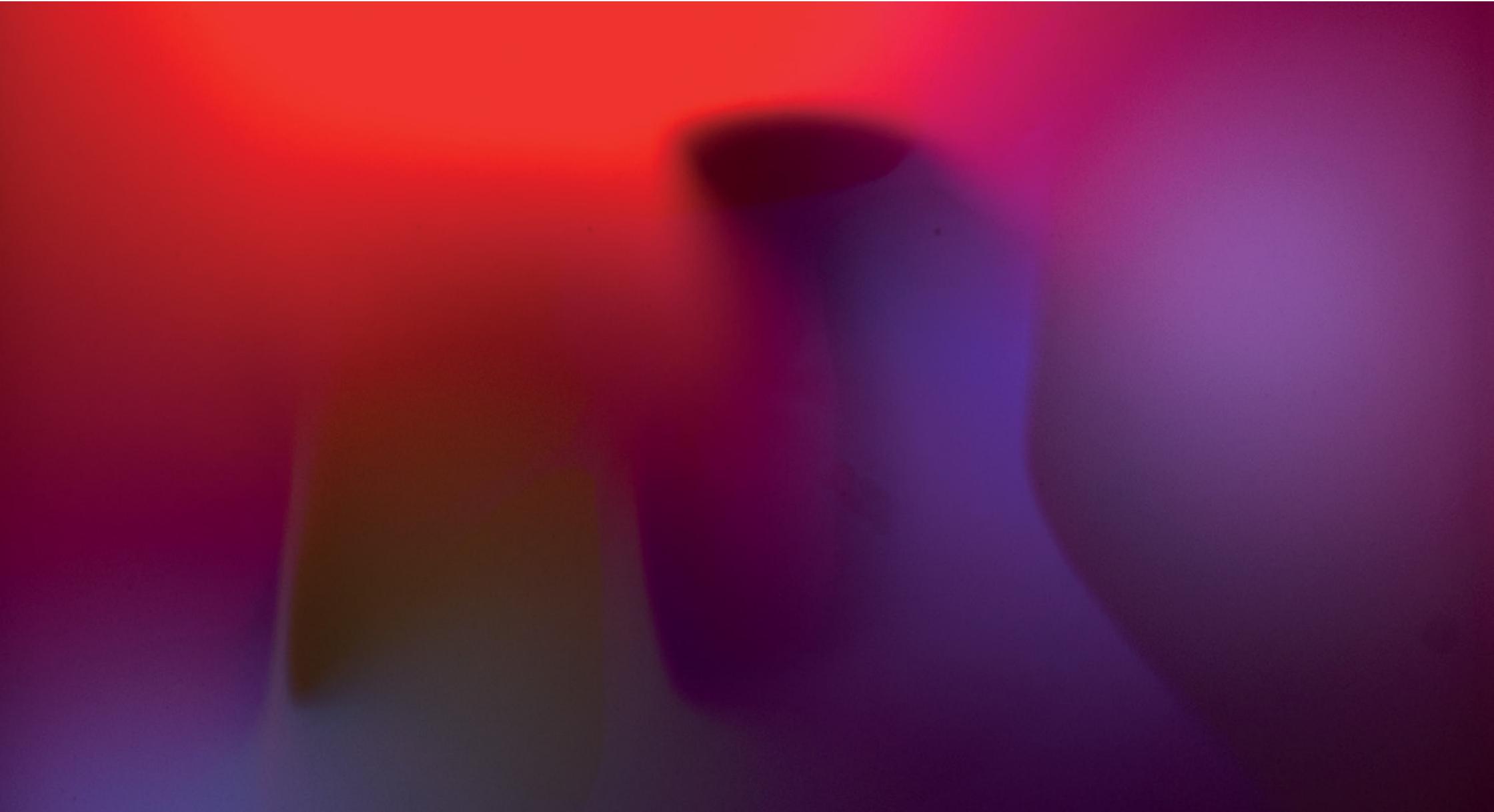


nara roesler

abraham palatnik



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.

cover *Kinechromatic Device 2 SE - 18*, 1955/2004 [detail]

all images courtesy of the artist's state and Nara Roesler

[click to see full cv](#)

selected solo exhibitions

- *Abraham Palatnik: Seismograph of Color*, Nara Roesler, New York, USA (2022)
- *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, Sao 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 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

4	w series
12	duco on cardboard paintings
15	rotating object
16	ludic object
18	kinectic objects
28	progressive reliefs
42	perfect square
43	magnetic fields
44	paintings on glass
48	kinechromatic devices

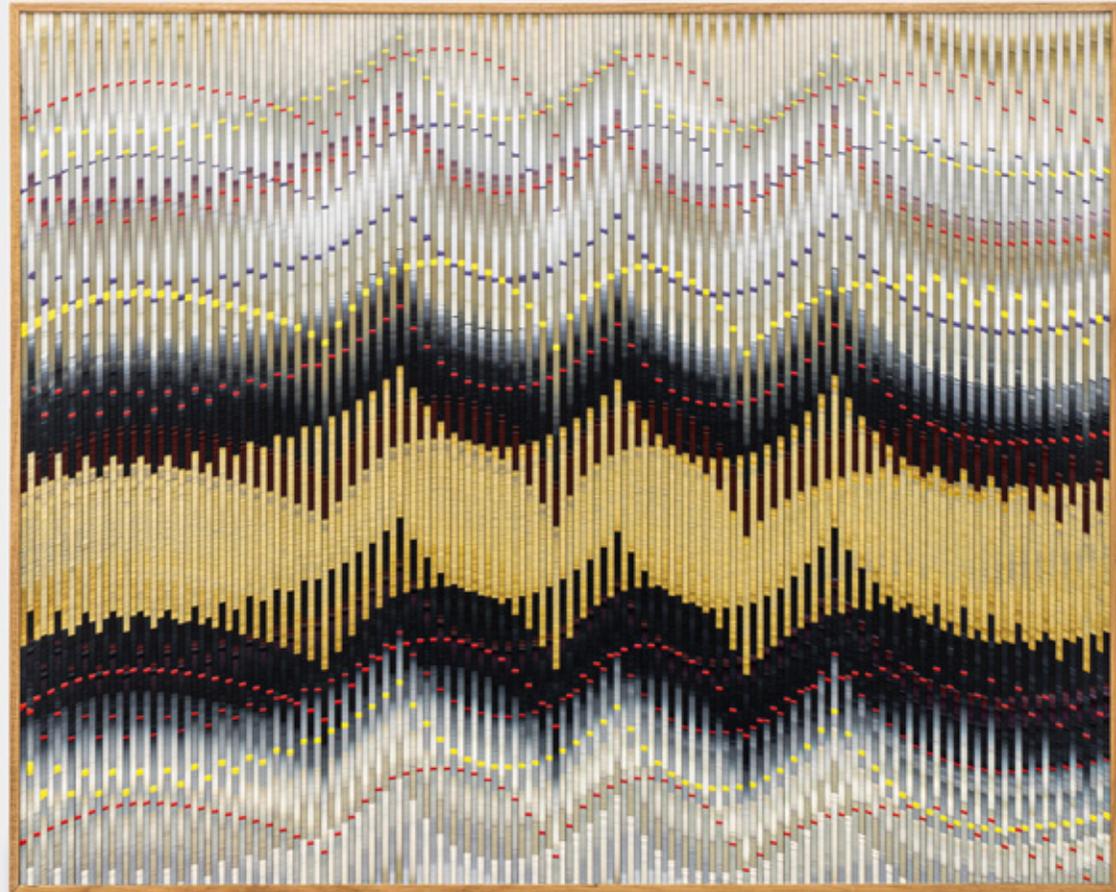
W series

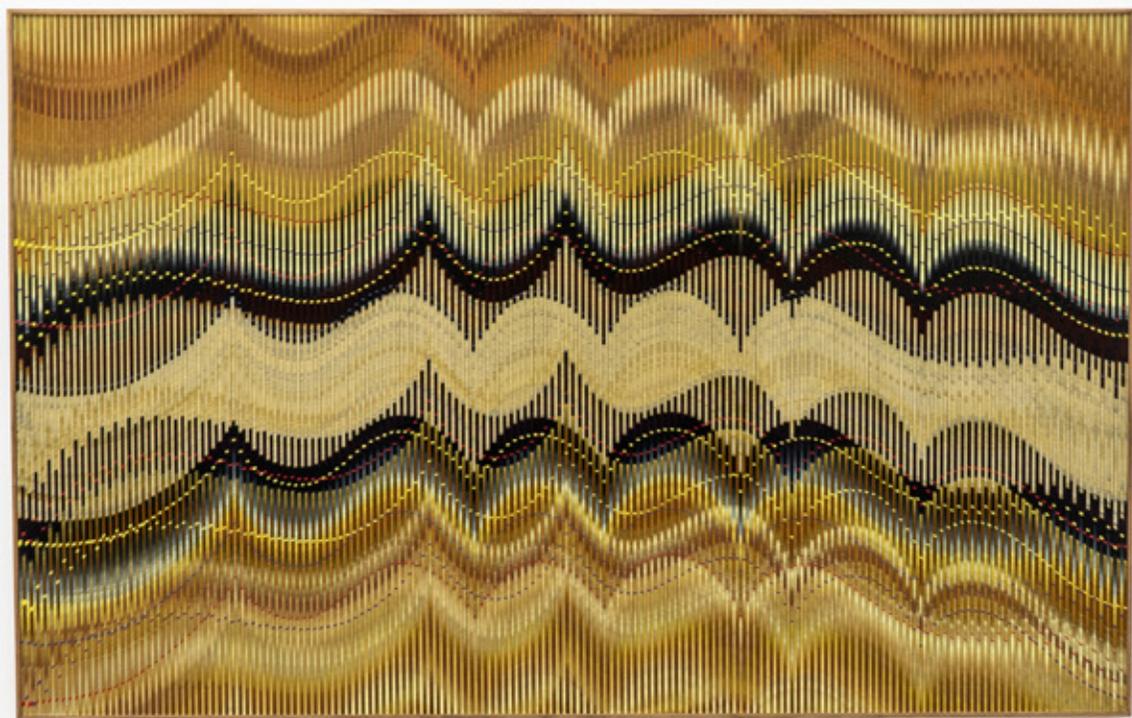
Abraham Palatnik began to develop the *W* series in 2004. They were first exhibited in the same year at Galeria Nara Roesler in São Paulo. Palatnik's *W* series developed from his *Progressive Reliefs* series, which he had been working on since the sixties. The process begins with the artist making a pair of non-figurative paintings on wooden plates, which are cut into long, thin, equally wide strips with laser. He then assembles them back together, intercepting strips from both paintings, as if to re-build another, yet vertically displacing the strips.

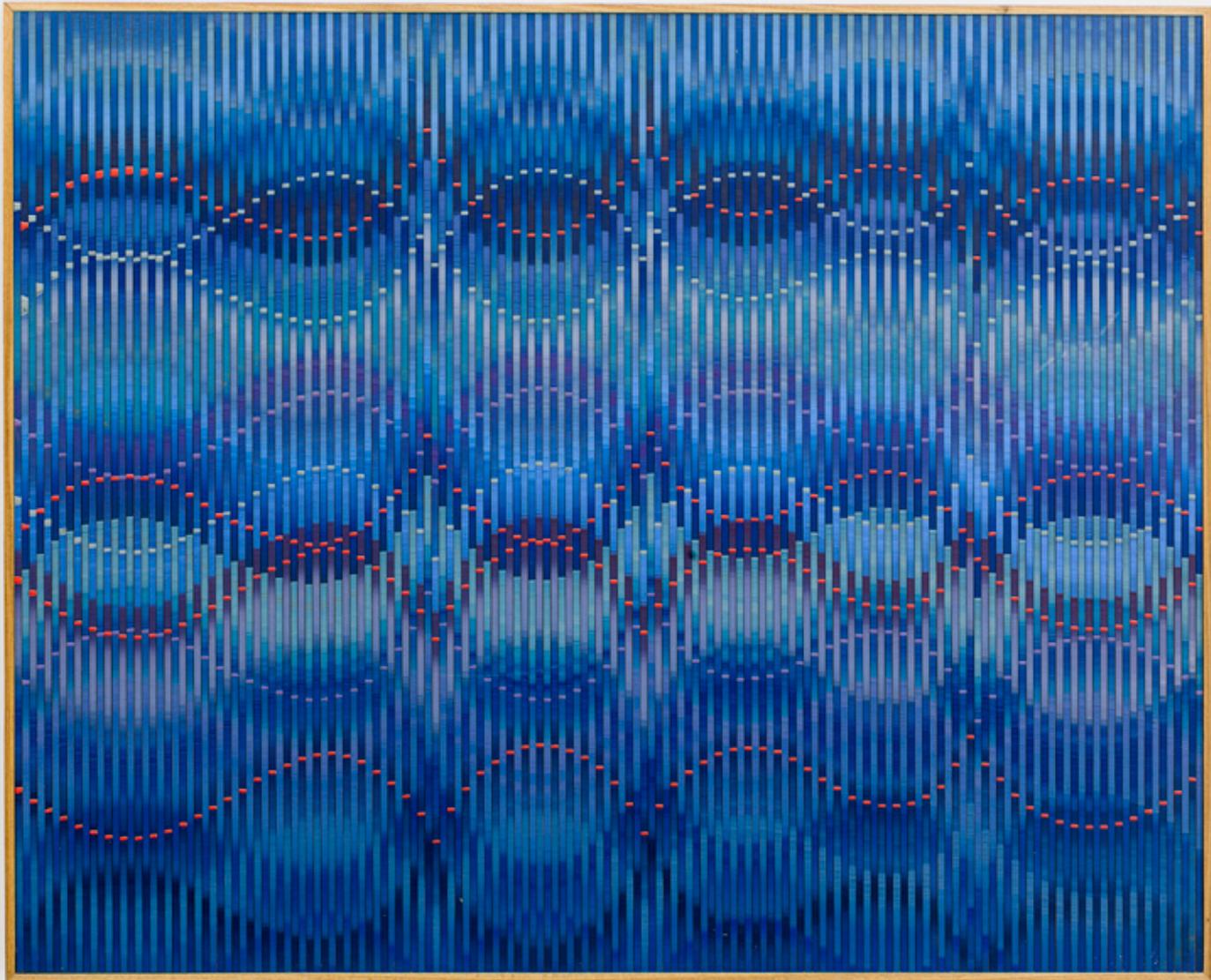
These shifts accentuate the rhythm and dynamism of the painting's composition—the colors create a sense of vibration, which are further emphasized by the vertical lines that trace back to the process of making.

