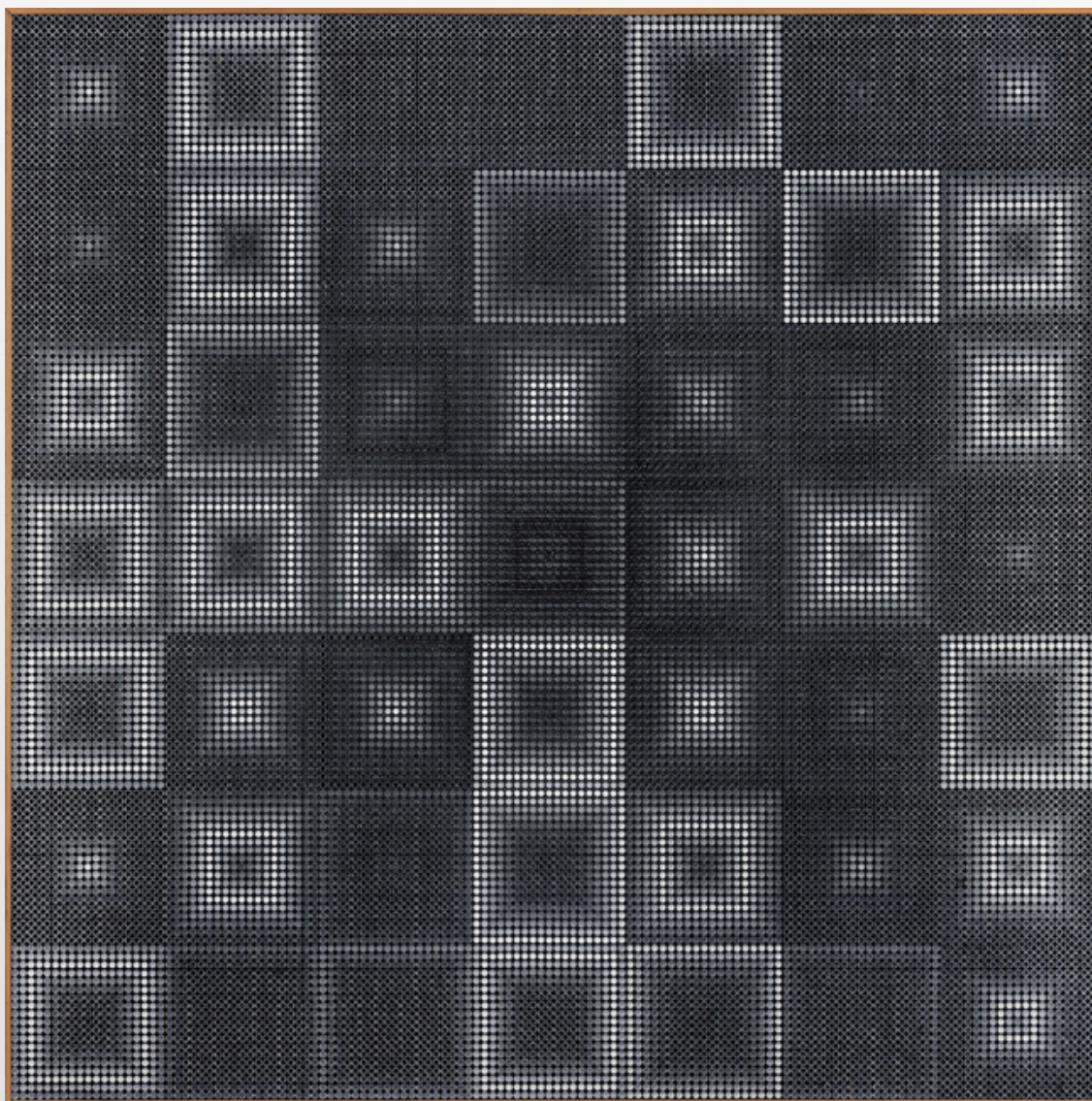




**Tonal Plots XIV, 2022**  
plastic puzzle pieces on wood  
unique  
190,5 x 190,5 x 3,5 cm  
