



RICHARD ANUSZKIEWICZ

TEMPLE SERIES II
1983-2019

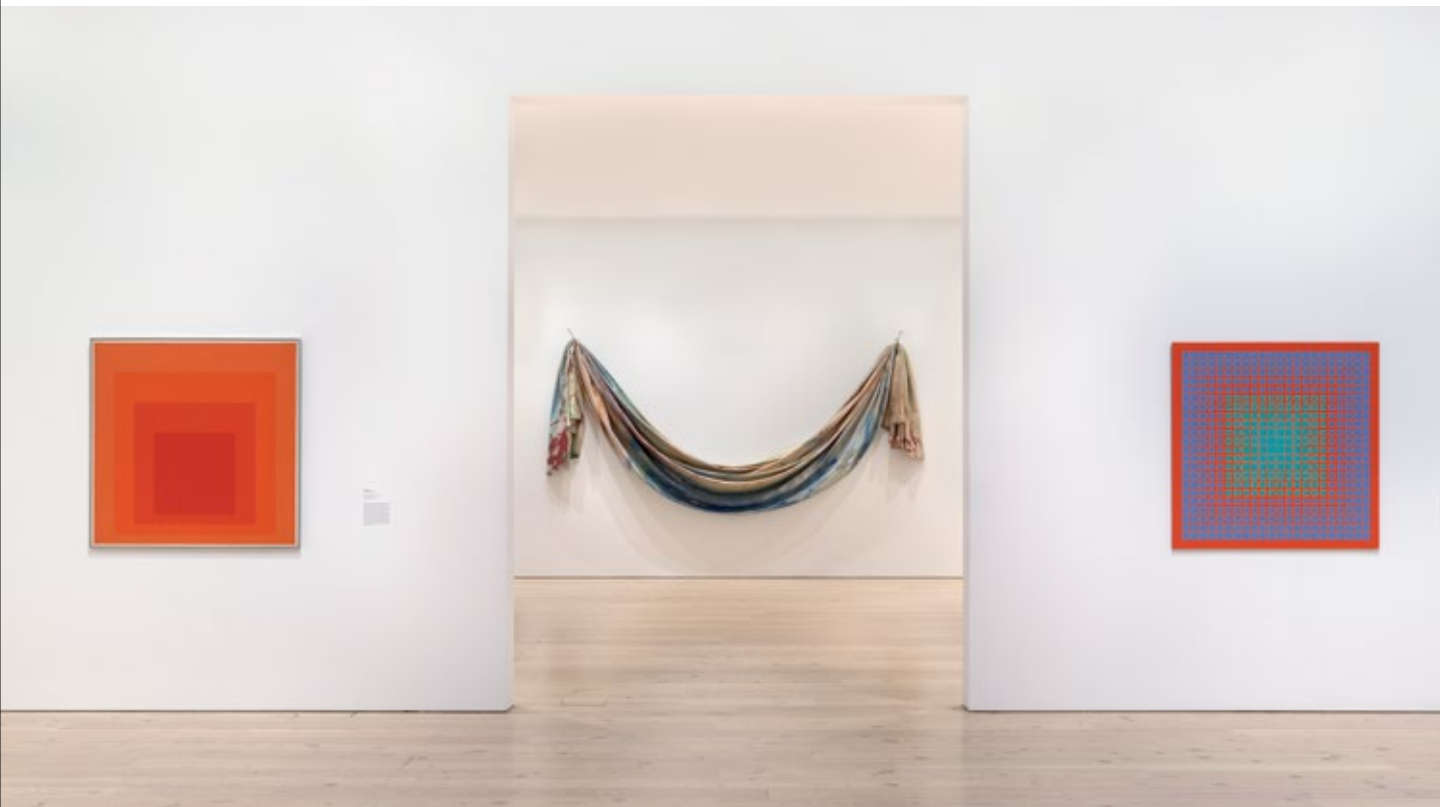
RICHARD ANUSZKIEWICZ

TEMPLE SERIES II
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October 17 – November 16, 2019

LORETTA HOWARD
GALLERY

521 WEST 26 STREET NEW YORK 10001 212.695.0164 LORETTAHOWARD.COM



The Temple Paintings of Richard Anuszkiewicz

By Saul Ostrow

Since he came to international prominence in the 1960s, the critical account of Richard Anuszkiewicz's (born 1930) work had not significantly changed until recently. Now with the benefit of historical perspective, the work made in the post war period is the subject of re-evaluation. This is due to the fact that over the decades there has been a persistent interest in artists such as Anuszkiewicz whose practices did not appear to mesh with the critically accepted themes of their time. Among these were Kinetic Art and West Coast Light and Space. Likewise, since the mid-1980s¹ there has been a renewed interest in the international array of artists such as Bridget Riley, Cruz-Diez, and Richard Anuszkiewicz whose works were once understood to be primarily concerned with optical effects. Today, these artists and movements are being recognized for their broader concerns and contributions to late-modernism and abstract art².

