

The image is an abstract composition of overlapping translucent panels. Each panel is filled with a series of parallel, slightly curved lines that create a sense of depth and movement. The lines are in various shades of blue and grey, and their orientation changes as the panels overlap, creating a complex, layered effect. The overall composition is dynamic and geometric.

RICHARD ANUSZKIEWICZ
TRANSLUMINA SERIES

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LORETTA HOWARD
GALLERY

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Richard Anuskiewicz by Serge Lemonie

LUMIERE !

Richard Anuskiewicz has been a prominent figure of optico-kinetik Art in the United States, right away baptized « Op Art » for Optical Art¹ and a counterpart to Pop Art. His paintings, vividly colored, with slim intertwined structures which create visual phenomena, were first exhibited in New York at the Museum of Modern Art in 1961 and then featured in the exhibit *Americans 1963*. During the same year his work was also exhibited at the Whitney Museum of American Art in the *Annual Exhibition 1963*. Soon after, his work was singled out and widely written about as a result of another exhibition; *The Responsive Eye*, organized by William C. Seitz in 1965, also at the Museum of Modern Art in New York², which launched Op Art as an artistic movement in the American continent³. This event of particular importance hit the art world audience like thunder, prompting very strong reactions. Richard Anuskiewicz was represented by two paintings, next to those of Victor Vasarely, Jeffrey Steele, himself much noticed⁴, Larry Poons, François Morellet⁵, Almir Mavignier⁶, Bridget Riley, then making one of her first showings, together with a large selection of European and American artists.

1. The kick-off was given in a way by the article of a journalist, Jon Borgzinner, appeared in *Time Magazine* on October 23rd, 1964 under the unequivocal title: "Pictures that attack the Eye".

2. The exhibition then turned in the United States in Saint-Louis, Seattle, Pasadena, Baltimore.

3. In Europe, the main demonstrations celebrating this artistic trend by revealing it at the same time were *Bewogen Beweging* at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in 1961, *Licht und Bewegung* at the Kunsthalle de Berne in 1965, *Kunst Licht Kunst* at the Stedelijk van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven in 1966, *Lumière et Mouvement* at the Museum of Modern Art of the City of Paris in 1967, as well as in *Documenta* in 1964 and 1968 in Cassel.

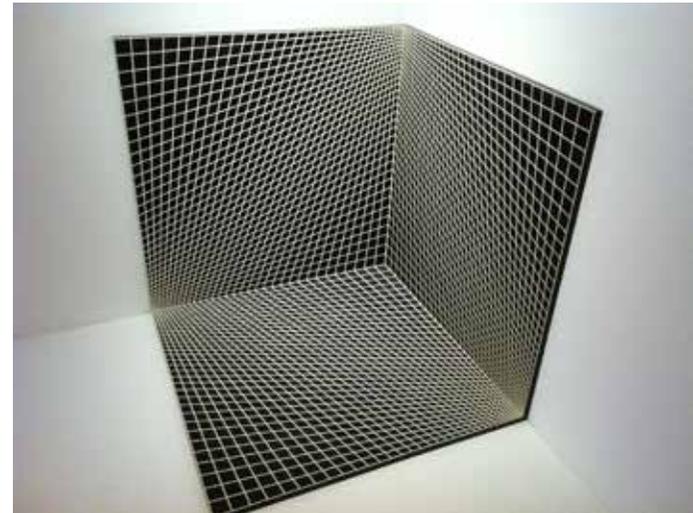
4. Jeffrey Steele' painting *Baroque Experiment-Fred Maddox* in 1964 (private collection) present in the exhibition was used as illustration in *Time Magazine's* article. Cf. above, note 1.

5. The similarity between François Morellet's wefts as that shown in the exhibition *The Responsive Eye* and the grids of Sol LeWitt was revealed many times. It is on the occasion of this exhibition that Sol LeWitt who, very young, was then a guard in the rooms of the museum, discovered the work of the French artist, as he acknowledged many years later.

6. Almir Mavignier played at that time a big role, being in 1961 the organizer of the exhibition *New Tendancies* in Zagreb, which widely contributed to feed, by its discoveries and its standpoint, the New York exhibition.

Soon thereafter, Richard Anuszkiewicz' work was also featured in the famous *Documenta 4* which took place in 1968 in Kassel, Germany and also prominently featured international kinetic art. This consecration, which went beyond the art world to become a fashion in many other areas would be positively coined in the book by George Rickey *Constructivism Origins and Evolution*, published in 1967, and in another by Cyril Barret titled *Op Art* and published in 1970⁷ where Richard Anuskiewicz was widely cited and his works reproduced.

Throughout his career Richard Anuszkiewicz has continued his brilliant and rigorous production by working in series and by varying his themes while at the same time exhibiting his work in major American museums and galleries. During the 1990s a new generation of artists became interested in experiences relative to the use of the light, optical phenomena and the rendition of movement. We think here of the master work *The Weather Project* presented in 2003 by Olafur Eliasson at the Tate Modern in London, which became the symbol of this revival and a reconquest. Other artists taking part in this renewed interest included Ann Veronica Janssens, Jeppe Hein, Carsten Höller, Žilvinas Kempinas, Philippe Decrauzat and also more recently Pe Lang and Elias Crespín. In the same spirit, numerous exhibitions have been organized to bring back to the forefront the works of preceding artists such as Anuszkiewicz which has resulted in their work being looked at from a wider perspective. Exhibitions such as *Optic Nerve Perceptual Art* of the 1960s, presented in 2007 at Columbus Museum of Art, prominently featured Anuszkiewicz's work⁸. The same year, the Schirn kunsthalle in Frankfurt am Main showed an

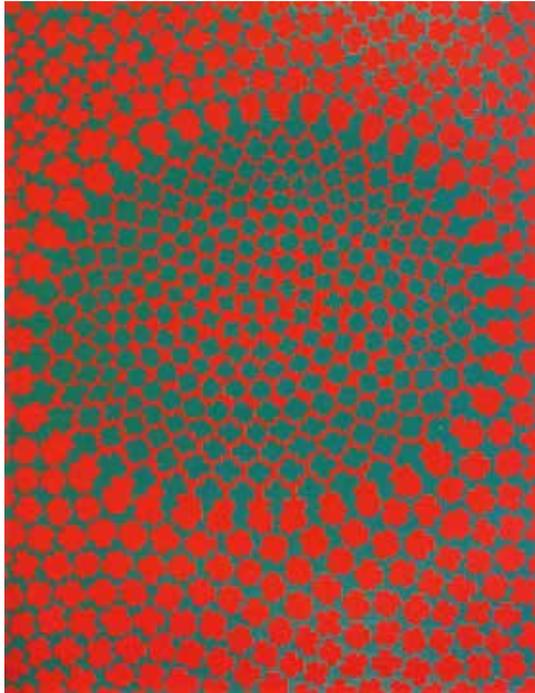


**Convex And Concave -
Three Unit Dimensional**, 1967
Enamel on Plywood
32 x 32 inches
Image courtesy of
Richard Anuszkiewicz studio

7. George Rickey's book, which is a monument, was published by George Braziller in New York. A second edition was published in 1969. For the artists to be featured therein represents a supreme acknowledgment. Cyril Barrett's book was published at Studio Vista in London.

