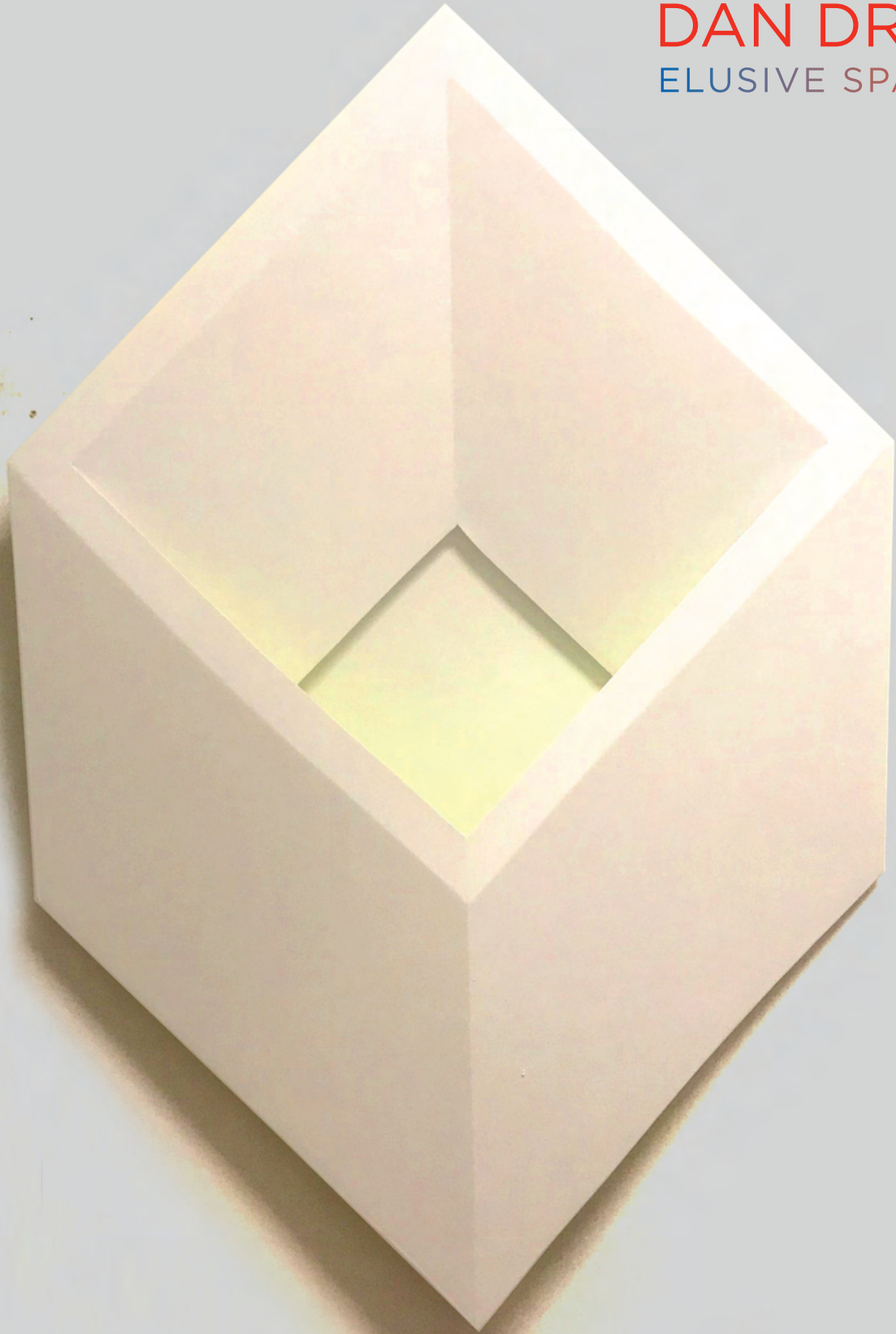
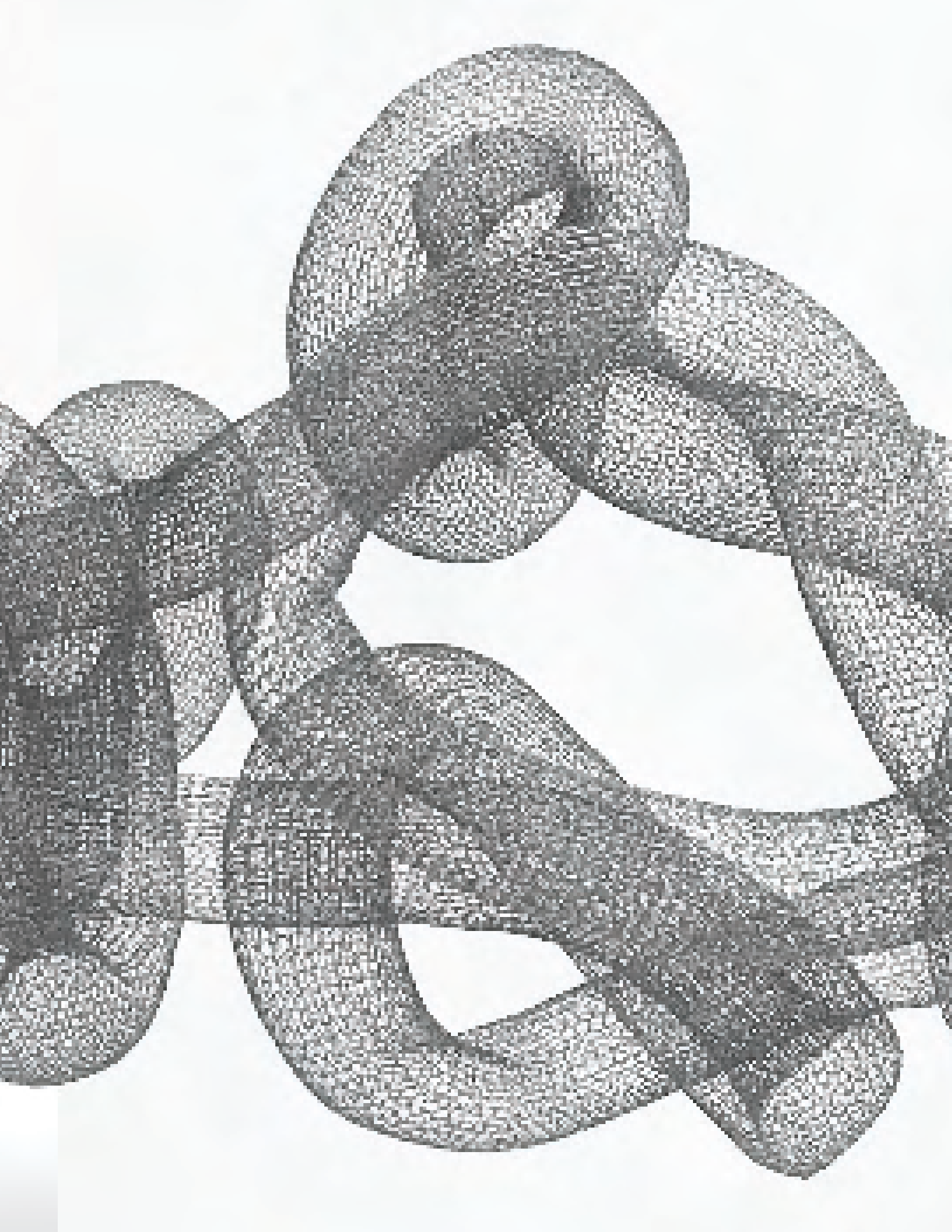


DAN DROZ
ELUSIVE SPACES





DAN DROZ

ELUSIVE SPACES

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Elusive Spaces

May 20-June 26, 2021
Associated Artists Gallery

Presented by:
Associated Artists of Pittsburgh

In Collaboration with
James Gallery, Pittsburgh, PA

For more about Dan Droz: www.dandroz.com

Cover:

Interior Glow, 2020
Gloss Enamel on Plywood
(Florescent Paint on Reverse Side)
48" x 36" x 4"

Left:

Mobius 5/Detail, 2021
Crocheted Wire Mesh
19" x 44" x 14" (Suspended)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Associated Artists of Pittsburgh is pleased to present *Elusive Spaces*, an exhibition of new work by sculptor Dan Droz, and the first solo exhibition of work by a member in our Lawrenceville gallery space.

