nara roesler

jac leirner



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jac leirner

b. 1961, São Paulo, Brazil, where she lives and works

Through her post-conceptual approach to artmaking, Jac Leirner's work reveals a masterful ability to articulate specific objects, collections, and archives. Her research is grounded in the accumulation of memories and things displaced from their original contexts. Here, the symbolic functions of these objects acquire new dynamics. Her work organizes addictions, utensils and tools, official papers, wrappings, and museum paraphernalia according to the internal logics of these materials.

Seriality, modulation, and standardization are methods through which these objects become constructive matrices of language. Jac's work is rooted in the presentation of things, where the material texture of everyday life gains a new body that assumes the aura of art.

cover exhibition view *Us Horizon*, 2022
Esther Schipper, Berlim. Photo: Andrea Rossetti
all images courtesy of the artist and Nara Roesler

selected solo exhibitions

- *Jac Leirner*, The Swiss Institute, New York, USA (2023)
- *Wolfgang Hahn Prize*, Ludwig Museum, Cologne, Germany (2019)
- *Institutional Ghost*, IMMA – Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, Ireland (2017)
- *Add It Up*, The Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh, Scotland (2016)
- *Jac Leirner: Borders are drawn by hand*, Museum of Contemporary Arts of Shangai, Shangai, China (2016)
- *Functions of a Variable*, Museo Tamayo, Mexico City, Mexico (2014)
- *Jac Leirner,* Estação Pinacoteca, São Paulo, Brazil (2011)
- Ad Infinitum, Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (2002).

selected group exhibitions

- *The past, the present, the possible*, Sharjah Biennial 12, Sharjah, United Arab Emiratess (2015)
- 10ª Bienal do Mercosul, Mensagens de uma nova América, Porto Alegre, Brazil (2015)
- 12th Istanbul Biennial, Istanbul, Turkey (2011)
- 5ª Bienal do Mercosul, Porto Alegre, Brazil (2005)
- 7ª Bienal de la Habana, Havana, Cuba (2000)
- 47ª Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy (1997)
- *Documenta IX*, Kassel, Germany (1992)
- 20ª Bienal Internacional de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil (1989)
- *Aperto 90,* Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy (1990)
- *Arte e Videotexto*, XVII Bienal Internacional de São Paulo, Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil (1983)

coleções selecionadas

- Art Institute of Chicago, USA
- Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, USA
- Ludwig Museum, Cologne, Germany
- Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, Spain
- Museo Tamayo, Mexico City, Mexico
- Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, USA
- Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, USA
- Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo (MAM), São Paulo, Brazil
- Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil
- San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMoMA), San Francisco, USA
- Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, USA
- Tate Modern, London, UK

introduction

Over more than four decades, Jac Leirner has built one of the most singular bodies of work in Brazilian contemporary art by transforming objects destined for circulation and disappearance into structures of strong formal and poetic density.

Money, museum bags, business cards, cigarette packs, adhesive tapes, rulers, electrical wires, and industrial labels are removed from their everyday circuits and reorganized through operations of accumulation, ordering, and repetition. The artist embraces their traces of use, allowing each object to continue carrying vestiges of the world from which it came while assigning them new intentions.



Jac Leirner, 1986, with the draft for *Os Cem*, made of banknotes
Photo: Romulo Fialdini



Her work establishes an ongoing dialogue with both the Brazilian and European constructivist traditions and with procedures associated with minimalism, conceptual art, and Pop art. In Jac Leirner's work, however, formal rigor and material precariousness remain inseparable: geometric lines are made from residues, grids emerge from disposable objects, and constructive systems coexist with fragile, banal, and ephemeral elements.

For British critic Guy Brett, one of the leading international interlocutors of Brazilian art in the twentieth century, "Jac Leirner proposes a new definition of poetics, a kind of intervention that modifies the patterns of space and time in which we, and objects, move. A new way in which life can vitalize art or art reveal life."

exhibition view *Jac Leirner*,
Estação Pinacoteca, 2011
São Paulo, Brazil

→
exhibition view *Jac Leirner*,
Estação Pinacoteca, 2011
São Paulo, Brazil
photo: Eduardo Ortega





exhibition view
Functions of a Variable, 2014
Museo Tamayo, Mexico City, Mexico



exhibition view
Functions of a Variable, 2014
Museo Tamayo, Mexico City, Mexico



exhibition view *Jac Leirner*, 2023
The Swiss Institute, New York, USA
photo: © Daniel Pérez



exhibition view
Institutional Ghost, 2017
IMMA – Irish Museum
of Modern Art, Dublin, Irela



exhibition view *Jac Leirner: Borders are drawn by hand*, 2016
Museum of Contemporary Arts
of Shangai, Shangai, China



exhibition view Wolfgang Hahn Prize, 2019, Ludwig Museum, Cologne, Germany



exhibition view *Latin America Artists of the XX Century*, 1993
MoMA – The Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA



Corpus delicti, Centre d'Art
Contemporain, 1993
Geneva, Switzerland



Names, Ikon Gallery, 1990

beginning

In Jac’s early works, many of the procedures that would later be developed through everyday objects were already taking shape. Interventions in printmaking processes and watercolors from the early 1980s already revealed the construction of visual systems. Her watercolors are built through rigorous systems of tonal control and ordering, while paintings from the early 1980s explore relationships between drawing, color, and structure in compositions reduced to a few elements.

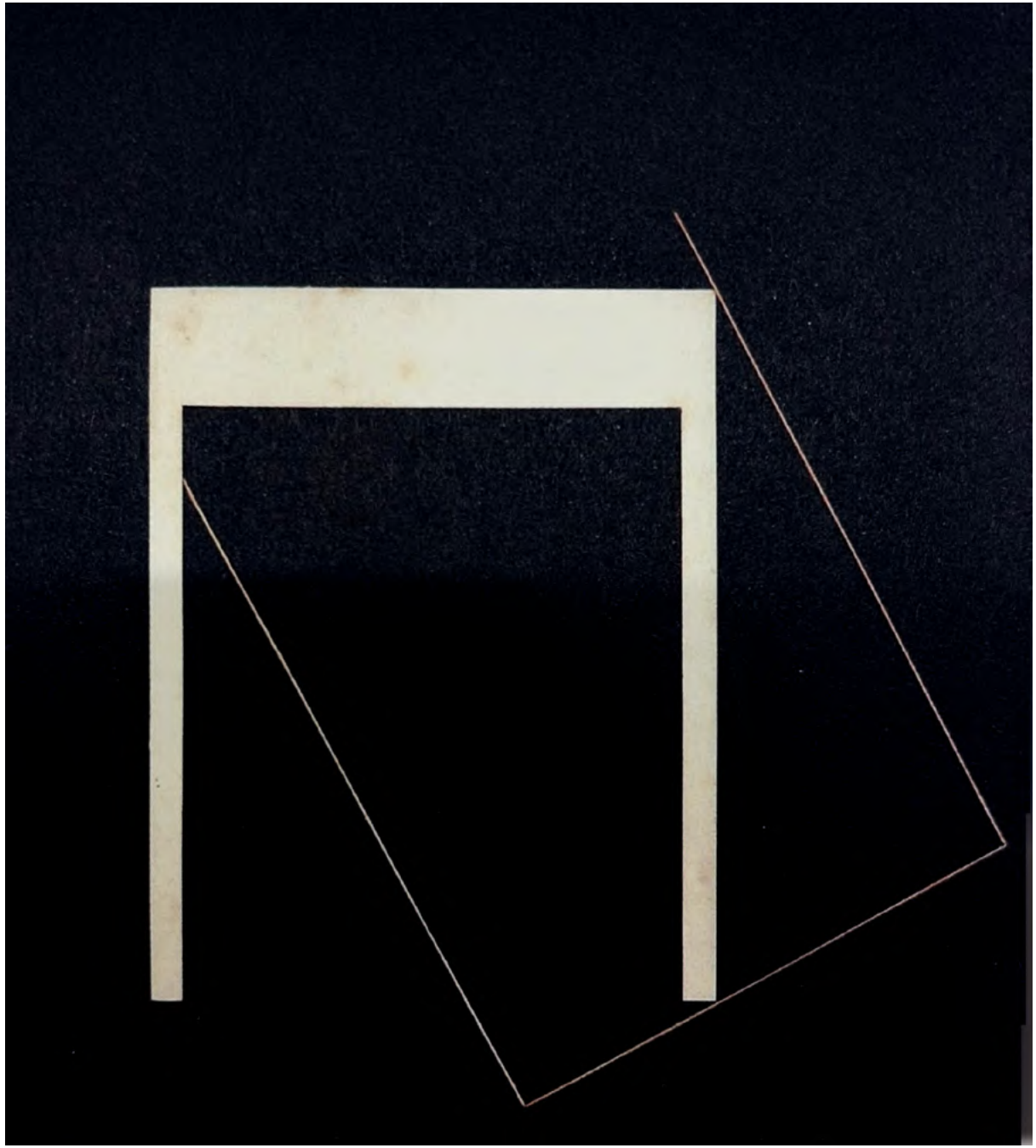
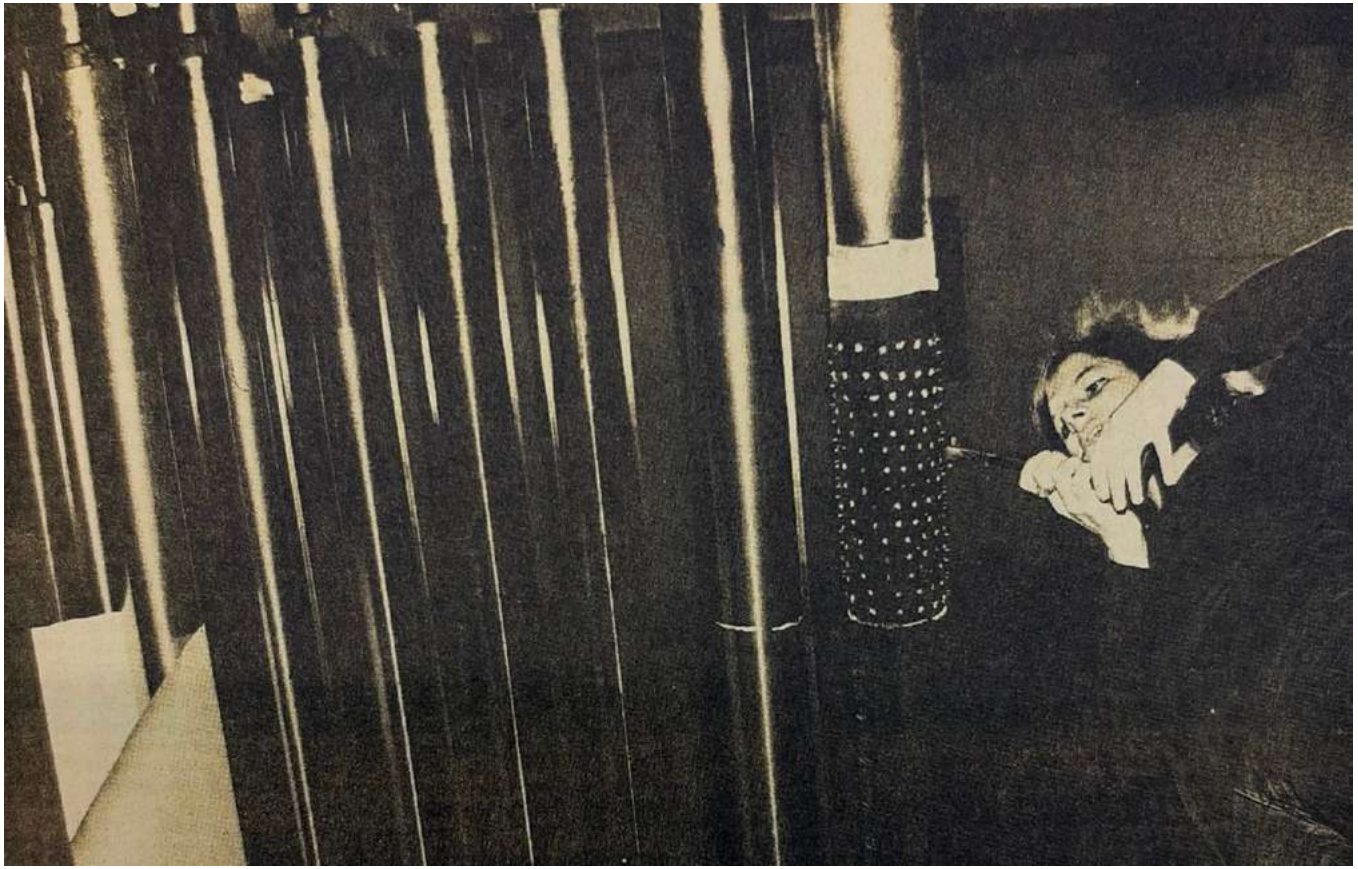


Imagem objetual, 1982
37 x 34 cm



Sem título, 1982
watercolor on paper
22 x 16 cm



In *Furos* (1989), Jac Leirner shifts her attention to the material infrastructure of the press. Produced through an intervention in the printing process of Jornal da Tarde, the work consists of small perforations made in the pages of the São Paulo newspaper. Exploring the double meaning of the word “furo” — simultaneously “hole” and “scoop”, “exclusive news” — the artist turns the medium of information itself into the content of the work, revealing mechanisms that normally remain invisible within the circulation of news.

Jac Leirner fixing nails into printer paper rolls, Jornal da Tarde, May 27, 1989

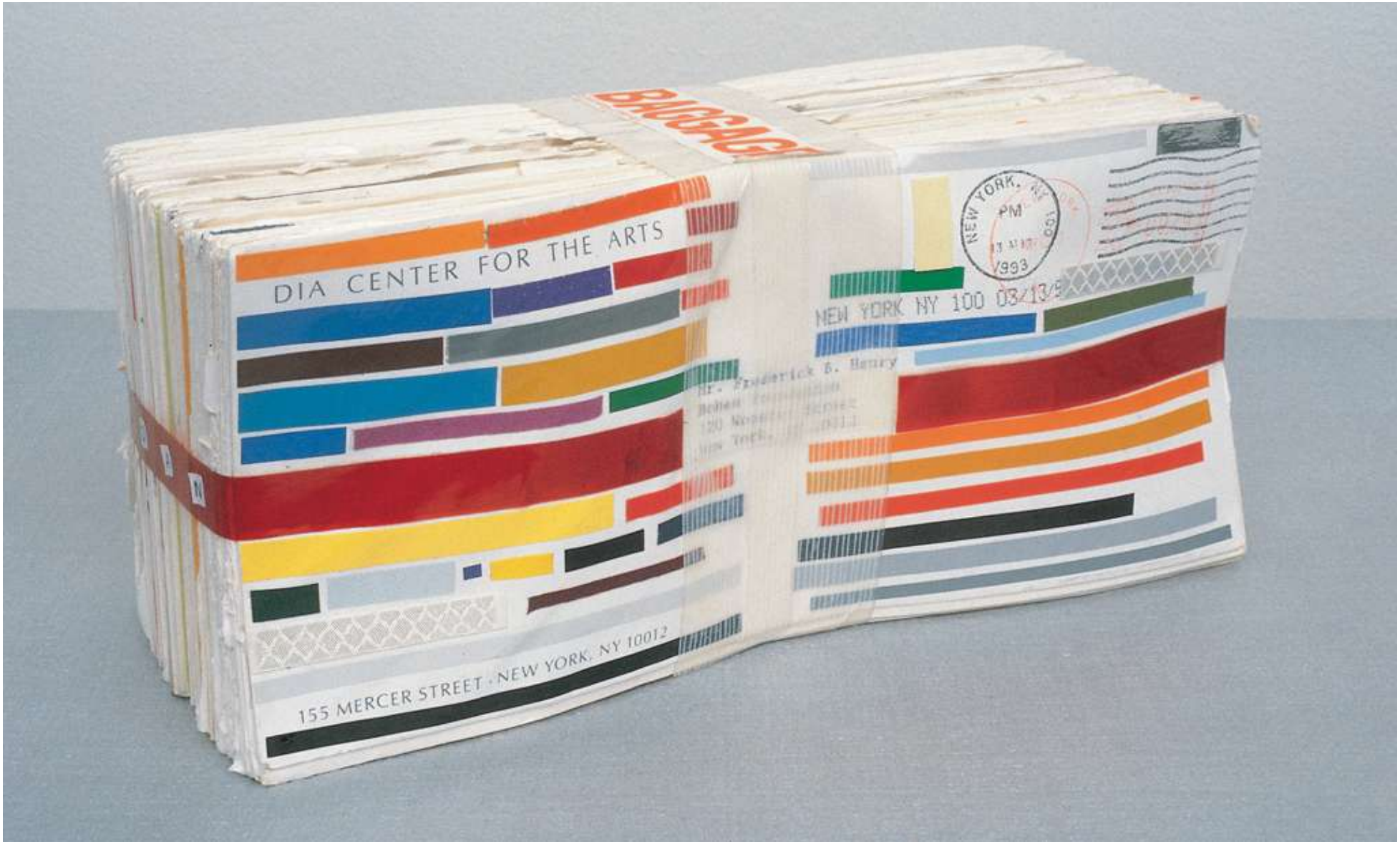
to and from

The series *To and From*, begun in 1991 during Jac Leirner's residency at MOMA Oxford at the invitation of the British Council, is made from envelopes used in correspondence between the museum and other institutions. Supported by steel cables, the envelopes are arranged linearly according to their formats, materials, and colors, foregrounding their traces of use, stamps, folds, and trajectories.