8. The curator of this original exhibition was Joe Houston, curator for the Hallmark Art Collection.

exhibition bearing the straightforward title *Op Art*⁹, where his work was also featured. *Ghosts in the Machine* (2012) which surveyed the relationship between humans, machines and art at The New Museum in New York featured Anuszkiewicz' work and in 2013, I organized, in Paris at the Grand Palais, the exhibition *Dynamo A Century Of Movement And Light In Art 1913-2013*¹⁰, featuring *Convex And Concave - Three Unit Dimensional*, 1967, Enamel on



Plus Reversed, 1960
Oil on canvas
74 5/8 x 58 1/4 inches
Gift of Mari and James A. Michener,
1991- Blanton Museum Collection
Image courtesy of
Richard Anuszkiewicz studio

Plywood, 32 x 32. (see image). By taking back the title of the Time Magazine article, the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Humlebaek, Denmark presented in 2016 in an exhibition titled *Eye Attack Op Art and Kinetic Art 1950 – 1970* many of his works. In 2018, in Rotterdam, I will present one of his most beautiful paintings of the 1960s, *Inflection*¹¹, as part of the exhibition *ACTIE > REACTIE 100 jaar kinetische kunst* at the Kunsthal. Richard Anuszkiewicz is very much present today.

In this context, New York based Loretta Howard Gallery currently organizes an exhibition of the *Translumina* series of works by Richard Anuszkiewicz dating from the late 1980's to the mid 1990's. The *Translumina* series is highly original and yet at the same time very much in line with continuing themes in the artists' work: constructions in three dimensional relief with shaped canvases, which use perspective only to better betray it; all vividly colored to represent light, a consistent theme we find in his work and throughout his career. In order to get a better look at Richard Anuszkiewicz's paintings, it might be necessary to briefly remind ourselves of his artistic itinerary.

9. Max Hollein, the director of the Städel Museum and the Schirn Kunsthalle in Frankfurt am Main, was its curator with Martina Weinhart.

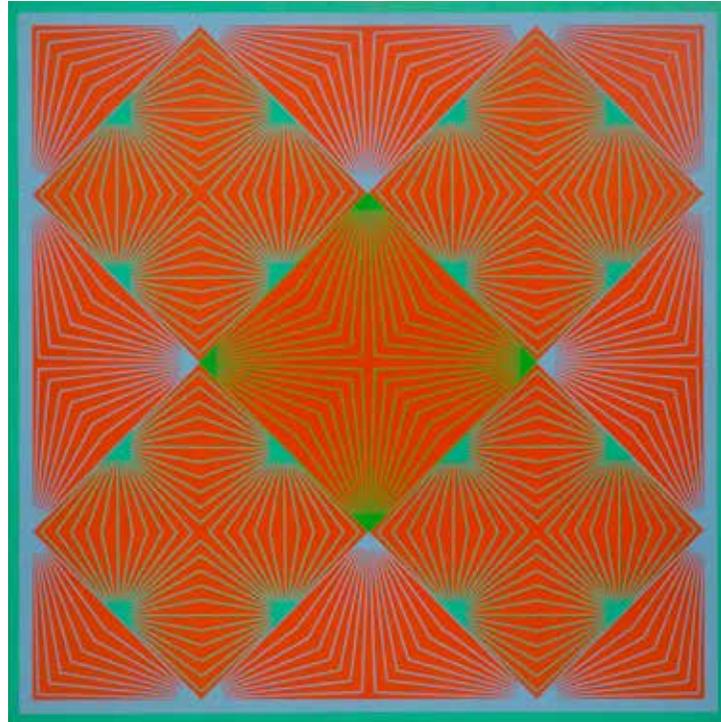
10. This exhibition was curated by Serge Lemoine, Curator in Chief, together with associate curators Marianne Le Pommeré, Domitille d' Orgeval and Matthieu Poirier these art historians, and was visited by over 320,000 visitors.

11. This painting belongs to Collection Aldo Rubino, on loan at MACBA of Buenos-Aires, Argentina.

Historical precedents and a few considerations.

Richard Anuszkiewicz was a student of Josef Albers, whose teaching he followed from 1953 to 1955 in New Haven, CT, at the Yale University School of Art and Architecture. He remained loyal to him. During this period, his own work which had been previously more representational similar in style to the American Realist painters Edward Hopper and Charles Burchfield would begin to turn to abstraction. *Plus Reversed*, painted in 1960 (Collection of the Blanton Museum of Art, Austin, TX) is composed of a sowing of small autonomous figures in the shape of a plus sign, set around two circular and superimposed focal points each surrounded by a halo, one green receding from a red background, the other red coming forward on a green background, each somehow reversing from one form to the other. This relationship, very much inspired by Pointillism¹², creates a powerful optical effect due to the intensity of the chromatic contrasts. However, this is not the main point. Rather, Richard Anuszkiewicz was mindful of rendering the light.

To this crucial interest, which is going to reveal itself as exclusive, and so to better reach his goal, the artist adds structure by resorting to elementary geometrical forms and the use of line. At once, his preference is for the square. Letting go of



Luminous, 1965
Acrylic on canvas
24 x 24 inches
Image Courtesy of George Nauyok

12. One of its paintings shown in the exhibition *The Responsive Eye* in 1965 in New York *All Things Do Live in the Three* (1963) persisted in this way which showed a network regular of multicolored points distributed in a vast field of red color, livened by subtle haloes in lozenge shape.

classic ideas of composition, he takes modules that he places inside a grid. He restricts his scope of colors to a dominant one. He uses a complex network of parallel and concentric lines, which leads to organizing the surfaces and to subtle differences in expression. Also letting go