W-MA 3, 2019
acrylic paint and enamel on wood
65,5 × 82,7 cm | 25.8 × 32.6 in
photo © Erika Mayumi

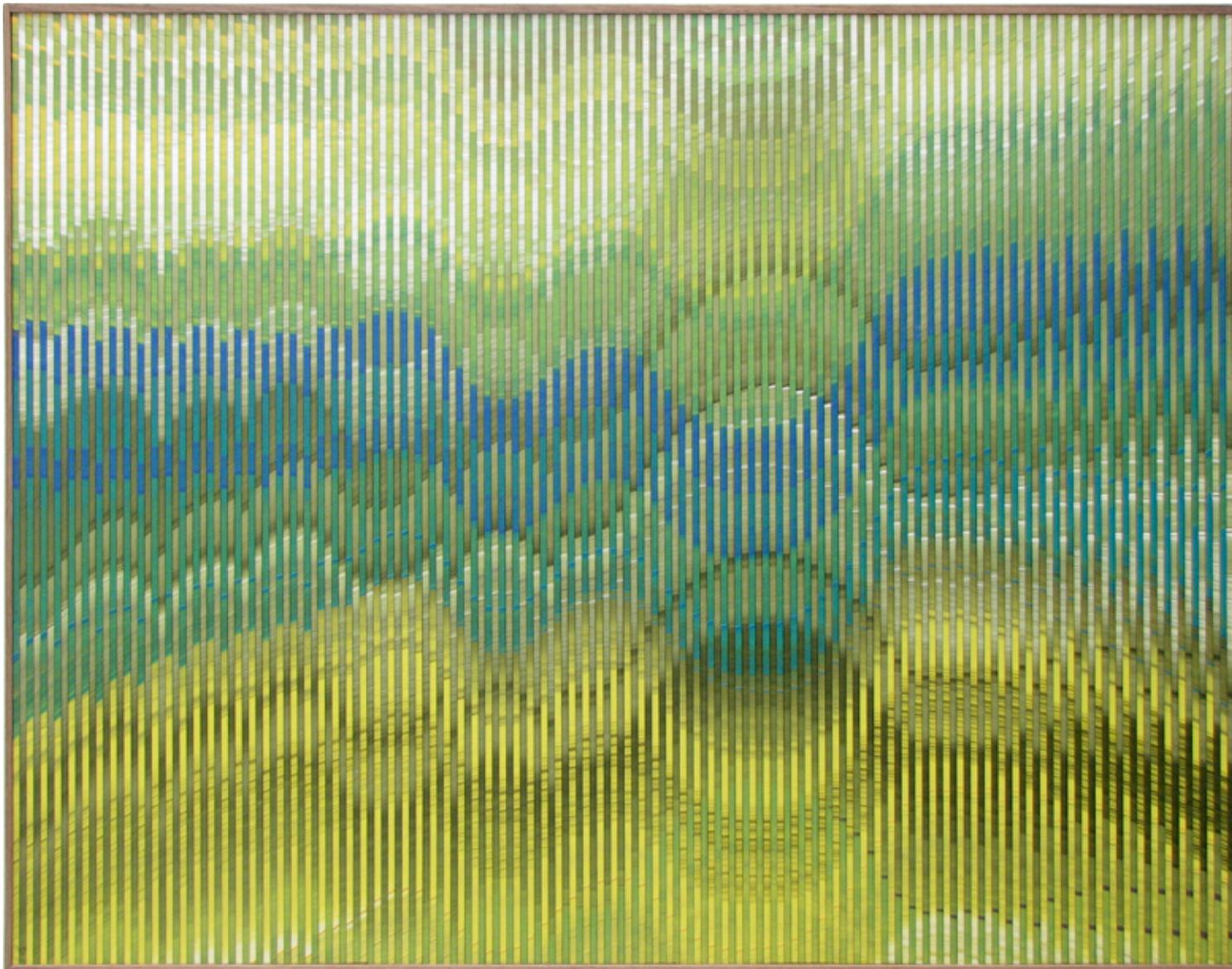
→
W-HA 9, 2019
acrylic paint and enamel on wood
104,8 × 167,7 cm | 41.3 × 66 in
photo © Erika Mayumi







W-M/49, 2018
acrylic on wood
70 × 80 cm | 27.6 × 31.5 in



W-271, 2009
acrylic on wood
74,4 × 98,2 cm | 29.3 × 38.7 in

→
W-192, 2007
acrylic on wood
27,7 × 24,5 cm | 10.9 × 9.6 in
photo © Erika Mayumi





W-10, 2003
acrylic on wood
54,4 × 71 cm | 21.4 × 28 in
photo © Erika Mayumi

→
exhibition view
Nara Roesler New York, USA, 2016
photo © Adam Reich

→ →
exhibition view
Abraham Palatnik: Ver, mover
Nara Roesler São Paulo, Brazil, 2017
photo © Everton Ballardín





duco on cardboard paintings

This series of work is comprised of ten paintings, all of which were created in 1988, have dimensions of 37,5 × 37,5 cm and follow the same method of production. In this series, Palatnik painted on cardboard using Duco, or automotive, paint and subsequently glued the surface on to wood panels. In using such dense and rigid paint, the artist sought to remove the trace of his gestures and authorship. This body of works is grouped together and placed in a wooden box, for it to be observed together, progressively and in comparison to one another.

Untitled, 1988
duco painting, cardboard, duratex
37,5 × 37,5 cm | 14.8 × 14.8 in
photo © Everton Ballardin

Untitled, 1988
duco painting, cardboard, duratex
37,5 × 37,5 cm | 14.8 × 14.8 in
photo © Everton Ballardin

→
Untitled, 1988
duco painting, cardboard, duratex
37,5 × 37,5 cm | 14.8 × 14.8 in
photo © Everton Ballardin





rotating object

As its name indicates, the *Rotating object*, created in 1975, is a piece whose structural movement is that of rotation. The work is made up of polyester resin and has a small physical distortion, meaning that when pushed in a specific direction, the rotation of the object is inverted. *Rotating object* is placed on a flat and hard surface in order to minimize external obstruction and maximize the duration of its movement. Following the spectator's shove, the object begins to move and eventually, due to its own anatomy, changes direction.



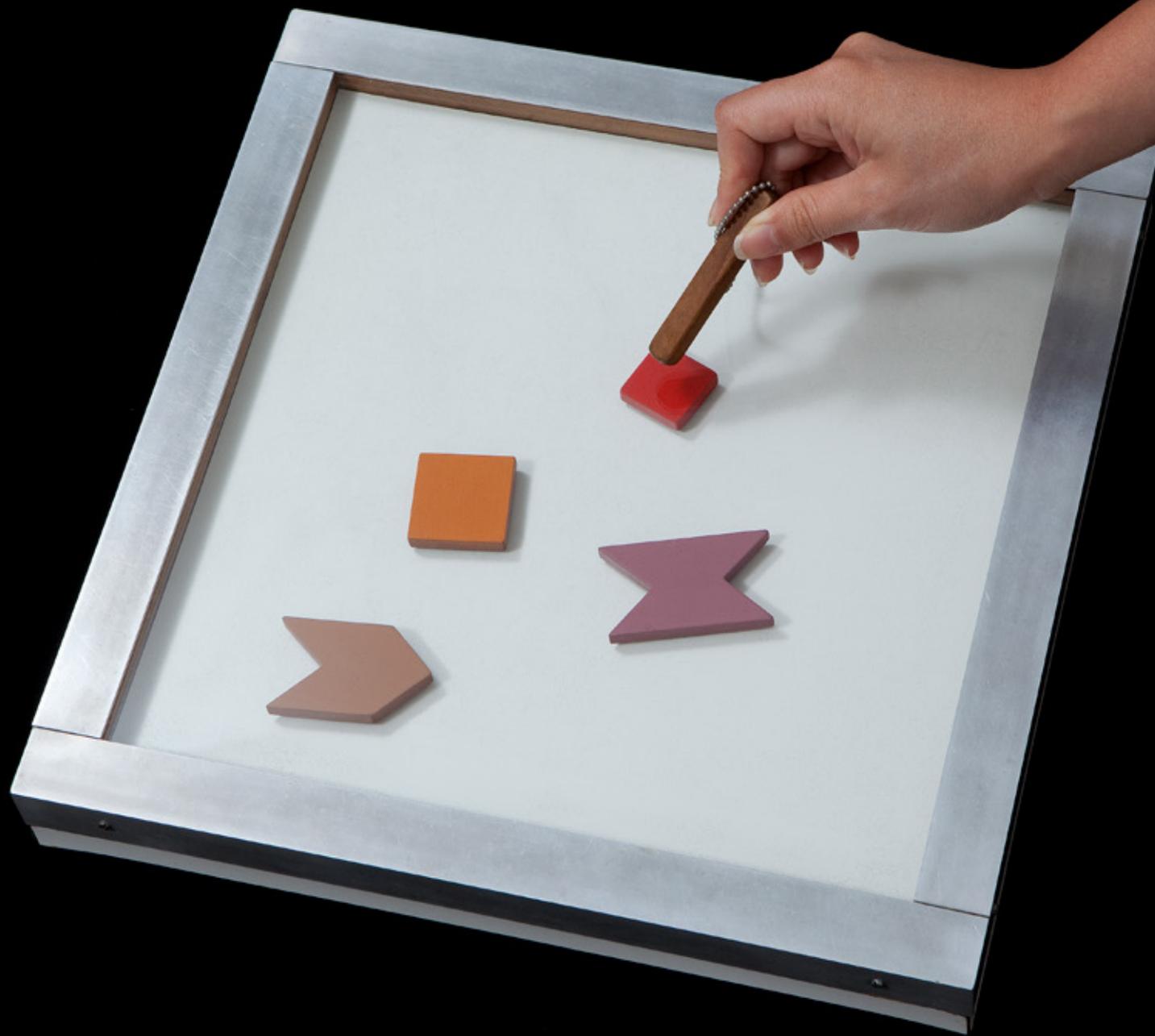
Rotating object, 1969
polyester
12 × 1,4 × 1 cm | 4.7 × 0.6 × 0.4 in
photo © Vicente de Mello

ludic object

Using his first experiments with magnetic fields as a point of departure, Abraham Palatnik created the *Ludic Object* in 1965. The work consists of a glass base on which the artist places a variety of small and colorful geometrical shapes. The audience is invited to move the parts using a magnetized stick, creating an array of different compositions that emerge from the viewer's intervention as well as the uncertain pulls of the magnetic field. Again, the *Ludic Object* intertwines the power of attraction and repulsion between magnetic poles with that of the human touch—the piece comes alive with the viewer's participation, which in turn activate the physical properties of the work.