Rather than emphasizing the contents of the correspondence, the series turns to the very supports of everyday circulation within these networks, inserting them into another circuit: that of art. The envelopes appear as material traces of communication networks, institutional exchanges, and physical displacements, preserving signs of journeys that have already been completed.



To and From (MoMA Oxford), 1991
Paper envelopes, acrylic, and polyurethane cord
43,5 cm x 281,9 cm x 32,4 cm



To and from (Bohen), 1998
Envelopes, stickers, adhesive tapes
11 x 23,5 x 8,5 cm
Bohen Foundation Collection



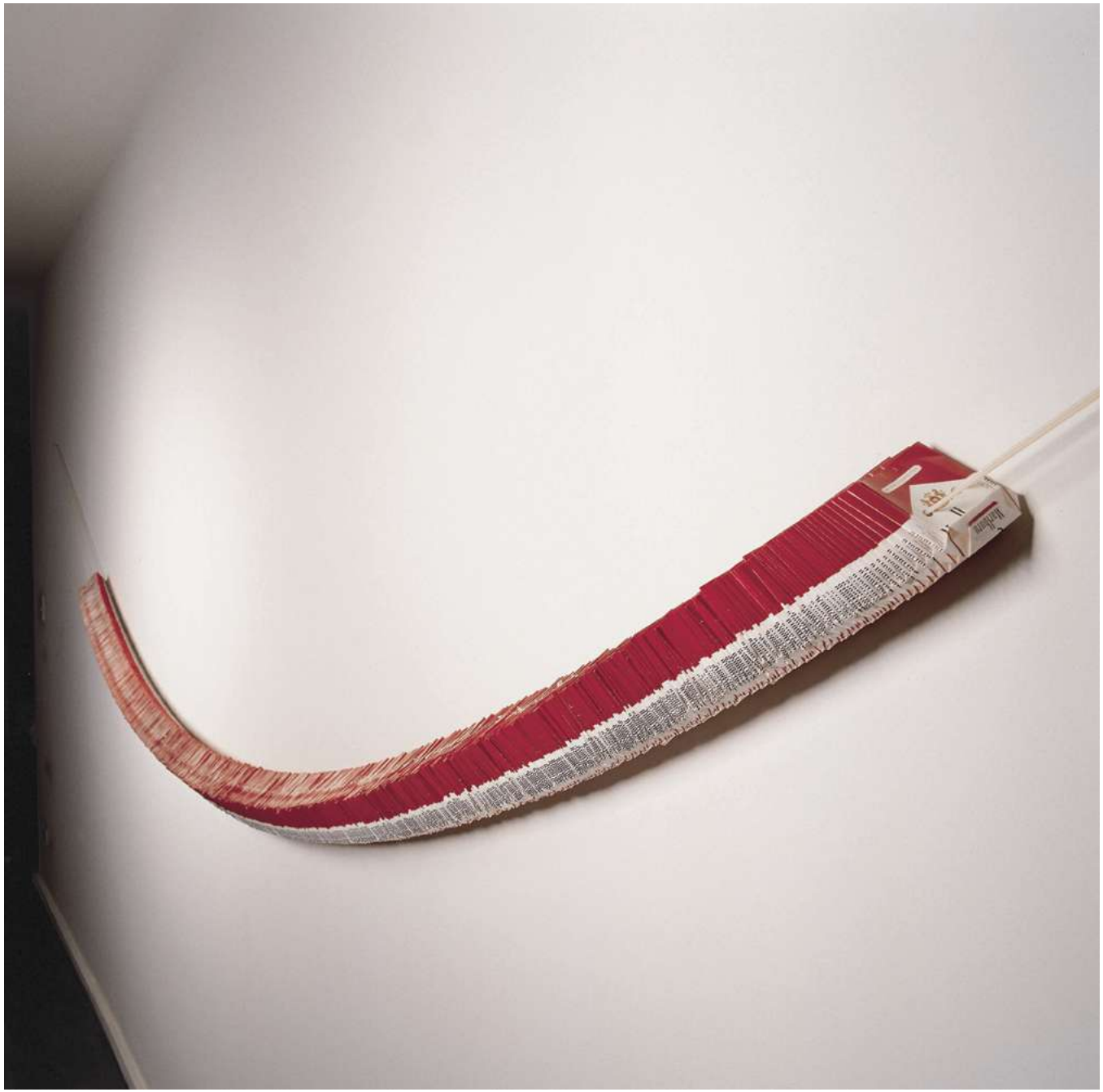
To and from (Walker), 1991
Envelopes, steel, acrylic
48 x 377 x 34 cm
Art Gallery of Ontario Collection



lung

In the group of works that make up the *Lung* [Pulmão] series, objects associated with the different stages of smoking acquire sculptural form. Cigarette packs, price stickers, packaging, and X-ray images of the artist's own lungs are accumulated, classified, and reorganized into rigorous structures.

Pulmão, 1987
Creased Marlboro cigarette packs
with polyurethane cord structure
Credit: MOMA NY.
David Rockefeller Fund for
Latin-American Art and Brazil Fund



Pulmão (plumária), 1987
Marlboro packs suspended
on a steel cord
440 cm x 480 cm
Credit: MOMA NY
David Rockefeller Fund for
Latin-American Art and Brazil Fund



Pulmão (multiple), 1987
Cellophane paper mounted
in an acrylic box
edition of 60
22 x 9 x 6 cm

By mobilizing procedures of repetition, seriality, and ordering, the artist approaches questions formulated by minimalism. At the same time, the presence of materials directly linked to everyday experience places the series in dialogue with both the operations of appropriation associated with Marcel Duchamp and the Brazilian constructivist tradition, in which formal rigor and sensory experience are often articulated.



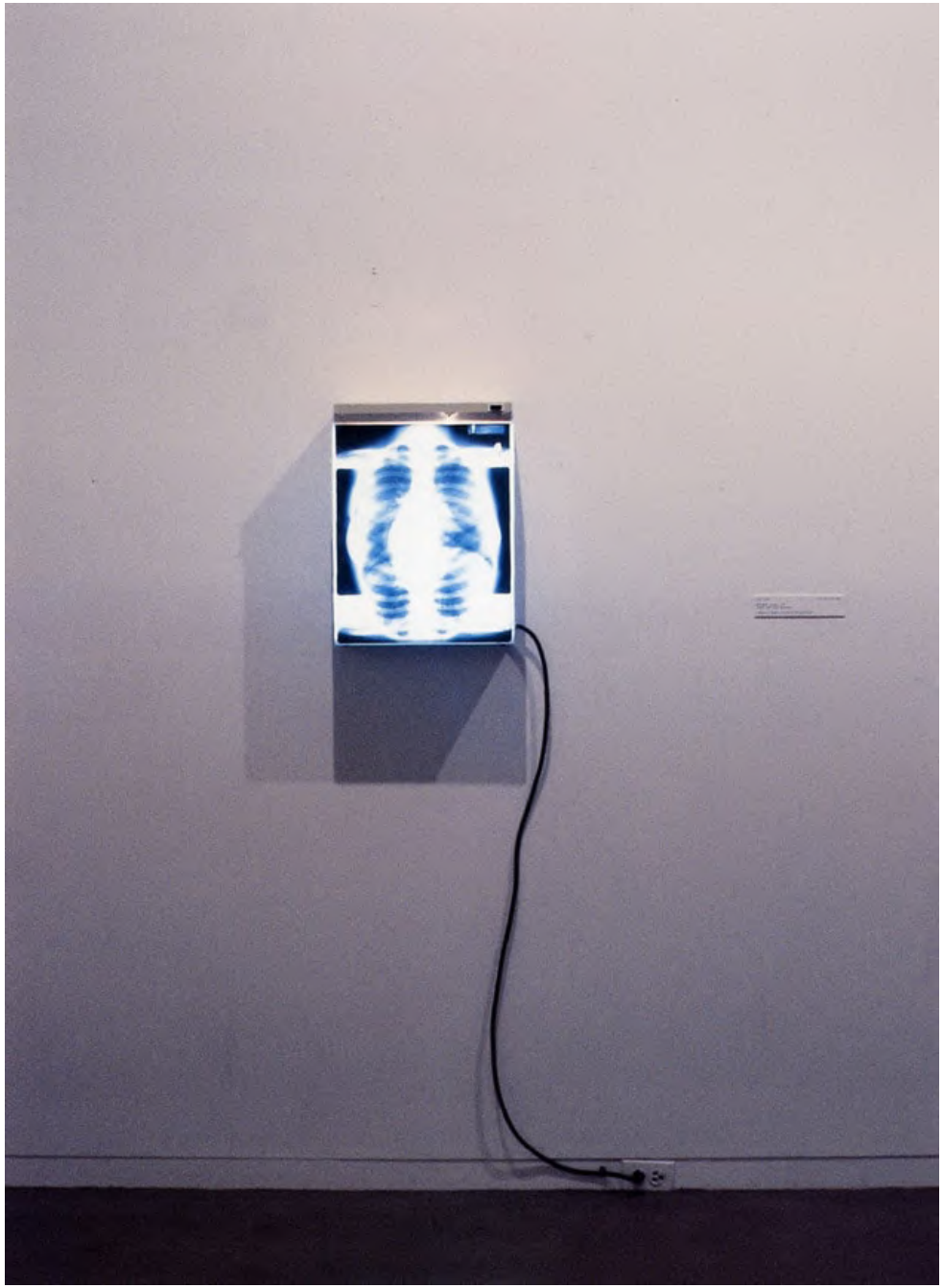
Pulmão (economia inflacionária II), 1987
stamps on stitched interfacing tape
120 x 40 x 40 cm



Pulmão, 1987
stitched laminated paper
132 x 12 x 24 cm

→
detail of the work





Pulmão, 1987
Light box with inverted X-ray
photographic plates
48 x 38,5 cm x 18 cm



Pulmão (vegetal mineral), 1987
stack of laminated paper
20 x 17 x 14 cm
photo: Eduardo Ortega

the one hundreds

Series such as *Os Cem* [The One Hundred], *Fantasma* [Ghost], *Todos os Cem* [All One Hundred], and *Fase Azul* [Blue Phase] emerged amid the context of hyperinflation that marked Brazil in the 1980s and 1990s, a period characterized by the rapid devaluation of currency, successive changes in monetary standards, and the everyday coexistence with high inflation rates. In this context, low-denomination banknotes circulated intensively and frequently lost their purchasing power within weeks, making visible the fragility of the monetary system itself and the growing distance between the value inscribed on a banknote and its effective value in everyday life.



Fase azul, 1991
8 x 310 x 15 cm
Helft Collection, Buenos Aires



Of the thousands of banknotes, a significant proportion bore inscriptions and interventions made by anonymous individuals. These were separated by the artist and organized into geometric structures, bands, rolls, and wall compositions. In doing so, she shifted money from its immediate function as a means of exchange in order to observe it as a material object and a document of circulation.

Os Cem (Quadro e Moldura), 1987
97 x 135 cm
photo: Edouard Fraipont





When she states that the banknotes do not metaphorize the economy, but rather figure as “the economy itself,” Leirner suggests that they cease to function as an abstract representation of currency and instead make visible the concrete mechanisms of production, circulation, wear, and the attribution of value that structure everyday economic life.

Os Cem (pornografia), 1987
Banknotes and interfacing
60 x 60 cm
© Rômulo Fialdini



Os Cem (Roda), 1985-1987
Brazilian banknotes
and stainless steel
3 × 26 pol | 7,6 × 66 cm



Os cem, 1986
perforated banknotes
with polyurethane thread
300 x 15 x 7 cm
l'Huillier Collection, Geneva
© Rômulo Fialdini



exhibition view
Functions of a Variable, 2014
Museo Tamayo, Mexico City, Mexico

Fantasma, made in the early 1990s, repeats the form of *Os Cem*, but replaces the banknotes with white paper of the same dimensions. The disappearance of money transforms the structure into a trace and an absence, as though only the material memory of the monetary system remained.



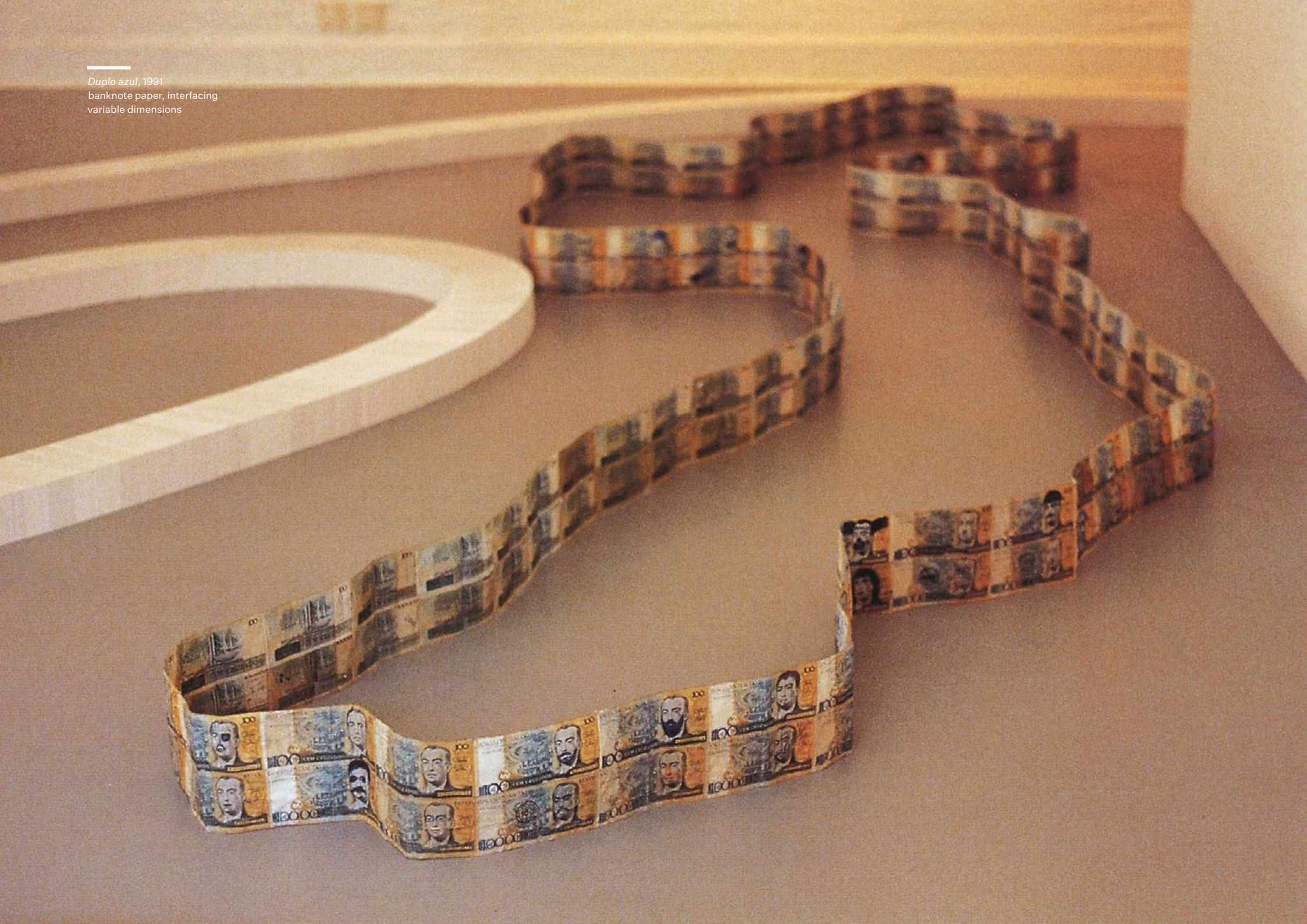
Fantasma, 1991
paper and polyurethane cord,
variable dimensions.
exhibition viewTransmission,
Roseeum Center for Contemporary
Art, Malmö, 1991