In 2019 we were presented with the opportunity to operate our own exhibition and office space in Pittsburgh's Ice House Studios. Through the generosity of the previous tenant, we were able to quickly move in and make the space our own. Then, after a months-long reconstruction of our central courtyard, we prepared to debut our first exhibition in March of 2020 just as the danger of COVID-19 and the effects of the pandemic started to spread throughout our country and region. With everyone else, we closed doors and waited for a time when we could find a way to safely gather.

During this time, however, our artists did not wait. Many utilized this period of isolation to closely examine their style and practice. Dan Droz is one such artist. The work in this exhibition evidences the variety of artistic avenues Dan explored this past year. New forms, media, and ideas pop out among familiar friends. All of this work is clearly Dan Droz, and, at the same time, points somewhere further and pushes Dan's practice farther. We are grateful to Dan for sharing this work with us, and we are excited to see where he goes next.

For making this exhibition possible, thanks are owed to our wonderful staff of Associated Artists of Pittsburgh. Whether hosting a zoom workshop, hanging artwork, or editing grant reports, the staff makes any and all of our programming possible. I must also thank our board and advisory council members. We have relied on their guidance, advice, and dedication more than ever throughout this time, and, because of their support, we are still able to serve our mission of exhibiting, promoting, and supporting the work of Pittsburgh-based artists. We are also appreciative of the work of our exhibition committee who saw the potential in Dan's work and exhibition and James Fredrick and the staff of James Gallery with whom we collaborated to bring Dan's work to the AAP gallery, setting an example for the role of galleries in our region.

Finally, thanks are owed to the Pittsburgh foundation community. Specifically, we would like to thank The Heinz Endowments, Hillman Family Foundations, and The Pittsburgh Foundation, as well as the Allegheny Regional Asset District for their support this past year, without which this exhibition and others would not be possible. We would also like to thank the Henry C. Frick Education Fund at the Buhl Foundation for their support of our educational programming.

Again, thank you to Dan Droz for sharing his new work with us. We hope this is the first of many member-driven exhibitions in this space.



ELUSIVE PERCEPTIONS

by Dan Droz

We all struggle for understanding, but much of our world remains elusive. It's especially hard when the really important information is hidden or camouflaged. I began to understand this, first hand, as a teenager, when I became interested in magic, where there are so clearly two realities - what viewers see and 'what's really going on.' But full out deception aside, it's also apparent that misperception is one of the realities of being human. What we perceive, ie, what we think is going on, is only part of the story and can even be illusory - camouflaging or misdirecting our attention away from some of the more subtle and important aspects of what we are observing.

Elusive Spaces considers this limited perception in a number of ways through sculptural forms including the intentional concealment of important aspects, the blurring of 'inside' and 'outside,' and the use of perspective. You look into a box and expect to see the inside, but instead, a mirror, positioned at 45 degrees to your viewing plane, shows you the scene askew by 90 degrees. By cutting out a shape from a sheet of aluminum, then folding it, you can see the space from which it came, but now, the shape is backwards revealing what was previously hidden and hiding what was previously seen. A simple boxlike shape emits an evanescent glow, a reflection of hidden florescent surfaces from within. Or a tangled web of delicate wire mesh confuses your sense of what's inside or outside and what's the front and back. More metaphorically, the mystery of understanding what's right in front of you might call to mind how much we're missing or not understanding at all.

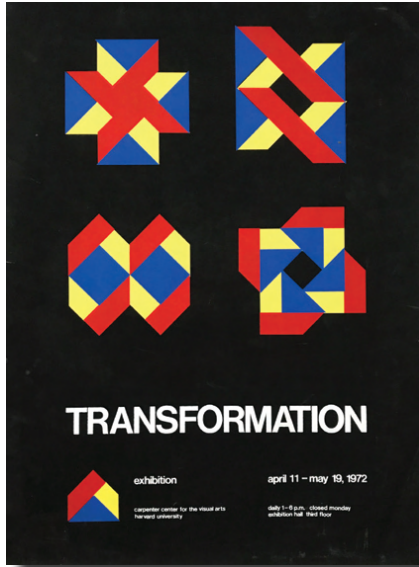
There are also figurative or gestural references. Is that sinuous form suggesting a dancer, a conversation between two people or a political/philosophical argument? Although the titles might suggest a specific intent, the point is that the same metaphors can apply to many situations, and that's for your personal experience to suggest or inform. Our perception is a gift, but is, let us say, "elusive."

ESSAY

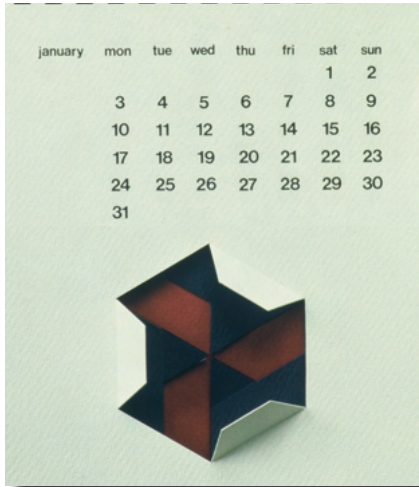
THE DESIGN ART/ART DESIGN OF DAN DROZ

Peter Frank, Art Critic/Huffington Post, LA Weekly and The Village Voice

Early Design Work



Transformation, Harvard Exhibition Posters 1972



Calendar, Mademoiselle Magazine 1972

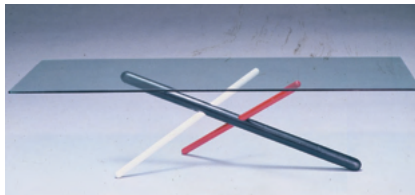


Shakemill™ Collection, H. E. Lauffer Company, USA 1973

In the “normal” world, geometric forms are clear, clean, and visually dependable. And artworks serve no lower purpose than to embody beauty and inspire contemplation. But we haven’t lived in a normal world – that kind of normal world – for over a century. Geometry now proffers us a banquet of delights, acrobatics, and kinetics as well as a dramatic, even theatrical monumentality, while artworks in general can as readily bear flowers, be sat upon, or support human labor as they can serve the mind aloft or the soul in search. Where does fixed form end and motion, or the spirit of motion, start? And where does practical design end and aesthetic design start?



Popsycle™ Tables, Beylerian 1981



Dowel Table, Beylerian, 1981



Jack Table, 1982



Trompe Table, Cross River Furniture, 1984

Dan Droz is hardly the first artist to pose this question to his audience or himself. The frontiers between the still and the animated, the useful and the transcendent, have been well explored for several generations. But Droz's artworks, however vivacious, however usable, situate themselves on either side of the "borders" with emphatic zest and self-possession. They not only embody such dualistic conditions, they pose them both like a philosopher's conundrum and a magician's prestidigitation. They make a challenge of the both/and circumstances in which (especially three-dimensional) art now operates - and they make that challenge a vibrant, gorgeous ride for those challenged. Droz's approach to art, design, and art-design sometimes makes the borders disappear altogether - and at other times maintains the notion of categories by toying with it, teasing its boundaries like smugglers, that is, smugglers of ideas and forms.

From the outset of his design career and artmaking history Droz has participated, knowingly, in the great modern adventure of the Gesamtkunstwerk, the "total work of art" that - even when not "total" - proposes not simply the bridging between, but the fusion of, the disparate practices of the arts. The term itself applied originally to the Wagnerian concept of music-drama, incorporating set design, choreography, poetry, and so forth, but in hindsight it applies equally to parallel later-19th-century theories of "through-designed" spaces, theories manifesting in the Arts & Crafts Movement, the Vienna Secession, Futurism, de Stijl, the Bauhaus, and other ideologies and praxes propounding a conflation of fine art, design, architecture, and somatic (not to say spiritual) awareness. We find this approach reasserted in the later 20th century in phenomena as diverse as the British Independent Group (whence came Pop Art), the post-Bauhaus theory of the Ulm School, and movements in South America such as Concretismo and Madí (not to mention the conceptual Gesamtkunstwerk of Situationism, concrete poetry, Fluxus, and other forms of intermedia). In the postwar era object design became self-aware as a visual language - witness Memphis Milano and even Scandinavian design - and, in the wake of Pop, graphic design refocused itself on codification and the refinement of the sign.