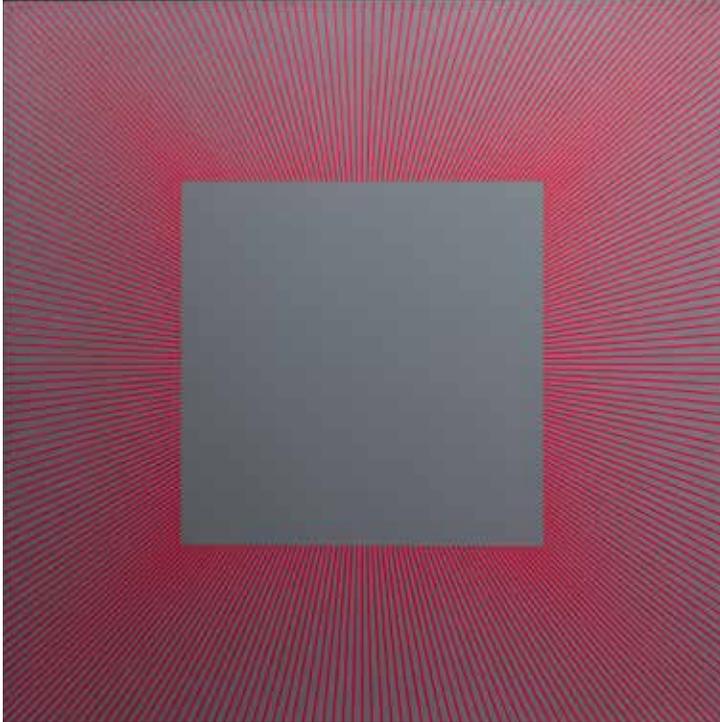
of the touch, he focuses on a neutral mechanical execution. He systematically programs his work before its execution. His painting *Luminous* of 1965 offers an illustration of his methodology with its forms in diagonal, its dominant cadmium red and its stark cold blue foyers which radiate in regular intervals, its networks of thin lines which create the vibration of colored surfaces and perfect execution. The optical effect that arises creates for Richard Anuszkiewicz the epitome of the active power of light.

This will become a dominant theme in his work and he will develop it in many forms: extreme brightness: *Ghostly Gray* (1978); obscurity: *Red Edged Smoky Gray Square* (1980); the midday sun: *Chartreuse Square* (1979); the night: *Viridian Square* (1981); a singular moon: *Eclipse III* (1979). Is this “Op Art”? Indeed and without question a mode of procedure but under calculated disguise to express a true sensibility and transform light into visual poetry.

Richard Anuszkiewicz works in series by turning to a specific vocabulary: The *Spectral Complimentary series* a horizontal or

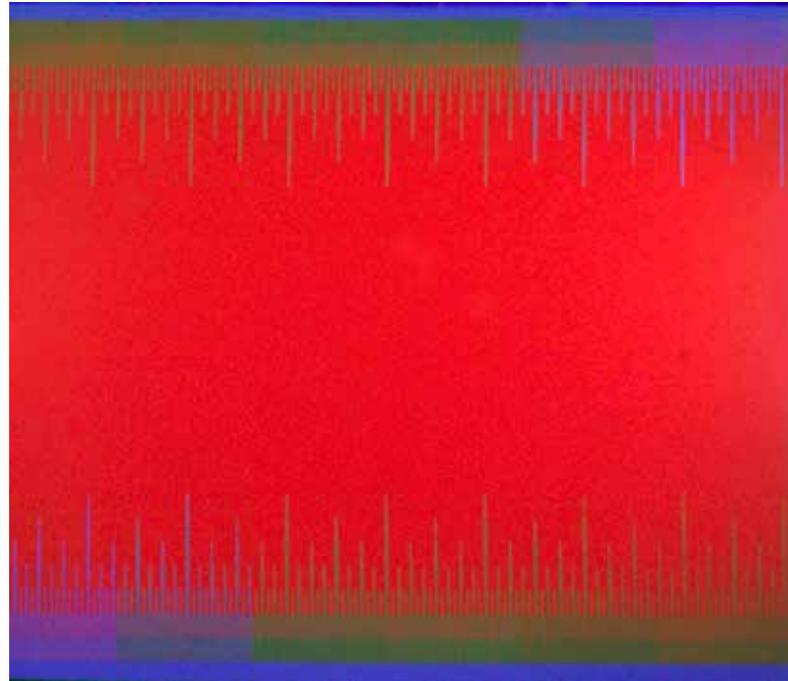
vertical, expanded composition of lines, perhaps his most “American” format, frames a color field. This composition allows him to translate passages, to mark transitions, with punctuations and borders in the shape of combs¹³ which frame or structure vast colored fields. His

13. These combs are made with a system of vertical dashes, the length of which increases and the spacing decrease, thereby enabling a variation in the density and securing the transitions.



Midnight Red, 1977-2017
Acrylic on canvas
36 x 36 inches

1974 painting *Spectral Complementaries I* delicately goes from light purple on the left to dark green on the right, by being punctuated with 4 regularly intervals of vertical haloes of an orange yellow color. With its 2,13 m height and 4,57 m length, this format, which reminds us of Claude Monet's *Nymphéas*, allows the artist to translate exactly an "impression", maybe of the mist at sunrise. His painting *Soft Red Cadmium* of the same year is a large format of 1,82 x 2,13 m, where a dominant red color was made to vibrate in a similar way to works by Mark Rothko, but here by means of contrasting colored edges set exactly to emphasize the light in all its intensity.



8

When needed, Richard Anuszkiewicz gives up the color, only to hold no more than a dense network of fine white lines crossing each other on a black background so as to indicate in the plan the passage from one shape to another. Explicitly titled, the 1966 *Convex-Concave* thus conveys this undulation by means of the perspective, albeit we look at it as the representation of a twilight with all its nuances.

When one takes a closer look, the art of Richard Anuszkiewicz cannot be solely defined by its somewhat incomplete historic categorization as Op Art. His work proves to be more complex, more pictorial and – dare we say - more refined than other work of the same type as many may be only experimental of the kinetic art.

Soft Red Cadmium, 1974
Acrylic on Canvas
72 x 84 inches
Image courtesy of
Richard Anuszkiewicz studio

About the “shaped canvas” paintings.

The *Translumina* series of paintings which Anuskiewicz undertook towards the end of the 1980s have special significance. The works built as constructions, executed in shaped canvases, present thin reliefs with hollowed out centers, the structures of which are elaborated by means of ambiguous spatial relationships. Color is added to them, a characteristic which has remained constant among all other themes found throughout his work. As such, his *Orange Light- Day and Night* of 1990 is unambiguous. It is a diptych: a light form to the left, a dark one to the right, with the inside being warm and the outside cool. Each time a square is shown in axonometric perspective, one at the top, the other one on the bottom; the effect of the one and the other, is impossible to assemble visually, as each annuls the other. Furthermore, the colored planes are rendered with a system of thin parallel lines in gradation, this creates an optical illusion of three dimensional depth and makes it impossible get a logical or coherent reading. The title is not deceptive, the subject is somewhere else: in the light. Several works of this series are entitled: “Translumina”, such as that presenting a single module: *Translumina Inner Yellow Light* from 1989 stands out in the shape of a diamond rotated on it's axis on the wall, the hollowed out center, with its blue “outside” and its yellow “inside”, each modeled by a network of black streaks in gradation.