Fantasma / Ghost, 1998
adhesive paper and steel cable
7,5 x 15 x 480 cm



Viewpoints: Jac Leirner.
Walker Art Center,
Minneapolis, 1991-1992



Duplo azul, 1991
banknote paper, interfacing
variable dimensions



O livro (dos cem), 1987
offset printing
edition of 1000
64,5 cm x 55 cm

série e jogue na loto. Boa sorte, DVV um amigo. Esta nota não vale mais do que cem. Cem 100. Ordem e progresso. Quem este dinheiro pegar vai ter muito
Paulo. Santo santo santo. Chana preta chana pelada. Quem pegar esta nota ponha no nariz e cheire. 13. Daniele Daniele Daniele Danilel. Duque de bana
raveco. Vire a nota e verás uma mulher de gelo; que pena você demorou e ela derreteu. Lourdes Tânia. O cruzeiro virou cruzado e se não der certo virá o
e. Tia Pituca lembre-se do totó forever; para você brincar na banheira sem se esquecer de mim. O enfeite de uma mesa é um jarro e uma colher; o enfeite
umano! Litrosfera alumínio magnésio níquel e ferro. Dinheiro não traz felicidade mas ajuda. Pafúncio e Joana. 1.11.85 Mad Max Eldorado. Tu sabes o qu
minho do grande buraco. Seja ladrão o governo garante. Bucetão de Arujá. São João rei da fortuna. O cachorro é amigo do homem por que? não conhece
ita! 1 dolar. Transas e caretas. Favor não escrever nas notas do banco central do Brasil. Guaianazes. Luza você é feia. Jovens, o mundo depende de nós hoje
pinhão quem votou nele, ele é um pinguso. Com esse tustão você não precisa mais comprar fiado, OK? Eu vi uma casa velha na beira do rio era uma brio
ocê é triste lembre-se que alguém é feliz porque você existe OK, só que essa pessoa não sou pois eu nem te conheço. Delfim ladrão. P.I.N.T.O. Dinheiro ives
Eli. Eu hein. 1985, Deicom e Márcia eu te amo. Maci Banana. A simpatia de ficar milionário você pega uma nota de cem cruzeiros e dá pro seu namorado
Como é bom se bom; mas ser melhor é bem melhor. Deise eu gosto de chupar buceta; eu quero comer uma buceta. Família reunida: Armando Pinto, Jaci
ar esta nota deverá dar um beijo prá ganhar o triplo. Este dinheiro vai para linda querida. Você pensa que ele é cachorro mas ele não é cachorro não. Vou
com o homem? Ich dier liebe. Se dinheiro não traz felicidade, devolver e sorrir. 500 500 Floral Rosa. As novidade se confundem com dinheiro novo; tou certo
inha estrada. Lê é coisa de burro; se você tá lendo você é burro. Quem pegar é cagão. Leandro 6/9/85 estou numa aula de Ed Física Colégio S.F.X. 100 gr
o puta que pariu traidor. Aumentos nesse país sem governo sério, já virou brincadeira essa é a maior violência contra o povo. Criminosos, ladrões impune
o eu fiz esse verso. A vida é vazia não quero mais viver. Você são um pessoal legal bonita eu amo você, são exita. Este dinheiro pertence a Samuel de Andréia
sofrendo. As drogas injetáveis destroem o meu ser. Mauá São Paulo. Este 100 lhe trará uma fortuna de 100 milhos de drolar. Era puta ordinária nunca noiv
corintiano é viado. Vanesa Vanesa Vasiena Vanesa. Feliz natal e um próximo ano novo para todos que pegarem esta nota. Figueiredo fuleiro Maluf se bu
u esta nota pois você está com sorte. Pois jogue este n° L 136 m-c 343 5 MESTO 4270 73 LOTO. Cem cruzeiro não vale mais. Miriam M N eu te amo Eu t
mos com eles? Do geito que as coisas andam só mesmo mudando de figura. John Player Special. Não vire curiosa. Que tal? EU amo você. Eu quero suga
r nele não vão se dar bem. Nene e Tina lilás. Gostaria de ser seu anjo e seguir todos os seus passos mas a vida nos separou. Nil eu te amo Ass: Elza Hélio eu
GMANNVJoR. Cucucucucuculhão. Tomate tomada. MK 85 VIP 022. Dinheiro cheira mal mas todo mundo gosta desse mal cheiro. Um fim Brasil. 19-20 T
uma poesia objetiva impessoal na história de um povo. dramÁTICO: Quando notares um espaço espacial apresentado por meio de palavras e gestos um a
nto da emoção o que as torna subjetivas. Sorria e chore mas ainda tente lutar pelo aquilo que você ama. Buceta. Zé da Bota. Pica dura. Meu computador n
alho. 7 de sete. Montoro e sua quadrilha estão ali!! Fogo! Eu vou asertar na quina da loto sózinha. Natalina. A/47/57/05/55/75/A. Roque Santeiro um pr
ização. Eu love e Li você. Você vai Malufar você vai pastar. Brasileiro que puxa o saco do Malufi e do Figueiredo tem que apanhar para ter vergonha na ca
rtos. Eu te amo Quelé. Vai mas vorte. Eu estou na avó. Se você não é capaz de amar não faça ninguém sofrer. Crescimento vegetativo 3,6. Jesus muito em brev
Punk rock Anarquia. "Beto". Não usar. Só pegue neste dinheiro no dia que aí você vai ver. CEP do end em vermelho. Tim pque Steca. Eu amo você gatã
Cosmi e Daminhão vai ajuda escreva 5 e passe. Bouquet/ Se dinheiro fosse merda Brasileiro não cagava. Azarento. Que Deus nos guie Amém. Slayer-Exodu
mais cola. Porco. 7 de sete de 85. 12:7:85 Assembléia Osaco SP de Deus N Osasco. Bores cura Rosenaldo saruba Nilda bansé Rosenaldo Alves Leite. É ma
Primeira nota. Você já viu vaca voar vire; é só mandar sua mãe pular a janela seu idiota. Boca falou cú pagou. Quem pegar esta nota vai encontrar um amor
já passou. Esta nota é da Bárbara a Bárbara é bonita e quem pegar é feio Falso dinheiro. Quem pegar dinheiro. Esta nota tem dono quem pegar é viado e
ira seu babaca. Antonio 44. PARAGUAY doador de cú. Cú arregaçado e buceta arrombada é da sua irmã. Meu coração não sei porque bate feliz quando tive
pinha. Cole eu amo você Cris. Santos campeão de 85. Não pegue. Aqui jaz Alemão causa morte xulé agudo Aqui jaz Aguinaldo causa mor mulheres. A
i rougo. Jioia ndeu y cará. QI de abelha. Tudo é merda mas ainda temos sombras radiosas que fazem gestos eternos. Marlei X Ditinha. JJ iguais e contrário
a nota veio lhe trazer sorte escreve em mais 10 notas de 100 e passar esta nota tem que ser das suas mãos dentro de 4 dias, ass: LU. Caramelo Rosane?? I
orre. Olhe para o outro lado do dinheiro; é você cara feia. Maiza Salmeirão. Não sou dolar viu! Vai cuidar da sua mulher corno. Decepcione. Que número qu
ó dar coca cola para sua irmã. Galinha é a sua irmã idiota. Ignes Ignes. Nesse olhar tão triste sinto brilhar um desejo; parece uma flor se abrindo a espera
e ama louco. Não não não vem cantar. Quem pegar chama veado lazarento. Se tudo que pensei não realizam quero que não pense que fui eu o culpado de
ada entupida. Ai que cheirinho de porra catinga de buceta. Música da Tetê Spíndola você prá mim meu tesão; Eu fui dar mamãe. Quem neste dinheiro peg
Cristo salva. Vire esta nota e veja o Roberto Carlos de bicicleta; você demorou tanto que ele já passou. Gente que amo com o coração como. Enes. Your lo
ser rico; deus majuda. Cruzeiro. K-3-69.82-06 95-15 37 44. Mecão. Jacarépaguá Brasil. 44. Riki Bidis. Vera Laureano Marzanno; eu te amo. Amo você e na
rdo você me procura eu te amo. O dinheiro não traz felicidade. Mulher é como café; quando esfria ninguém quer. Você é mau. Id quero hora amor não eu



corpus delicti

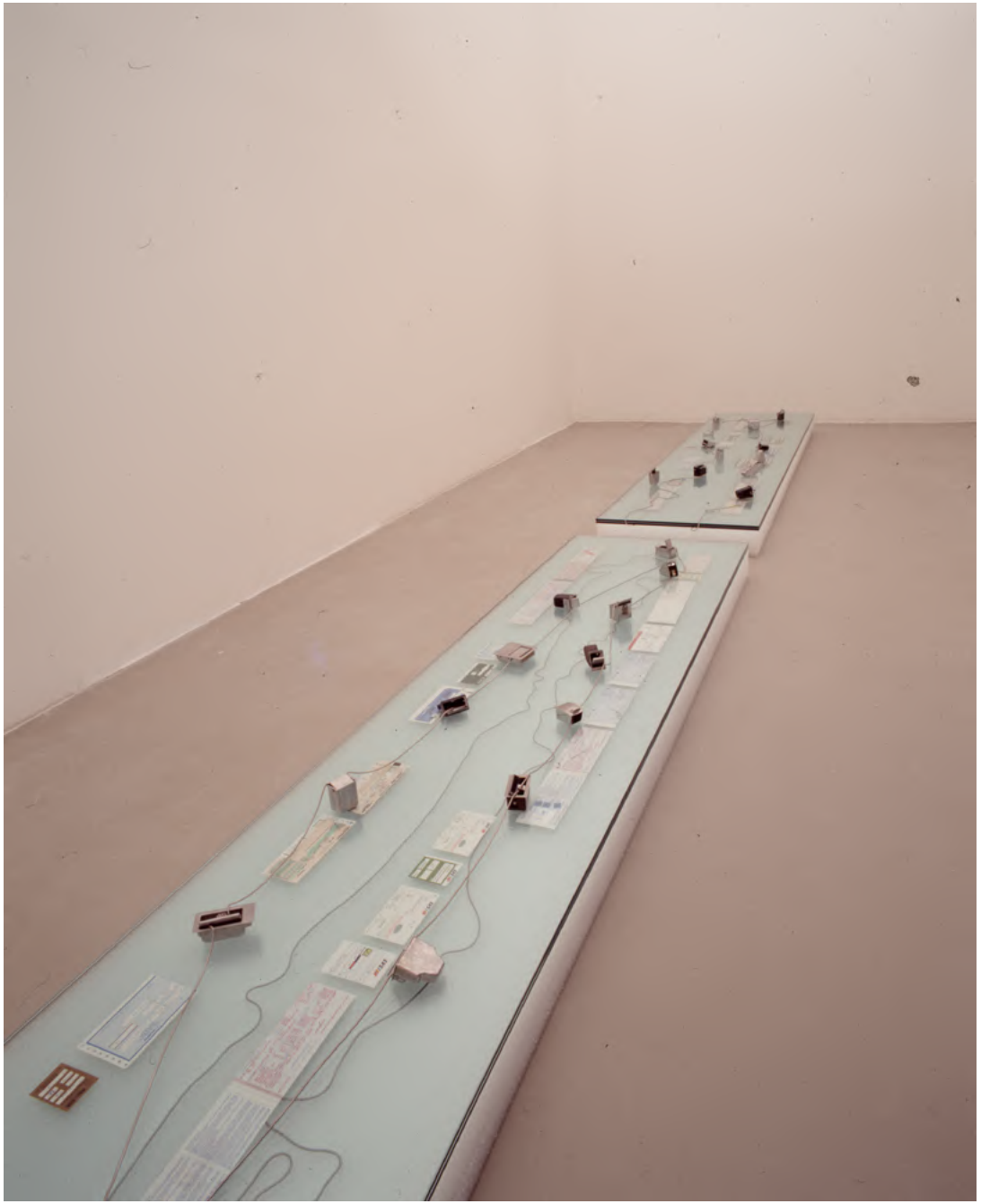
The *Corpus Delicti* series brings together objects appropriated from air travel, such as ashtrays, blankets, pillows, cutlery, cups, and boarding passes, reorganized in multiple configurations.

The title, a Latin legal expression referring to the “material evidence of a crime,” introduces an ironic dimension to the work: the objects carry traces of negotiations with flight attendants and of small acts of theft committed by the artist during commercial flights. Removed from the aircraft environment, these standardized utensils from different airlines begin to reveal the aesthetic mechanisms of global circulation, transforming experiences of transit and displacement into sculptural structures.

Corpus delicti, 1993
polyurethane cutlery and rope
18,1 x 317,8 x 40,6 cm

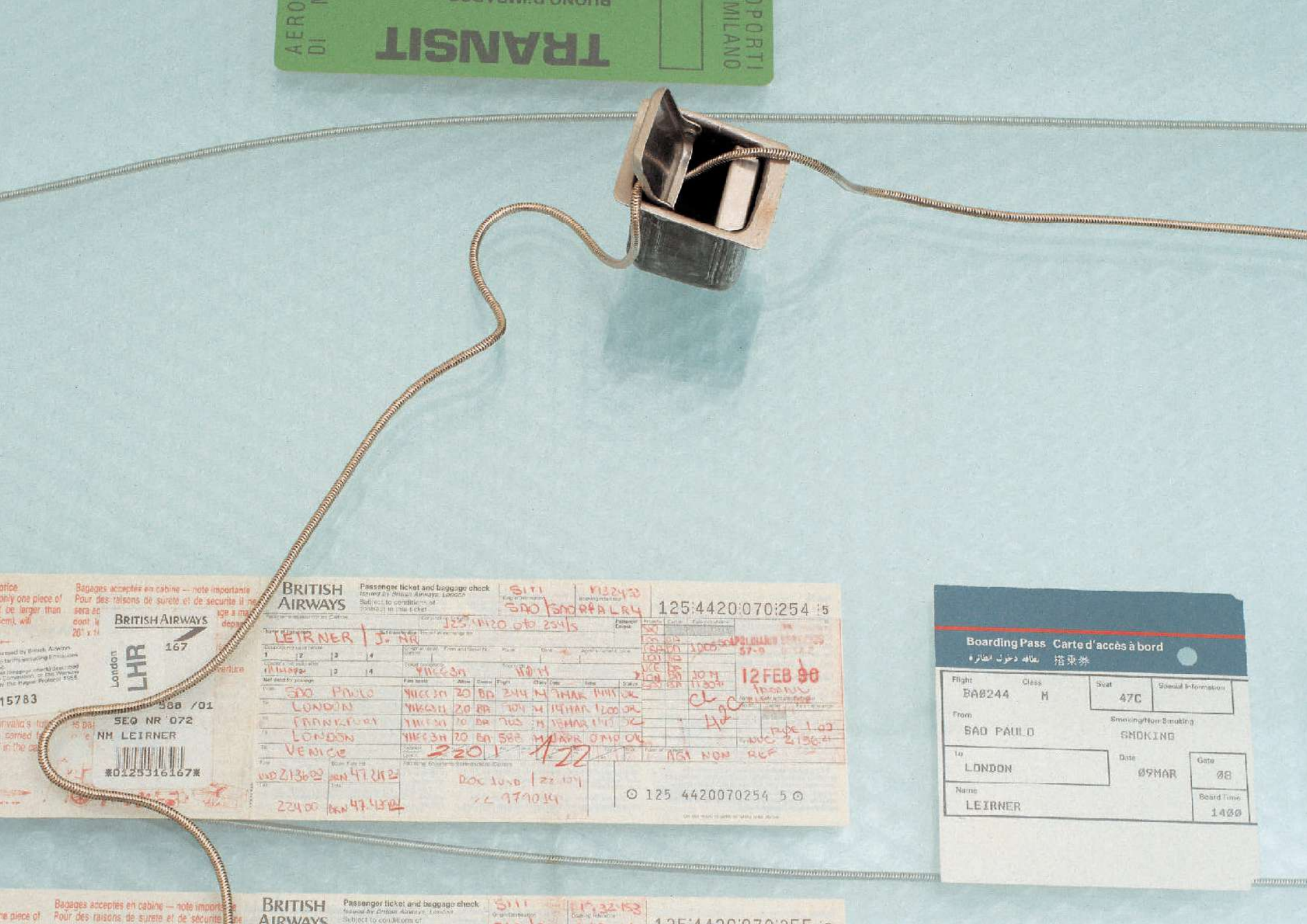


Corpus delicti, 1993
pillows
variable dimensions



Corpus Delicti, 1992
ashtrays, boarding passes, airline tickets, chain, glass, bubble wrap
20 x 70 x 300 cm [each element]
exhibition view Documenta 9, Kassel, 1992
photo: Dirk Pawels

