

A black and white portrait of an older man with a mustache, looking directly at the camera. He is wearing a dark, textured sweater over a black t-shirt. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a window or a bright outdoor area.

**MONAGHAN
AT 70**

Gormleys.

"My work is the result of a disciplined research into the experience of looking – the experience of pure visual sensation and aesthetic pleasure."







PETER MONAGHAN

MONAGHAN AT 70

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ESSAY BY DENISE FERRAN

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Peter Monaghan b. 1955, grew up in Walkinstown, Dublin in the 60's and he can clearly recall his first artistic influences; children's classes at the National Gallery during the Christmas holidays, initiated by the Director James White, art classes in a Dawson Street studio run by artist Palm Skerritt and the ROSC Exhibition at the RDS in 1967, brought to by his father. The architect Michael Scott, in his introduction to the 1967 catalogue, as Chairman of the Committee, wrote that ROSC meaning '*poetry of vision*' had '*three art experts of the highest international repute*' delegated '*to choose 50 painters of the international scene, and from these to select from 2 to 5 paintings executed in the last four years*'. The committee decided to create '*a contrast of the modern paintings with some of the great objects of our ancient culture*'. (1)

The ancient Celtic art was shown in the National Museum of Ireland, and the modern art was shown in the RDS in a breathtaking display of works suspended from the ceiling, the scale, the diversity, and the colour were mind-blowing. To me, it was unforgettable so I can only imagine how it must have affected a 12-year-old boy. Peter Monaghan recalled to Niall Mac Monagle of the Irish Independent in August 2021, '*I still remember Günther Uecker's 'nails' painting and I always had a strong visual awareness and loved to deconstruct and examine objects closely.*' (2) His early interest

in drawing was apparent and nurtured by his family. ROSC was a bold, enlightened undertaking, spearheaded by a group of art-interested, influential people who planned to have a ROSC exhibition every four years, an ambition which resulted in five ROSC exhibitions, 1967, 1971, 1977, 1984 and 1988.

In addition to Günther Uecker, German, b. 1930, who exhibited three works in the 1967 ROSC, one of which was "Lichtsteiner" 1966, a pattern of nails on an oval-shaped wooden base, there were other artists whom Monaghan credits as early influencers. Victor Vasarely, Hungarian, 1906-1997, whose early studies and learned principles at the Budapest Bauhaus endured through his life's work. He exhibited three works, one of which, "Goyo" 1965, created movement with circles in varying tones. He is regarded as an artist wedded to pure abstraction who discarded any element of figuration to pursue a "*new city - geometrical, sunny and full of colours*" in which art will be '*kinetic, multi-dimensional and communal. Abstract, of course, and closer to the sciences.*' (3) These aims are reflected in many of Monaghan's paintings. He states that his work is influenced by Vasarely, Soto, and Bridget Riley, who are artists belonging to the 'Op' and Kinetic movements of the 1960's and his appreciation of Picasso and Miró for their humorous, mercurial twists.

Jésus-Raphael Soto, Venezuelan, 1923-2005, a pioneer of Op art was represented in ROSC'67 with two works, one "Double Noir – Equilibre Dynamique", 1967, painted wood with strips of very thin metal adhered to the bottom third of the work which moved with the slightest air current created by a passerby. Although Picasso, 1881-1973 was Spanish, as was Joan Miró, 1893-1983, they, like Soto and Vasarely, all made Paris their cultural centre at this time. Picasso, in ROSC 1967, was represented with two works, one of which, "Grand Profil" 1963, showed the cubist treatment of multiple facets of the woman's head, eyes and profile. Joan Miró was represented by three works, and his "Femmes et oiseaux" captures the freedom of line and the use of colour in a childlike freedom, ignoring boundaries. It was due to ROSC that the young Peter Monaghan was able to see the current movements in 20th Century Modern Abstract painting in his own city, Dublin, leapfrogging centuries of art history studies.

The support for the arts, in a relatively prosperous Dublin, was thriving and the Hendrick's Gallery in Dublin displayed a Kinetic exhibition in 1966 and an Op exhibition in 1967 in association with the Denise Renée Gallery, Paris, exhibiting among others, Soto, Vasarely and Le Parc. The businessman Gordon Lambert purchased works by Soto and Vasarely which are now in IMMA to be enjoyed and appreciated by future generations. Peter Monaghan visited these Hendrick's exhibitions, and the influences are present in the pervading artistic atmosphere. Monaghan regards himself as *'an Irish contemporary artist'* (4) and his sculptural works show the influences from the Op and Kinetic artists of the late 1960's. Le Parc was included in ROSC'71 with three works, in different

media, aluminium and plastic, plexiglas and oil on canvas. His 'Relief soumis aux contingence de la lumière', 1968-71, from the Denise René Gallery, is sculptural in form and in its movement reminiscent of Monaghan.

Peter Monaghan's regard for Bridget Riley, English, b. 1931 is echoed in his own paintings. Riley was included in ROSC'71 with three works, mostly acrylic or cryla on canvas in horizontal lines with varying spaces from top to bottom. Her painting "Cataract 1V" 1967, collection Ulster Museum, Belfast, uses plain blue lines moving from left to right with lines converging and then moving apart, creating the movement of water or of sound waves. Additionally, she has introduced some pale red lines in the central area which replace the white lines used in the upper and lower sections of the painting. (5) Monaghan's 'Harmonic Series' shows a knowledge of Riley's work, in the coloured lines, converging and diverging but the scale of Monaghan's work of 52 meters dwarfs Riley's painting of 179 x 179 cms, not only in scale but also in the breadth of his use of colour. He goes through the spectrum of primary colours, blues, reds and yellows to the secondary and then the tertiary, to the initial colours used in the beginning of the mural. This gradient of colour allows the visitor to move with the painting as it progresses from pure colour to softer tones. Unlike Riley's uniformity of spacing, Monaghan, in 'Harmonic Series' varies the painted lines to create shapes from top to bottom. In this work, Monaghan's skill as a colourist, with a profound knowledge of the science of colour is apparent. Bridget Riley, in turn, looked to the work of Georges Seurat, French, 1859-1891, and his fellow pointillists, to learn from their scientific research into the use of colour.

Monaghan embodies the use of colour and abstract shapes to create a psycho-physiological reaction in the viewer, to dazzle and create an optical illusion of movement. The artist states that *'My work is the result of a disciplined research into the experience of looking-the experience of pure visual sensation and aesthetic pleasure'*. (6) This is certainly evident in his work, which is underpinned by his profound knowledge of colour and the juxtaposing of colour areas which are diametrically opposed in hue but of similar tonal value. This in-depth knowledge evolved from his background as a graphic artist, beginning with his student days at the National College of Art and Design. After graduation, he joined the graphic design firm of Dara O'Lochlainn's, becoming an award-winning graphic designer, before setting up his own graphic design business in the 1980's, in addition to lecturing at Dun Laoghaire College of Art.

In 2000, at the age of 40, he gave up his design work to focus on his creative artistic practice of making 2 and 3-dimensional paintings and wall sculptures, fulfilling his innate ability to create. His honed discipline of mathematical accuracy and precision in his graphic design work now informs his subsequent artwork. His work 'Concave Convex', 100 cm square, illustrated, page 30-33, is built up on slips of card set into evenly spaced radiating lines, like an unfolding flower or the explosion of a colour bomb. To begin such a work, he prepares large pages of watercolour paper, giving a wash of a warm colour on one side and usually a cool colour on the other side. These previously painted pages are then meticulously hand-cut into uniform shapes, which are arranged in a circular movement as in 'Concave Convex' to create a large, enveloping flowerlike 3D form. The subtlety of the colours from warm to cool creates movement, engaging the viewer.

His initial work was conventional and representational but *'a coloured dowel piece from 2001-my first painting in relief-was a breakthrough...'*. In the Gormleys Gallery video "In the Studio with Peter Monaghan" April 2024, Monaghan demonstrates how he assembles a work using dowels. First the idea, then the working of the idea out meticulously on paper, then the compass to describe the inner circle, then the middle circle and finally the outer circle, allocating eight dowels, sixteen dowels and twenty-four dowels, all previously embellished with gold leaf. One is reminded of the Greek mathematical precision to create the temples of the Parthenon or the golden section in painting with a one-third, two thirds ratio. In his large work 'Twelve Tones' at 1 Grand Parade, Dublin, illustrated, page 96-97, which is made up of 1300 wooden dowels again embellished with gold leaf, the arresting arrangement is achieved by his inbuilt precision and finely trained vision. The light from the glass roof is reflected in the movement of the dowels which Monaghan directs, using darker brown painted dowels to key the work in with the window bars above.

His first one-person exhibition in Dublin followed in 2002 with great acclaim with international exhibitions in London, New York, Miami, Hong Kong and Singapore. In 2022, when Mike Smyth of Rumble Films made a documentary *'Peter Monaghan - A Portrait'*, which was streamed on Netflix, his love of music, especially that of Francesco Tristano, a Luxembourg pianist and composer, became apparent. In his studio he works to the sound of Jazz and world music which includes Jóhann Jóhannsson, Anouar Brahem and Carmen Souza. His abstract works are *'impersonal in the sense that they are non-figurative, but they are certainly personal to me and very personal to the person who chooses to buy one'...* *'form and colour*

can resonate very deeply and personally with people.' (7) Just as symphonies or piano concertos do. His work in the Gibson Hotel "Harmonic Series" illustrated, page 99, is 52 metres in length and embodies the rhythm of music running through the work in the graded lines of colour creating a wave, ebbing and flowing from vermillion contrasting against deep green to quieter notes of pale yellows and muted greys. He has stated that it is not just one colour but *'the combinations and contrasts, shades and tones and the interplay between them really fascinate me'* (8) His works in University College, Dublin, interact with the light and the life of the university, radiating colour, movement and light, in addition to a lasting legacy, illustrated page 98.

He achieves his aim of *'Simple forms and colours... used in repetition to engage the viewer. It is a dialogue about light, colour movement and illusion; exploring the relationships and contrasts between painted flat surfaces, protruding spheres, cubes or geometric shapes.'* (9) In his series of these flower-like intricate coloured wheels, one is reminded of the little plastic windmills of our childhood which we blew to create a fusion of colour, light and movement. The child in us can bridge the gap and create the movement in our vision with ensuing enjoyment.

Developing from his 3D work in Concave Convex and Twelve Tones, Monaghan formed a collaboration with Ferreira de Sá, the oldest producer of luxury rugs in Europe, based in Portugal, who produced handmade rugs of his paintings. (10)

Monaghan at 70, still has many ideas to explore and avenues of diversification in the decades to come.

1. ROSC'67, patron Eamon de Valera, *Uachtarán na hEireann, Honorary President, C.J.Haughey T.D., Minister for Finance.*
2. *'What Lies Beneath: Peter Monaghan's artworks provide an eyeeful of invigorating colours and contrasts.'* Niall MacMonagle, *Irish Independent, Sun 29 Aug 2021.*
3. *Vasarely in Aldo, Pellegrini, New Tendencies in Art, 1966, pp.166-7*
4. *"In the Studio with Peter Monaghan", April 2024, Gormleys*
5. *The Catalogue, edited by Eileen Black, published by the Museums & Galleries of Northern Ireland in association with Nicholas & Bass Limited, 2000, illus. p.316.*
6. *'Meet the Artist with Peter Monaghan: I'd like people to have a visceral connection with my work'.* Philip Carton, *Business Post, 26 April 2024*
7. *What Lies Beneath: Niall MacMonagle, Irish Independent, Sun 29 Aug 2021*
8. *Ibid*
9. *Meet the Artist with Peter Monaghan: I'd like people to have a visceral connection with my work'.* Philip Carton, *Business Post, 26 April 2024*
10. *'What Lies Beneath: Niall MacMonagle, Irish Independent, Sun 29 Aug 2021.*

Dr. Denise Ferran, April 2025.



Cat Stevens, gouche painting, 1971

IN CONVERSATION

When did you first become interested in art?

I can't remember not being interested in art. My earliest memory, and it's still quite vivid, is of drawing a blackbird in our back garden at age 6 or 7. I remember sitting on a stout branch halfway up a tree in my grandmother's Newbridge garden to better capture the landscape below. I remember early portraits of my family members, my first attempts to capture a likeness.

The world I drew from was small and local, but I seemed to have a need to record it from a young age and attempted to do so with whatever was at hand.

I was fascinated with the natural world and would collect and examine closely the colours, patterns and textures of birds' plumage, flower heads and rock strata. Even when playing, I seemed to favour crafting and model making, constructing buildings from matchsticks and building working models with my Meccano sets.

Was your interest in art encouraged in school?

Actually, the Christian Brothers school I attended didn't even offer art as an Intermediate Certificate subject. So I attended the studio of artist and art teacher Palm Skerrett in her Dawson Street studio, twice weekly for three years.

There, I got a solid basis in art techniques and materials. I remember working with oils and watercolours, lino printing and portraiture. By the time I completed my Inter Cert, I was sure that I wanted to make a career of art but was concerned at the lack of art education in my school. I reached out to Jim Fitzpatrick in Hunter Advertising for advice. He told me that all I would be doing in Hunter's would be making the tea but that I had potential and should sit the Leaving Certificate and aim to attend the National College of Art & Design (thanks for that Jim!)

As luck would have it, that year my school had decided to add art to the Leaving Certificate curriculum and had engaged an art teacher called Tod Chadwick to take the class. He had a refreshingly progressive approach and was very encouraging. I focused on producing the portfolio of work which resulted in me being offered a place in NCAD.

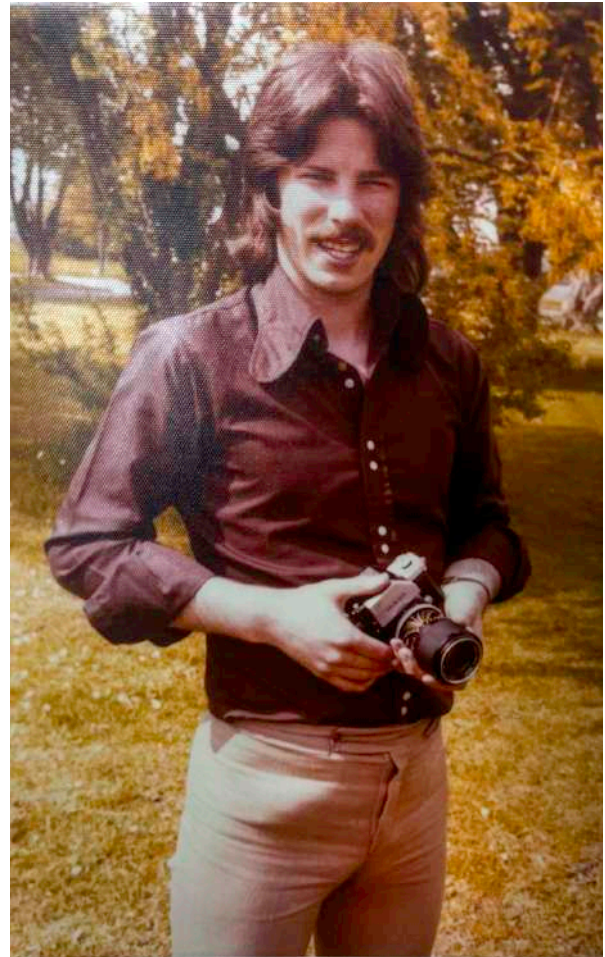
IN CONVERSATION

How was your experience at NCAD?

I spent four very enjoyable years in the college, from 1973 to 1977. NCAD at that time was very small, making it easy to form friendships and get to know the tutors. We worked very hard, 8-hour days, Mondays to Fridays and some weekends, unlike most of my other friends in 3rd level colleges and universities.

We had a book and film club, lively artistic debates in Keogh's pub every Friday evening and educational trips abroad... in fact, my first trip outside of Ireland was to Paris with my college year group.

One of the strengths of NCAD was their first year or pre-diploma year which exposed each student to sample all of the art disciplines - painting, sculpture, ceramics, metal work etc. before deciding on the area they wanted to focus on for the remaining three years. I opted for graphic design as this would enable me to produce work which would reach more people than fine art would.



Photograph while at NCAD, 1978

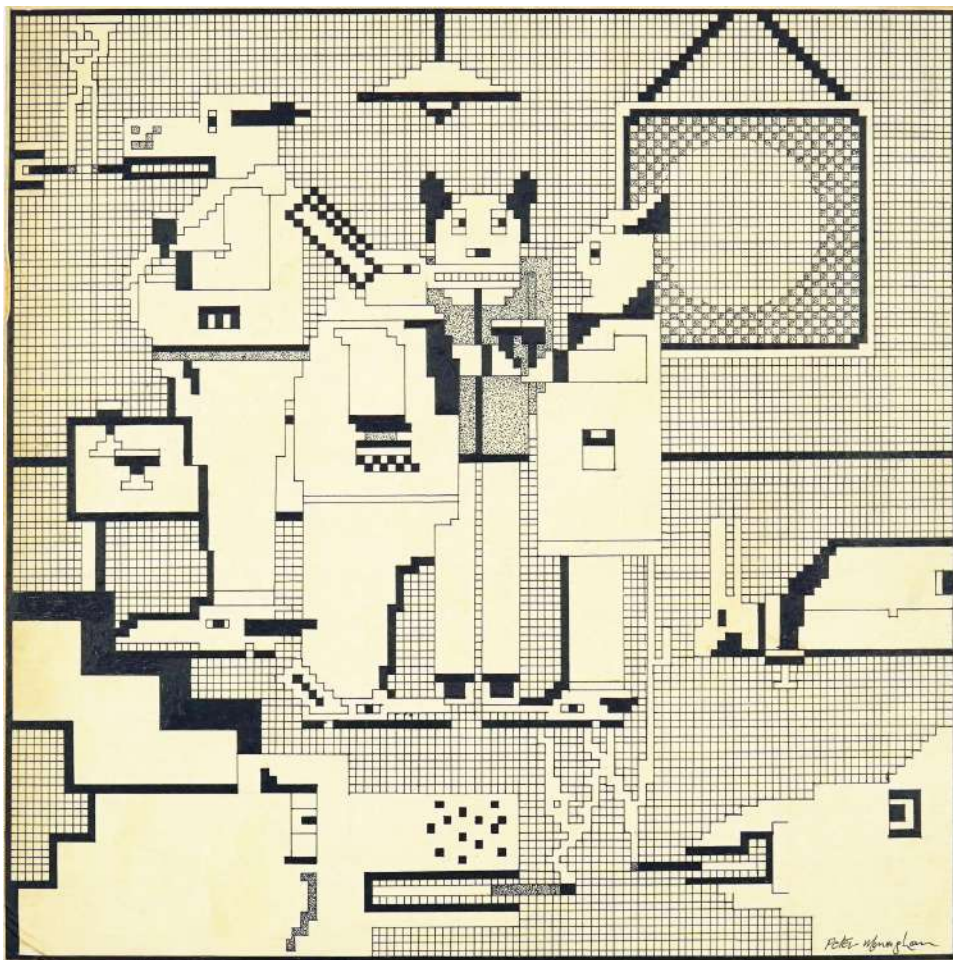


Illustration for 'Square' InDublin magazine, 1978

IN CONVERSATION

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First design job with Dara O'Lochlainn, 1981

Did you enjoy your time in Graphic Design?

I was very fortunate on leaving NCAD to get my first job with the legendary Dara O'Lochlainn and my second with Hunter Advertising. My time with both companies honed my skills as a graphic designer and enabled me to make the move to set up my own business in 1983, Monaghan Design, which I ran until 1990, until I merged with IRN Publishing to form Creative Inputs.

I was very proud of the clients we represented, such as Smurfits and the OPW but I personally took particular enjoyment in producing the literature for our artistic institutions - the National Gallery of Ireland, IMMA and the Hugh Lane Gallery - as it was related to my continued interest in art. In fact, throughout my career in graphic design, I continued to paint in my free time and always possessed a desire to create fine art and define my own artistic identity.

By the year 2000, my role in the business had become almost entirely managerial and with my creative output becoming less of my day to day, I decided it was time to pursue my goal full-time. I closed the book on my design career and dedicated myself full-time to fine art.

IN CONVERSATION

How did you make the transition from graphic design to art?