Beginning in 1986, Anuskiewicz went in this direction; he built shapes from colored modular elements. He created a triangular composition of more than 3m in height and width composed of three superimposed columns which overlap at one of their extremities (*Translumina-Yellow, Orange and Red*, 1986) which was featured at the Venice Biennale that year; a radial composition with four overlapping columns (*Translumina-Light Yellow to Dark Blue*, 1988); a radiating spectral composition among whose nine columns go from red to blue with yellow at the center (*Rainbow-Red to Blue*, 1988); a tight interwoven majestic composition of (2, 48 x 3, 35 m), seven columns of varying lengths ¹⁴ (*Grand Midnight Palace*, 1989). The subject? Always the light always and its vibration.

14. These are actually segments put edge to edge so as to stay in the plan.

The specific Translumina works featured in this show at the Loretta Howard Gallery present a common theme which is the use of axonometric perspective. *Translumina-Marriage of Silver and Gold* 1992 uses the theme of interlacing, a convention which was widely used on illuminated manuscripts during the High Middle Ages: two square-shaped “rings” passing through one another. However this construction indeed shows the “marriage” itself as impossible because of the position of each of the elements which are precisely arranged in the plan, without any overlapping. To achieve this result, Richard Anuszkiewicz uses the means of the paradoxical perspective, well known in the Renaissance for its decorative design and which had also been widely used as the ornaments for pavement in Antiquity. In the 20th Century, we see it in the work of Josef Albers in his *Constellations*, produced between 1940-1950¹⁵. Later in the 1970s, yet another American artist, also influenced by Albers, will resort to it: Al Held¹⁶. Such is the theme that Anuszkiewicz uses in his own way to represent the twilight, the warmth and the cold, and by using a cutout shape. *Translumina-Marriage of Warm and Cold*, 1991 places itself on the wall in light relief, with its plans indented in hollow, a lozenge-like silhouette, pressed on one of its sides to break the symmetry of the figure and to offer, through its oblique composition, dynamism as a whole.

Beginning with the rotated square compositions by Piet Mondrian first done in 1918, the cutout frame became a recurring theme in Abstract Art in the 20th Century. For example: Theo Van Doesburg, then Jean Gorin, César Domela, Friedrich Vordemberge-Gildewart with a rectangle rotated on its edge, Carl Buchheister with a triangle, and many of the other Constructivist artists will in their own way to develop this theme. Its peak goes back to the years 1940-1950 in South America, where a large number of young Argentine painters coalesced around the movement. Madí and Arte Concreto Invención will make the cutout of a form a subject of expression in itself. Together with Carmelo Arden Quin and Gyula Kosice, we can find Juan Melé,

15. It is also necessary to mention the Dutch illustrator M.C. Escher, who made a brilliant use of it in a ‘realistic’ way.

16. See for instance his painting *Flemish VII*, 1973 (The Museum of Modern Art, New York).



Grand Midnight Palace, 1989
 Painted wood
 98 x 132 inches
 Image courtesy of
 Richard Anuszkiewicz studio

The works shown at the Loretta Howard Gallery attest to an original and important period in Richard Anuszkiewicz's career. They represent a logical continuation of themes which have evolved from his earlier periods and which represent a significant step forward for the artist. The works show with all of these factors both the depth of his vision and the unique poetry that emanates from his representations of light.

Each time different, each time new, as is itself the light. ■

Paris, February 1st, 2018
 Serge Lemoine
 Professor Emeritus at La Sorbonne University, Paris
With an English translation by Marie Sophie Lemoine

Rhod Rothfuss, Raúl Lozza, Juan Bay, Diyi Laañ, who compete in the creation of silhouettes all more or less baroque, alive and joyful, and appear in shows in Buenos-Aires and soon thereafter in 1948 in Paris in the Salon des Réalités nouvelles. It is thus a whole history that unwinds, where we see joining with superiority Leon Polk Smith in the 1950s in New York and where we discover some time later Frank Stella's masterful works. This history goes on today with the creations of Philippe Decrauzat. The use of actual three dimensional forms by Richard Anuszkiewicz are in turn part of this artistic evolution, with their thin constructions made of painted wood which define the outline of interlaced volumes (*Translumina - Transparent Rectangle: Yellow, Orange, Dark Purple and Blue*, 1990) rendered in bas-relief.