→
detail of the work


TRANSIT
AERO
DI
PORTI
MILANO
BRITISH AIRWAYS
London
LHR
167
15783
SEQ NR 072
NM LEIRNER
0125316167
BRITISH AIRWAYS
Passenger ticket and baggage check
LEITRNER / J. MR
SAO PAULO
LONDON
FRANKFURT
LONDON
VENICE
12 FEB 90
125 4420070254 5
Boarding Pass Carte d'accès à bord
Flight
BA0244
Class
M
Seat
47C
From
SAO PAULO
Smoking/Non-Smoking
SMOKING
To
LONDON
Date
09MAR
Gate
08
Name
LEIRNER
Board Time
1400



Corpus Delicti
exhibition view
Institutional Ghost, 2017
IMMA – Irish Museum of
Modern Art, Dublin, Ireland



Corpus Delicti (Radical), 2022
briefcases, chains and stickers
42 x 150 x 46 cm



installation view
Corpus Delicti and Other Lines, 2019
Galleria Franco Noero, Turim, Italy



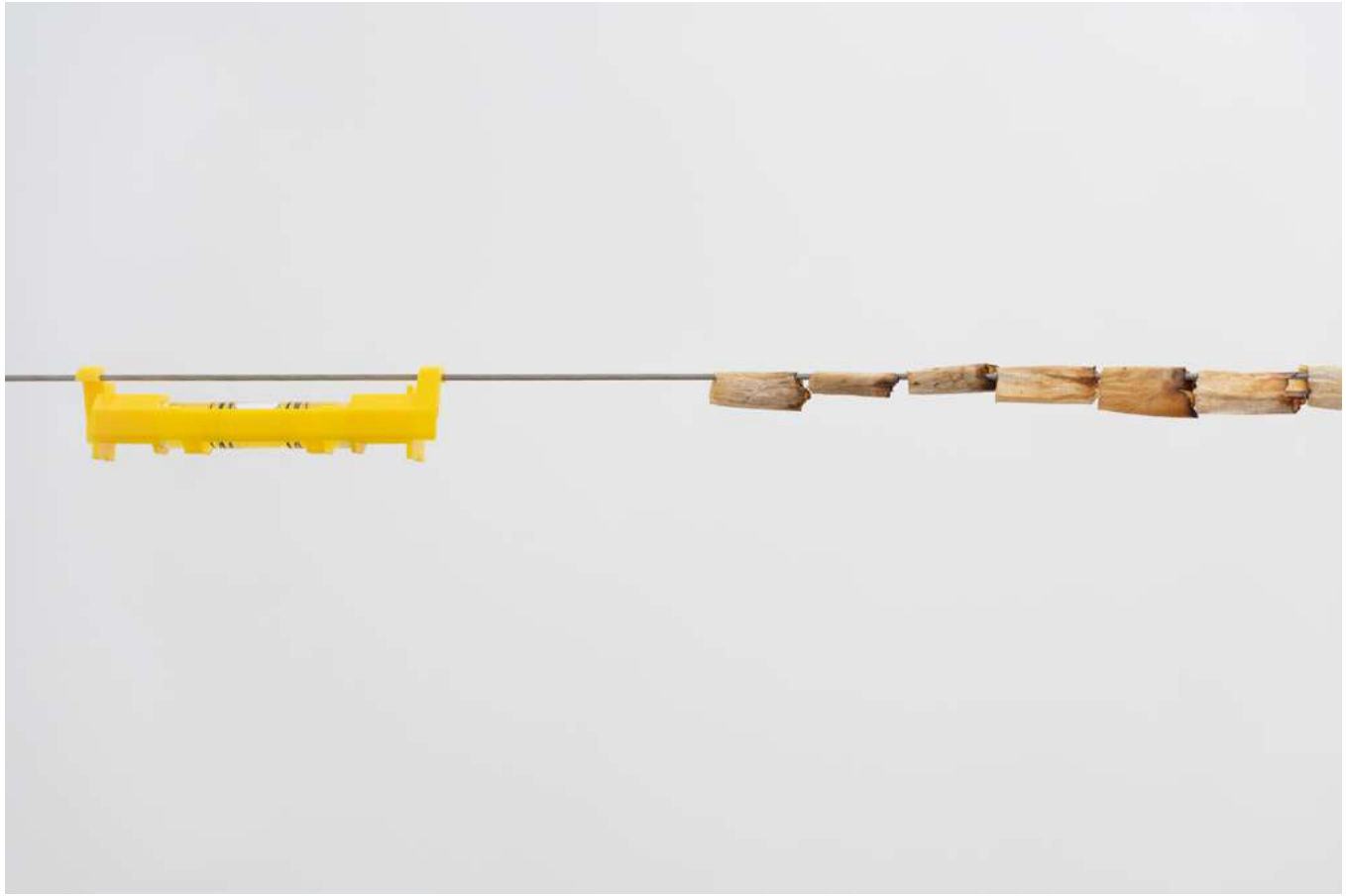
Jac Leirner,
Corpus delicti (United), 1985-2018
steel and nylon
113 x 19 x 5 cm



junkie

Addition appears at various moments throughout Leirner's career. The artist incorporated rolling papers and cigarette butts, as well as the packaging for these papers, into her body of work, and also cut and photographed small quantities of cocaine. In these works, illicit substances and their traces are displaced from the realm of personal experience into rigorously organized structures.

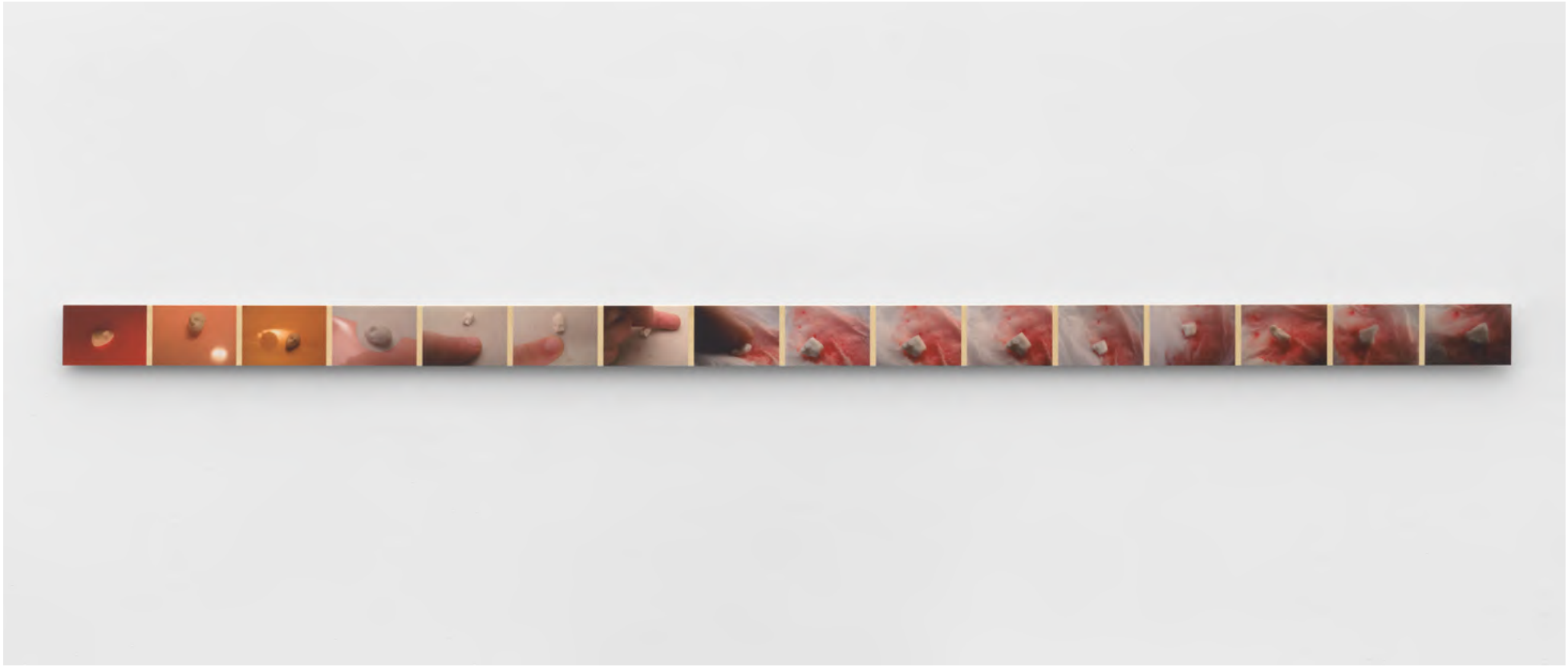
From the small cocaine sculptures, which disappear as they are consumed, to the spatial drawings produced by marijuana cigarette butts, the works bring duration and wear, permanence and disappearance into coexistence.



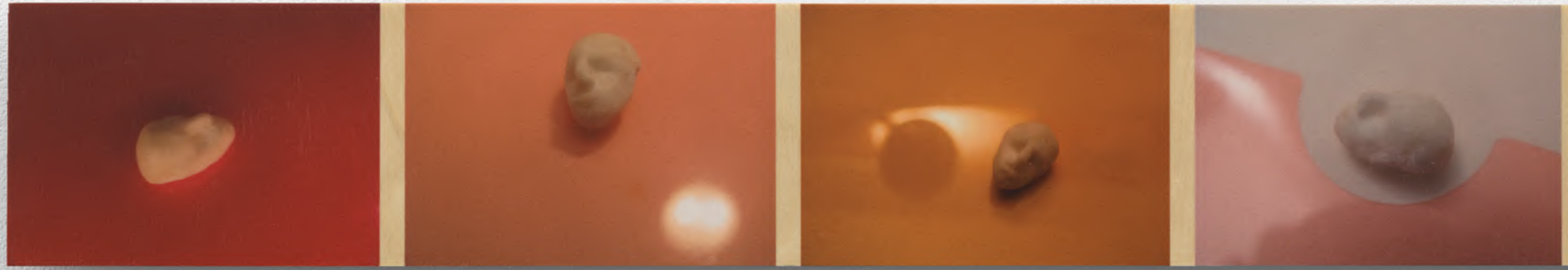
Jac Leirner,
High 'n' Low, 2016-2018
steel cable, paper, tensioners
and precision levels
variable dimensions



High 'n' Low, 2016-2018
steel cable, paper, tensioners
and precision levels
variable dimensions
(installation: 2 parts of 665 cm)



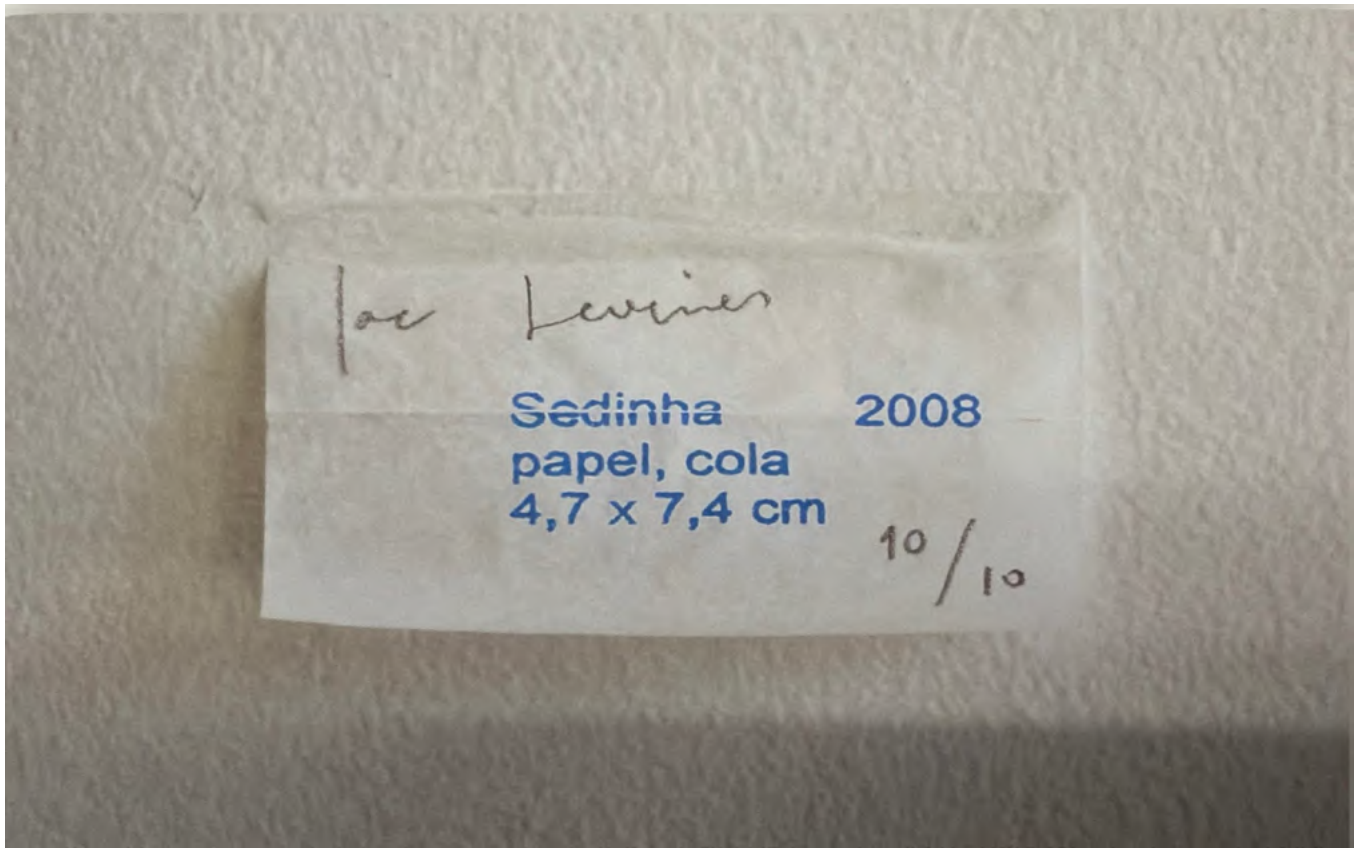
Fuck, 2016
UV printing on plywood
10,6 x 251,6 x 2 cm



