

nara roesler

**parallel inventions:  
julio le parc  
& heinz mack**

curated by luis pérez-oramas

**nara roesler new york**

**opening** may 9, 2023

**exhibition** may 9 – june 16



The word ‘genius’ proceeds from and shares etymology with the Italian term ‘*ingenio*’. Often found in ancient treaties of art, notably painting, ‘*ingenio*’ refers to the notion of ‘invention’, to the faculty of imagining new things, unedited artistic paths, new worlds. More specifically, humanists in the Renaissance used the term ‘*ingenio*’ in visual arts to signify the instance of composition, the mental staging that leads to the creation of a work of art. As ancient rhetoricians conceived speech in three steps—*inventio*, *dispositio*, *elocutio*—(meaning inception, distribution of words, and utterance) humanist theory of painting translated them into *ingenio*, *compositio*, and reception of light or color.

Abstraction in the visual arts—a flawed term that does not embrace the complexity of its true meaning—has never stopped inventing, composing and chromatically enlightening figures and forms. Abstract figures and forms are not referential or imitative; they do not point to the representation of reality. But abstract forms and figures unveil a different dimension of reality, one beyond or before representation, and certainly one that overcomes verbal discourse. Modern Abstraction has, among other effects, emancipated

visual arts from the logocentric and the verbal. That is the genius of abstraction.

Julio Le Parc (b. 1928) and Heinz Mack (b. 1931) have, without knowing each other or working together, each one in a different way, produced abstract works that are similarly transformational of our understanding of the visual realm. Both of them were instrumental figures in the foundation and activity of two of the most influential and transformative avant-garde groups mid last Century in Europe: Mack was one of the founders (with Otto Piene and Gunther Uecker) of Grupo Zero in 1958 whereas Le Parc set, with a large ensemble of contemporaries, the Groupe de recherche d’art visuel—GRAV—in 1960. Parallel inventions, their works have played an unavoidable and leading role in the landscape of Western optical abstraction. This exhibition takes ground on that fact, unfolding from connections and differences between their art throughout the last 60 years.

‘Resemblance’—Claude Lévi-Strauss famously stated—‘does not exist in itself. Resemblance is a specific case of difference where difference tends towards zero.’ However similar at some points in their successful and accomplished

careers, the works of Heinz Mack and Julio Le Parc feature significant differences that contribute to defining a signature character for each one: whereas both artists have never stopped delving into light, Le Parc has developed an entire repertoire based on anamorphic reflections while Mack has stressed topological refraction. Light in Le Parc tends towards color; it blossoms as pure quality often unfolding into mirror-like effects in Mack’s works. Le Parc’s work stresses optical seriality. Mack’s is a masterful example of texture and repetition. Le Parc’s work often functions as an optical partition. Mack’s as a seismographic record. Le Parc’s is euphonic, Mack’s is tectonic.

These two geniuses of modern abstraction are very much active nowadays. Movement and stasis, ground and void, repetition and texture, veils and mirrors, are elements that both artists continue to use in order to induce unlimited aesthetic effects. Their most recent production is a testament to the fact that the greatest artists achieve the peak of their art at their most venerable and experienced maturity. Like old Titian, like old Picasso, their current work has an effect of total restitution as if the fruitfulness of age was the ceaseless infancy of genius.