No longer bound to AbEx ethics and aesthetics, Anuszkiewicz work represents the changing of the guard — he abandons the dictums of subjectivity, authorship, and spontaneity to emphasize objectivity, formalism, and the phenomenological. Among his contemporaries are Frank Stella and Kenneth Noland. Stella adopted an industrial aesthetic expressly to address systematically the issues of repetition and variation and Noland who, among the formalists, worked in series intuitively avoiding the systemic. Then there is Tom Downing who among the Washington Colorist produced tightly composed, visually unstable patterns of dots and circles meant to activate the viewer's perception. Subsequently, Anuszkiewicz would go on to make shaped canvases whose forms both undermined and re-enforced the inherent spatial illusionism of his images.

Though anti-illusionism and formalism as artistic concerns date back to the late-Renaissance and Mannerism, today these terms are most associated with the critic Clement Greenberg's critical emphasis on flatness, process, and color. This view and the circle of painters promoted by Greenberg came to critically dominate the subject in the 1970s. Through his work is an amalgam of the formalist

top
Richard Anuszkiewicz

below
Installation view of *Spilling Over: Painting Color in the 1960s* (Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, March 29-August 2019).
From left to right:
Josef Albers, *Homage to the Square: "Wait"*, 1967;
Sam Gilliam, *Bow Form Construction*, 1968;
Richard Anuszkiewicz, *The Fourth of the Three*, 1963.
Photograph by Ron Amstutz

1. Painters Geo such as Ross Bleckner, Peter Halley, Philip Taaffe, Steve DiBenedetto and Michael Scott among others associated with Po-Mo and Neo-in the late 80s-1990 began to appropriate OP-Art motifs and effects.
2. For instance, in 2019, Anuszkiewicz work has been included in such museum exhibitions as *Spilling Over: Painting Color in the 1960's* at the Whitney Museum of American Art. This exhibition references the pioneering curator Marcia Tucker's exhibition *The Structure of Color*, from 1971, which was also at the Whitney Museum. In Europe his work has been recently included in "Negative Space" which focuses on Anuszkiewicz's sculpture at The ZKM / Center for Art and Media in Karlsruhe, Germany and has also been included in "Bauhaus in America. Experiments in Light and Movement" at LWL Museum for Art and Culture, Munster, Germany, and at "Action - Reaction: 100 Years of Kinetic Art", Kunsthall, Rotterdam, NL, as well as "Vertigo - Op Art and a History of Deception 1520 - 1970", Museum of Modern Art, Vienna, AT.

practices that define minimalism, hard-edge abstraction, and color-field, this 70s formalist perspective is one of the reasons one does not immediately think of Anuszkiewicz as a formalist. Another reason is that despite his affinities with formalist and minimalist works, Anuszkiewicz paintings do not become literal objects. The difference lies in that Anuszkiewicz's use of color consistently asserts that the mechanics of vision are an active factor in what we see and therefore a reminder that the world out there is not the one that we experience through our senses.

The Temple paintings, which Anuszkiewicz has been working on since the 1980s, may be thought of as a summation of his main concerns. They permit him to re-visit many of the themes from his past works such as: line interference, reversible perspective, color contrasts, and chromatic vibration resulting from his juxtaposing of complementary colors at full intensity. What is most apparent is his continued interest in splitting the aesthetic experience between the sensuous and the conceptual. Subsequently, his use of color, the invocation of light, and the subtle irregularities created by the hand, fall under the sensuous, while the perceptual devices he uses to stimulate spatial and optical allusions constitute the conceptual. What often goes un-noted is that Anuszkiewicz's imagery in the main is based on the grid and regular geometry.

With the Temple Series, Anuszkiewicz has economically honed his means to have his viewer differentiate between what is actually on the canvas and that, which is being generated by our senses. Each painting consists of non-relational compositions of planes and lines of color, which though visually agitated seek equilibrium within the frame of the canvas. If these works were to be reproduced in black and white it would become apparent that Anuszkiewicz is a classicist — every variation is planned, there is nothing arbitrary, every non-essential detail has been excluded. What remains are repetitive, equally spaced, vertically orientated rectangular modules, framed by a motif of concentric bands which alternately produce either an illusionistic shadow-box like space or seem to advance to create illusionary bas relief-like objects.

Though the Temple series begins with an association on the artist's part — his inspiration being the architecture of Egyptian and Greek temples and particularly the spaces between the columns. His principle interest is in how these frame differing light and atmospheric color conditions. As such, the paintings themselves never express more than what they are — vehicles for his interest in the mechanics of



Larry Bell
Made for Arolsen (Pink/Blue)
 1992/2016
 Pink and blue laminated glass
 Unique
 4 panels pink glass:
 72 x 96 x 1/2 in /
 182.9 x 243.8 x 1.3 cm
 4 panels blue glass:
 72 x 48 x 1/2 in /
 182.9 x 121.9 x 1.3 cm
 72 x 96 1/4 x 96 1/4 inches/
 182.9 x 244.5 x 244.5 cm /
 (overall)
 © Larry Bell
 Courtesy the artist and
 Hauser & Wirth
 Photo: Genevieve Hanson

color and light and the qualities of geometry. As such, regardless of his source of inspiration the works remains objective — his architecture consists of just forms on the canvas meant to communicate to his audience the real in the abstract. Subsequently, though he employs more of an illusionary space than one usually associates with his work, the Temple Paintings at no point imply an expanding field nor do they permit the viewer to imagine the image as extending beyond the edge of the canvas.