My plan was to give myself two years to see if I could prepare a body of work which I would be content to exhibit. Initially, I painted and sketched traditionally, both in terms of subject matter and technique. I suppose this was safe territory for me and a way of reconnecting with my earlier work. However, after some time, I remembered a Pablo Picasso quotation from college:

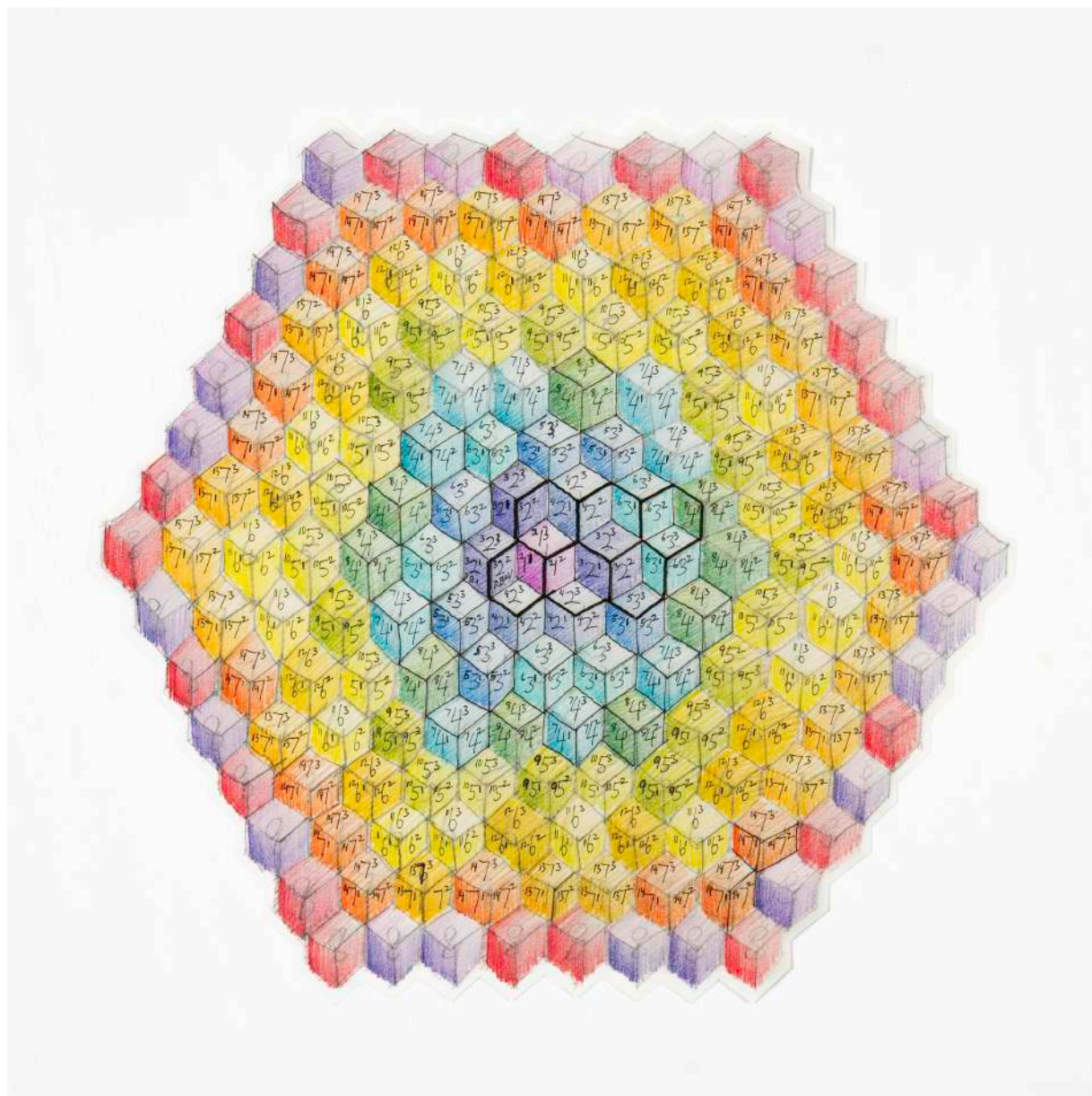
"I am always doing that which I cannot do, in order that I may learn how to do it".

So I decided to 'stop caring', so to speak - loosen up and take a journey into the unknown to see where the experimentation led me. During this process I realised that I had been denying my graphic sensibility and not using the calligraphic and sculptural techniques which I had developed. Incorporating these skills with my appreciation of naturally occurring patterns seen in nature, mathematics, music and movement, over time the work developed into the abstract three-dimensional work for which I am known today.

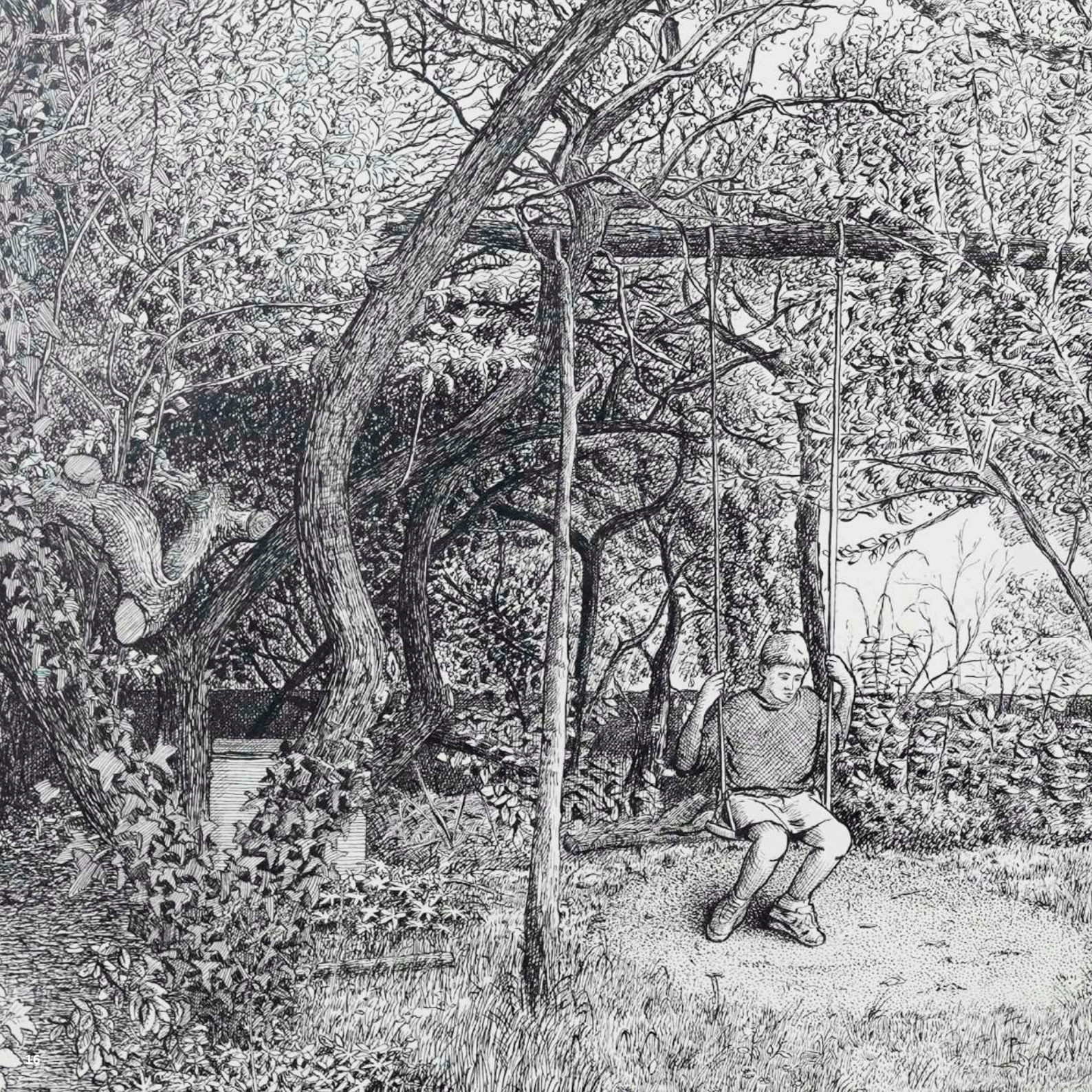


Drawing of son Daragh, Pen & Ink, 2000

Following spread: Eoin in the Garden, Pen & Ink, 1998



Hexagon Painting Plan, Coloured Pencil, 2000





IN CONVERSATION



Working in the studio, 2024

To what do you attribute your success as an artist?

There is a cliché in which The Artist sits alone in their studio, waiting for the muse to strike. The truth is that to succeed as an artist, you need to work hard and you need other people. I have worked hard all my life: in summer jobs, in college, in my years in graphic design. I took this work ethic with me into the world of art and it's ultimately the greatest contributor to my success. Inspiration is a result of consistent development of ideas and as a result of continuous effort, my work has continued to evolve over the past 25 years.

Equally, other people have been a huge part of my success. I received encouragement from my parents when I was young. My wife, Audrey and sons, Eoin and Daragh, have always believed in me.

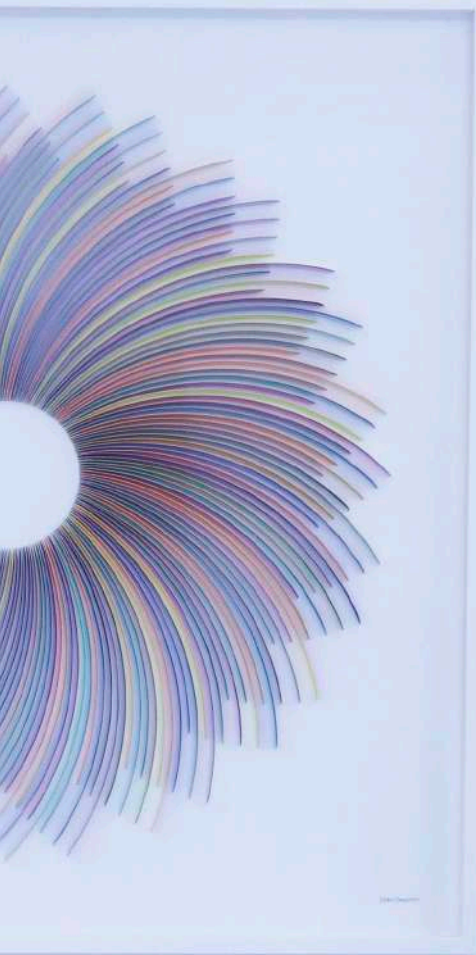
Early in my career I got support from the Bridge and Oisín galleries in Dublin, Coloured Rain in Templepatrick and the Cube Gallery London and of course, Gormleys which I have been with for the past 20 years.

Other examples which spring to mind are the boosts which I received in 2008 when Aidan Dunne wrote a very appreciative review of my Redemption Songs exhibition and winning the Jim McNaughton Tile Style Bursary in 2010. Acceptance into the RHA's annual exhibition on numerous occasions was very affirming also.

I have been fortunate also to have engaged a series of young art graduates in recent years to work as assistants in my studio. I have tried to impart to them skills which will enhance their work into the future and they have all fully engaged in my vision. Bentley Allison is my current and much valued assistant.

Finally, any success I have had is down to the art lovers and buyers. Art buyers are doing a service to the individual artist but they are also educating others to the pleasure of art when they hang a piece of work in their homes and workplaces. To all of them I say a sincere thank you.