—Luis Pérez-Oramas

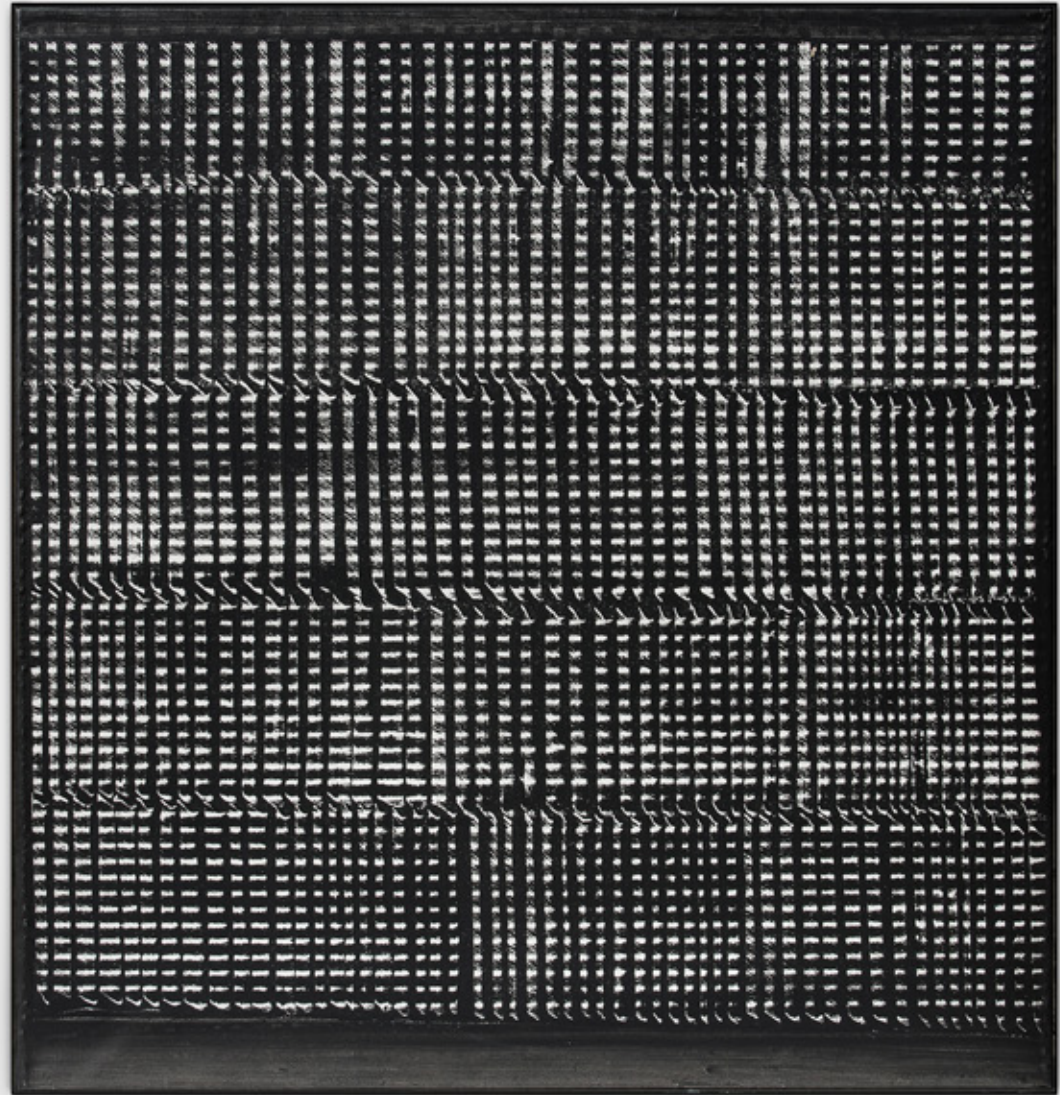
---

cover

**left** Heinz Mack, *La Lune en Rodage*, 1961

**right** Julio Le Parc, *Formes en contorsion sur trame*, 1966

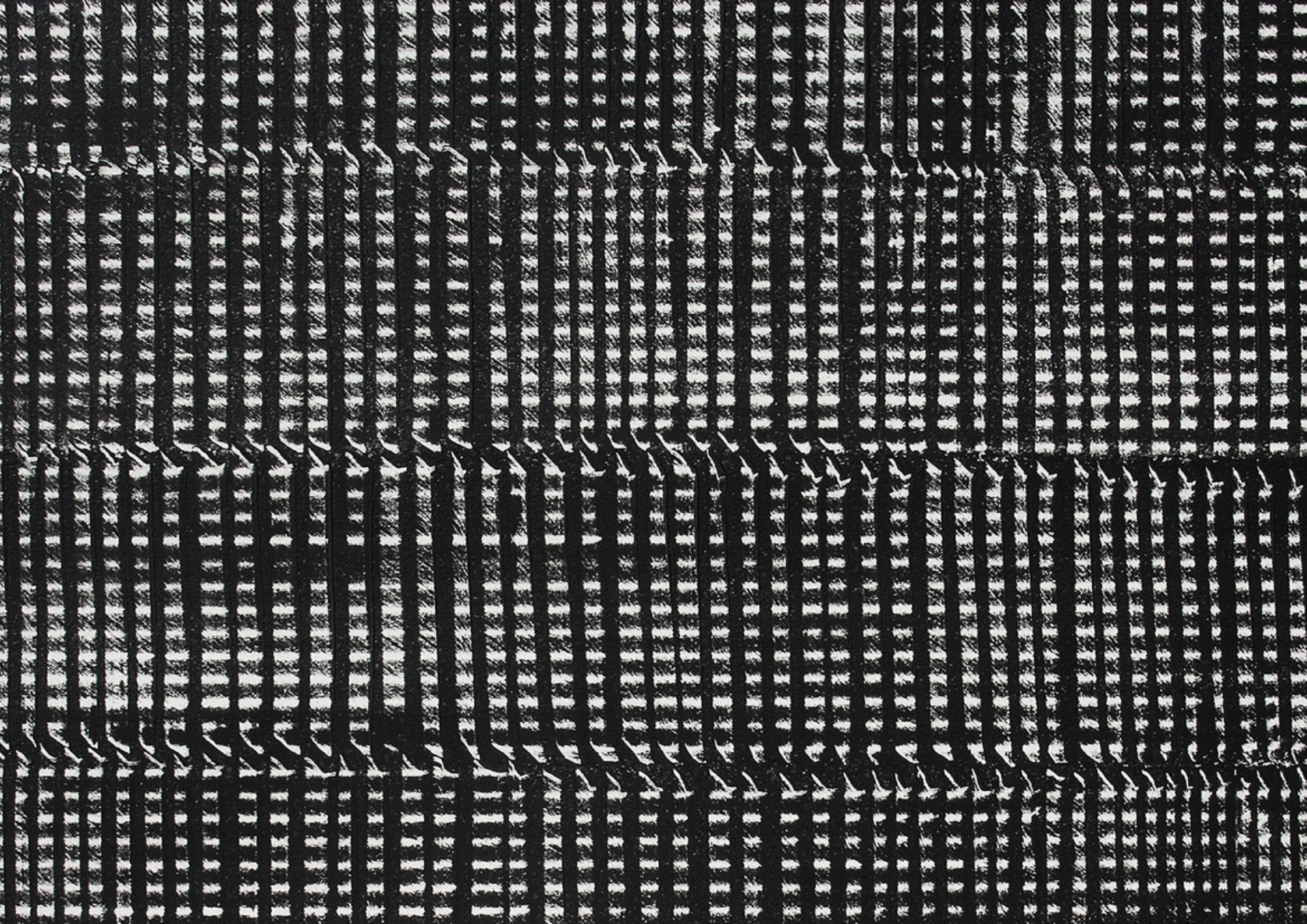
In the late 1950s, Mack developed a series of works using a technique known as *frottage*, which consisted of transferring the texture of a relief surface made with aluminum or other materials, onto a support. He carved metal or wooden structures, which he placed under the paper or canvas, manually rubbing 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'.



---

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









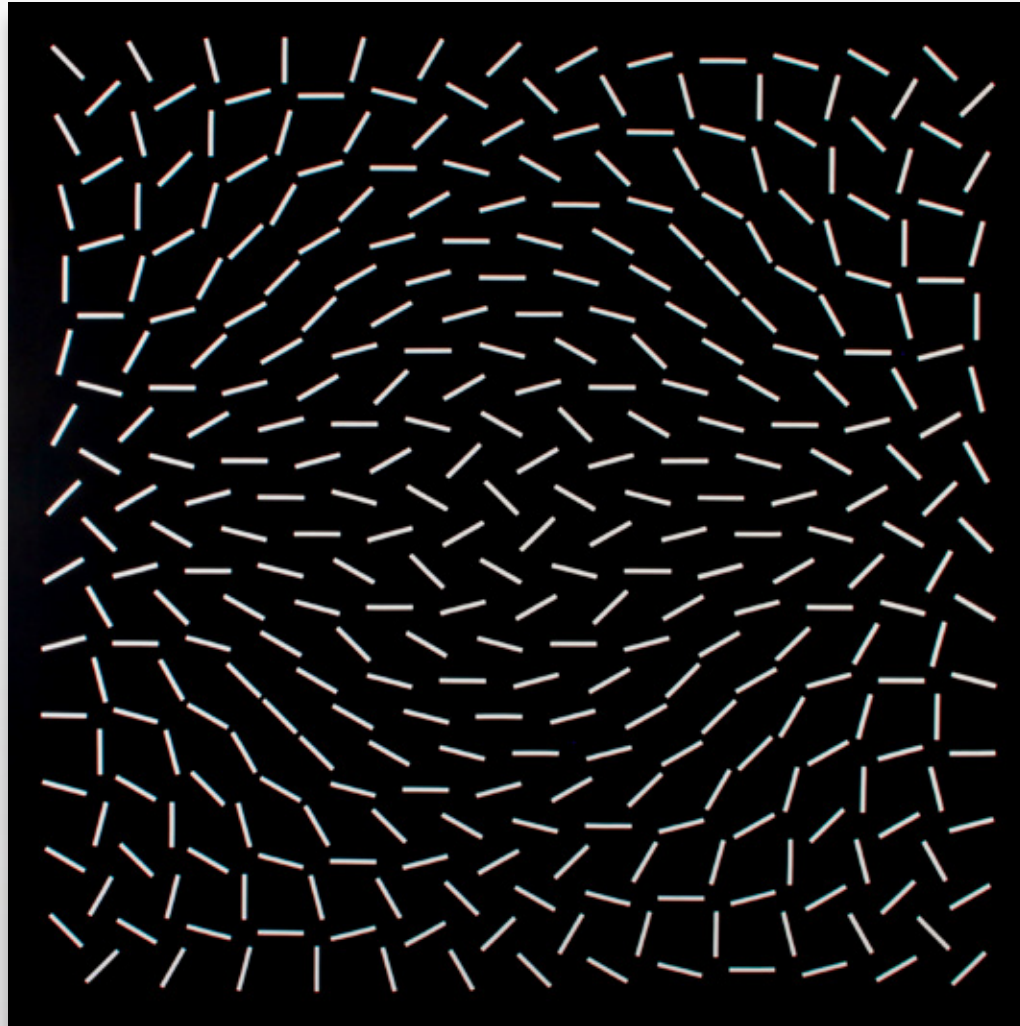
---

Heinz Mack in his studio  
Gladbacher Straße, Düsseldorf, ca. 1958  
courtesy of Holdings Heinz Mack  
photo: Charles Wilp



---

Julio Le Parc  
*Séquences de rotation*  
*sur blanc et noir*, 1959/2014  
acrylic paint on canvas  
200 x 200 cm  
78.7 x 78.7 in





*Surfaces* is the oldest series of works executed by Julio Le Parc and it serves as the basis for all his later investigations. In these gouaches, which began to be executed from 1958, the artist studies pure pictorial values such as movement, instability and progression. The colors used here are only black, white and gray. Even though it relies heavily on rationality, mathematics and the absence of subjectivity, the works in this series carry a sense of unstable balance, involving the viewer through a vibrant visual game that would eventually unfold in future works by the artist.

