



Tangents

***Abstract and Geometric Art
in Northeast Ohio***

November 2 -

December 16, 2023

Tangents: Abstract and Geometric Art in Northeast Ohio

November 2 - December 16

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Acknowledgements:

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The Artists Archives of the Western Reserve is a unique archival facility and regional museum that perserves representative bodies of work created by Ohio visual artists and, through ongoing research, exhibition and educational programs actively documents and promotes the heritage of the benifit of the public.



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Curatorial Statement



This exhibition aims to excite a deeper interest
in geometric art and abstraction in the area
and inspire more artists to open up
their studio practice.

The art in Tangents: Abstract and Geometric Art in Northeast Ohio is a collection of work created by a group of diverse and prolific artists. They encode abstraction as a part of their artistic language. This includes forays into: color, optical interplay, mathematics, space, surface, texture, process, and the built environment. These artists are further unified by the use of non-representational forms that are powerful yet pragmatic upholding traditions of abstract art in the region.

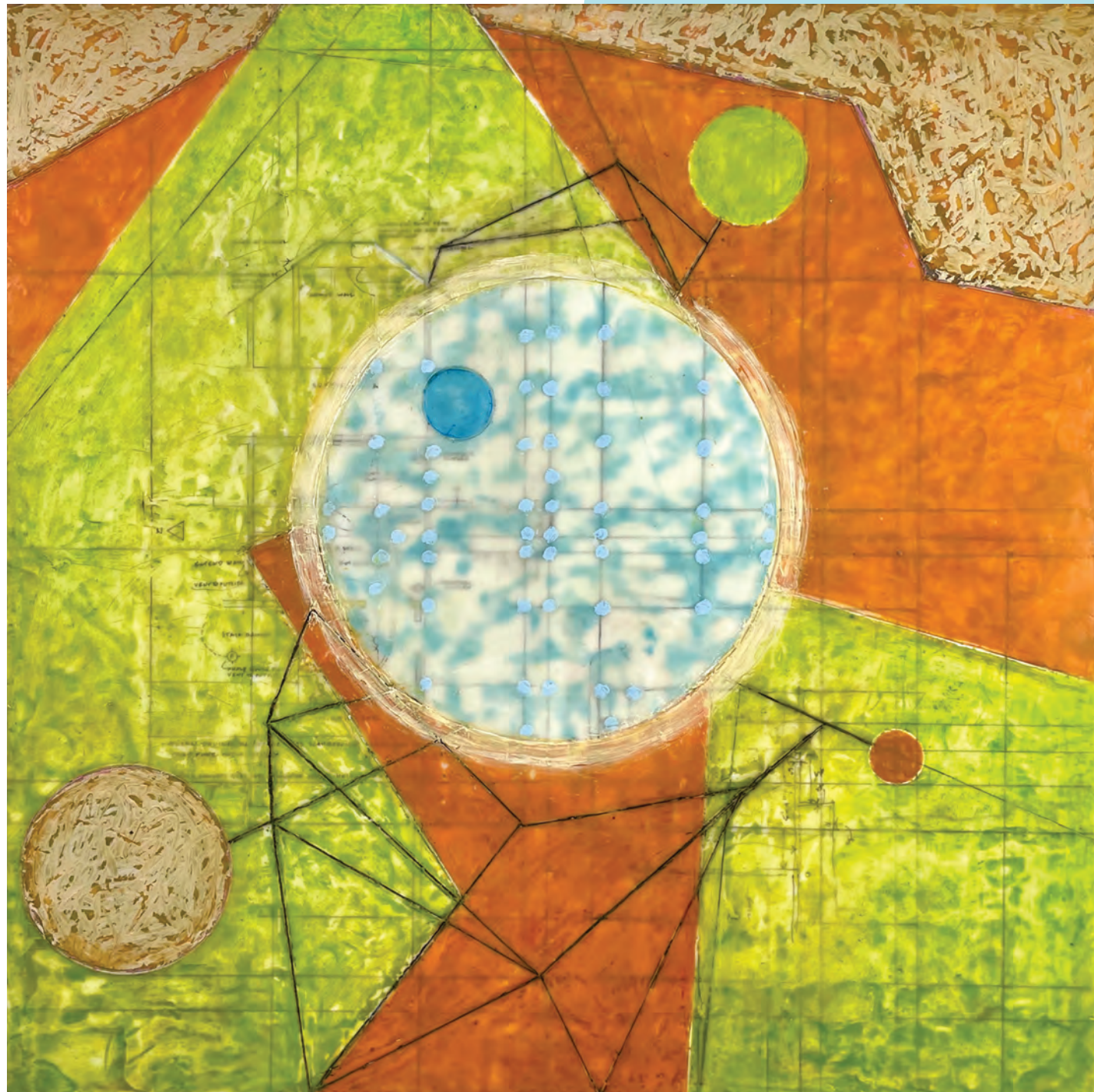
The idea for this exhibition grew out of a call to action. In the wake of the COVID 19 Pandemic most regional artworks appeared to explore literal pictorial space in painting and sculpture. Questions circulated about who in the area is making design dominant, non-representational work? Why is making abstract work still important? And how can the process of being an abstract artist lead to greater manifestations of perception? This exhibition aims to excite a deeper interest in geometric art and abstraction in the area and inspire more artists to open up their studio practice.

The nine artists in *Tangents* share many intersections but all explore their individual pursuits in geometry and abstraction. For example, **Susan Squires** explores the excavation and preservation of the surface under dense layers of encaustic wax. **Mark Keffer** uses a series of processes to add and subtract text, symbols, and references to circuitry. **Andrew Reach**, trained as an architect, uses various computer programs to explore geometry, rhombas combinations and mathematical constraints in both two and three dimensions. **Catherine Lentini** uses analog drawing techniques to arrive at the optical interplay in her geometric forms. **Gianna Commito** allows relationships between forms and layering techniques to

crystalize into new geometric spaces. **Ed Raffel** employs a sculptural approach with mirrors, optical interplay, and material intersecting various styles, tastes and perceptions. **David Louis Cintron** uses a more automatic, layered and traditional approach in his paintings to fragment forms and time. **Mark Howard** is inspired by the collage like aesthetic of arrangement in using various shapes, textures, and bold colors in his paintings. All of these artists are connected through abstraction but are divergent in their practice.

The process of making abstract art occupies a rare space. It combines ways of thinking and making that interact with the temporal; sometimes abstraction is minimal and simplified, sometimes optical, and sometimes part of a collaged or combined language. It slows down or abandons the use of literal shapes and forms, often including ad hoc arrangement and disparate elements to engage the viewer in a space where philosophical questions prevail. The work has the power to share the pictorial space of color and surface with sensoriality, metaphor, and resonance.

Jenniffer Omaitz



Susan Squires

cool spot/ summer studio

"The image developed as I responded to an architectural drawing of my studio, which can be seen underneath.

The black lines are incised in the wax and filled with oil stick. They connect areas of the underlying drawing , and play against the contrasting centered circle."