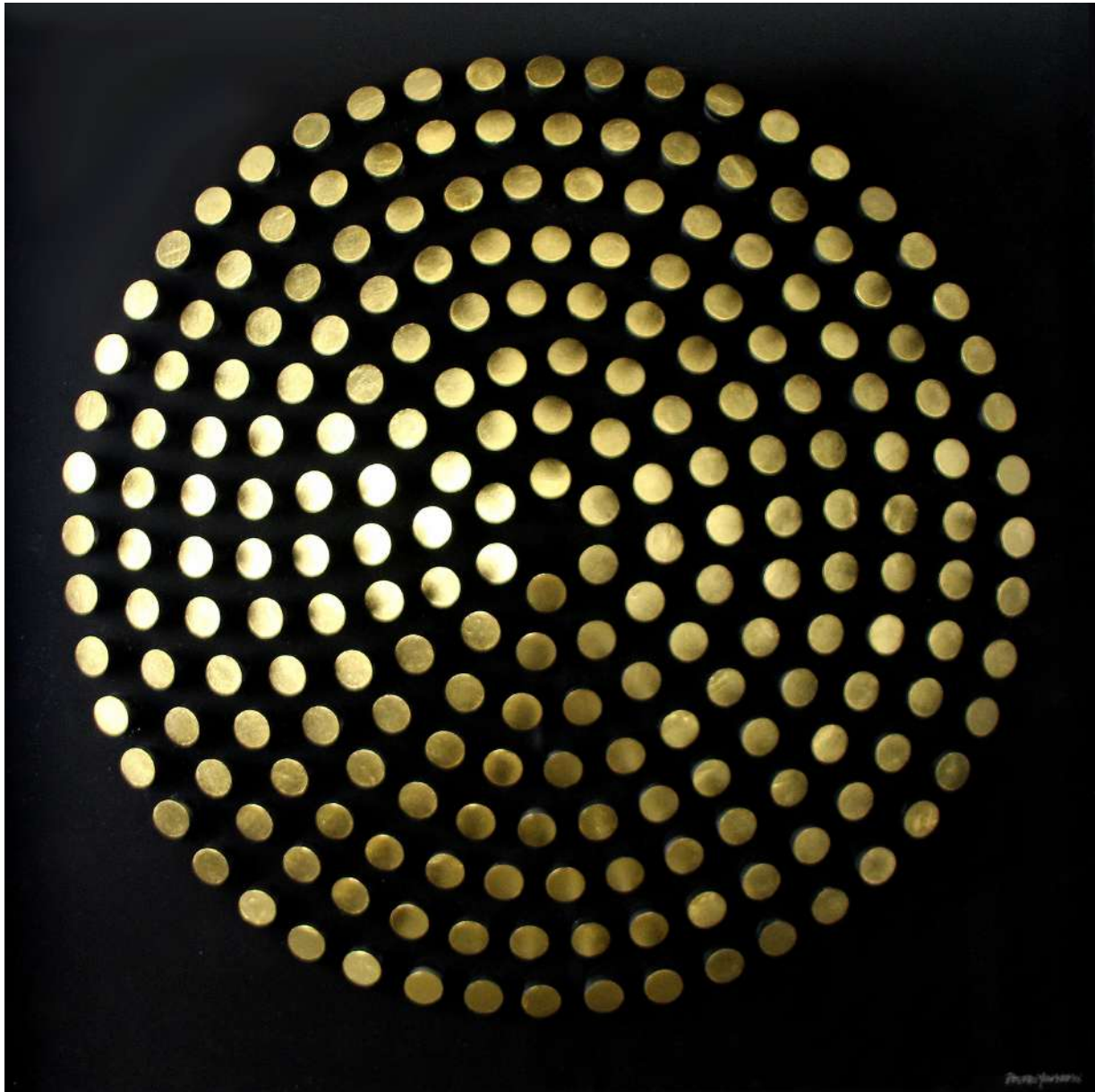


PREVIOUS ARTWORKS

GOLD LEAF SERIES

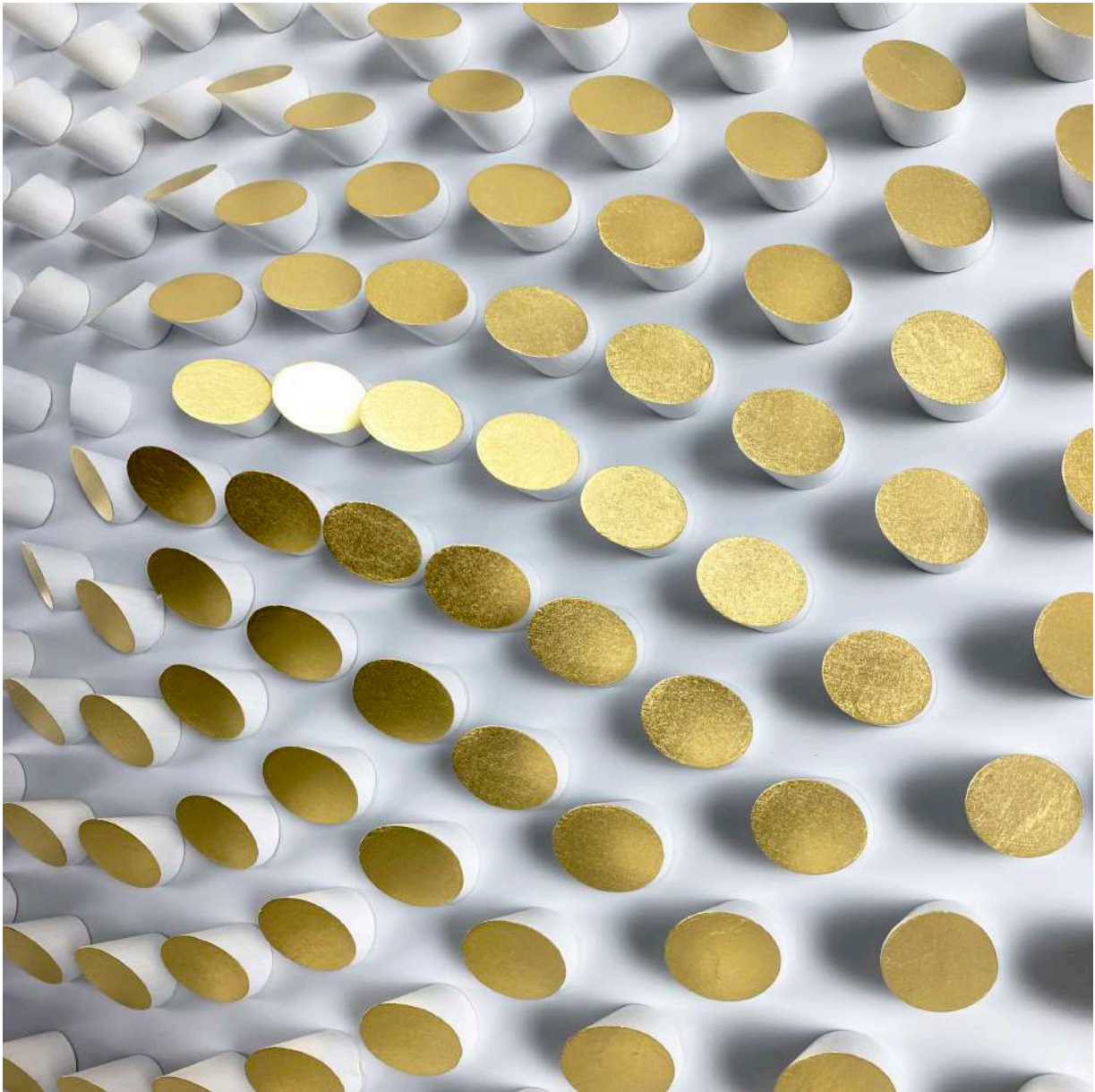


Black & Gold Wave

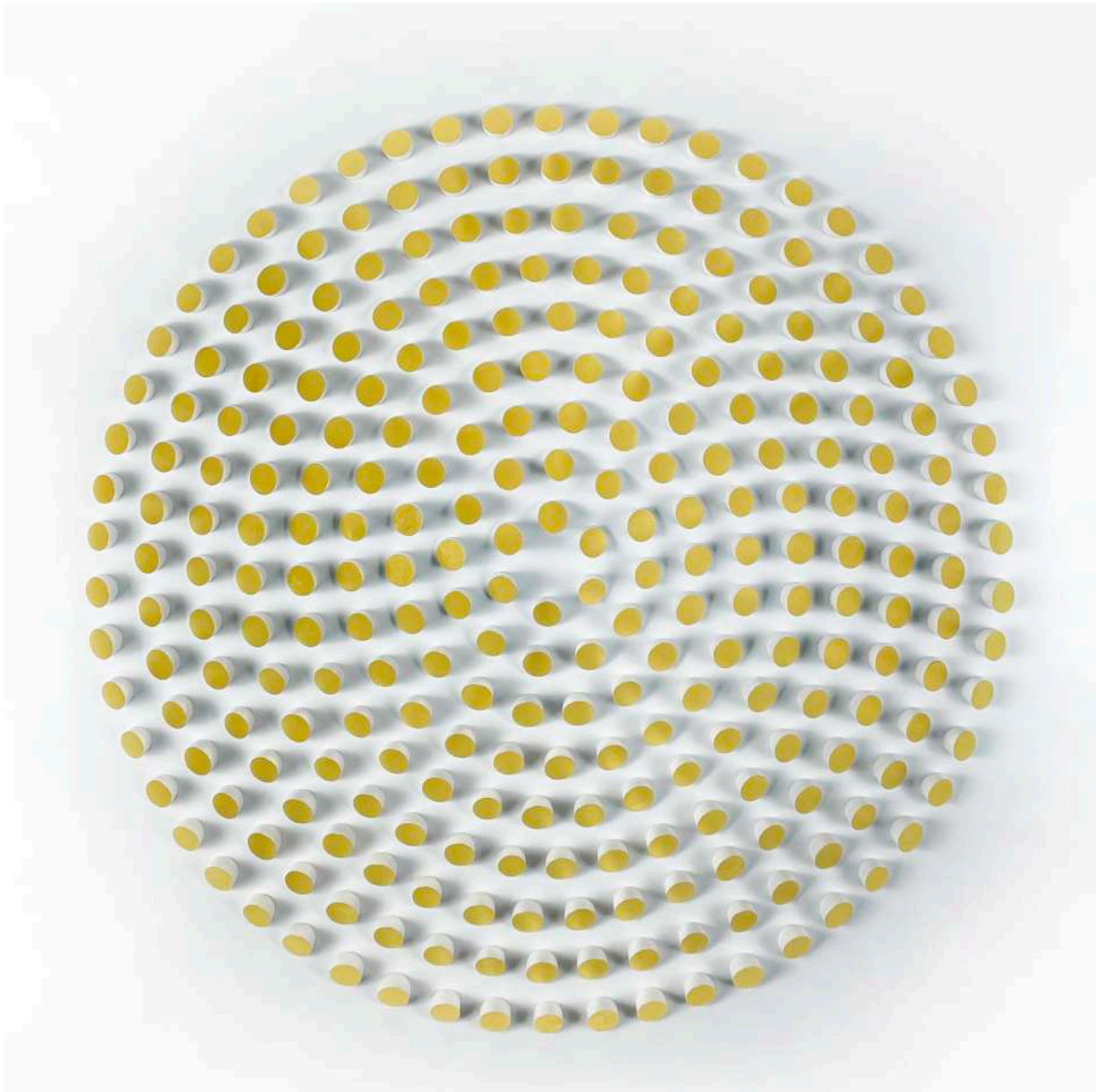


Black & Gold Dowels

GOLD LEAF SERIES

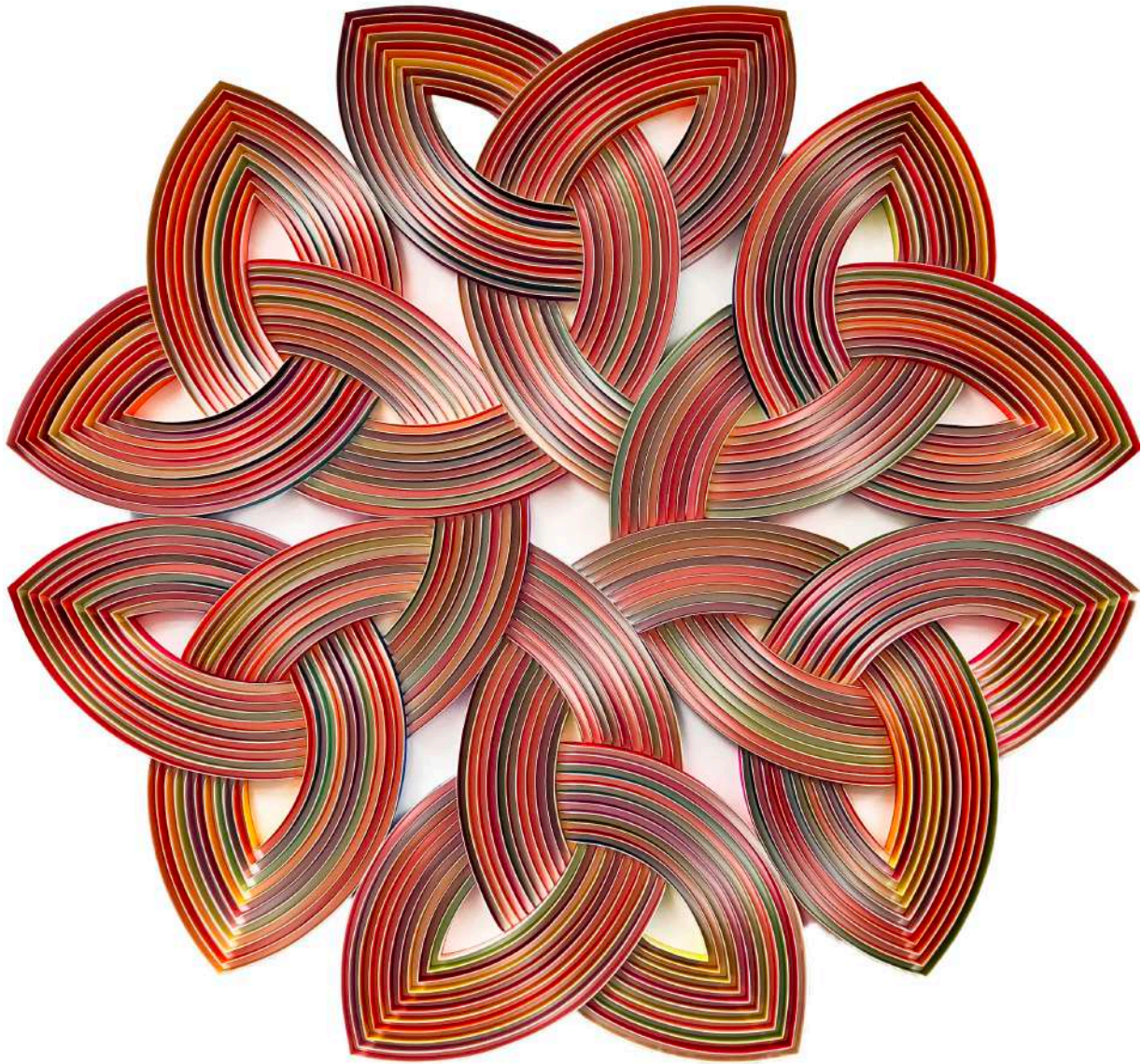


Detail: White & Gold Dowels



White & Gold Dowels

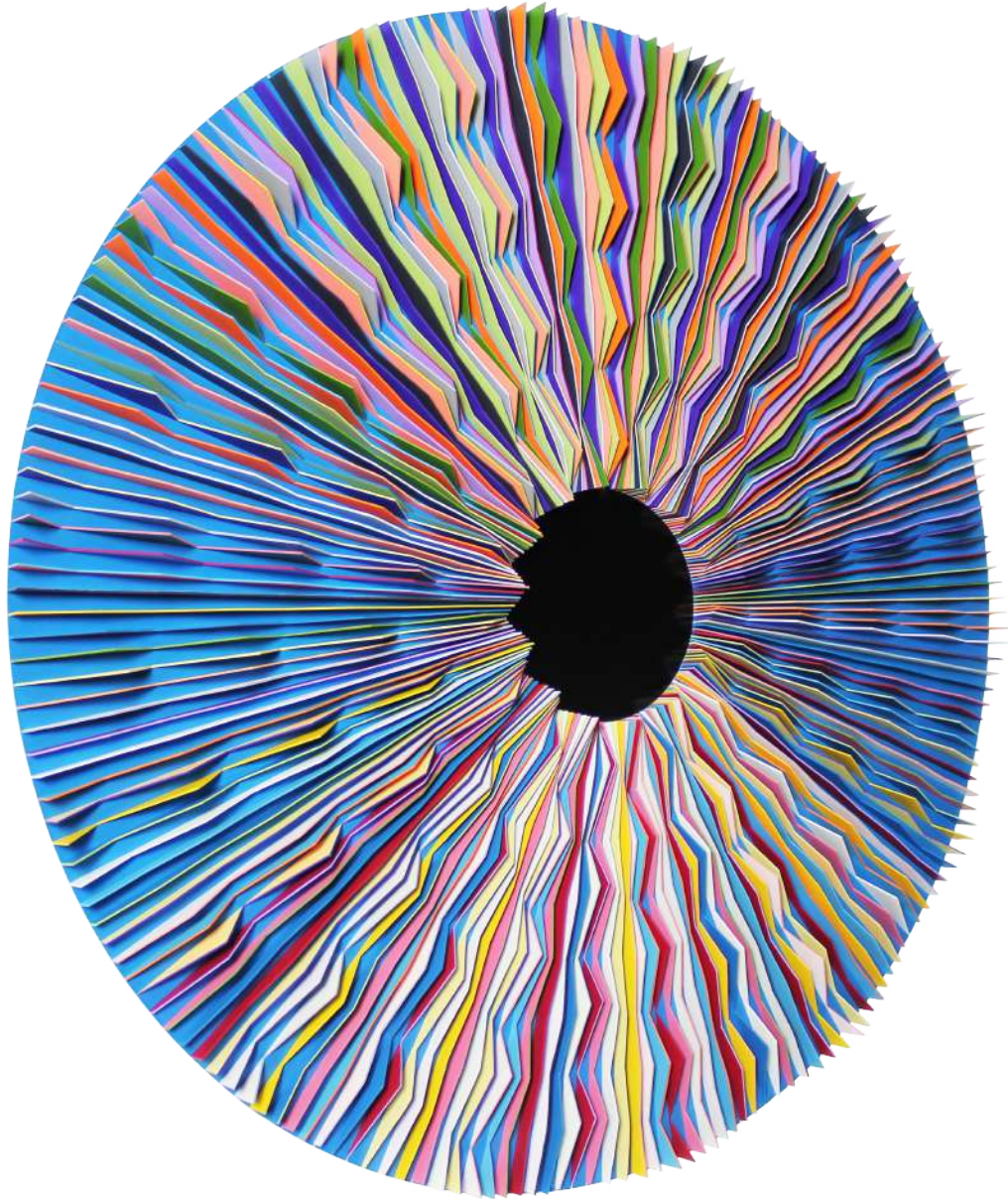
CELTIC SERIES



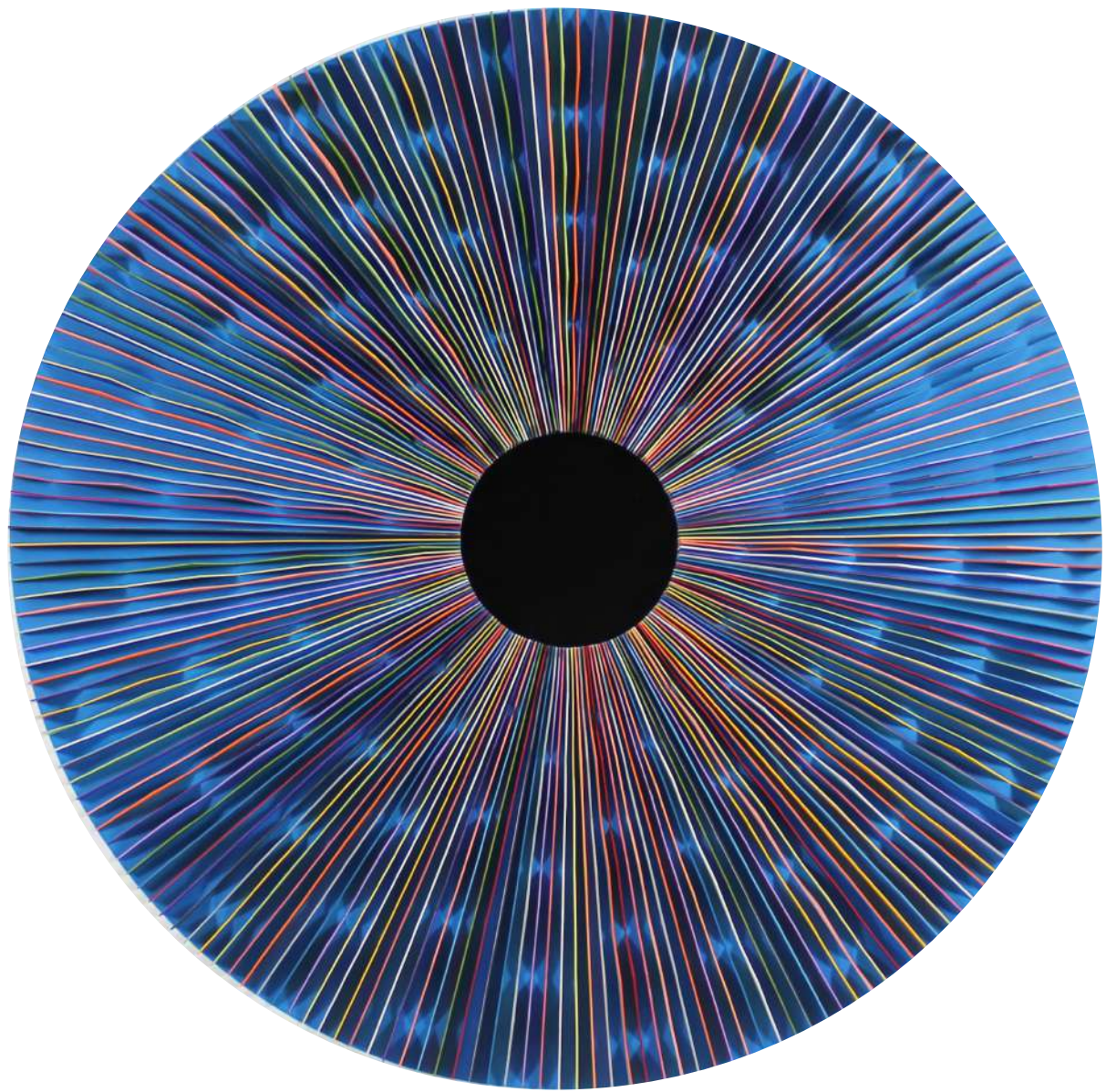


Celtic Circle

RADIATING LINES SERIES

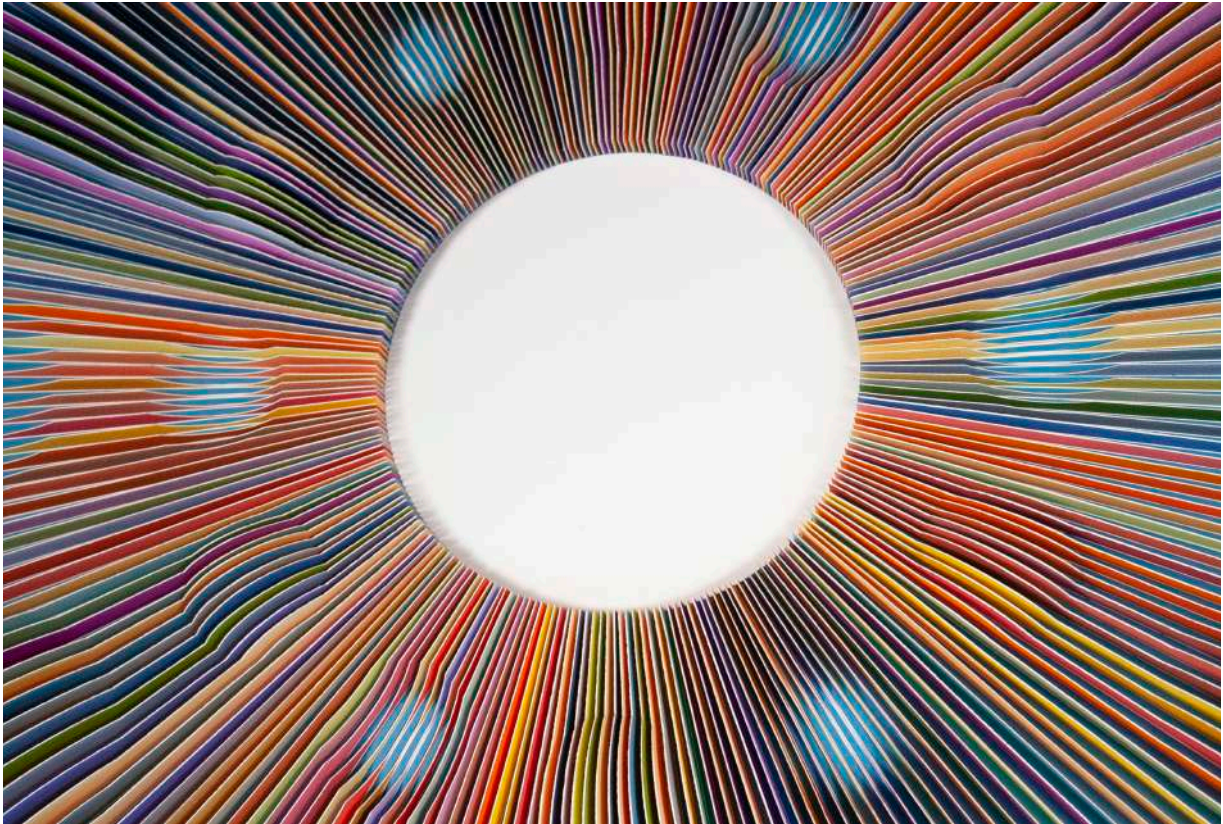


Detail: Concave Convex I

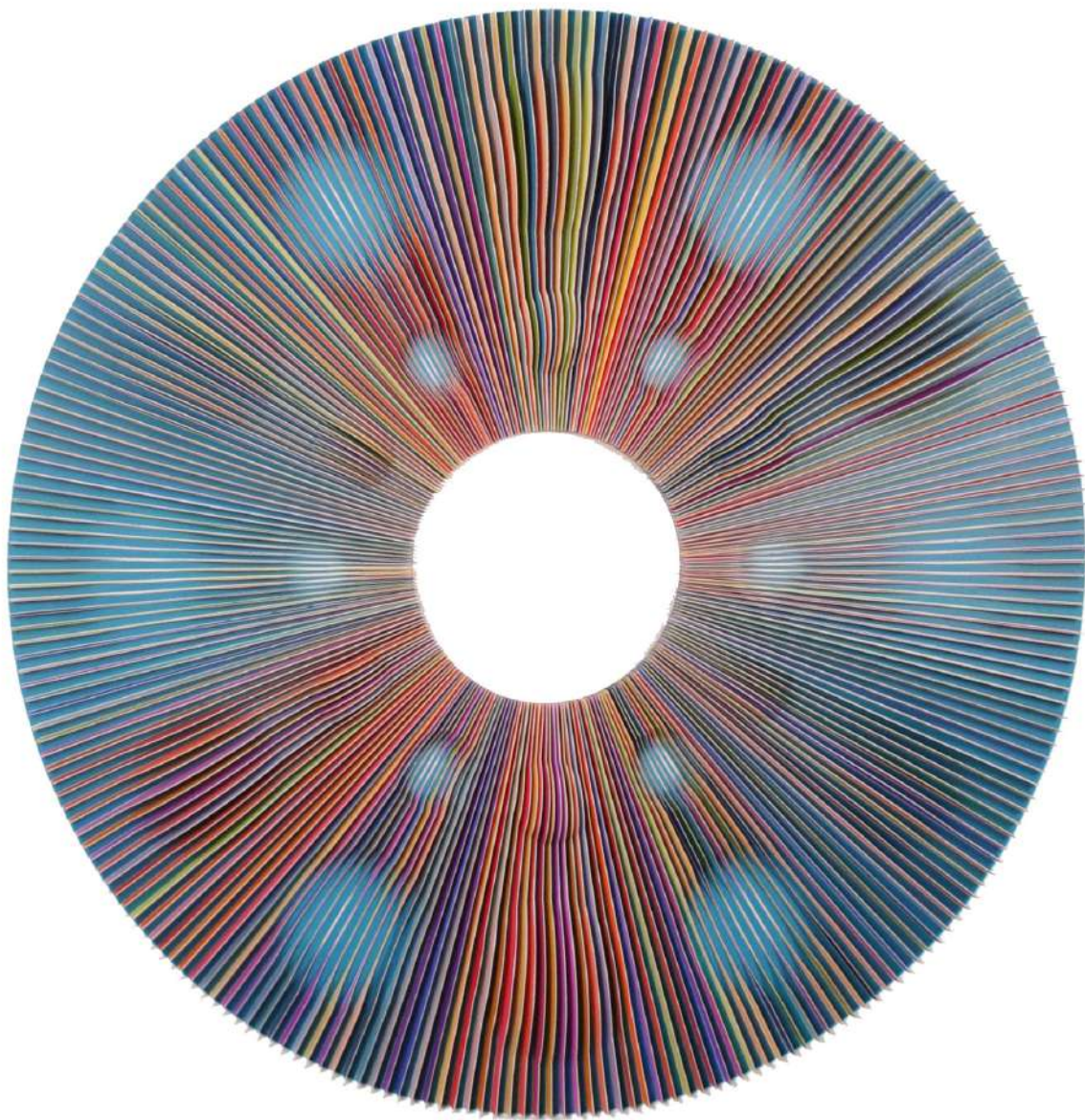


Concave Convex I

RADIATING LINES SERIES



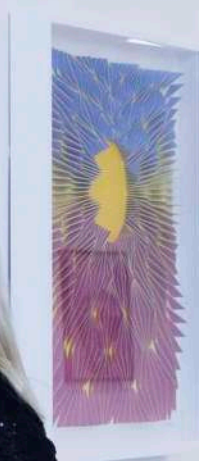
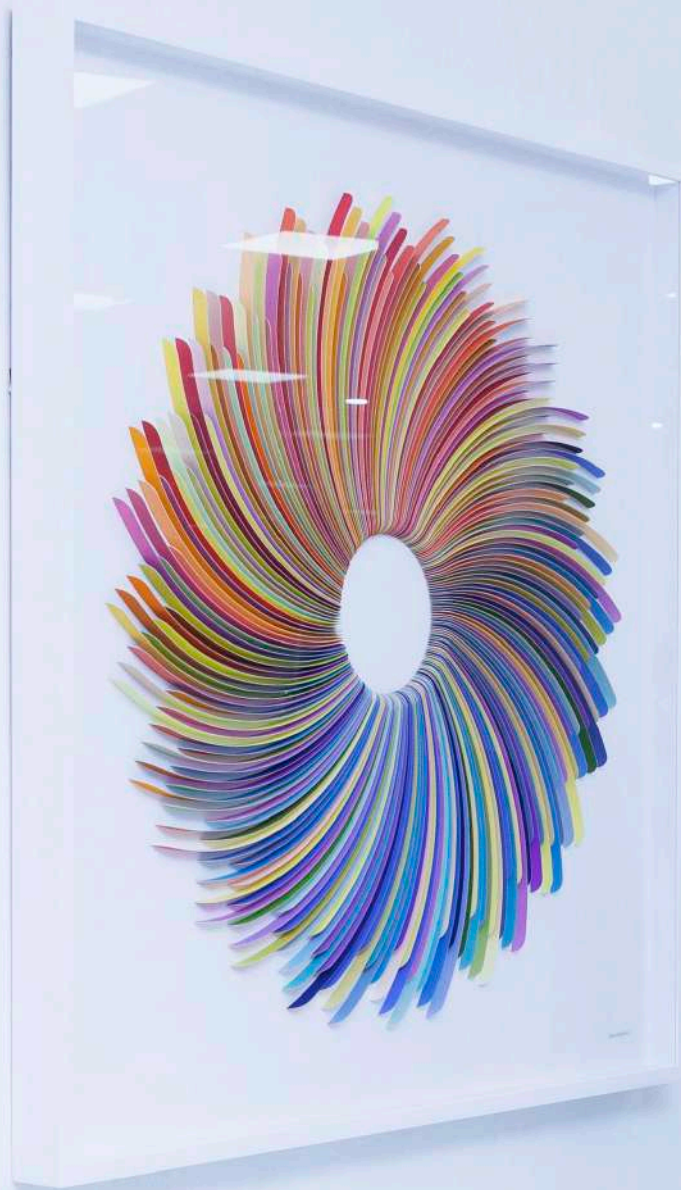
Detail: Concave Convex II