Monoprint 1, 1979
Ink on Folded Paper
36" x 36"



Monoprint 2, 1979
Ink on Folded Paper
22" x 22"



Monoprint 3, 1979
Ink on Folded Paper
22" x 22"

Droz's fine art practice, no less than his design, admits to this rich inheritance, and certainly to its drive to simplification. Indeed, you could say that, like a sculptor hewing marble, he composes his objects not by deciding what should be there, but what shouldn't. This implies a reductivist urge behind Droz's method, reducing his forms to their elemental states.

But, however much he may have learned from Minimal Art, Droz is no minimalist. To be sure, he descends from the likes of Donald Judd and Ellsworth Kelly, but he applies their lessons in perception to his native expansiveness and wit. In this regard, Alexander Calder and George Rickey are no less important to Droz's manner. In fact, in certain respects Droz's art and design – or perhaps we should call it artdesign – recapitulates the entire course of modern and post-modern “utilitarian abstraction,” moving from Vasily Kandinsky's Point and Line to Plane through the art-design fusions of (among others) Isamo Noguchi and Anni Albers to 1970s Supergraphics and beyond in a focused, unbroken arc. (Droz was a part of that history right out of college, working in graphic design in New York at a time when Milton Glaser, Seymour Chwast, and other “New York School” designers were beginning to disrupt the magazine and book page.)

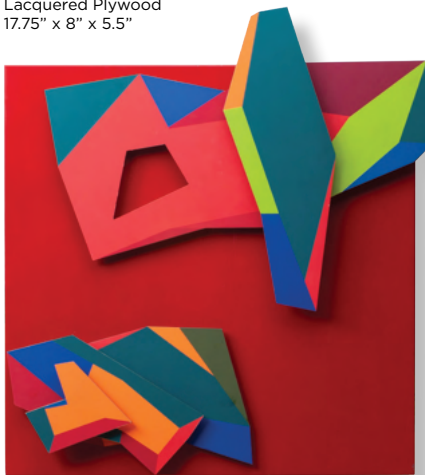
However, despite occasional direct references to this artist or that designer, clearly posited as crypto-homages, Droz bases his formulations on the apparitions of his own imagination. Such formulations can access readily recognized, even universal, shapes, like loop-tie noods or flat-cube illusions; but this nod to familiarity manifests the entertainer in Droz, making references like a gag comic and even revisiting his childhood fascination with magic. You could say he's pulling art out of his hat. Finally, we have to regard Droz's artworks as examples of that adage: the more influences (you think) you see, the more original the art is.



The Briefcase, 1994
Stained and Lacquered Plywood
18.5" x 7" x 5"



Reaching High, 1994
Lacquered Plywood
17.75" x 8" x 5.5"



Reality Isn't What It Used To Be, 2001
Acrylic on ACM and Enamel on Steel
(Magnetic and Kinetic Elements)
33" x 24" x 2.25"

The basic factor unifying everything Droz formulates – the point-of-view that makes a Droz a Droz -- is the relationship of two to three dimensions. He reasons, as Kandinsky exerted, from point and line to plane, thinking of the object – even the image of the object – as an unfolded construction of itself, that is, of its planar and even linear components (color not least). He builds his images into things, a cubist, indeed Cézannian notion that came to dominate modern visual culture, especially as it engendered – in time as well as space – the quintessential 20th-century notion of the “collage aesthetic.”

With their angles, patterns, sharp delineations, and giddy, jarring color combinations, Droz’s art and artdesign take the collage aesthetic for a wild ride. But with his virtuosic sense of superposition and segue, Droz convinces us that his driving skills are up to the challenge. In fact, while he’s adding and interlocking and flipping shapes and hues, he’s keeping tight control with his minimalizing bent. Droz knows how far to push the collage aesthetic, and how far to reel it back. He can maneuver and slow his vehicle as deftly as he can gun it.

Dan Droz is a craftsman through and through, but it’s in his mind and eye where a higher craft – the craft of conception and refinement – generates. He thinks like an artist. Or, perhaps more accurately, Droz thinks like an artist-designer, reasoning and inventing in two and three (and arguably four) dimensions at once. He works readily with clients, but the ultimate client is always his inner artist – and, nowadays, his outer one. He seeks not simply what functions or entertains or elevates, but what works. Additive and subtractive at once, Droz’s aesthetic is as rich as it is clear, and above all is poised amidst seemingly contrary conditions which turn out to be complementary. Open to every source, Droz’s sensibility seeks its own total work of art.

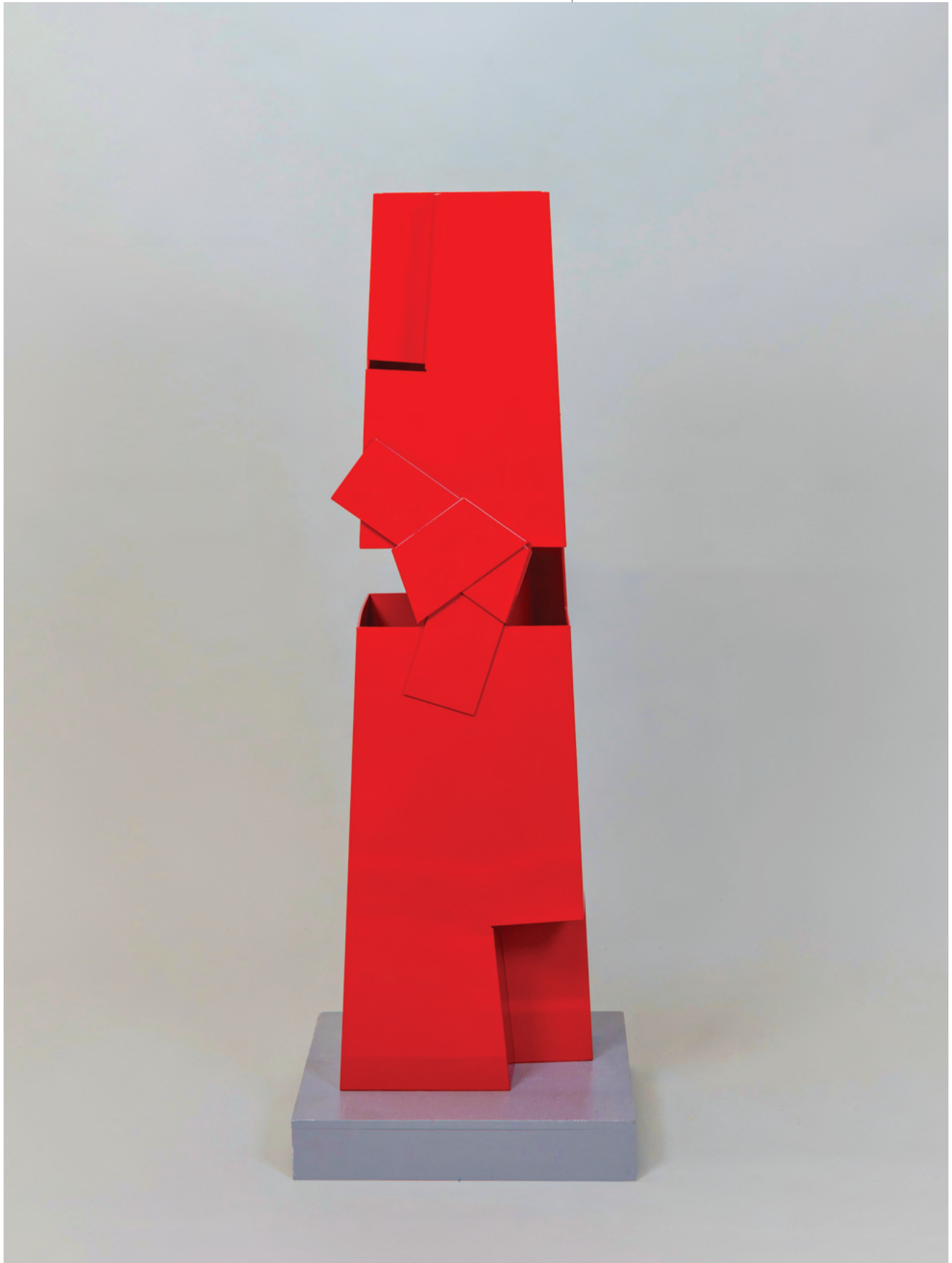
Peter Frank, Los Angeles, May 2021



InsideOut, 2021
Powder Coated Aluminum
62" x 19" x 12" (Suspended)