Of singular importance in contextualizing the Temple Paintings, in particular, is to note that while studying at Yale, Anuszkiewicz became familiar with Joseph Albers and his color system with its emphasis on the relativity of perception. This had a significant influence on Anuszkiewicz. Though this effect was not meant to be an analogy, Albers' influence on the Anuszkiewicz's generation of artists coincided with the very moment that Western society was making a philosophical and scientific transition away from Positivism to the phenomenological. Likewise, given the rise of cinema, advertising, and TV believing what one sees, to be factual or true had become a tricky business. As such rather than seeking a reductive or essentialism, Anuszkiewicz deploys — within this new framework — the discourses of materialism and phenomena, concerns that have been key to the formation of abstract painting from its inception. Consequently, in the age of information theory and the proliferation of images, we just may want to keep in mind the resonance of Anuszkiewicz's painting in which concept and aesthetic effect vie for dominance — in which the cognitive and what is to be known oscillates between what's there and perceptual illusions — leaving the viewer seeing something that may or may not be there. ■

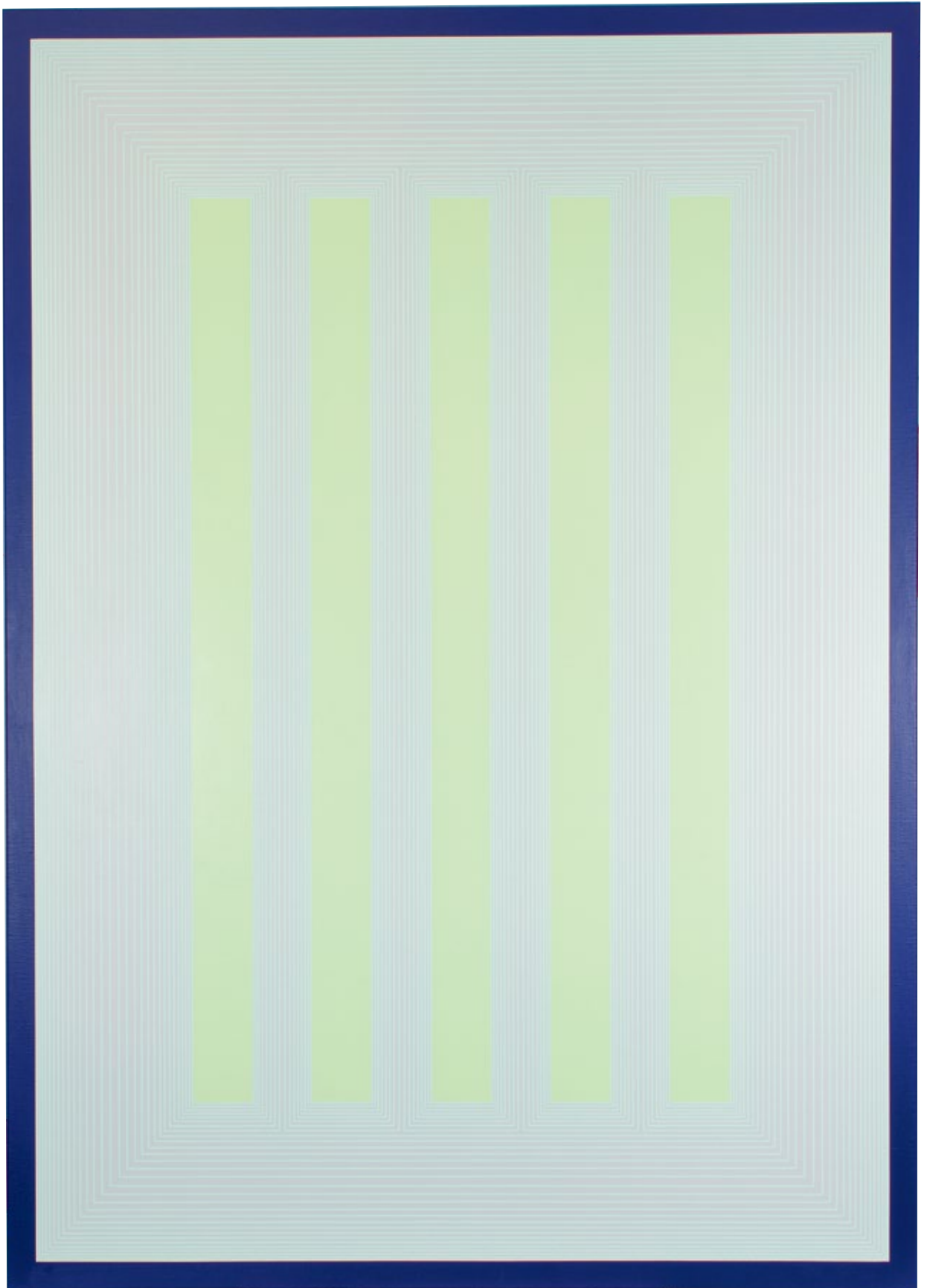


Temple of Khnum, Esna, Egypt

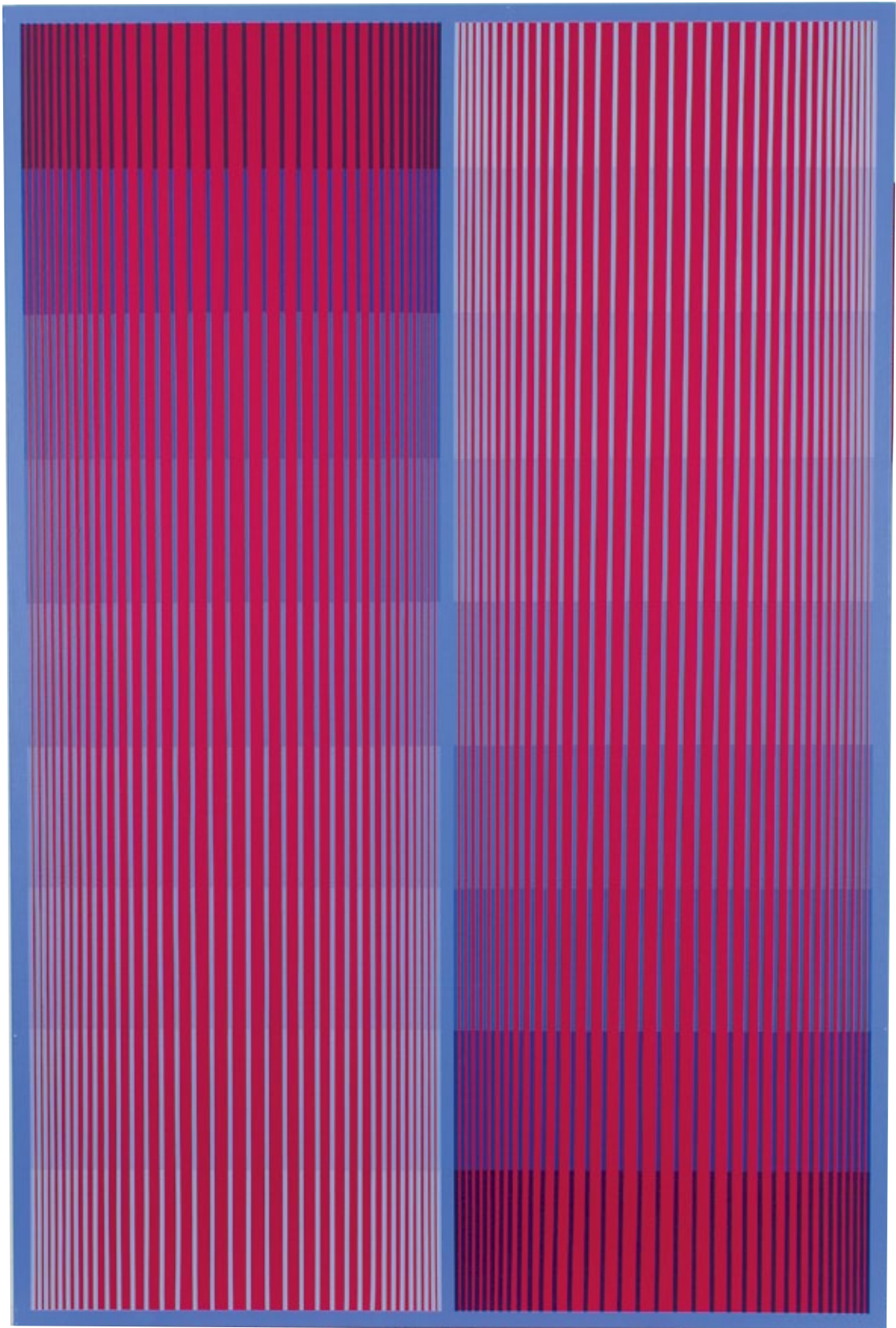
Temple of Green Mist, 1983-2019

Acrylic on canvas

84 x 60 inches

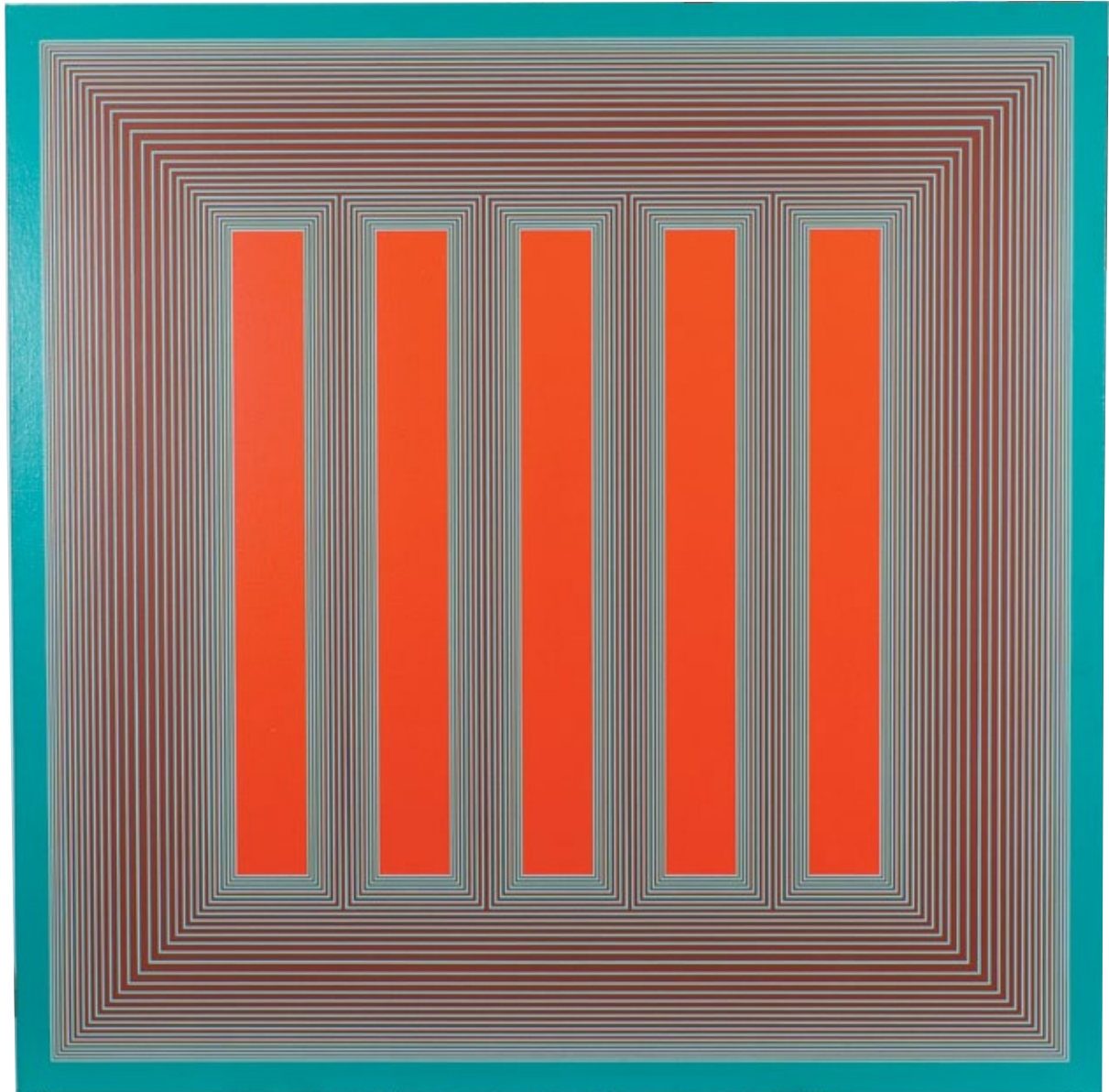


Blue Red Duo, 1984-2017
Acrylic on canvas
72 x 48 inches