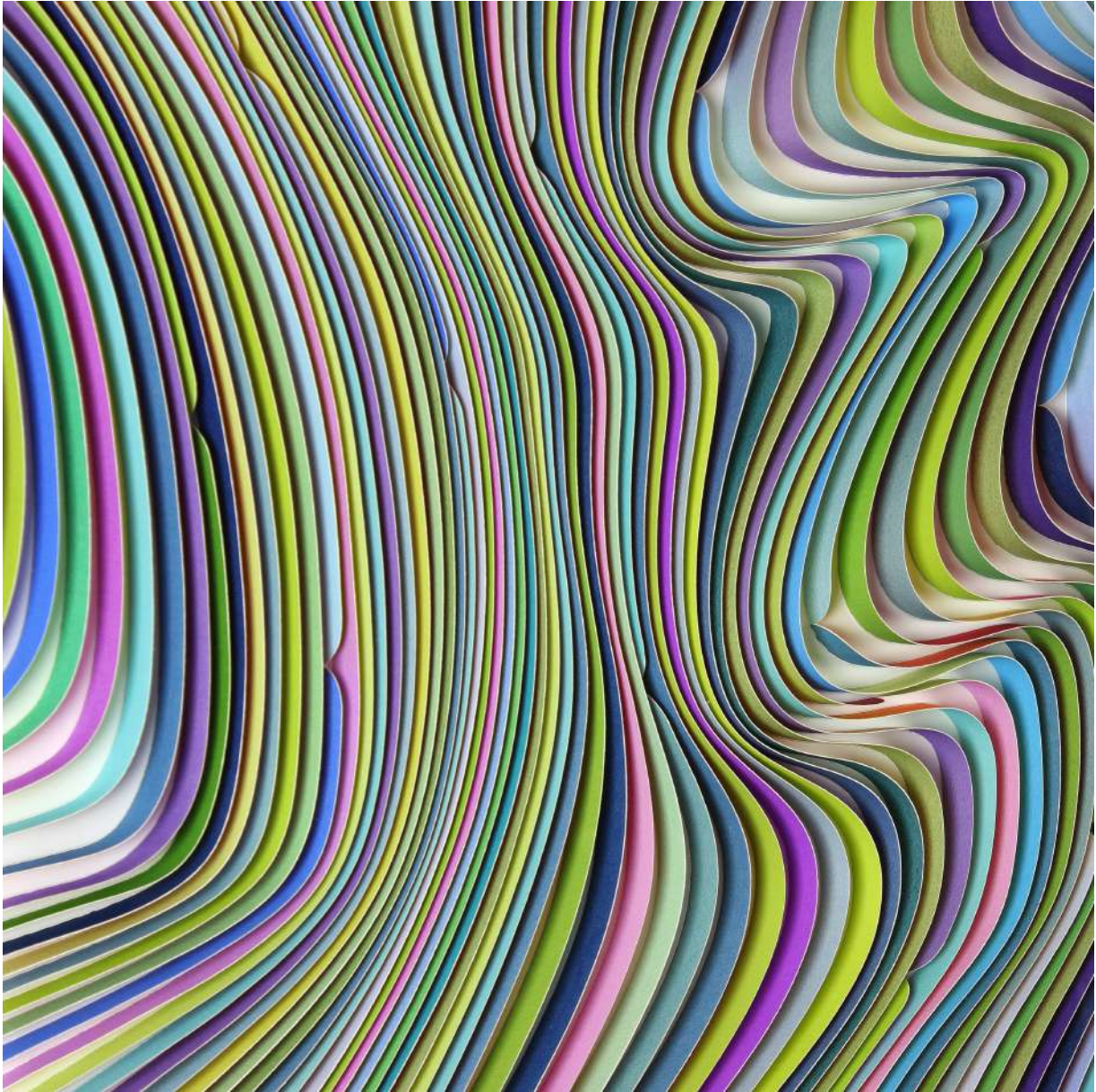
Concave Convex II



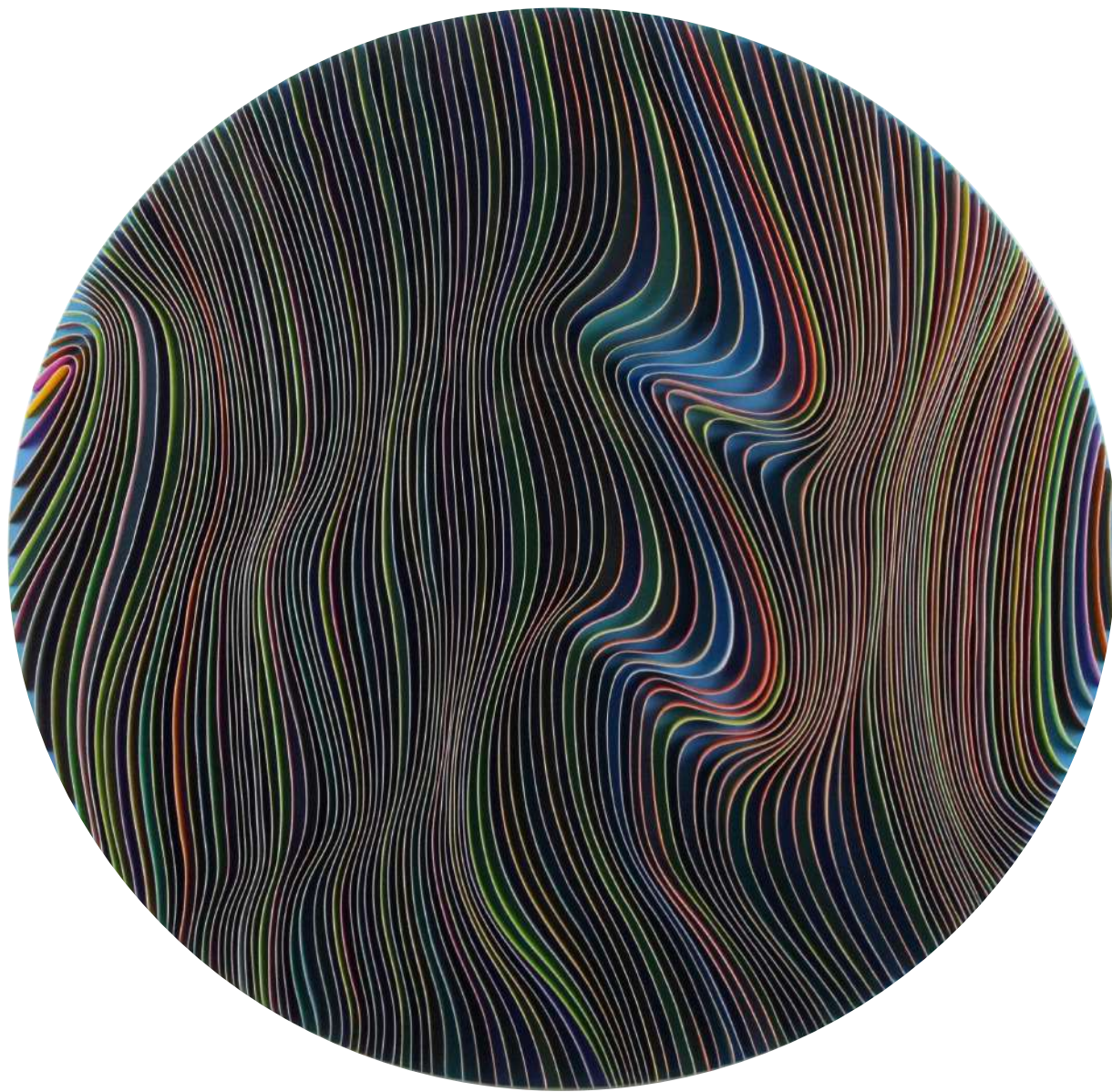
Peter Monaghan at Charlemont Square
2024