Susan Squires

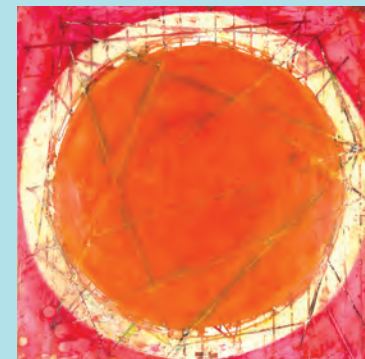
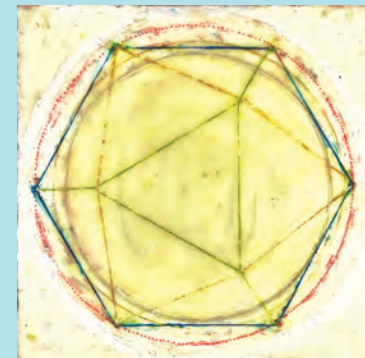
Image on right, *cool spot/summer studio*, encaustic/ oil stick on panel, 30" x 30", 2021.



Image on left, *sound of silence*, encaustic/ oil stick on wood, 24"round, 2023.

Below top, *becoming air*, encaustic/ oil stick on panel, 12" x 12", 2023.

Below bottom, *becoming fire*, encaustic/ oil stick on panel, 12" x 12", 2023

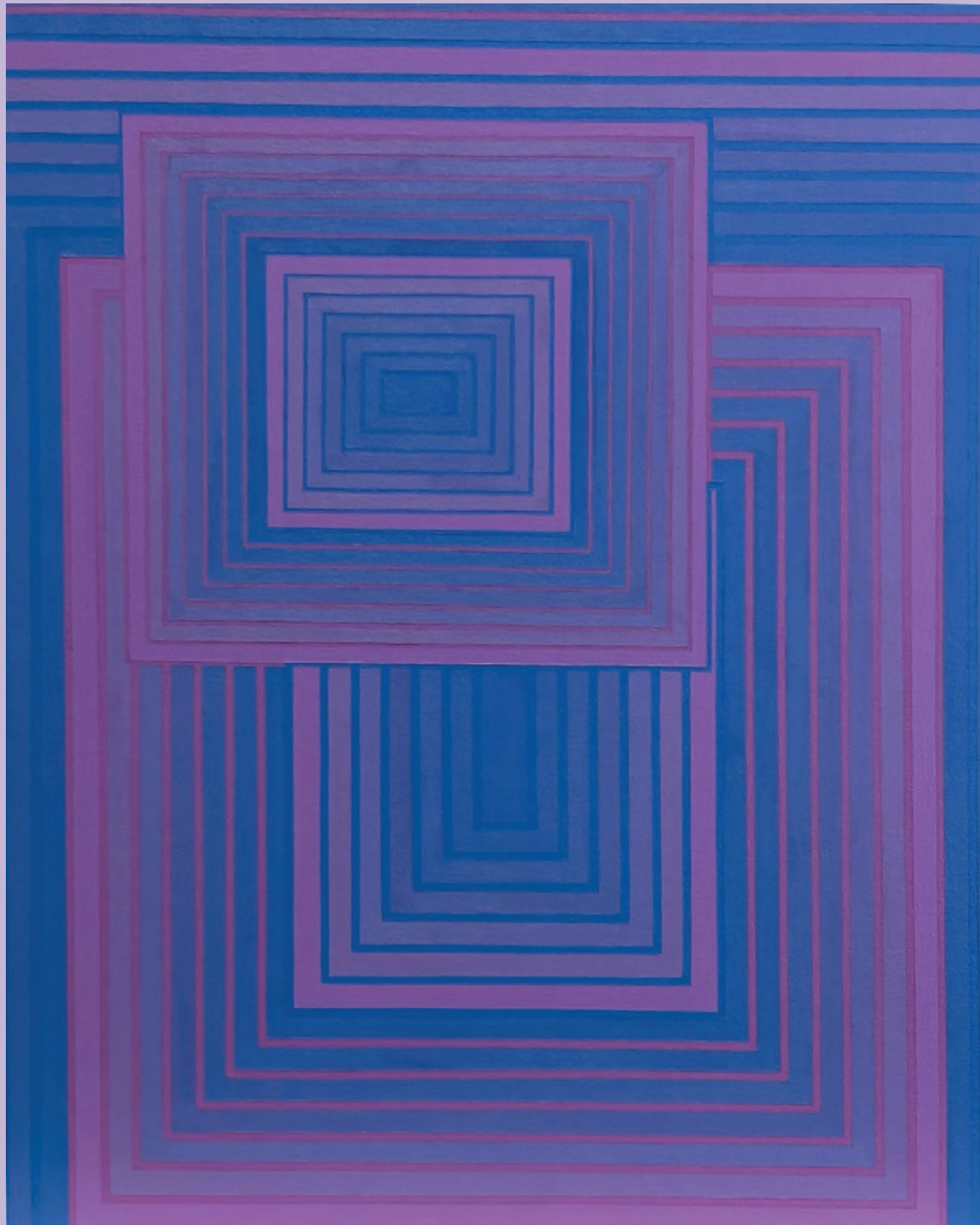


Encaustic is my chosen painting medium. It's history, seductive surfaces, transparency, and the resulting ability to layer and imbed, all precisely suit my goals. Believing that a sense of "the sacred" is missing in our contemporary world, I refer to ancient studies of Sacred Geometry in my work. Painting, for me, is always an elusive mystery, and always about color.

sound of silence

"In this piece I am working with the wood grain of the pine round and the rectangles of the wood strips which form it. I joined the rectangles with drawn and incised lines. I am interested in the space created."