Autumn Forest 2, 2020
Powder Coated Aluminum
69" x 93" x 16"



Knotted Totem 3, 2020
Powder Coated Aluminum
46" x 13" x 8.5"



Mother and Child, 2021
Powder Coated Aluminum
61" x 32" x 23"
(Interlocking/changeable elements)



Interior Reflections 1, 2020
Mirror Polished Powder Coated Aluminum
79" x 44" x 33"



GeoTower, 2021
Enamel on Hinged Plywood Panels
84" Tall (Dimensions vary as panels are moved)

INTERVIEW

James Fredrick's Conversation with Dan Droz, May 2021

JF It's great to talk with you Dan and I'm really gratified to be involved with your new exhibition, *Elusive Spaces*. Such a range of work, pushing so many boundaries and clearly influenced by your rich history in design, teaching, art making and particularly, sculpture. I'm curious how these threads have influenced your work.

DD Thank you James, for your involvement in this exhibition. It's great to have such an experienced and thoughtful voice to refine some of the thematic threads. To your question, in design, you're usually concerned with function and market differentiation to get people to buy something. Although there can be layers of meaning, design is principally about creating the desire to own and use a product. Sculpture abandons the functional/commercial aspects so there's a lot more room to create the layers of meaning. But the same urge to push materials and experiment with process applies.

Apart from the influences you mentioned, a couple other things have also been important. My dad was a welder and also had a woodworking business, so I became pretty familiar with tools, different materials and processes, and have always been comfortable with the physicality of sculpture. Also, as a teenager, I was a professional magician, and that strongly influenced my understanding of what people perceive.

JF Can you explain that a bit more?

DD In magic, there are these two realities - what the viewer sees and 'what's really going on.' That gap or limited perception is fascinating to me. In a lot of my sculpture, particularly the wall pieces, there are actually 'hidden' areas, the spaces behind the surface, although intrinsic to the piece, that are largely unseen. This mystery of perception is definitely a strong thread in most of my work.

JF Did your early design work show some of these threads?

DD For sure. Even in college, I was exploring the boundaries of perception, using some of the same techniques like folding and kinetic movement. And, a lot of products I designed in the 70's and 80's were part of the 'furniture as art' movement and are now on ebay and being auctioned at 10-20 times their original selling price! Wish I'd kept a few!

Although they all had functional value, much of my early design work definitely had a sculptural quality. I tended to be attracted to the kind of products that lent themselves to sculptural touches. For example, my pepper grinders had distinctively figurative forms which didn't interfere with the function of grinding pepper. Furniture is another category where this is possible. Table bases just have to hold up a piece of glass, so you have a lot of latitude in terms of the form. The same is true with some types of seating. You can sit on almost anything, so I could make more sculptural statements.

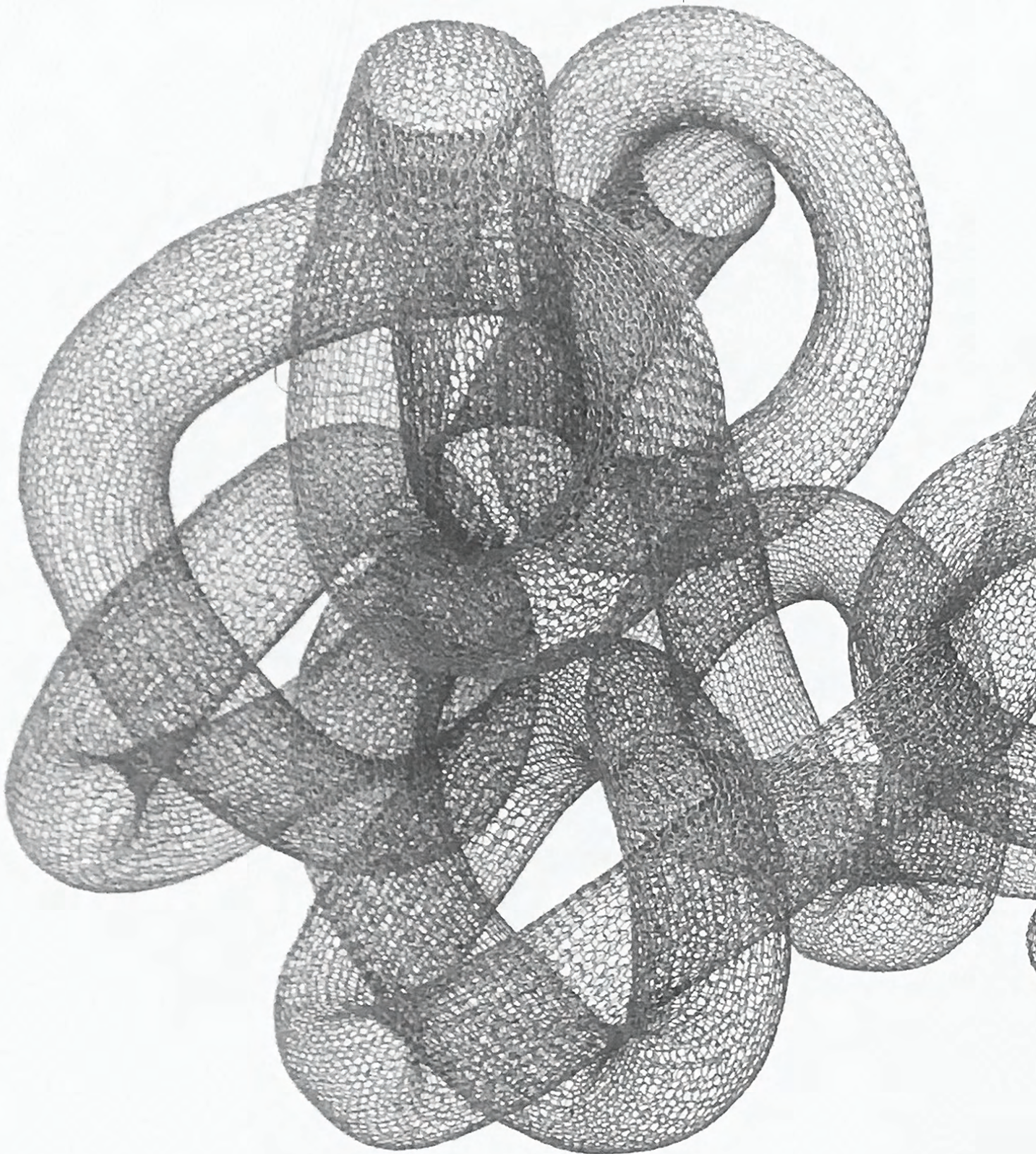
JF Are there particular themes that characterize your work?

DD Generally, the intersection between two and three dimensions, and particularly, the transformative attributes of a flat surface. You can see a bit of Elizabeth Murray or Frank Stella's later work, which deal with the boundary between painting and sculpture, or even Charles Hineman, a painter who used shaped canvas to create a sculptural quality.