CONTOUR SERIES

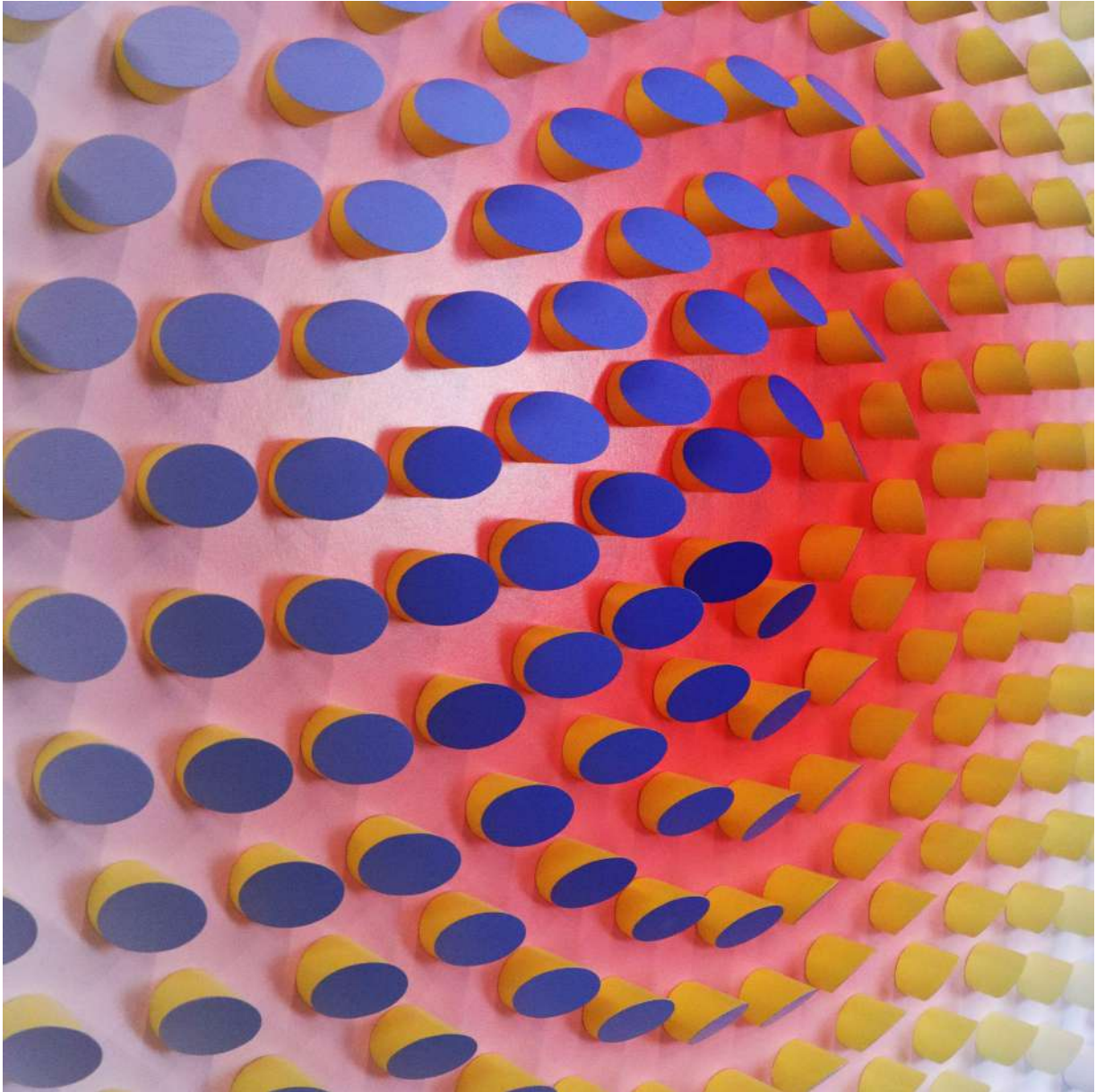


Detail: Contours I

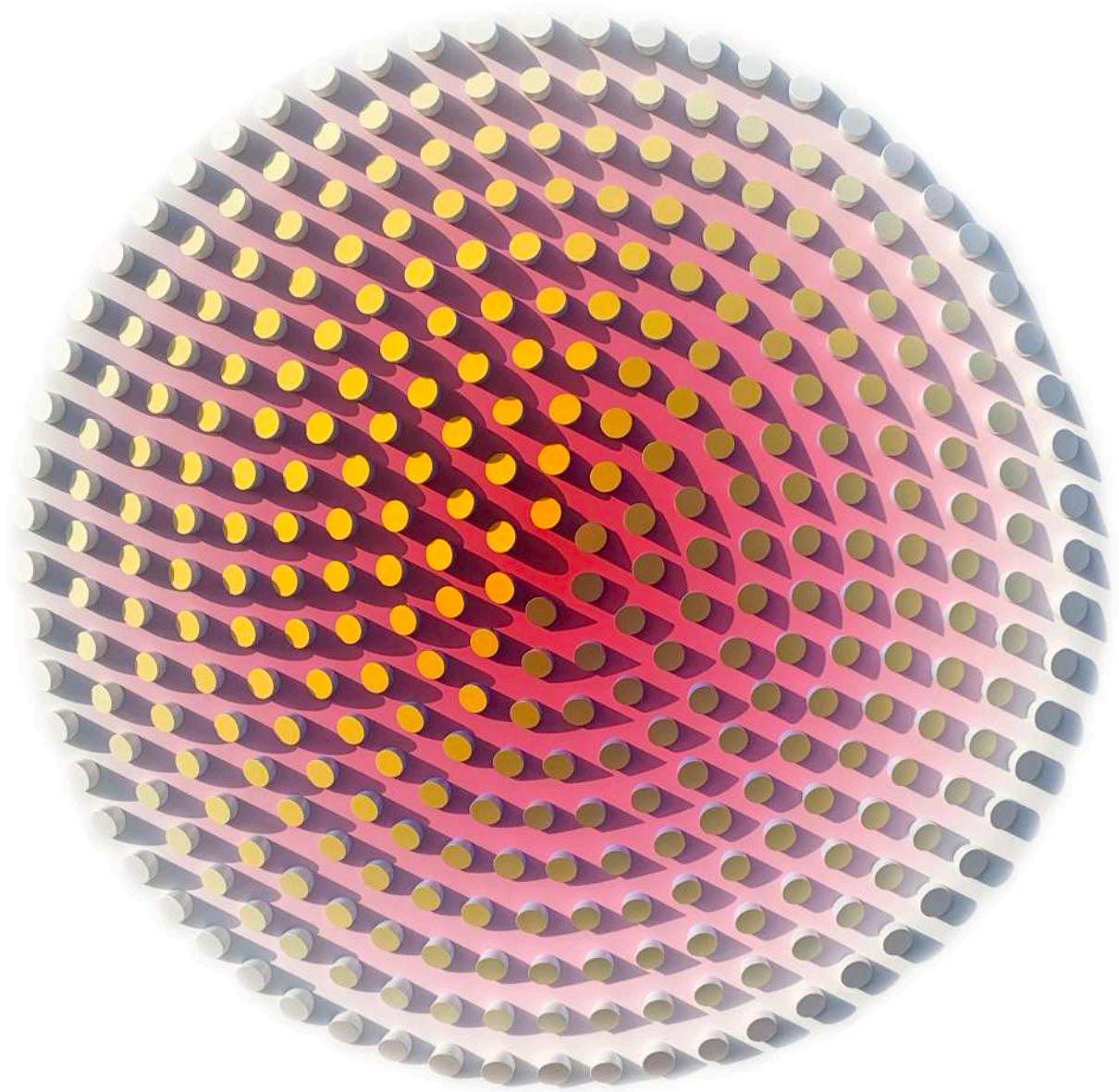


Contours I

DOWEL SERIES

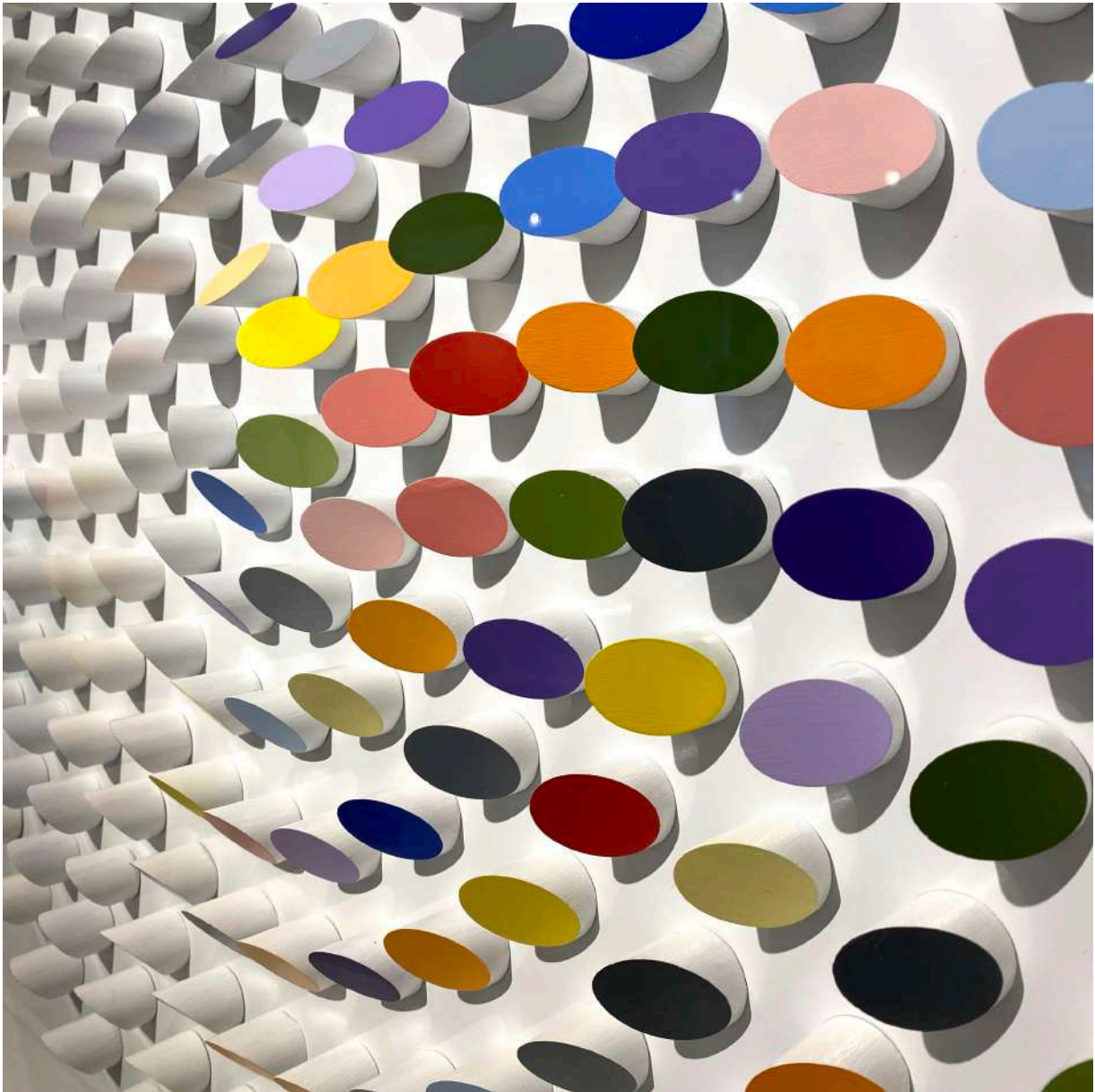


Detail: Red & Blue Dowels

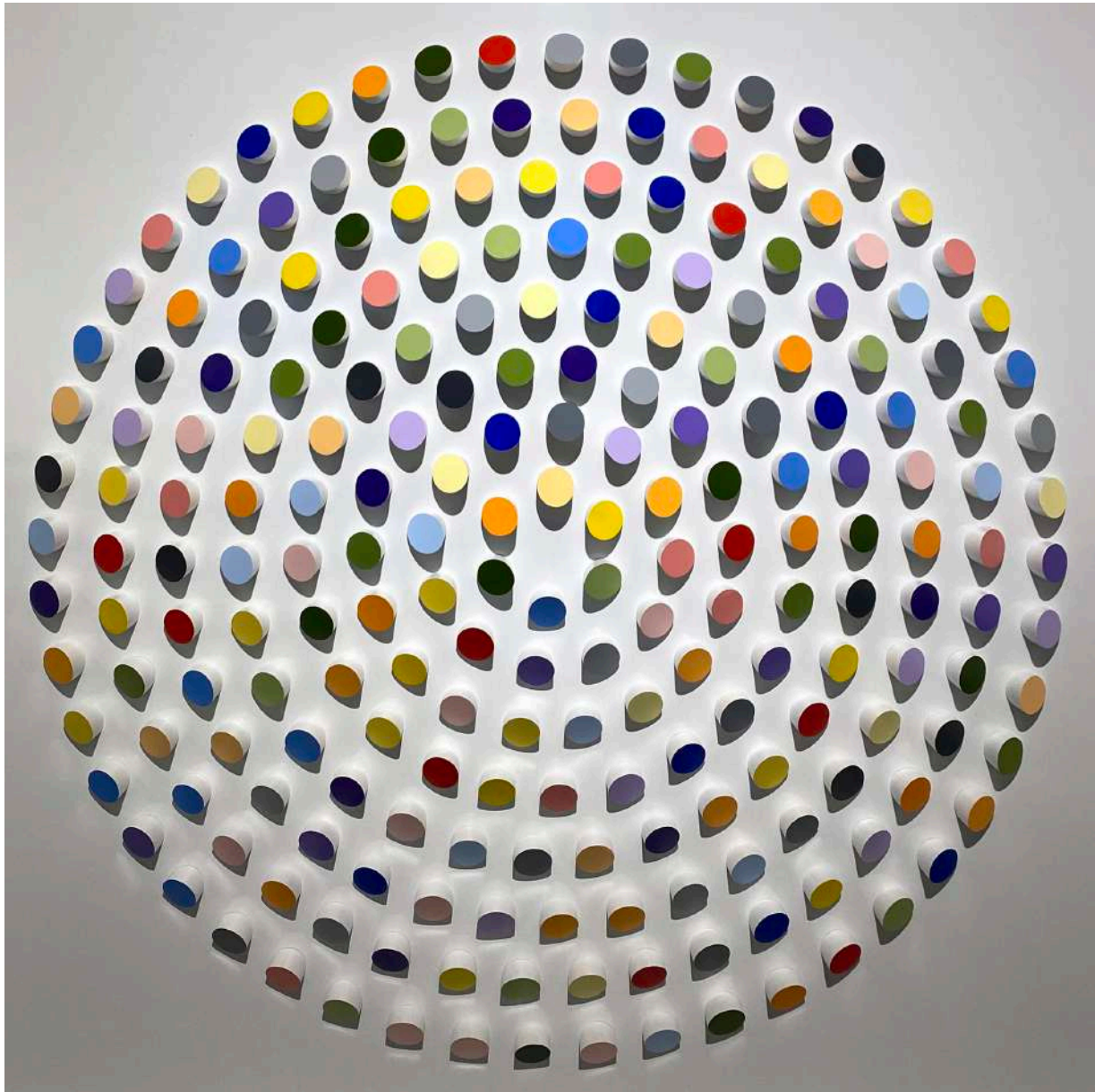


Red & Blue Dowels

DOWEL SERIES

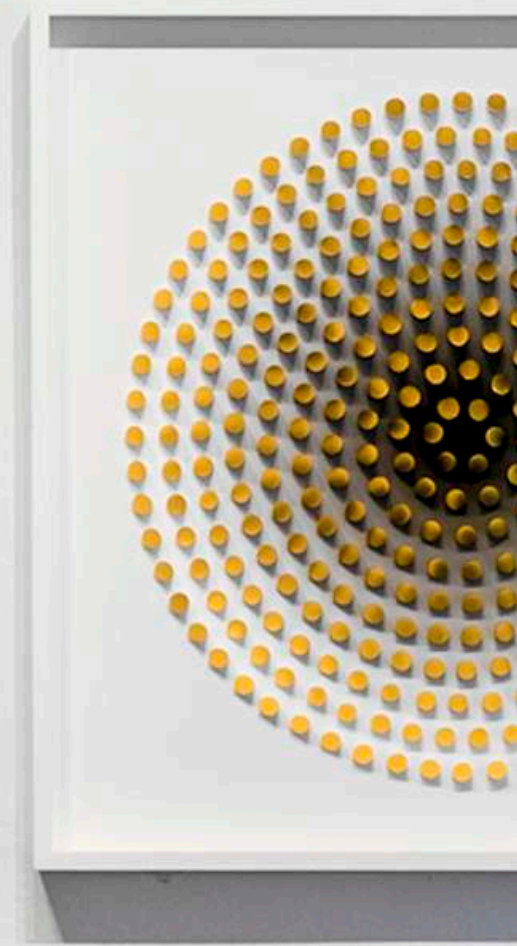
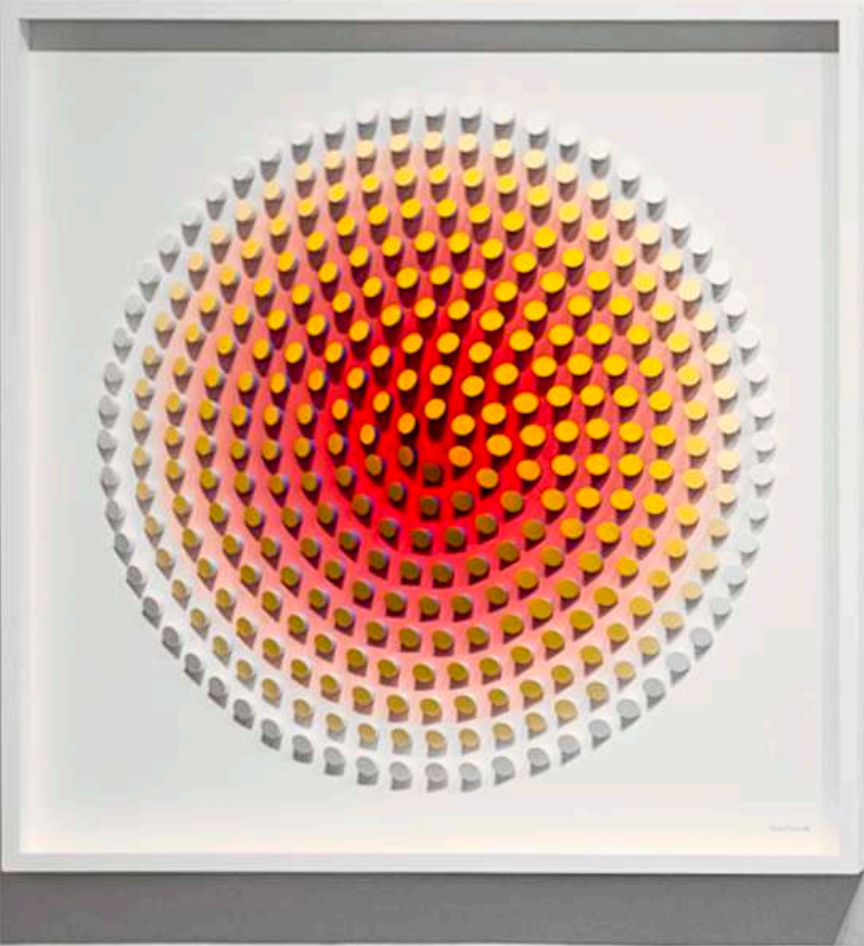