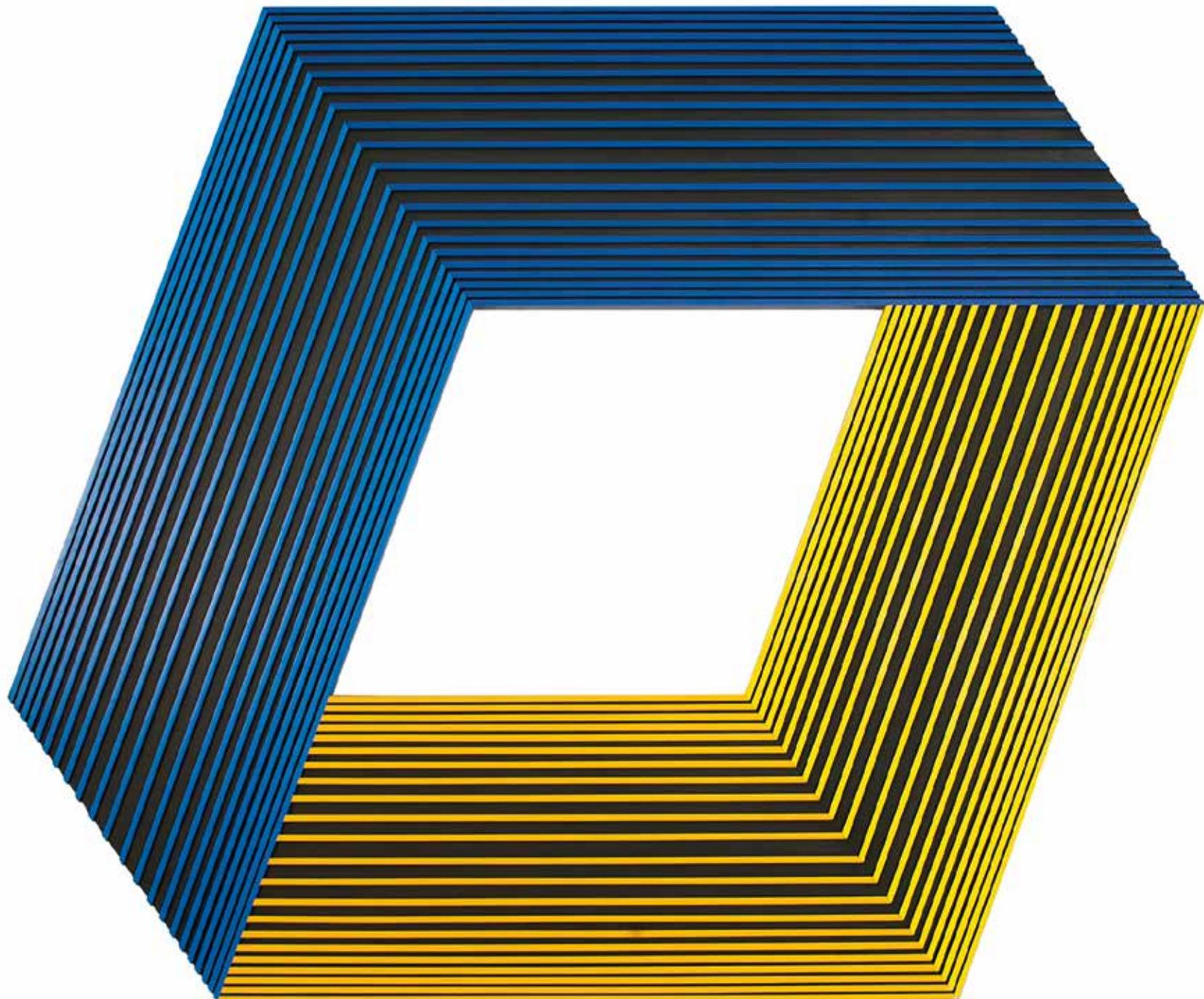


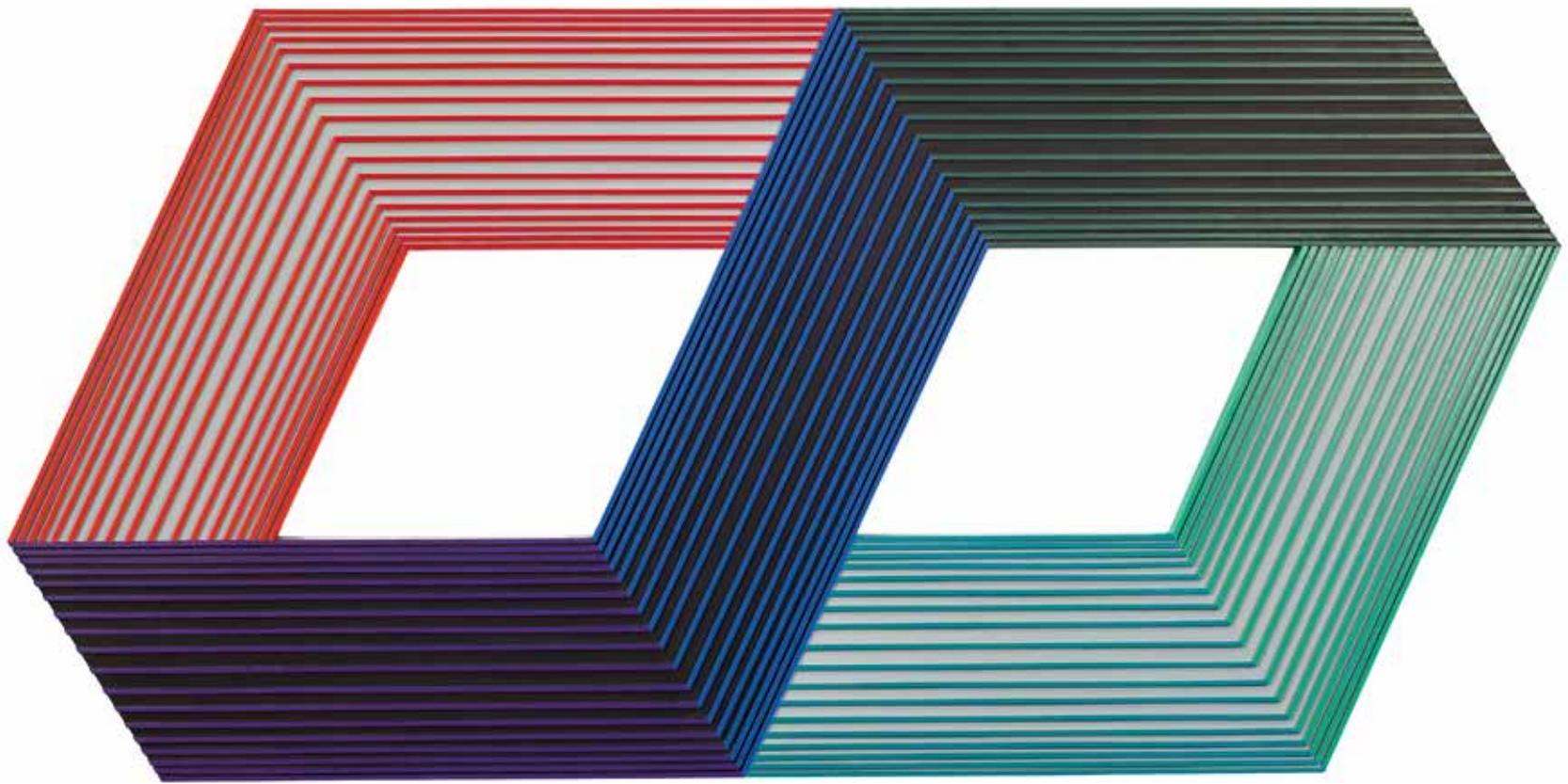
Study Inner Yellow on Red
(Print Collage 1), 1991
Serigraph and collage
22 x 28 inches
Edition 28 of 60