Ludic object, 1965/2002
wood, formica, glass, plastic and
magnetized stick
33,5 × 33,5 × 4,3 cm
13.2 × 13.2 × 1.7 in

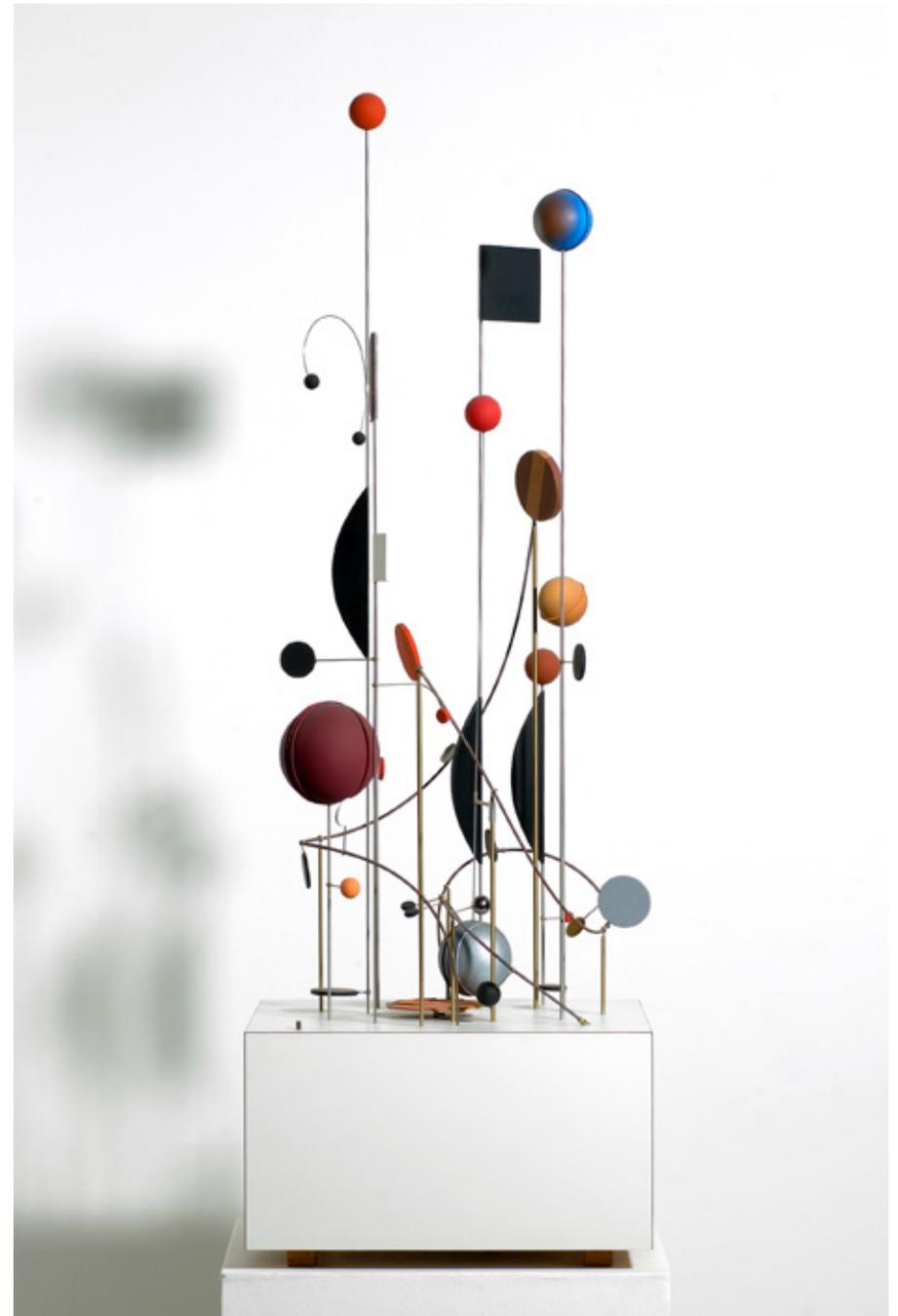




kinetic objects

Abraham Palatnik's *Kinetic Objects*, which he began to produce in 1964, are perhaps the artist's most emblematic works. They are characterized by small wooden shapes painted in a variety of colours and supported by thin metal rods. The whole is framed by a white base, within which Palatnik has placed small motors to power a slow, delicate and choreographed movement for each of the parts. Just like in his *Kinechromatic Devices*, Palatnik gives each fragment a different direction and speed, creating an uneven rhythm that infuses his highly rigorous and logical method of construction with a sense of poetic spontaneity.

Kinetic Object CK-8, 1966/2005
steel, brass, painted wood and motor
120 × 40 × 40 cm
47.2 × 15.7 × 15.7 in
photo © Daniel Arantes



Resalh. de lâmp. (movimento)

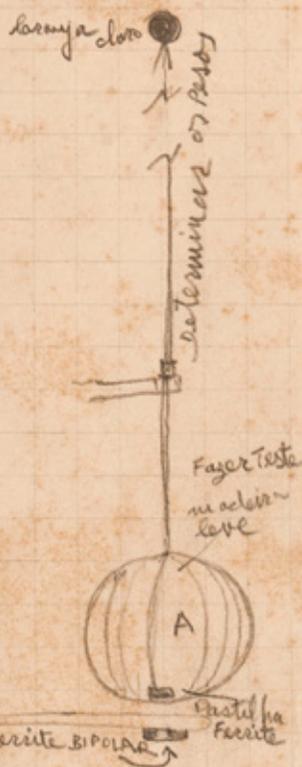
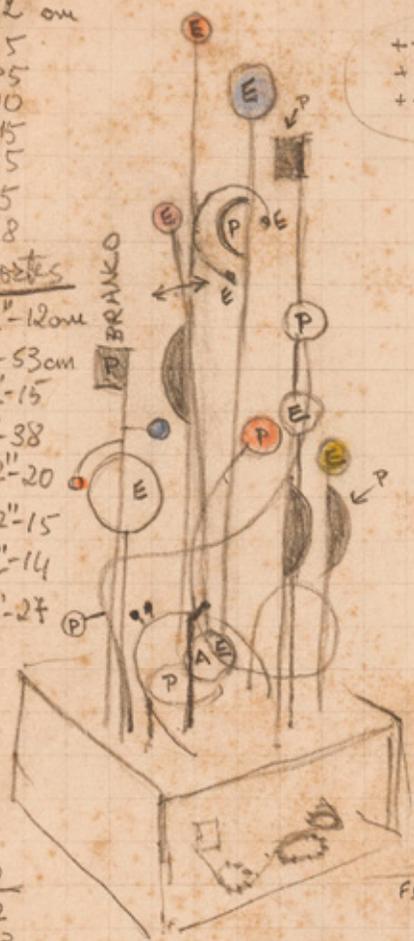
CK-8 (11)

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

+ - 12 a 13 afeiras ?
 + - 14 dias ?
 + - 4-5 recortes ?

Suprimentos

- 5/32" - 12cm
- 3/16" - 53cm
- 5/32" - 15
- 3/16" - 38
- 5/32" - 20
- 5/32" - 15
- 5/32" - 14
- 3/16" - 27

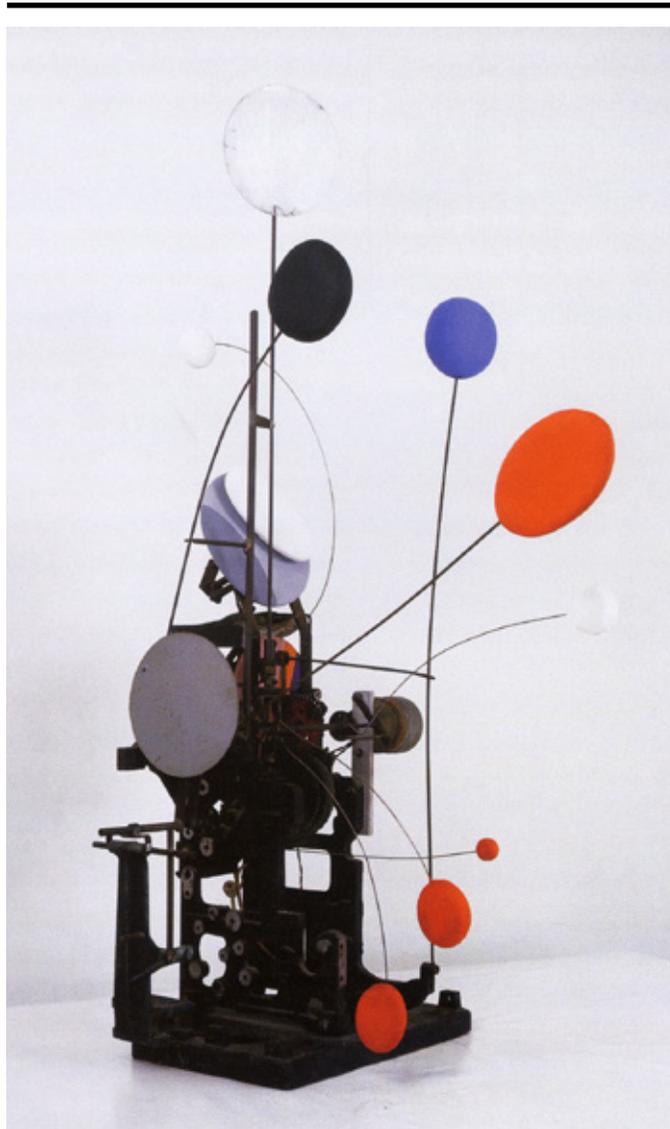


- aco
- (A) 92
- (B) 93
- (C) 55

2 a 3 motores
 1 TPM. e 3 TPM.

guardar as peças

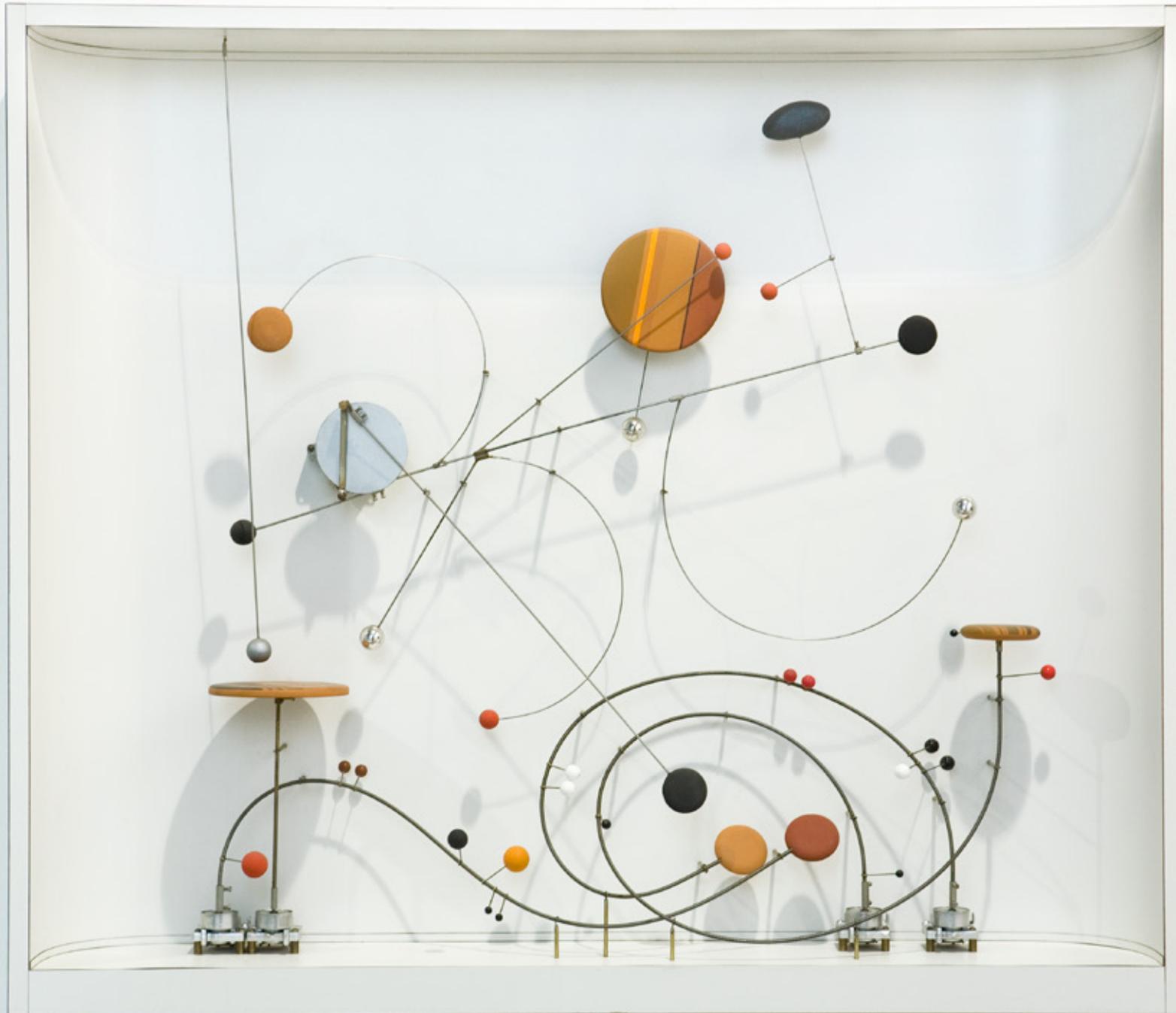
entregar a FWK até 3/67 } cancelar
 → até dia 15