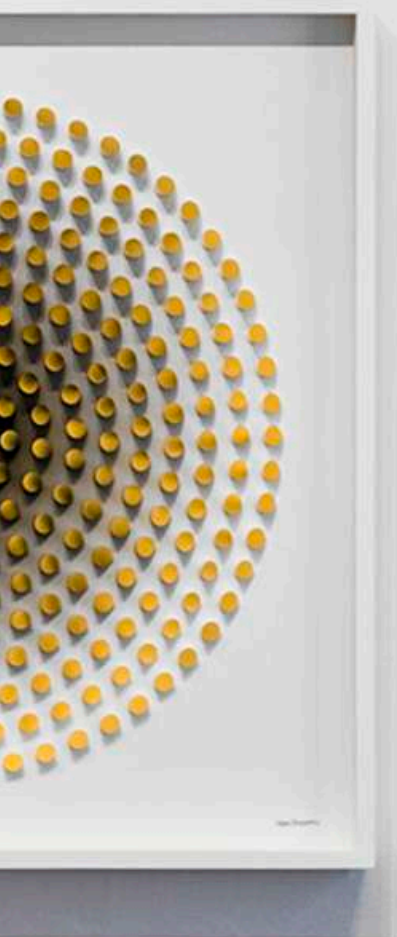
Detail: Colour Movement



Colour Movement

DOWEL SERIES





FINGERPRINT SERIES



Detail: Fingerprint I



Fingerprint I

FLORAL SERIES



Detail: Circular Lily



Circular Lily

FLORAL SERIES



Detail: First Lily



Spring Iris

FLORAL SERIES



Detail: Bloom



Bloom

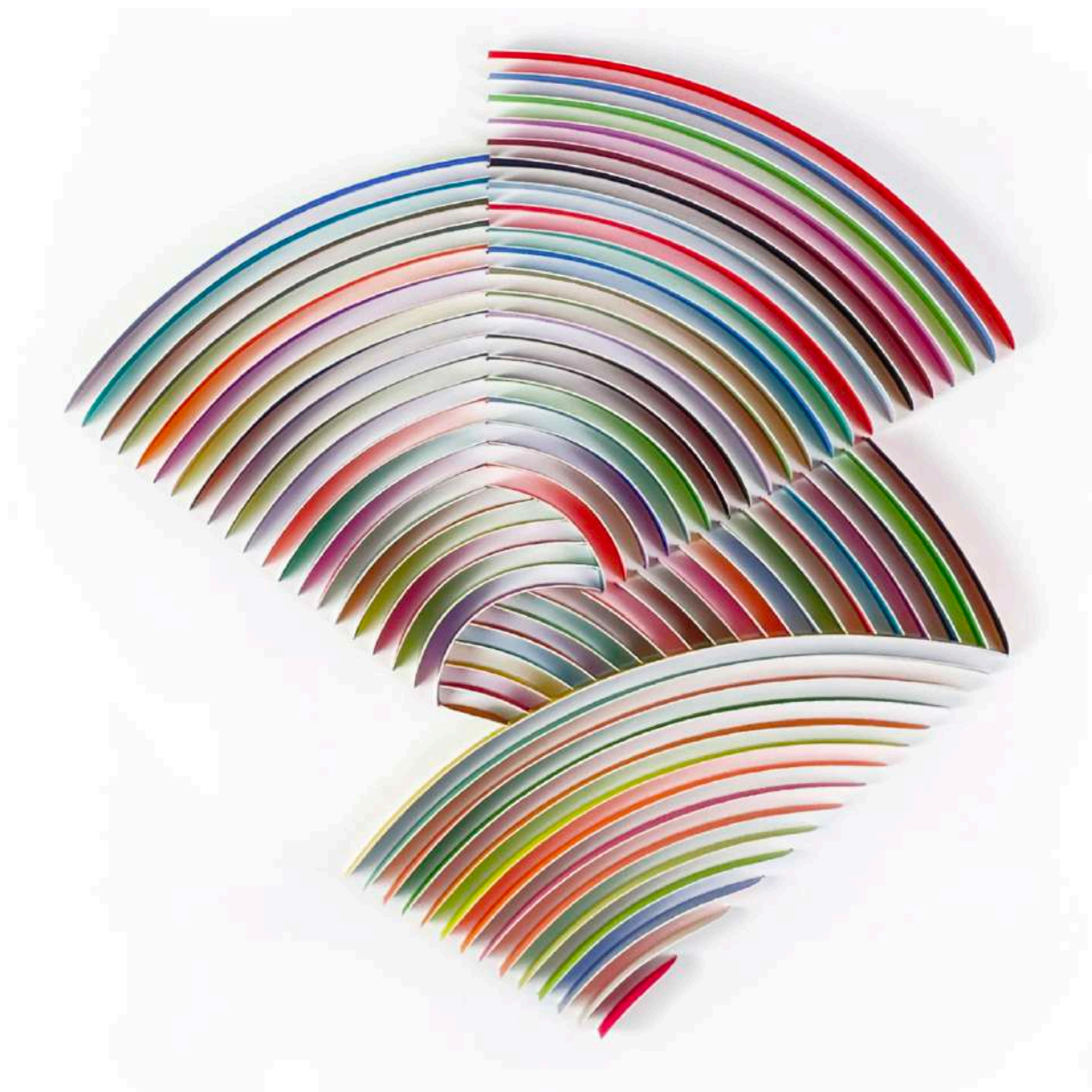




FOLD SERIES



Flame-Fold



Semi-Fold

INTERLOCKING CIRCLES SERIES



Detail: Interlocking Circle



Interlocking Circle

INTERLOCKING CIRCLES SERIES



Open Circle



Proliferate

INTERLOCKING CIRCLES SERIES

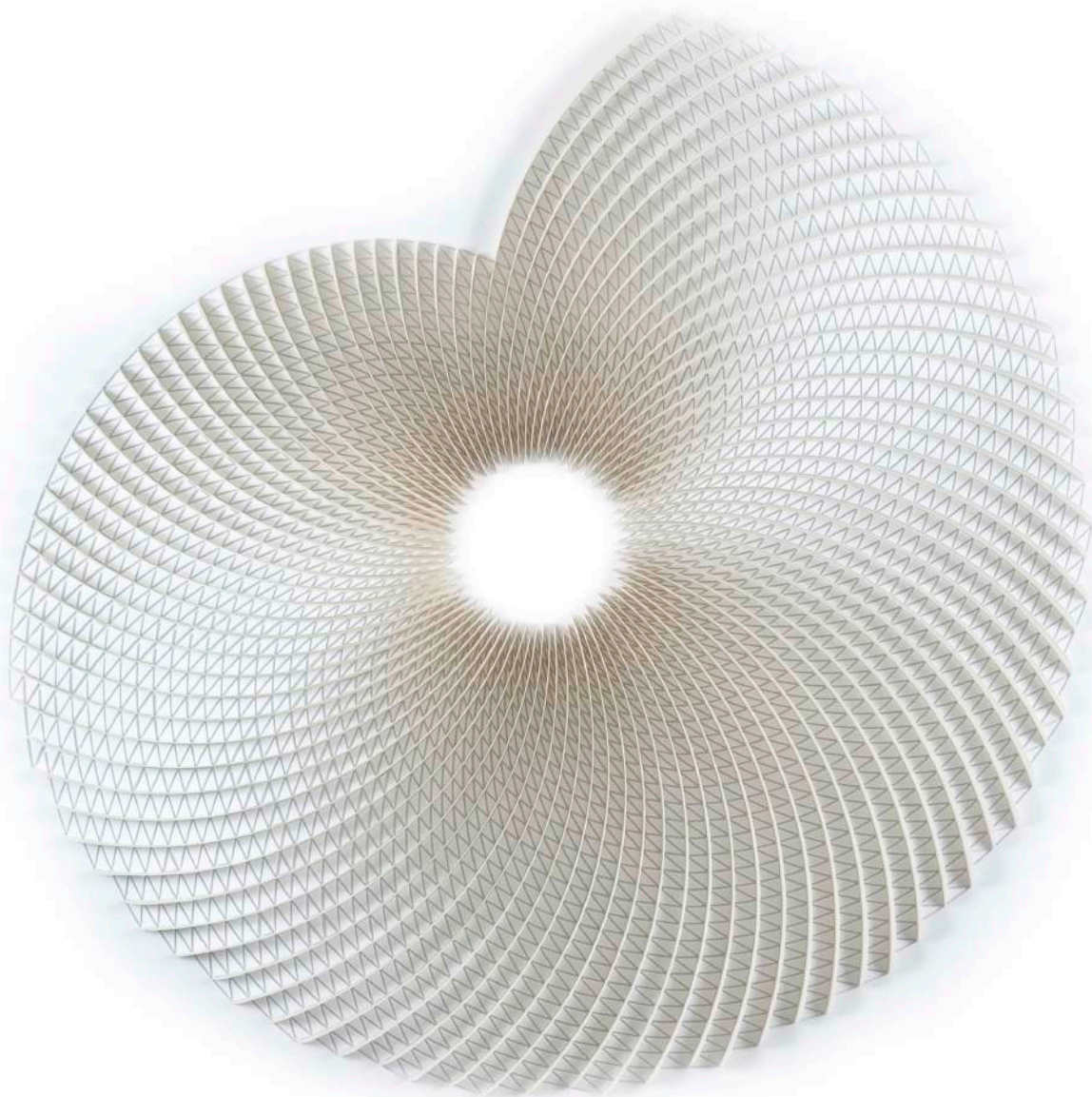


Detail: Fibonacci Circle



Fibonacci Circle

MONO SERIES



Conch I

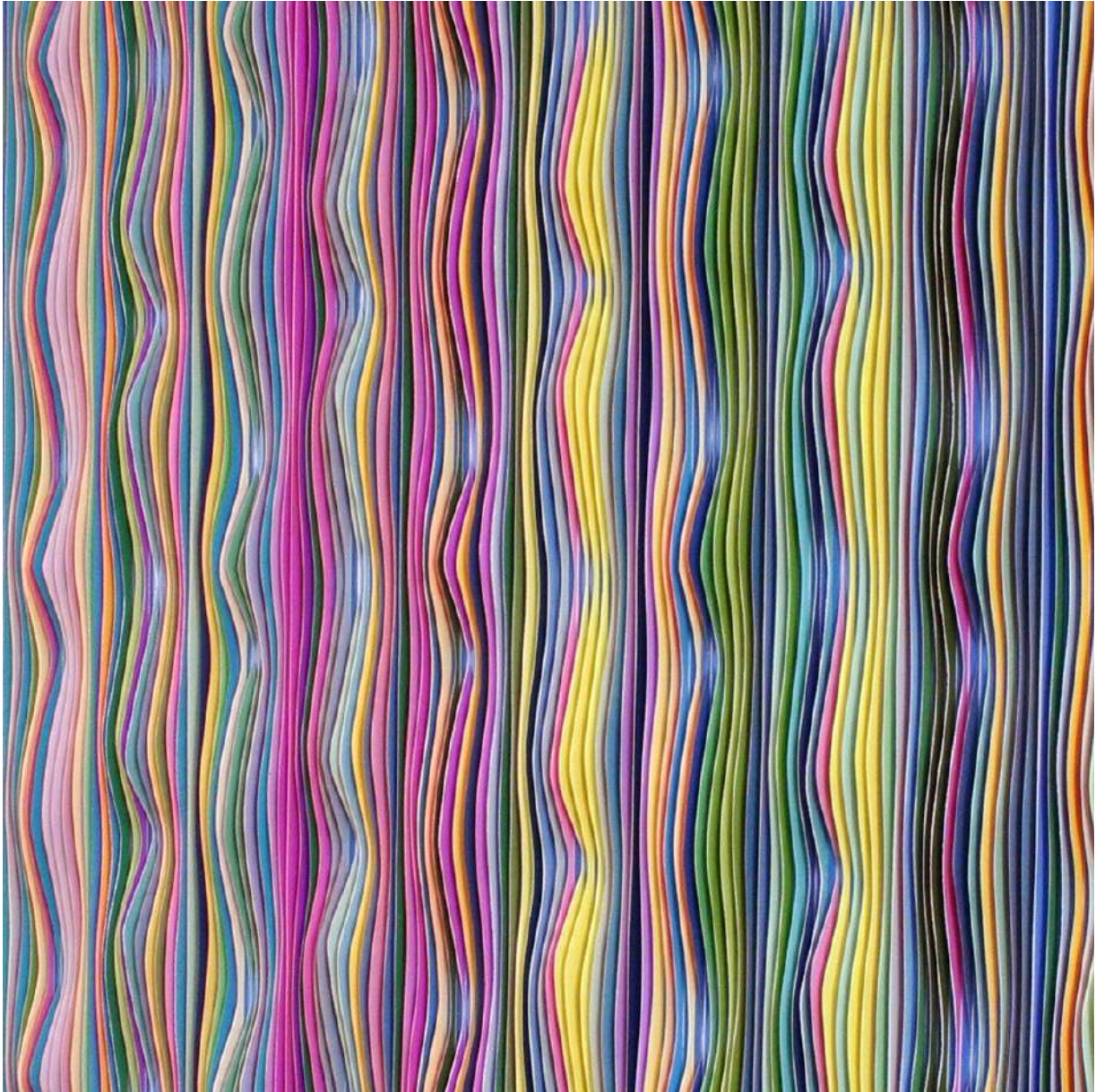


White Lily

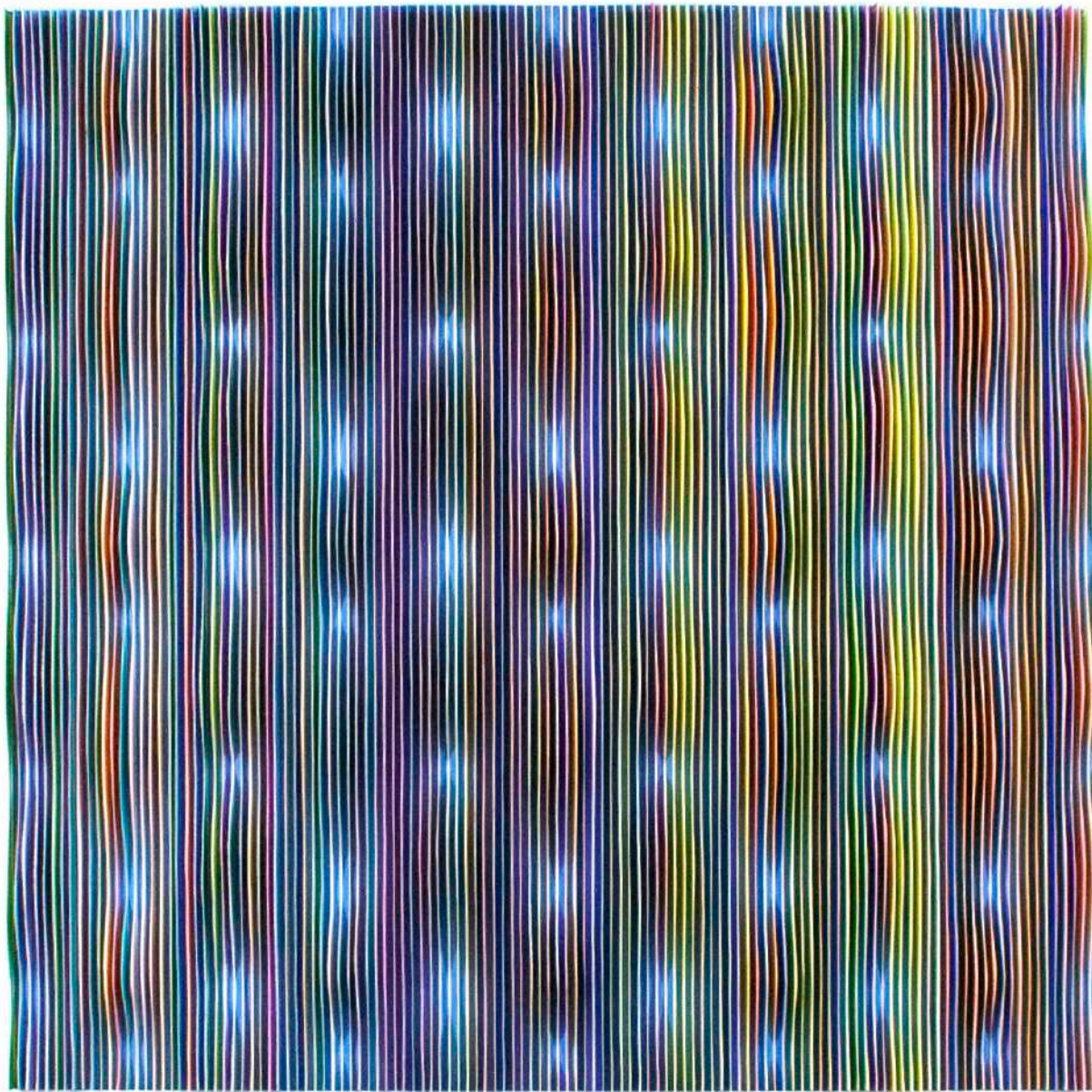




LINEAR SERIES

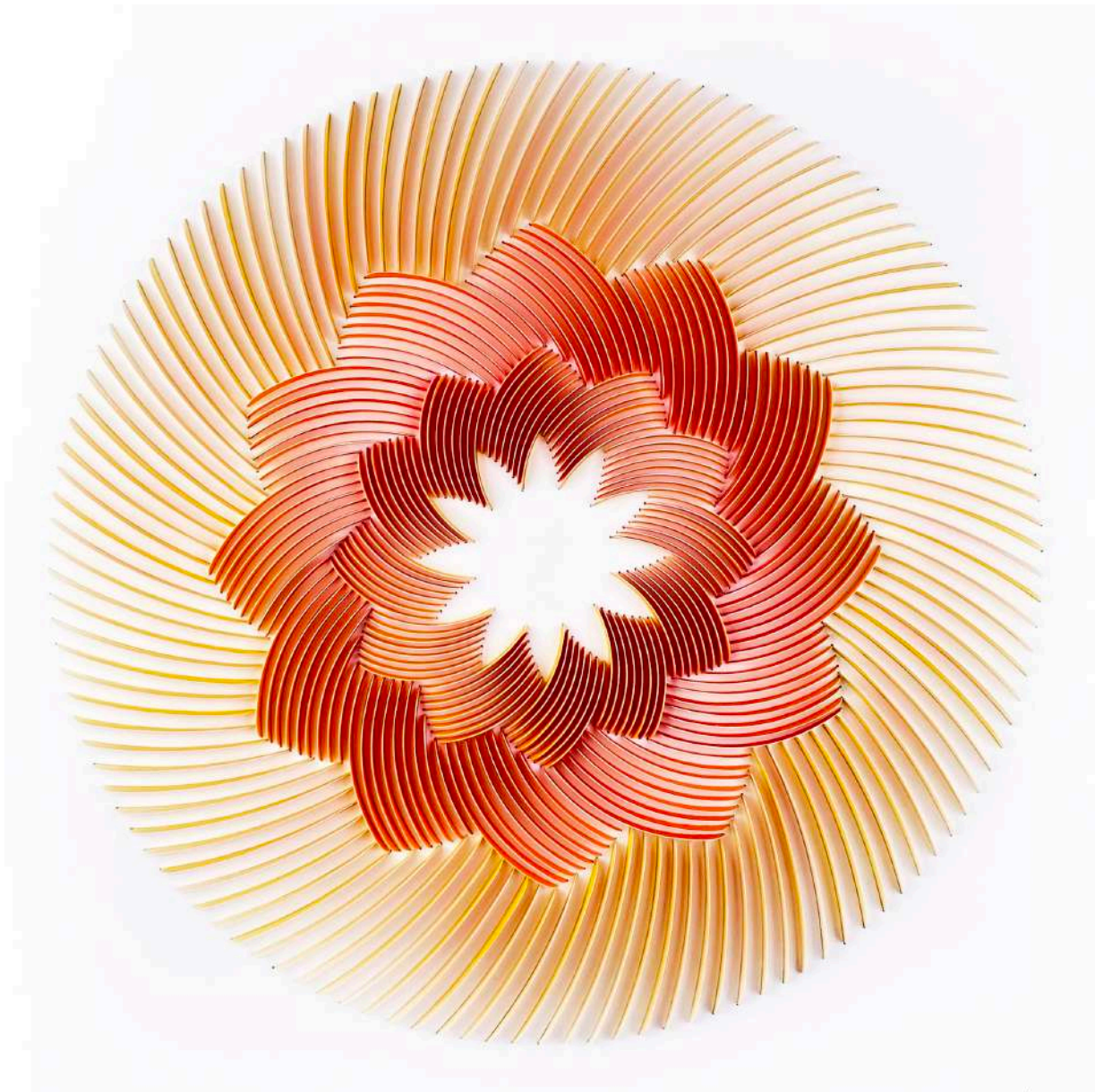


Detail: Radiating Lines I



Radiating Lines I

ROSE SERIES

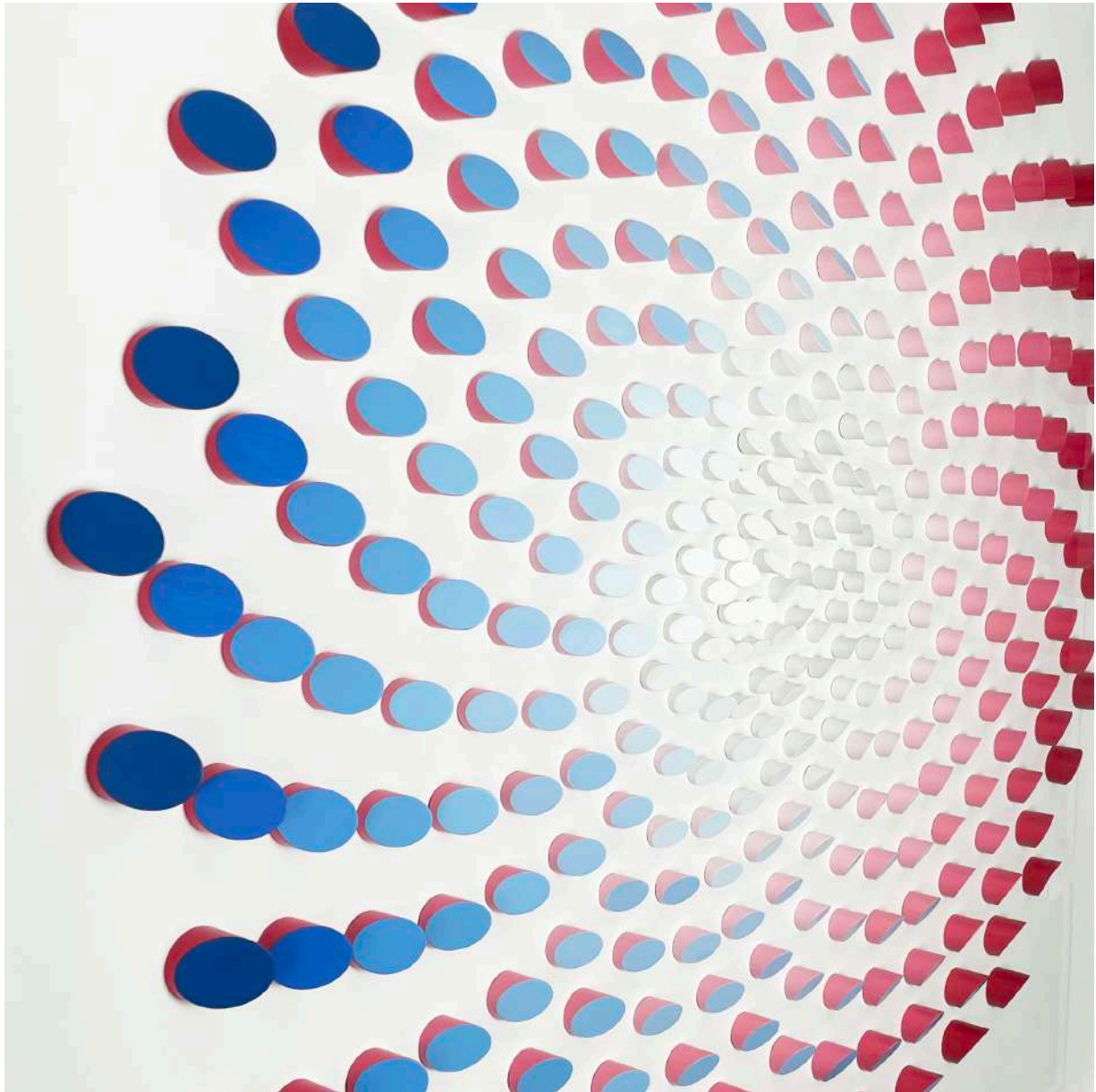


Red & Yellow Rose

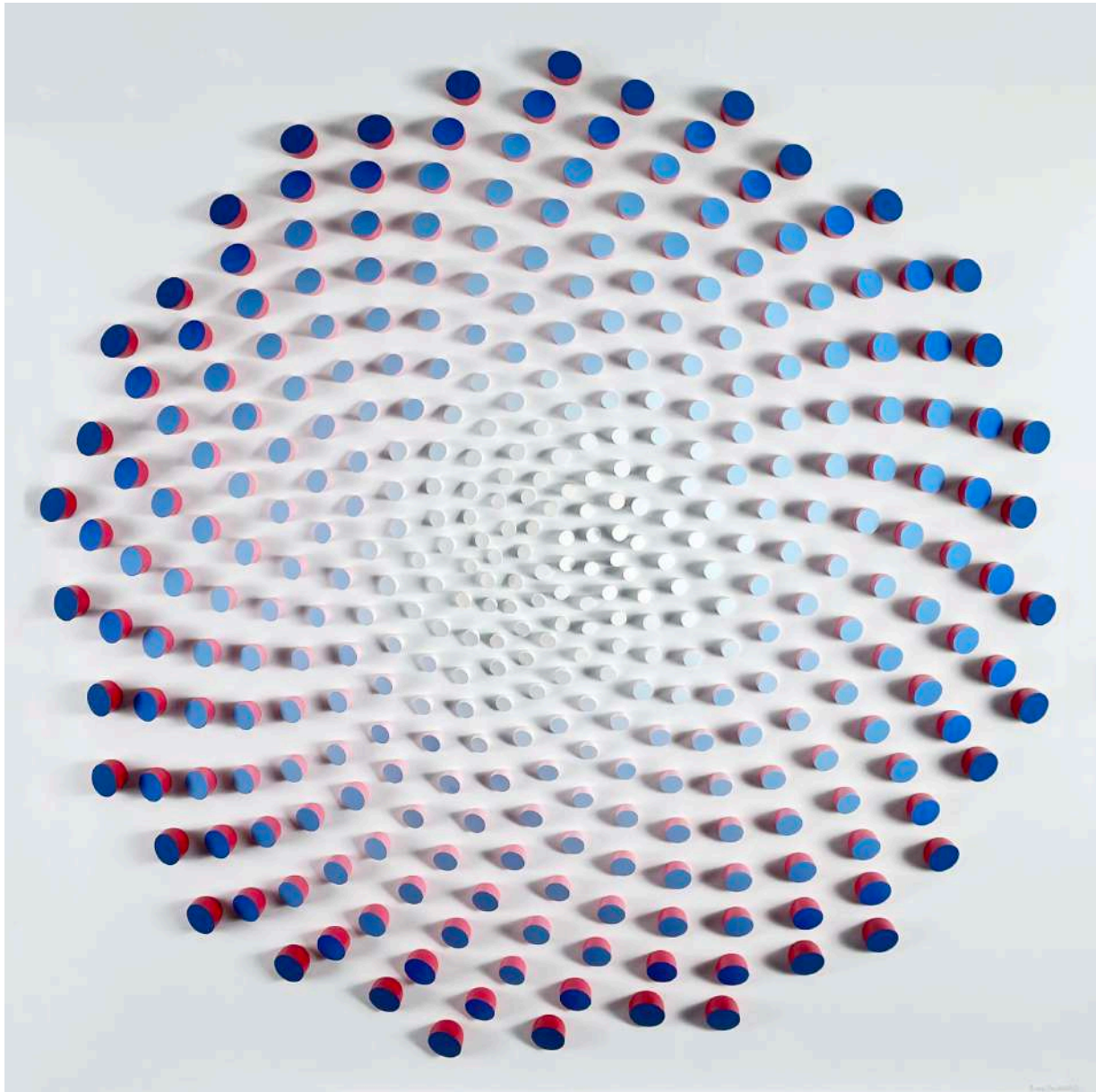


Gold Rose

FIBONACCI SERIES



Detail: Red & Blue Fibonacci



Red & Blue Fibonacci

IRIS SERIES

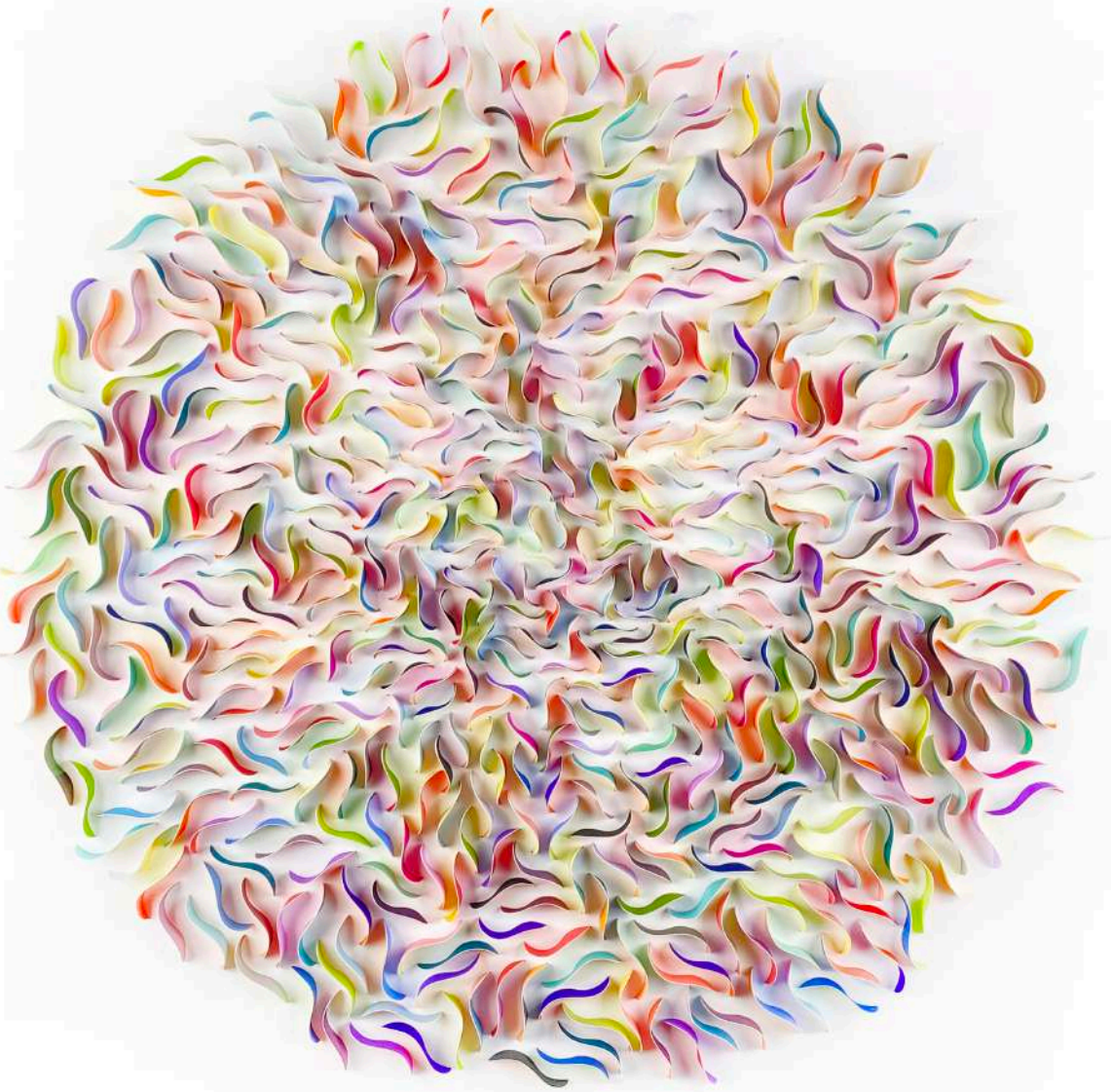


Iris I



Primary Iris

PETAL SERIES



Petal I



Petal II

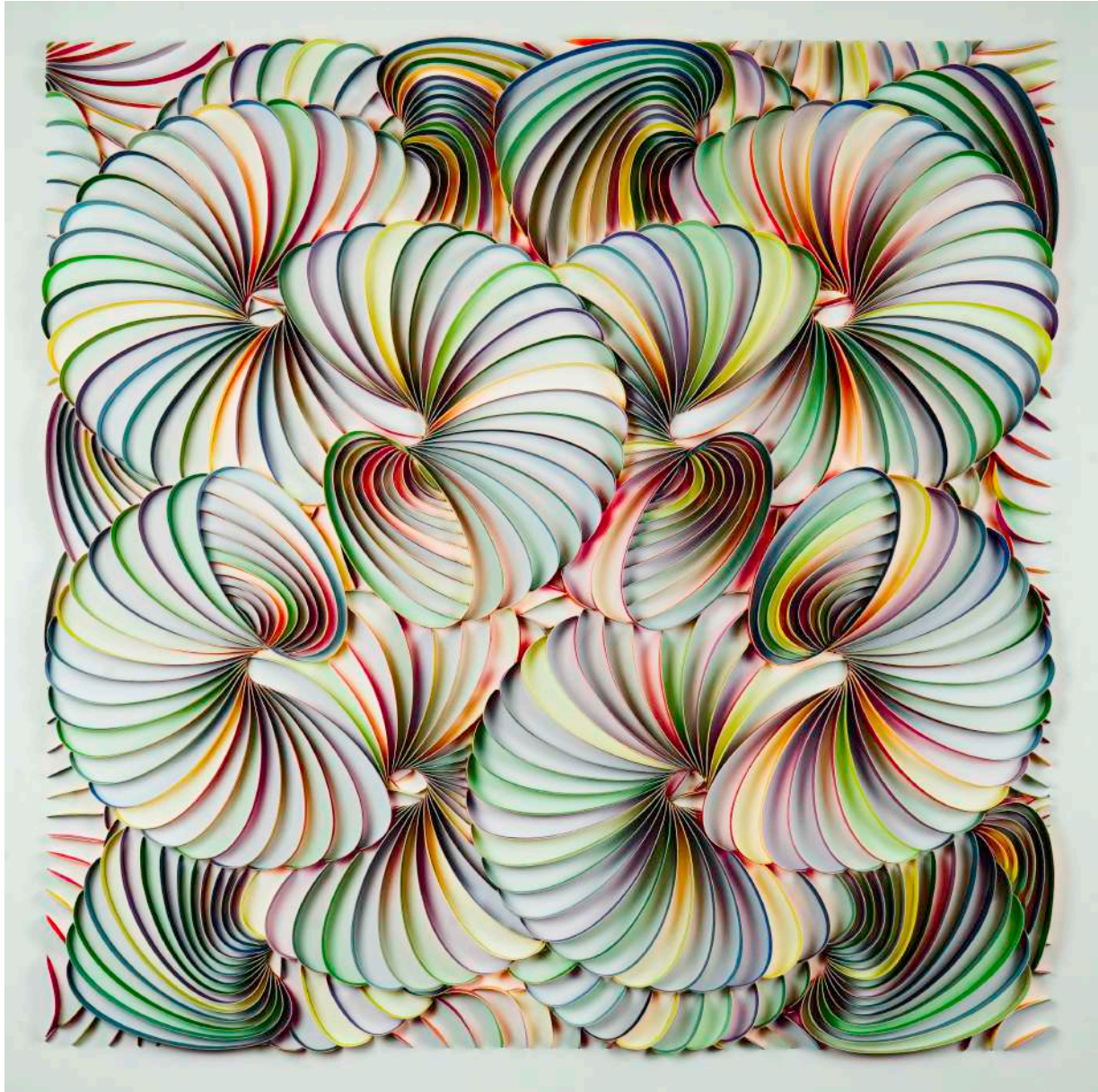


David Laundy



RECENT WORKS

RECENT WORKS



Tubular, Mixed media, 2025, 100cm x 100cm

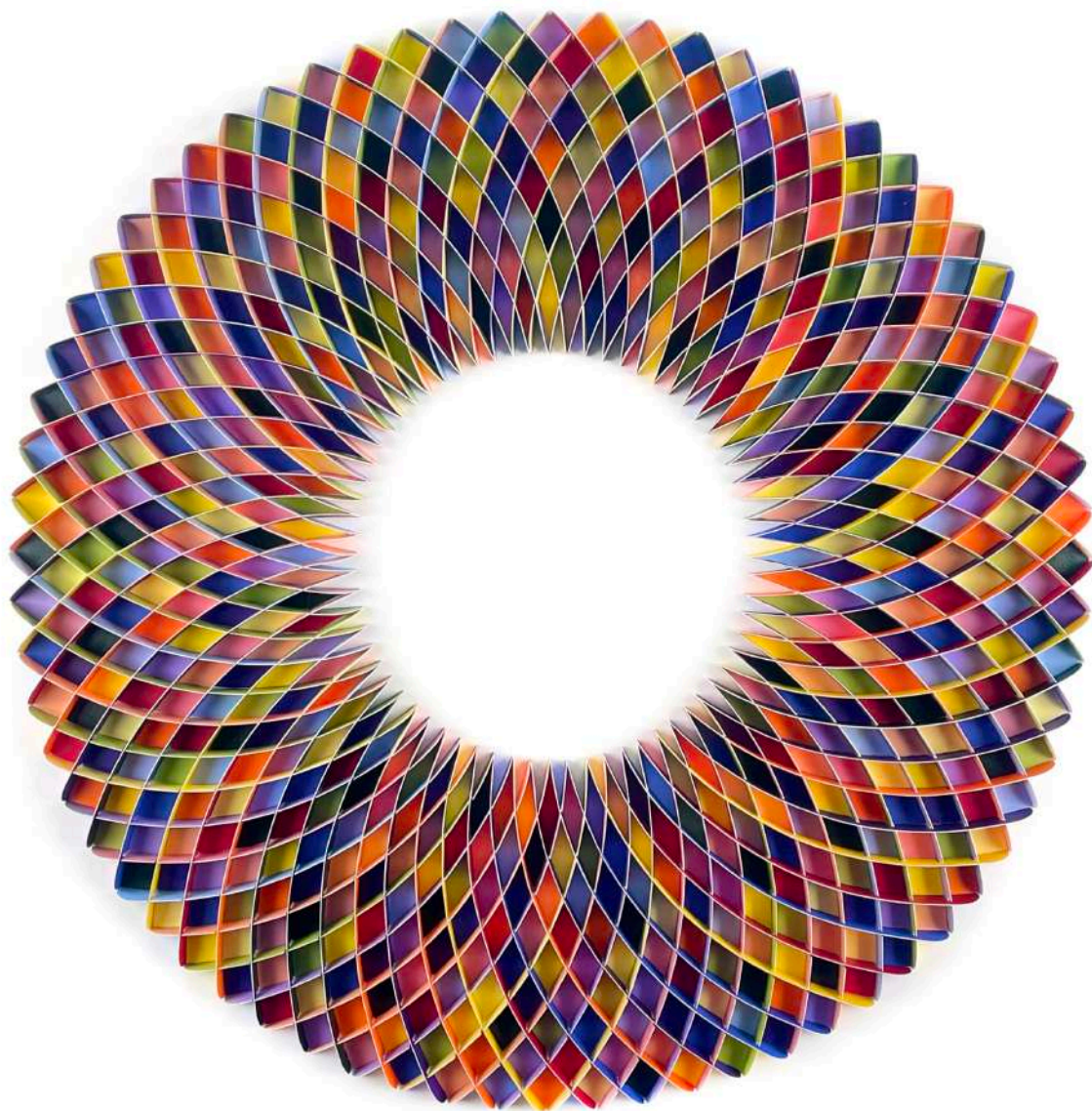


Heart, Mixed media, 2025, 80cm x 80cm