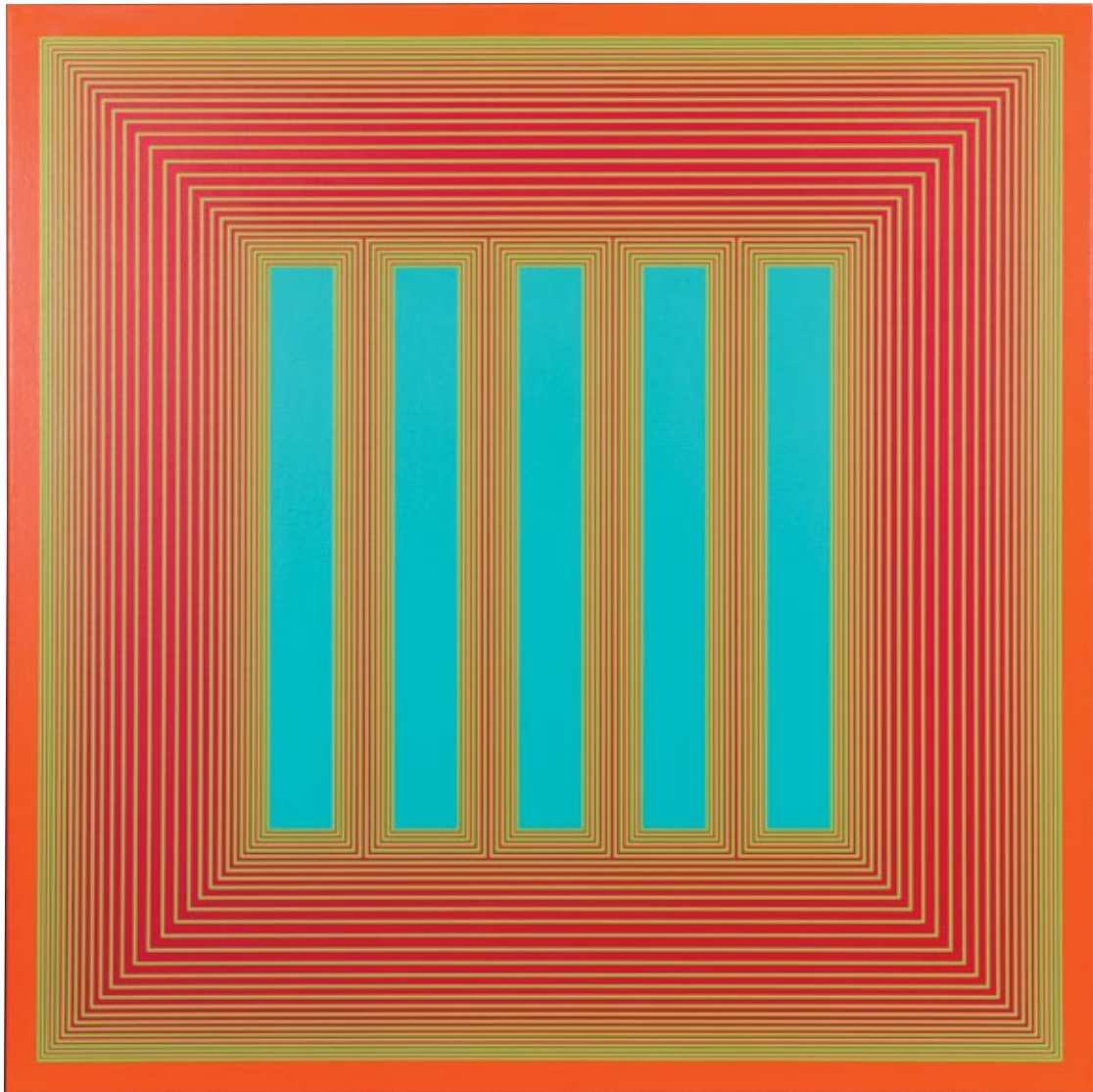


Temple of Summer Dawn, 1983-2019
Acrylic on canvas
48 x 48 inches



Green Temple of Red Cadmium, 1984
Acrylic on canvas
60 x 60 inches

Temple of Celestial Blue, 1985
Acrylic on canvas
84 x 72 inches

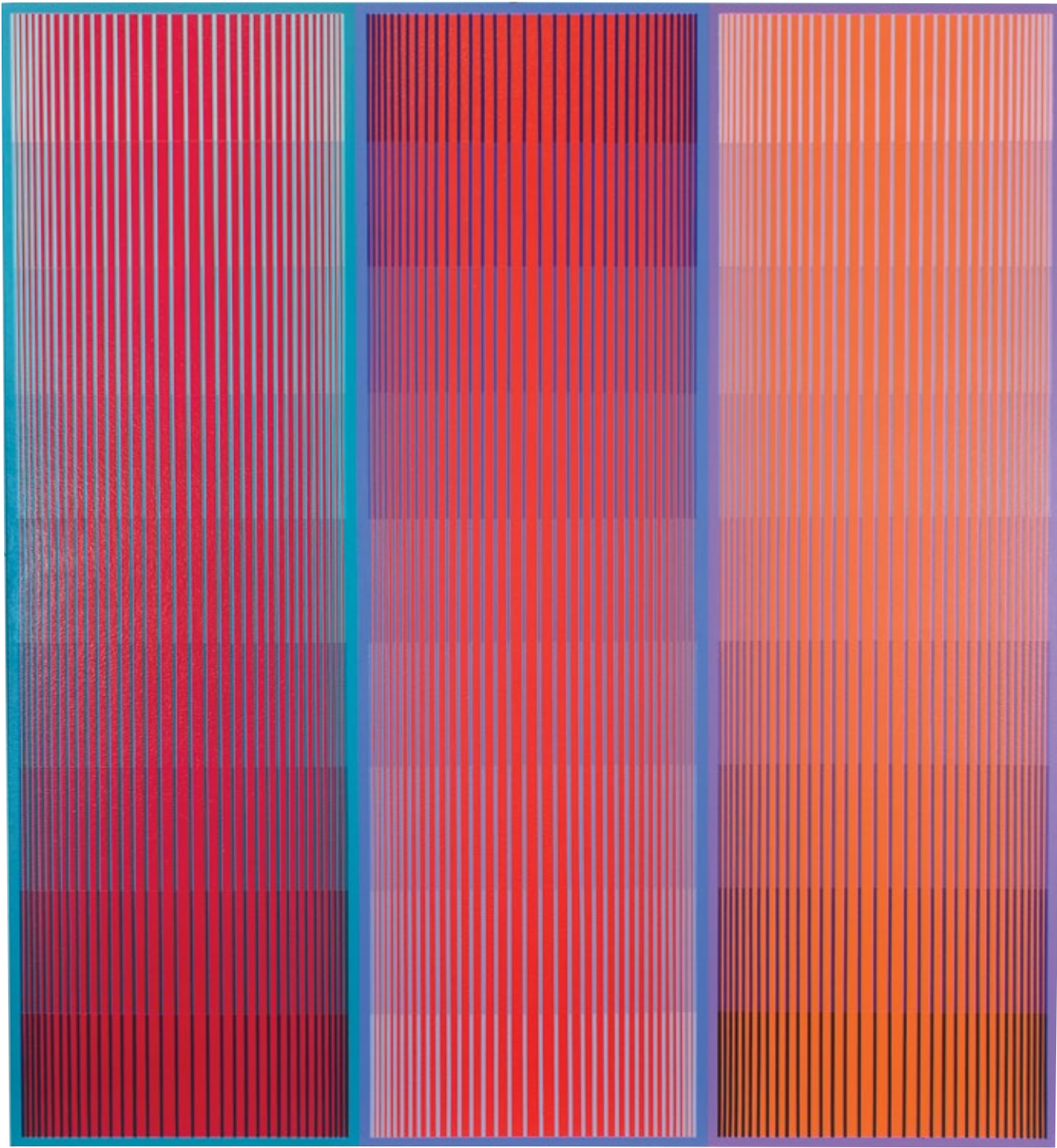


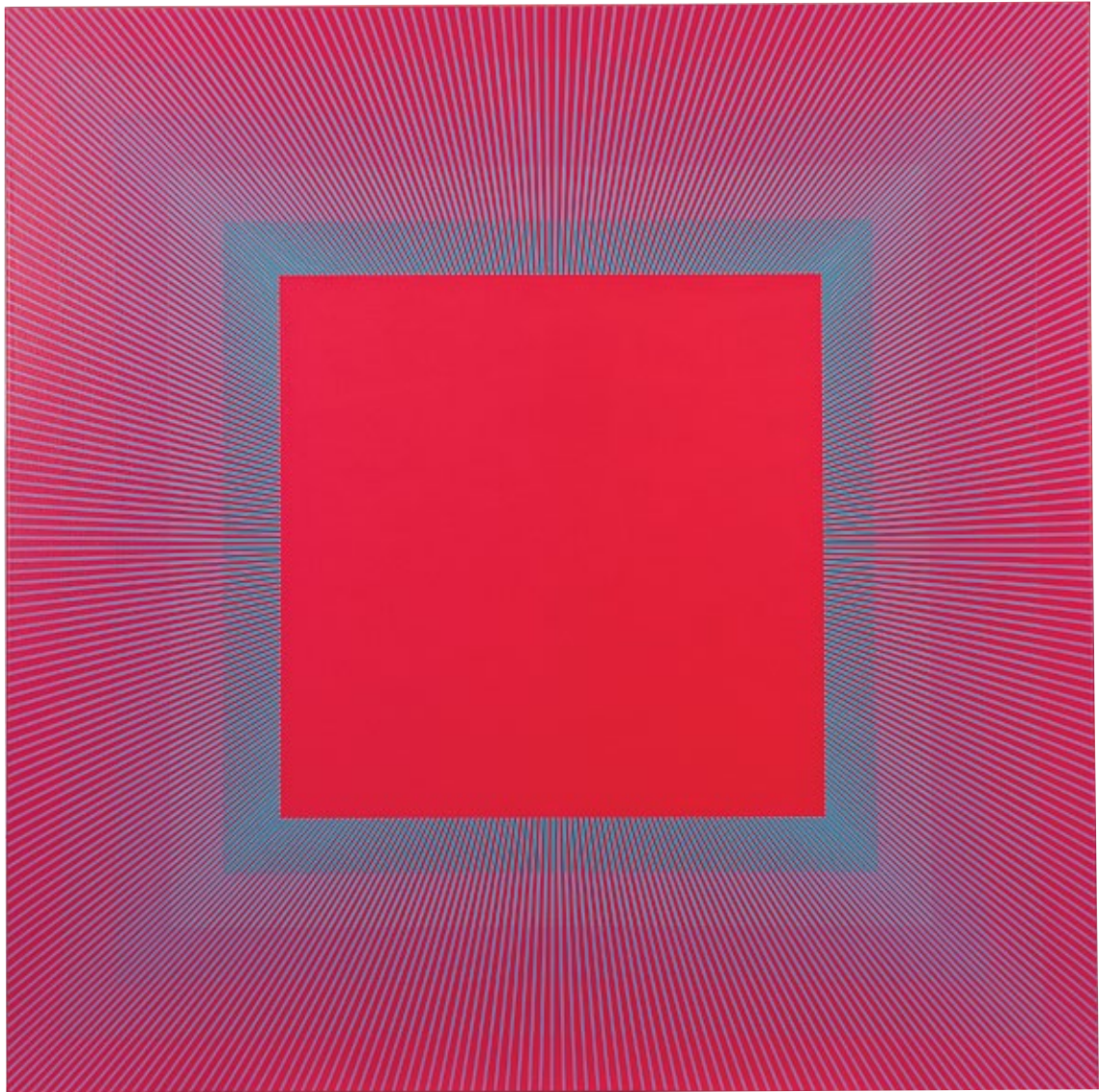
Temple of Turquoise with Red, 1985
Acrylic on canvas
48 x 48 inches