---

Julio Le Parc  
*Gamme a quatre positions*, 1959–1972  
gouache on plyboard  
95 x 95 cm  
37.4 x 37.4 in



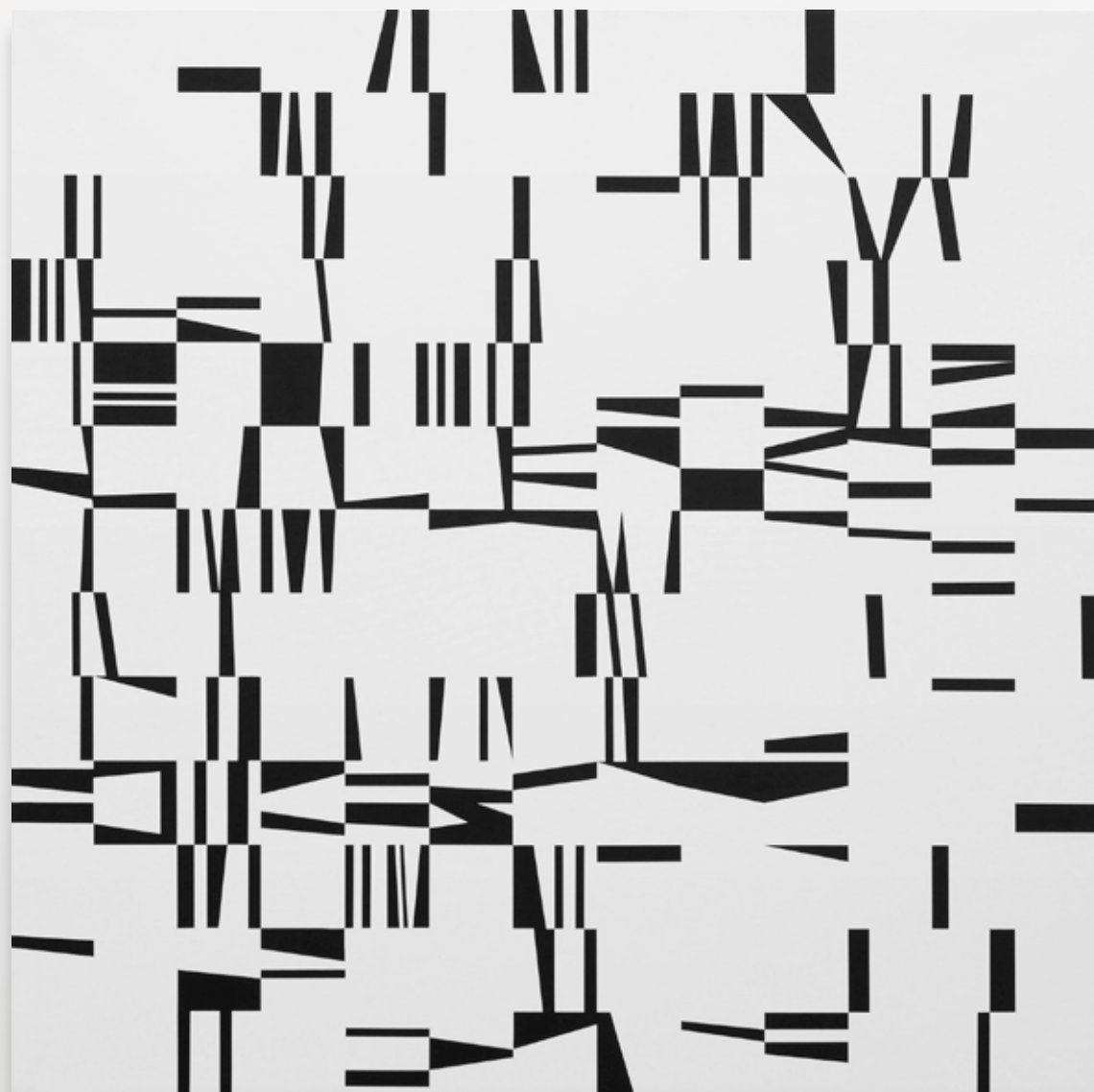


---

Heinz Mack  
*Small Wood-Relief*, 1955  
wood  
43 x 23 x 8 cm  
16.9 x 9.1 x 3.1 in







---

Julio Le Parc  
*Disonancia 2*, 1958/2016  
acrylic paint on canvas  
130 x 130 cm  
51.2 x 51.2 in





In 1957, 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, sand 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.