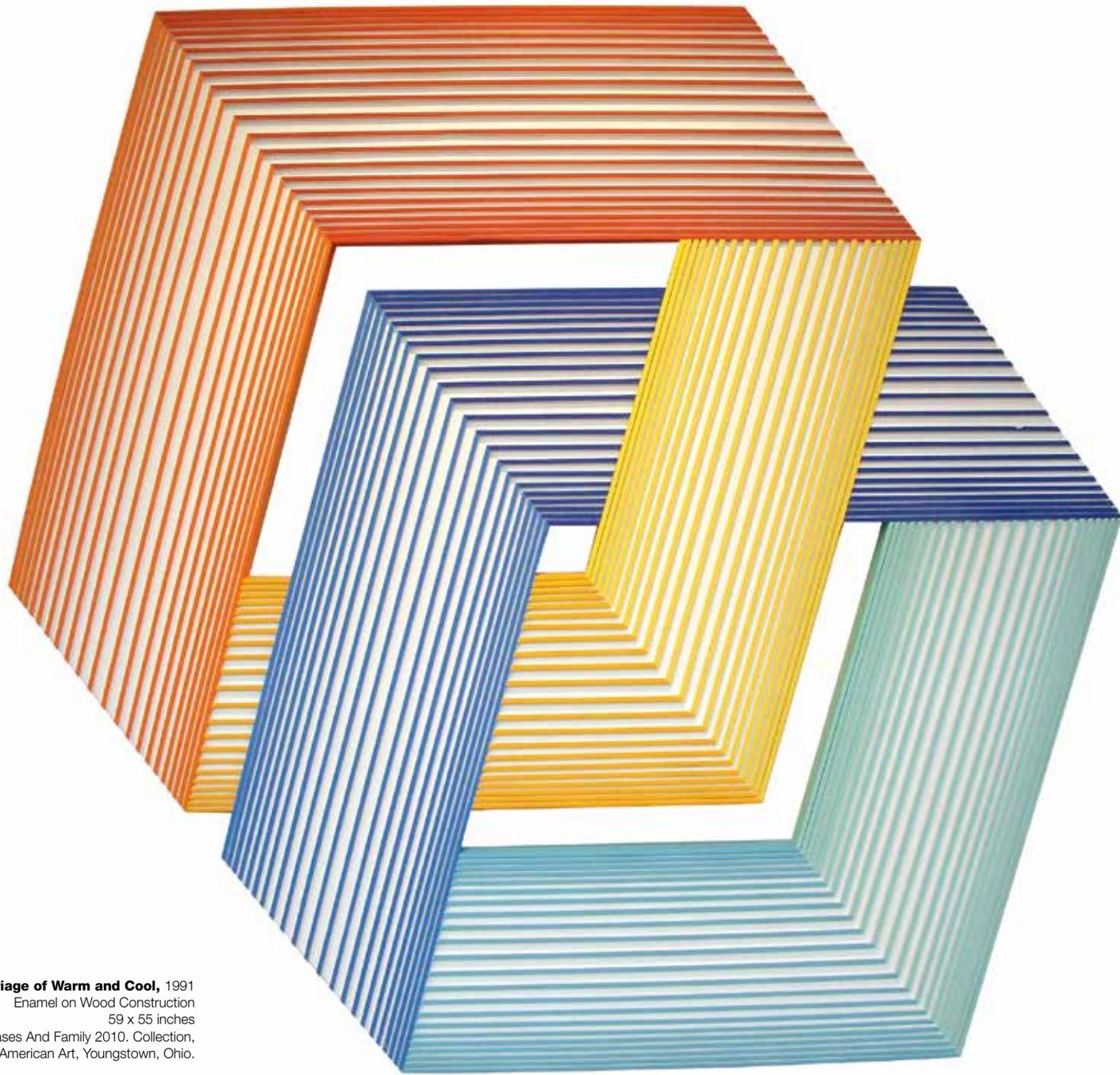
Study Inner Orange on Blue
(Print Collage 1), 1991
Serigraph and collage
22 x 28 inches
Edition 28 of 60

opposite page
Inner Yellow Light, 1989
Enamel on wood construction
96 x 79 inches