Kinetic Object, 1965/2000
industrial paint, wood, formica,
metal, acrylic, motor and magnets
67 × 36,2 × 36,2 cm
26.4 × 14.3 × 14.3 in



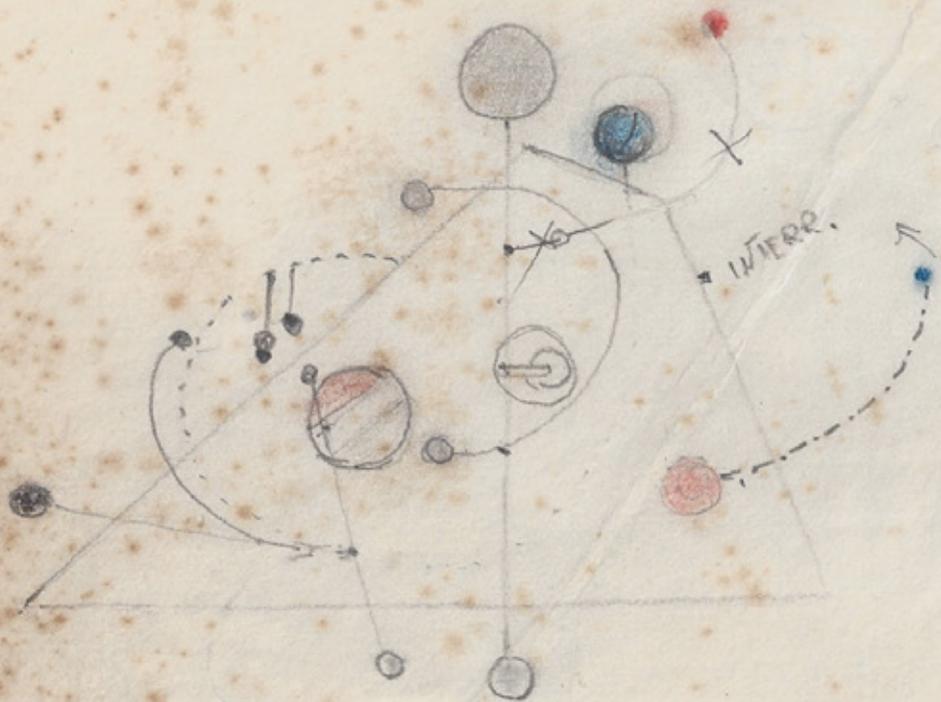
Kinetic Object, 1964
industrial paint, wood, formica,
metal, acrylic and motor
82,5 × 30 × 31,5 cm
32.5 × 11.8 × 12.4 in
photo © Eduardo Ortega



Kinetic Object C-15, 1969/2001
industrial paint, wood, formica,
metal, acrylic and motor
77 × 90,5 × 15 cm
30.3 × 35.6 × 5.9 in
photo © Eduardo Ortega

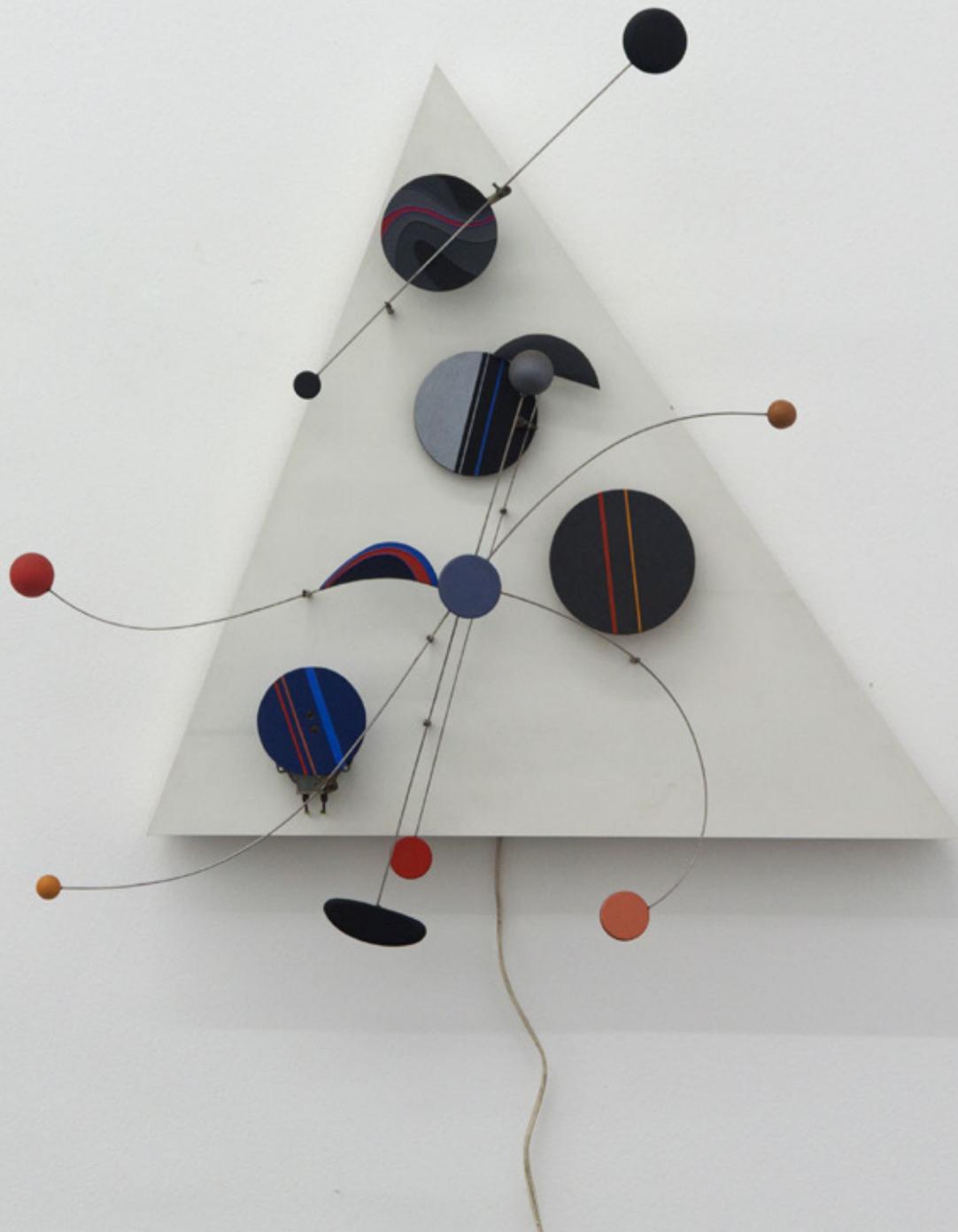
→
Artist's notes, 1960's

motors 1 RPM
.. 3 RPM
ACO 2 mm · 2 Vases



→ FINK OUT.

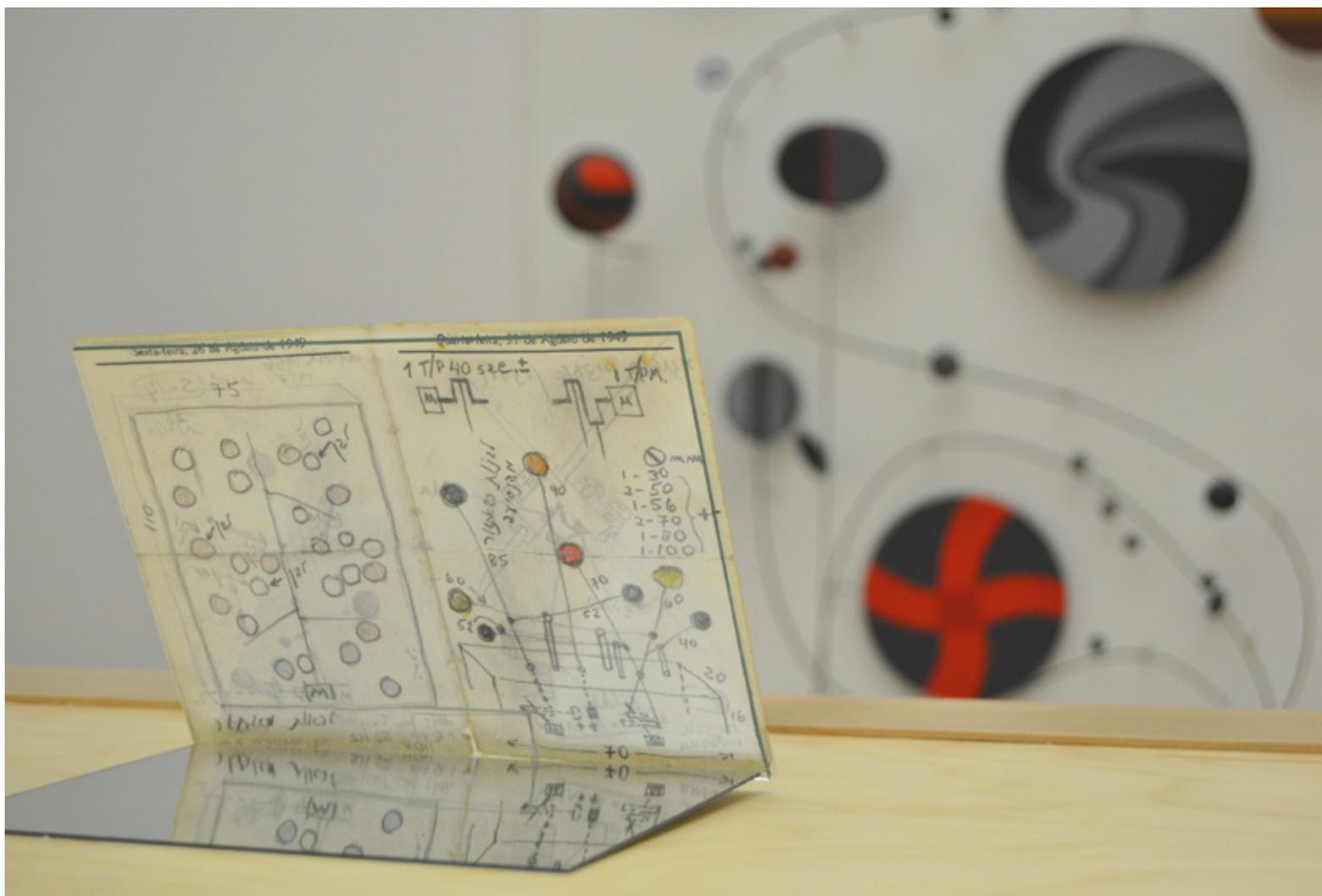
KIKO 11/66



Kinetic Object - Blue Spider,
1966/2004
wood, motor, magnet and formica
86 × 86 × 20 cm
33.9 × 33.9 × 7.9 in
photo © Pedro Andrada

→
Kinetic Object, 2006/2018
wood, formica, metal, acrylic,
magnets and motor
205 × 226 × 40 cm
80.7 × 89 × 15.7 in
photo © Pat Kilgore





→
exhibition view
Abraham Palatnik: A reinvenção da pintura, 2015
Fundação Iberê Camargo
Porto Alegre, Brazil
photo © Elvira Fortuna
courtesy of the artist's state
and Nara Roesler

→
exhibition view
Abraham Palatnik: A reinvenção da pintura, 2015
Fundação Iberê Camargo
Porto Alegre, Brazil
photo © Nilton Santolin
courtesy of the artist's state
and Nara Roesler

→
exhibition view
Abraham Palatnik: A reinvenção da pintura, 2013
Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil
(CCBB-DF), Brasília, Brazil



Alexander Calder
Mobile
1926



Alexander Calder
Mobile
1926



Alexander Calder
Mobile
1926



KINETIC OBJECTS

These kinetic objects are made of thin metal rods and various colored spheres and discs. They are designed to move and change shape as they are viewed from different angles. The sculptures are a classic example of Alexander Calder's work, which combines sculpture and painting in a dynamic and expressive way.

progressive reliefs

In the 1960s, Abraham Palatnik developed a method, which he would later apply to a variety of different materials. With each material came different challenges and results, keeping the artist engaged in working and re-working his technique for decades. The series began after Palatnik visited a carpentry shop and noticed wood knots throughout the fragments of wood laying around—he found a recurrence, a pattern, that revealed a progression inherent to nature's elements. Using this as a point of departure, he decided to collate strips of wood to create compositions using the material's natural motifs. Though leaving the surface untouched, Palatnik placed each part carefully so as to design shapes, rhythms and movements that emphasized the naturally occurring patterns.