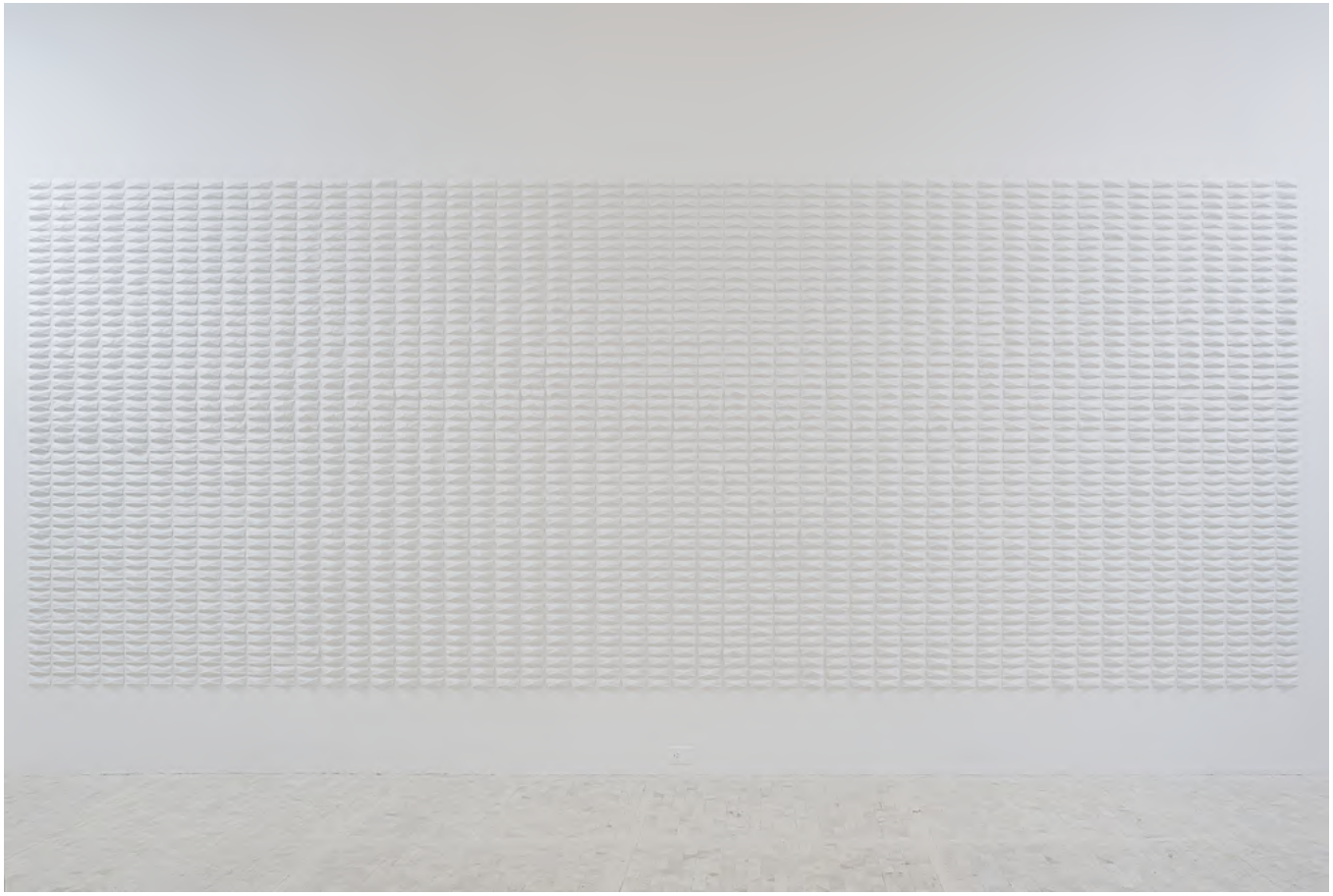


exhibition view *Adição*, 2018
Fortes D'Aloia & Gabriel

In *Sedinha*, Jac Leirner uses rolling paper to produce a print that reproduces its own technical information, including title, dimensions, and medium.



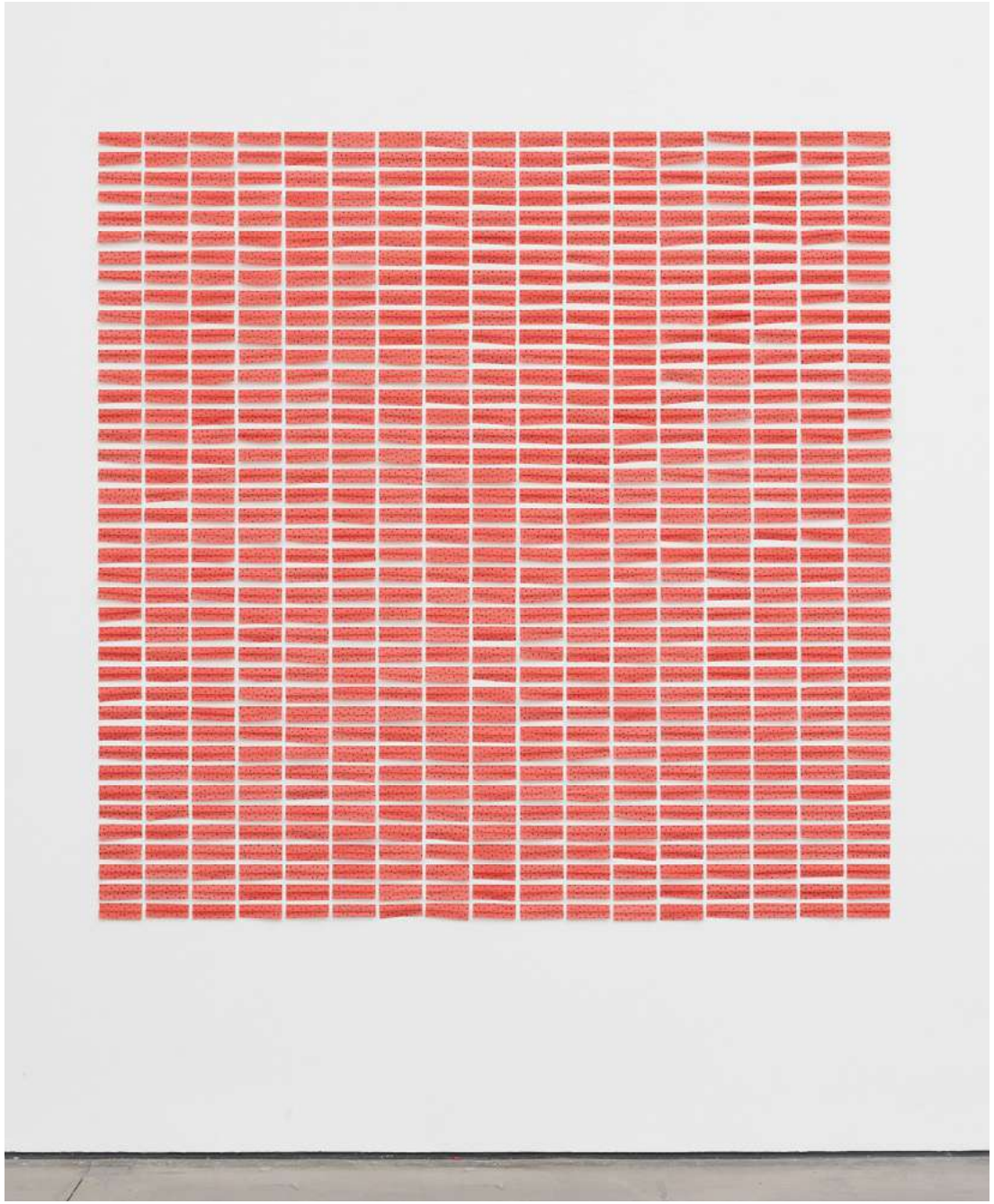
Sedinha, 2008
tissue paper for rolling cigarettes,
ink, pencil and glue.
4,7 x 7,4 cm



In the *Skin* series, the artist returns to the same material and explores its spatial multiplicity. By working with the transparency, delicacy, and precariousness of these extremely thin materials, Leirner engages seriality as associated with the consumer object while also referring to the concrete tradition and minimalism through the grid that structures each colored sheet on the wall.

exhibition view
Functions of a Variable, 2014
Museo Tamayo, Mexico City, Mexico

Organized into repetitive and subtle compositions, the translucent sheets produce almost ethereal surfaces, in which slight variations in folding, overlapping, and light become structuring elements of the work. As critic Robert Storr observed, Leirner turns “things into commentary, objects into content, matter into idea,” allowing minimal everyday items to acquire formal and poetic density.

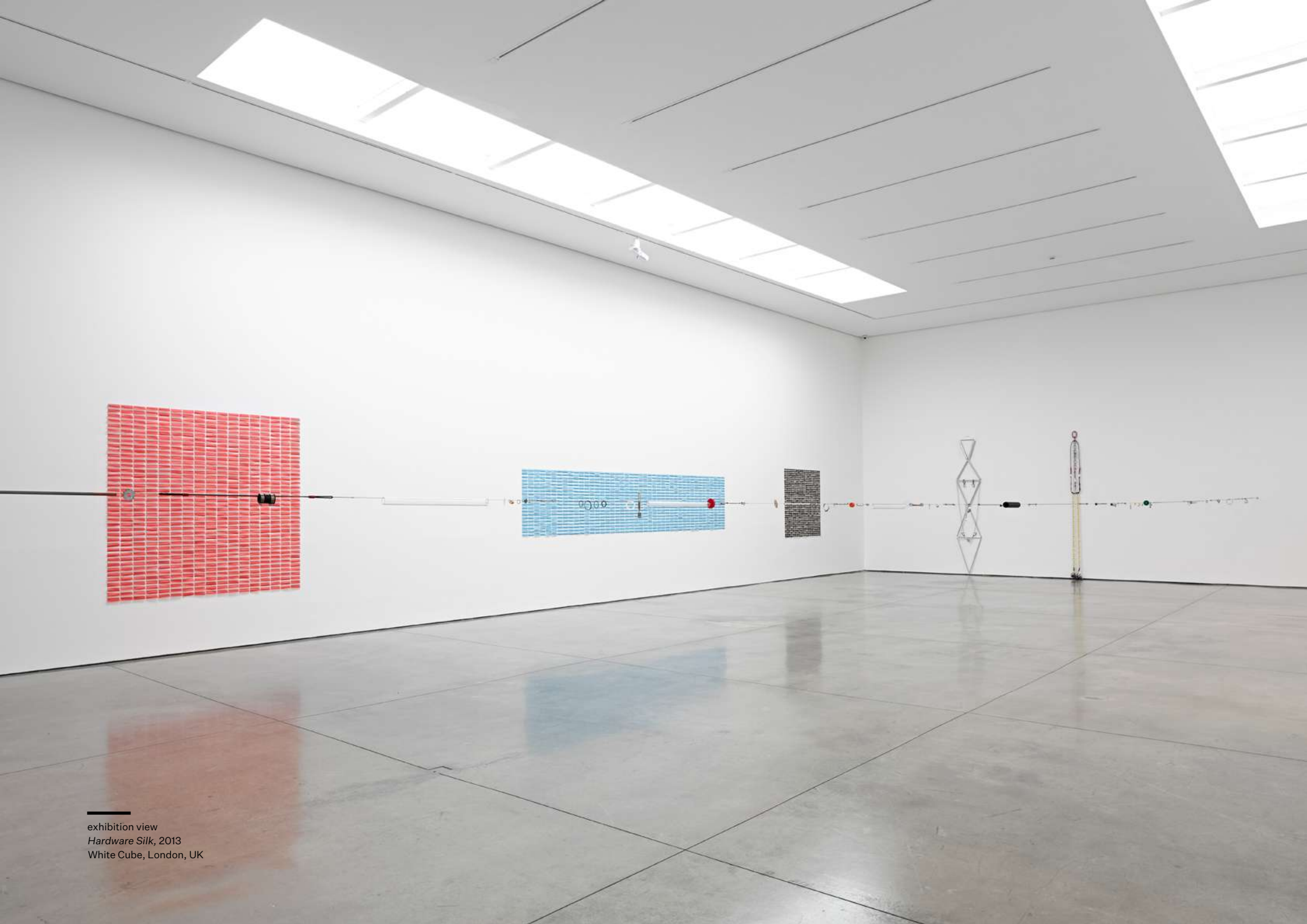


Jac Leirner,
Skin (Juicy Jay’s Watermelon King Size Slim), 2013
Cigarette rolling papers (680 units)
200 x 200 x 1,5 cm



Skin selfie (Smoking brown), 2019
cigarette rolling papers (203 units)
160 x 60,5 cm





exhibition view
Hardware Silk, 2013
White Cube, London, UK



nice to meet you

The series *Nice to Meet You*, begun in the mid-1980s, brings together business cards accumulated by the artist throughout her participation in the international art circuit. Organized according to formal criteria such as typography, color, size, position, and graphic design, the cards are aligned in horizontal or crossed structures and pressed between acrylic plates, transforming small utilitarian prints into sculptural works. The series represented Brazil at the 1997 Venice Biennale, when art professionals themselves recognized their names and contact information incorporated into the work, highlighting the simultaneously intimate and public dimension of the artist's research.

Nice to meet you, 1997
acrylic, business cards, metal
variable dimensions



Foi um prazer, view at the Brazilian Pavilion, at the 47th Venice Biennale, 1997

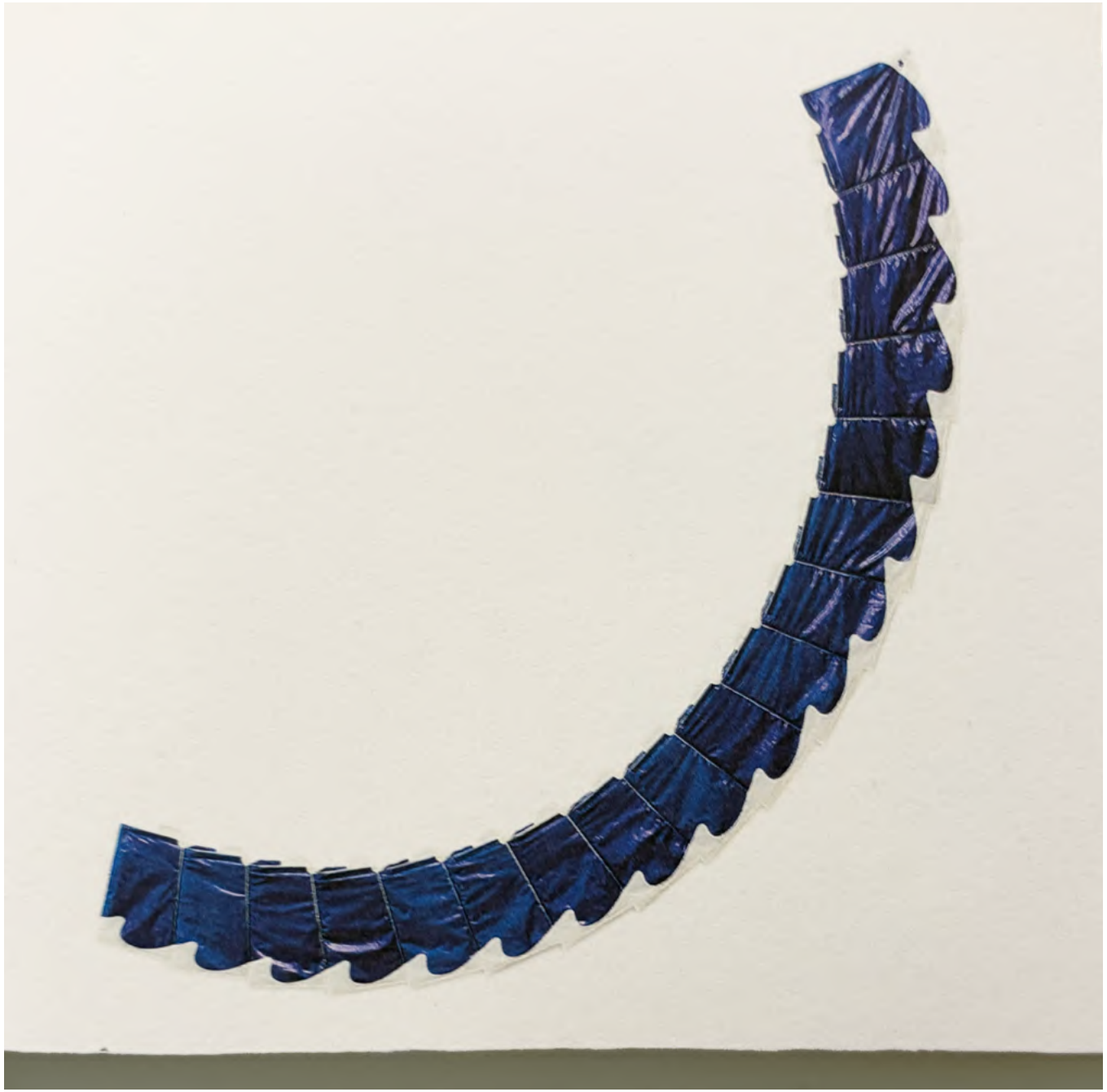


American critic Robert Storr described Jac Leirner as a “self-taught situationist,” emphasizing the way her works reveal the flows of contemporary systems of circulation. In *Foi um Prazer (Nice to Meet You)*, the accumulation of business cards brings forth a kind of relational and bureaucratic cartography of the art world at the end of the twentieth century, in which professional networks, graphic design, and institutional identity simultaneously become image, archive, and sculpture.