---

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

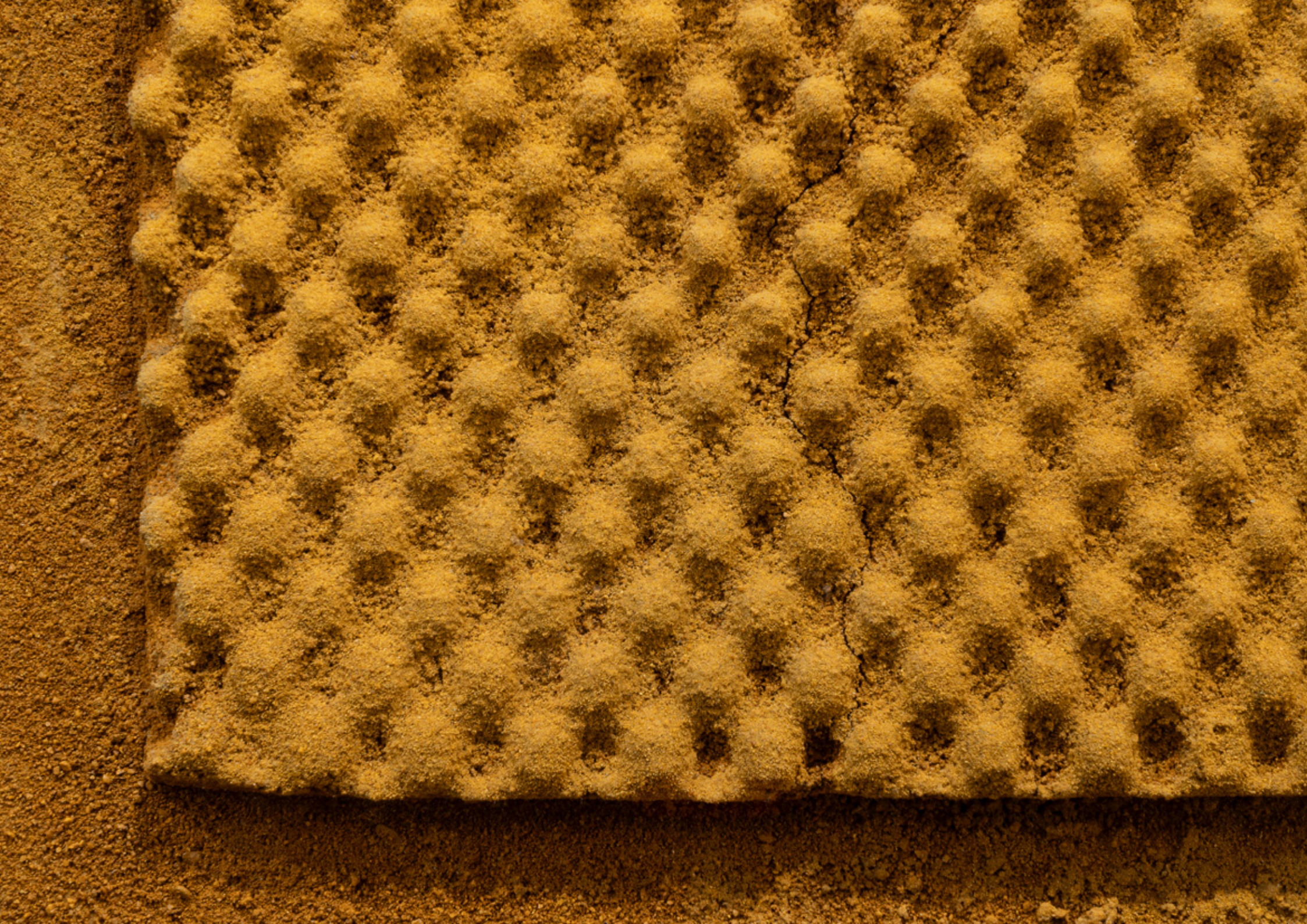




---

Heinz Mack at the Grand Erg Oriental, 1976









‘Nor will I forget the highly romantic, adventurous crossing of the Alps on a starry winter night, on which the incomparable gallery owner, author and collector Carl Laszlo accompanied me. Arriving in Basel, as a souvenir he presented me with a small book he had written, entitled *Holidays at the Lake of the Woods*. It was the sad story of his youth in a concentration camp. It was Laszlo who published the book *La Lune en Rodage* soon after. It was a spectacular anthology, with artistic manifestations and works by Manzoni, Castellani, myself and many other writers, painters and poets’.

—**Heinz Mack**. Excerpt from *Heinz Mack—the Kaleidoscope of my Memories*, October 1995

---

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

*La Lune en Rodage* (1961), belongs to a group of sculptures developed from 1958, 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 motorless 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.









In *Contorsions*, Le Parc uses flexible, three-dimensional metal strips as the main compositional elements: either alone, in dialogue with the background, or together. Because the metal is highly reflective, they mirror the background, the environment's lighting, as well as the strips themselves

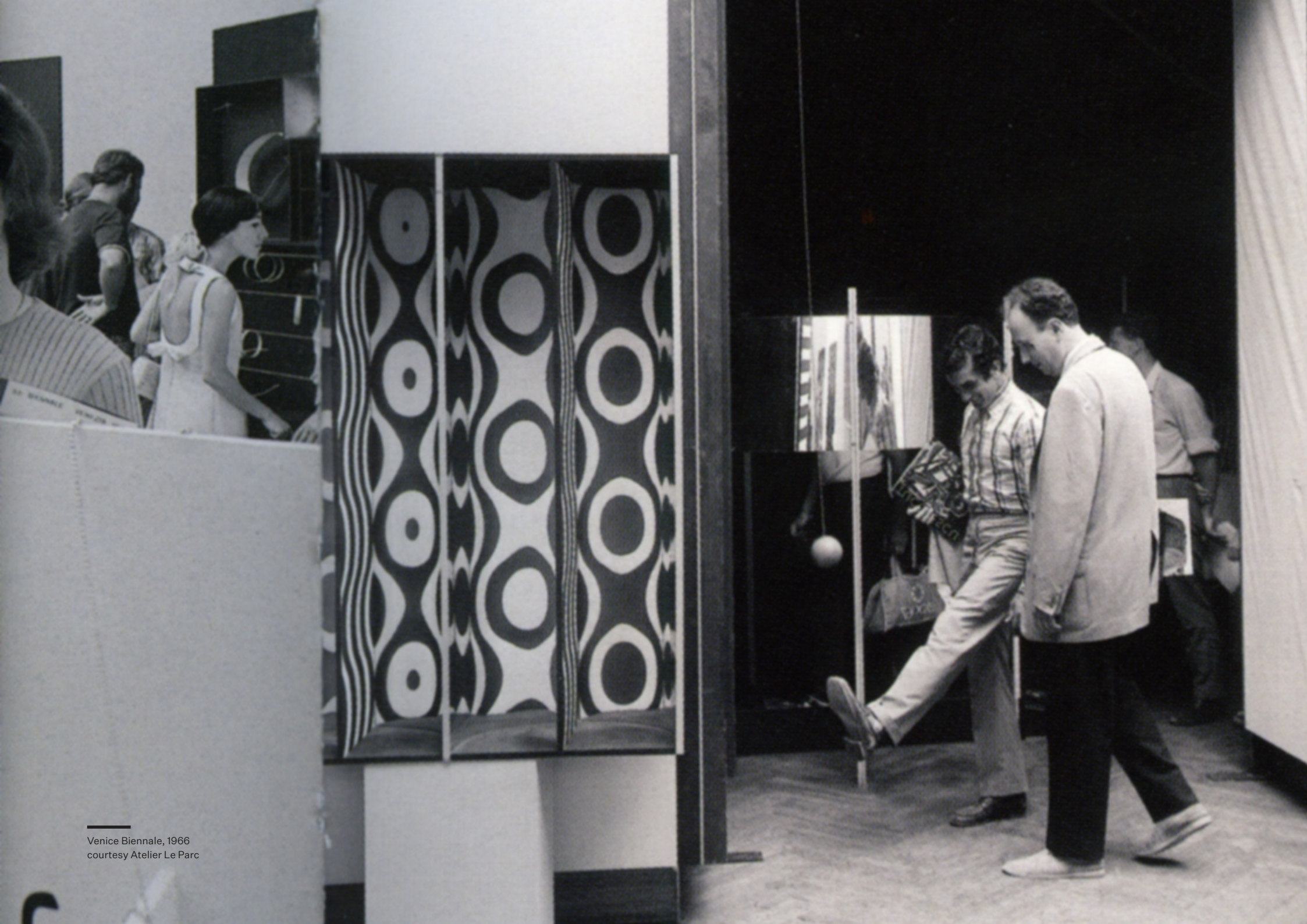
Here, however, the artist placed small motors inside the works, wishing to obtain real, physical dynamism, and not only optical illusion. The metallic ribbons are nailed to the support and directly linked to the motor, which when turned on, sets them in motion, causing them to be in constant contortion. The striped backgrounds and the surrounding lighting reinforce the dynamic character of the work.