Temple of the Summer Evening, 1983-2018
Acrylic on canvas
60 x 48 inches

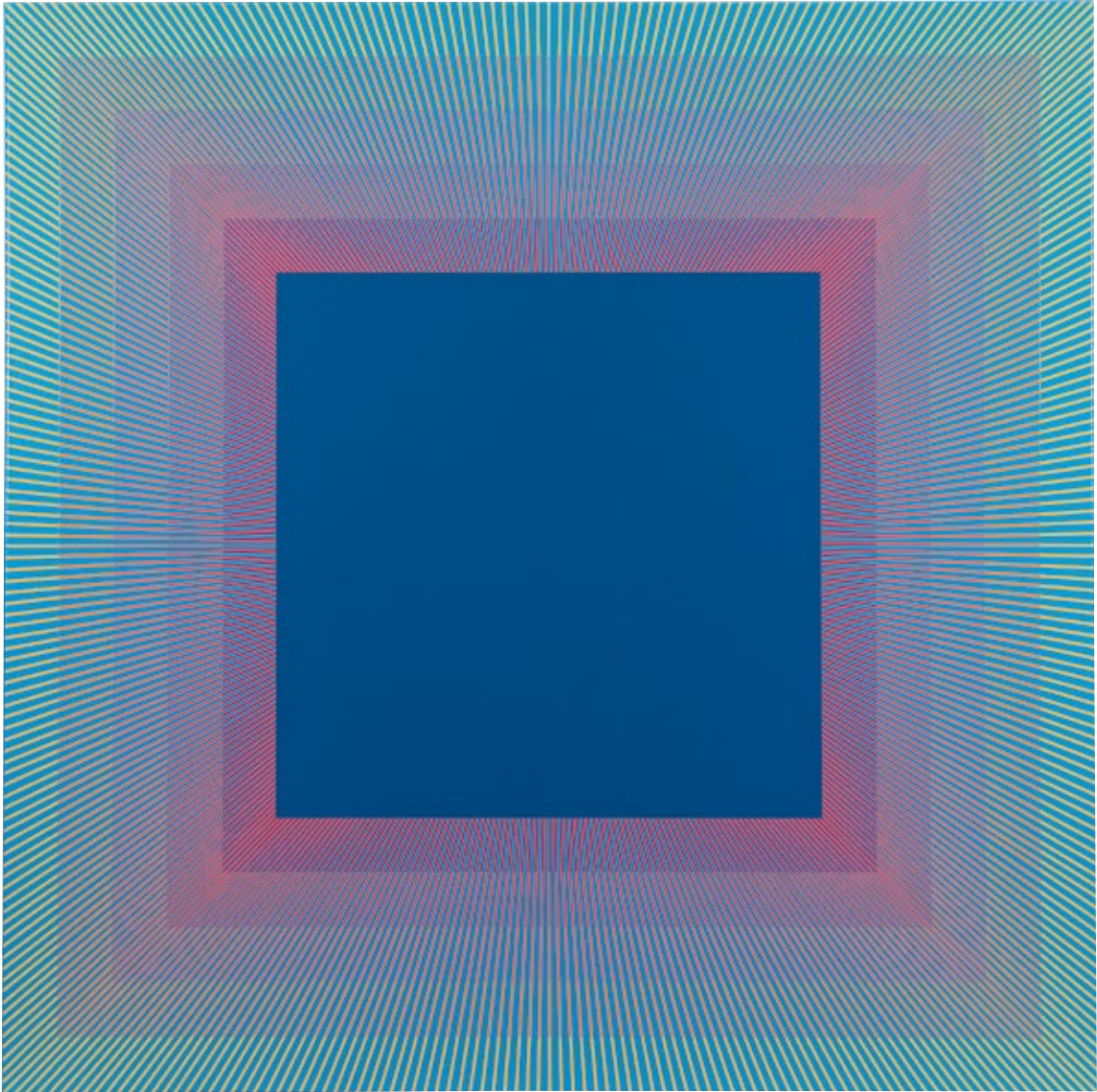


Red Cadmium Trio, 2018
Acrylic on canvas
78 x 60 inches





Rainbow Squared Red, 2019
Acrylic on canvas
48 x 48 inches



Rainbow Squared Blue, 2019
Acrylic on canvas
48 x 48 inches

Light Parallel, 1972
Acrylic on canvas
84 1/2 x 37 inches



This catalogue published on the occasion of the exhibition

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Public Collections

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Albany State Capitol, Albany, NY
Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY
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