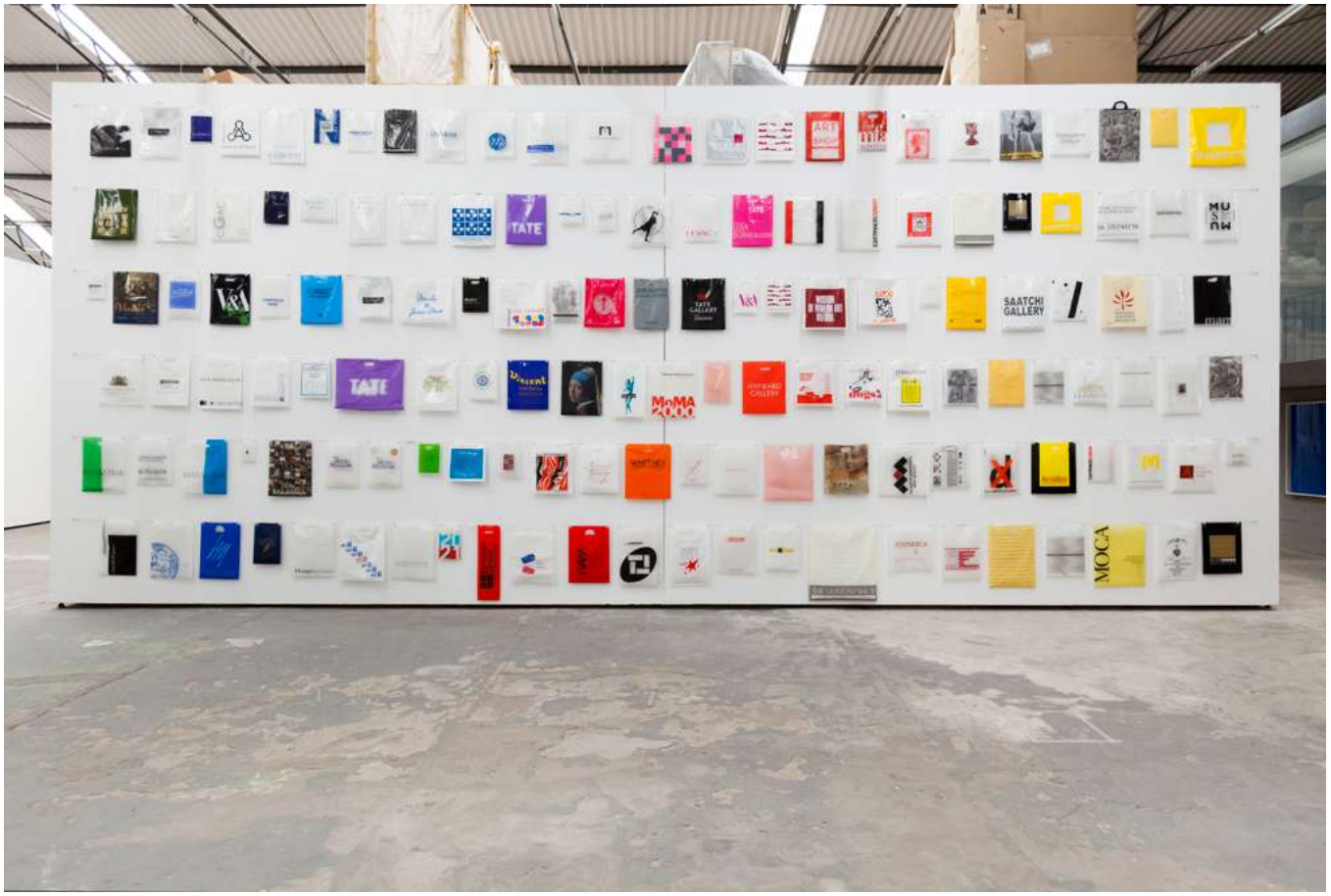
detail *Foi um prazer*, view
at the Brazilian Pavilion,
at the 47th Venice Biennale, 1997

names, museum bags and void

The series *Names*, *Museum Bags*, and *Void* form part of a group of works in which Jac Leirner uses plastic bags, packaging, and containers associated with the circuits of consumption and art institutions. Begun in the 1980s, the Nomes series brings together hundreds of bags from stores, bookstores, museums, and commercial brands, sewn onto interfacing to form large surfaces and installations.



Azuis (Blue Ones), 1990
plastic bags
and polyester foam
150 x 420 cm



In *Museum Bags (Names [Museums])*, the artist focuses specifically on bags from museums and cultural institutions, using them as material indexes of the processes of circulation, value, and legitimation that structure the art system. Deformed by the weight of the valuable objects they carry, these bags leave museums as functional supports and, when preserved from disposal, return to the exhibition space transformed into works of art.

144 Bolsas Museu, 1985-2006
Plastic bags, tensioners, steel cables and binding clips, variable dimensions
© photo: Eduardo Ortega

→
detail of the work


ART SHOP
mfa BOSTON
Staatsgalerie Stuttgart
TATE
TATE LOVE SURREALISM
MUSEUSERRALVES
ROYAL ACADEMY OF ARTS
THE ARTIST'S SHOP
marca
musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris
la librairie
GUGGENHEIM
TATE GALLERY LONDON
V&A
MUSEUM OF MODERN ART OXFORD
DAVE DAVO ALBUMS
TATE
SAATCHI GALLERY
THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM
Vincent
MoMA 2000
HAYWARD GALLERY
SENSATION
dogs!
WHITNEY
LILLEVALCHS
MUSEUMBOOKS
MUSEUSERRALVES
ATAPUERCA
THE MUSEUM SHOP
genève musée d'art et d'histoire
MUSÉE JACQUEMART ANDRÉ

In the *Void* series, presented in 2008, Leirner radicalizes the process of emptying and abstraction of these materials. In the works, the artist removes logos, words, and printed areas from the bags, leaving only geometric voids and residual structures that oscillate between drawing, painting, and sculpture.



Void fifteen [Vazio quinze], 2008
acrylic, polyester blanket
and plastic bag
58 x 29 x 4 cm

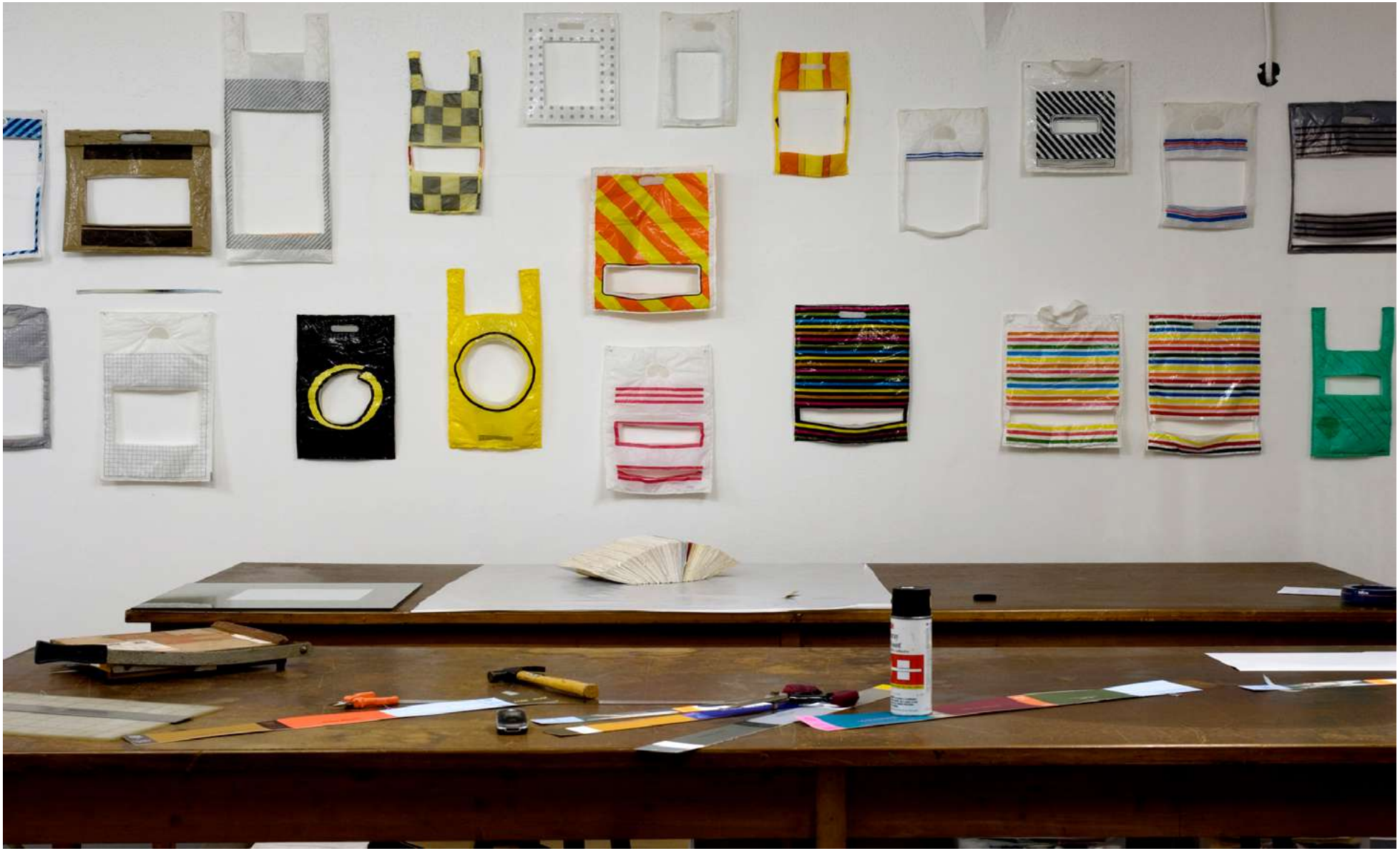


The plastic bag is reduced to a kind of “skeleton,” preserving only its minimal supporting structure. By eliminating all graphic information and commercial identity, the artist reflects on structure, cropping, and emptiness, questions that also relate to geometric abstraction.

Osso 52, 2008
plastic bag, blanket
made of polyester and plexiglass
35 x 35 x 4 cm



Osso (void 26), 2008
Plastic bags, polyurethane
foam and plexiglass
66 x 45 x 4 cm
Courtesy of the Cisneros Foundation



exhibition view *Osso 008*, 2008
Centro Universitário Maria Antonia,
São Paulo, Brazil



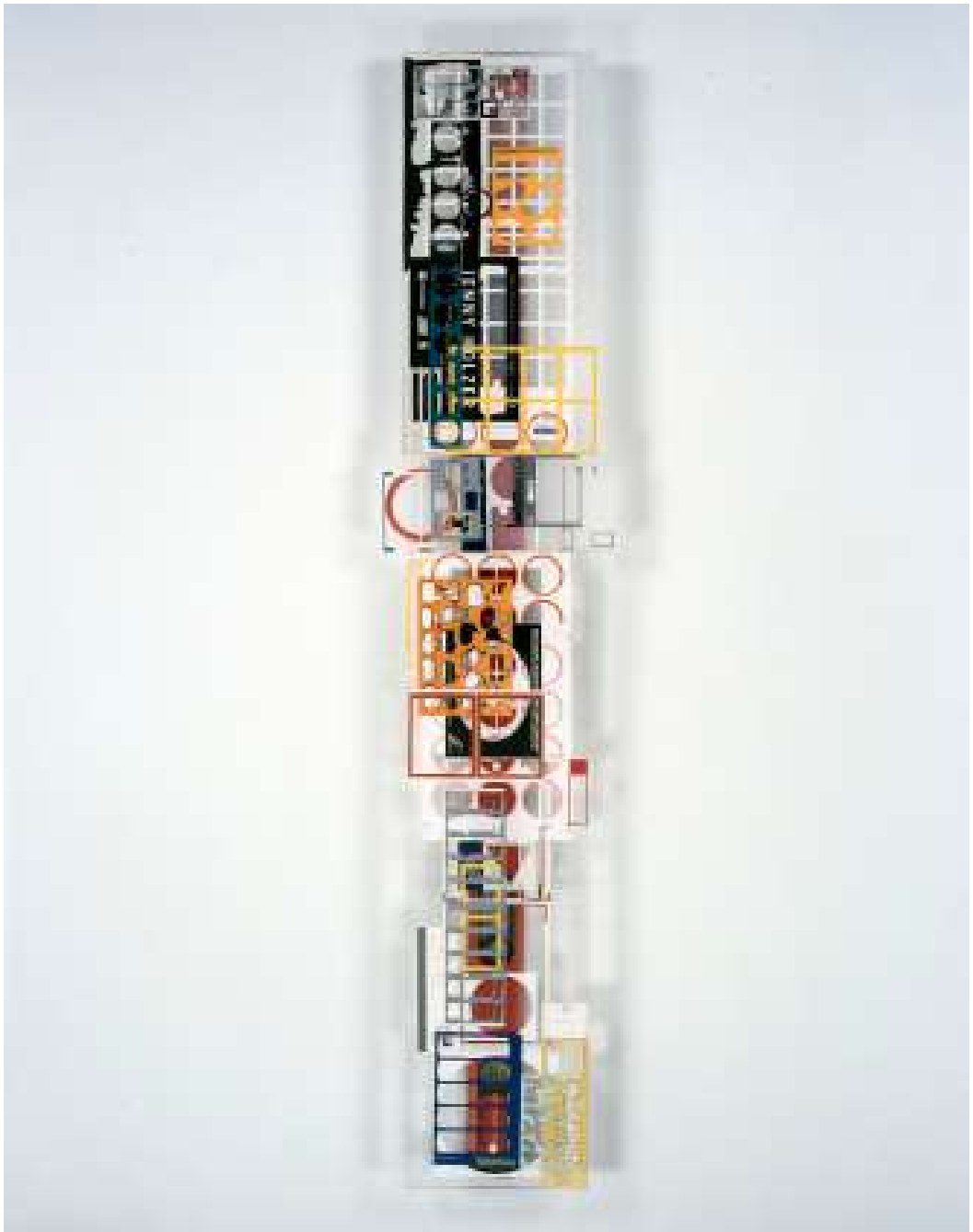
stickers

The Stickers [Adesivos] series, developed from the late 1990s onward, brings together labels, stamps, and stickers collected over decades from museums, galleries, airports, magazines, and packaging. Organized according to chromatic, graphic, and typological criteria, these materials are applied to translucent glass plates, which serve as supports for linear and modular constructions. Relationships of repetition, variation, and visual rhythm bring cataloguing procedures closer to questions associated with abstract painting.

Adesivo 18 (yellow), 2001
adhesive, construction level, acrylic
40 x 188.5 x 3.8 cm



Adesivo 9
(voo vezes dois), 2000
adhesives, glass and iron
87 x 134 x 18 cm



Adhesive 17 (Giacometti), 2001
adhesive and acrylic
124.5 x 25 x 3.8 cm



exhibition view *Jac Leirner*,
Estação Pinacoteca, 2011
São Paulo, Brazil

little light

In the *Little Light series*, begun in the 2000s, kilometers of copper wire run along walls and exhibition spaces in trajectories connecting small illuminated bulbs at different points throughout the environment. Using materials associated with electrical circuits, such as wires, connectors, outlets, and light bulbs, the artist transforms systems of energy conduction and transmission into spatial drawings. The cables extend through the space like continuous lines that guide the viewer's gaze toward the luminous instant in which the electrical current manifests itself, making the circulation of energy itself into sculptural matter.



Little Light, 2005
exhibition view
Museum of Contemporary art
(MOCA), Los Angeles, USA



Little Lights, 2005
view of the installation of 4 works
at the Esther Schipper gallery
photo © André Morin



According to Leirner, the work is her only piece with a metaphorical resonance, relating it to the idea of journey and illumination. “We travel along very long paths until we reach important places. We go through difficult periods before seeing some light at the end of the tunnel,” she says. At the same time, Leirner also states that the series is connected to minimalism, citing the field of color and the reduction of representation as central elements of the work.