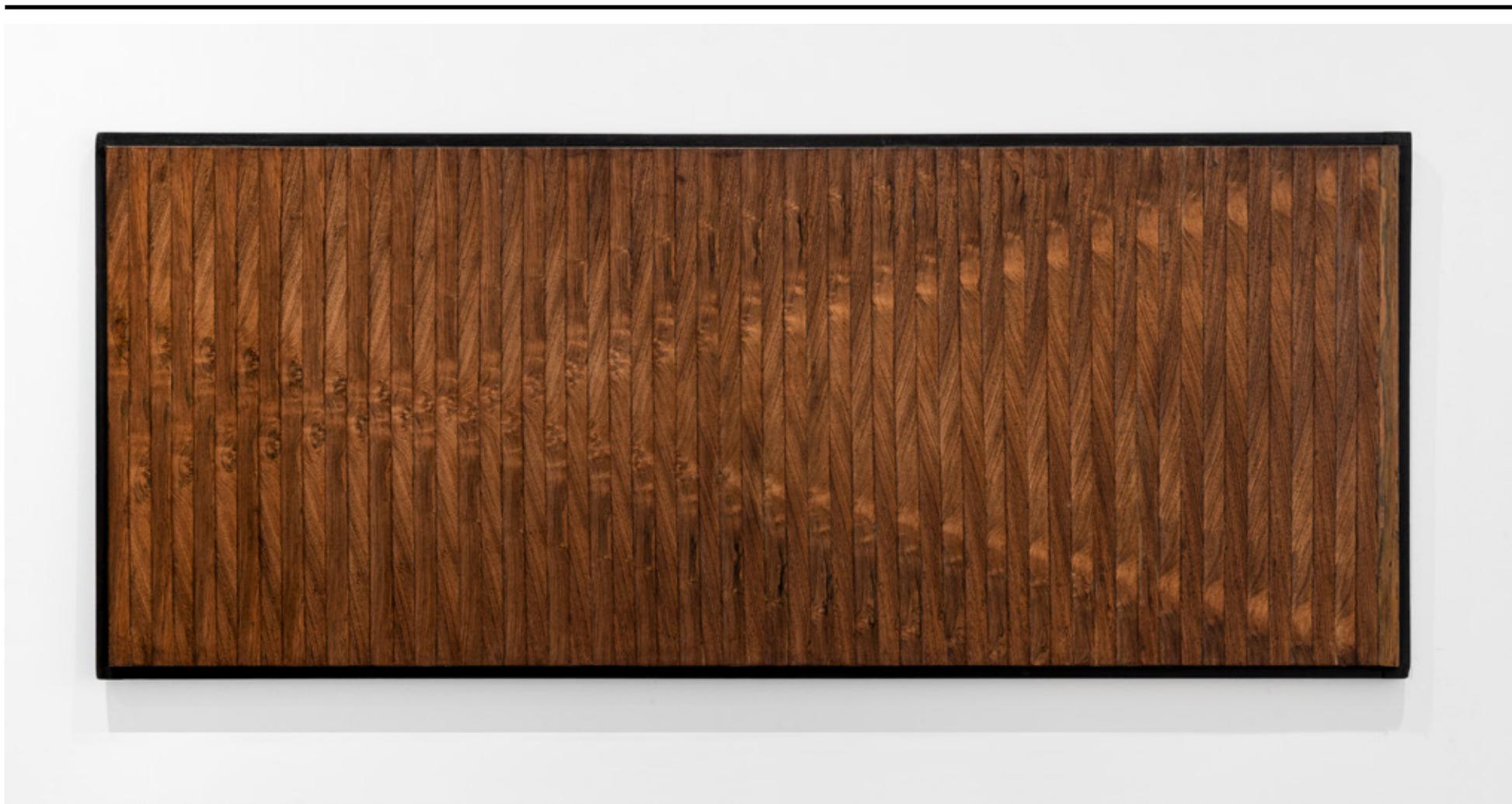
Untitled, 1971
brazilian rosewood
20,5 × 16,5 cm | 8.1 × 6.5 in
photo © Erika Mayumi





Untitled, 1971
brazilian rosewood
15,5 × 14,5 cm | 6.1 × 5.7 in
photo © Erika Mayumi





Progressão 60-A, 1965
brazilian rosewood
56 × 145 cm | 22 × 57.1 in
photo © Erika Mayumi





Untitled, 1972
brazilian rosewood
49,9 × 27,6 cm | 18.5 × 10.9 in
photo © Erika Mayumi

Nearing the end of the 1960's, the artist continued to explore the idea of progressive reliefs by turning to Duplex cardboard. He began to assemble large piles of paper and cut through them with a double-edged knife following an undulating line. With the cardboard sculpted, the artist's play with depth and protrusion becomes apparent—the layers of paper interact with light, creating shadows that not only move with daylight but also physically enact visual kinetics.



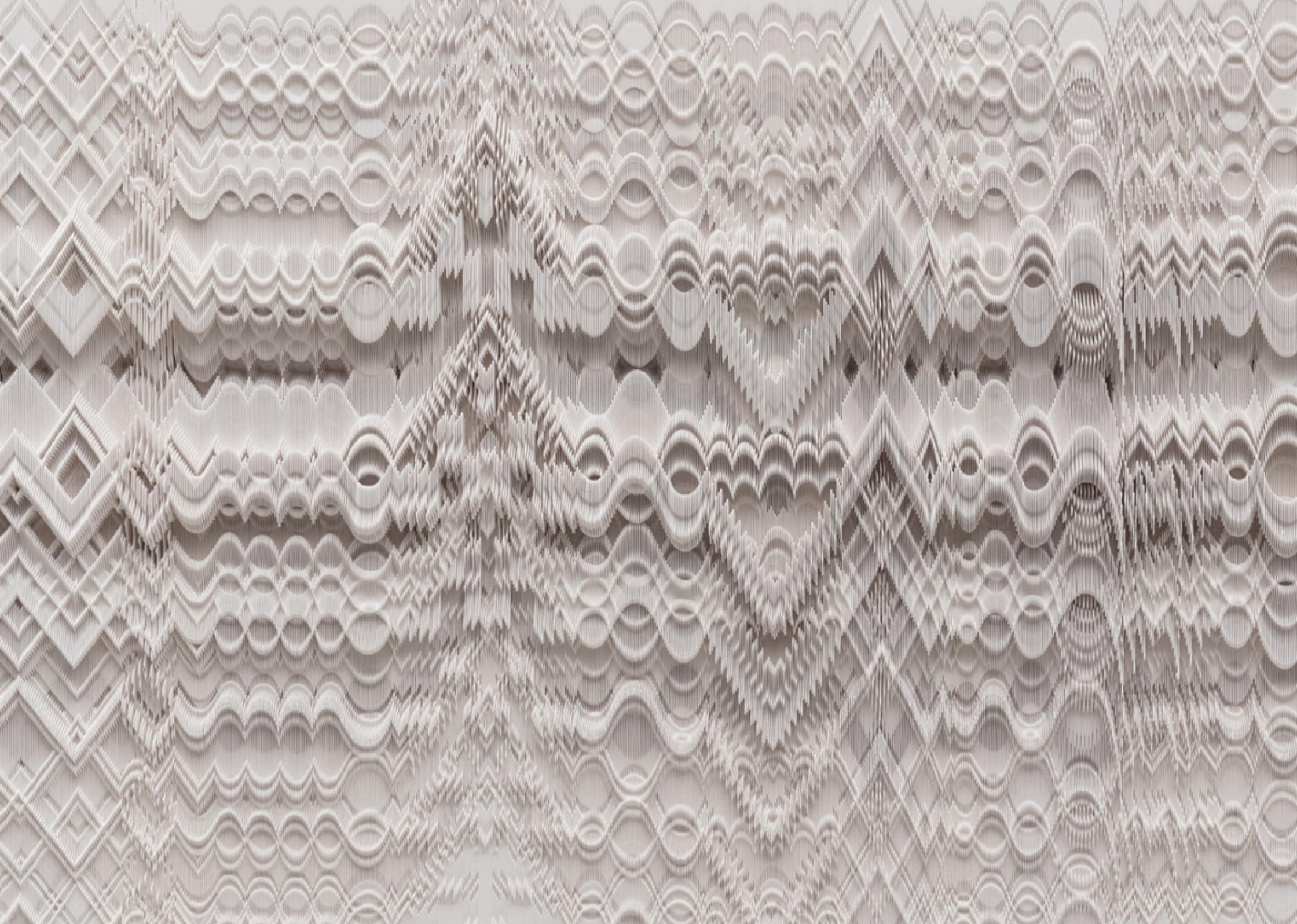
Progressive relief, 1968
duplex paperboard and wood
15,4 × 15,2 cm | 6 × 6 in
photo © Erika Mayumi



Progressive relief, 1982
duplex paperboard and wood
45 × 43,5 cm | 17.7 × 17.1 in
photo © Everton Ballardín



Untitled, 1985
progressive relief on duplex
paperboard and wood
80 × 77,5 × 11,5 cm
31.5 × 30.5 × 4.5 in
photo © Everton Ballardini



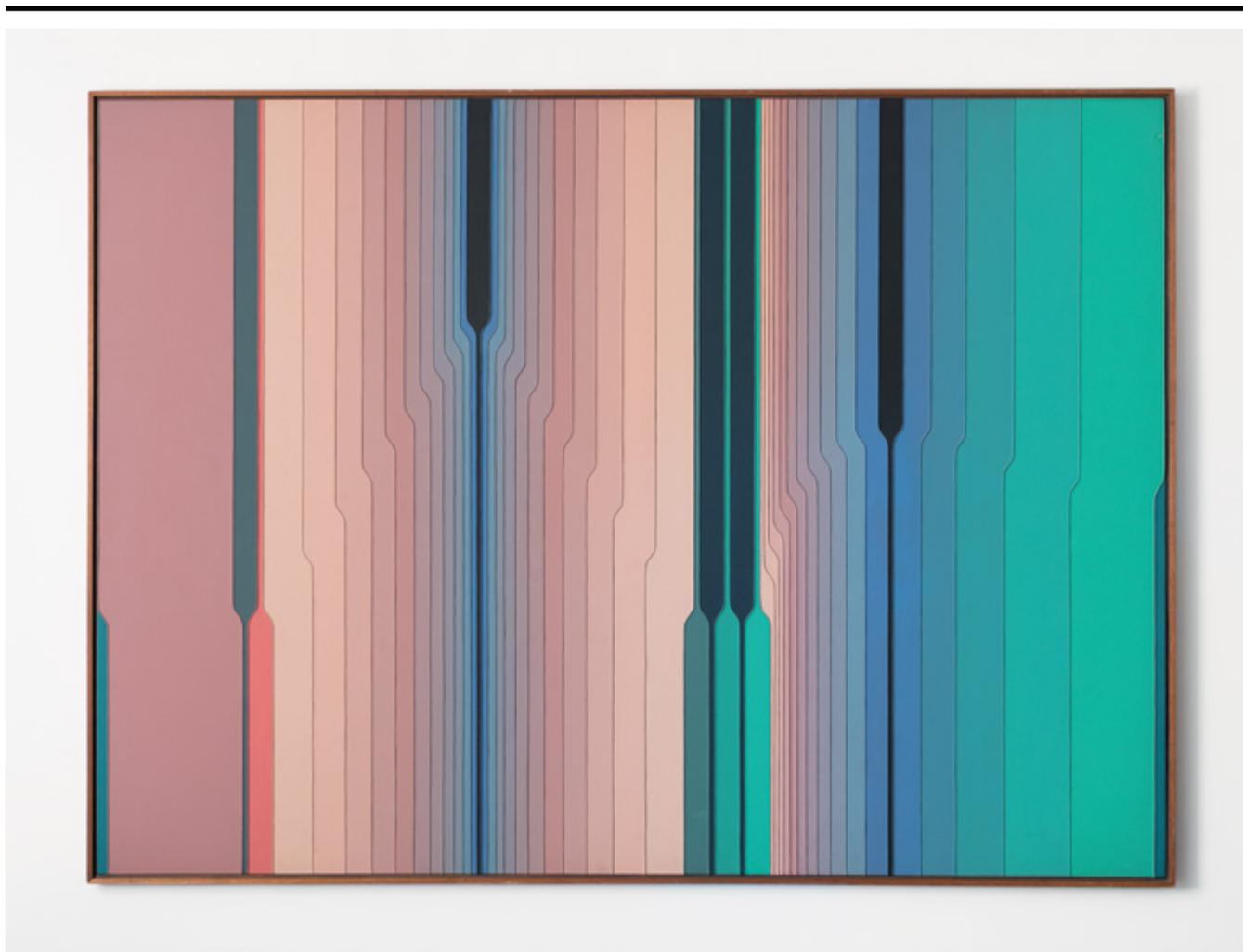


Progressive Relief, 1979
metal
35,3 × 19,2 cm | 13.9 × 7.6 in
photo © Everton Ballardin