Susan Squires



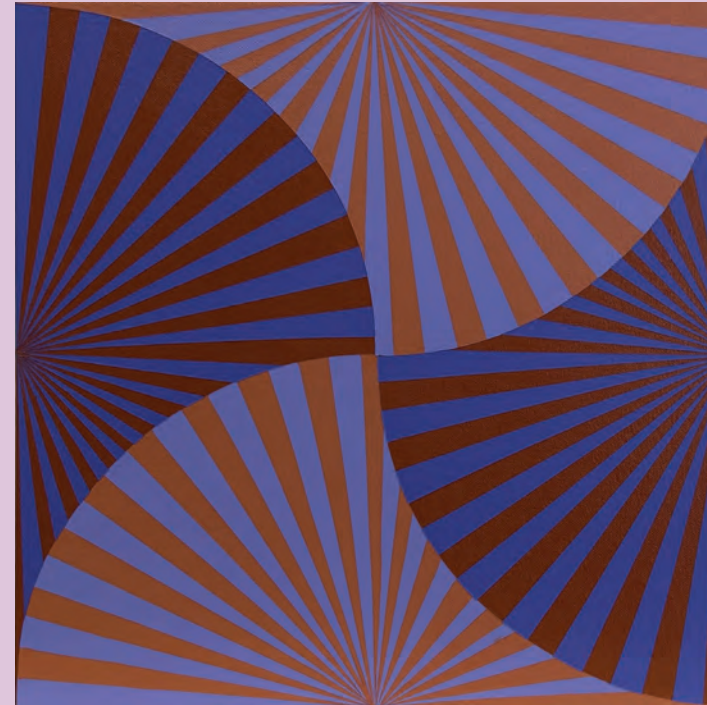
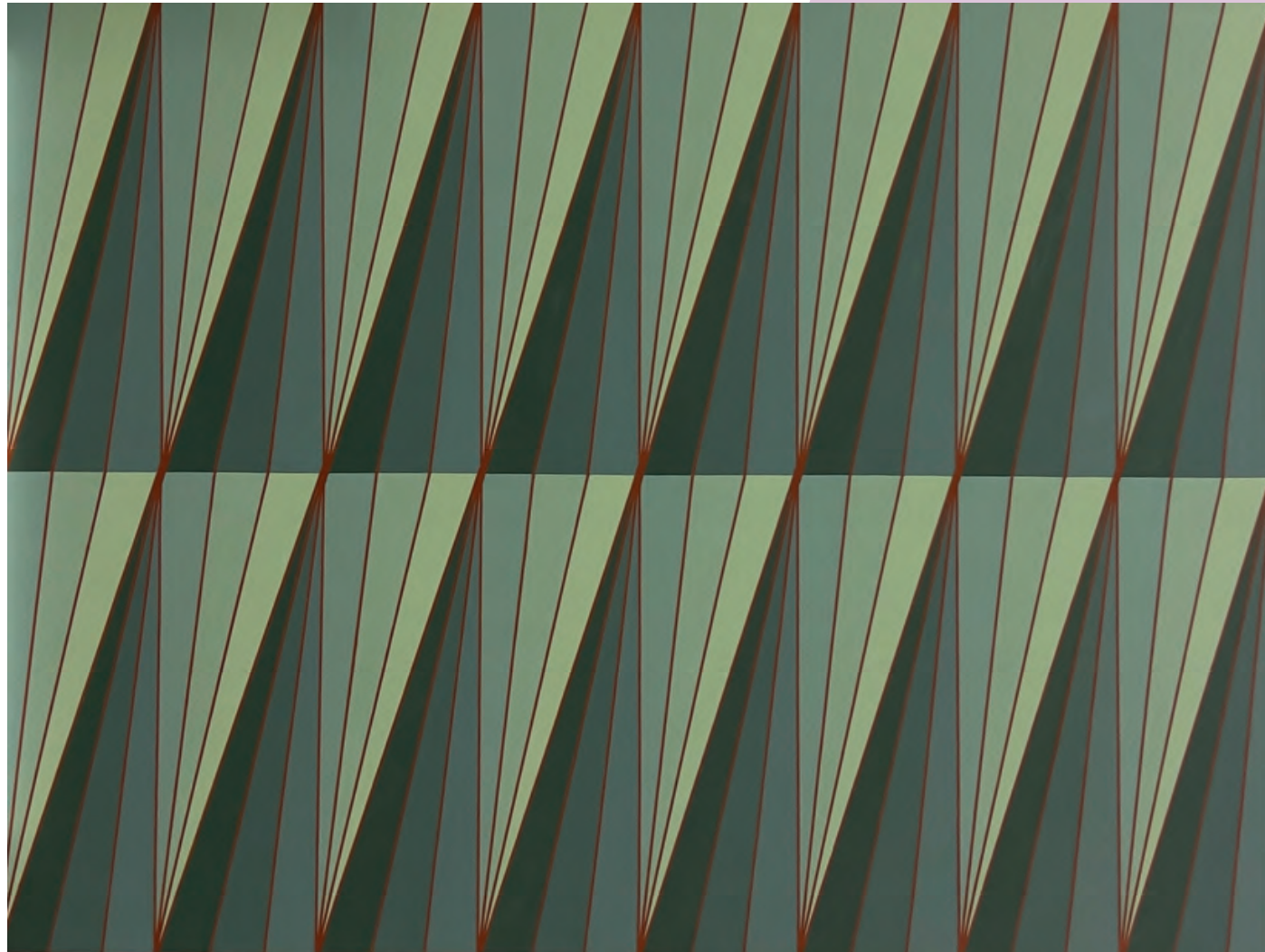
Left, *Untitled (Window)*, 2022
Acrylic on canvas
16x20"

Catherine Lentini

My approach to painting revolves around discrete projects, often conceptual in nature, that incorporate an open-ended balance of systematic thinking and a fascination with the experiential effects of color. I make paintings about painting, and I'm interested in painting as a way of thinking. Engaging with tropes of geometric abstraction and the elegance of pattern, and the imagery I use draws upon basic arithmetic and abstract reasoning to challenge and delight viewers' perceptions.

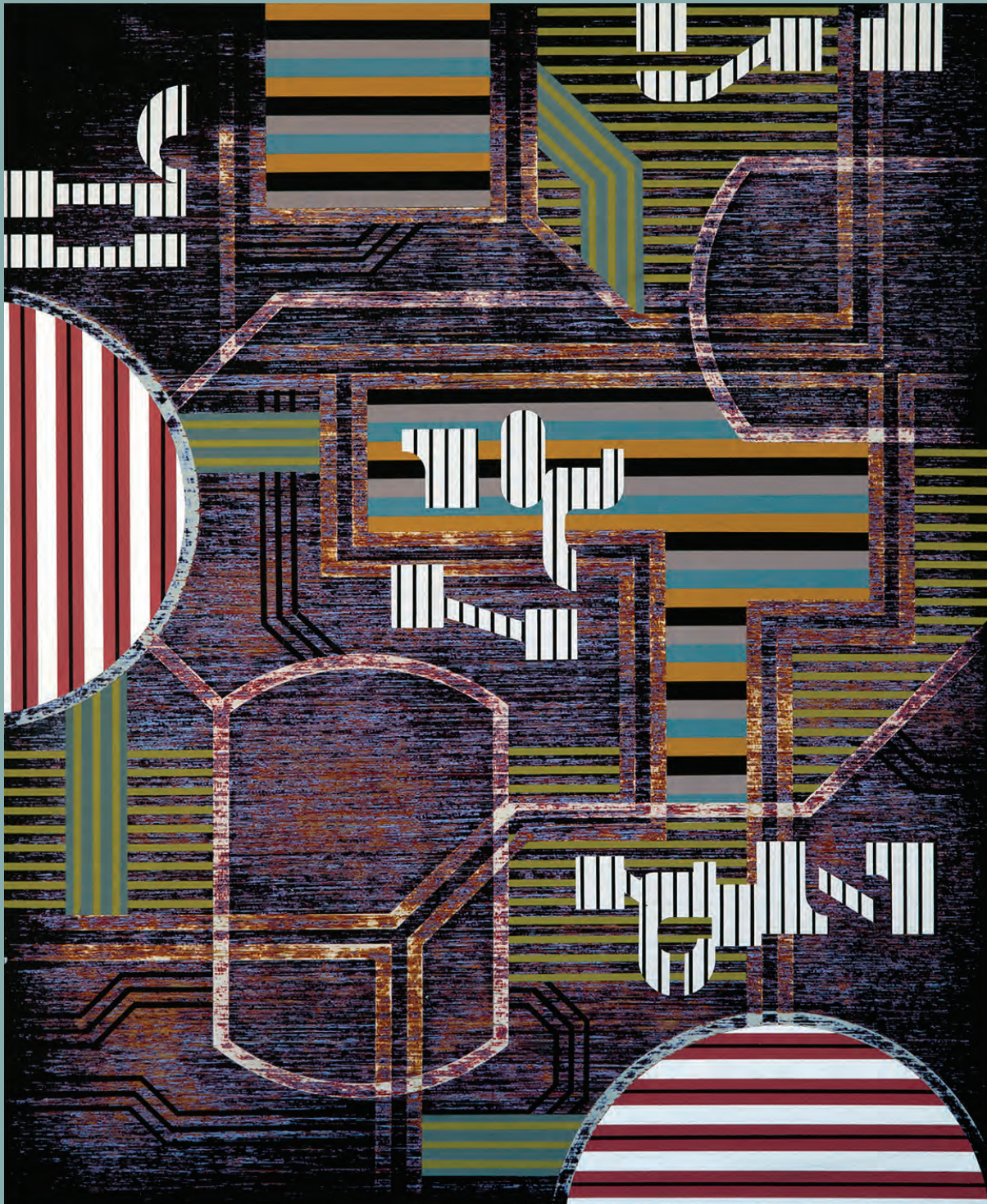
Below, *Untitled (Green)*, 2023
Acrylic on canvas, 37" x 48"