---

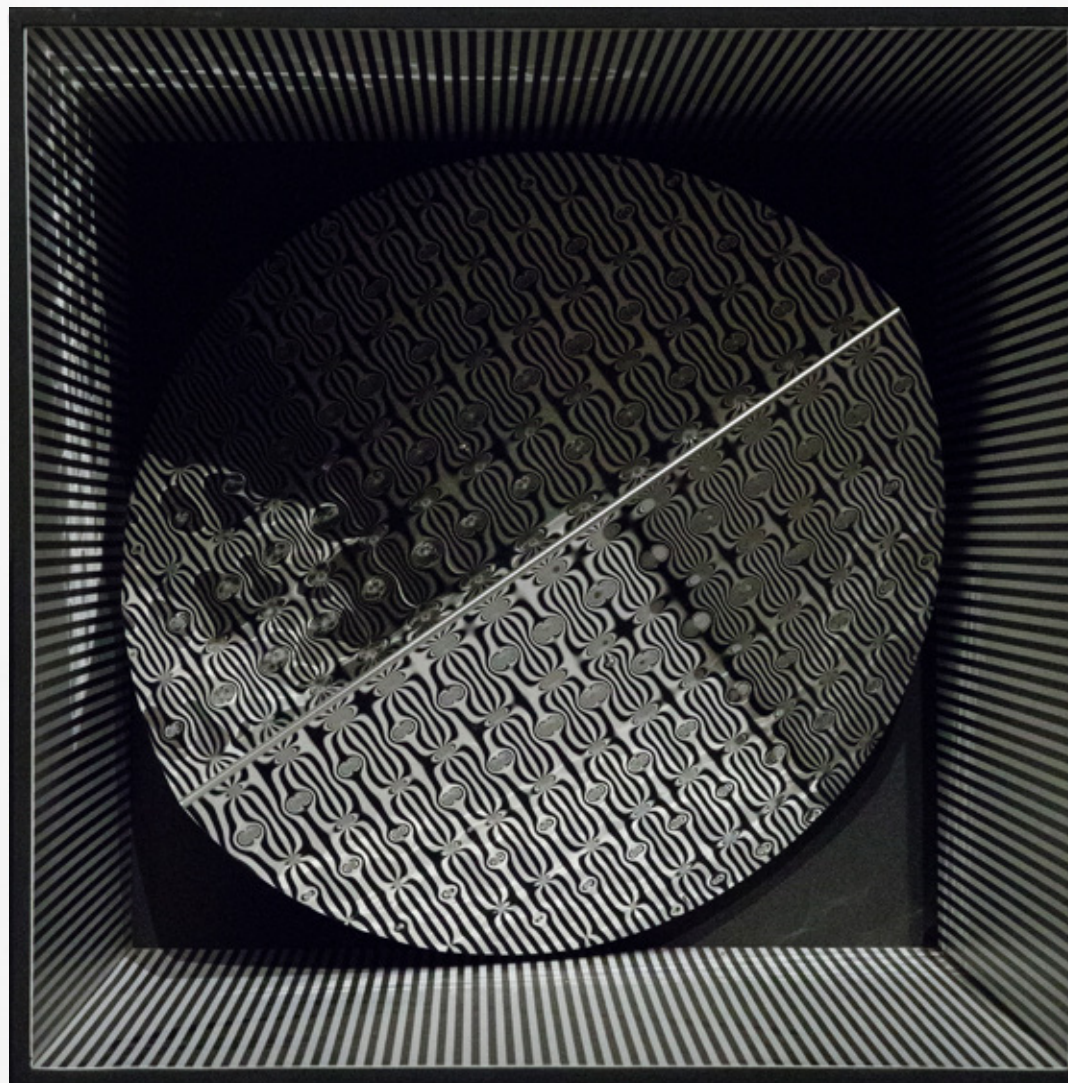
Julio Le Parc  
*Formes en contorsion*  
*sur trame*, 1966  
Wood, metal, motor,  
screen printing, painting  
edition of 3  
163 x 103 x 16 cm  
64.2 x 40.6 x 6.3 in





Venice Biennale, 1966  
courtesy Atelier Le Parc

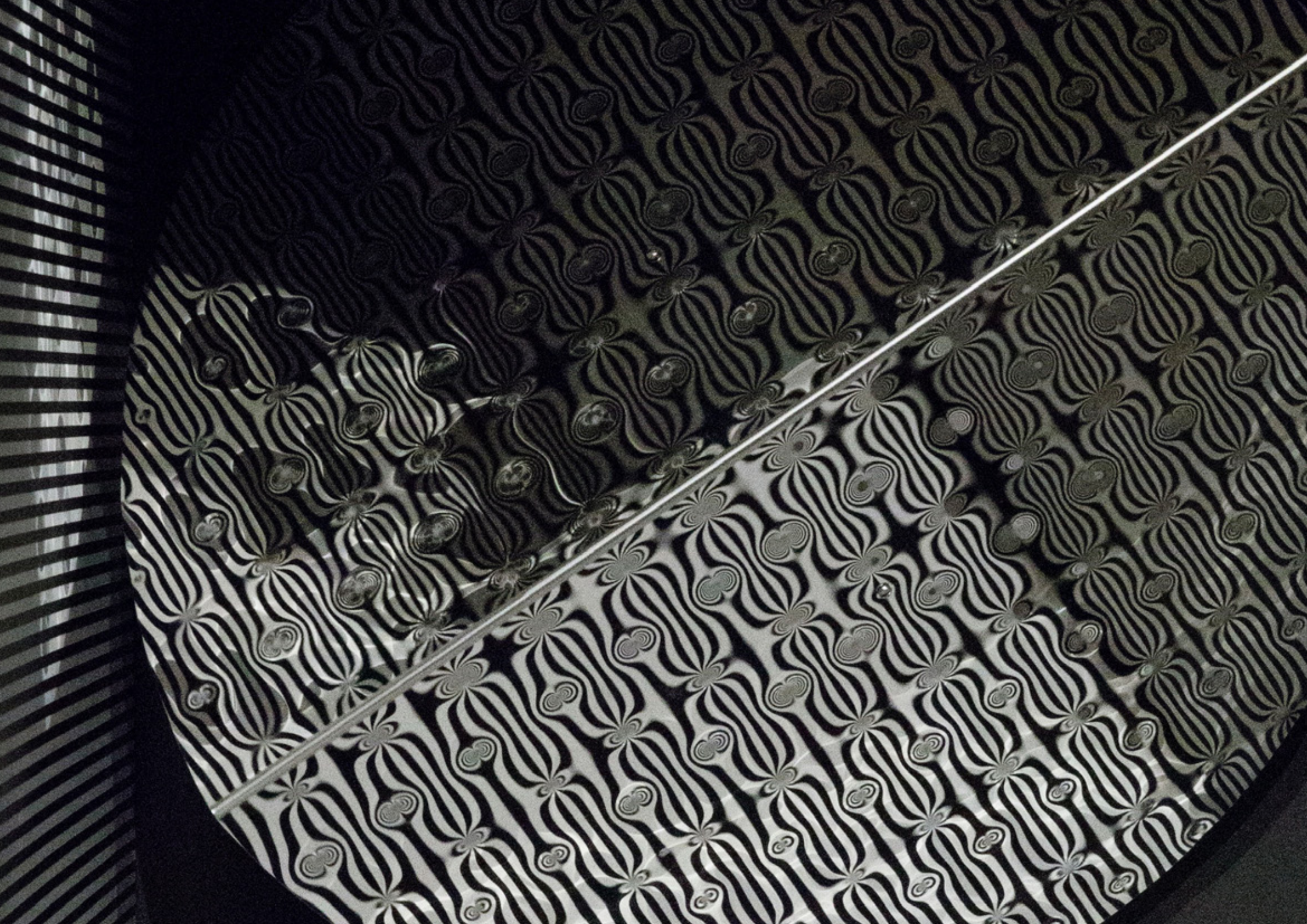




---

Julio Le Parc  
*Trame altérée*, 1965  
wood, steel and motor  
edition of 9 + AP  
60 x 60 x 60 cm  
23.6 x 23.6 x 23.6 in







Julio Le Parc at his pavilion representing  
Argentina at the Venice Biennale, 1966  
courtesy Atelier Le Parc