Little Light 5, 2013
socket, copper wire, light bulb and screws
180 x 180 cm





hip hop

The work *Hip-Hop*, begun in 1997, emerged from adhesive tapes of different widths, origins, and tonalities. The artist constructs long horizontal lines that cross walls, doors, corners, and windows, creating a continuous field of color and visual rhythm.

Hip hop, 2001
installation with adhesive tapes
variable dimensions
Centro Universitário Maria Antônia,
São Paulo, 2001

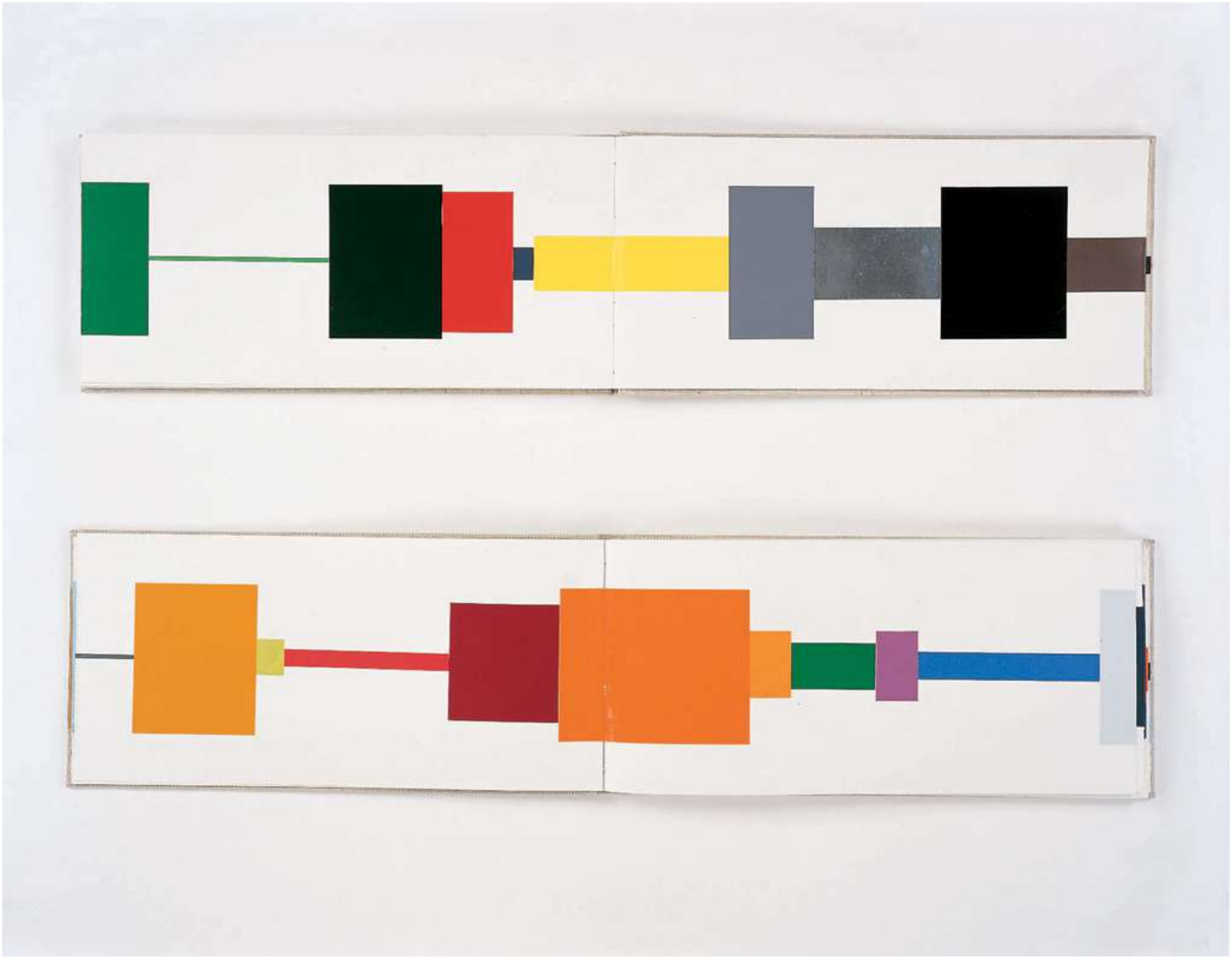
Venezuelan art critic Ariel Jiménez related *Hip-Hop* to Mondrian's painting *Broadway Boogie Woogie*, emphasizing the "cadence and rhythm" produced by variations in the color and width of the adhesive tapes. Elsewhere, the critic observes that the work does not seek a stable geometric order, but rather "a fortuitous, circumstantial order," resulting from differences in the width, texture, and tonality of the tapes used by Leirner.



exhibition view *Jac Leirner*,
Sala Mendoza, Caracas, 1998



Hip Hop, 1998/2025
adhesive tape on the wall
variable dimensions
Esther Schipper Gallery



Hip Hop book, 1999-2000
notebooks with adhesive tape
18,5 x 76 cm (open)
The Bohen Foundation Collection



weights and measures

Rulers, levels, and other tools appear at different moments throughout Jac Leirner's work as objects already imbued with a logic of calculation, alignment, and precision. By organizing them into sequences, lines, and suspended structures, the artist presents the systems of alignment, calculation, and proportion already inscribed in these objects, transforming measuring instruments into elements of pictorial and spatial construction.

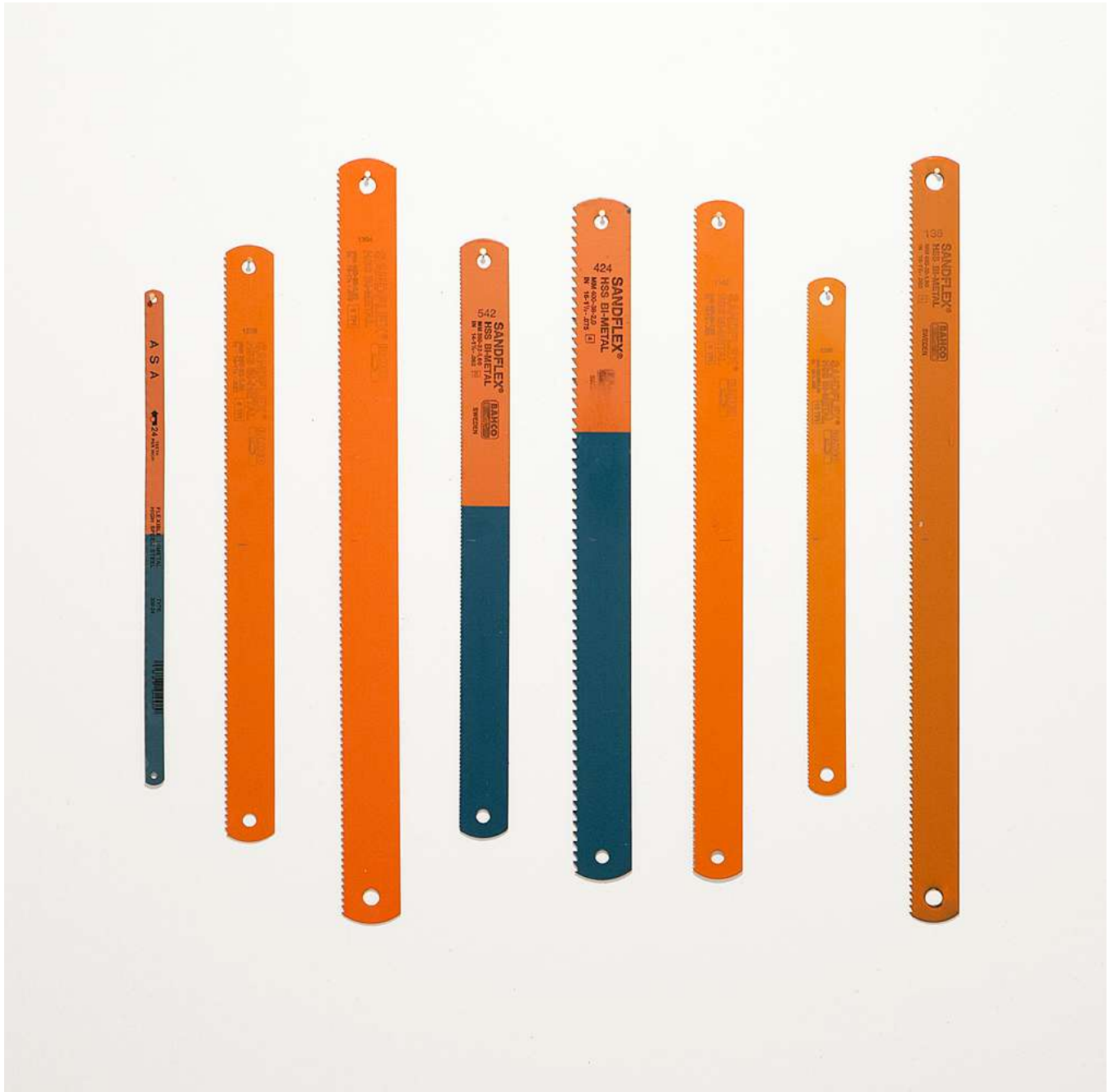
In the series, rulers and levels cease to serve the organization of the exhibition space and become the work itself. What ordinarily remains backstage during installation takes center stage, making visible the devices that structure the construction and perception of exhibition space.

Dezessete Réguas, 2020
plastic, metal and wood
photo: Edouard Fraipont



Verde rosa, 2020
33 plastic rulers
32 x 190,5 cm

→
detail of the work



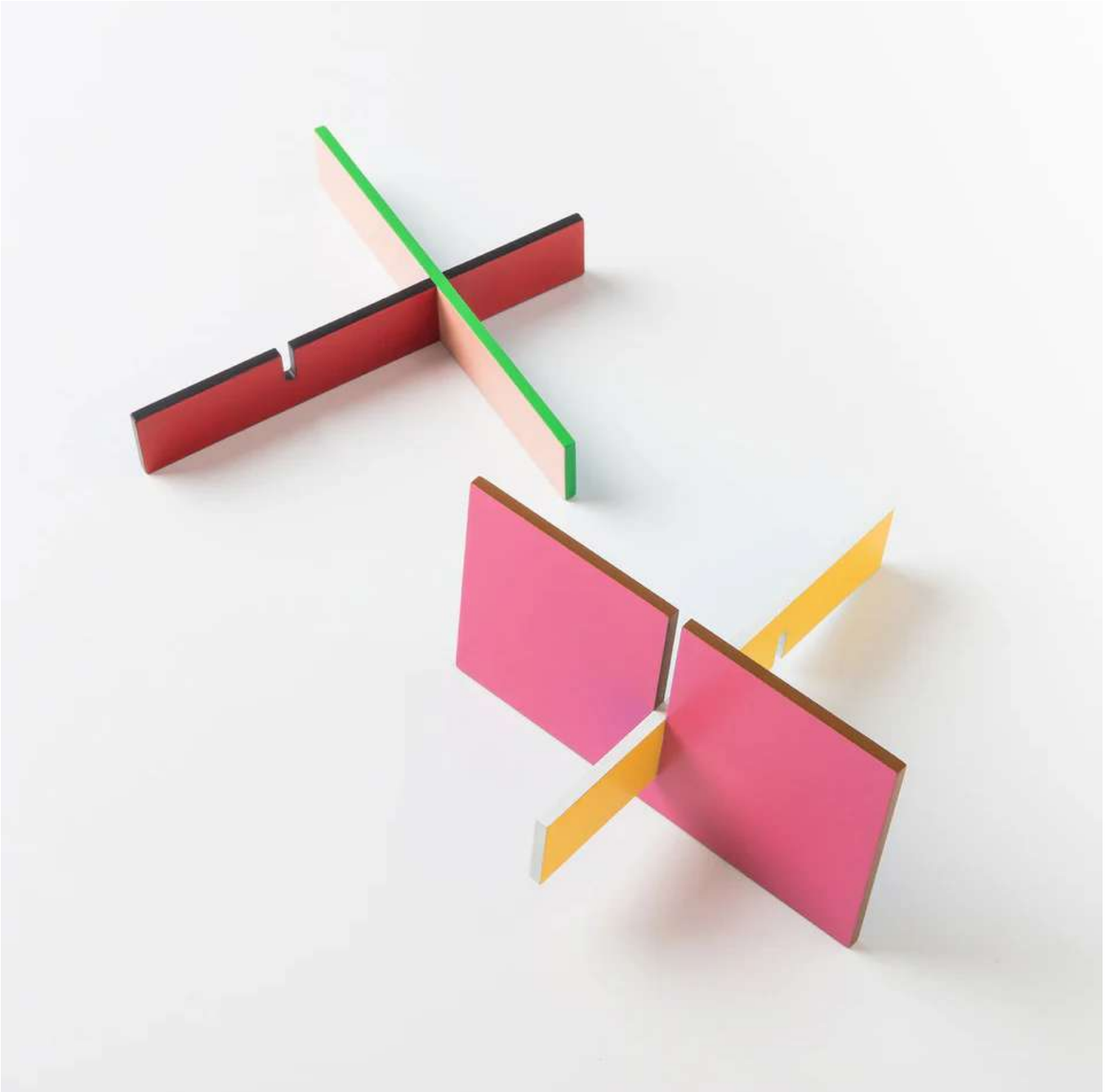
Richard, 2014
steel
48 x 51,5 cm



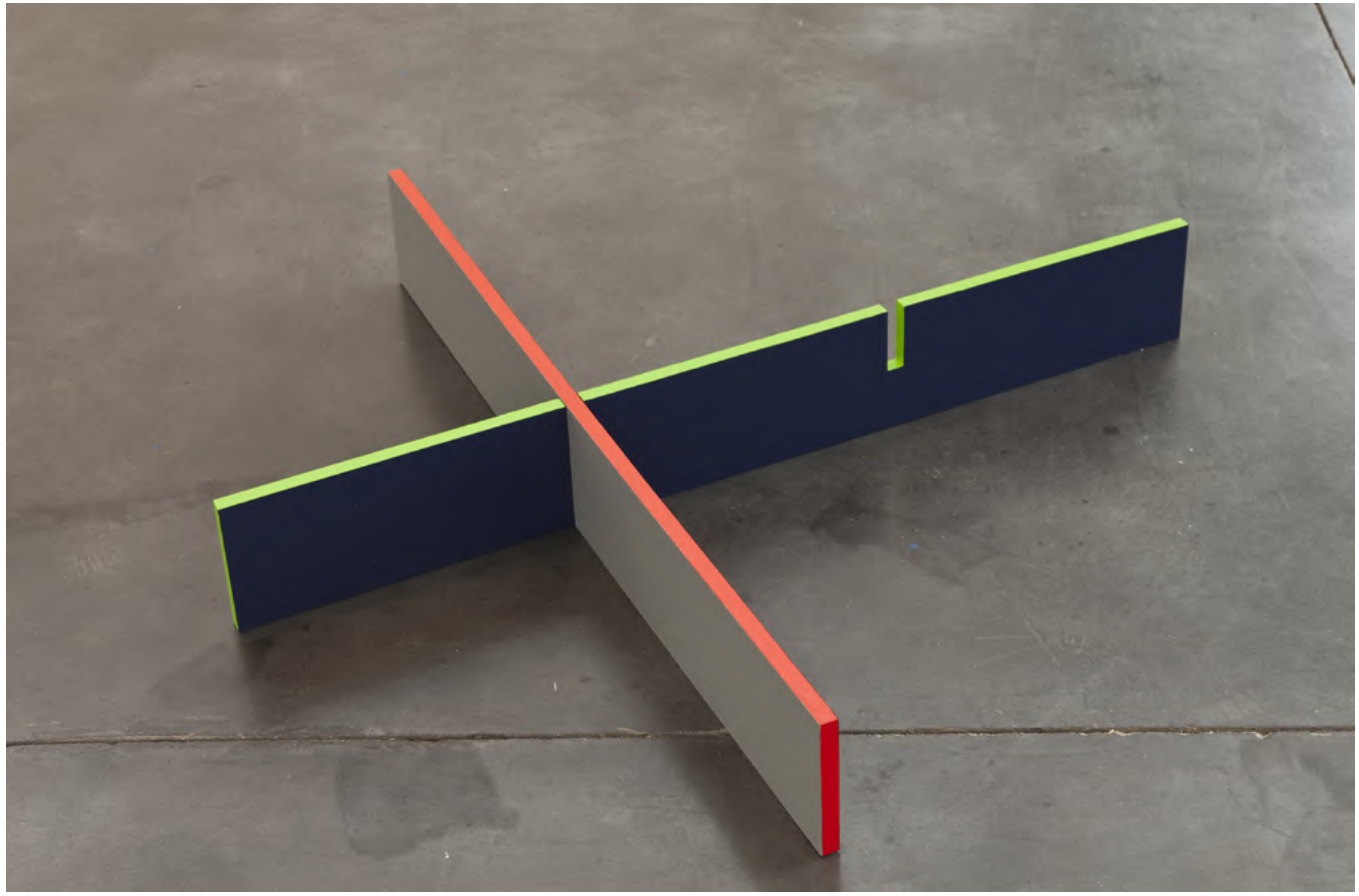
exhibition view
Sesc 24 de Maio,
São Paulo, Brazil

other forms

Although a large part of Jac Leirner's research is organized into ongoing series, individual works or less systematic groups reveal the breadth of her procedures and materials. Works such as *Quilômetro Amarrado* [Tied Kilometer], *Aquarela para Sandra* [Watercolor for Sandra], *Crossing Colors*, *Composição com Corrente* [Composition with Chain], *Hardware Silk*, and the various *Cartoons* articulate recurring interests in the artist's investigation, including repetition, the displacement of function, color, and circulation.