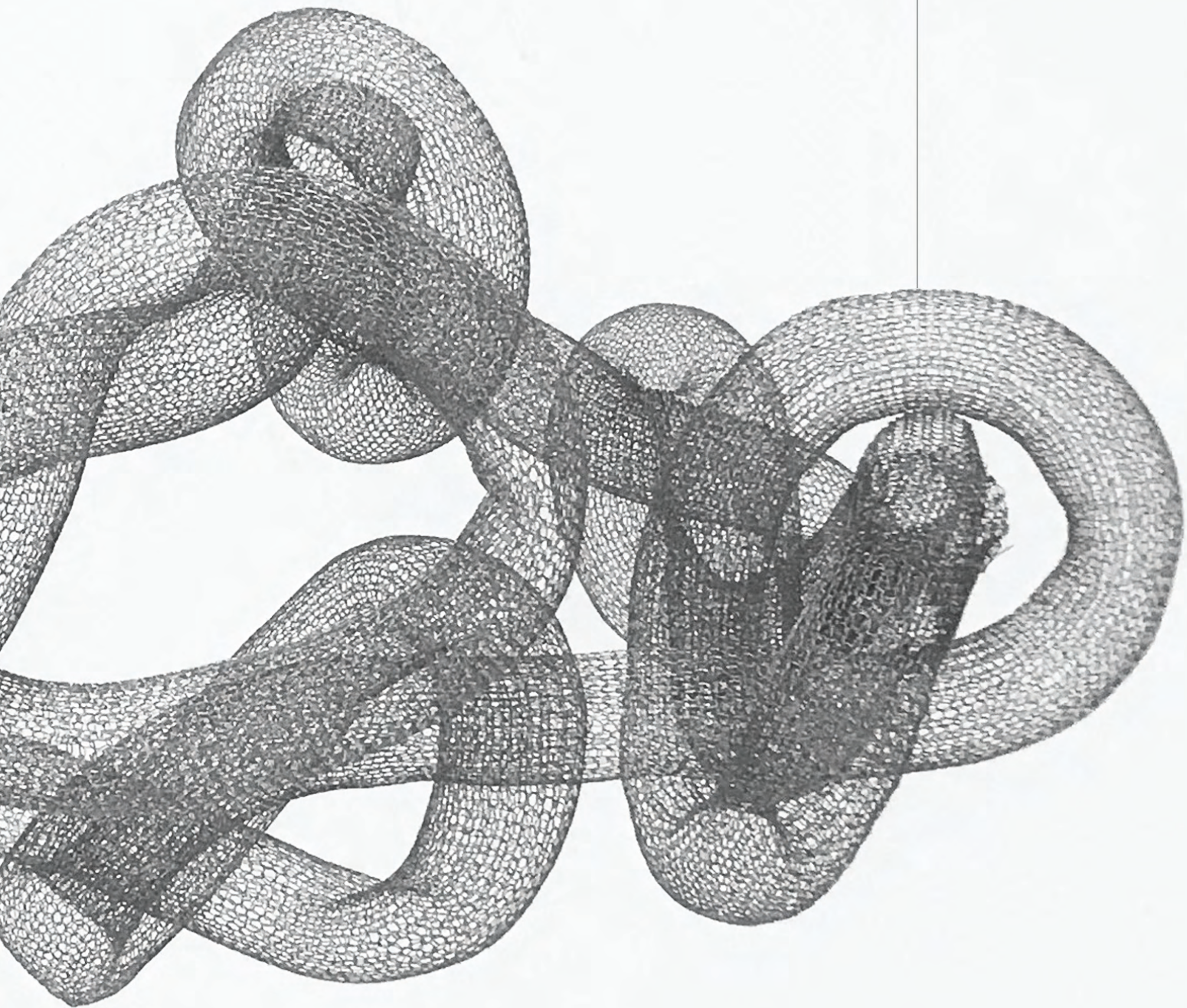
More recent pieces have a good deal more fluidity and complexity of form. For example, I'm experimenting a lot with crocheted wire mesh which has structural integrity, but also a sense of transparency and fluidity, which apart from the negative/positive spaces, really accentuates the boundaries between inside and outside. Also, more fluid materials allow greater reference to organic and figurative forms.

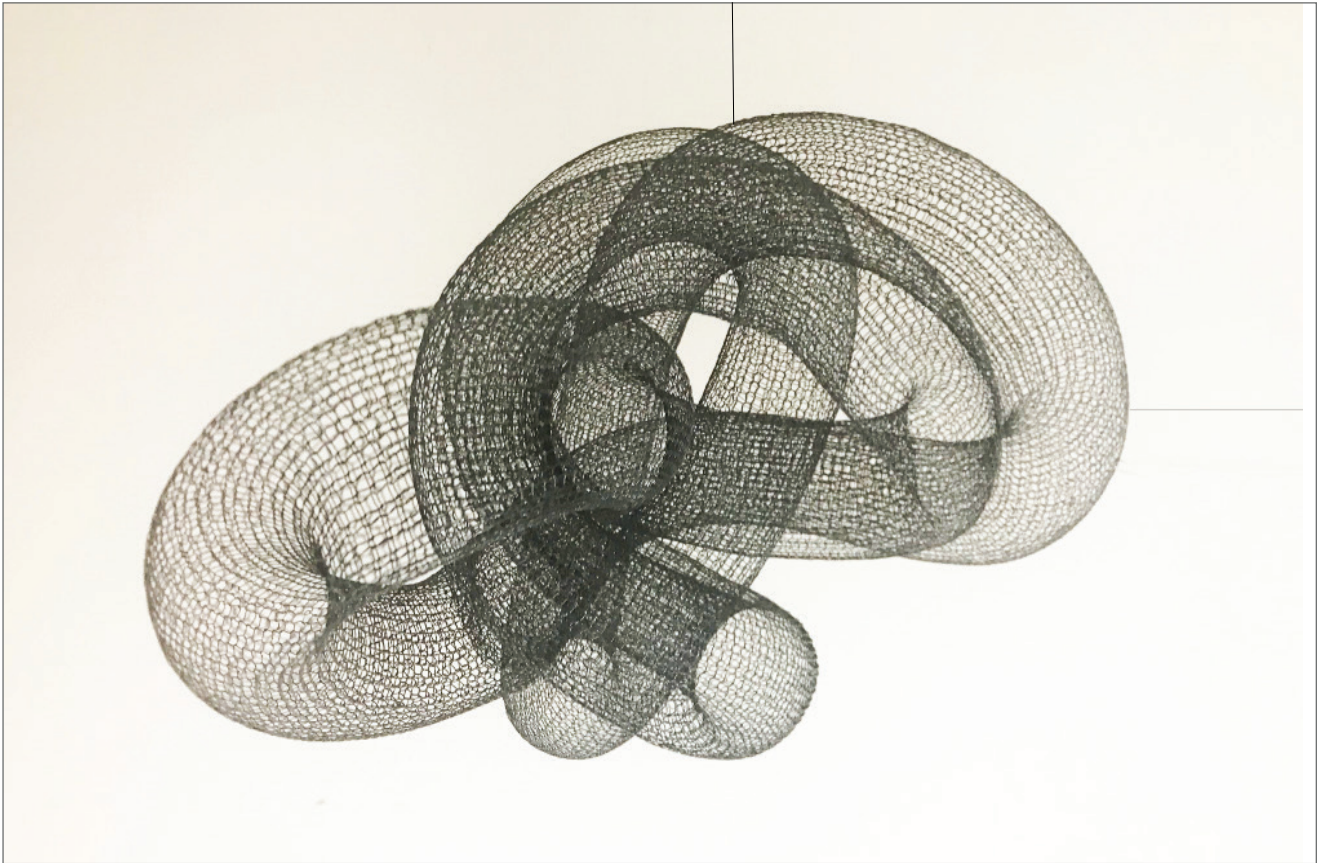
JF Where do you see your work going from here?

DD Referencing the connection between design and sculpture, I really enjoy commissions, where, though there's no particular function, there is a more defined set of parameters that actually helps me focus and innovate. Sometimes constraints are the best way to invent new methods. Maybe there'll be more opportunities for larger public art pieces that could be both a challenge and help push some ideas forward.