---

Heinz Mack  
*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

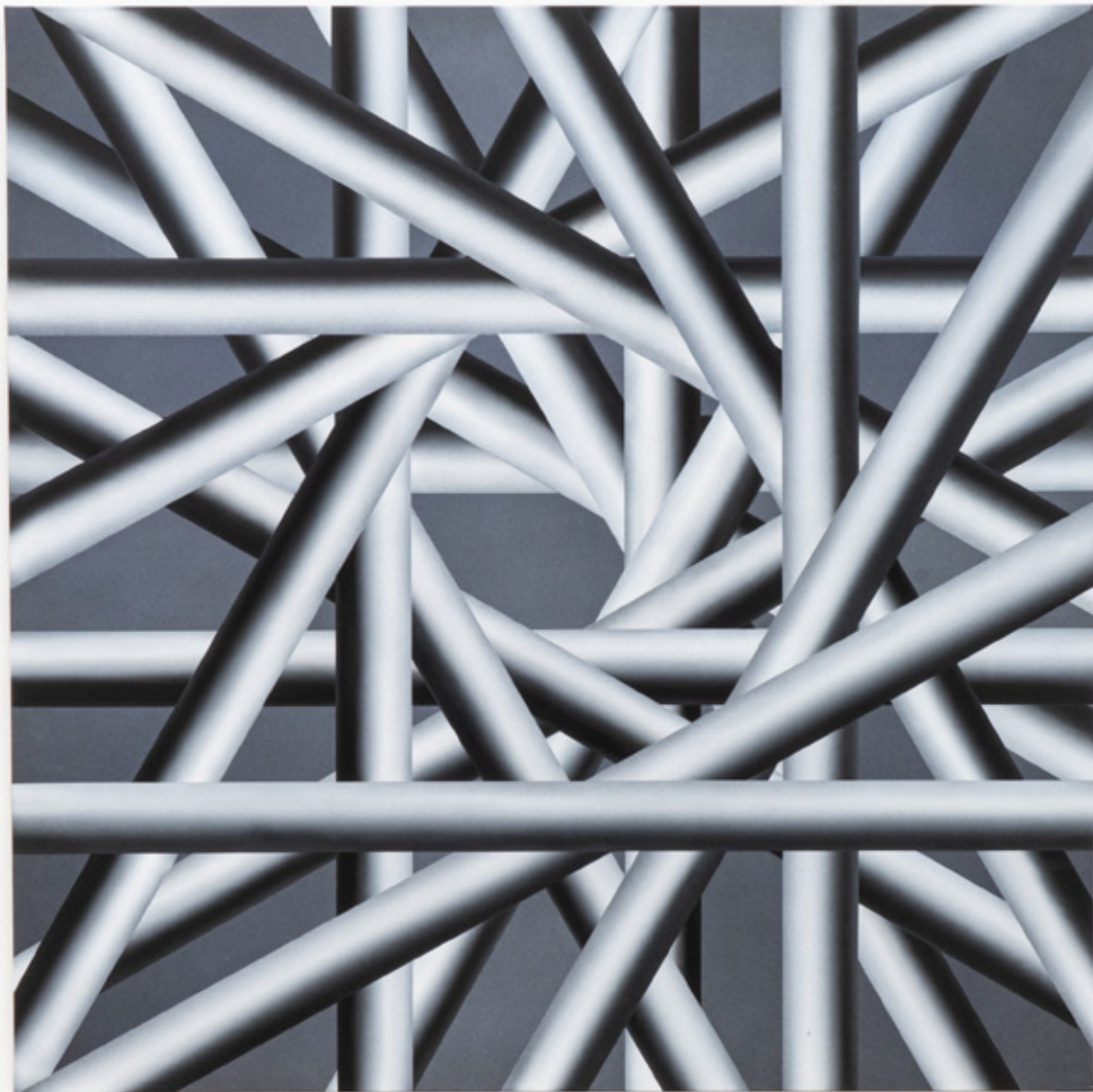








The *Modulation* series was conceived in the mid-1970s, bringing several investigations about three-dimensionally onto the pictorial plane with volumetric and sculptural forms being illustrated on a two-dimensional support. To accentuate their physicality, the artist plays with light and shadow. At first, the artist used black and white exclusively, using an airbrush and spray paint to produce the image, through which he he created a modulated passage from luminous white to completely dark.



---

Julio Le Parc  
*Modulation 1191 à partir  
de maquette de 1976, 1976/2018*  
acrylic paint on canvas  
200 x 200 cm  
78.7 x 78.7 in







---

Heinz Mack in front of his work  
*Kleiner Urwald* at Galeria Hans Mayer, 1964  
Courtesy of Holdings Heinz Mack

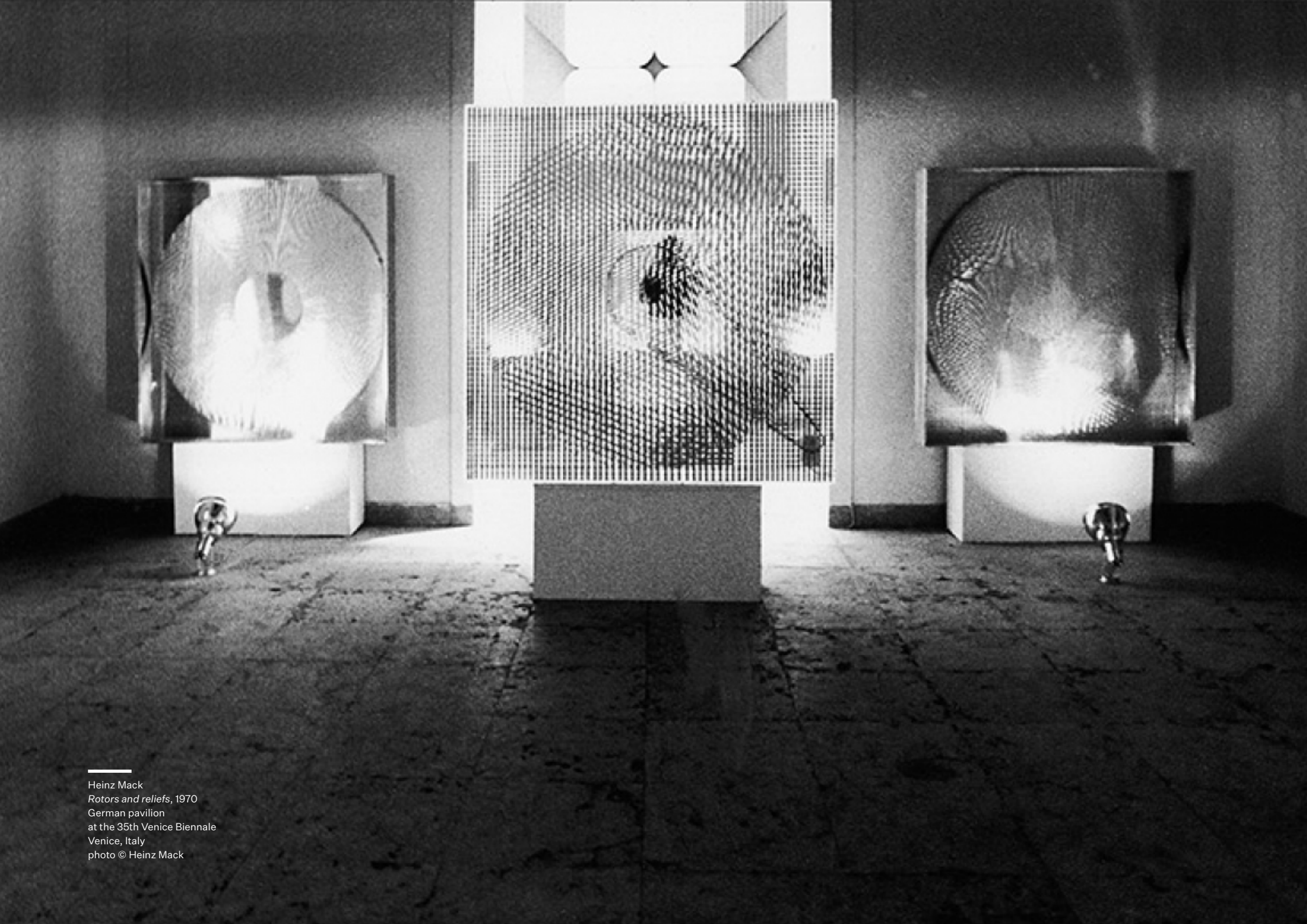


Heinz Mack  
*Silver Fan*, 1966/2014  
stainless steel  
210 x 210 x 29,5 cm  
82.7 x 82.7 x 11.6 in