Inner Warm and Inner Cool, 1990
Enamel on wood construction
38 x 77 inches

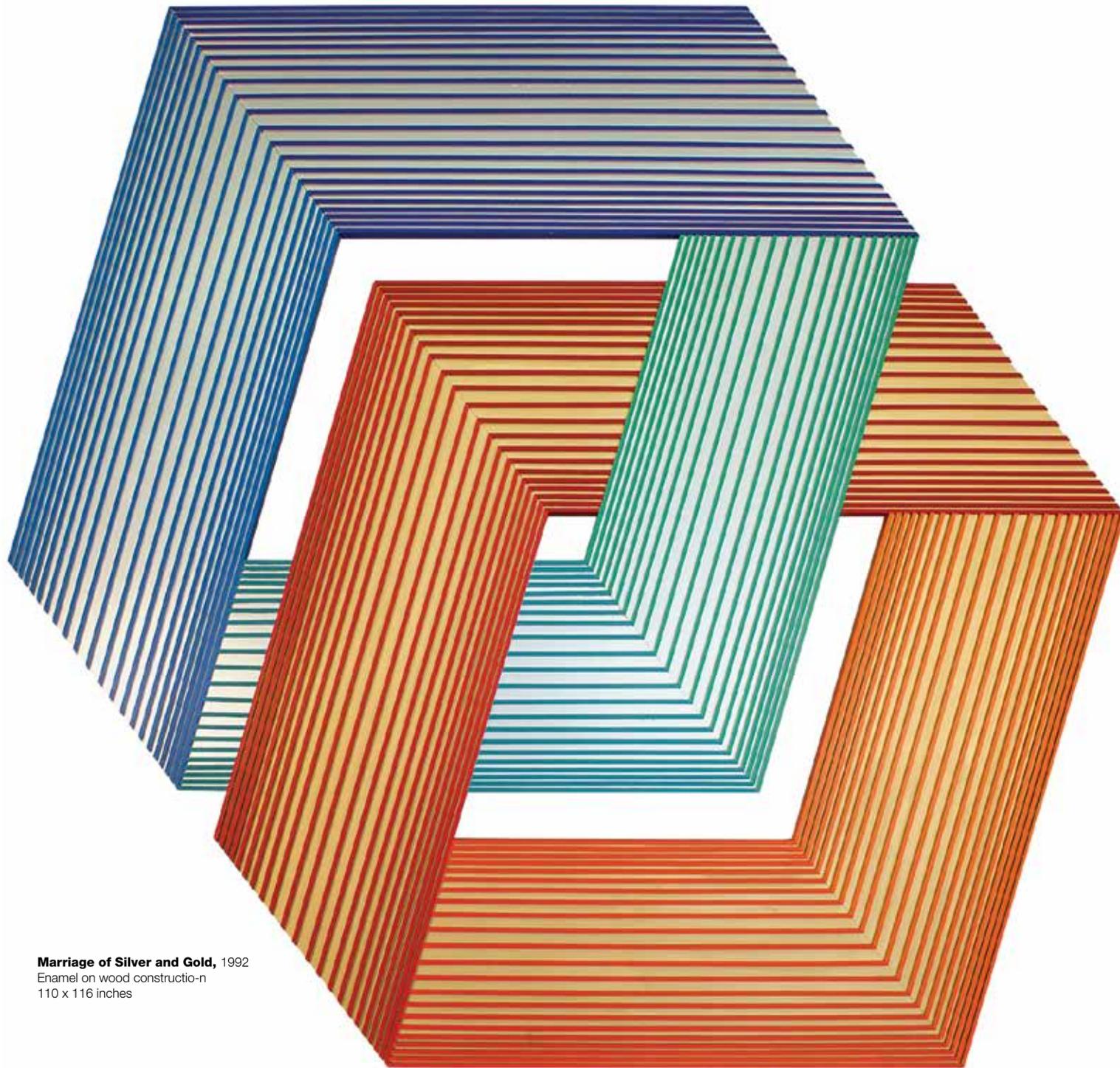


Marriage of Warm and Cool, 1991

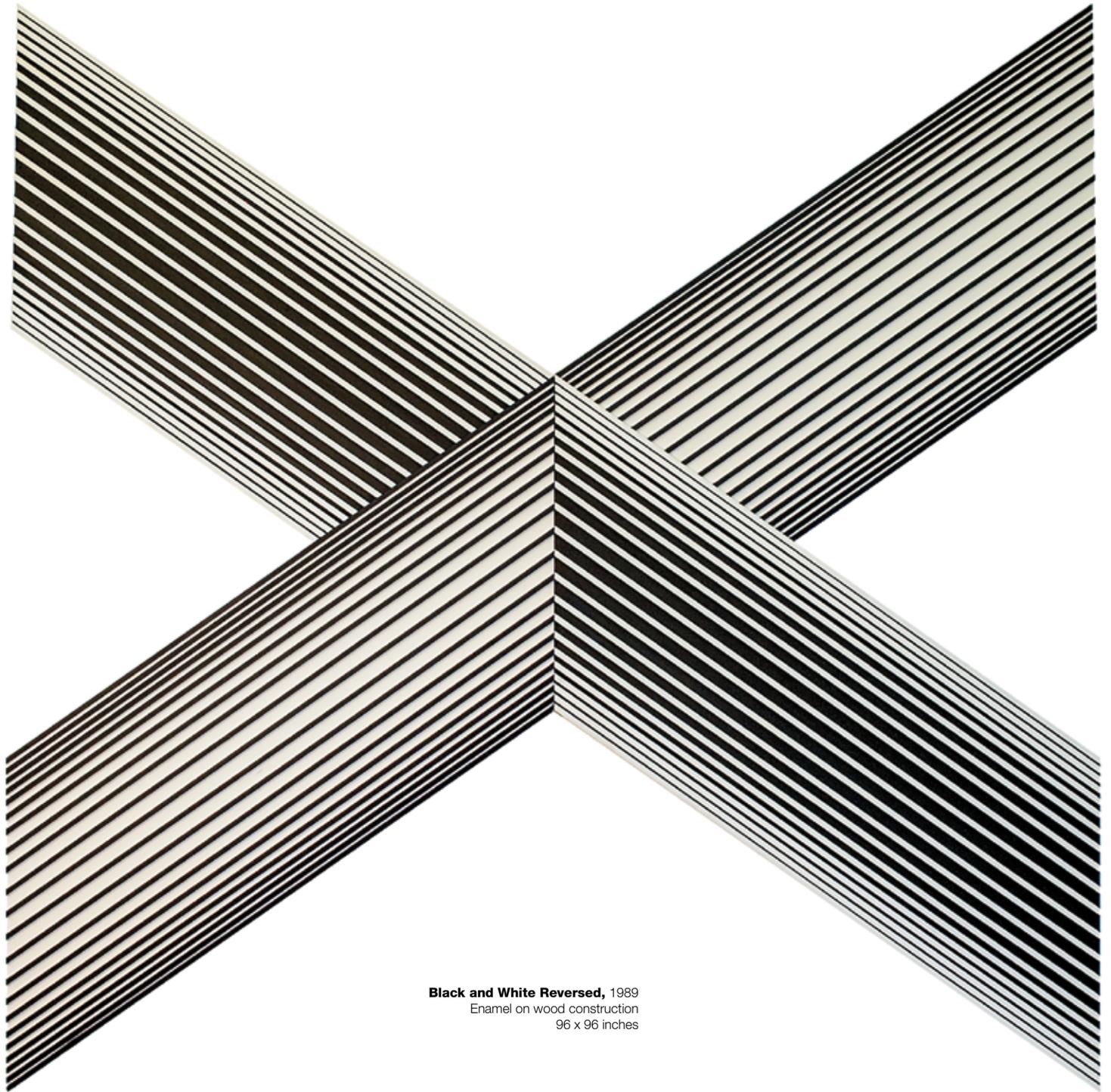
Enamel on Wood Construction

59 x 55 inches

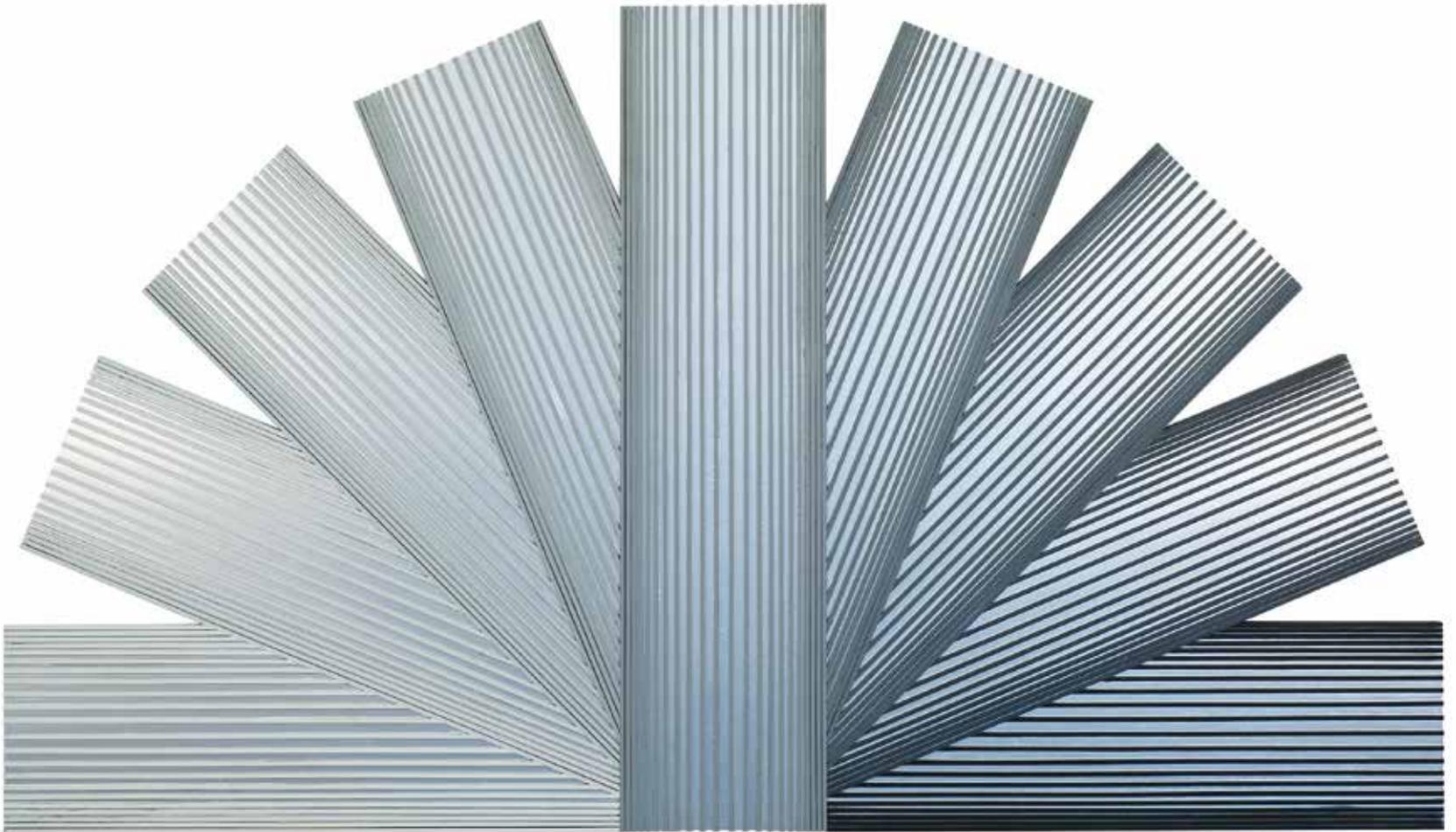
Gift Of Irwin And Jane Thomases And Family 2010. Collection,
The Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, Ohio.



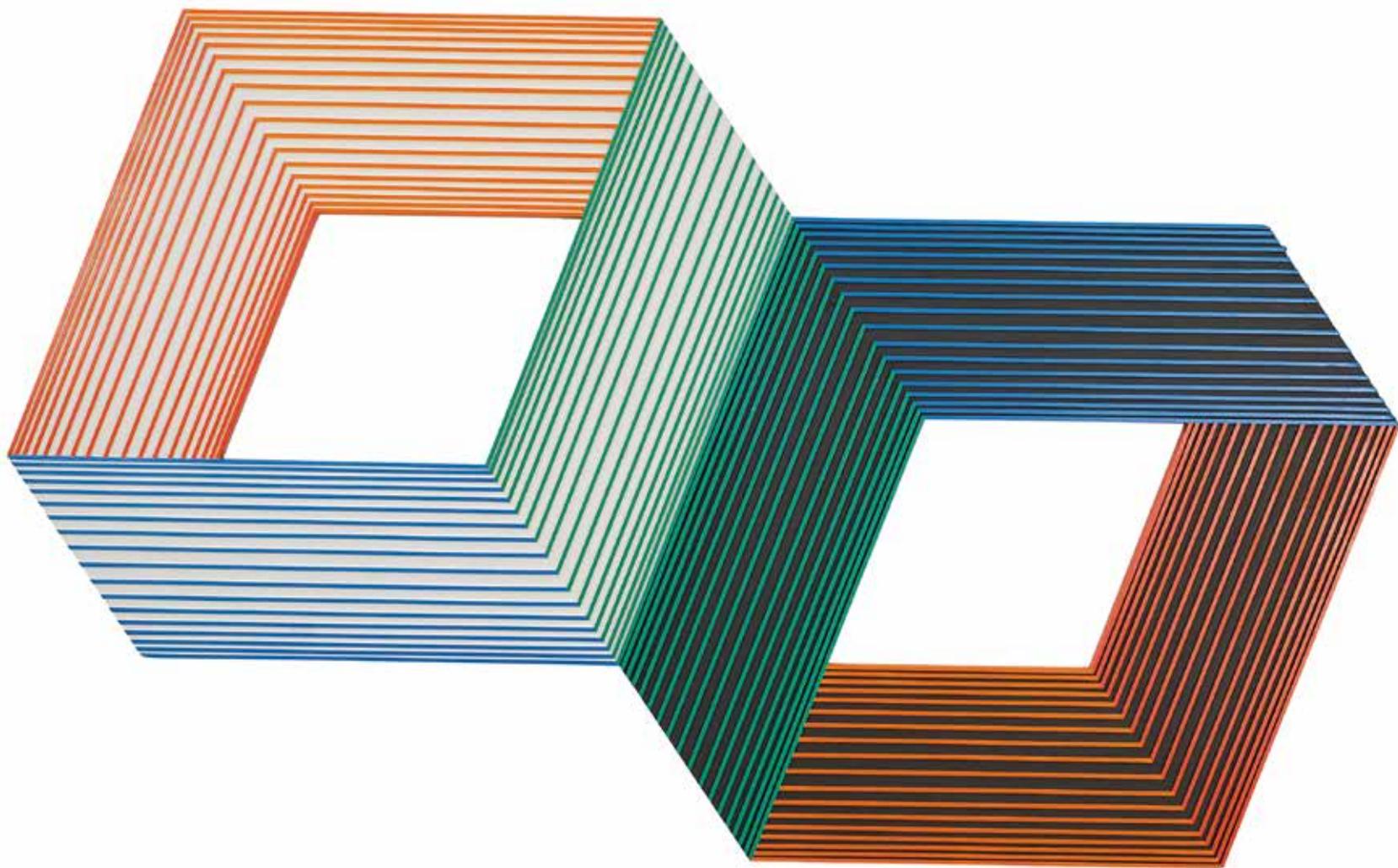
Marriage of Silver and Gold, 1992
Enamel on wood construction
110 x 116 inches



Black and White Reversed, 1989
Enamel on wood construction
96 x 96 inches



Silver Rainbow with Grays, 1989
Painted acrylic on wood construction
48 x 86 inches



Orange Light - Day and Night, 1990
Enamel on wood construction
51 x 84 inches



This catalogue published on the occasion of the exhibition

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Richard Anuszkiewicz in studio
photographed by Ellen Page Wilson

Richard Anuszkiewicz studio 2018
photographed by John Small





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