Mobius 5, 2021
Crocheted Wire Mesh
19" x 44" x 14" (Suspended)







Mobius 7, 2021
Crocheted Wire Mesh
42" x 10" x 10" (Suspended)



The Back Story, 2019
Acrylic on Aluminum
36" x 38" x 3"

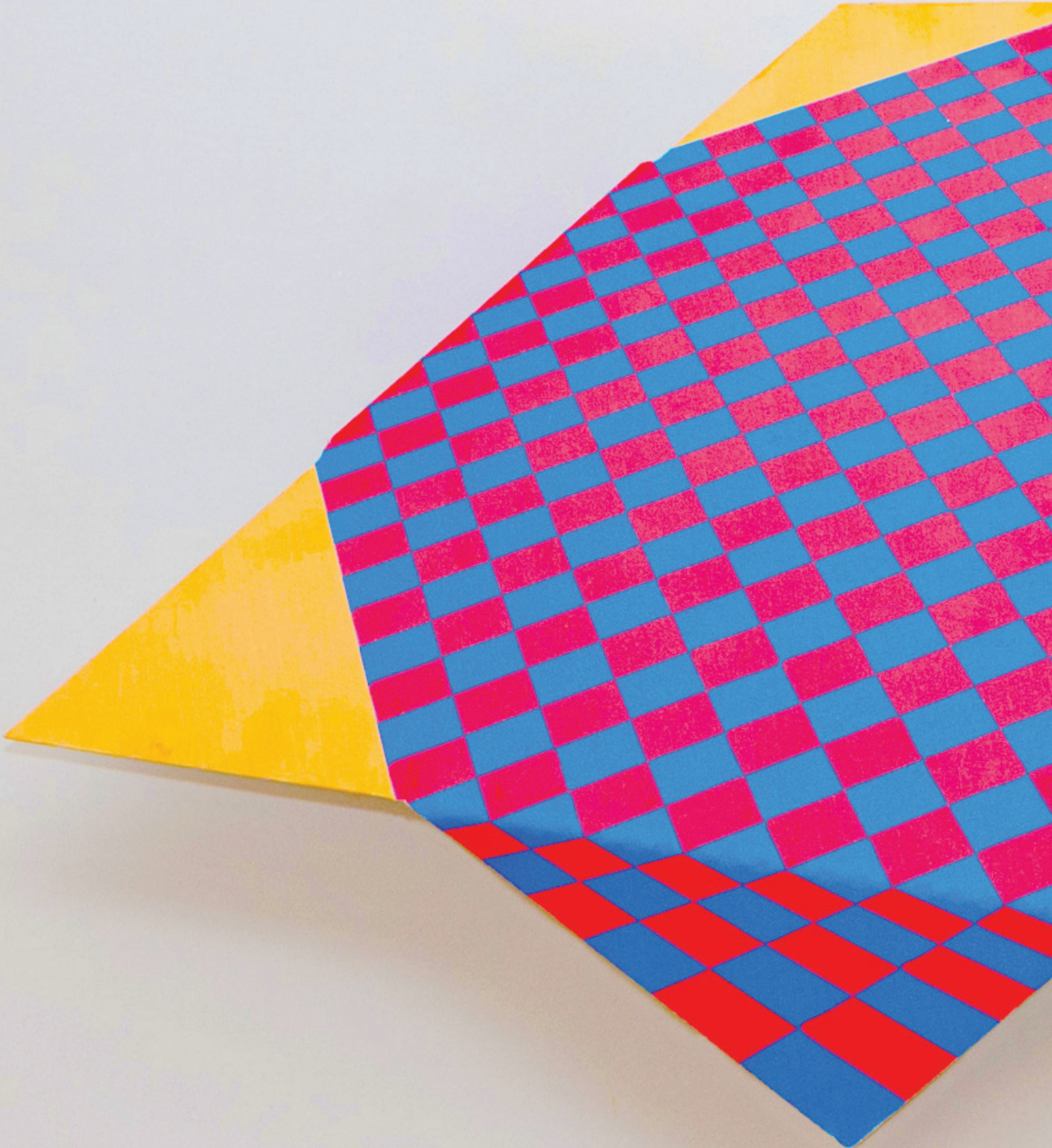


Layers of Meaning, 2021
Acrylic on Multiple Layers of Wire Mesh
36" x 136" x 1.5"



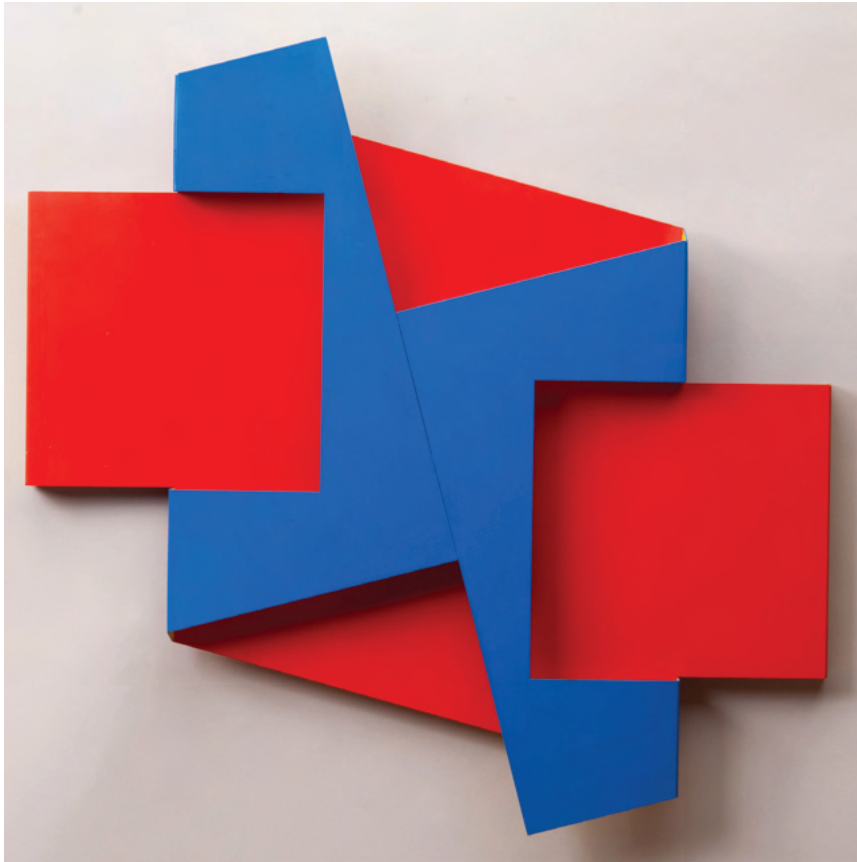
Striped Perspective Box. 2018
Acrylic on Canvas
34" x 34" x 2.5"

Folded Stripes, 2018
Acrylic on Canvas
36" x 36" x 2.5"



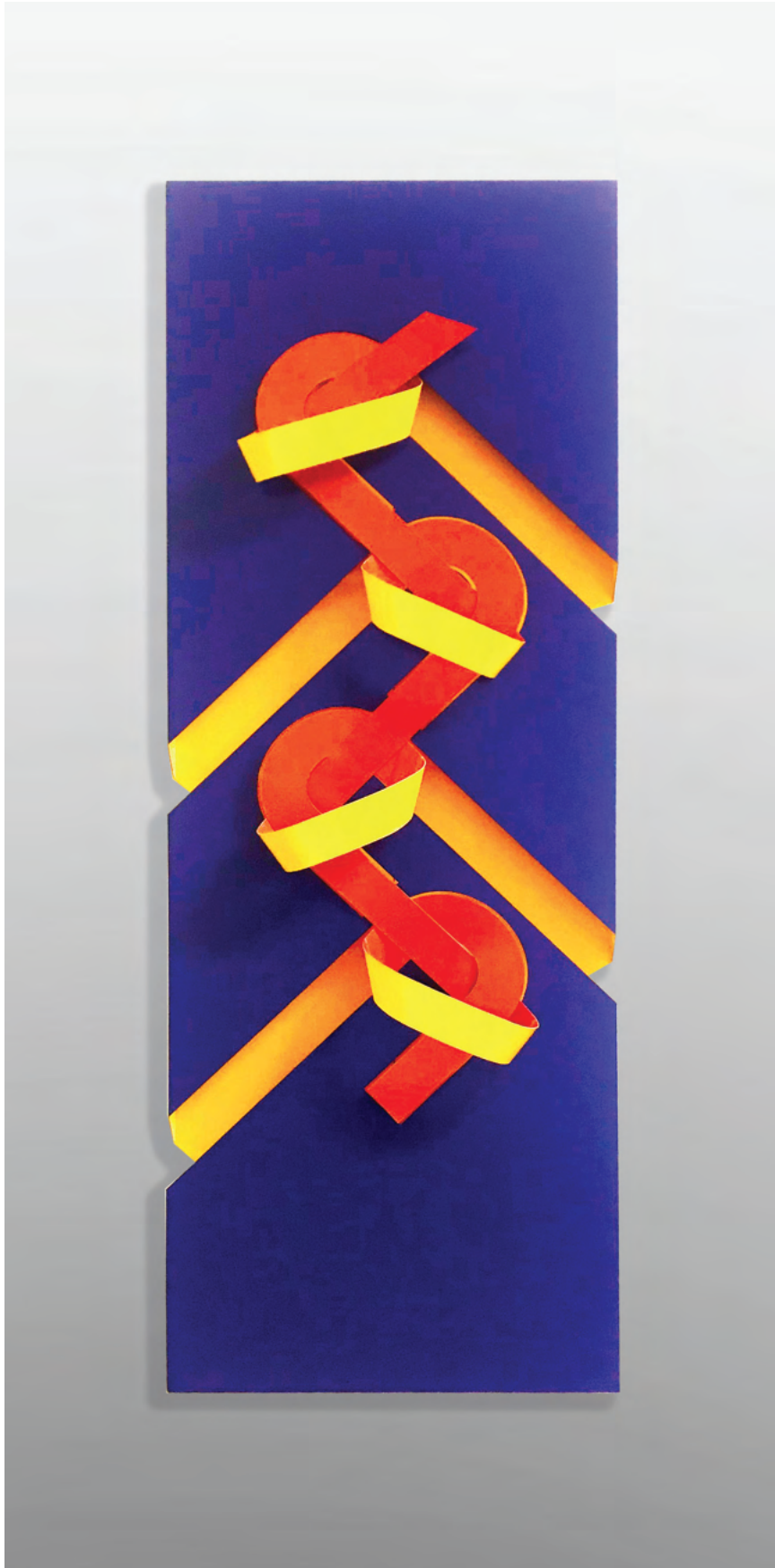
Checked Table, 2020
Acrylic on Canvas
71" x 42" x 7"