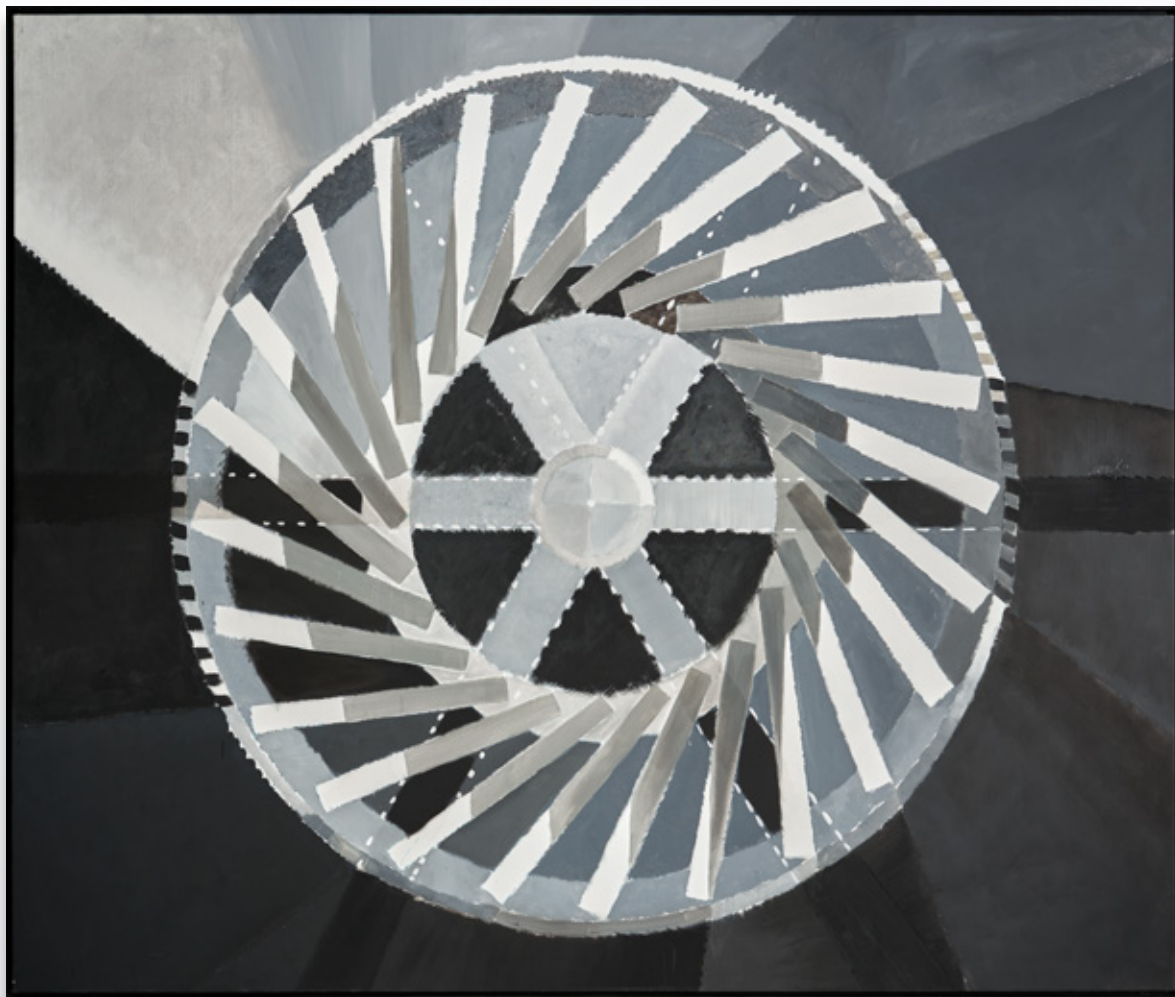






Heinz Mack  
*Rotors and reliefs*, 1970  
German pavilion  
at the 35th Venice Biennale  
Venice, Italy  
photo © Heinz Mack





Heinz Mack  
*Untitled (Chromatic  
Constellation)*, 2016  
acrylic paint on canvas  
209 x 248 cm  
82.3 x 97.6 in











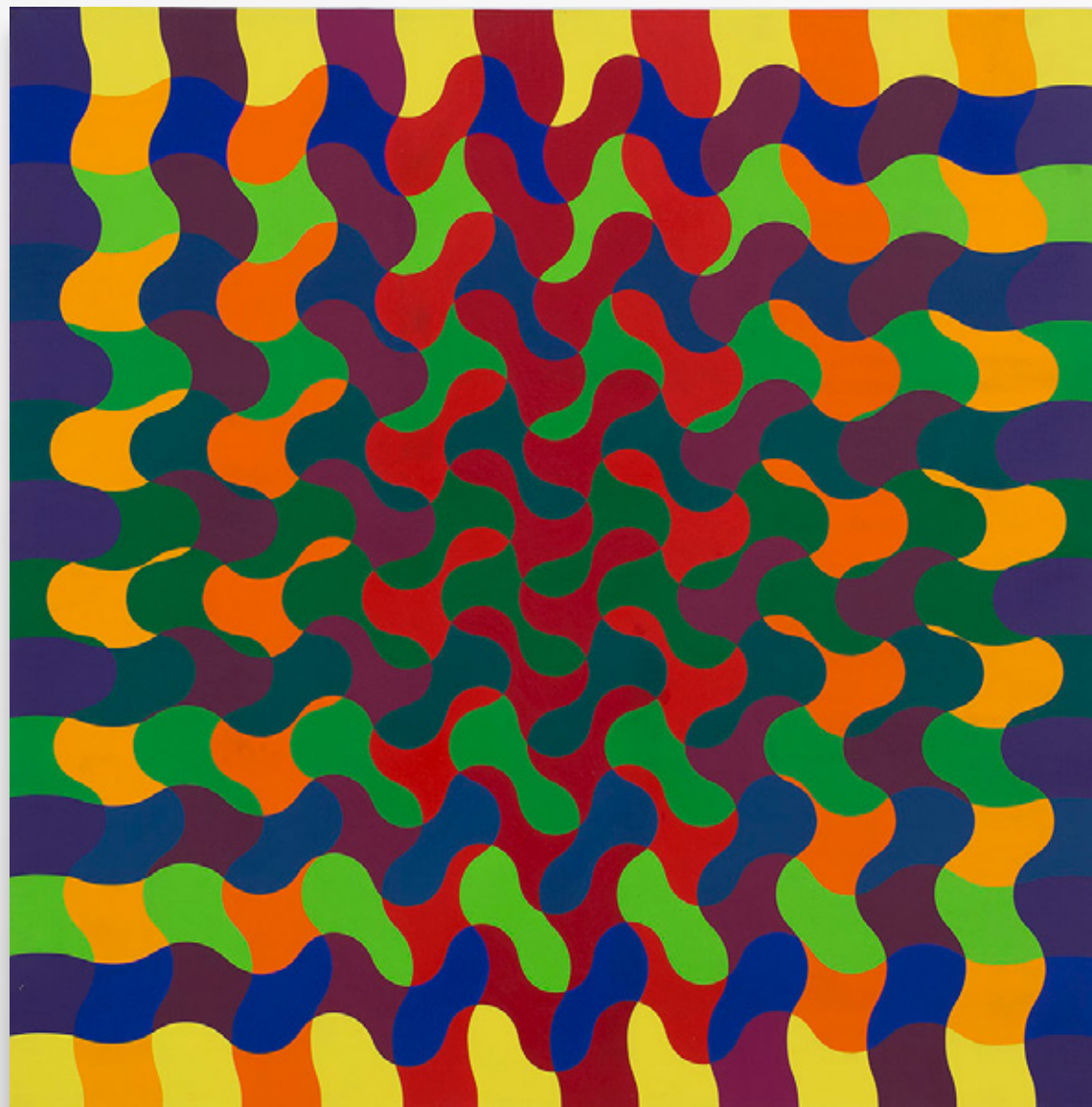
---

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



In this series, Le Parc's main focus is the study of color. Taking as a chromatic palette of 14 colors as his starting point, which ranges from dark blue to bright red, the artist studies all possible arrangements created by the colors and the visual results obtained through these interactions.