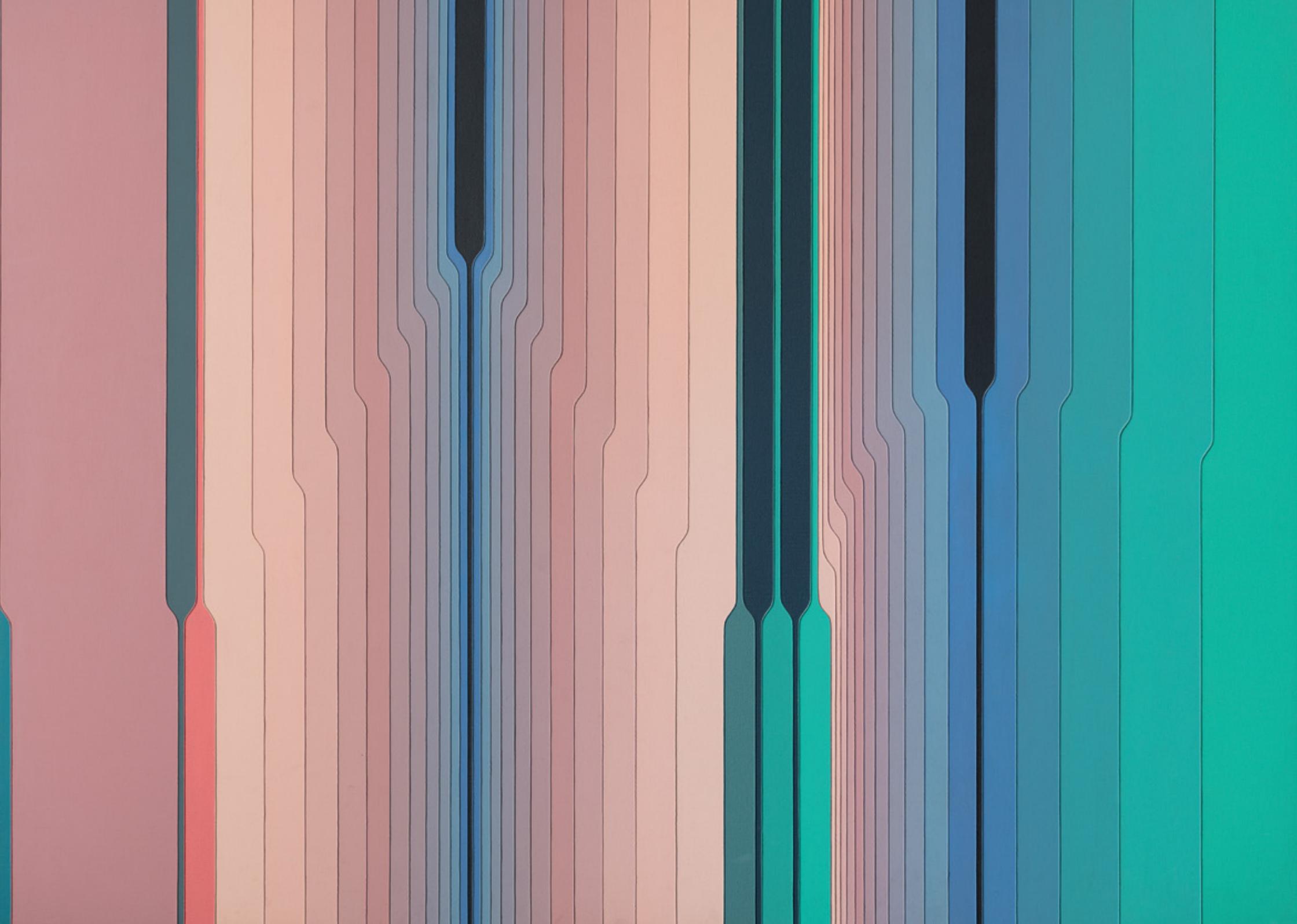
Palatnik further explored these ideas by turning to metal, whereby the shine and reflection allowed for even more poignant visual effects, later proceeding to polyester resin in the 70's, cords on canvas in the 80's and plaster in the 90's.



Untitled, 2009
vacuum molded PVC relief
30 × 40 cm | 11.8 × 15.7 in

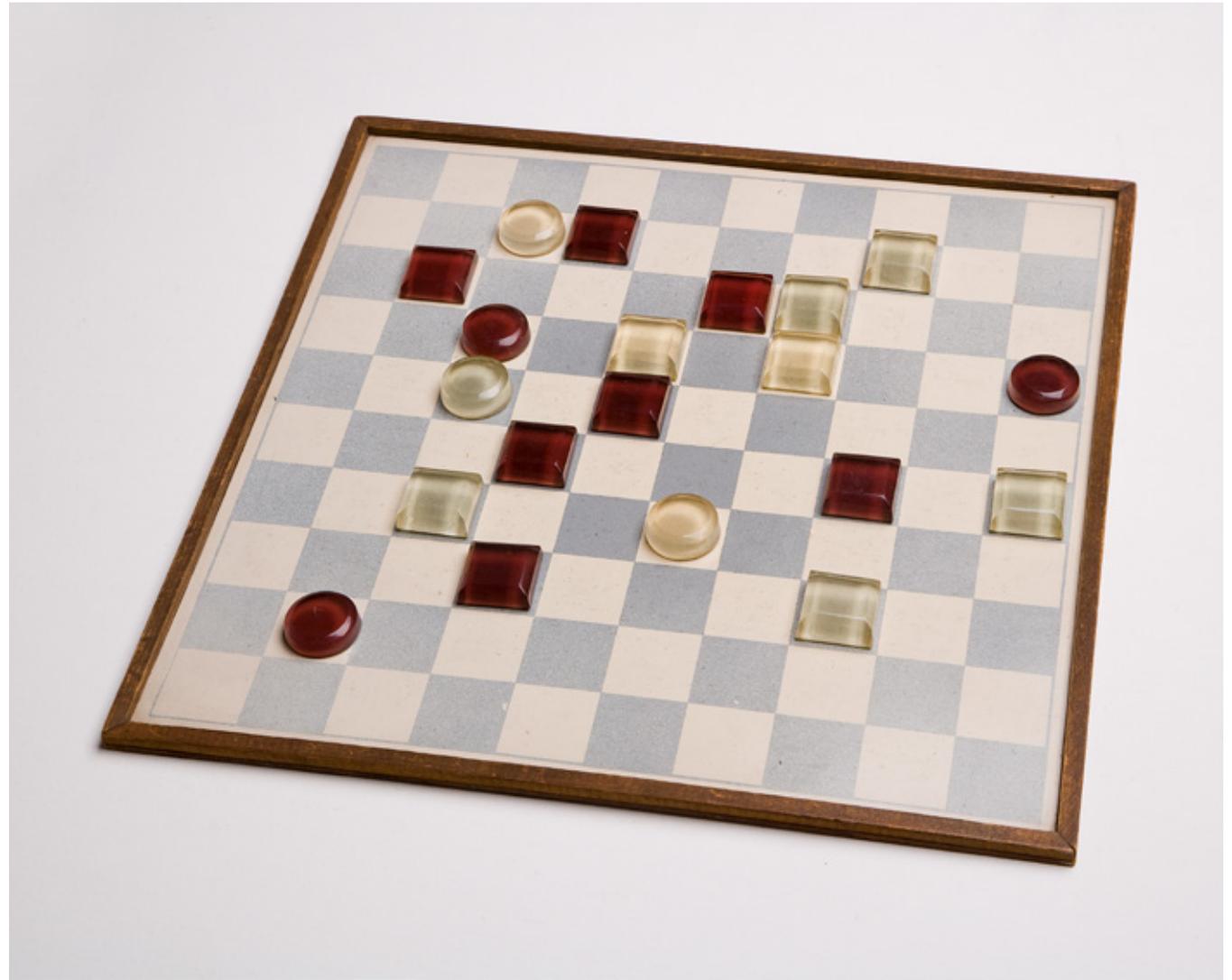


Progressão KA-40, 1988/1990
acrylic paint and strings on canvas
130 × 180 cm | 51.2 × 70.9 in
photo © Edouard Frapoint



perfect square

In 1962, Abraham Palatnik created and patented a game, which he named *Quadrado perfeito* [Perfect Square]. Though initially created for his sons, it soon came to be included at a show at Galeria Barcinski in Rio de Janeiro and in *Arte Programatta e Cinética* in Milan. The game consists of a board, similar to that of chess, though it counts a larger number of squares. It does not establish a system of 'positions', nor does it call for a specific objective—it is about its players perception rather than their rationale—, it is about the process.



Perfect Square's board, 1962
wood, eucatex and polyester resin
2 × 38 × 38 cm | 0.8 × 15 × 15 in

magnetic fields

At the end of the 1950s, Abraham Palatnik began to explore the aesthetic possibilities of magnetic fields, both through the physicality of magnetic structures and through the inclusion of viewer participation. This series of objects reveal a certain proximity, or at least a dialogue, between Palatnik and the artists of Brazilian Neoconcretism in their similar use of the audience as a means of activating the works—spectators were expected to interact with the pieces, rather than merely observe them. In fact, many of his works from this series resemble board games, they inspire recreational experimentation with artistic creations, while excluding the restrictions of game rules and strategies. Ultimately, the focus becomes the reactive movement of magnets and electromagnets in relationship to the body's prop.

Mobility IV, 1959/2001
wood, formica, electromagnet
35,4 × 35,4 × 14 cm
13.9 × 13.9 × 5.5 in
photo © Vicente de Mello

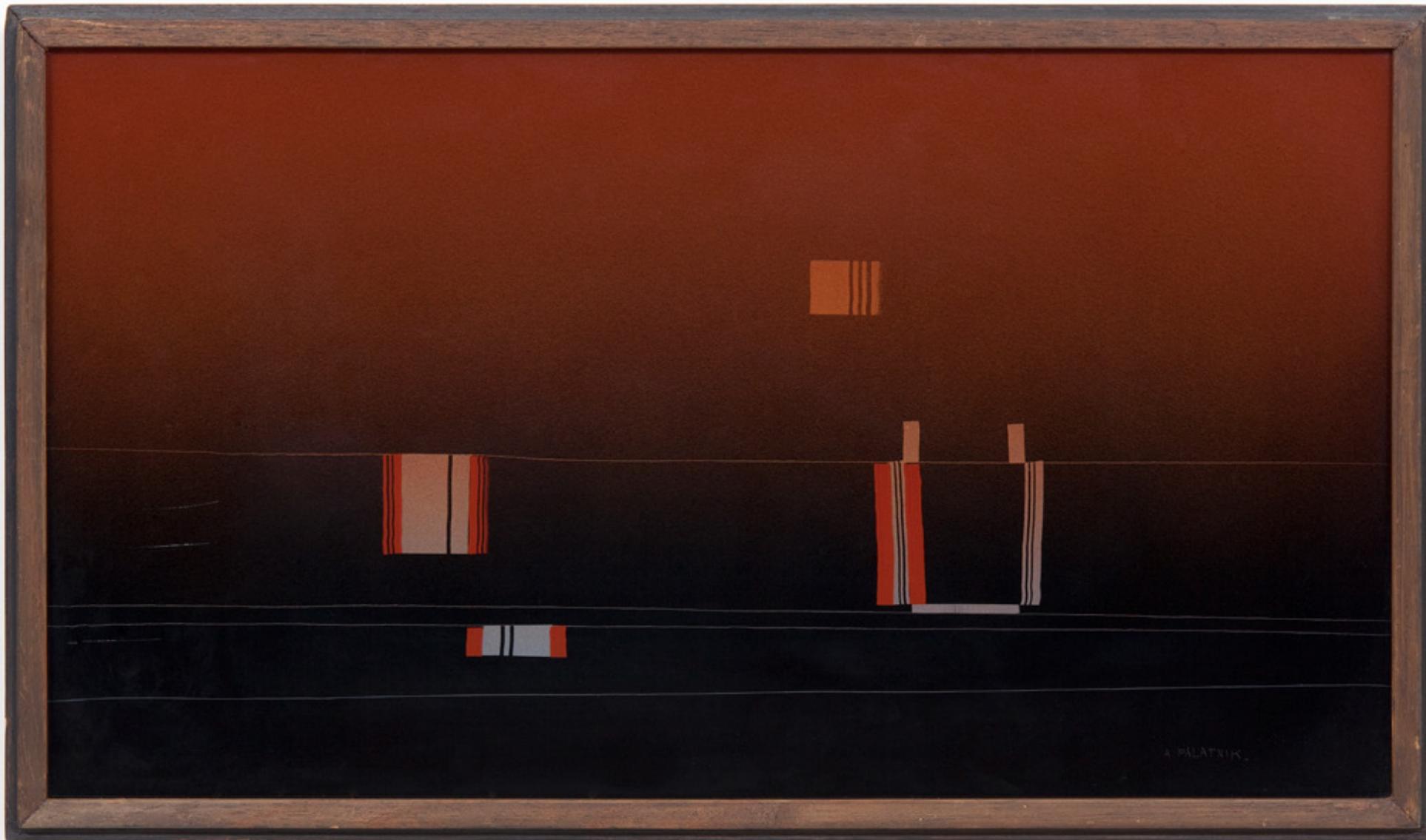


paintings on glass

In 1953, Abraham Palatnik began his pictorial research using synthetic paint on glass. He would paint and intertwine shapes and lines of colors to create abstract compositions on glass. This technique was also used to produce compositions on furniture, notably creating designs for glass table tops and chairs. The artist's design work was produced in partnership with his brother at the Arte Viva manufactory, selling pieces for over twenty years nationally and internationally.