Square Study 1, 2018
Acrylic on Primed Aluminum
42" x 40" x 3"

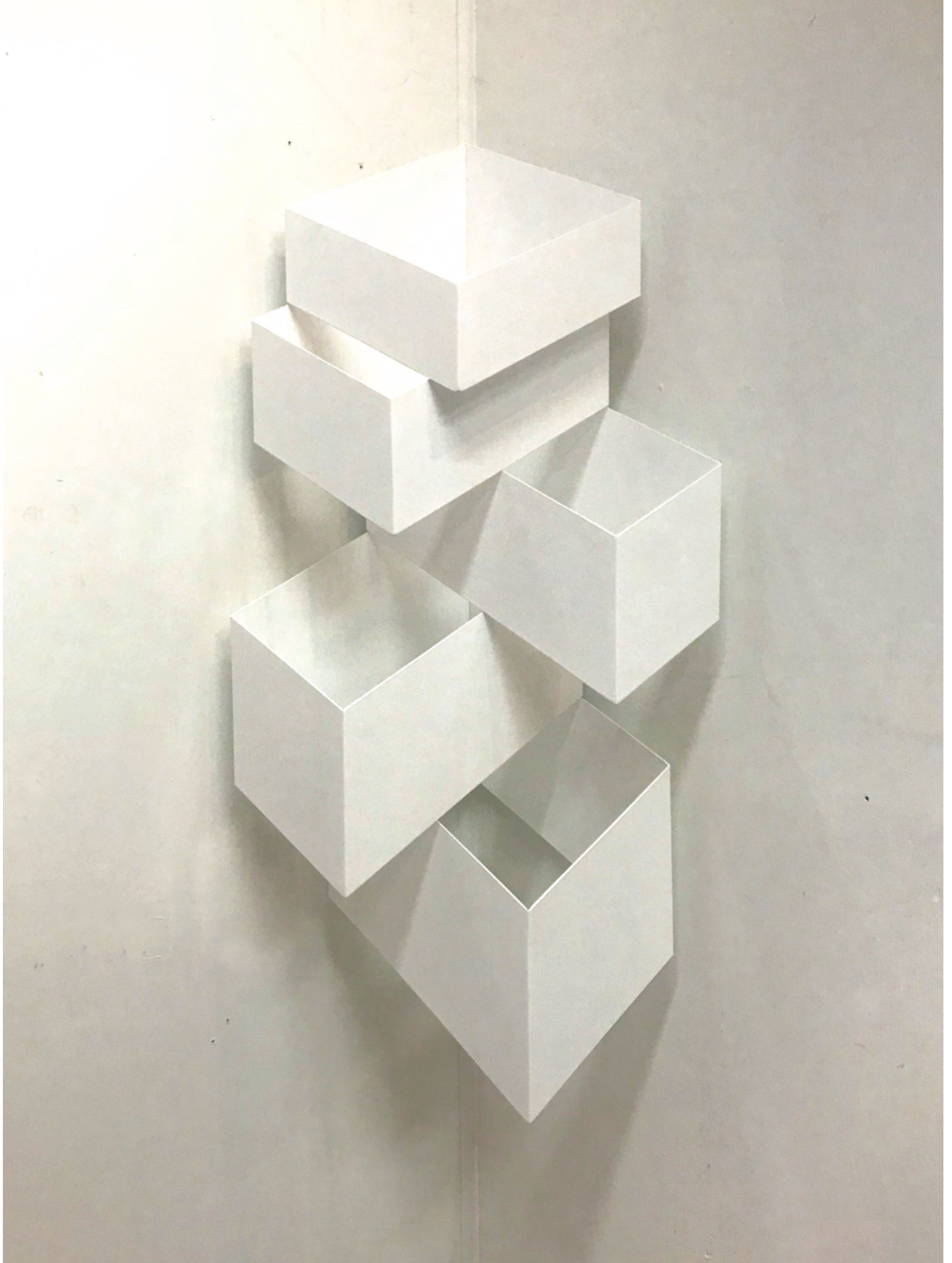
Reclaimed Space 4, 2021
Powder Coated Aluminum
40" x 43" x 4"



Folded Knots, 2021
Acrylic on Primed Aluminum
46" x 20" x 2"



Seven Up, 2021
Powder Coated Aluminum
46.5" x 19" x 5"



Corner Stacked Perspective Boxes, 2021
Powder Coated Aluminum
32.5" x 14" x 6"



Reverse Fold Stripes. 2020
Fused and Folded Kiln Formed Glass
17" x 17" x 2"



Reverse Fold Squares. 2020
Fused and Folded Kiln Formed Glass
17" x 17" x 2"



About Face 1, 2021
Cast Glass
14" x 6" x 3"

About Face 2, 2021
Cast Glass
12" x 5.5" x 2.75"



Family Portrait 2, 2021
Cast Glass
14" x 7" x 5"

GeoTower 2, 2021
Cast Glass
13" x 6.5" x 3"



The Conversation 2, 2020
Mirror Polished Aluminum
21" x 12" x 8"



Mobius 8, 2021
Suspended Wire Mesh and Cast Aluminum
10" x 12" x 3"



Reflective Universe 3, 2020
Powder Coated Aluminum/Steel
16" x 12" x 4"