Many works in this series do not take on regular forms. Here, Le Parc groups chromatic palettes in wavy, circular patterns and sometimes seeks to achieve a volumetric effect, creating compositions in which the colors are arranged to create forms resembling organic elements.



---

Julio Le Parc  
*Ondes 140 série 50 n° 1, 1974*  
acrylic paint on canvas  
150 x 150 cm  
59.1 x 59.1 in





exhibition view  
*Julio Le Parc. Un visionario,*  
Centro Cultural Kirchner,  
Buenos Aires, Argentina, 2019





---

Julio Le Parc  
*Ensemble volume-couleur*,  
1971/1975  
acrylic paint on wood  
edition 1/9 (one of a kind)  
136 x 27 x 27 cm  
53.5 x 10.6 x 10.6 in





---

Julio Le Parc  
*Ensemble volume-couleur*,  
1971/1975  
acrylic paint on wood  
edition 1/9 (one of a kind)  
43 x 42 x 8 cm  
16.9 x 16.5 x 3.1 in





---

Julio Le Parc  
*Ensemble volume-couleur*,  
1971/1975  
acrylic paint on wood  
edition 1/9 (one of a kind)  
56 x 14 x 14 cm  
22 x 5.5 x 5.5 in





---

Julio Le Parc  
*Ensemble volume-couleur*,  
1971/1975  
acrylic paint on wood  
edition 1/9 (one of a kind)  
75 x 14 x 14 cm  
29.5 x 5.5 x 5.5 in





---

Julio Le Parc  
*Ensemble volume-couleur*,  
1971/1975  
acrylic paint on wood  
edition 1/9 (one of a kind)  
80 x 12,5 x 12,5 cm  
31.5 x 4.9 x 4.9 in



---

Julio Le Parc  
*Ensemble volume-couleur*,  
1971/1975  
acrylic paint on wood  
edition 1/9 (one of a kind)  
48 x 14 x 14 cm  
18.9 x 5.5 x 5.5 in





---

Julio Le Parc  
*Ensemble volume-couleur series,*  
1971/1975  
acrylic paint on wood



exhibition view  
*Interactive Spatial Experiences*,  
Kunstmuseen Krefeld, Germany, 2022  
photo © Dirk Rose





---

Heinz Mack  
*Colored Glass-relief*, 1983/2010  
mineralogically vaporized glass,  
wood, acrylic and canvas  
107 x 92 x 17 cm  
42.1 x 36.2 x 6.7 in

Following Heinz Mack's experiments 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.



---

Heinz Mack  
*Untitled (Chromatic  
Constellation)*, 2016  
acrylic paint on canvas  
220 x 208 cm  
86.6 x 81.9 in







Heinz Mack in his studio, 2014





---

## heinz mack

b. 1931, lollar, germany

lives and works between mönchengladbach, germany and ibiza, spain

Throughout his career, Heinz Mack (Lollar, Germany, 1931) 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 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.

---

## selected solo exhibitions

- *Vibration of Light*, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Venice, Italy (2022)
- *Paragold*, Nara Roesler, São Paulo, Brazil (2021)
- *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)
- *The Sky Over Nine Columns*, Venice Biennale, Italy (2014)
- *Mack – The Language of My Hand*, Museum Kunstpalast, Düsseldorf, Germany (2011)
- *Heinz Mack – Licht der ZERO-Zeit*, Ludwig Museum im Deutschherrenhaus, Koblenz, Germany (2009)

## selected group exhibitions

- *The Sky as Studio – Yves Klein and his contemporaries*, Pompidou Metz, Metz, France (2021)
- *Visual Play*, Wilhelm Hack Museum, Ludwigshafen, Germany (2018)
- *New Beginnings: Between Gesture and Geometry*, Georgem Economou Collection, Athens, Greece (2016)
- *Facing the Future. Art in Europe, 1945–68*, Palais des Beaux Arts, Brussels, Belgic (2016)
- *ZERO: Let Us Explore the Stars*, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (2015)
- *ZERO: Countdown to Tomorrow*, 1950’s–60’s, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, USA (2015)
- 35<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale, Italy (1970)
- *Documenta II* (1959) and *Documenta III* (1966), Kassel, Germany

## 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, United Kingdom





Julio Le Parc's studio, Cachan, France  
photo © Gregory Copitet



---

## julio le parc

b. 1928, mendoza, argentina

lives and works in cachan, france

Julio Le Parc is internationally recognized as one of the leading names in Optical and Kinetic art. Over the course of six decades, he has performed groundbreaking experiments on light, movement and color, seeking to promote new possibilities for the relationship between art and society from a utopian perspective. The artist's canvases, sculptures, and installations challenge the traditional Art Historical definition of paintings: he uses mediums that pertain to pictorial tradition, such as acrylic on canvas, while incorporating formal kinetic processes in the assemblages and apparatuses he employs.

Julio Le Parc was a co-founder of Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel (1960–68), a collective of optical-kinetic artists who set out to encourage the participation of viewers in their art, in order to enhance their abilities to perceive and act. In keeping with these premises, and more generally with the then quite disseminated aspiration to a dematerialized art, an art indifferent to market demands, the group showed in alternative venues and even on the street. Julio Le Parc's works and installations, which were made from nothing other than the interplay of light and shadow, were a direct result of that context, where the production of a fleeting, unsellable art had a clear socio-political undertone.

---

### selected solo exhibitions

- *Julio Le Parc: Un Visionario*, Centro Cultural Néstor Kirchner, Buenos Aires, Argentina (2019)
- *Julio Le Parc 1959*, Metropolitan Museum of Art (Met Breuer), New York, USA (2018)
- *Julio Le Parc: Da forma à ação*, Instituto Tomie Ohtake (ITO), São Paulo, Brazil (2017)
- *Julio Le Parc: Form into Action*, Perez Art Museum, Miami, United States (2016)

### selected group exhibitions

- *Action <-> Reaction: 100 Years of Kinetic Art*, Kunsthal Rotterdam, Rotterdam, The Netherlands (2018)
- *The Other Trans-Atlantic: Kinetic & Op Art in Central & Eastern Europe and Latin America 1950s–1970s*, Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow, Russia (2018); Sesc Pinheiros, São Paulo, Brazil (2018); Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw, Poland (2017)
- *Kinesthesia: Latin American Kinetic Art, 1954–1969*, II Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA (II PST: LA/LA), Palm Springs Art Museum (PSAM), Palm Springs, USA (2017)
- *Retrospect: Kinetika 1967*, Belvedere Museum, Vienna, Austria (2016)
- *The Illusive Eye*, El Museo del Barrio, New York, USA (2016)

### selected collections

- Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation, Miami, USA
- Daros Collection, Zurich, Switzerland
- Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, USA
- Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris, France
- Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, USA

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 21<sup>st</sup> street  
new york, 10011 ny  
usa  
t 1 (212) 794 5034

---

[nararoesler.art](http://nararoesler.art)

[info@nararoesler.art](mailto:info@nararoesler.art)