Right, *Untitled*, 2023
Acrylic on canvas, 14" x 14"



“The paintings included in *Tangents* are each part of their own series. Both are emblematic of the way color and pattern operate in my work. *Untitled (Window)* references the screen (computer, television, window) and invites comparisons between painterly space and digital space. *Untitled (Green)* is a tessellation of a pattern I painted on a smaller canvas of the same proportions, which raises questions about the space beyond the picture plane and representation through abstraction.”

Catherine Lentini

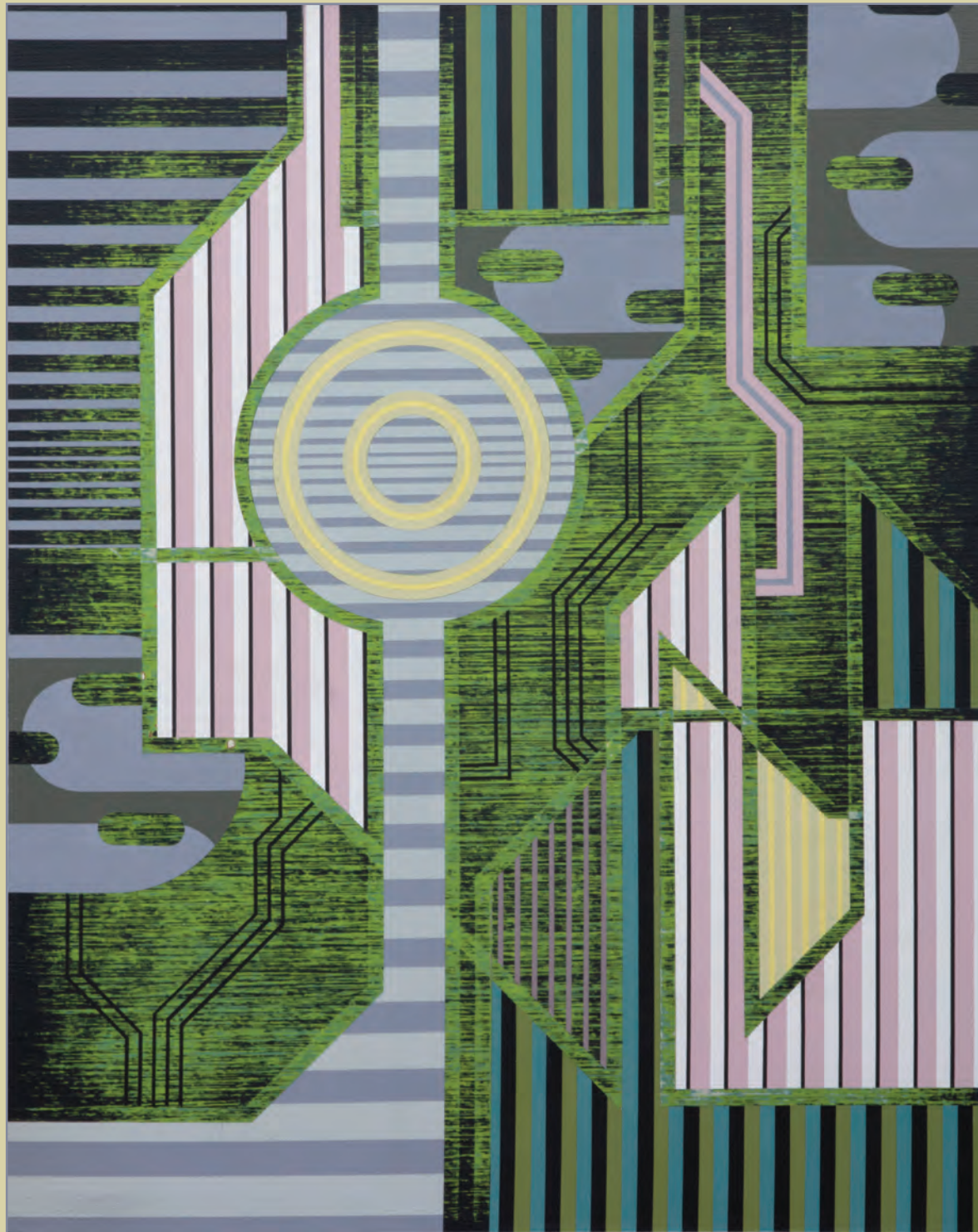


No Us 52 (glyphs)
2022, acrylic on paper
20 x 16" image size
(28 x 24 framed)

Mark Keffer

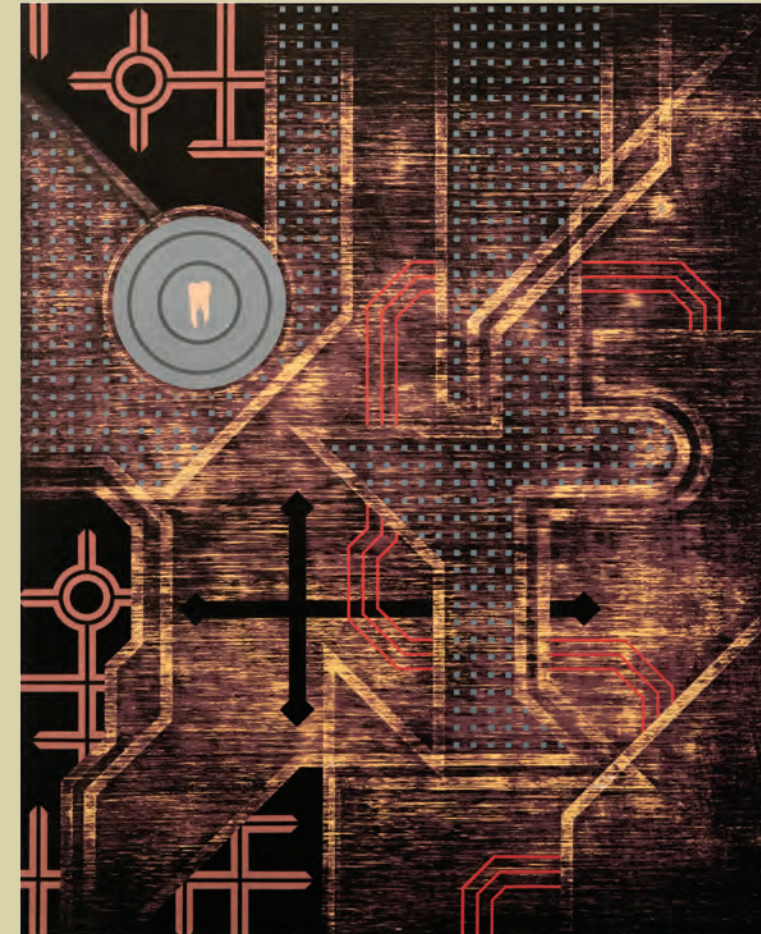
My paintings are an effort to reflect a state of uncertainty, one that is the natural product of the times in which we live, but also, one produced by the cognitive processes of perception and memory. These aspects of the mind are fragmentary and subjective and inspire the spatial ambiguity and other formal disruptions in my work. Attractive colors and patterns create semi-ironic moments of optimism in the midst of existential voids.