Untitled, 1959
friable ink on glass
70 × 70 cm | 27.6 × 27.6 in
photo © Everton Ballardín



Sequence with intervals, 1954
friable ink on glass
25 × 45 cm | 9.8 × 17.7 in
photo © Everton Ballardín



Untitled, 1963
friable ink on glass
65 × 74,5 × 6 cm | 25.6 × 29.3 × 2.4 in
photo © Everton Ballardin

Chair, 1950's
wood, painted glass and fabric
64 × 71 × 80 cm | 27.9 × 31.5 × 25.2 in
photo © Vicente de Mello

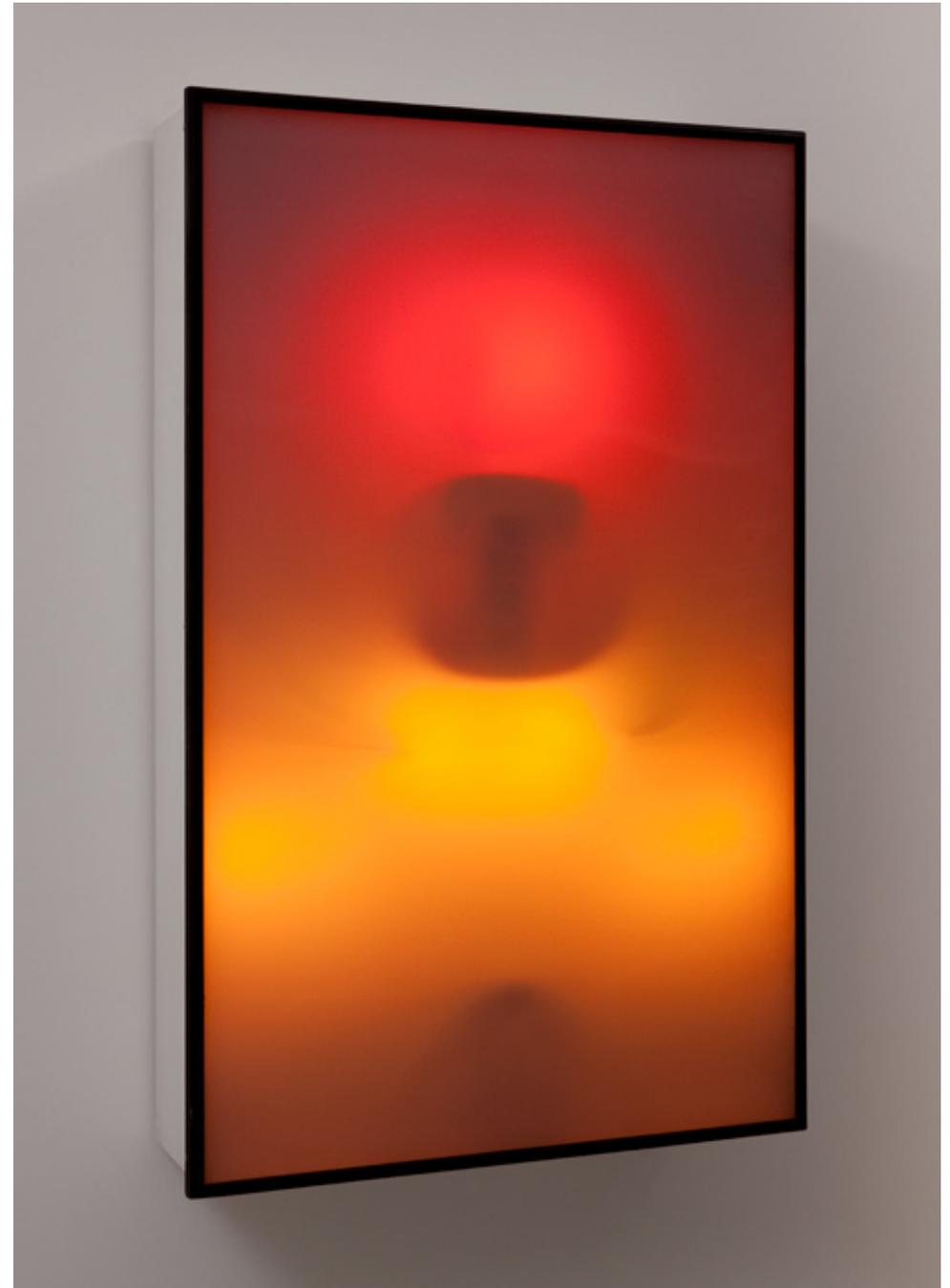


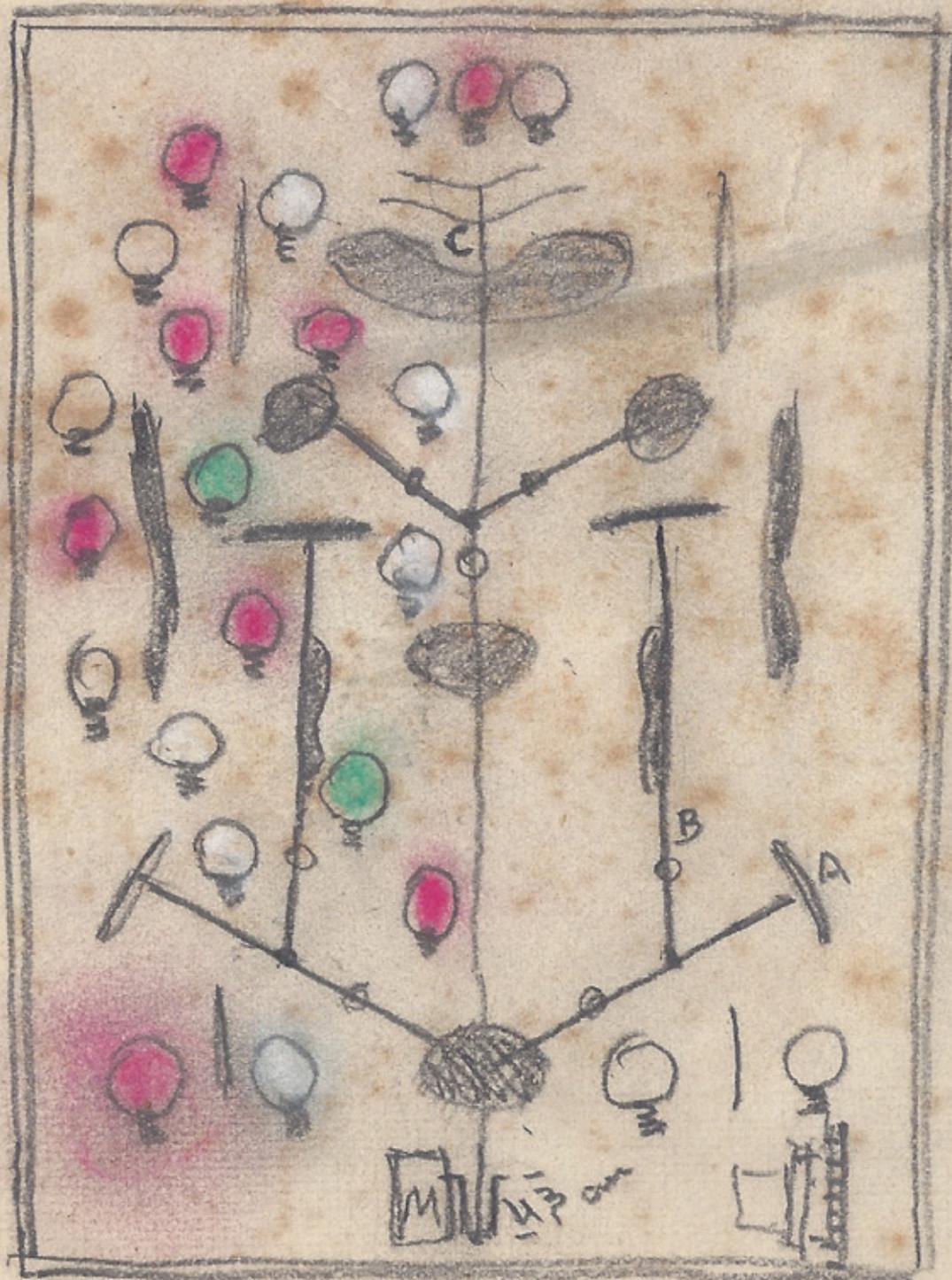
kinechromatic devices

In 1951, on the occasion of the 1st Bienal de São Paulo, Abraham Palatnik exhibited his first *Kinechromatic Device*, created in 1949–50. Despite having almost been disqualified for failing to fit in to any of the Bienal's traditional visual arts categories, the work was critically-acclaimed and eventually awarded an Honorable Mention by the International Jury for the artist's pioneering contribution to his field. The following seven editions of the Bienal—between 1951 and 1963—also included *Kinechromatic Devices* and in 1964 they were exhibited in the Venice Biennale, elevating Palatnik to a prestigious and international arena for contemporary artists. In total, Palatnik created thirty-three *Kinechromatic Devices* ranging between 1943 and 1983, his first one having approximately six-hundred meters worth of electric cables and one-hundred-and-one lightbulbs on different voltages.

Kinechromatic Device, 1969/1986
wood, metal, synthetic fabric, light
bulbs and motor
112,5 × 70,5 × 20,5 cm
44.3 × 27.8 × 8.1 in
photo © Everton Ballardin