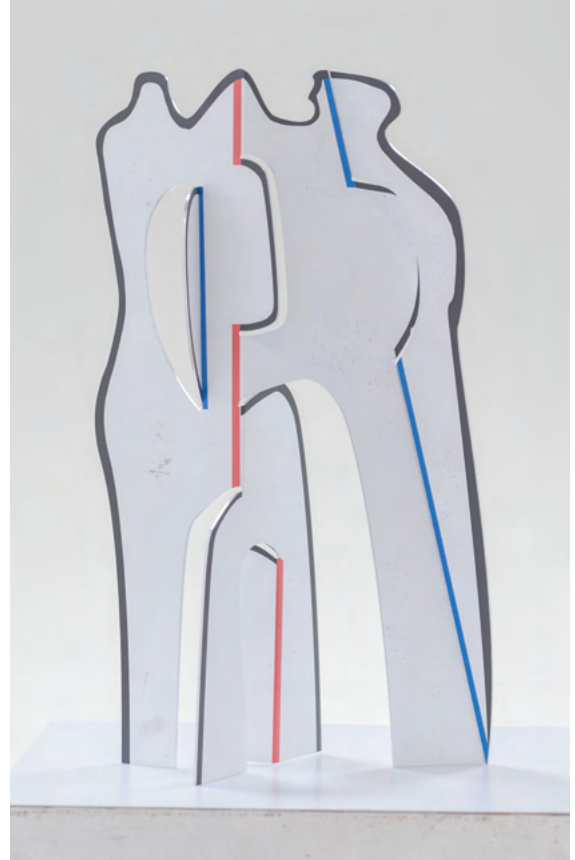
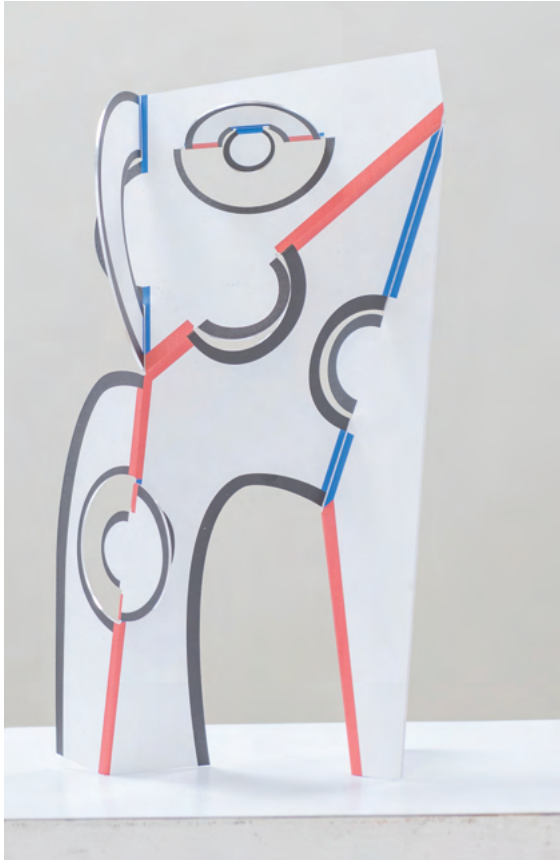
Reflective Universe 4, 2020
Powder Coated Aluminum/Steel
16" x 12" x 4"



Forward Together, 2021
Polyester Resin
26.5" x 28" x 10"



Together Again, 2021
Polyester Resin
31.5" x 17" x 10"



Triumph, 2020
Acrylic on Aluminum
16" x 9" x 5"

Love Knot 2, 2021
Powder Coated Aluminum
10" x 6" x 4"

Triumph, 2020
Acrylic on Aluminum
16" x 9" x 5"

Standing Ground, 2020
Powder Coated Aluminum
16" x 16" x 12"

DAN DROZ BIOGRAPHY

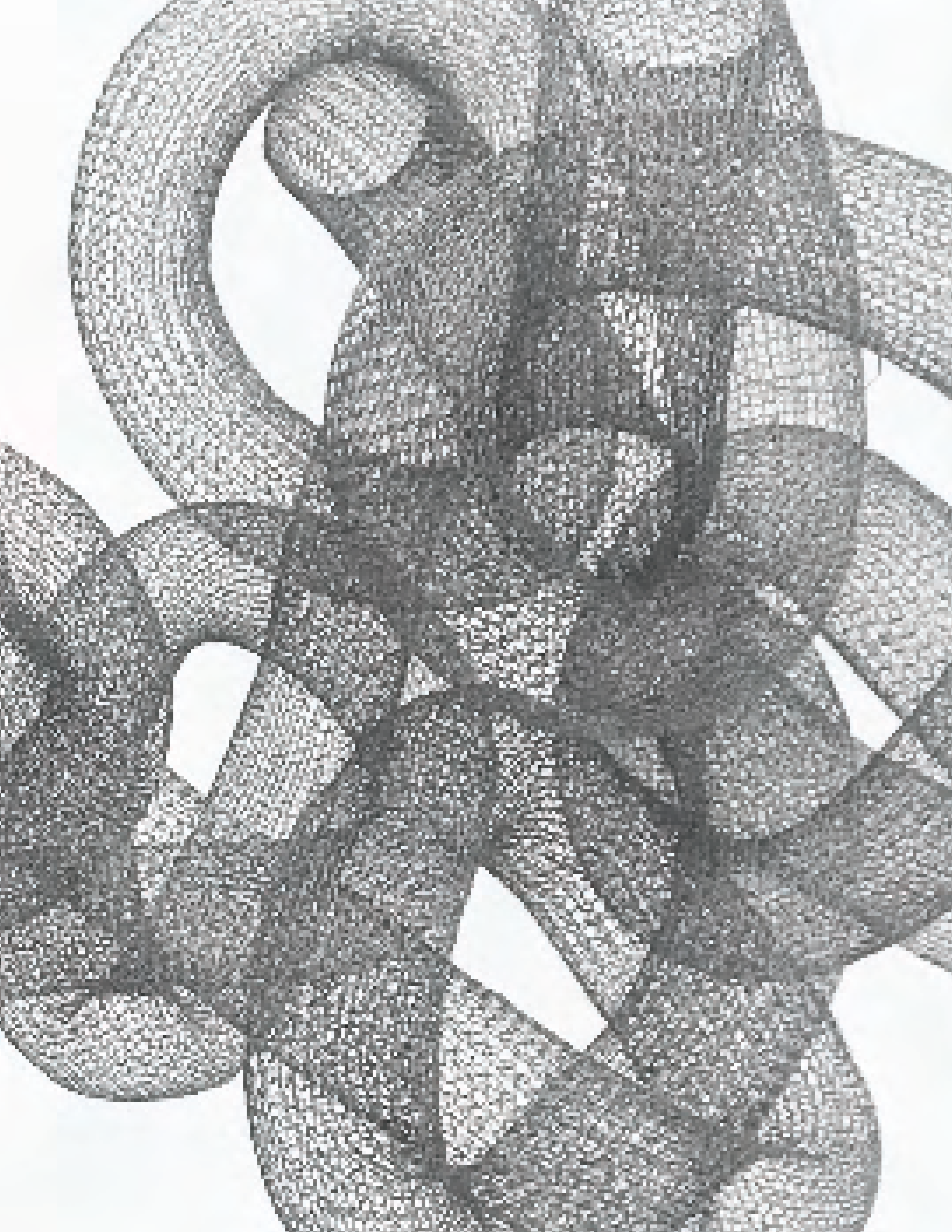
Dan Droz's sculpture explores the boundaries between two and three dimensions, interior and exterior spaces and what we can and cannot see, calling attention to the limits of our perception. Using novel methods of folding and forming metal, glass, wire mesh and polymers, Droz's sculptures reference the many 'layers' of processing and understanding the world around us.



Droz was born and raised in Pittsburgh. His father, a skilled welder and woodworker, introduced him to tools and processes that allowed him to start making things at an early age. He also became interested in sleight of hand and soon became a professional magician, fascinated by the two realities that exist simultaneously when performing magic: what the audience sees and...what is 'really going on. The simultaneous awareness of these two 'realities' would ultimately influence his artistic themes, particularly the limits of perception and understanding 'what is real.'

Droz attended Harvard College where he further explored these themes, double majoring in the History of Science and Visual Studies and on graduating, worked for a brief period as guest design director at Mademoiselle Magazine in New York. He then returned to Pittsburgh to found his eponymous design firm, Dan Droz Designs and later joined the faculty at Carnegie Mellon University, teaching in the College of Fine Art, while continuing his sculpture. In 2018, he retired from his design activities to devote full time to creating large-scale freestanding and wall-based works, incorporating his characteristic folds, reflection, and artificial glows to draw attention to the limits of perception.

His work has been shown in numerous solo and juried exhibitions including the Westmoreland Museum of Art, the Pittsburgh International Airport, The Three Rivers Arts Festival, the Harrisburg Art Center and commissions for both commercial and private collections. Droz is also the recipient of multiple awards, including the Mary Phillips Award for Sculpture from Seton Hill University, ID Magazine's "Designer's Choice," "Best of America" by Abitari Magazine (Italy) and an unprecedented 7 Daphne awards for his design. In 1996 Droz was recognized as one of six distinguished design alumni of Harvard College at the 30th anniversary of Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts.





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