There are often references to circuitry, which are used primarily to symbolize information to which we have no access. I see ultimate truths as unknowable and hope to mirror our state of not knowing. On a poetic level, I hope my work evokes remnants of a future digital past. I embrace open-endedness and a degree of absurdity in my work, as they echo the world around us.



Left, *No Us 62 (semi-sequitur)*
 2023, acrylic on paper
 20 x 16" image size (28 x 24 framed)

Right, *No Us 51 (semi-sequitur)*
 2022, acrylic on paper
 20 x 16" image size (28 x 24 framed)



Gianna Commito

This body of work deals with illusionistic frames as a source of internally and/or externally applied pressure. All of the pieces have some kind of framing device that is either pushing out from the center or compressing in from the edge, or both. The concentric framing devices are always painted first, and then usually covered up while I start the planer, fractured, “body” of the painting. At a certain point I reveal the covered frame or interior structure and marry the two competing images. I want this to be an uneasy union. They are a loud couple. A certain amount of energy or anxiety between competing color systems or patterns is what keeps the work from becoming too friendly.

My paintings are made with casein, a milk protein--based paint, and traditional marble dust gesso ground on wood panel. I do not have a predetermined image in mind. I work intuitively, allowing dozen of layers to build and relationships between forms to crystalize into geometric, architecturally inspired spaces.



Untitled
casein on paper
15' X11" (unframed) 2017



Untitled
casein on paper
15' X 11'' (unframed) 2017

This idea of scaffolding, floor plans, or underpinnings is important to the visual stability of the work. Without some kind of structure the image falls into chaos. Despite how graphic they seem in photographs, my paintings and drawings are fairly grungy. I spend a lot of time touching my work. There is a haptic quality to how it is made. The repetitive act of pulling tape off the roll, pressing it to the painting, and pulling it away keeps my face about six inches from the surface at all times. I am hunched over the painting as it lays flat on the worktable and my elbows, hands, and coffee rest on its surface. This hands-on, sensory input is similar to what a weaver or potter must feel, completing the same motion over and over again. Unlike a factory worker on an assembly line, I am able to respond to the repeated motion and change the task to fit the visual need. This recent work shares a similar aesthetic weft and warp to the way textiles are made. I am weaving several images together, if only illusionistically. In this way, I'm again subverting the initial structure of the image by pushing it back and pulling it again to the surface.



Gale, 2021
Flashe, DayGlo and acrylic on
paper
54" x 44"

Natalie Lanese

I make abstract geometric paintings and installations inspired by landforms and rock formations that, combined with dizzying color contrasts, play with perception of shallow space. Relying on repetition, line, scale shifts, and collage techniques to push and pull the picture plane, the resulting image manipulates and challenges spatial expectations. I create rules as I go, making decisions that are spontaneous and slightly measured, allowing for mistakes and corrections. DayGlo colors, a signature of the palette, challenge adjacent colors and disrupt a comfortable place. After years working with hard-edged patterns, slick geometric painting has eroded into gestural mark-making and heavily layered textures. The marks are expressionistic, at times smooth and controlled, and sometimes demonstrating struggle and confrontation. The resulting punchy surfaces inhabit a frontal, shallow, optical space.

Collage serves as both a sculptural and conceptual expression. Repeating patterns and gestures call out the flatness of the picture plane, while collaged or painted elements push against it, creating a constant, inventive dialogue between illusions of depth and flatness. The paintings expand into the viewer's space, either perceptually or physically, and create a greater sensory experience beyond seeing.



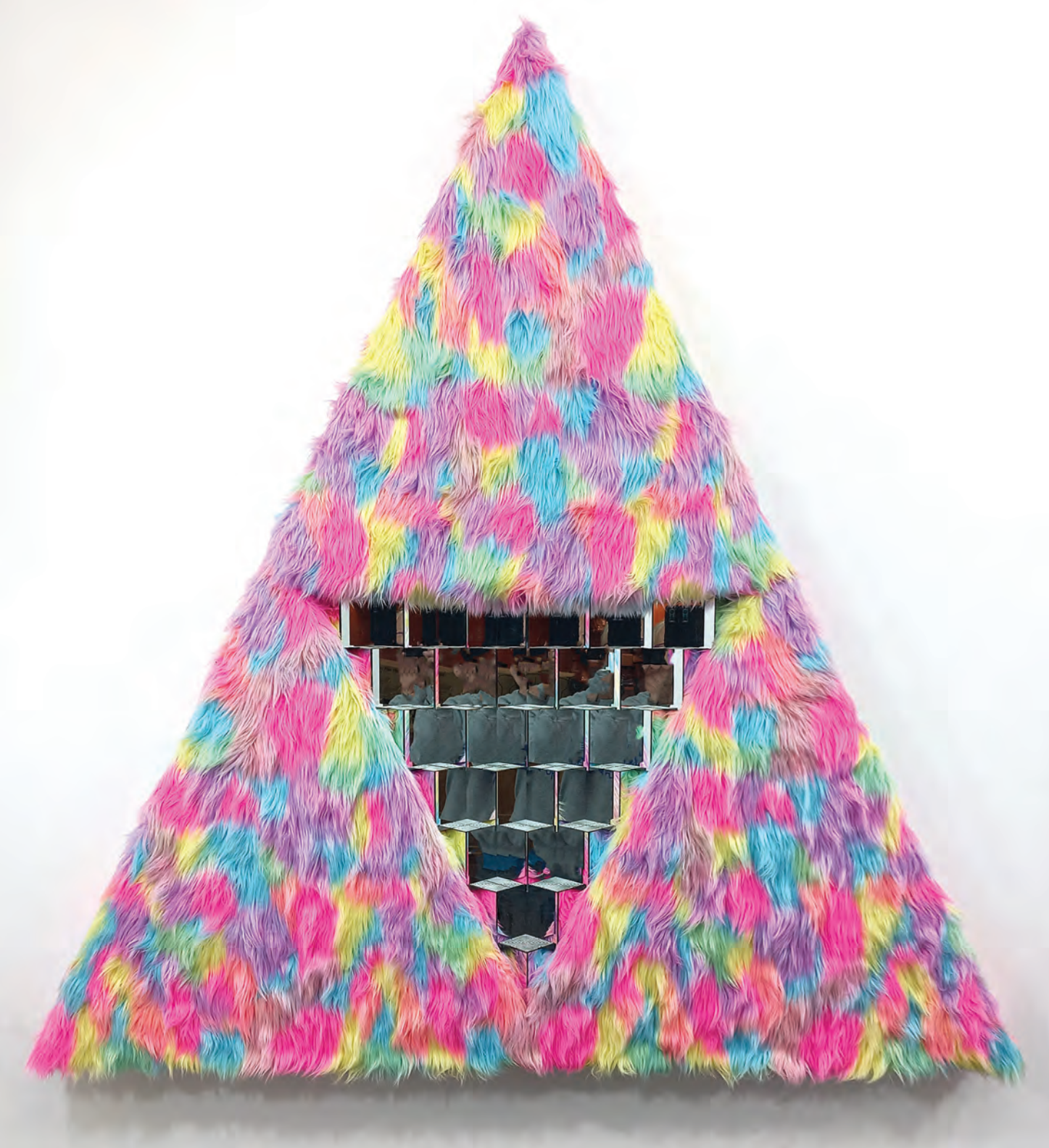
Memory Pile, 2022
Flashe, DayGlo and acrylic
on watercolor paper
30.25" x 23"