75 x 75 x 1.4 in

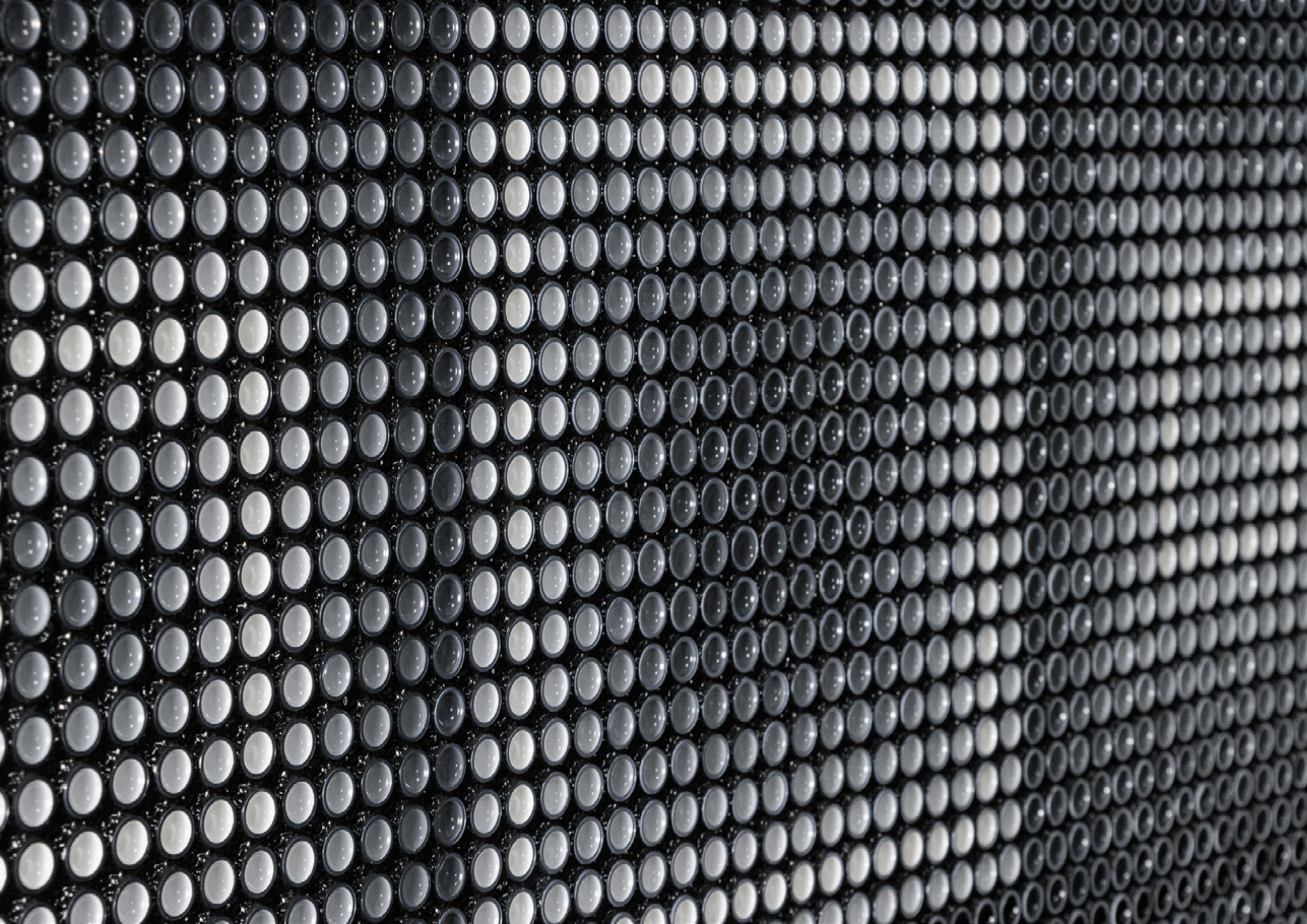




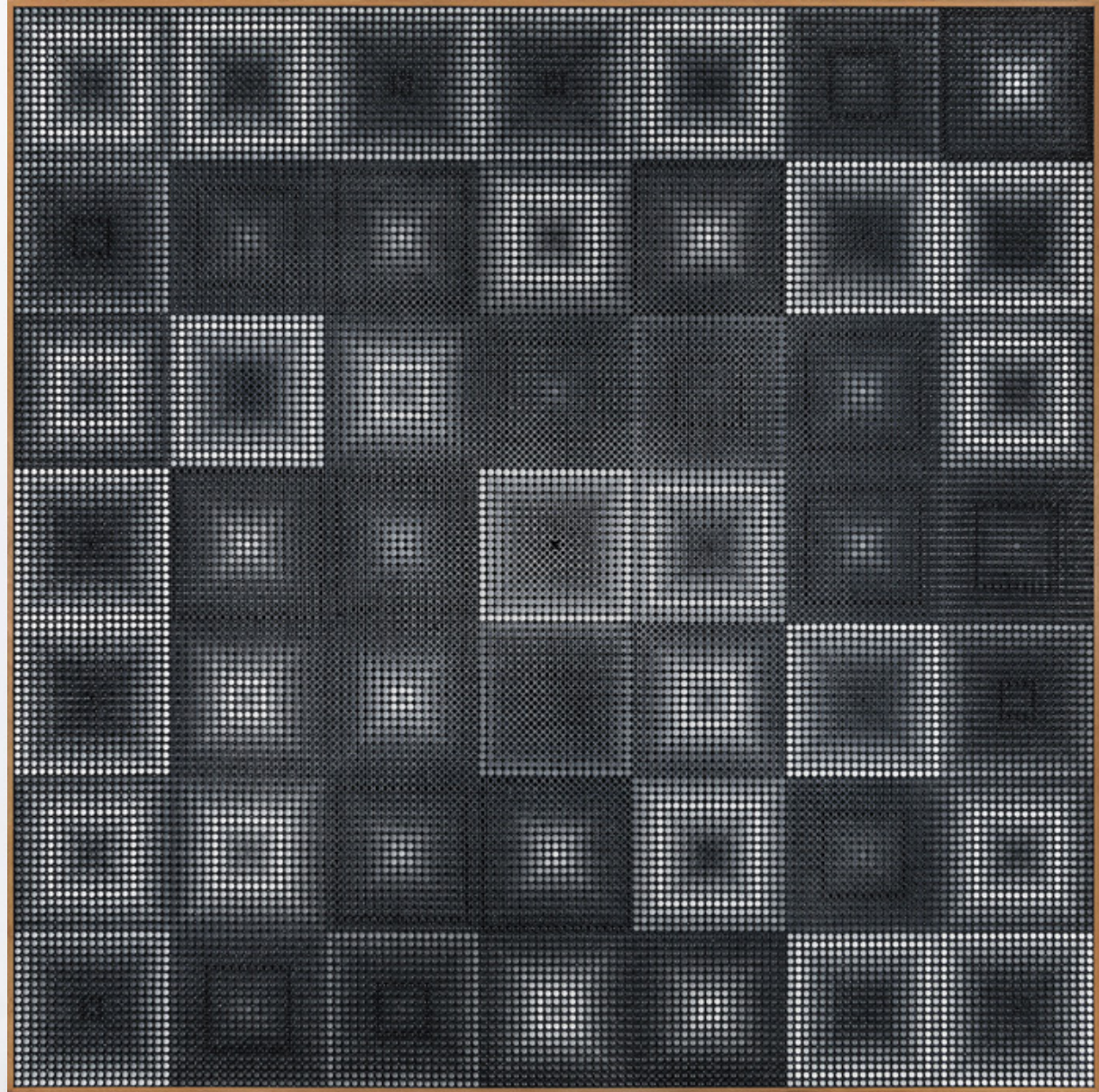


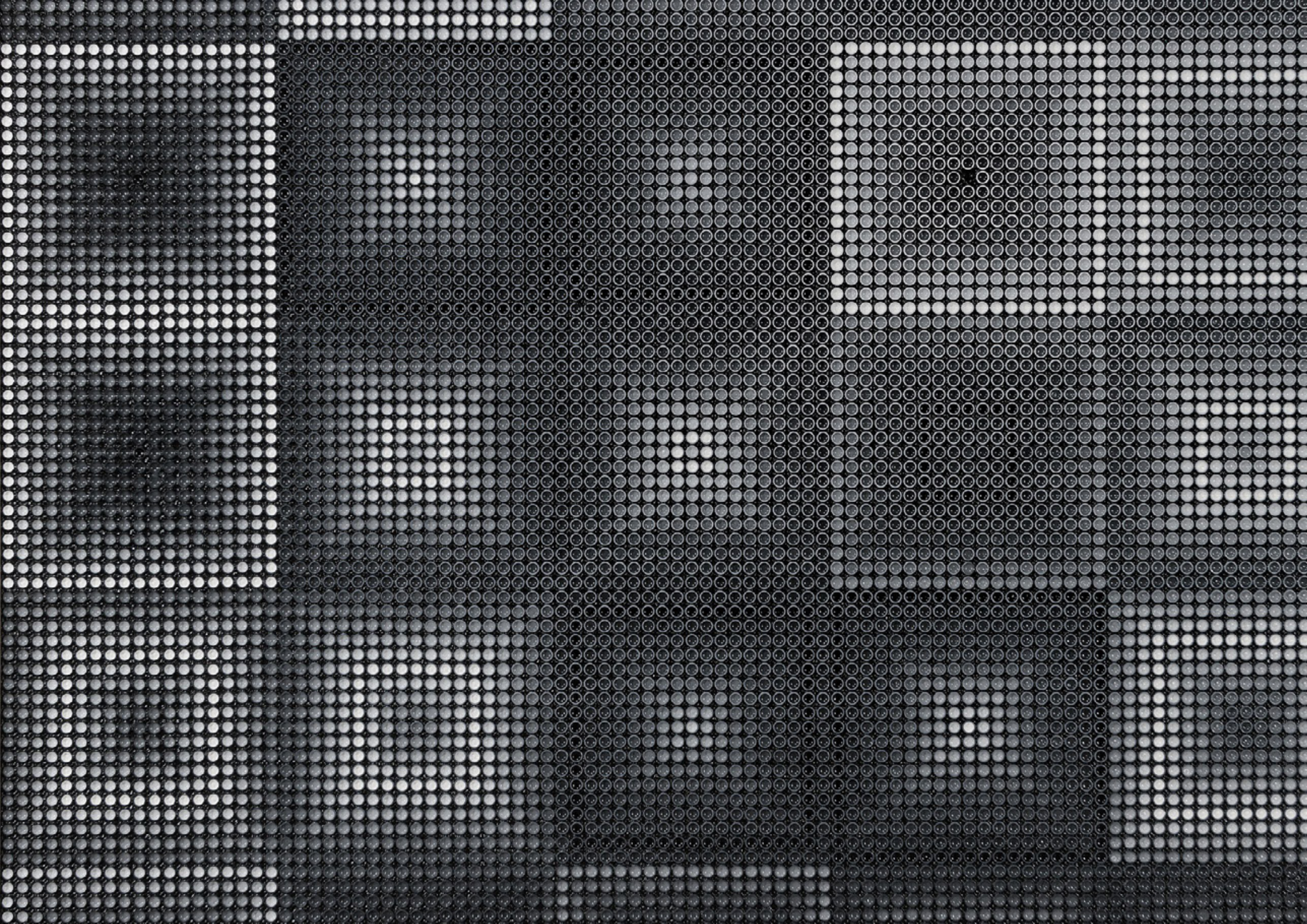
*Containers – Tonal Progressions II*, 2019  
plastic puzzle pieces on wood  
unique 190 x 190 x 4 cm  
74.8 x 74.8 x 1.6 in