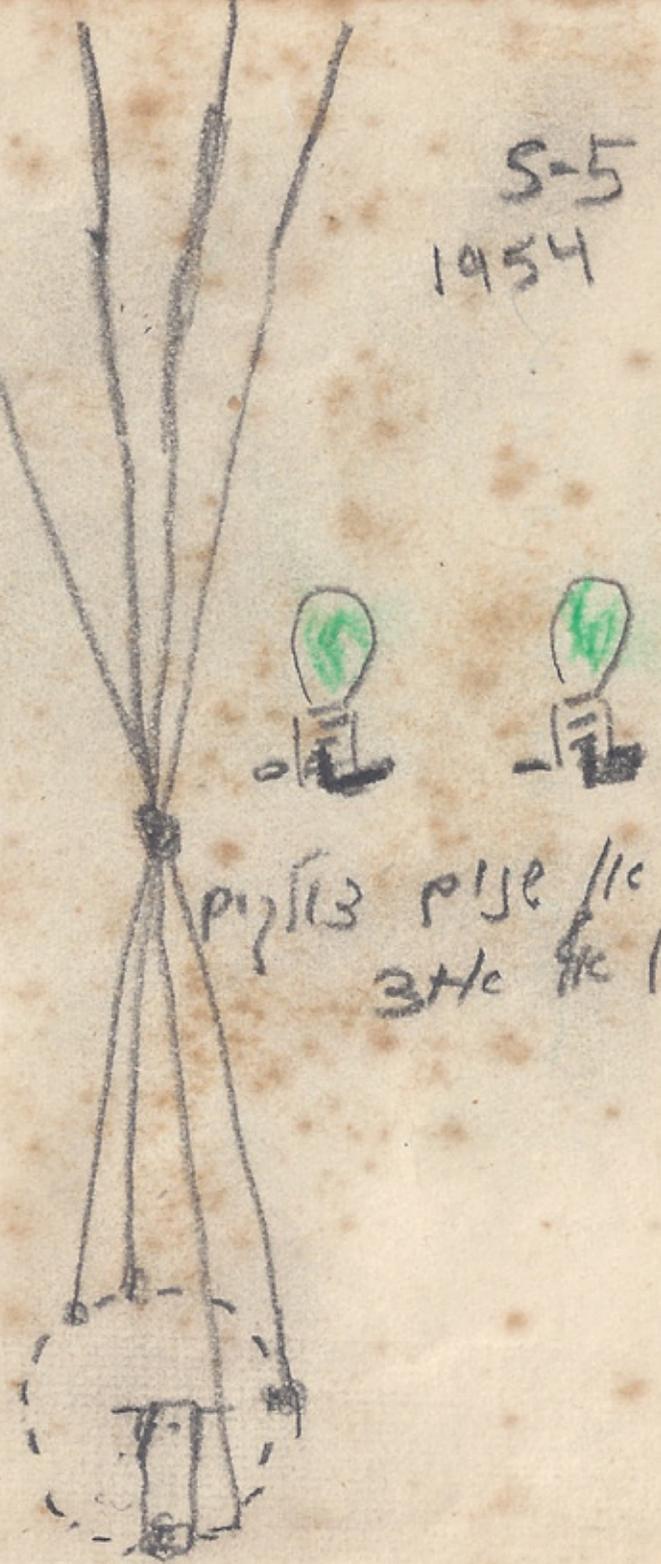
→
Artist's notes, 1950s





A 25cm
 B 30cm
 C 70cm

S-5
 1954



3He He
 3He He



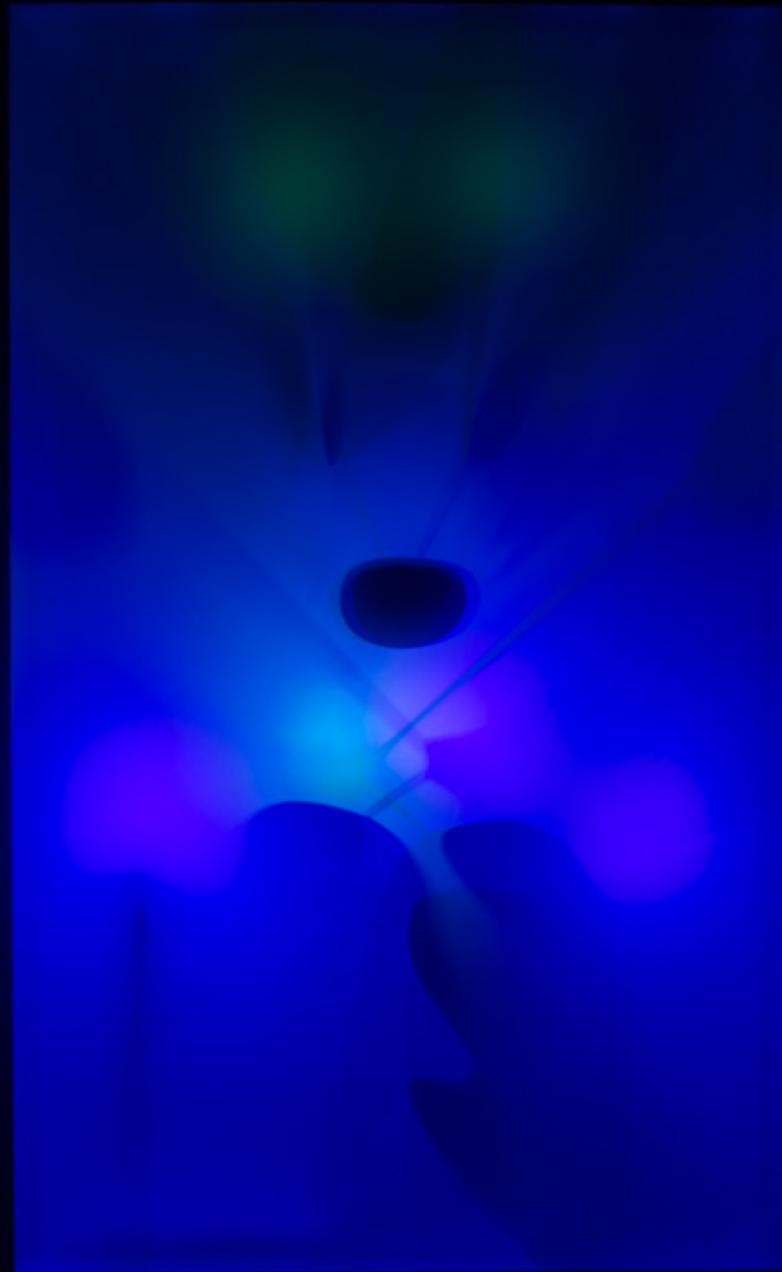
These parts were all placed into a metal box and covered by a synthetic screen. While the hidden lights move in different directions and speeds, the surface shows indistinct shapes dashing through the 'canvas' to create a changing painting with fluctuating colors and compositions. Later works incorporated new technologies as advancements came through, but the intricate and sophisticated craftsmanship remained intact.

Kinechromatic Device, circa 1955
wood, metal, screws, plastic, light bulbs, synthetic fabric and electrical components
61,3 × 61 × 19,7 cm | 24.1 × 24 × 7.8 in

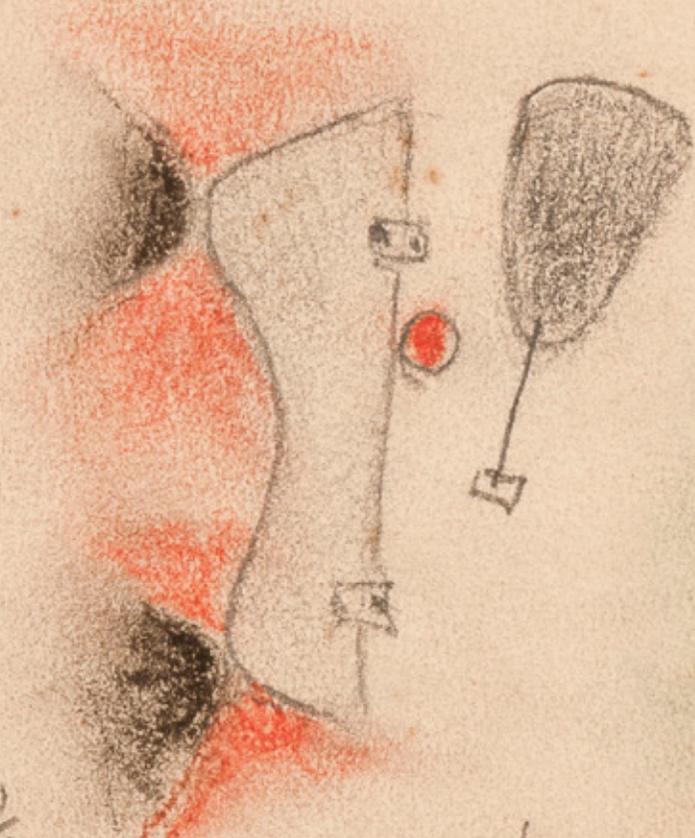
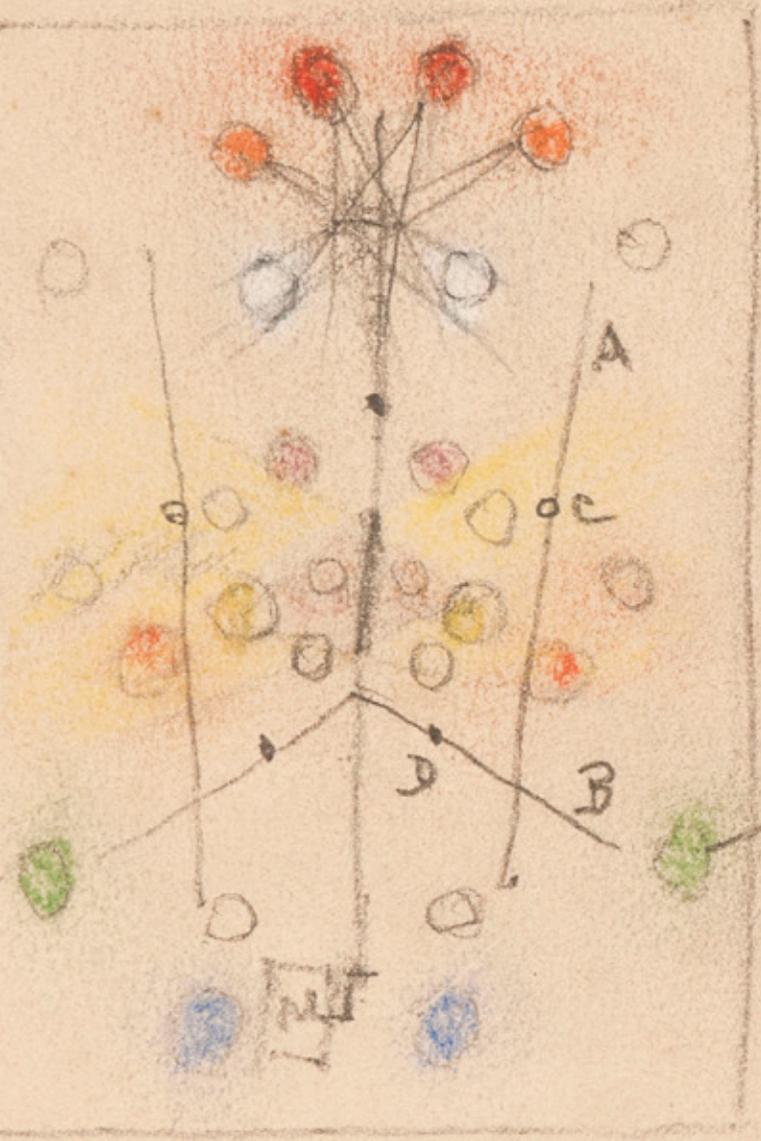
→
Internal view of *Kinechromatic Device*, circa 1955

→ →
Kinechromatic Device (Sequência vertical S-30), 1950's
wood, metal, screws, plastic, light bulbs, synthetic fabric and electrical components
170 × 70 × 20 cm | 66.9 × 27.6 × 7.9 in
photo © Pat Kilgore





2 SE (18.) 55
Jacaranda



Motor 1 T/m

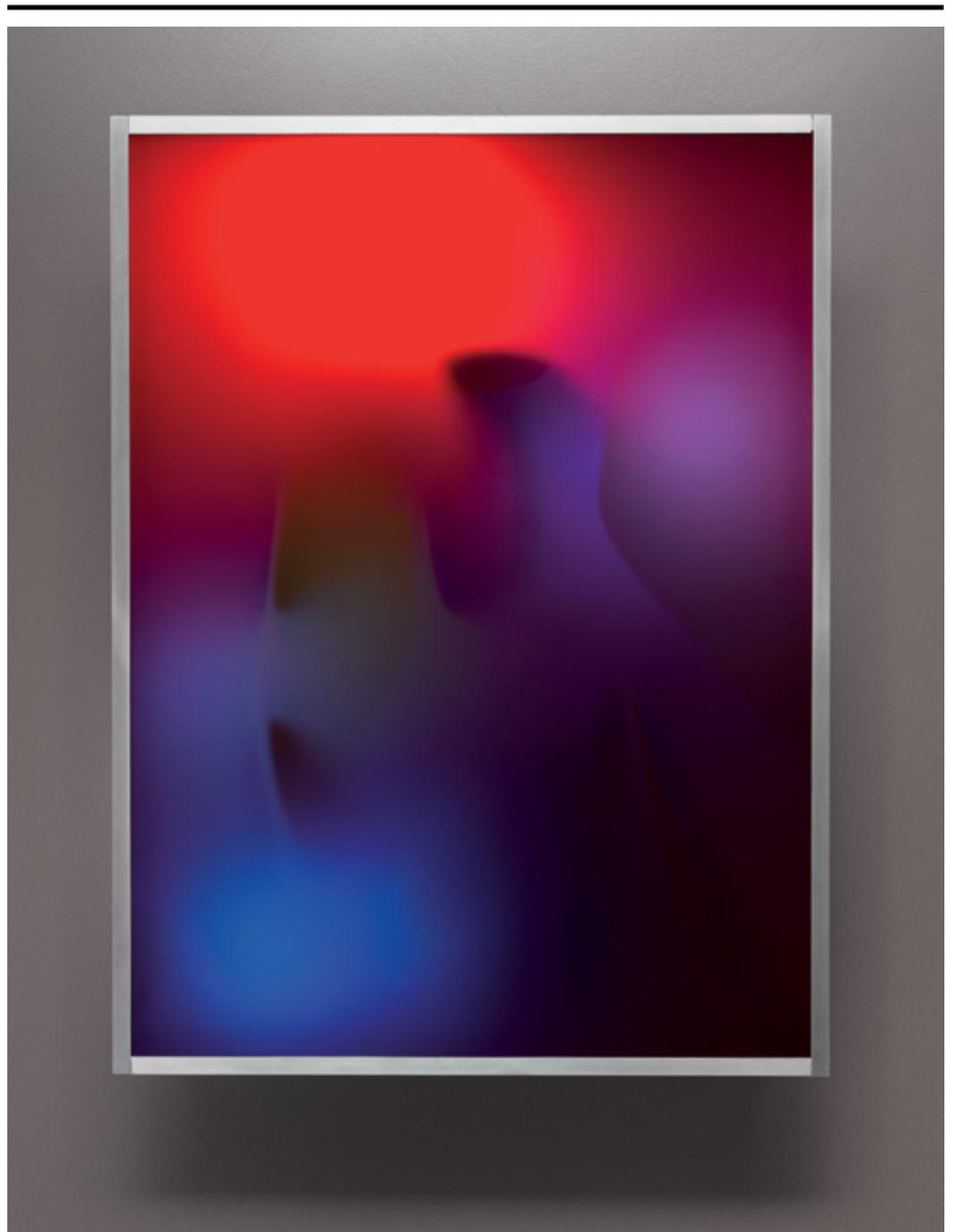
galvanizado latas
central 64cm
48cm
21cm

28 longitudes
(10 Brancas)

suportes C 2 D 6 cm (A-)

←
Artist's notes, 1950's
photo © Vicente de Mello

Kinechromatic Device 2SE - 18,
1955/2004
wood, metal, synthetic fabric, light
bulbs and motor
80 × 60 × 19 cm | 31.5 × 23.6 × 7.5 in
photo © Eouard Fraipont





Kinechromatic Device S-14, 1957
wood, metal, synthetic fabric, light
bulbs and motor
80 × 60 × 20 cm | 31.5 × 23.6 × 7.9 in
MoMA Collection, New York

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