"Over the last few years, I've explored the potential of pattern and color to create a feeling of heaviness. During the first year of the pandemic, this exploration resulted in paintings of pile-ups of stripes that resemble mountains, piles, or boulders. These shapes make me think of weight, groundedness, solidness, and largeness. Densely painted and solid, they are frontal and at a larger scale, confronting. "Memory Pile" is an example of this work. Shaped like a boulder, but also resembling a pile of blankets, the form is confronting and comforting simultaneously.

In an all-over format, the patterns take on more movement, where repetition creates rhythm and colors move in rivers across the picture plane. "Gale" is a storm of lines and contrasts, pushing and pulling against the picture plane.

Both works explore a psychological space through abstracted landscapes and bright and moody color palettes, and serve as a record of uncertainty and longing during a strange time."

Natalie Lanese



Left, *Whatever Ever Happened to All the Fun in the World*, Plywood carcass, front surface mirrors, epoxy-coated line art, faux fur, 57" x 55" x 5", 2023.

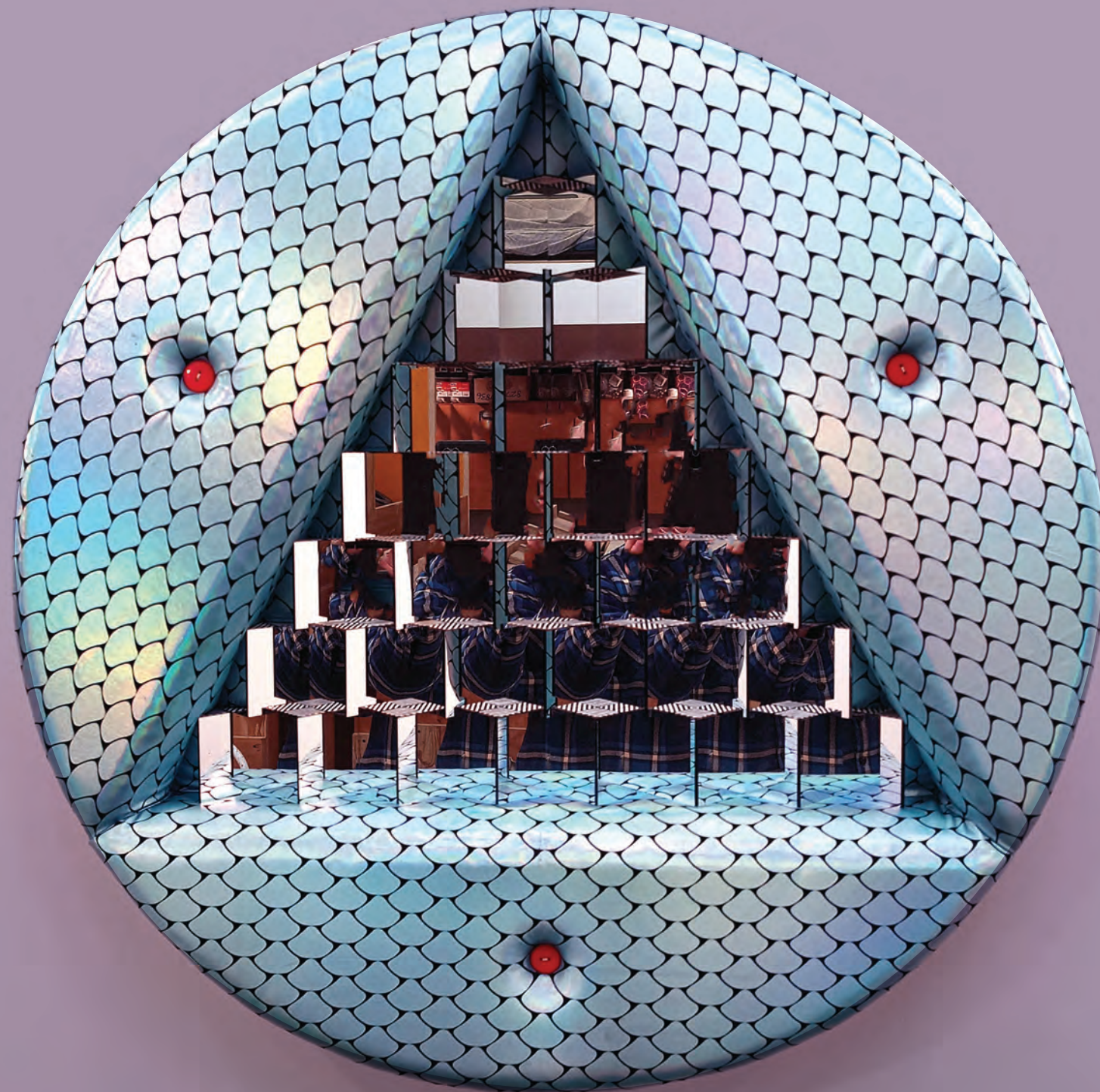
Ed Raffel

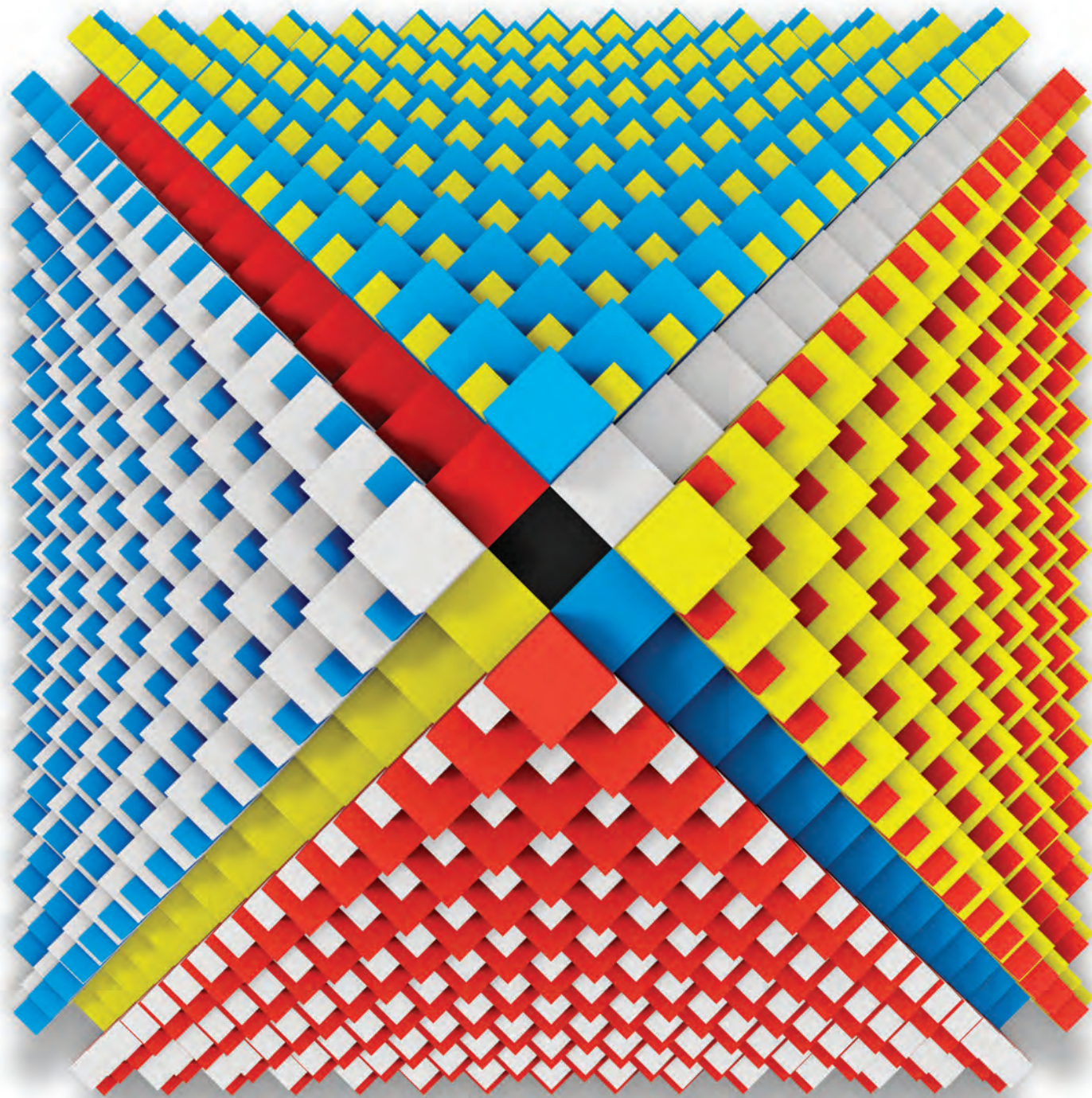
Art is entertainment. If I see art in a style I am familiar with, I am bored therefore NOT entertained. I am trying to entertain the viewer enough to penetrate their ever decreasing attention span with objects that move, reflect, and have lots of shiny stuff. I am not interested in making political statements, or venting my own personal grievances, or using the format to solve or salve my emotional problems. I am interested in material as stored information and the intersection of styles and tastes that have not previously been explored, using combinations of materials and techniques that are also new. I approach sculpture with the eye of a painter using shapes and forms as potential color (and occasionally texture) containers. The capturing and imitation of the natural world seems completely futile to me as it can never be as good as nature or reality itself, in addition to these pursuits already having been beaten to death and done far better by others. This leaves me free to explore the man-made world and