RECENT WORKS



Rotations, Mixed media, 2025, 100cm x 100cm



Harlequin, Mixed media, 2025, 80cm x 80cm

RECENT WORKS

84



Linear Inserts, Mixed media, 2025, 100cm x 700cm

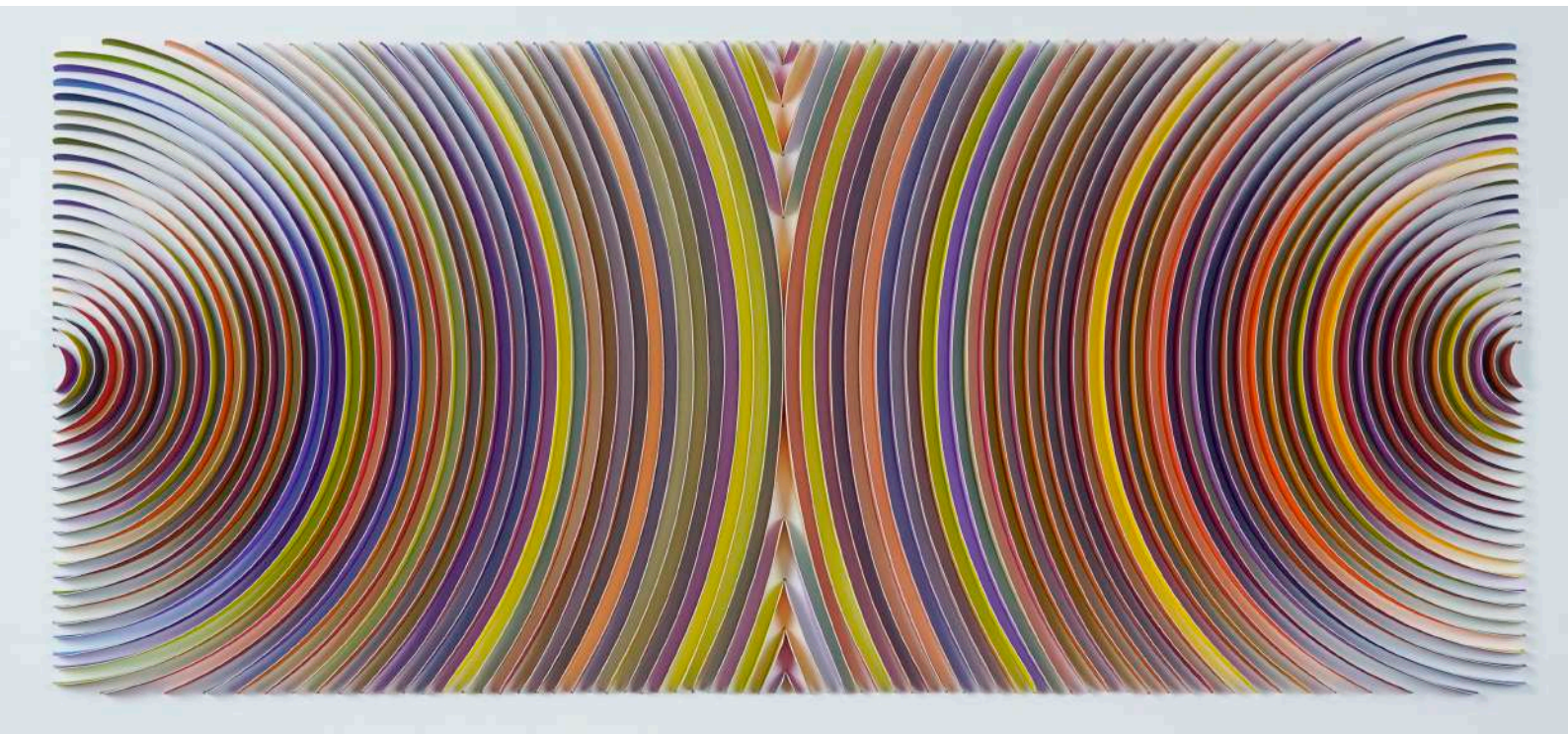


Lily, Mixed media, 2025, 120cm x 120cm

RECENT WORKS

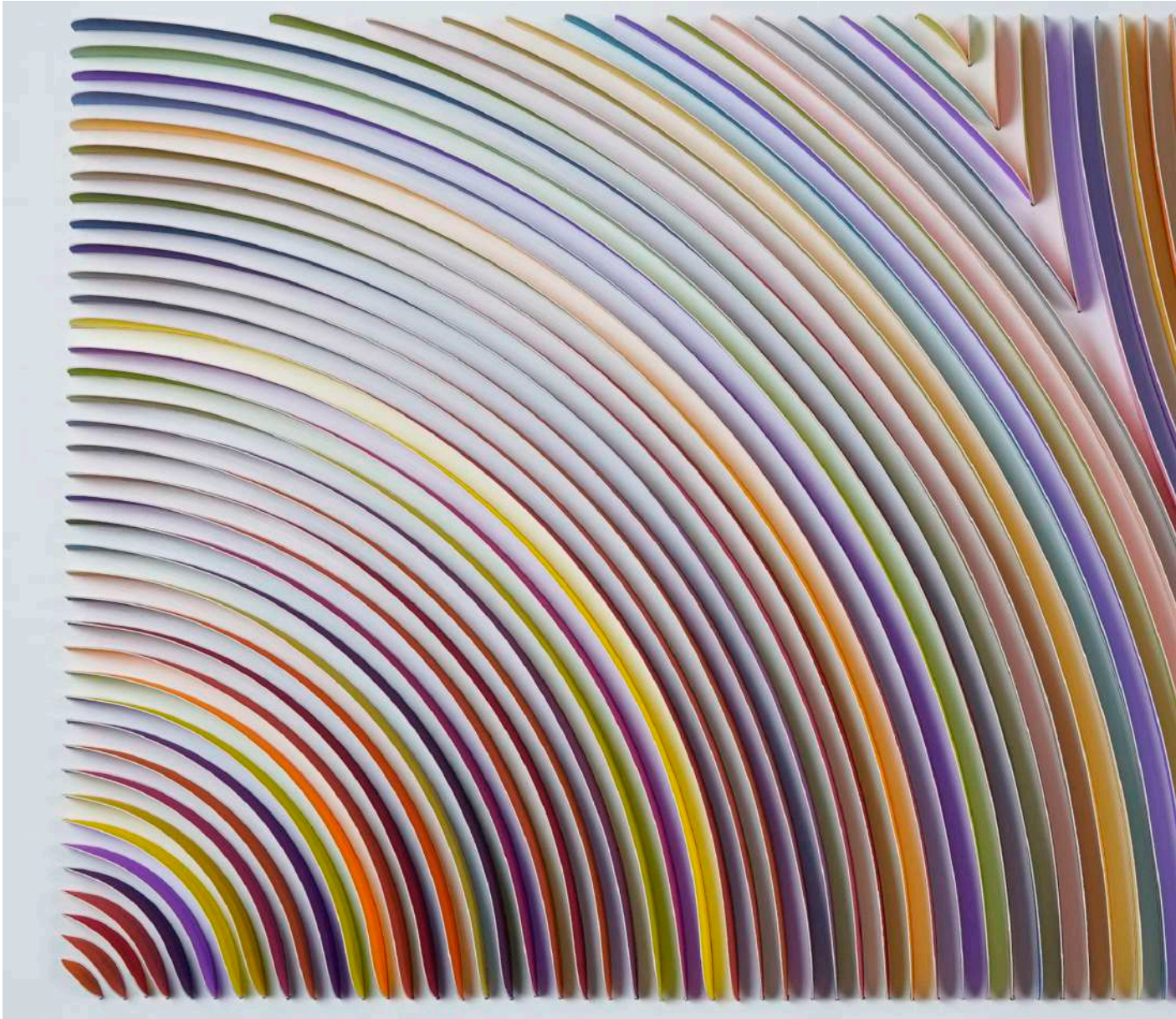


Colliding Circles 1, Mixed media, 2025, 100cm x 50cm

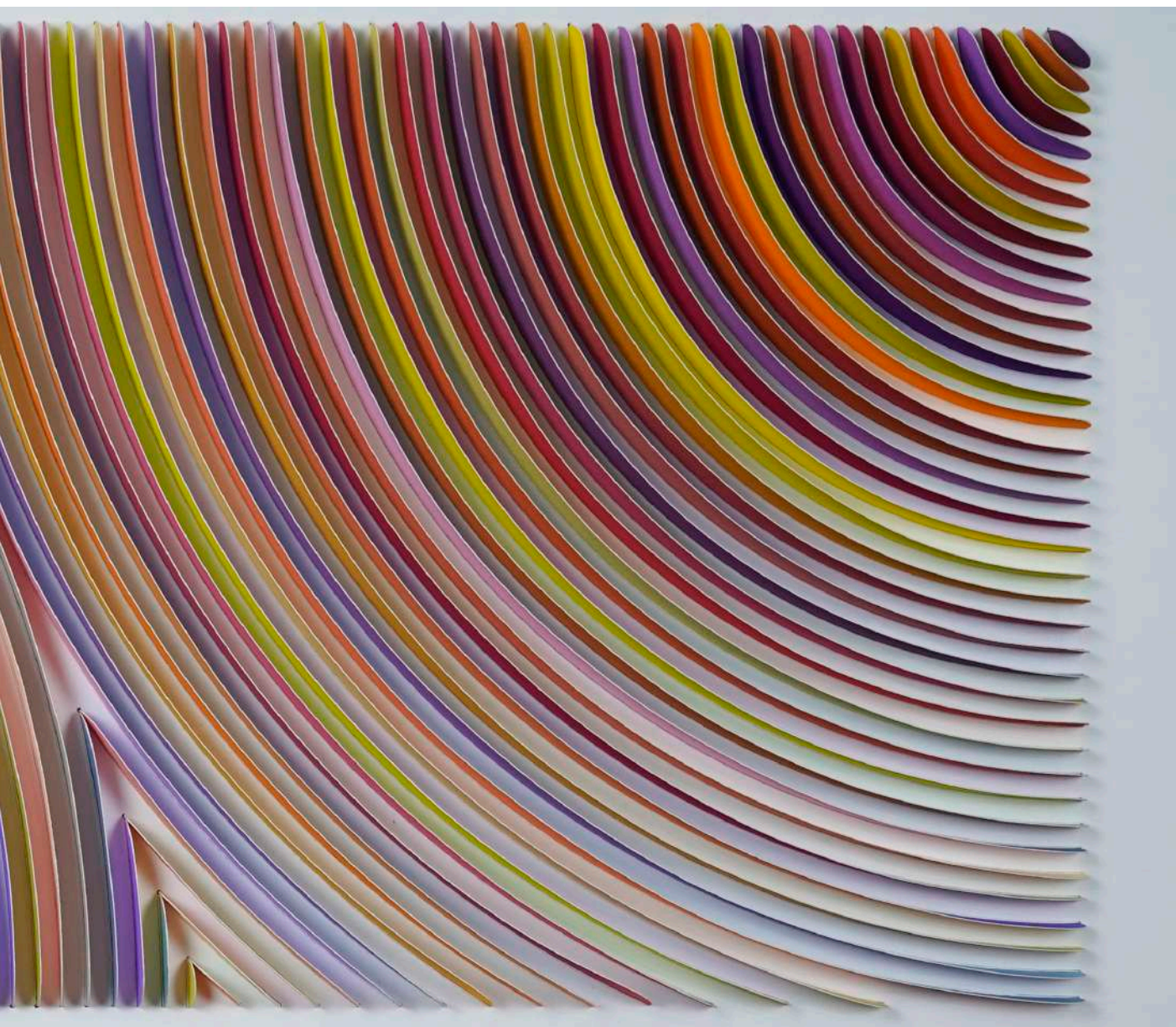


Colliding Circles 2, Mixed media, 2025, 100cm x 50cm

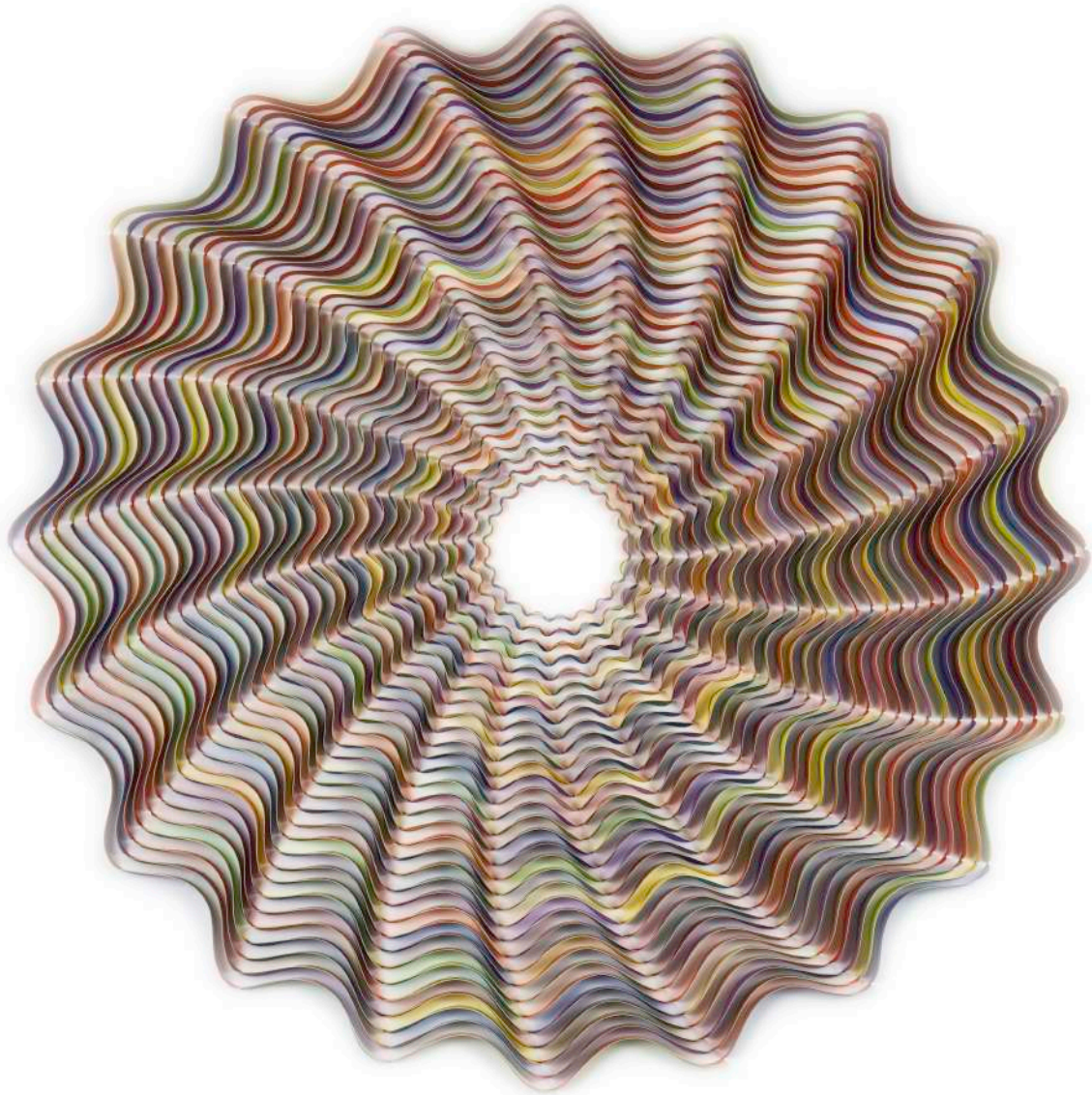
RECENT WORKS



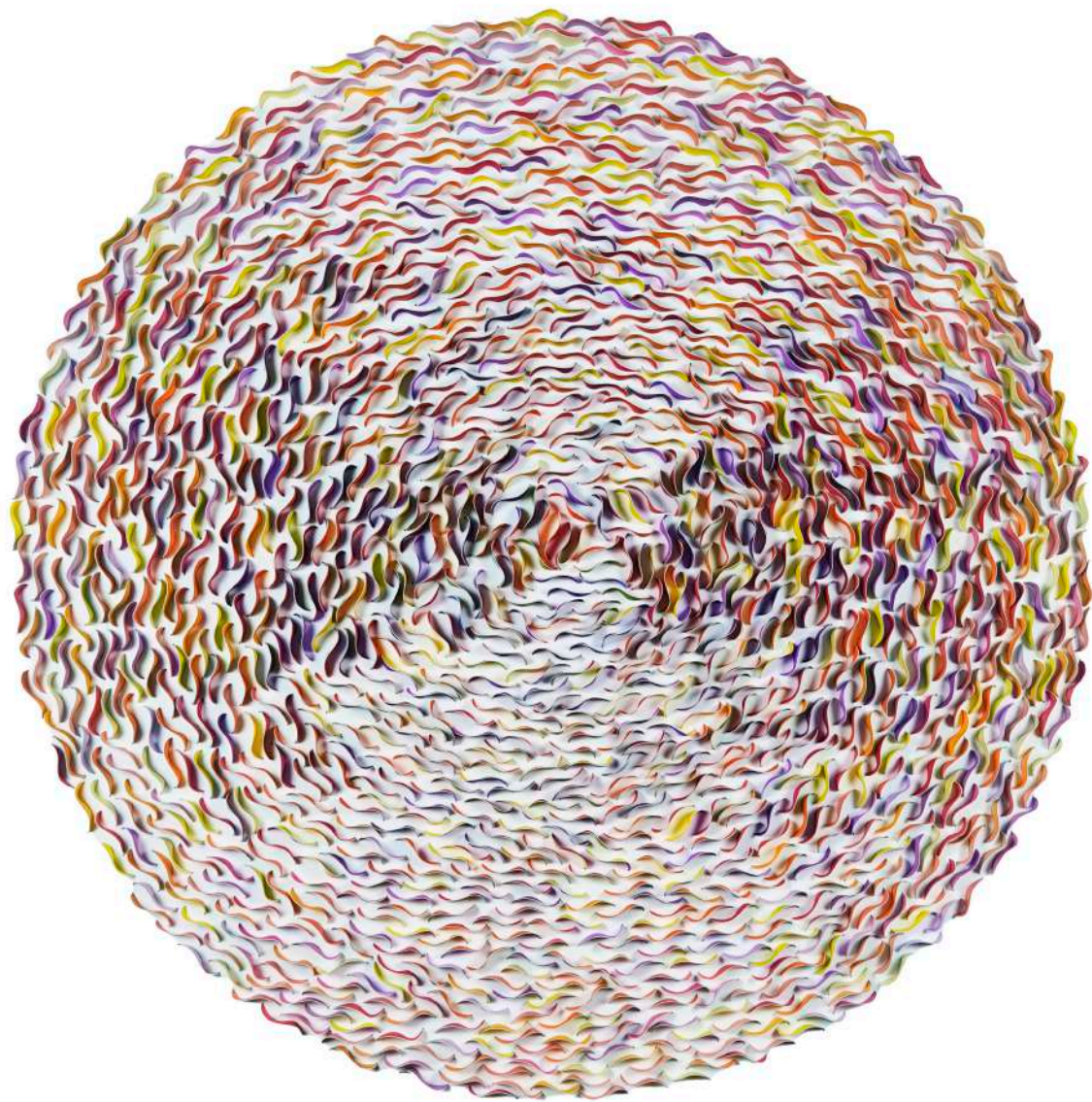
Colliding Circles 3, Mixed media, 2025, 100cm x 50cm



RECENT WORKS

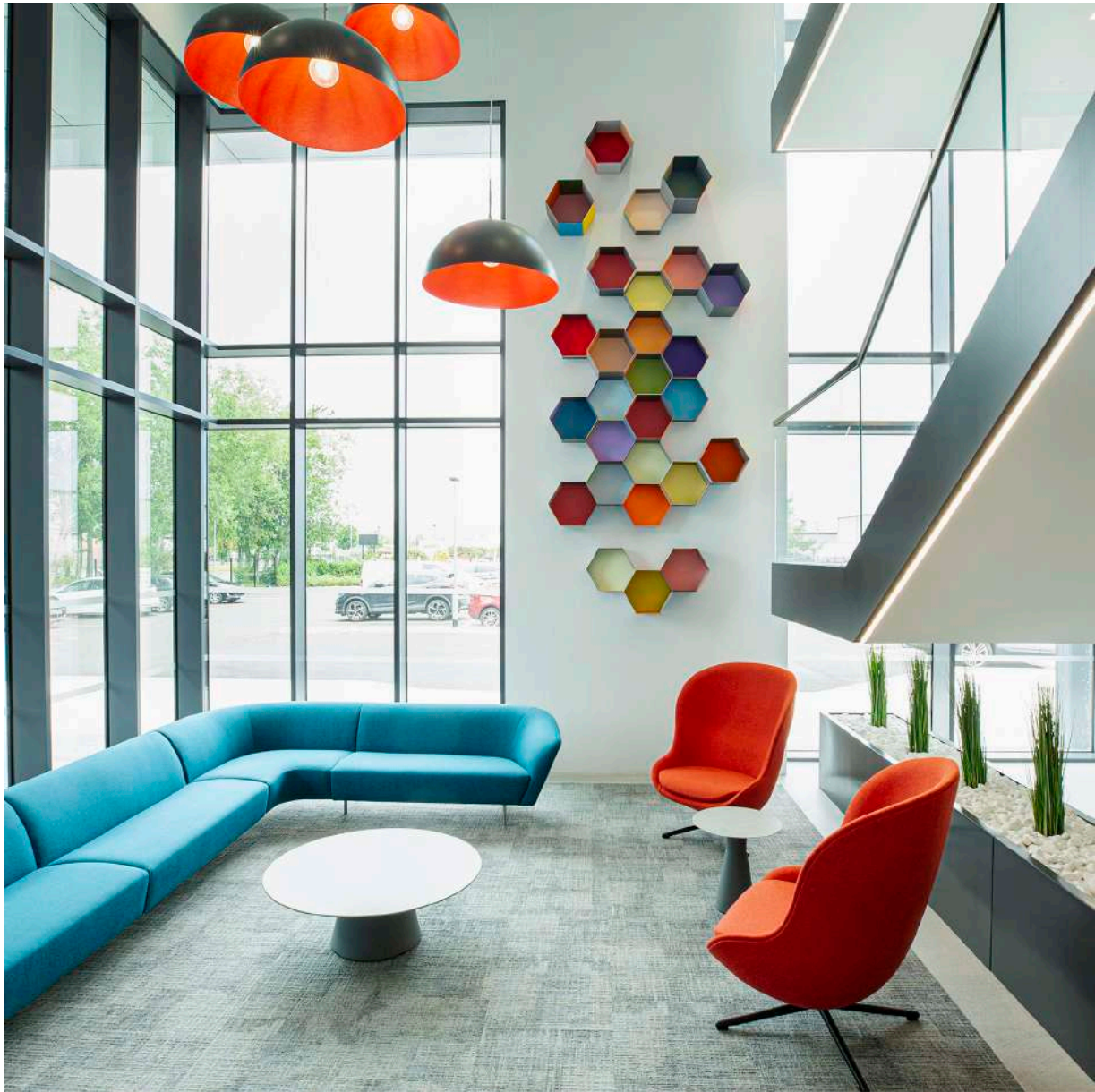


Shell, Mixed media, 2025, 100cm x 100cm

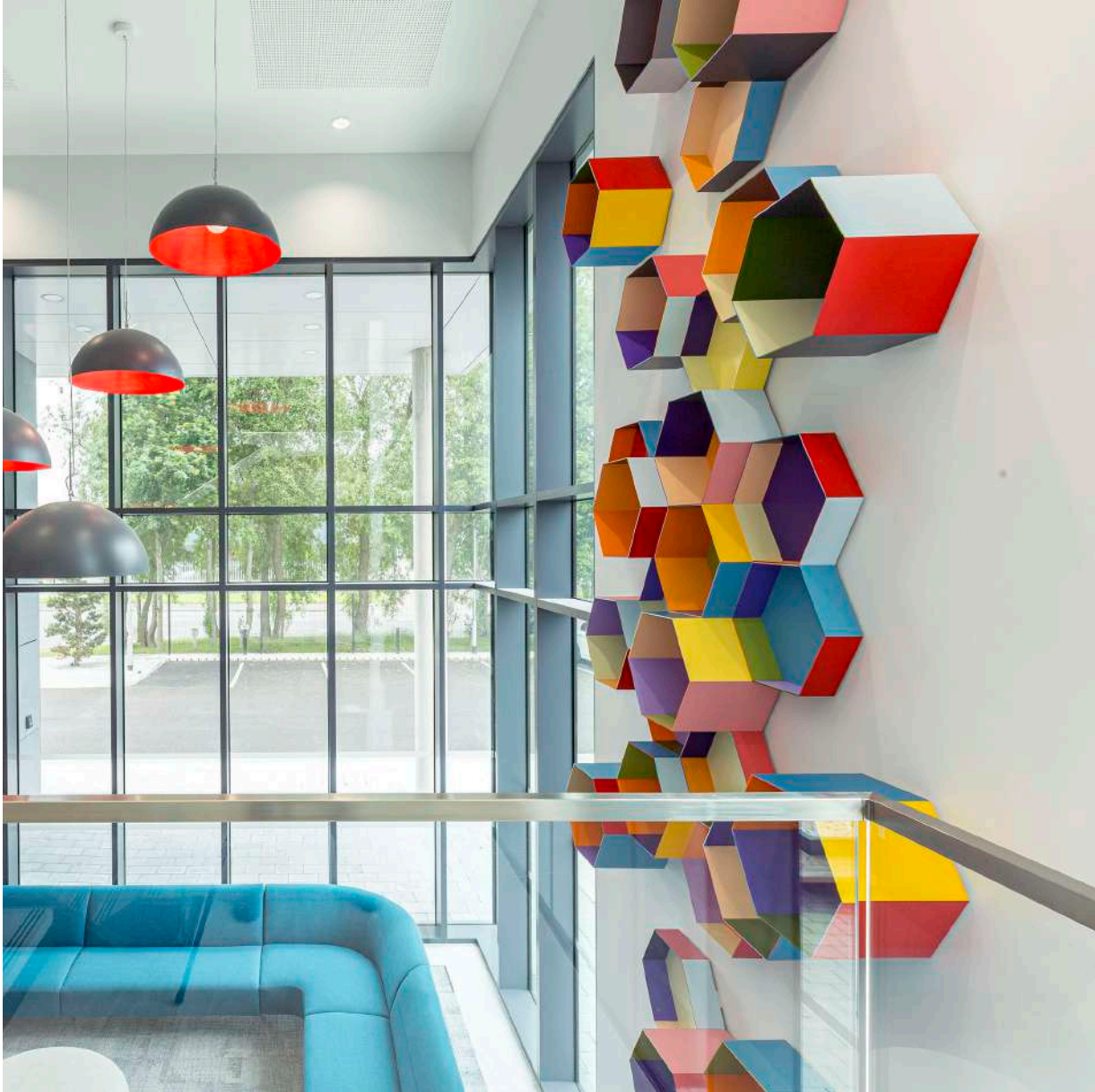


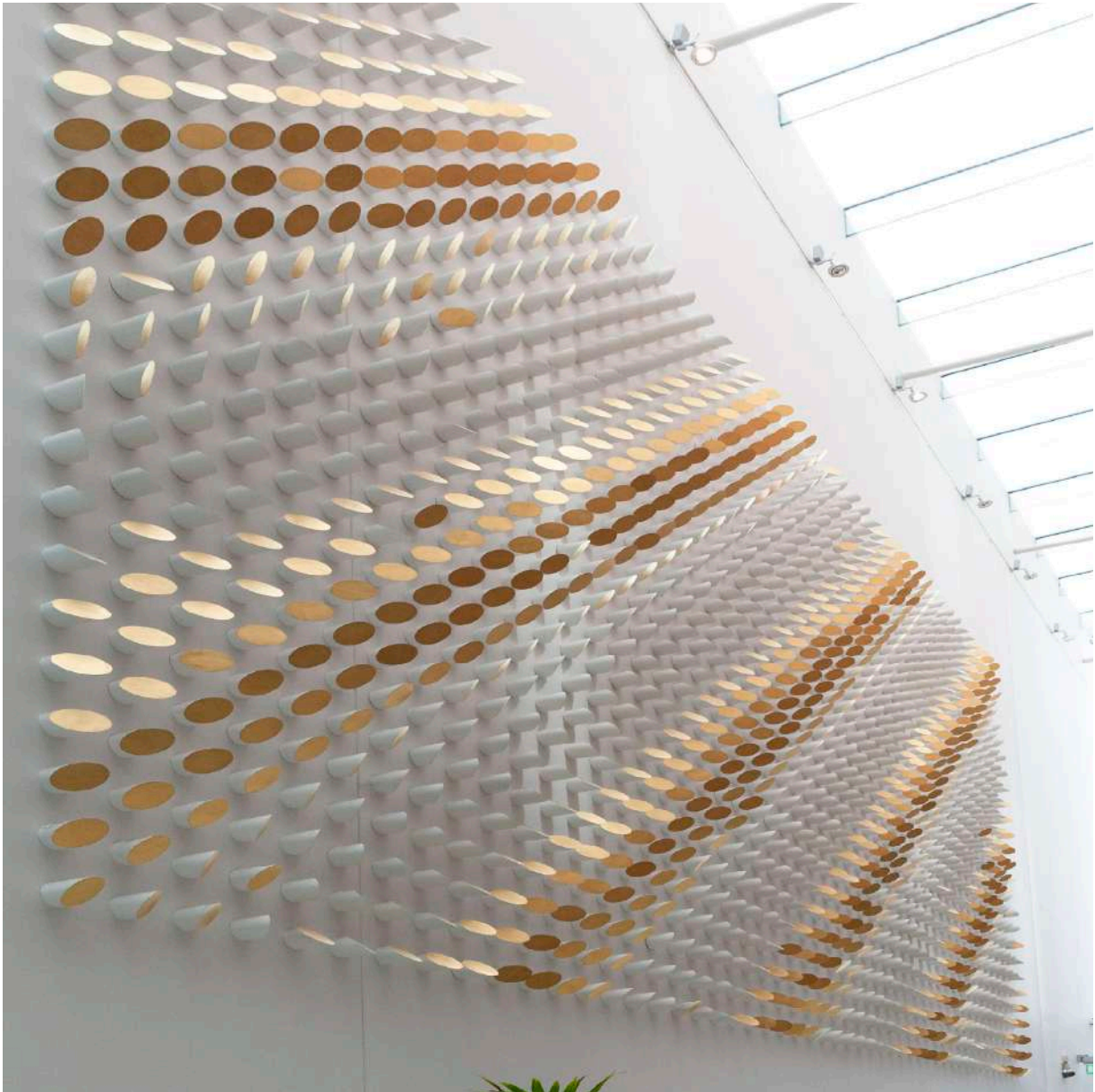
Ripples,, Mixed media, 2025, 120cm x 120cm

**PUBLIC
WORKS**



Gilbert Ash, Belfast





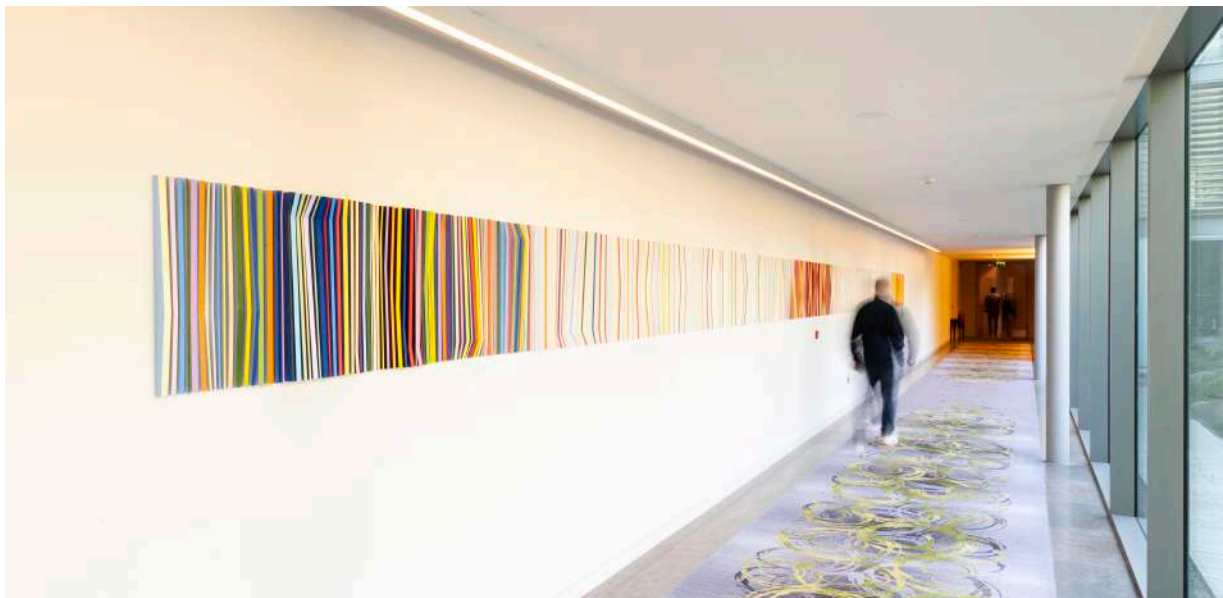
One Grand Parade, Dublin



PUBLIC WORKS



University College Dublin



The Gibson Hotel, Dublin

PUBLIC WORKS



Crowne Plaza Hotel, Paris

BIOGRAPHY

Award-winning artist Peter Monaghan was born in Dublin in 1955 and studied at the National College of Art and Design in the mid-1970s. After graduating Monaghan joined Dara O'Lochlainn's pioneering graphic design firm, before starting his own successful design company.

In 2000, he gave up design work to concentrate full-time on his artistic practice. Monaghan has enjoyed a burgeoning artistic trajectory since, with numerous solo and group exhibitions in Ireland, the UK, across Europe, Asia and the United States. His work is the subject of a Netflix documentary, 'Peter Monaghan - A Portrait' and he has worked on large-scale site-specific installations in Ireland, Europe and the Middle East.

Monaghan's artwork has won national recognition including the Jim McNaughton Bursary as part of the Business to Arts Awards. His large-scale installations can be seen in prestigious locations such as the V.I.P. Presidential Suite in Dublin Airport, One Grand Parade, Crown Plaza Paris, the Marker and Gibson Hotels, the Beacon Clinic, and University College Dublin's scientific centre.

"My work is the result of a disciplined research into the experience of looking – the experience of pure visual sensation and aesthetic pleasure. Simple forms and colours are used in repetition to engage the viewer. It is a dialogue about light, colour, movement and illusion; exploring the relationships and contrasts between painted flat surfaces, protruding spheres, cubes or geometric shapes. I would like my audience to have a visceral connection with my work. I hope that the joy which I experience in creating the paintings is evident and that enjoyment is passed on to the viewer."

Gormleys.

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