Containers – Tonal Progressions II, 2019  
plastic puzzle pieces on wood  
unique  
190 x 190 x 4 cm  
74.8 x 74.8 x 1.6 in





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## josé patrício

b. 1960, Recife, Brazil, where he lives and works

José Patrício's work blurs the boundaries between installation and painting. His practice stems from the arrangement of everyday-use objects, such as dominoes, dice, buttons, and nails, to create patterns and images, either in a geometric or organic manner, but always enigmatically familiar. Starting out his career in 1999 when he created an installation at the São Francisco Convent in João Pessoa, Patrício uses dominoes as a key element to several of his works. When viewed from afar, the patterns we see in his artworks assume an almost painterly tonality with an overall appearance that contrasts with the graphical nature of each individual domino

Under the influence of important Brazilian artistic trends and movements, such as geometric abstraction and Concretism, Patrício emphasizes the subtle limit between order and chaos, suggesting that even the most rigid of mathematical formulas has an expressive potential dimension. To the critic and curator Paulo Sérgio Duarte, Patrício's accumulation procedure places us 'on a different level than the issues set forth by the progress of science and technique in artwork. As the terrain of combinatorial mathematics is incorporated as a starting point, we are faced with the combination of series, endless in their possibilities. The problem is no longer the reproduction of the same; it is now about producing endless others from the same.'

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### selected solo exhibitions

- *Potência criadora infinita*, Nara Roesler, São Paulo, Brazil (2021)
- *José Patrício: Algorithm in 'Object Recognition'*, Pearl Lam Galleries Hong Kong H'Queens, Hong Kong (2018)
- *Precisão e acaso*, Museu Mineiro, Belo Horizonte; Museu Nacional de Brasília (MUN), Brasília, Brazil (2018)
- *Ponto zero*, Sesc Santo Amaro, São Paulo, Brazil (2017)
- *Explosão Fixa*, Instituto Ling, Porto Alegre, Brazil (2017)

### selected group exhibitions

- *Utopias e distopias*, Museu de Arte Moderna da Bahia (MAM-BA), Salvador, Brazil (2022)
- *Ateliê de Gravura: da tradição à experimentação*, Fundação Iberê Camargo (FIC), Porto Alegre, Brazil (2019)
- *Géométries américaines*, du Mexique à la Terre de Feu, Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris, France (2018)
- *Asas e Raízes*, Caixa Cultural, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2015)
- 8<sup>th</sup> La Habana Biennial, Cuba (2003)
- 22<sup>th</sup> São Paulo Biennial, Brazil (1994)

### selected collections

- Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris, France
- Museu de Arte Moderna Aloisio Magalhães (MAMAM), Recife, Brazil
- Museu de Arte Moderna da Bahia (MAM-BA), Salvador, Brazil
- Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro (MAM Rio), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil



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