the chiefly inorganic. I love the intersection of high kitsch with fine art, and there is no piece of junk in the world that cannot be elevated to the highest form. My found object assemblage work differs from the traditional thrift store esthetic in that I am using junk materials only as a starting point with high intervention (remanufacture, machining, color change, etc.) of a majority of the components, and substantial use of modern materials. I want the viewer to say to themselves “What the f*ck is that thing?”, that is the highest praise, and to illicit a response of laughter as well. Above all, I want to have fun making this stuff, and have my fascination with and curiosity for the material world reflected in the joy of the viewer.

Right: "It Always Comes Back to You,"
19" x 42" x 11", Welded steel frame on
linear motion tracks with dual chain
and sprocket drive system. K1 attach-
ments hold 51 non-reversing front
surface mirror pairs mounted on aluminum
carriers with color-multiplying panels.
The drive system is a DC gear motor
driven with variable speed and
reverse. 2023

Right Page: *Nautilus Triad*, 34", Plywood
and Wigglewood carcass, front surface
mirrors, polyacrylic coated line art,
polyester fabric. 2923

The idea for this piece occurred to me some 25 years ago and all the mirrors were purchased from a company in California, which were later used on everything EXCEPT this piece. This was the nidus for all of the mirror diad art I have done for the last 3 years finally culminating in this piece. These front surface mirror diads are rather miraculous in that they affect three optical illusions simultaneously. The mirrors reverse the image so that the viewer sees themselves in the correct L-R orientation, perhaps for the first time. Second, the diad captures the viewer within its 90-degree dispersion radius and inescapably follows any observer within its range. Adjacent observers will not see their neighbor but only themselves, as this operates as an observer-dependent reality. Thirdly the mirrors can multiply the adjacent color squares thrice resulting in the appearance of a complete square of color.





PYRALUX IV, 2023
UV inkjet on acrylic mounted to composite aluminum and cut out on cnc router.
Edition 1 of 3,
47.5" x 47.5"