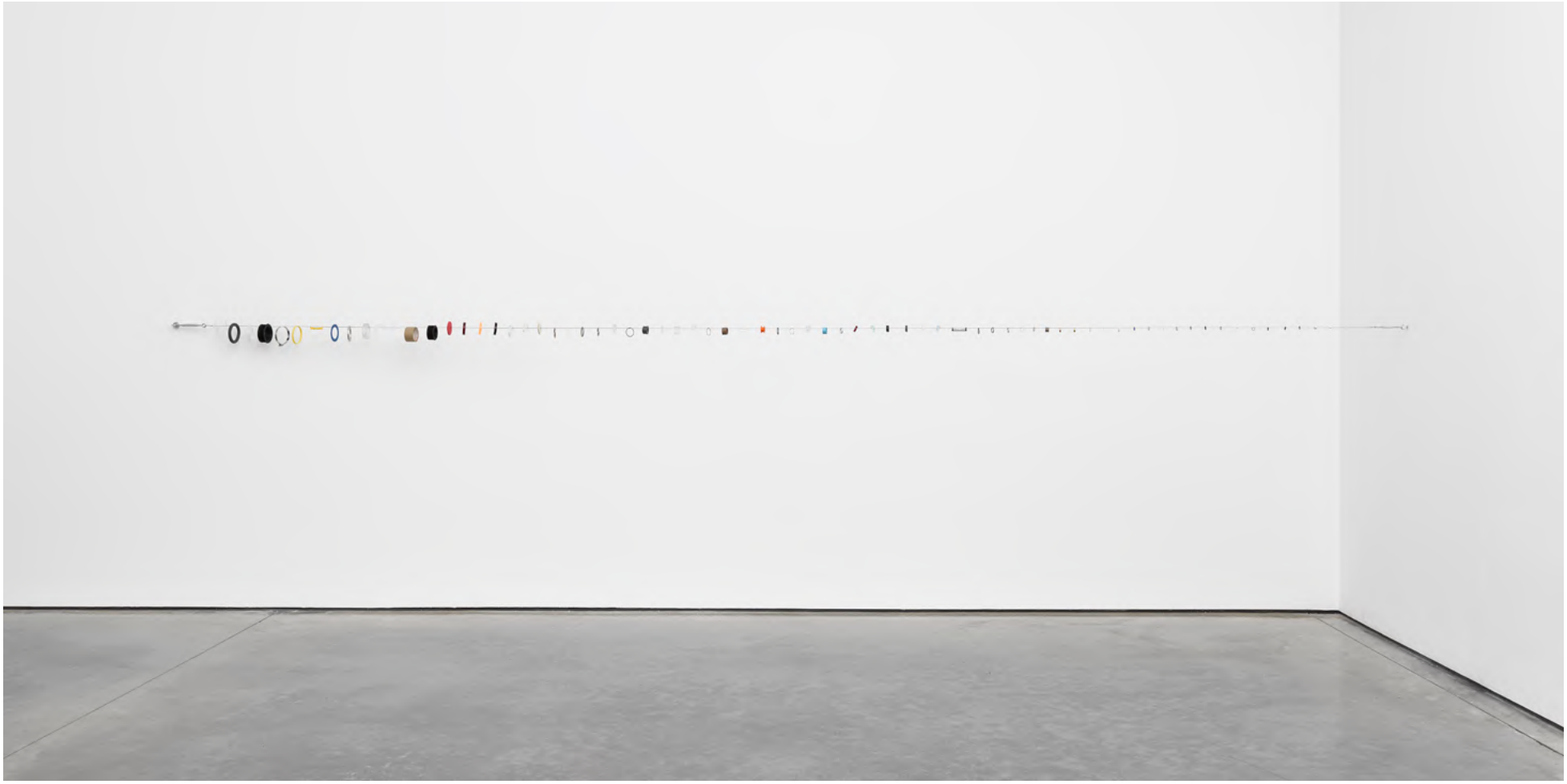
Crossing Colors, 2012
wood and paint



In *Crossing Colors*, color appears as a structure constructed through painting on wood in spatial intersections.
In works involving chains, cables, and metal contours, such as *Hardware Silk*, *Aquarela para Sandra*, and *Cartoons*, the line acquires a physical presence, tracing paths and tensions through space or around itself.

Crossing Colors, 2012
wood and paint

Exhibition #6, 1992
paper labels, cardstock
28 x 28 cm



Hardware Silk 4, 2013
mixed technique
7 x 700 cm



Aquarela para Sandra, 2014
wool and steel
two pieces
170 x 326 x 4 cm



Quilômetro amarrado, 2004
ribbons and cords
variable dimensions



Punk Ostentazione, 2019
ribbons



Ie Cartoon com cílios, 2012
metal
77 x 8 x 9 cm
photo: Eduardo Ortega



Cartoon 2, 2012
mixed technique
122 x 37 x 9
photo: Eduardo Ortega



Jac Leirner,
Em família, 2021
paper mounted on aluminum foil
2 parts of 135 x 40 cm and 134 x 38 cm



In other small-scale works, various materials take on anthropomorphic contours. Situated within reach of the hand, these figures seem to emerge from a playful impulse open to a wide range of interpretations.

Noiva, 2020
fabric, plastic and metal
15,5 x 47,5 x 68 cm

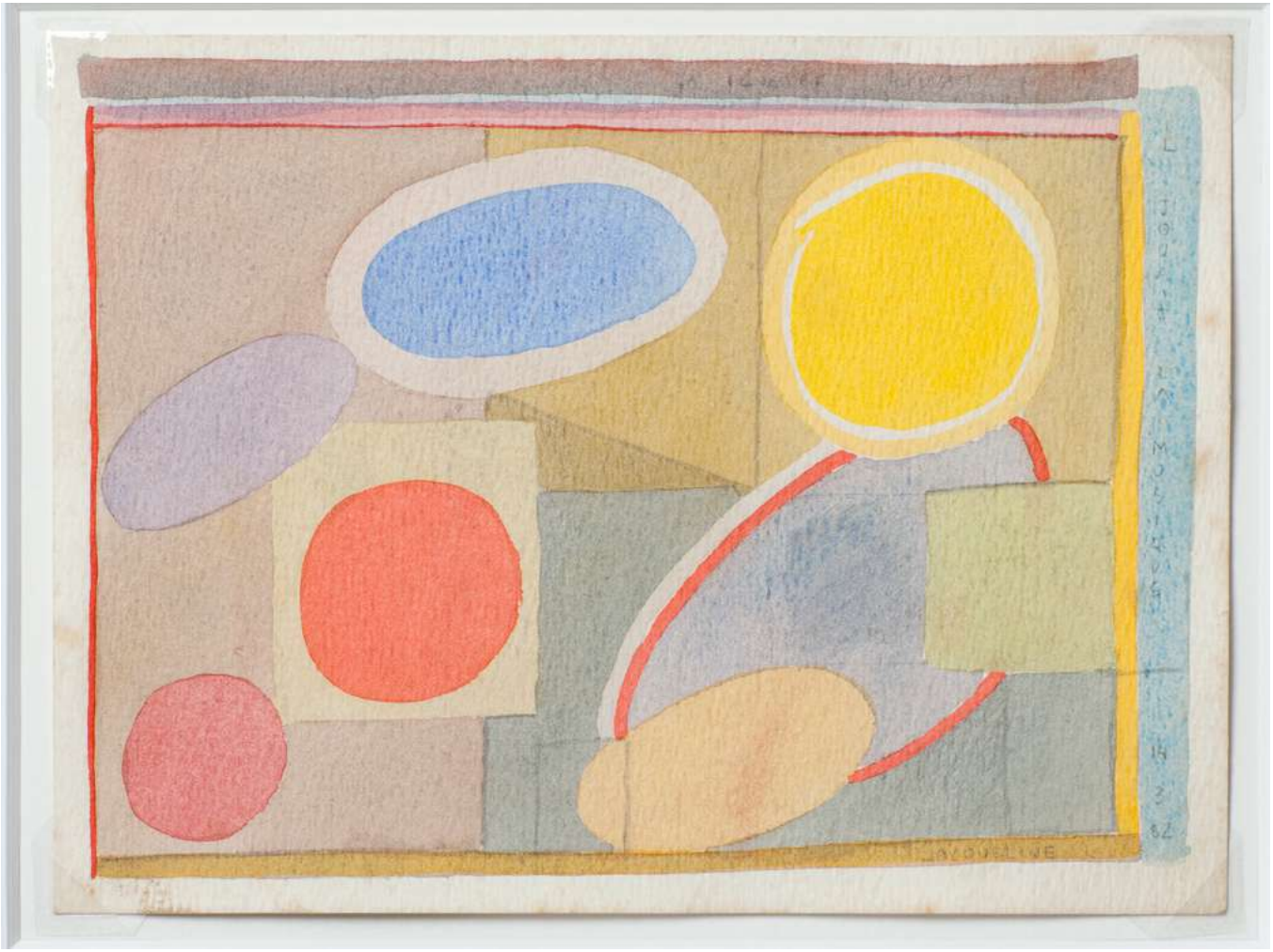


Robot, 2021
paper and glue
11,5 x 11,5 x 11 cm

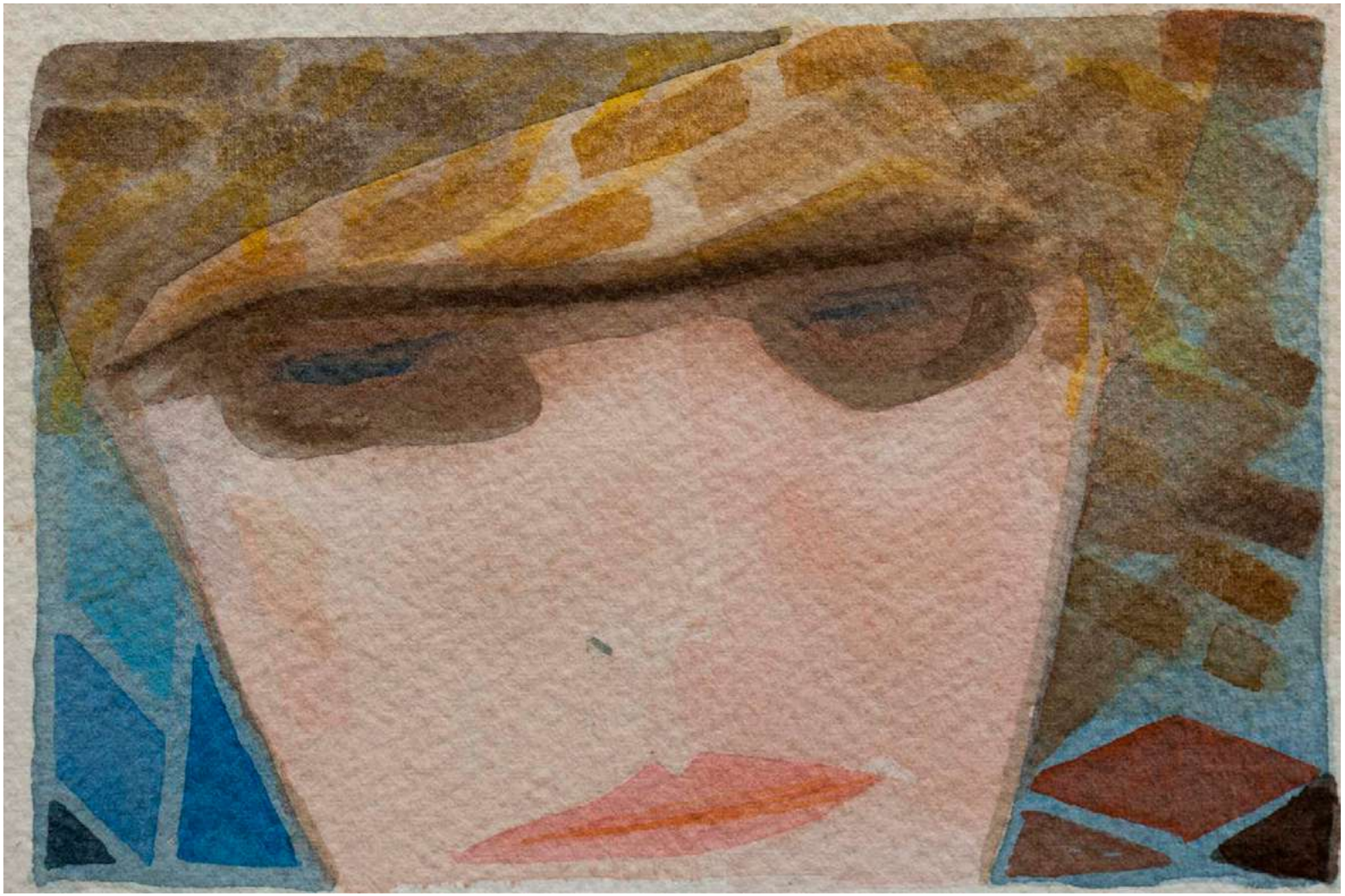


rrrrrrr (primitit ti), 2021
paper, plastic and aluminum
52 x 24 cm

In the watercolors developed since the 1970s, color emerges through chromatic and spatial operations that engage with questions developed in her sculptural works while also proposing a specific investigation into color. Through subtle gradients and forms that give structure to the unpredictable flow of watercolor, the artist explores tensions between control and chance, construction and fluidity.



Linkiamo, 1982
watercolor on paper
16 x 21.5 cm



Jac Leirner
Marcel, 2010
watercolor on cotton paper
10 x 15 cm

In the *Atletas* [Athletes] series, begun in the 1980s, the artist draws on the world of sports to create paintings, books, and sculptures. This is the case with the steel contours derived from photographs of athletes, as in Carmelo Anthony, Henrik Lundqvist, and Tonia Couch, in which the artist transforms images from printed newspapers into open silhouettes, where presence and absence come to coexist.



Jac Leirner,
Carmelo Anthony, 2012
metal, plastic and paper
198 x 65 cm



Tonia Couch, 2012
metal, plastic and paper
142 x 80 cm

Saturday March 24 2012 | THE TIMES

IN THE FRAME

Great Britain's divers have been continuing their build-up to the Games by taking part in the Fina World Series second leg in Beijing's Water Cube. Tonia Couch, above, was seventh in the women's ten-metre platform



Giant, 2024
plastic bag
17,5 x 12 x 13 cm



Jac Leirner
Esfinge ao Vento, 2023
acrylic paint and packaging
32,5 x 110 x 31 cm



Bloody Red Silk, 2023
aluminum and silk
one piece, 220 cm |
Installation height 180 cm



Buddha's eyes, 2016
Chinese calligraphy brushes
and steel chains
2 pieces of 53 x 158 (each) |
installation: 53 x 371 cm



exhibition view *Jac Leirner: Borders are drawn by hand*, 2016
Museum of Contemporary Arts of Shangai, Shangai, China



Dark line, light line, 2018
pens and steel cable
photo: Eduardo Ortega

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,
ipanema, 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 5038

info@nararoesler.art
www.nararoesler.art