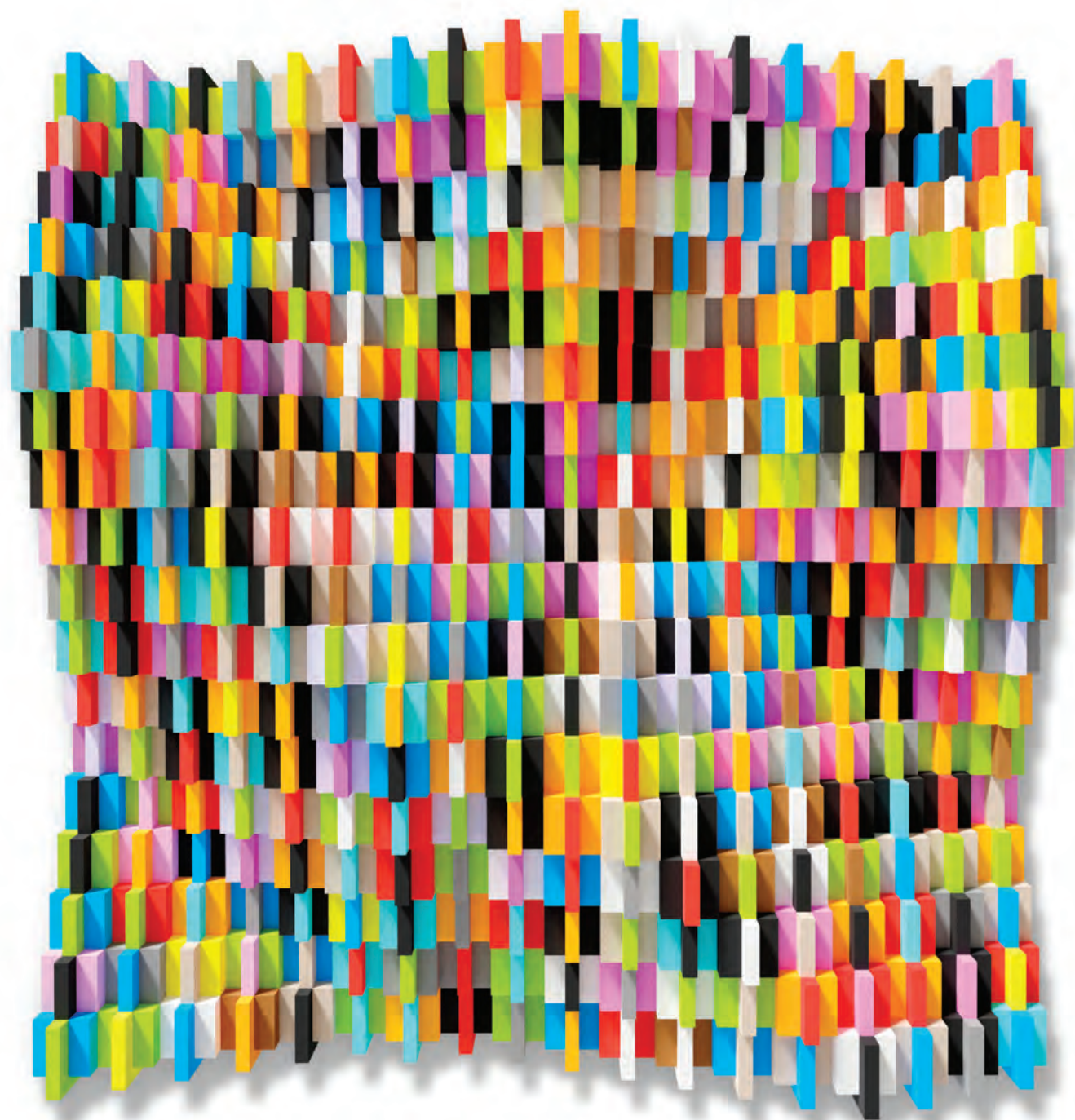
Andrew Reach

I was an architect first, having practiced for over 20 years when a progressive spine disease left me disabled and unable to continue practicing. I re-channeled my restless creative spirit as an artist working in the realm of digital media. Digital media is a blessing to me, an accessible alternative platform to me for creating art. I live with chronic debilitating pain. Each work of art I create is a techno-meditation of multiple aspects; technology, intellect and imagination. When these elements come together, I feel an indescribable sense of wellbeing. In my art making, I am lost in a place where pain does not live.

What I strive to express in my art is the opposite of pain; of triumph. I quest to reach optical joyfulness and impart this joy to the viewer. I like to think of my work being my alter egos; proxies for me to express joy, energy and movement. I may not be able to have unbridled energy and movement in my physical body but I can through artwork that speaks to freedom of spirit.

My vehicle to express this is through geometry and color. My connection with geometry started at a young age. The tropical colors and shapes around me in the physical environment resonated with me particularly the shapes of Art Deco buildings in Miami Beach where I grew up. It became clear to me by the time I was a teenager that my calling would be to become an architect where I could put geometry into practice.

And so it would come to pass that geometry and color would be my escape hatch in my artistic journey and in my recent work tapping into the architect that never left me, I have found that creating 3d structures provides me with further experiments in integrating color and geometry in new ways.



QUADRABAR I (perspective) 3D Derivative Series, 2023 UV inkjet on acrylic mounted to composite aluminum, cut out on cnc router. Edition of 3, 47.5" "x 45.5"

QUADRABAR is structure of a grid of cubes intersected by bars. The cubes and bars shift up in down, undulating in a wave like formation forming a kind of implied geographic terrain. I infused this structure with a choreographed mix of 14 colors of varying degrees of saturation and value plus black and white, making it come alive as an optical tapestry. For QUADRABAR I, The virtual camera's vantage point is directly overhead with a virtual sunlight source coming from the upper left casting shadows across the forms. Light not only illuminates color but also form, as the shadows cast reveal the shape and depths of all the parts. I would go on to do other renders (QUADRABAR II & III) looking at the structure from different vantage points making for entirely different visualizations, revealing that our perception of reality depends on our point of view.

This 3D derivative process continues to be a rich source of exploration for me in geometric abstraction as I reconnect with where I started as an architect.



Crushed
2017, 17"x17"
Acrylic on canvas

David Louis Cintron

My current artistic practice functions as a grounding meditation. My intent is simply to create automatically, in the present moment, to express who I am.

The work begins without a preconceived idea or plan; I show up and start. Compositions—depicting images emergent from the unconscious mind—are exploration and discovery of form and formlessness, negative space and imagined structures, suspended worlds and symbolic gateways. There is an intuitive dialogue with the materials and the painting—a constant back and forth process between automatism, creating without conscious thought, and a stepping back to make more considered decisions with color, composition, pattern, shape, space, and dimension. Heavily inspired by all nature and life around us, I will occasionally notice recognizable forms in the developing work, and may play with them just enough to encourage formation while allowing identification to remain elusive.

There's also a very important temporal aspect to my process. Though I proceed with work daily, I find it important to recognize when to leave; when I no longer have answers. The intervals between the studio sessions will always provide solutions until they don't. Once there are no more questions asked, no more lines or forms, tangential relations shouting for resolution, I know the painting has found its proper place; transcending the picture plane and living in its own space.



Steps along the Way, 2023
Acrylic on canvas, 17"x17".

Left, *Regeneration*, 2023
Acrylic on canvas, 24"x24".



**Meditations on the paintings *Regeneration*
and *Steps Along the Way***

"A place of tepid water and refuge. Boney white highlight and tunneled flora interior, ever slowly shifting with a calm glow."

'A confluence of paths. Visualizing a budding tapestry of minor miracles.'

David Louis Cintron



Untitled, 2020, Collage on paper, 8" x 7.5".

Mark Howard

Mark Howard's recent works are derived from contemporary paper cutouts he has been working with for the past five years. This technique, inspired at a transitional point in his artistic career by a folded paper snowflake, has served as fertile ground for his expression and growth.

Howard's works begin as small sketches, which he then transfers to paper, folds, and cuts. When unfolded, intricate compositions of rhythmic repeated patterns are revealed. His deft use of line, positive and negative space, and the expressive qualities of his renderings are dramatically intensified through the repetitive patterns created.

Howard is known for the range of subject matter he approaches in his work. Much of the personal, social and cultural imagery he develops is gleaned from life in his Cleveland neighborhood. In his creative hands, what he sees and finds --- including scraps of newspaper, letters and photographs, become the impetus for his compelling compositions.

Howard's paper cutouts, complete works of art themselves, also serve the artist as drawings for his other works. These include large scale paintings where the cutout imagery has been expanded and energized with the artist's instinctive use of dramatic color. In many works, repetition, shape and pattern have been dominant forces in these compositions. In other smaller paintings, the artist has isolated segments of these cutouts to focus our attention on them. In all these works, the negative shapes are critical elements of the artist's work.



Left, *Untitled*, 2020, Collage
on paper, 8.5" x 5.25"



Above, *Untitled*, 2020, Collage
on paper, 7.25" x 6"

"These three collages completed a few years ago, were the result of a long journey towards abstraction. Previously my work was figurative, translated via papercut cutouts. That practice served me well for over 30 years. I increasingly became more excited about the negative spaces rather than the positive (figural) ones. We move forward and hopefully, the art follows suit. Figurative work implies narrative, intentional or not. To be rid of narrative I had to free myself of reference which led me to abstraction. Hesitant at first, confidence soon followed. The spontaneity and freedom to explore and react more than made up for the loss. The progression of a body of work is narrative enough for me. I really do not need my work to be a metaphor for something else. My passions are color, shape and texture. For now that will suffice."

Mark Howard

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